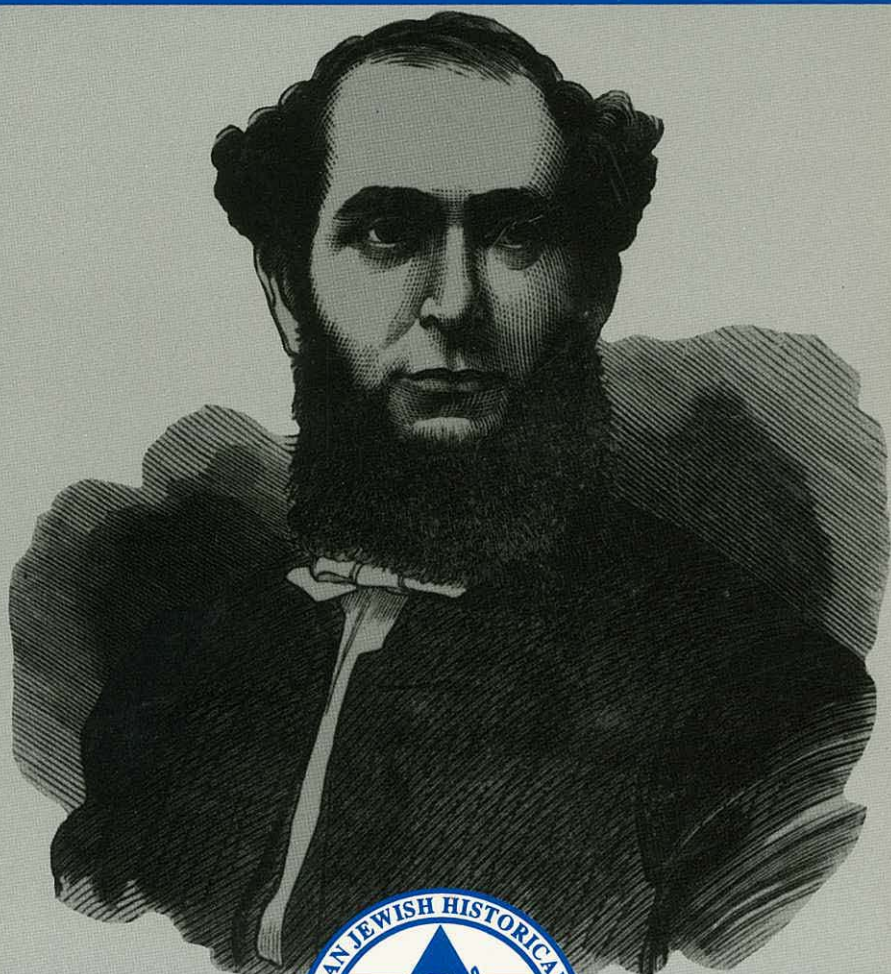


# AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL



VOL XII 1994



PART 3



# THE JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Australian Jewish Historical Society was founded in Sydney in August 1938. The Victorian Branch of the Society was founded in October 1949. Branches also exist in Canberra and in Western Australia.

The Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society has been published since 1939. From 1988, production of the Journal is being shared by the Victorian and New South Wales sections.

The Victorian-based issues of the Journal are edited and published by an Editorial Committee, whose members are

Professor William D. Rubinstein, BA, MA, PhD, FAHA, FASSA, FRHistS (Editor)

Dr Paul R. Bartrop, BA(Hons), MA, DipEd, PhD

Mrs Beverley Davis, ARMA, (Dip Archives & Records) (Honorary Secretary)

Dr Howard A. Freeman, BDSc, LDS (ex-officio as President of the Victorian Committee)

Rabbi Dr John S. Levi, AM, DD, MAHL, MA, DipEd

Dr Serge Liberman MB, BS

Dr Hilary L. Rubinstein, BA(Hons), MS, PhD, FRHistS

A complete list of the Society's office-bearers is printed inside the back cover.

The Editor welcomes suggestions for articles and manuscripts by authors dealing with any aspect of the history of the Jewish people in Australia. The Journal is national in coverage and deals with the whole sweep of Australian Jewish history from 1788 to the contemporary period.

Material submitted for consideration for publication in the Journal should be presented on a computer disk (3.5inch preferred), in DOS or Macintosh format. Please indicate the software used (Microsoft Word is preferred). The disk should be sent with a double-spaced printout or typescript, and may be accompanied by illustrations. References should be in the form of endnotes rather than footnotes. No payment can be offered for any contribution. No handwritten submissions will be accepted.

Communications regarding publication should be sent either to the Editor, Professor W. D. Rubinstein, SAIS, Deakin University, Victoria 3217, or to the Honorary Secretary, Mrs. Beverley Davis, PO Box 255, Camberwell 3124, from whom information about membership in the Society and its other activities and resources may also be obtained.

The Australian Jewish Historical Society — Victoria Inc., gratefully acknowledges the generous contribution towards the publication costs of this Journal by the Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs, Melbourne, Australia, and its Publication Advisory Committee (Isi J. Leibler, AO, CBE, DLitt. [Chairman], and Professor Louis Waller, AO).

*Front Cover: Rev. Abraham Frederick Ornstien, 1871  
(Courtesy the LaTrobe Collection, State Library of Victoria)  
For story, see Page 443.*

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*Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Society.*



## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Readers familiar with the format of this *Journal* will notice a number of changes in our November 1994 issue. For one thing, our title has been changed slightly to become identical to that of the issues of our *Journal* produced from Sydney. Secondly, our printing and copy-editing is now done largely in-house, in a highly professional manner, resulting in very considerable cost-savings and a higher degree of control over our production process.

While our typeface and format may have changed somewhat, the quality of this *Journal* and its range hopefully remains as good as ever. Once again, we offer articles on the whole sweep of Australian Jewish history, from early colonial times to the present. Judith O'Donnell discusses whether the convict Ikey Solomon was the model for Dickens' Fagin, while Dr. Malcolm J. Turnbull examines the very chequered career of Rev. Abraham Ornstien, a leading Jewish minister of the late nineteenth century. Contrary to what one might expect, Australian reactions to the Dreyfus Affair, according to Dr. Hilary L. Rubinstein, were pro-Dreyfus and philo-Semitic. In the first part of an important study, Peter Mansfield examines the long-neglected career of Nathan Spielvogel, one of the most important and popular Jewish writers in Australian history, whose works were once known to virtually every Australian schoolchild.

We are privileged to be able to reprint the university paper on "Religiously Carlton" written by the late Yankel Rosenbaum, murdered so tragically in New York in 1991. Our hope in future issues is to reprint other work by Yankel, both as a memorial to him and for their genuine importance as research on Australian Jewish history.

Robert Exiner's "From the Spree to the Yarra" is one of the most vivid and interesting accounts of the migration here of a German-Jewish refugee known to me. A much briefer account of Exiner's life appeared in Dr. John Foster's *Community of Fate*, but this greatly expands on the earlier piece. Of particular note is that Exiner remained in Nazi Germany for over a year with an Australian entry visa in his pocket, simply not realising what the future held. Eva de Jong-Duldig provides another valuable memoir of the early days here of her father, the late Karl Duldig, the renowned sculptor.

The Hobart Hebrew Congregation is this country's oldest continuing synagogue. Its early years have been written about before, but its survival against the odds during the past fifty years forms the interesting and important concern of Hedi Fixel's article. We offer our warmest greetings to the Hobart Hebrew Congregation on its Sesquicentenary.

Philip Mendes continues his searching and important analysis of the modern Jewish Left in Australia with a series of interviews of Melbourne Jews who were members of the Communist Party of Australia, a trend, now so difficult to understand, which was a response to fascism and Depression and had its parallels everywhere in the Jewish world.

Two articles deal with Australian echoes of the Holocaust. Dr. Paul R. Bartrop examines how the Australian press viewed the Nuremberg Trials, while I report on the important survey "What Do Australians Know About the Holocaust?" undertaken earlier this year by the Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs and the American Jewish Committee.

Marianne Dacy, the esteemed head of the Archive of Australian Judaica at Sydney University, presents a history of that invaluable repository, while Lorraine Freeman offers another instalment of her popular feature, "100 Years Ago", from the Australian Jewish press of the day. There are the usual number of book reviews and a range of supplementary material.



Even more than before, I must profoundly thank our honorary secretary, Beverley Davis, for the enormous burden of work she has put into making this issue a success, and which has made Australian Jewish historiography the richer. Similarly, I must thank Dr. Hilary L. Rubinstein for her outstanding proofreading, time for which was taken from a heavy load of other work.

As a result of our investment in new technology, we are able to accept material incorporating articles and illustrations in computer disk format. This process has successfully reduced the lead-times to which we have previously been working, and allowed us to streamline our publishing procedures. For technical information please see the inside front cover of this issue, or contact our production editor, Beverley Davis.

Finally, I wish to thank Andrew Freeman of Blueprint Pty. Ltd. for his unfailing courtesy and support, and for giving so generously of his time and expertise throughout the production of this issue.

Prof. W.D. Rubinstein  
Editor



## CHARLES DICKENS AND THE JEWISH CONVICT or Did Fagin Come to Australia?

Judith O'Donnell

I am engaged in a project to research and write a book about the Jewish convict, Ikey (Isaac) Solomon, or Solomons<sup>1</sup>, who was transported to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in 1831. Ikey Solomon was a notorious London receiver, and it has been said that he was the model for Fagin in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. Unlike Fagin, however, Ikey was never hanged. Most likely he would have been, because on 1 May 1827 he had been charged with four capital offences, but while under escort, somewhere between the Courts of King's Bench, Westminster, and Newgate Gaol, Ikey escaped from custody.

His escape is vividly described in the *Times* (28 May 1827)<sup>2</sup>

... and the coach, which by this time had reached Bishop-gate, suddenly turned into Petticoat-lane, and stopped. The door was quickly opened, and out jumped Solomons. A party of Jews, who were in waiting, instantly shut the coach-door and kept it closed. As soon as the turnkeys could get out, they saw Solomons at a distance, running as if for his life: they raised a cry of stop thief and pursued with all their might, but Solomons was seen to turn down one of the alleys of Petticoat-lane, and has not since been heard of. The astonishment and mortification of the turnkeys at losing their prisoner was great; and when they returned to Newgate with their story, it produced an unusual sensation amongst the ministers of the law. A reward of 50 pounds has been offered for the apprehension of Solomons, and never before were the city police more on the alert.

Three years later, after his recapture, the *Times* (19 July 1830) gave Ikey's version of the events:

Ikey Solomons has declared that his escape from Newgate was accomplished, not by bribery or promise of a reward, but by an ingenious and able arrangement, with which those who had him in care were totally unacquainted; and he complains much of the enormous expense which that arrangement cost him. He says, that after getting out of the coach, upon his return from Westminster, he went to a certain house in the city, and remained there all night, and that in the morning he went to Tottenham, where he sojourned for some weeks. When the astonishment caused by his escape had subsided, and the search after him had become less inquisitive, he joined a ship going out in ballast, and was conveyed to Denmark, where, upon landing, he found himself possessed of cash to the amount of upwards 800 pounds. As he could not conveniently trade in a country the language of which he was wholly unacquainted with, he embarked as soon as he could for the United States of America ...

The only copy of Camden Pelham's *The Chronicles of Crime* (1841)<sup>3</sup> that I could find in Melbourne was in the Rare Books Section, Monash Law Library, Clayton. This book describes itself as "being a series of memoirs and anecdotes of notorious characters who have outraged the laws of Great Britain from the earliest period to the present time." Pelham devotes a whole chapter to Ikey Solomon.

According to Pelham, Ikey in America was anxious to do business, so he wrote to his wife from New York "desiring her to send him a quantity of cheap watches, which he had good reason to believe would turn to good account. In this letter ... he charged his wife to send him none but 'righteous' (honestly obtained) watches, and not to touch one which had been got 'on the cross'."

But something went wrong. Greed, according to one source; innocence, according to Ikey. On 20 September 1827, Ann Solomons, wife of Ikey Solomons, was indicted for having in her possession a silver watch, the property of Joseph Ridley, well knowing the same to be stolen (*Times*, 21 September 1827).

Two days later she received her sentence in the Old Bailey. She was ordered to be transported for 14 years. "The appearance of Mrs. Solomons seemed to excite the most intense interest. She was most elegantly dressed. On hearing the sentence, she fainted but recovered before she left the dock, and exclaimed, as she was leaving the court, 'Oh, my poor children - my poor children.'" (*Times*, 24 September 1827). Ann and Ikey had six children. At the time of her conviction their approximate ages were John, twenty, Moses, seventeen, David, eight, Nancy, seven, Sarah, four, and Mark, one.

Ann left England in the convict transport ship *Mermaid* on 24 February 1828. Her four youngest children accompanied her, but her two oldest sons, John and Moses, sailed to Australia independently, or, as Ann was to state in her convict dossier, "as gentlemen to settle". The *Mermaid* reached Hobart on 27 June.

By Ikey's own account, (*Times*, 19 July 1830), he was in America when "he learned by the newspapers that his wife was transported. This intelligence determined him to sail ... for Hobart-town." A dangerous decision! By leaving America, where he was out of reach of British justice, and making for a British penal colony, Ikey was literally "risking his neck". In a long letter he was later to write from Newgate Gaol (1830)<sup>4</sup>, he gave his reasons for doing so as "solely to gain the Society of an affectionate Wife."

(I must confess here that I rather admire him. Any man who risks his neck in order to be with a wife he has been married to for more than twenty years, a woman described in her convict dossier as fortyish and stout, has won my heart.)

He arrived on 6 October 1828

... and on the following day was seen parading the straggling streets of Hobart's Town (*sic*), with an air of confidence, self-possession, and indifference, but scarcely did he pass through one of them, or near any of the Government or Penitentiary establishments, than he was recognised by his former 'pals' and saluted with 'Oh Ikey my boy - my boy, how are you? Blow me but I'm glad to see thee. What a cursed lucky fellow you've been'. While others, pointing him out to their friends remarked, 'I say, there goes Ikey Solomons - he used to 'fence' my 'swag' — the cursed rogue; if it had not been for him I should not be here now!' The running comments nothing daunted Ikey — he turned a deaf ear to them; he still continued his business and during the week-days drove about in [a] fashionable English-built gig. His superciliousness and contempt of his former friends roused their vengeance, and they gave information to Colonel Arthur and the Local Government of the sort of personage who had arrived on the island, the circumstances under which he had escaped, and the heavy charges that were then against him in England.

So reported the *Sydney Monitor*, 17 March 1830.

Colonel Arthur, or to give him his correct title, Colonel George Arthur, Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land, could do nothing. Ikey had committed no crime in the Colony and Arthur had received no warrant for his arrest from London. Ikey set up shop. He bought a general store in Liverpool Street, and on 16 March 1829 Ann was "assigned to her husband". But this idyll was broken on 7 November 1829, when the *Lady of the Lake* arrived in Hobart bearing the long awaited warrant for Ikey's arrest.



To quote the *Sydney Monitor* (17 March 1830) again:

At about two o'clock on Saturday, the 21st, two constables, in the disguise of out settlers, came into his shop, one of whom said, 'he wanted some tobacco' and the other a pipe. On coming in, they asked for the old gentleman, as they preferred dealing with him to the young ones (John and Moses). Ikey, who was behind the counter, started up and said, 'I am the person' and instantly one of the men seized him, and said, 'you are the person we want.' "On his apprehension, Ikey turned as pale as death, and after recovering from the stupor of a few moments, exclaimed, 'So help me Heaven! I am a done man now; it's all over with me; I am done for!' He then made a rush towards a desk at the upper end of the counter, on which there was lying a penknife, which he endeavoured to seize hold of, no doubt for the purpose of committing suicide, but was prevented in the attempt by the constables, to whose assistance four of the military, who were stationed outside came, with drawn bayonets and firearms. Having rendered him powerless, they handcuffed him, and brought him before the Chief Police Magistrate of the Colony; and after his undergoing a short examination and being identified as Isaac Solomons, who stood capitally charged in the county of Middlesex, he was committed to gaol, in order to await the sailing of a return convict transport to the mother country.

In January, 1830, Ikey was put on board the *Prince Regent* and transported back to London. He arrived on 27 June. Eleven days later he was standing in the docks of the Old Bailey. His trial was extensively covered by the newspapers of the day. It was also described in one of the small booklets, usually referred to as pamphlets<sup>5</sup>, that were written about Ikey during his lifetime:

It having been ascertained at an early hour in the morning of Thursday, the 8th of July, 1830, that the trial of this notorious character, whose various exploits at the different police offices, combined with his ingenuity and frauds, have immortalised his name in the records of the Newgate Calendar, would take place shortly after the opening of the courts, every avenue leading to the New Court, in which the case was appointed for trial, was thronged almost to suffocation. The decided majority of the crowd seeking admittance were evidently the descendants of the patriarchs. As was to be naturally expected, the utmost anxiety was evinced on the part of all those of the Jewish persuasion to catch a glimpse of the person and features of the prisoner.

At nine o'clock the Common Serjeant took his seat on the bench, and shortly afterwards the prisoner Solomons was placed at the bar. It is reported that since his arrival in this country he has suffered under considerable dejection of mind; but certainly neither his person nor manners betrayed the least token of such having been the fact. During the time the indictments were being read, he frequently and piercingly surveyed those persons in the body of the court, as if he were prepared to find an accuser in every one his eye rested upon. (*Pamphlet* 1830–31?).

On 13 July 1830, Ikey was found guilty on two counts of purchasing goods knowing they were stolen. He appealed and was remanded to Newgate Gaol and it was not until 13 May 1831 that the "judgement and verdict of the trial were confirmed by the Court" and Ikey sentenced to be "transported beyond the seas for the term of 14 years" (*Times*, 14 May 1831). He arrived back in Hobart on 1 November 1831, and spent time in Richmond Gaol and a year at Port Arthur.

In 1835 Ikey was granted a ticket-of-leave on condition that he moved to New Norfolk, about thirty kilometres from Hobart. His family was allowed to live with him. They quarrelled. Ann and Ikey separated. In 1838 Ikey returned to Hobart. Two years later he received his pardon. He died early in September 1850.

This then, is a brief, a very brief, account of the life of Ikey Solomon. As can be seen from the above extracts he is very well documented. There can scarcely have been a transported felon with as much original source material written about him/her as Ikey Solomon. Ikey, it seems, was a rare type. An idiosyncratic individual who caused people to reach for their pens. But was he the model for Fagin?

"What's that?" said the Jew. "What do you watch me for? Why are you awake? What have you seen? Speak out, boy! Quick — quick for your life!" There is something unique about Fagin. He speaks perfect English. A novel example of a Jew in English literature who can actually pronounce his "Ws". A small point, perhaps, but one that convinces me that Fagin was probably based on a real person.

Given Ikey's notoriety, I believe it would have been impossible for a sharp young reporter like Charles Dickens *not* to have known about him. During July 1830, reports on Ikey were appearing almost daily in the newspapers. My feelings are that if Ikey Solomon was the model for Fagin it would have been Ikey as he was in 1830–31 and not the Ikey of 1827, the successful receiver who, according to the *Times* (11 September 1827) "was known to be in the habit of carrying 1,000 pounds in his side-pocket".

There is a sketch of Ikey taken at the Lambeth Street Police Office in 1827, and it shows him to be a handsome, well dressed, well groomed man-about-town, far removed from the description we have of Fagin as "a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair."<sup>6</sup>



*Ikey Solomons (from a Sketch Taken at the Lambeth Street Police Office)*

*Taken from 1829 Pamphlet "Adventures, Memoirs, Former Trial, Transportation, and Escapes, of that Notorious Fence, and Receiver of Stolen Goods ... by a Former Police Officer" (Courtesy Mitchell Library, Sydney)*



But as we all know, three years is a very long time in the life of an entrepreneur, and Ikey in 1830 was quite a different man from the Ikey of 1827. Even though he was only forty-five at the time of his trial it is quite likely that after spending five months heavily ironed in the hold of a returning convict ship and been brought to trial within days of arrival, that he was indeed looking "old and shrivelled". Certainly, Ikey does appear to have possessed that nervous, highly strung type of temperament that has trouble eating while under stress. There are a number of references for this, but the best one comes from an earlier hearing: "His appearance since his first examination is completely altered, his limbs are quite reduced, and he exhibited when brought into the office, as a complete personification of human misery as can well be imagined" reported the *Times*, 3 May 1827.

Both Ikey and Fagin were tried at the Old Bailey. Comparing Fagin's trial with Ikey's, as quoted earlier (*Pamphlet* 1830-31?), there is a similarity of atmosphere. "The court was paved, from floor to roof, with human faces. Inquisitive and eager eyes peered from every inch of space. From the rail before the dock, away into the sharpest angle of the smallest corner in the galleries, all looks were fixed upon one man — the Jew ... [and] at times, he [Fagin] turned his eyes sharply upon them to observe the effect of the slightest featherweight in his favour ... " (*Oliver Twist*, Chapter 52). Had Dickens been part of that suffocating crowd?

Even the description of Fagin in his cell, despairing and desperate, his mind wandering, fits the known facts about Ikey. Ikey, by his own account, writing from Newgate Gaol (1830), describes himself: "The innumerable other troubles and sufferings which my unfortunate Wife has endured since her banishment from her native Country I can no longer dwell upon from the agitated state of my mind ...", and again, further on, "... I am now of the age 45 years and from the continual run of troubles which my mind has experienced am reduced to a state of extreme wretchedness — I have to contend with oppression in every form — my mind is literally [*sic*] distracted ...".

Fagin does not appear to have had any family, but then neither did Ikey at the time of his trial. His family was in Australia.

"... the Jew stepped gently to the door: which he fastened. He then drew forth, as it seemed to Oliver, from some trap in the floor, a small box, which he placed carefully on the table ... the Jew once more deposited the watch in its place of safety. At least half a dozen more were severally drawn forth from the same box and surveyed with equal pleasure; besides rings, brooches, bracelets, and other articles of jewellery, of such magnificent materials and costly workmanship, that Oliver had no idea even of their names." (*Oliver Twist*, Chapter 9) A trap door! That Ikey had a trap door in his house is well documented.

Camden Pelham writes: "His (Ikey's) purchases were, for the most part, confined to small articles, such as jewellery, plate, &c., and in his house, under his bed, he had a receptacle for them, closed by a trap-door, so nicely fitted, that it escaped every examination which was made. In the space between the flooring and the ceiling of the lower room there were abundant means to conceal an extent of valuable property which was quite astonishing."

"It appeared that, on the 27th of August, Mr Ridley was robbed by a fair Cyprian of his watch, which two days afterwards, was found by the officers in the prisoner's house, at No. 13, Bell-alley, Petticoat-lane, under a trap-door in the floor of her bed-room." That is taken from the report of Ann Solomon's trial in the *Times*, 21 September 1827).



Chapter 42 of *Oliver Twist*, and Noah Claypole, the charity-boy meets up with Fagin in a back-room behind the bar of the "Three Cripples". Somewhat unwisely Noah mentions to Fagin the £20 note he has stolen from Mr. Sowerberry. "Twenty pounds, though, — it's a lot of money!" "Not when it's in a note you can't get rid of," retorted Fagin. "Number and date taken, I suppose? Payment stopped at the Bank? Ah! It's not worth much to him. It'll have to go abroad, and he couldn't sell it for a great deal in the market." The "him" that Fagin refers to, is, of course, himself.

Bank notes were numbered and therefore identifiable. A charity-boy, like Noah, could not have passed a £20 note without arousing suspicion. Ikey bought stolen notes. He paid fifteen shillings in the pound, and would have given the money back, to someone like Noah, broken down into coins. Ikey sold the notes to contacts he had on the Continent. After a period of time the notes would make their way back to England. My reference for this is again Pelham:

He, [Solomon] however, outbid all his opponents in the purchase of stolen bank-notes; this he was for a long time enabled to do, in consequence of his connection with Jews in Holland. All stolen bank-notes which come into the hands of those who buy them, are sent to the Continent, to pass in the way of purchases through some regular mercantile house, when they find their way, by remittances to London houses, into the Bank, where they must be paid. The price given by Solomon for large notes, was 15 shillings in the pound [20 shillings]; and he calculated that on an average he could send them their circuit of safety for one shilling in the pound: thus securing for himself four shillings profit on each 20 shillings., that is twenty per cent., and this is now the regular price for stolen notes with the London fences.

I could go on, and on, comparing Fagin with Ikey and Ikey with Fagin, but after a while I began to feel that it was somewhat limiting to try and squeeze a large personality like Ikey Solomon into a Fagin-type strait-jacket. And besides, I had come upon a more fruitful line of inquiry. For nearly twenty years Ikey Solomon and Charles Dickens lived in very close proximity to one another. The physical world of Charles Dickens was, I discovered, very much the physical world of Ikey Solomon.

Ikey was born in the East End of London in 1785, or thereabouts, and grew up in the Whitechapel-Spitalfields area, an area known as the Whitechapel Rookery. Fagin territory! "[The Jew] struck off in the direction of Spitalfields ... [and] soon became involved in a maze of the mean and dirty streets which abound in that close and densely-populated quarter". (*Oliver Twist*, Chapter 19).

The first newspaper report I have on Ikey is from the *Times*, 18 April 1810: "The light-fingered fraternity, as might be expected, were very numerous and active at the meeting in Palace-yard yesterday. Two of the corps were made prisoners ..." Three days later the prisoners' names were revealed. "Joel Joseph and Isaac Solomons, two well-known pickpockets, were charged with picking the pockets of Mr. Dodd, of Eltham, of bank-notes to a considerable amount, at the Westminster Meeting on Tuesday."

John Vickery, one of the officers belonging to Worship-street, "... secured Solomons, and as he was leading him along he picked up a pocket-book, which he had no doubt Solomons dropped, as it fell at his feet. On searching him, he found four one-pound Bank of England notes in his fob-pocket, and in his breeches-pocket seven dollars, which Solomons said was all the money he had about him; but on searching his right-hand coat-pocket, he found another 1[?] pound Bank of England note," reported the *Times*, 21 April 1810).

*Oliver Twist*, Chapter 18, tells us: "At other times the old man [Fagin] would tell them stories of robberies he had committed in his younger days; mixed up with so much that



was droll and curious, that Oliver could not help laughing heartily, and showing that he was amused in spite of all his better feelings." (Chapter 18).

Two months later Ikey and Joel received their sentences in the Old Bailey. "Yesterday seventeen prisoners were tried, thirteen of whom were convicted of felony ... Nine were ordered to be transported for life, viz; ... Joel Joseph and Isaac Solomon." So reported the *Morning Chronicle*, 15 June 1810. Joel Joseph was indeed transported but Ikey never got beyond the hulks at Sheerness.

Charles Dickens was born in 1812 and spent much of his early childhood in the Medway port towns of Sheerness and Chatham, an area that forms the backdrop to the early chapters of *Great Expectations*. "Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea." And across these marshes, "like a wicked Noah's ark" was the "black Hulk lying out a little way from the mud of the shore" ... and in that Hulk, at the very time that Dickens was a boy, was one Ikey Solomon!

'And please what's Hulks?' said I.

"That's the way with this boy!" exclaimed my sister, pointing me out with her needle and thread, and shaking her head at me. "Answer him one question, and he'll ask you a dozen directly. Hulks are prison-ships, right 'cross th' meshes [marshes]."

It is possible to guess at the sort of prison garb Ikey would have worn because no doubt he would have been dressed as Magwitch, the escaped convict, "all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head". But maybe Ikey's shoes would not have been so bad; Magwitch, after all, was a man on the run, and maybe Ikey would not have lost his "flat, broad-brimmed, low-crowned felt hat".

Ikey was released from the hulks on 31 October 1816, and according to Pelham did not return directly to London, but stayed on for a few years in Chatham. "His first employment was to all appearance an honest one. He was engaged by his uncle at Chatham as a barker, or salesman; and, in the course of a couple of years, he realised a sum of 150 pounds, with which he determined to start in business for himself."

Chatham in 1816, at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, was a rough and dirty town, a military town, a haunt of sailors and drunken soldiers. The sort of town that a character like Ikey Solomon would probably have felt quite at home in. Dickens describes one of the Medway towns, likely Chatham, in *The Pickwick Papers*:

The principal productions of these towns", says Mr. Pickwick, "appear to be soldiers, sailors, Jews, chalk, shrimps, officers and dockyard men. The commodities chiefly exposed for sale in the public streets are marine stores, hard-bake [nut-toffee], apples, flat-fish, and oysters. The streets present a lively and animated appearance, occasioned chiefly by the conviviality of the military. It is truly delightful to a philanthropic mind, to see these gallant men staggering along under the influence of an overflow, both of animal and ardent spirits.

Pelham refers to Ikey's uncle as a "slop-seller". My dictionary, the *Concise Oxford*, describes "slop" as "workman's loose outer clothes; ready-made or cheap clothing; clothes and bedding supplied to sailors in the navy". That there were a number of slop-sellers in Chatham there can be no doubt because Dickens has David Copperfield sell his jacket to one while on his way to his aunt's house at Dover:

Accordingly, I took the jacket off, that I might learn to do without it; and carrying it under my arm, began a tour of inspection of the various slop-shops.



It was a likely place to sell a jacket in; for the dealers in second-hand clothes were numerous, and were, generally speaking, on the look-out for customers at their shop-doors. But, as most of them had, hanging up among their stock, an officer's coat or two, epaulettes and all, I was rendered timid by the costly nature of their dealings, and walked about for a long time without offering my merchandise to any one.

Have we here a description of Ikey's uncle's slop-shop? Pelham describes it as "considerable" and "respectable". Or was his shop more like the following?

"This modesty of mine directed my attention to the marine-store shops, ... in preference to the regular dealers. At last I found one that I thought looked promising, at the corner of a dirty lane, ending in an inclosure full of stinging-nettles, against the palings of which some second-hand sailors' clothes, that seemed to have overflowed the shop, were fluttering among some cots, and rusty guns, and oilskin hats, and certain trays full of so many old rusty keys of so many sizes that they seemed various enough to open all the doors in the world." (*David Copperfield*, Chapter 13).

It is not certain when Ikey returned to London. Possibly he was back there by 1818-9 as his third child, David, was born about 1819. Dickens came to London in 1822 as a ten-year-old.

Later, he lived in Furnival's Inn (1834), and Doughty Street (1837). Both these locations were only a short distance from the Whitechapel district, the haunt of Fagin/Ikey. *Oliver Twist* was published in 1837-39, but by then, of course, the Solomon family was far away in Australia.

I have kept my best find till last. Mr. Fang! Mr. Fang was the magistrate before whom *Oliver Twist* was dragged. Dickens modelled him on a real magistrate, Allan Stewart Laing of Hatton Garden Police Office<sup>7</sup>. Interesting, because A.S. Laing was the magistrate who examined Ann "wife of the notorious Ikey" on 29 August 1827, and again, almost a fortnight later, on 11 September. "Hatton-Garden — Yesterday, Ann Solomon, Moses Solomon, her son, and Clara Brown, the servant girl, were brought up for examination, before Mr. Sergeant Sellion and A.S. Laing, Esq." Thus reported the *Times*, 12 September 1827). Moses and Clara Brown were later discharged but Ann was fully committed for trial as a receiver.

By using young Oliver as a guide it is possible to add some colour to the rather dry account of Ann's examination given in the *Times*. Oliver was taken to the Hatton Garden Police Office via the back way, "beneath a low archway, and up a dirty court," and from there he was taken into a "small paved yard" where he was met by a "stout man with a bunch of whiskers on his face, and a bunch of keys in his hand. ... The office was a front parlour, with a panelled wall. Mr Fang (Laing) sat behind a bar, at the upper end; and on one side of the door was a sort of wooden pen" into which Oliver [Ann?] was deposited.

Dickens gives us a very good description of Fang/Laing. He "was a lean, long-backed, stiff-necked, middle-sized man, with no great quantity of hair, and what he had, growing on the back and sides of his head. His face was stern, and much flushed. If he were really not in the habit of drinking rather more than was exactly good for him, he might have brought an action against his countenance for libel, and have recovered heavy damages."

The effect that Mr. Fang had on Oliver was such that he fell to the floor in a fainting fit. "Let him lie there; he'll soon be tired of that." But what affect A.S. Laing had on Ann has, unfortunately, not been recorded. It is possible, though, that Ann might have spent some time in the lock-up. "A sister of Mrs. Solomons was, however, allowed to see her in the lock-up place, in the presence of Limbrick, the officer, for the purpose of making



arrangements for her (prisoner's) infant child" reported the *Times*, 30 August 1827. If so, Dickens provides us with a description of the cell: "The cell was in shape and size something like an area cellar, only not so light. It was most intolerably dirty; for it was Monday morning [Ann's first day there would have been a Wednesday] and it had been tenanted by six drunken people, who had been locked up, elsewhere, since Saturday night."

I am hoping to write a book on Ikey Solomon, having become like a woman obsessed. I just can't leave the ol' boy alone. I know what it is that attracts me to him. It is the strange complexity of his personality. Ikey could be as sneaky and as conniving as Fagin, always happy to inform on his "pals" if he could see an advantage in it. Yet Ikey was not an insensitive person. He was capable of the tenderest of feelings. The relationship he had with his wife was a long lasting, and from his point of view at any rate, a deep and meaningful one. He had taken extraordinary risks in order to be with her and as a local newspaper was later to comment: "let this man be whatever he may, a most redeeming quality to his blackest sins, that such was his affection for his wife and children, that he preferred sharing their fate at the risk of the most serious consequences, to the certainty of securing his own personal safety ... These ... are qualities of some redemption for his offences, be such what they may." My feelings, exactly!

### NOTES

Ikey was notorious! "The notorious Ikey Solomons" is how he is generally referred to in the *Times*; consequently there is a great deal of original source material on him. I have some fifty contemporary newspaper reports on Ikey and his family and am still collecting! However there is very little modern writing on him. As far as I am aware the only two works of any substance are J.J. Tobias, *Prince of Fences: The Life and Crimes of Ikey Solomons* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1974); and J.S. Levi and G.F.J. Bergman *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers 1788 - 1850* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1974).

1. Solomon or Solomons? I prefer Solomon as it is the more common Australian spelling. It is the how his name is spelt on his convict dossier and, generally, it is how he signed his name.
2. *Times* (London) from 1785 to the present day is available on microfilm in the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne. All extracts in my article come from there.
3. Camden Pelham, *The Chronicles of Crime; or, The New Newgate Calendar*. Vol. 2 (London, (1841). Dickens was obviously aware of the Newgate Calendar as it is mentioned in *Oliver Twist* in reference to the Artful Dodger. "... the Artful's booked for a passage out ... going abroad for a common twopenny-halfpenny sneeze-box! ... How will he stand in the Newgate Calendar? P'raps not be there at all."
4. Letter from Isaac Solomon to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 1830. Quoted in full in Tobias.
5. *The Life and Exploits of Ikey Solomons, Swindler, forger, fencer, and brothel-keeper*, by Moses Hebron. Undated but probably written 1828-29. *Adventures, Memoirs, Former Trial, Transportation, and Escapes, of that Notorious Fence, and Receiver of Stolen Goods, Isaac Solomons*. by a Former Police Officer (1829). Both these pamphlets are written in a wild, fanciful, lurid style, the nineteenth century equivalent of the tabloids, and it is a little hard to take them seriously. However, the third pamphlet, *The Life and Adventures of Isaac Solomons, the notorious receiver of stolen goods, better known as Ikey Solomons*, Anon, (1830-31?) is much more sober and gives a very good, factual account of Ikey's 1830 trial at the Old Bailey. Copies of all three pamphlets are in the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

6. Ikey Solomon did *not* have red hair. He had an olive complexion with dark brown/black hair. According to M.J. Landa, *The Jew In Drama* (London, 1926) a Jew on the stage was denoted by an actor wearing a red wig. Dickens was a great lover of the theatre, both highbrow and lowbrow, and perhaps this is where Fagin's red hair comes from.
7. See John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (London, 1874) and R. H. Stoddard "The Hatton Garden Philanthropist" in *The Dickensian* Vol. 37, (1941).



## REV. ABRAHAM FREDERICK ORNSTIEN

*Malcolm J. Turnbull*

When Abraham Frederick Ornstien died in December 1895, London's *Jewish Chronicle* lamented the passing of "one of the most prominent and highly esteemed of our Colonial ministers".<sup>1</sup> In far-off Australia, the Jewish press also paid tribute to "an eloquent preacher, a good scholar, a deeply-read and broadminded man ... imbued with a true feeling for religion".<sup>2</sup> "To this very day", declared the *Jewish Herald*, "there are members of the community who remember him with the warmest affection".<sup>3</sup> Recalling the minister's humiliating exit from Victoria twenty years earlier, the *Australasian Hebrew* noted that his supporters still regarded that departure as an irreparable loss to the colonial community. ("There have been few men in Australian pulpits who could have so successfully welded together all the various sections of Melbourne Judaism had but opportunity served").<sup>4</sup> Rev. Joseph Hirsch Landau, assistant minister of Sydney's Great Synagogue and a former pupil, added a personal note when he predicted that his late teacher's influence would live after him: "Being dead, he will yet speak from many a pulpit and on many a platform and in many a home".<sup>5</sup>

In view of these tributes, and the fact that he was deemed sufficiently important to warrant an entry in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* in 1905,<sup>6</sup> it is a little surprising that Ornstien has long since become something of a "forgotten man" in Australian Jewish history. In the 1950s Rabbi L.M. Goldman detailed the feud between the Bourke and Stephen Street clergy and briefly noted the key events of Ornstien's Melbourne ministry. More recently, Joseph Aron and Judy Arndt have done likewise in *The Enduring Remnant*,<sup>7</sup> but little or no attention has been paid elsewhere to either the man or his contribution to the Melbourne Jewish community of the 1860s and 1870s. Admittedly, Ornstien was in Australia for less than a decade, and he was a distinct "lesser light" in comparison with such rabbinical "heavy-weights" as Abrahams, Blaubaum or Danglow. Nonetheless, contemporary records indicate that he was a zealous and committed communal worker and a dedicated (albeit inflexible) preacher and pastor. In my view, he deserves recognition as a key figure of 19th century Melbourne Judaism, and a more exhaustive examination is overdue. As an early prototype of the post-Emancipation "Anglo-Jewish clergyman", groomed to that model and sent out to the colonies in that capacity, Ornstien helped determine the overall shape and style of local Jewish religious expression. I contend that his tenure at Bourke Street was an important formative factor in the development of institutionalised Anglo-Orthodoxy in Victoria.

Apart from his significance as model for a local Jewish clergy, Ornstien's turbulent time in Australia demonstrates the difficulties that were faced by many provincial and colonial religious leaders in the 19th century. Similarly, the vicissitudes of his career (which included creditable service on four continents and yet must be seen as something of a failure), give us a poignant insight into both the man and his calling. This paper is a short biography of Rev. Ornstien as minister and teacher, with particular reference to the eight years he spent in Melbourne. As such, it is an attempt to highlight the subject's minor but real importance in the history of Australian Judaism.

Details of Ornstien's family and educational background have proved somewhat elusive. We do know that he was born in London in 1836, and that he was the youngest of nine children born to Nathan and Rebecca Maria Ornstien. Dutch Jews, possibly of Sephardi descent,<sup>8</sup> Nathan and Rebecca emigrated to England in the early 1820s. They lived in London's Whitechapel district for several years before settling in suburban



Walworth. (The 1851 census records their address as 13 Wellington Place, East Street). Like so many Jewish East Enders before and after, Nathan Ornstien established himself in the "rag trade"; his occupation is listed as "general dealer" or "dealer in clothes". Apart from Abraham, Nathan and Rebecca had two sons and six daughters. Phineas Ornstien (c1822–1885) also entered the Anglo-Jewish ministry but, unlike his much-travelled sibling, he spent almost his entire life in south London. He served for many years as honorary Reader of the St George's Road Synagogue, Southwick, and later as Second Reader and assistant to the famous Rev. Simeon Singer at the Borough New Synagogue.<sup>9</sup> Another son, Jacob Ornstien (nine years Abraham's senior), worked as a teacher; he is described in the 1851 census as a "professor of music".

The same census indicates that five of Nathan and Rebecca's daughters followed their father into the clothing trade. Esther (then aged 31), is listed as a milliner, Amelia (20) as a dressmaker, and Dinah (29), Sarah (25) and Mathilda (18) as staymakers.<sup>10</sup> Rather intriguingly, 15 year old Abraham's occupation is given as "wholesale stationer". It is unclear whether he actually worked in a minor capacity in such a business, or whether the term is simply a euphemism for employment as a "newsboy".<sup>11</sup> We do know that he subsequently underwent some form of training for teaching and the ministry, and that he taught at the Jews' Free School prior to taking up his first pulpit.

Ornstien entered the Anglo-Jewish ministry at a significant time in its evolution. As a result of Emancipation and accelerating integration into Western European societies, Jewish community spokesmen had begun seeking and promoting a redefined spiritual leadership. The pre-modern concept of "rabbi" as scholar, teacher and Halachic authority, was gradually being superseded and reshaped along the lines of the Christian clergy. Steven Singer has noted that — increasingly — integrated Anglo-Jews viewed their ancestral faith in British Protestant terms and, accordingly, lobbied for a ministry which viewed Judaism in the same way.<sup>12</sup>

The election of Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler in 1845 heralded the emergence of the idealised "Anglo-Jewish clergyman", i. e. a *trained* minister, subservient to the Chief Rabbinate (as the single Ashkenazi Halachic authority in Britain), and part of an ecclesiastical structure which bore marked similarities to that of the Church of England. Lord Jakobovits has argued that this ministry played a dominant, long-term role in fashioning the character of Anglo-Jewry. He sees the clergy as having been responsible for the established community's ongoing predilection for moderation and conservatism, commitment to tradition, and a "mellow" style of observance.<sup>13</sup> Emphasis was placed on liaising with the clergy of "other denominations" and on rendering English Judaism acceptable in gentile eyes. Traditional domains of Talmudic and Halachic expertise were downplayed in favour of secular academic qualifications, pastoral duties and responsibilities, and (in particular) regular preaching in the vernacular.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to Adler's appointment, regular English sermons had been very much the exception rather than the rule. Coming as he did from a German background where lectures were a well-established feature of synagogue services, the new Chief Rabbi strongly encouraged home-grown preaching, and he fostered the founding of Jews' College to that end.<sup>15</sup> The popularity of the sermon within broader Victorian Britain also influenced Jewish community leaders in its favour. Many highly Anglicised Jews "found little relevance in a service which lacked just that element which, in Protestant thought, was the central feature of religious worship".<sup>16</sup> Increasingly, the traditional role of *Chazan* or Reader was subordinated to demands for a preaching pastor, comparable to ministers of other religious groups.



Ornstien was an early specimen of this idealised, modern Anglo-Jewish clergyman, although the extent and nature of his education and training for the role have proved difficult to determine. A solitary source describes him as "Rev. A.F. Ornstien, M.A."<sup>17</sup> This seems unlikely; at that time the University of London was the only English institution which allowed Jews to take degrees. The registrar has no record of Ornstien graduating there, nor have I been able to uncover any other evidence of his having received a university education. Similarly, he was not among the initial student intake trained under Adler's aegis at Jews' College. (The college opened with two students in November 1855). Yet later sources indicate that Ornstien had a solid secular and religious education, and that he was regarded as a "trained" clergyman. (Certainly his selection for the pulpit of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation was the outcome of an advertisement for a qualified minister). In view of the family's probable economic circumstances, it seems most likely that he was educated from infancy at the Jews' Free School in Bell Lane, Spitalfields.

The Jews' Free School was founded in 1817 to cater for London's Jewish poor. It succeeded the charity Chevra Kadisha Talmud Torah which had been attached to the Great Synagogue since 1732.<sup>18</sup> The Free School aimed to augment the Talmud Torah's program by providing large numbers of Jewish children and adolescents with a "good English education". In part, its upgrading was a defensive reaction to the conversionist activities of local Christian charity schools. Permanent premises were opened in Bell Lane in 1821, and enlarged in the 1840s; by 1850, 700 boys and 400 girls were enrolled. The school offered a comprehensive curriculum which ranged from elementary instruction in the lower grades through to a "top class" catering for those boys ("specially proficient in Hebrew") who would go on into the Jewish professions.<sup>19</sup> Most of the teaching staff was recruited from the student ranks.

Over the years the Free School filled a vital need in the community by sending out "eloquent preachers and efficient masters" to schools and pulpits in the provinces, colonies and America.<sup>20</sup> Other alumni who spent time in Australia included Moses Moses, an early editor of the *Jewish Herald*, and Rev. Raphael Benjamin, headmaster of the Melbourne Hebrew School during the 1870s.

Ornstien spent several years as a teacher at the Free School. Apparently he discharged his duties effectively and enjoyed considerable personal popularity. (The *Jewish World* later recalled: "Originally connected with our Jews' Free School, his demeanour there acquired for him the confidence and respect of his superiors, while his thorough goodness of heart won for him the affection and regard of his colleagues").<sup>21</sup> A talented pedagogue, the education of Jewish youth would remain a priority for him throughout his career. He was later active in providing Hebrew and Sabbath classes for the various congregations he led, and he founded a private college in the final years of his life. Notwithstanding this, the ministry was — and remained — his first love; contemporary records indicate that Ornstien teamed a commitment to communal welfare and pastoral duty with distinction as a *chazan* and preacher. Following his "apprenticeship" with the Jews' Free School, he was inducted as reader/minister of the small Portsmouth Hebrew Congregation in December 1857.<sup>22</sup>

Portsmouth proved to be a valuable training ground for the young cleric. During his three year stay there he gained vital experience as preacher and teacher and, in the process, reportedly won "the unfeigned esteem of the entire Jewish population" of the area.<sup>23</sup> The task of preparing and delivering monthly sermons enabled him to hone his oratorical skills, and the results earned him widespread praise. For instance, the *Jewish Chronicle* described his discourses as "most useful and eloquent ... breathing true religious sentiments and combining strict orthodoxy with elevating spiritualism".<sup>24</sup>



Drawing on his teaching background, Ornstien established and superintended regular Hebrew classes in Portsmouth; he retained an interest in them for several years after his departure from the district.<sup>25</sup> Portsmouth also gave him a preliminary taste of congregational politics. The synagogue had a long history of discord. (One critic later described its members as "notoriously distinguished for their quarrelsome proclivities").<sup>26</sup> Two years before Ornstien was appointed, a disaffected minority had defected and formed a small rival concern, the "Hebrew New Congregation". Ornstien appears to have been instrumental in reconciling the factions and returning the secessionists to the parent body. A testimonial later acknowledged "his untiring and successful exertions in the cause of peace and unity".<sup>27</sup>

In 1860 he resigned from Portsmouth and took up an appointment with the larger Birmingham Synagogue, serving as that congregation's secretary and as Headmaster of its educational facility. Founded in 1843, the Birmingham Hebrew National School offered instruction in the Three "Rs": basic Judaism and Jewish culture, and secular subjects.<sup>28</sup> Ornstien occupied the post of headmaster until 1865. For three years he also doubled as the congregation's chief minister, filling a gap left by the resignation of Rev. Joel Rabinowitz, and pending the appointment of Rev. George Emanuel in 1863.<sup>29</sup>

The Birmingham Synagogue traced its beginnings to the early 18th century and was one of Anglo-Jewry's most prestigious pulpits. In the 1840s it had pioneered regular preaching in English under the celebrated Dr. M.J. Raphall, and the sermon had become a key element of Divine service there. Ornstien inherited Raphall's legacy a decade later and, by the time he left Birmingham, had developed a minor reputation of his own as a capable minister and "good preacher".<sup>30</sup> He came under the notice of the Chief Rabbi and when the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation advertised for a new spiritual leader, Adler recommended him for the post.

The first phase of Ornstien's career as teacher and clergyman gave him a solid grounding in the skills of his profession, as well as experience in the less clearcut arenas of congregational politics and interpersonal relations. His efforts had generally been fruitful and he could review his career to date with some satisfaction. The Birmingham period, in particular, had been "a decided success" professionally, and a milestone personally.<sup>31</sup> In July 1862 he married Julia, the youngest daughter of Joel and Rachel Benjamin. Judging from later references to the couple's domestic situation and Julia's disinterested support throughout their lives together, the marriage was a notably happy one. The first of the couple's eleven children, Rebecca Ellen and Frances Louisa, were born in Birmingham in 1863 and 1864 respectively.<sup>32</sup>

We can assume that by 1866 the young minister viewed his future with optimism, and that he looked forward to continuing success in the colonies. Sadly, responding to the challenge of leading a young congregation in remote Melbourne proved to be the turning point in his career. From this time on, Ornstien confronted a succession of disappointments as congregational bickering, institutional politics and his own rigidity eroded his very real achievements in a variety of professional posts. This ultimate lack of success seems especially unfortunate in view of the man's undoubted calibre and his sincere devotion to his calling.

Ornstien succeeded Rev. Emanuel Myers as spiritual head of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation (hereafter referred to as MHC). Myers, in turn, had replaced Rev. Moses Rintel when Rintel defected and formed the breakaway East Melbourne congregation in 1857. Like his predecessors, Myers had not been a trained minister and he had been engaged primarily as a Reader. He resigned in 1864 and subsequently emigrated to Canada.



Preaching was not seen as of major importance in Australian synagogues before the 1860s. In general, sermons were only delivered on the High Holydays and special occasions. When Palestinian emissary Rabbi Jacob Saphir visited the colonies in 1861–62, he described both Rintel and Myers as primarily “cantor and reader”, only “sometimes preacher and teacher”.<sup>33</sup> However, as the communities made the transition from pioneering to permanency, the makeshift lay arrangements of the past no longer satisfied more status-conscious congregants. Sydney emulated the English provinces in making preaching a feature of its services. (Rev. A.B. Davis preached “regularly and eloquently” from his arrival in 1862).<sup>34</sup> Predictably, MHC followed suit. Subscribing to Anglo-Jewish trends, the committee advocated replacing Myers with a better qualified “clergyman”, able to deliver regular “lectures”.<sup>35</sup> A recent emigrant, Henry Davis Marks, was engaged to lead the services *pro tem*. (Marks, who reportedly displayed some ability as a lecturer, filled the void for 5 months in 1865).<sup>36</sup> In due course, MHC’s London-based selection committee appointed Ornstien for an initial three years at £500 per annum plus a £120 rent allowance. His contract specified that he read the Law and deliver sermons on Shabbat and the Festivals.

The minister and his young family (including a third daughter, Marie Amelia, born on the voyage out to Australia) arrived in Melbourne on the *Kent* in May 1866.<sup>37</sup> Almost immediately, he found himself at odds with a vocal element within the congregation. Few in the community would have felt surprise at this; MHC’s internal relations had long been characterised by factionalism and bickering, and the ministers were time-honoured targets. A significant body of congregants firmly believed that the men were mere paid officials who should be “kept in their place”. Rev. Rintel had resigned because of friction with prominent committee-men; Rev. Myers had been forced to weather ongoing uncertainty about his tenure and a consistently inadequate remuneration. (In fact, his resignation was mainly dictated by his bankruptcy). Throughout his own stay in Melbourne, Ornstien was forced to endure humiliating salary reductions, and he too fell victim to factional politics.

Right from the start, he was made aware of his own vulnerability. Even before his arrival, complaints were voiced at his tardiness in leaving England.<sup>38</sup> He had only been in the colony a matter of weeks when he alienated a vocal element in the community by providing the child of a Christian mother with a Jewish burial.<sup>39</sup> (He was promptly reprimanded). Subsequently, many restrictions were placed on him, including curbs on his taking payment for performing marriages outside the synagogue.<sup>40</sup>

At the same time, MHC’s committee found that the minister could be a sturdy and independent adversary. For instance, when a demand was tabled that he and his fellow officers explain any absence from duty in writing, Ornstien refused even to receive a letter to that effect.<sup>41</sup> Tensions between cleric and laity increased the longer Ornstien stayed in Melbourne. Notwithstanding this, the first four years of his Australian ministry seem to have been a success (in the main).<sup>42</sup> Keen to prove himself in the new environment, he entered enthusiastically into local Jewish and non-Jewish activities (as expected of a modern Anglo-Jewish clergyman), and became “a leading figure in the life of the general community”.<sup>43</sup> He was prominent in local cultural arenas, such as the programs of the Early Closing Association<sup>44</sup>; his activities on behalf of the Melbourne Hospital were duly rewarded with a life governorship; along with other clergy (including Rintel) he was formally presented to Victoria’s Governor on several occasions, and he joined Rintel as the Jewish community’s spokesmen in presenting loyal addresses to the visiting Prince Albert in 1867.<sup>45</sup>

Within the Jewish community itself, he was active in all areas of pastoral and welfare activity, and he promoted dialogue with clergy of other faiths. His outreach encompassed



prison and sick visiting, serving on the executives of the Melbourne Jewish Philanthropic Society, the shortlived Sabbath Observance Association, and the local branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association. In addition, he was prominent in the founding and functioning of the Melbourne Jewish Literary and Debating Society, the community's sole cultural organisation of the period.<sup>46</sup>

Ornstien also wholeheartedly embraced the cause of Jewish education; as board member and correspondent of the Jewish day school, Common School 180, he worked zealously to improve attendances and standards, and to maintain subsidies. Goldman has noted that "any success that the School achieved either scholastically or administratively, could be almost entirely directed to Ornstien's devotion and enthusiasm for his task".<sup>47</sup> When State Aid was abolished in 1872, Ornstien was in the vanguard of those lobbying to retain a separate Jewish facility. In his view: "It was our duty as Jews, to inculcate in the minds of our children, the beautiful precepts of Judaism ... the only way that Jewish children could be taught their religion in this colony was through the medium of a Jewish school".<sup>48</sup> (The Melbourne Hebrew School opened in January, 1874).

The *Jewish Chronicle's* Melbourne correspondent described Abraham and Julia Ornstien as "good and useful upon all occasions where sickness, charity or education demanded aid", and it would seem that the minister and his wife amply filled the pastoral criteria of the Anglo-Jewish clerical model.<sup>49</sup> However, it was as a preaching clergyman that Ornstien made his greatest impression on the community. At this stage, and well into the 1870s, MHC was the only Melbourne synagogue where the sermon was a regular feature of services. At East Melbourne, Rintel preached only on festivals and special occasions; at St Kilda, Blaubaum (appointed in 1873) was initially contracted to deliver only occasional addresses in English.<sup>50</sup> By all accounts, Ornstien's discourses made him something of a local celebrity. One visitor to the community described him as "an excellent lecturer and a very zealous man"; another observer noted: "As a lecturer he is not only appreciated by his congregants, but by numbers of members of other creeds, who frequently attend to hear him, especially on holyday times, and who have expressed the pleasure they felt at listening to his discourses".<sup>51</sup>

His outreach as a "denominational" cleric encompassed welcoming non-Jewish visitors to Bourke Street, and several of them have left us personal impressions of his preaching ability. One such interested non-Jew eulogised the minister's skill as a *chazan* and noted that he "seems bent on making his discourse useful and acceptable". Ornstien's sermon was described as all too short ("I could have listened to him for hours"), although the writer hinted that the cleric might still need to improve his delivery:

Ornstien's chanting is better than his speaking ... He has a strong voice ... producing at times a great deal of waste sound... His opening is abrupt and awkward. You are scarcely comfortable till he has talked himself into ease and all forgetfulness of effort. Then, indeed, he is excellent.<sup>52</sup>

The *Australian Israelite* later suggested that the quality of Ornstien's preaching could be erratic but that "whenever he chose to put forth all his native vigour ... he could display both real eloquence and sound scholarship in his discourses".<sup>53</sup> In a series of articles surveying local places of worship, another Melbourne journalist informed readers of the *Weekly Times*:

The minister of the synagogue must be a preacher. It is not enough that we have heard Mr Ornstien's fine, rich, manly voice for an hour and a half intoning the service in Hebrew; it must next be raised for well-nigh half an hour in English. Mr. Ornstien is perfectly at home in the one place as the other.



The writer highlighted the parallels between Ornstien and Melbourne's Christian clergy:

In dress, but for his tall hat, he might be mistaken for a Christian divine, for he wears the decent black gown and white tie sanctioned by orthodoxy; in matter his sermons might pass current in any chapel, but for the reference being made to the Rabbis and not to the apostles ... Mr. Ornstien's delivery is equally in accord with that of many of his brethren of the churches ... simple, impressive and deliberative ... Should Mr. Ornstien by any means be included in the proposed scheme for a systematic interchange of pulpits, he will have nothing to learn or to unlearn before entering any Anglican or Presbyterian church ... <sup>54</sup>

A number of the minister's sermons are accessible thanks to Solomon Joseph, who printed the texts in the *Australian Israelite*. In many ways typical of Victorian pulpit oratory, they do give us an indication of Ornstien's writing style, his considerable scholarship, and his religious philosophy. Certainly he believed wholeheartedly in the universality of Jewish ideals

... the plan of the Mosaic dispensation is to join the human family into one great brotherhood so that all may acknowledge the Great Creator as the Universal Father, and recognise all men as brethren ... we Jews see in the Unity we worship no tutelar deity, who cares for one race alone, but the God of all.<sup>55</sup>

On several occasions he found himself called upon to serve as "Defender of the Faith". When the Rev. Charles Clark targeted Jewish "exclusivism" and asserted that Judaism was inferior to Christianity in the areas of benevolence, charity and concern for the "stranger", Ornstien speedily rebutted the claim. He cited Biblical and Rabbinic sources to prove that what were now called *Christian* forbearance, fortitude, virtue and brotherhood (that is, "all the nobler attributes, which elevate man above the dull routine of every-day life"), had not only been taught but practised "long, long before the doctrines of Christianity were promulgated".<sup>56</sup> On other occasions he utilised the pulpit to counter popular scientific attacks on the Bible. For instance, when Dr. Brumby, a former Wesleyan cleric, invoked science to declare the Biblical account of Creation invalid, Ornstien joined other clergymen (among them the Bishop of Melbourne) in refuting the arguments. To that end, he delivered a series of lectures on "Science and Revelation" in which he explored the intimate connection between the two.<sup>57</sup> In a later discourse, titled "Science and its influence on religion", he lauded the achievements of science "in its legitimate sphere" but warned strongly against accepting as fact the theories of Darwin, Huxley, *et al*.<sup>58</sup>

A recurring concern of Ornstien's sermons was the decline in religious observance which had accompanied material success in the colonies. Protestingly loudly at local Jewish hypocrisy, he deplored the widespread desecration of Shabbat and disregard of ritual laws.<sup>59</sup> Early on, the *Jewish Chronicle* hinted that his admonitions, while justified, might well be rather too severe, and it seems likely that his sincere but undiplomatic outcries seriously affected his popularity.<sup>60</sup>

At the beginning of the minister's eight years in Australia, MHC's President, the Hon. Edward Cohen, observed that Ornstien had deservedly won the good opinion of Jew and non-Jew alike.<sup>61</sup> At the Annual General Meeting of 1868 he was readily re-elected for a further term — albeit at a decreased salary.<sup>62</sup> However, by the time his contract next came up for renewal, a strong anti-Ornstien faction had emerged within the congregation, and opposition to him had crystallised. By now, Edward Cohen was claiming that the minister had failed to give satisfaction. (He acknowledged the man's ability but lamented his "extremely obstinate disposition").<sup>63</sup> Not all the blame for the situation lay with the congregation. At times Ornstien appears to have been his own worst enemy. As



his later service in Cape Town would confirm, he was dogged by inflexibility and a want of tact. Sadly, his undoubted talent was undermined by his faulty public relations, and the combination of dwindling popularity, MHC's finances, and an ongoing feud with Rev. Rintel, ultimately precipitated his resignation.

From the start of his tenure at Bourke Street, Ornstien took strong exception to members making monetary offerings when called up to the Torah. He refused to accept any such donations made in his favour (despite the inadequacy of his stipend), and he campaigned for an end to the practice.<sup>64</sup> The system (called *Misheberachs*) was abolished by the congregation in 1868 and annual fixed contributions substituted, but the change failed to meet expectations. Faced with a funding shortfall, the committee opted for a scheme of salary reductions and annual re-election for the paid officers; Ornstien seems to have been the prime target. Edward Cohen indicated that a number of members had reduced their subscriptions due to dissatisfaction with the minister, and the move to curtail his stipend was widely seen as an attempt to get rid of him.<sup>65</sup> At its 1871 Annual General Meeting, the committee adopted a resolution that: "After the expiration of the present Minister's term of office, a Minister shall be appointed at a salary of £500 per annum". (This entailed a reduction of £120). The *Australian Israelite* interpreted the move thus: "We [the committee] have muddled the affairs of the congregation; we require a scapegoat; we are getting tired of our present Minister; no doubt this reduction will rid us of him, and direct attention from ourselves".<sup>66</sup> The offence was aggravated by the committee's failure to notify Ornstien of its intent before inviting applications for the posts of Minister, collector, *shochet* and Second Reader. Understandably distressed, he decried the lack of courtesy and resigned.

The whole issue unleashed a storm within MHC and polarised the members into pro- and anti-Ornstien camps. Some wanted a stubborn and unyielding officer gone; others insisted that a talented man was being treated unfairly. It soon became clear to many that the chances of finding a replacement of equal calibre were remote at best (particularly given the remuneration offered). Ornstien's supporters requisitioned a special meeting to lobby for his reinstatement and he, in turn, indicated his willingness to return should his original salary be restored. The committee refused to consider this option and the situation reached a stalemate. One volatile meeting over the issue saw the committee resign *en masse*.

Dismayed at the bitterness dividing his flock, Ornstien swallowed his pride and notified the executive that he was willing to accept its conditions. Possibly he was pessimistic about finding anything better at this stage. Certainly the need to provide for his growing family must have made him wary of returning to England without any concrete prospects.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps he was still fired with zeal for the position that had been entrusted to him. He wrote

... the peace of the Congregation is paramount to all other considerations; and being desirous of using my endeavours not to permit existing differences to be widened, I now beg to place my services as Minister unconditionally at the disposal of the Committee and the general body.<sup>68</sup>

MHC's executive acknowledged the offer (rather ungraciously) and recommended acceptance of his services "as proffered", i.e. at the reduced salary.<sup>69</sup> (The congregation's *shochet*, Rev. Goldstein, who had likewise been a target of the dissatisfaction, was also re-appointed due to a dearth of other applicants).<sup>70</sup> The *Australian Israelite* applauded Ornstien's unselfish action and expressed relief at the resolution of an ugly "embroglio", but it warned: "Independent of all consideration in respect of the gentleman at present holding the office of Minister, it is apparent that the stipend as at present agreed upon,



is not sufficient".<sup>71</sup> Failing to make ends meet, Ornstien again announced his intention to resign six months later. He was dissuaded when a proportion of his former salary was restored; even so, he became heavily in debt, and his financial position reached a crisis by early 1874.<sup>72</sup>

Parallel with, and compounding his financial woes, was a persistent feud with East Melbourne's Rev. Rintel. The animosity between the two men became a major concern to the community; it substantially affected Ornstien's already shaky relations with his own flock, exposed him to widespread criticism (much of it unjustified) and, in conjunction with his money worries, brought about his departure.

The rift started within a year of Ornstien's arrival in the colony. It centred on the issue of which man was entitled to recognition as "Senior Jewish Minister". Rintel was Melbourne Jewry's longest-serving and most experienced clerical officer; even after he left MHC in 1857, the appointments of Revs. Myers and Marks did nothing to challenge this primacy. No doubt, MHC members had chafed at the bit when the defector continued to represent the community officially at colonial functions, but not until Ornstien's engagement could the congregation tackle Rintel on his own ground.

Rintel had studied Talmud and *shechitah* under his Polish rabbi father. Although not a professional clergyman prior to working for MHC, he was a licensed shochet and he had undoubtedly received a better than average Jewish education.<sup>73</sup> (Indeed, Moritz Michaelis asserted that he was better versed in Hebrew lore than his younger rival).<sup>74</sup> Even so, in terms of the Anglo-Jewish clerical model, he was not regarded as a *trained* minister<sup>75</sup>, and his essentially Eastern European outlook did not "jell" with MHC's Anglo-conformist mores. MHC had obviously simply been waiting to acquire a presentable clergyman of its own before asserting its seniority. Goldman maintains that, at the outset, the dispute largely grew out of the vanity of the two Boards of Management and their desire to declare their respective superiority.<sup>76</sup> The feud can also be seen as an early manifestation of "English Jew" versus "Eastern European Jew", with Ornstien the representative of diluted Anglo-Orthodoxy, and Rintel the spokesman for "foreign" traditionalism.

Once it could boast its own Anglo-Jewish preacher/pastor — recommended by the Chief Rabbi — MHC lost little time in mounting its challenge. An advertisement in the *Argus* announced that Ornstien, as "Senior Jewish minister", was to preach in aid of NSW Flood Relief; MHC's committee also advised the Governor that Ornstien was now "Head of the Community".<sup>77</sup> To East Melbourne protests that Rintel held endorsements from such revered sages as the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, Bourke Street countered that Ornstien's appointment had been confirmed by "the Chief Rabbi of British Jews who, moreover, is the only spiritual head of all Jews residing in Great Britain and its dependencies. English Jews know nothing and care little about the documents issued by ... the Haham Bashi of Jerusalem".<sup>78</sup>

It was several years before the issue could be resolved. When appealed to, Chief Rabbi Adler tentatively judged in favour of East Melbourne, but neither he nor Stephen Street had reckoned with the tenacity of MHC's committee.<sup>79</sup> In October 1869 a deputation waited on the Chief Secretary (Premier) of Victoria, hoping to gain official confirmation of Bourke Street's claim. The delegates insisted that

The Melbourne Hebrew Congregation represented something like two thirds of the Jews in Melbourne, and was far the largest and most influential of the two bodies. The congregation was, therefore, greatly concerned to think that the gentleman who had seceded from them and opened a place of worship elsewhere, should take precedence of the gentleman who was the recognised head of the senior congregation ...<sup>80</sup>



MHC reinforced its action by assigning a London sub-committee to wait on Adler personally. While the Chief Secretary expressed regret that such a matter should be brought to him at all, he diplomatically elected to wait on Adler's advice before deciding either way. Besieged by the London delegates, Adler subsequently backed down and wrote to MHC "... that although Rintel be called the Senior Minister of the Melbourne Hebrew community by reason of his age and period of service, that this does not imply any authority or control over Ornstien or over the Bourke Street congregation."<sup>81</sup>

East Melbourne was incensed at its sister congregation's action and statements. Stephen Street representatives promptly aired their side of the dispute in the *Argus* and called a public meeting to register their protest.<sup>82</sup> However, MHC ultimately gained the victory. By late 1871 it had succeeded in deposing Rintel as "Senior Jewish minister" and in gaining official recognition of Ornstien "because he ministered to the oldest and largest congregation in the colony."<sup>83</sup> (The political clout of the Hon. Edward Cohen may well have been influential).<sup>84</sup>

The *Jewish Chronicle* recorded the settlement of the dispute with relief, but assumed rather naively that the two congregations and their officers would now work "in concert and unison."<sup>85</sup> As it was, the years of acrimony had irreparably impaired the working relationship between the two clerics. From that point, the competition for seniority degenerated into a "sullen quarrel", largely due to the "inflexible disposition" of the two men, and the conflict seriously affected the functioning of the community's ecclesiastical court.<sup>86</sup>

Rintel tried in vain to keep his rival off the Beth Din. Because of chairman Rev. Samuel Herman's age, lack of English and distance from Melbourne, the East Melbourne minister had become unofficial spokesman for the body. (East Melbourne's *shochet*, Isaac Pulver, was the third member of the court in the 1860s). Not surprisingly, MHC was dissatisfied with Stephen Street's control of the institution and its own lack of representation; accordingly, Adler promised that Ornstien should fill the first vacancy that occurred.

No doubt Rintel assumed that the younger man would undermine his primacy here as elsewhere. When Pulver resigned in 1871, he petitioned Adler to allow another East Melbourne delegate (the strictly observant Woolf Davis) to serve in his stead. Adler demurred and insisted that Ornstien's appointment be upheld. Still reluctant to accept the inevitable, Rintel suppressed a letter from Adler confirming Ornstien's membership of the court, and he later refused to notify his rival when it met.<sup>87</sup> When Ornstien complained to London, Rintel declared he would recognise the appointment provided that the Bourke Street cleric withdrew all claim to the title "Senior Jewish minister" and agreed not to deal with any questions of Jewish Law.<sup>88</sup> (Obviously, Rintel was making a "last stand" here, pitting his Eastern European Talmudic background against Ornstien's more general secular and religious education). Neither Ornstien nor Adler would countenance this; Rintel then refused to work with his rival and resigned. In time, he was succeeded by St. Kilda's Rev. Blaubaum, thus leaving East Melbourne without a representative for several years.

Rintel subsequently refused to recognise any Beth Din decision made without him, and he went so far as to question Adler's ruling on proselytes. He even set up a Beth Din of his own to make a convert. This prompted Adler to notify the communities that the combine of Ornstien, Blaubaum and Herman comprised the only legitimate Ecclesiastical Court in the colonies. Adler did agree to allow Rintel to act as Second Dayan on pressing matters, but he ruled that the Beth Din must act without him should he persist in his refusal to work with the Bourke Street minister. (The Chief Rabbi stressed that any



decision made by Rintel outside these boundaries was "null and void").<sup>89</sup> It was an ignominious defeat for Rintel, and a significant victory for Anglo-Orthodoxy against old-fashioned Eastern European traditionalism.<sup>90</sup>

The clerical conflict only worsened with time. Rintel stubbornly refused to participate alongside Ornstien at the consecration service of the St Kilda Synagogue, and community leaders complained that the continuing animosity was undermining any possibility of communal unity. Following public references to the feud by the Hon. Edward Cohen, the committees of both East Melbourne and MHC were forced to meet together and attempt to effect a reconciliation. The conference did little good; Rintel insisted that Ornstien's status as "Senior Jewish minister" remained an insurmountable obstacle.<sup>91</sup>

The majority opinion seems to have been that Ornstien was less to blame than Rintel for the persistence of the feud,<sup>92</sup> but there is no doubt that there was fault on both sides. A frustrated Nathaniel Levi of MHC expressed the feeling of many in the community when he called for a drastic solution. (He asserted that "any other sect" would have long since dismissed the two offenders).<sup>93</sup> "These men are paid to serve us, and we must not be further inconvenienced by them", declared another critic.<sup>94</sup> Ornstien declared himself at a loss to understand the perpetuation of the dispute; nonetheless he compounded the situation by publishing correspondence on the matter in the *Australian Israelite*. Stung by criticisms of his part in the feud, he included a letter from MHC which supposedly exonerated him from blame. He also challenged a statement made by Moritz Michaelis (a friend of Rintel) that Ornstien might be the better preacher but that the East Melbourne cleric boasted a better background in the knowledge needed to lead a Jewish community.<sup>95</sup> Ornstien demanded of Michaelis

I have to ask you by what authority you ventured to speak of my capabilities to carry out the sacred duties of my office as Spiritual Head of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, an office I hold by appointment and authority from the Rev. the Chief Rabbi.<sup>96</sup>

Both the *Australian Israelite* and the *Jewish Chronicle* questioned his wisdom in thus rushing into print, and the latter paper noted how the action had angered MHC's committee.<sup>97</sup> Nor was Rintel prepared to let Ornstien have the last word. Incensed at the way the younger man had eclipsed him, he retaliated: "There are, doubtless, to be found ... many ... *chasonim*, *Ba'ali Korim*, *Mohlim*, etc superior to myself, but I am bold enough to assert that the Rev. Mr Ornstien has much to learn before I can reckon him amongst them".<sup>98</sup> In Rintel's view, Ornstien's alleged superiority as a preacher was of minor importance. In any event (he intimated), Rev. Davis of Sydney was more proficient in that area. (Rintel's response highlights the crucial differences in outlook which separated the two ministers. Regular preaching was central to Ornstien's conception of his role, while it was a distinctly subsidiary consideration in his adversary's more traditional agenda).<sup>99</sup>

The *Australian Israelite* sided with Ornstien in lamenting the complete absence in Rintel of that proper feeling/kindly spirit which should influence a Jewish minister: "... a little superior rabbinical knowledge was claimed, and subsequently flaunted as a weapon wherewith to wound a brother minister".<sup>100</sup>

With hopes of reconciliation fading, the only likely solution to the impasse lay in the departure of one or other protagonist. As it turned out, Ornstien tendered his resignation again immediately prior to the High Holydays. He cited communal quarrels and the criticism he had endured as the reason for his action

My repeated denial of any act on my part to cause discord appears to be of no further avail, even the investigation and resolution of the committee proving that denial to be correct is



repeatedly questioned ... the result is that any influence for good I may have had in the congregation is considerably weakened; added to this, these attacks upon my personal character as a minister ... and the unsettled state of the congregation, not only affect my future prospects, but cause such disquiet in the present as almost to unfit me for my sacred duties.<sup>101</sup>

He received sympathetic support from the overseas Jewish press. "Mr. Ornstien fell a victim to the communal disputes ... as disgraceful as they are puerile", declared the *Jewish World*: "Finding that he was reproached and maligned, and that he was losing ground with his surroundings, he resolved to retire from his unenviable post, rendered wretched and untenable by reason of querulousness and opposition". "Unfortunately", observed the *Jewish Times*, "... the Jews of Melbourne have been engaged in the uncongenial amusement of quarrelling with each other ... Actuated, no doubt, by the troublous dissensions raging in his congregation, Mr. Ornstien tendered his resignation".<sup>102</sup>

Actually, it was an open secret among Melbourne Jews that the minister's financial situation had been the deciding factor.<sup>103</sup> Goldman notes that a member of MHC wrote to the committee demanding refund of a loan to Ornstien, and that a subsequent investigation uncovered an outstanding debt of nearly £800.<sup>104</sup> Periodic salary reductions had forced the minister to borrow in order to meet family demands and other calls on his purse. (His skills did not extend to financial management. According to Solomon Joseph: "His generosity was notoriously such as bordered on extravagance. He carried the virtue of open-handedness to the verge of indiscretion").<sup>105</sup> MHC's committee tactfully (and uncharacteristically) allowed him to maintain the polite fiction of "communal differences" as his excuse for leaving, and his resignation was duly accepted. Gratuities, a life insurance policy, financial aid, and a substantial gift to Mrs Ornstien went some way towards cancelling the debt.<sup>106</sup> Ornstien delivered his farewell address at Bourke Street in October 1874. Reviewing his time in Australia, he expressed sadness that his tenure had not yielded all that he had hoped for. He insisted that "he had endeavoured strictly and earnestly to perform the duties of his office; he had never hesitated to reprove when he saw occasion for reproof; and had never abused his pulpit for purposes of self-aggrandisement or for personal gain".<sup>107</sup> Many in the community were deeply sorry to see him go. The *Australian Israelite* subsequently observed: "Of Mr Ornstien, it may truly be said that he was every man's friend but his own".<sup>108</sup>

The family left Melbourne on the *Rodney* in early December. A large party of friends and representatives of the metropolitan congregations and other Jewish institutions gathered to farewell them. (Rintel, of course, did not appear).<sup>109</sup> The three and a half month voyage was uneventful in the main, although several of the children contracted measles, and the family suffered somewhat with seasickness. In a letter to friends in Melbourne, Ornstien took the opportunity to compare synagogue services with the makeshift Sunday worship on board, and he was forced to conclude (somewhat ruefully): "when I contrast the attention, the decorum, and the devotional feeling of the congregants, with that of the Synagogue, I am almost ashamed of the latter, if not quite, and I question does worship among us simply mean good *Chazoneth* ... When will the Synagogue be even like the service in the saloon of a ship?"

When the *Rodney* anchored briefly in Table Bay, Ornstien took the opportunity to visit Cape Town. He was impressed by the area's scenery, but much less so by the "motley city" and its population, and the debilitated Jewish presence there.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, Cape Town struck a chord with him (he compared Table Bay's mountain background with Mt Sinai "when the *Schechina* rested on it"), and he was to return there permanently several years later. Once back in England, Ornstien naturally needed to look out for a new position. This time his sights were set on America. Soon after tendering his



resignation at MHC, he had applied for the vacant pulpit of the Congregation B'nai Yeshurun, one of the leading synagogues in New York.<sup>111</sup> The post was prestigious. A previous occupant had been the same Dr. Raphall who had been one of his predecessors in Birmingham.<sup>112</sup> The advertised conditions were enticing as well; the salary of \$5,000 plus perquisites compared favourably with anything available in the colonies or English provinces.<sup>113</sup> Such eminent Anglo-Jewish clerics as Rev. Professor David Isaacs of Manchester, Rev. George J. Emanuel of Birmingham, and Rev. Simeon Singer of London's Borough Synagogue, were among the other applicants.<sup>114</sup>

Notwithstanding the calibre of the competition, Ornstien seems to have been confident of winning the appointment.<sup>115</sup> He realised that being on the spot would place him at an advantage, and so he promptly left London for an extended visit to the USA. The B'nai Yeshurun minute books indicate that he occupied the New York pulpit briefly in May-June 1875. Possibly by way of "audition", he delivered three sermons to the congregation, and was subsequently voted \$300 as compensation.<sup>116</sup> This liberal payment may have been a tactful gesture on the part of the committee for, despite his optimism and reports of initial enthusiasm on the congregation's side, he was not elected to the post.<sup>117</sup> Perhaps his religious conservatism was a factor. At this time, B'nai Yeshurun's members were debating the introduction of "family pews" and organ music, and Ornstien's dislike of Reform may have swayed the committee against choosing him.<sup>118</sup> As it turned out, B'nai Yeshurun fielded applicants for 18 months before appointing Rev. Henry S. Jacobs in 1876.

Ornstien spent several months touring the United States. (His first son, John Aaron, was born during this period). He returned home to an offer of a new position in Portsmouth, this time as Principal of Aria College. Ostensibly, the post was to take advantage of his combined skills as educator and cleric; however, ongoing salary constraints and trustee mismanagement meant that his six years with the college became one more chapter in a pattern of disillusionment and disappointment.

The college had been founded in 1874, as the result of a bequest by Lewis Aria, a Portsmouth-born merchant who amassed a fortune in the West Indies. When he died in 1858, Aria left the residue of his property (variously estimated at between £18,000 and £25,000) for the establishment and maintenance of a seminary for training Jewish clergymen.<sup>119</sup> Unfortunately, his will stipulated that the seminary must be in the Portsea area (and nowhere else), and that the students must be natives of Hampshire.<sup>120</sup> Advocates of a trained Anglo-Jewish ministry welcomed the bequest, but generally agreed that such stringent conditions made the scheme's success unlikely.<sup>121</sup> Attempts were made to change Aria's will and establish the college in London as an adjunct of Jews' College (enjoying all the educational advantages of the metropolis), but local sentiment won the day. Members of the Portsmouth Jewish community insisted the Chief Rabbi observe Aria's conditions to the letter, and the college was opened in two adjoining buildings in St. George's Square. The Chief Rabbi's secretary, Rev. I. S. Meisels, was appointed as the first Principal. Adler and his son, Rev. Hermann Adler, were among the trustees, but control of the seminary devolved primarily on members of the local community.

The project started in a very small way, with four students. Ornstien replaced Meisels as Principal in 1876 and found that, in addition to a teaching load which included Hebrew, English, German, Religion and the Classics, he was required to deliver weekly expositions on "Orthodox Judaical principles", and double as occasional "lecturer" to the Portsmouth congregation. As well, he had to provide for the college's day-to-day management and residential requirements.<sup>122</sup> From the outset, he was hampered by lack of funds, the interference of the trustees, the inadequacy of the premises, and the



unsuitability of some of the students. With an income of only £600 a year, the college was expected to clothe and maintain the students, pay the Principal and sessional masters, and meet the costs of gas, coal, rent, taxes and incidental expenses.<sup>123</sup> In the first seven years, not one student stayed for the full course of training. Some of them complained of petty restrictions, "espionage and interference" on the part of the trustees, and the dullness and seclusion of scholastic life in provincial Portsea.<sup>124</sup> One disgruntled pupil publicly labelled the enterprise "a waste of time and money", and declared that the students to date "had not the remotest inclination or abilities for the holy profession which the College seeks in vain to train them for".<sup>125</sup> Claims were made that the Aria bequest was being abused by affluent parents who were eager to give their sons a good education, but had no intention of them becoming ministers. One contributor to the *Jewish Chronicle* called the seminary "a complete failure", and argued that the enterprise was simply frittering away Mr. Aria's legacy.<sup>126</sup>

Much of the criticism was justified. The problem lay mainly in an inefficient management: local worthies who had "no knowledge whatever of the education required for a Jewish minister", and who failed to enforce agreements made on the students' admission.<sup>127</sup> Ornstien did his best under the circumstances. Several of his students ultimately completed their training and went on to become clergymen, and more than one later paid tribute to their teacher's skills. Rev. J. H. Landau of Sydney, who entered Aria College in 1881, spoke highly of the environment created by Ornstien: "His real influence was exercised in the sphere of his own home, and there he created an atmosphere in which convictions were converted into conduct".<sup>128</sup> Rev. J. F. Stern of Stepney remarked: "If the foundation of Lewis Aria failed in its purpose in many ways in the days of which I write, it was all that could be desired on the domestic side during Mr. Ornstien's tenure of the Principalship". (Thirty years on, Stern retained particularly fond memories of Julia Ornstien and her devotion to the comfort and well-being of her family and the students).<sup>129</sup> All in all though, the five years the minister spent at the college — underpaid and undervalued in a foundering venture — must have been singularly disheartening. The period was further marred by personal tragedy, with the deaths of three of his children.<sup>130</sup>

He therefore seized the opportunity when another colonial pulpit became available. Presumably, memories of Table Bay's "majestically grand" scenery, as well as the challenge of revitalising Judaism there, induced him to apply for the vacant ministry of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation in 1881. Successful, he resigned from Aria College, emigrated to South Africa with his family, and was inducted in June of the following year.<sup>131</sup>

Ornstien arrived in the Cape colony at a turning point in the local Jewish community's development. Cape Jewry had come into being following British occupation, and in the wake of the first large-scale British colonisation of the area in the 1820s. Its synagogue, the Congregation Tikvath Israel (founded in 1841), shared a number of basic commonalities with colonial Australian congregations. By the 1880s its English, Dutch and German founders had merged into a normative Anglo-Jewish homogeneity; the congregation's religious style and outlook were Anglo-Orthodox, and its members were confronted by the universal colonial ills of intermarriage, assimilation, geographical and intellectual isolation, and religious apathy. In fact, the previous decade or so witnessed so serious a decline in numbers and Jewish consciousness, that it seemed likely the community would disappear.<sup>132</sup> Visiting the Cape seven years earlier, Ornstien had written: "I saw the synagogue here; it is a very poor affair, and what I hear of the place Judaism here is worse".<sup>133</sup>



From 1881 however, the community experienced a dramatic transformation. Elazar and Medding note: "The great turning point came with the arrival of a sizeable influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe".<sup>134</sup> From an estimated 4,000 in the whole of South Africa, the Jewish population more than doubled in a decade. (By 1891 there were approximately 1200 Jews in Cape Town).<sup>135</sup> In a striking parallel with the Melbourne of two generations later, the small Anglo-Jewish establishment rapidly found itself outnumbered and out-flanked by newcomers, most of them Yiddish-speaking Jews from Lithuania. Their arrival revitalised the Cape Town community and congregation during Ornstien's term of office, but it also spelled an end to his style of Anglo-Orthodoxy. A congregational split compounded the situation, and eventually led to the minister's replacement.

The end of Ornstien's South African career was in marked contrast to its beginning. Israel Abrahams has noted the "springtime quality" of his first years in the colony.<sup>136</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle* later observed: "The problems which met him on his arrival in the colony were enough to discourage a man of less force and ability. The congregation of Cape Town lacked many of the appurtenances that are considered indispensable to every well-regulated congregation".<sup>137</sup> Undaunted, Ornstien set about redressing the imbalance. Obviously he relished the chance for a "fresh start" after the stresses of MHC and Aria College, and he poured his energies into improving the congregation's status and membership. The committee of management acknowledged his efforts with liberal bonuses and testimonials in 1883-84.<sup>138</sup> As the number of worshippers outgrew the premises, Ornstien spearheaded programs of renovation and redecoration which included



*Ornstien and family, Cape Town, 1882 (Courtesy Bob Metter)*



the construction of the community's first *mikvah*. To ease the growing demands on Ornstien's time, an assistant minister was engaged in 1889.<sup>139</sup>

Soon after his arrival, he attempted to replace the congregation's half-hearted weekly Hebrew classes with a fully-fledged Jewish Day school. The bid proved premature; instead, he opened his own private school in 1884. A residential facility, the "Jewish Collegiate School" appears to have enjoyed fair success and a reputation for scholastic excellence, although it eventually prompted criticism that its demands were causing the minister to neglect his clerical duties.<sup>140</sup>

As immigration accelerated during the 1880s, Ornstien revived the community's dormant Hebrew Philanthropic Society and served variously as its President, treasurer and secretary. In addition, he fostered a Ladies' Benevolent Society and lobbied extensively on behalf of the Russo-Jewish Relief Fund and the local branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association. As minister of South Africa's "mother congregation", he also assisted and advised new congregations as Jewish communities proliferated inland. (For example, synagogues were established at Oudtshoorn and Paarl in 1883 and 1884 respectively).<sup>141</sup>

The promotion of good relations between Jews and the wider community was (and always had been) a key feature of Ornstien's agenda as an Anglo-Jewish clergyman. In Cape Town this included serving on the committees of local Anglican and Roman Catholic orphanages, the Free Dispensary and a Commission of Enquiry into the treatment of Lepers in the colony. He also became an active and enthusiastic Freemason. (As Senior Deacon of the Grand Lodge he delivered the funeral oration for the Earl of Carnarvon, at the express wish of the Dean of Cape Town).<sup>142</sup> In a gesture of respect for his religious values, Ornstien's masonic peers altered their meeting night from Friday to Tuesday.<sup>143</sup> By all accounts, he enjoyed considerable respect within wider Cape Town society.

The initial positive relations he enjoyed with his congregants did not last, however; unfortunately (but, by now, predictably), "a certain rigidity of outlook and disregard for the virtue of tact, though indicative of moral courage and a high sense of rectitude, impaired his judgment at times and blinded him to the consequence of his actions".<sup>144</sup> Trouble came on two fronts: from within the committee's ranks, and from the increasing weight of immigrant Jews who scorned the Anglo-Jewish milieu which the minister represented.<sup>145</sup>

To be sure, Ornstien had a solid core of supporters, people who were charmed by his skill as preacher and teacher, and by his unswerving devotion to the Chief Rabbi and English norms.<sup>146</sup> One such admirer informed the *Jewish Chronicle*: "Our minister, the Rev. A. F. Ornstien is a popular man amongst all sorts and conditions. He is a distinct *chazan*, an intelligent lecturer, and is thoroughly broadminded, in fact he is the right man in the right place".<sup>147</sup> Sadly, as the years passed, more and more dissenters failed to share this view.

In 1885 Ornstien found himself involved in a major confrontation with an erring committee member. The details of the man's offence no longer exist but it was sufficiently serious for the minister to demand his resignation. The member left, taking a vocal minority of supporters with him, and promptly established a rival congregation. The defection was temporary; by 1888 peace had been made and the breakaways had returned, but subsequent relations were less than harmonious.<sup>148</sup>

In-house opposition to Ornstien was reinforced by the gathering strength of Eastern European-style Orthodoxy within the community. To the Cape Town Jewish



establishment the Yiddish-speaking newcomers were non-conformist, superstitious "yokels"; to the "foreigners" the Anglo-Jews were ignorant, religiously lax and "goyish".<sup>149</sup> Some Eastern Europeans joined the congregation and allied with the minister's opponents; others rejected what they saw as Tikvath Israel's dilution of their religion and, in 1887, they set up an alternative minyan in Bouquet Street. A reader and *shochet*, Rev. Simon Sliom, was appointed without the Chief Rabbi's endorsement. Perhaps unwisely, Ornstien challenged the group. Affronted at the snub to Anglo-Orthodox authority he issued a circular, warning the community against Sliom's *shechita*. Without the Chief Rabbi's sanction (maintained Ornstien), any meat slaughtered by his rival was "unfit and unclean". Sliom responded by suing Ornstien for malicious libel. He insisted that the Bouquet Street congregation was an independent body, that he had been licensed as a *shochet* elsewhere, and that — regardless — neither he nor his congregation was answerable to Ornstien or the Chief Rabbi.<sup>150</sup>

Israel Abrahams has pointed out the irony of the "English" minister (whose learning and piety were more than suspect in the eye of the "foreigners") becoming "Defender of the Faith" in this way.<sup>151</sup> On an earlier occasion Ornstien had unsuccessfully protested to both Adler and the civil authorities when the Oudtshoorn congregation appointed a minister without Adler's approval.<sup>152</sup> This time around the ruling was in his favour. The magistrate decided that Ornstien had only done his duty; however, it was a hollow victory.

When his tri-annual contract came up for renewal in 1891, Ornstien's opponents resisted re-appointing him. He was re-elected but only for one further term. By 1894 the combined opposition had routed the minister's support within the congregation, and the committee voted to find a new spiritual leader. (Rev. A.P. Bender subsequently took over the position).

In his history of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, Israel Abrahams concedes Ornstien's faults but suggests that they were more than outweighed by the worth of his achievements. In Abrahams' view, the minister deserved far better treatment than was meted out to him.<sup>153</sup> This chapter in his turbulent career was all the more sad because it proved to be the last. He had been in poor health for several years; a visit to Britain for medical aid in 1891 only afforded a temporary reprieve.<sup>154</sup> Illness eventually affected his ability to perform his clerical duties, and his condition was doubtless aggravated by the continuing discord.<sup>155</sup> In the last year of his life he concentrated his energies into the Jewish Collegiate School. Even there he found himself "under siege" when Tikvath Israel established a public Jewish Day school. (Ornstien saw this as an attempt to close down his own private institution).<sup>156</sup> Embittered, he may have toyed with offering his services to one of the senior congregation's emerging competitors; the *Jewish Chronicle* notes his presence at a meeting to establish the Cape Town New Hebrew Congregation in August 1895.<sup>157</sup> As it turned out, this was his last contact with congregational politics. He died of throat cancer at his Kloof Street home on 6 December, 1895.<sup>158</sup>

The "ups and downs" of Ornstien's career demonstrate the vulnerability of the colonial clergyman, subject to all the hazards of frontier existence, and dependent for his material existence on the vagaries of communal politics. In a heartfelt tribute to him, the *Jewish Chronicle* catalogued the rigours and extraordinary demands of such a vocation, and the physical and mental toll they could exact. The newspaper tacitly acknowledged Ornstien's imperfections ("In his dealings with the members of his flock, the deceased displayed alike his strength and his weakness"), but it eloquently praised the man's unceasing commitment to his clerical office.<sup>159</sup>



Ornstien's biography indicates that he was a minister and teacher of considerable stature — zealous, able and sincere. Ironically, the very tenacity and determination which enabled him to surmount frontier obstacles also proved to be his undoing; entrenched in his thinking, and in his subscription to conservative British-style Judaism, he ultimately lacked either the flexibility or diplomacy to maintain long-term positive relations with his temperamentally diverse congregants. As a guardian of Anglo-Orthodoxy, he fell victim to historical circumstance (i.e. the transformation of the South African community by large-scale immigration from Eastern Europe). Yet his impact should not be under-rated. During his time in Melbourne, he established the contours of local "denominational" Judaism and served as prototype for his Anglo-Orthodox clerical successors. In Cape Town, he was instrumental in revitalising both the waning congregation and the local Jewish community. In the long run, Abraham Ornstien deserves recognition for the modest, but very real, contributions he made to the political, institutional and congregational histories of a number of 19th century Jewish communities.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to a number of people for their assistance in providing detail on aspects of Abraham Ornstien's life and career, or in making pertinent material available. In particular, I am indebted to Dr. Anthony Joseph (genealogist with the Jewish Historical Society of England), Judd Levingston (former student rabbi with the Congregation B'nai Yeshurun in New York), Dr. Hilary Rubinstein (Melbourne), Lieba Robinson (of the Jewish Museum, Cape Town), Justice William Ormiston (Melbourne), Elizabeth MacDougal (of the Society of Genealogists, London), Ornstien's great-grandson, Bob Metter (Johannesburg), and the committees of the Portsmouth and Birmingham Hebrew Congregations.

### NOTES

1. *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 January 1896. (Readers should note that "Ornstien" is the correct spelling, not "Ornstein".)
2. *Australasian Hebrew*, 31 January 1896.
3. *Jewish Herald*, 24 January 1896.
4. *Australasian Hebrew*, 31 January 1896.
5. *ibid.*, 7 February 1896.
6. See also *Australian Israelite*, 9 October, 23 October & 11 December 1874. Short biographical entries in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* and, more recently, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1973) focus on Ornstien's service in South Africa, with only passing reference to his work in Australia.
7. L.M. Goldman, *Jews in Victoria in the 19th Century*, Melbourne, 1954, p. 186–199, 241–244; Joseph Aron & Judy Arndt, *The Enduring Remnant: the first 150 years of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation 1841–1991*, Melbourne, 1992, p. 138–143, 179–181.
8. Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 180. Goldman states that Ornstien "who had a Spanish and Portuguese background" once tried to effect a minor alteration to the Synagogue ritual according to Sephardi custom (i. e. adding verses to the *Adon Olam*), but was speedily reminded that the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation conformed strictly to the *Minhag Polin*. As far as I can ascertain, this seems to be the only evidence of the minister's Sephardi background. He and brother Phineas spent their careers serving Ashkenazi institutions.
9. *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 July 1885. Phineas Ornstien married Adelaide Samuel in 1845. One of their 13 children, Frederick Saul, emigrated to Australia, settled in Melbourne, and became prominent in the rubber industry (with the Barnet Glass Rubber Co. and Dunlop). Anti-German sentiment prompted him to change his name to Ormiston during World War One. (Information from Frederick Ormiston's grandson, Justice William Ormiston, 2



- June 1992). Beverley Davis' listing of Australasian Jewish gravestone inscriptions indicates that Lewis [Eliezer] Ornstien, another son of Phineas, settled in New Zealand, and is buried at Auckland's Waikumete Cemetery with his wife Esther and son Jack. Phineas' offspring also included Philip Ornstien, who served as Secretary to the United Synagogue for many years, and Abraham, who was minister to the Kimberley Congregation in South Africa (albeit briefly).
10. The 1851 census lists another daughter, Rosetta, but gives no occupation. The A. M. Hyamson Papers (held by the Society of Genealogists in London) suggest that Phineas and Dinah Ornstien (who died unmarried in 1885) may have been twins. Sarah Ornstien married Benjamin Amsell in 1857, and was widowed in a house fire in Devonshire Square within six months. Nathan Ornstien died in 1851, aged 69; Rebecca Ornstien died in 1858, aged 68. (I am grateful to Dr Anthony Joseph and Bob Metter for their help in compiling genealogical material on the Ornstiens).
  11. Dr A.P. Joseph, Letter to the author, 16 January 1992.
  12. Steven Singer, "The Anglo-Jewish ministry in early Victorian London", *Modern Judaism*, 5(3), 1985, p. 280-283.
  13. Lord Jakobovits, "The Evolution of the British Rabbinate since 1945", in *Yismach Yisrael: historical essays to honour Rabbi Dr Israel Porush, O.B.E. on his 80th birthday*, Sydney, 1988, p. 16.
  14. Singer, *op cit.*, p. 280. See also, Michael Goulston, "The Status of the Anglo-Jewish Rabbinate, 1840-1914", *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 10, June 1968, p. 57.
  15. Vivian Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858*, Leicester, 1990, p. 24; See also, Goulston, *op cit.*, p. 56. Goulston notes that Jews' College was not founded until 1855, but from "... the new Chief Rabbi (Nathan Adler) on, men were regularly preaching before that date. Apart from the Amsterdam-born chazan of Bevis Marks, David Aaron de Sola, and the Swedish M.J. Raphall at Birmingham, there was a small group of English-born preachers, mainly educated at the Jews' Free School ..."
  16. Singer, *op cit.*, p. 284. See also, Raymond Apple, "United Synagogue: religious founders and leaders", in *A Century of Anglo-Jewish Life 1870-1970*, ed. Salmond S. Levin, London, 1970, p. 14-15.
  17. Harry Levine, *A Short History of the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation*, Birmingham, 1956, p. ii.
  18. A similar facility had been established by London's Sephardi Jews in the late 17th century.
  19. Lipman, *op cit.*, p. 47.
  20. See comments by Chief Rabbi Adler and Sir Anthony Rothschild, *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 June 1871. See also, *ibid.*, 15 January 1875; 16 February 1883. For background on the Jews' Free School, see Salmond S. Levin, "The Origins of the Jews' Free School", *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 19, 1955-59.
  21. Cited *Australian Israelite*, 12 February 1875.
  22. *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 December 1857. Ornstien's obituary notice (*ibid.*, 3 January 1896) incorrectly states that the young minister was only 18 when he took over the Portsmouth pulpit; this error has been perpetuated by later sources, including Goldman, Aron & Arndt, and the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.
  23. Cited *Australian Israelite*, 12 February 1875.
  24. *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 February 1859. In an early sermon, Ornstien demonstrated his commitment to Anglo-Orthodox mores by highlighting the advantages enjoyed by Jews under English rule, and calling for greater (church-like?) decorum. *ibid.*, 23 July 1858.
  25. See *ibid.*, 26 April 1861; 2 May 1862; 5 June 1863.
  26. Cited *Australian Israelite*, 12 February 1875.
  27. *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 October 1860. The Portsmouth community was too small to support more than one synagogue. Even after the rift was patched up in 1860, membership was



- less than fifty. For the history of the Portsmouth Synagogue, see Cecil Roth, "The Portsmouth Community and its Historical Background", *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 13, 1936; Aubrey Weinberg, *Portsmouth Jewry, 1730s–1980s*, Portsmouth, n. d.
28. Levine, *op cit.*, p. 7.
  29. The mid-nineteenth century Anglo-Jewish ministry was small and insular, and it is interesting to note the frequent criss-crossing of the small corps of ministers. For instance, Rev. Alexander B. Davis preceded Ornstien at Portsmouth a decade before he took over the reins of MHC's sister synagogue in Sydney. Rev. Joel Rabinowitz, who preceded Ornstien at Birmingham, left England for Cape Town; following his retirement, his position with the Cape Town congregation was again filled by Ornstien. Another predecessor at Birmingham, Dr M. J. Raphall, later served the New York pulpit for which Ornstien auditioned in 1875. Rev. Isaac Pulver, Beth Din member and shochet to East Melbourne during Ornstien's time in Australia, had preceded both Rabinowitz and Ornstien as minister in Cape Town (1849–1851). Henry Davis Marks ministered to MHC in an "acting" capacity before Ornstien arrived; he later set himself up as a Cape Town merchant when Ornstien was Jewish minister in that city.
  30. Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 179.
  31. *Australian Israelite*, 12 February 1875.
  32. Information from Bob Metter, 22 August & 21 September 1992.
  33. Cited in Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 162.
  34. Raymond Apple, "Francis Lyon Cohen: the passionate patriot", unpublished Master of Letters thesis, Department of History, University of New England, 1984, p. 33.
  35. Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 179.
  36. Marks (1843–1885) was a talented but indiscreet (or singularly unfortunate) man. Like Ornstien, he taught at the Jews' Free School before serving as Reader to congregations in Hull, Melbourne, Cardiff and Manchester. His career was dogged by a series of scandals. Goldman states that he left Hull "under a cloud", and that MHC later refused to give him a testimonial because of allegations that he ate *Trefah* and marked the *Sefer Torah* to assist in reading texts. A more serious scandal (involving "unspecified moral misdemeanours") surrounded his time with the Cardiff congregation, and later debarred him from being appointed to a Readership at London's Great Synagogue. (It also brought about his temporary removal from Manchester). He was cleared but a stigma remained. The last years of his short life were spent in business in Cape Town. See Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 179; Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry, 1740–1875*, Manchester, 1985, p. 308, 314; *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 April 1871.
  37. Victorian Immigration Records (Public Records Office, Melbourne); Melbourne Hebrew Congregation's Register of Births (held by the A.J.H.S. Archives, Victoria). The family lived successively in Victoria Street East, Carlton; 7 Burlington Terrace, East Melbourne; and 33 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy.
  38. *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 May 1866.
  39. *ibid.*, 19 October 1866.
  40. Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 181.
  41. *ibid.*
  42. In 1871 the *Jewish Chronicle* described him as having "earned for himself the good opinions of all men". *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 March 1871.
  43. *Jewish Weekly News*, 26 October 1934.
  44. See H. J. Wrixon, *The Condition and Prospects of Australia as compared with Other Lands: a lecture delivered at the Princess' Theatre, Melbourne, on May 3, 1869*, Melbourne, 1869, p. 24.
  45. *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 October 1866; 17 January 1868; 3 January 1896.



46. During his first year with MHC, Ornstien resurrected the Synagogue Choir which had functioned briefly under Rev. Myers. Under the direction of Mark Capua, the choir became a fixture at Bourke Street and the other congregations eventually followed suit. *ibid.*, 23 July 1867; Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 181–182.
47. Aron & Arndt, *op cit.*, p. 39; Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 204.
48. *Australian Israelite*, 28 February 1873. For more detail on Ornstien's involvement with Jewish education in Melbourne, see Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 204–210. Aron & Arndt, *op cit.*, p. 39–40, note that, "as head of the Jewish denomination in Victoria", he gave evidence to the Royal Commission into Education in 1866, and that the 1872 legislation "largely corresponded to what Ornstien had advocated ..."
49. *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 March 1871.
50. St Kilda Hebrew Congregation Minutes, 21 April 1872. St Kilda's Reform advocates eventually requisitioned regular fortnightly sermons, and the Sabbath address ultimately became a central feature of services there. See *ibid.*, 4 June 1877; *Jewish Herald*, 17 June 1904. Similarly, following Rintel's death, regular preaching became a feature at East Melbourne, under Rev. Isidore Myers.
51. *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 March 1867; 10 March 1871.
52. *Melbourne Herald*, 18 January 1869.
53. *Australian Israelite*, 9 October 1874.
54. *Weekly Times*, 11 November 1871.
55. *Australian Israelite*, 17 October 1873.
56. *ibid.*, 3 October & 17 October 1873.
57. *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 December 1869.
58. *Australian Israelite*, 15 November 1872. Keen to acquaint the local community with its traditions and history, Ornstien stepped beyond the pulpit and published an edition of Menasseh Ben Israel's *Humble Addresses* in 1868. Like his sermons, his "Introduction" testified to the minister's extensive reading and education. His prefatory remarks paid tribute to the architect of Jewish resettlement in Britain, and enthusiastically highlighted the benefits enjoyed by Jews as English citizens. See *To His Highness the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland: The Humble Addresses of Menasseh Ben Israel, a Divine, and Doctor of Physic, in behalf of the Jewish Nation*, ed. A. F. Ornstien, Melbourne, 1868, p. 2.
59. *Australian Israelite*, 6 October 1871; 8 December 1871; 3 May 1872.
60. *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 July 1867.
61. *ibid.*, 15 February 1867.
62. *ibid.*, 6 & 13 November 1868.
63. *Australian Israelite*, 1 March 1872. Earlier, critics of the minister had complained that his reading of the Torah was inefficient, and that his sermons were inadequately prepared. Aron & Arndt, *op cit.*, p. 40.
64. Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 181.
65. *ibid.*, p. 241; *Australian Israelite*, 8 September 1871.
66. *Australian Israelite*, 19 January 1872.
67. During the family's stay in Melbourne, four more children were born: Dinah Florence in 1868, Kate Martha in 1870, Rose Blanche in 1872, and Sara Daisy in 1874.
68. Letter from Ornstien to President and Committee of MHC, 27 February 1872. Quoted, *Australian Israelite*, 8 March 1872.
69. Letter from A. Levy, Hon Secretary of MHC, to Ornstien, 28 February 1872. Quoted *ibid.*
70. Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 241–242.
71. *Australian Israelite*, 22 March 1872.
72. *ibid.*, 20 September 1872; 13 December 1872; Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 243.
73. Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 62.



74. *Australian Israelite*, 26 December 1873.
75. *ibid.*, 23 February 1872. See Angel Ellis' comments on the Jewish ministry. He notes that only Ornstien was a trained man, and that Rintel and Pulver "had been laymen like themselves".
76. Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 185–186.
77. *ibid.*, p. 186; *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 September 1867.
78. *Argus*, 15 & 16 July 1867. Aron & Arndt, *op cit.*, p. 180, write: "It is particularly ironic that Rintel's supporters were able to use such accolades given that the Rev. Rintel was of Ashkenazic Eastern European origin, and it was Ornstien who had a Sephardic connection in his background".
79. Letter from Chief Rabbi Adler to Henri J. Hart, 10 June 1869. Quoted, *Argus*, 5 November 1869.
80. *Argus*, 21 October 1869.
81. *ibid.* Quoted, Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 191.
82. Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 191.
83. *ibid.*, p. 194.
84. *ibid.*
85. Quoted, *Australian Israelite*, 29 December 1871.
86. *ibid.*, 12 December 1873.
87. *ibid.*, 22 May 1874; Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 194–196.
88. *ibid.*
89. Letter from Chief Rabbi Adler to MHC's Committee, 3 July, 1874. Quoted, *Australian Israelite*, 11 September 1874.
90. Rintel resumed his place on the Beth Din, and became chairman in name as well as in practice, by the late 1870s. *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 December 1879.
91. *Australian Israelite*, 20 June 1873.
92. One disillusioned critic observed of Rintel: "Moses the Lawgiver himself would have been unable to work with him". *Dialectic*, 5, August–September 1875.
93. *Australian Israelite*, 12 December 1873.
94. *ibid.*, 24 October 1873.
95. Correspondence quoted *ibid.*, 26 December 1873. Aron & Arndt, *op cit.*, p. 40, 325, cite Ornstien's decision to allow a non-Jew to porge meat, and his unsanctioned authorisation of a patent pan and dough-mixer (for preparing Matzos), as indicative of his lack of familiarity with Jewish Law.
96. Quoted, *Australian Israelite*, 26 December 1873.
97. *ibid.*, 2 January & 20 February 1874.
98. *ibid.*, 9 January 1874.
99. Rintel concluded: "I am now determined not to submit tamely to be deprived of my rights of any one ... still less will I calmly endure the unblushing effrontery of one whom I know to be inferior to myself in most of the qualifications required by a 'spiritual head' ... If I cannot succeed in enjoying the same amount of peace and harmony that existed between myself and Mr. Ornstien's predecessors, I must rest satisfied with the feeling that I am not the cause of discord and strife by any unwarrantable assertions of a claim to which I have not a shadow of a title". *ibid.*
100. *ibid.*, 30 January 1874.
101. *ibid.*, 2 October 1874.
102. Quoted *ibid.*, 12 February & 12 March 1875.
103. *ibid.*, 19 March 1875.
104. Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 243.
105. *Australian Israelite*, 9 October 1874.
106. *ibid.*, 11 December, 1874; 9 April 1875; Goldman, *op cit.*, p. 243.



107. *Australian Israelite*, 23 October 1874.
108. *ibid.*, 11 December 1874.
109. *ibid.*
110. Ornstien's Correspondence, quoted *ibid.*, 7 May 1875.
111. Congregation B'nai Yeshurun Minutes, 20 December 1874.
112. *Dialectic*, 5, August–September 1875.
113. *ibid.*, 3, June–July 1875.
114. Congregation B'nai Yeshurun Minutes, 8 October & 20 December 1874.
115. *Australian Israelite*, 16 April 1875.
116. Congregation B'nai Yeshurun Minutes, 23 June 1875.
117. See *Australian Israelite*, 5 April 1875; *Dialectic*, 3, June–July 1875.
118. I am indebted to Judd Levingston for providing information on Ornstien's association with B'nai Yeshurun.
119. *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 September & 1 October 1858.
120. *ibid.*
121. *ibid.*, 22 & 29 March 1872; See also *Australian Israelite*, 20 March 1874.
122. *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 January 1874.
123. *ibid.*, 17 September 1880.
124. *ibid.*, 10 & 17 September 1880.
125. *ibid.*, 8 October 1880.
126. *ibid.*, 10 September, 17 September, 24 September & 8 October 1880.
127. *ibid.*, 10, 17 & 24 September 1880.
128. *Australasian Hebrew*, 7 February 1896.
129. *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 June, 1910.
130. Daughter Rachel May was born and died in 1877; daughter Sara Daisy (b. Melbourne 1874) died in 1879; son Raymond Nathan was born and died in 1879. The Ornstiens' last child, Grace Marion, was born in 1880.
131. See *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 August 1881; 21 July 1882. Before departing England, Ornstien was honoured with the obligatory testimonials and illuminated addresses by the college, the Portsmouth congregation, the local Jewish Literary Society and Hebrew Benevolent Institution. *ibid.*, 3 March, 1882. He was replaced by Rev. Dr. Berlin, who only stayed for two years. When Berlin resigned, the *Jewish Chronicle* commented: "The chances of good results from Aria College were always doubtful. Failure is, however, inevitable unless some means can be adopted of retaining the services of the head-master for more than a couple of years". *ibid.*, 25 January, 1884. Even so, the college struggled on. An attempt to amalgamate it with Jews' College (in 1902) was soundly rejected by the Portsmouth community, and the institution managed to stay in existence until 1957! The sale of the college enabled the trustees to set up a fund for Jews' College students. Aubrey Weinberg observes: "The Aria College trust ... with the Chief Rabbi as its chairman, thus continues to sustain the original intentions of its founder, 'the training and maintenance of young men as Jewish divines on orthodox Jewish principles'" Weinberg, *op cit.*, p. 20–22.
132. Daniel Elazar & Peter Medding, *Jewish Communities in Frontier societies: Argentina, Australia and South Africa*, New York, 1983, p. 166.
133. Ornstien's observations were made in a letter to friends in Melbourne. He had continued: "If Judaism has to depend in the future on its progress in the colonies, then its glory is surely departed". Quoted, *Australian Israelite*, 7 May 1875.
134. Elazar & Medding, *op cit.*, p. 167.
135. Gustav Saron & Louis Hotz, *The Jews in South Africa: a history*, Cape Town, 1955, p. 89; Israel Abrahams, *The Birth of a Community: a history of Western Province Jewry from earliest times to the end of the South African War*, 1902, Vol 1, Cape Town, 1955, p. 52.



136. Abrahams, *ibid.*, p. 54.
137. *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 January 1896.
138. *ibid.*, 9 November 1883; 3 October 1884.
139. Abrahams, *op cit.*, p. 49–50; Louis Herrman, *A History of the Jews in South Africa*, London, 1930, p. 258–259. One contemporary described the renovated building as a “bijou synagogue .... indescribable architecturally, although it has some pretensions to the Byzantine”. *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 July 1891; See also *Jewish Standard*, 10 October 1890.
140. Hermann, *op cit.*, p. 260–261; Abrahams, *op cit.*, p. 84.
141. Abrahams, *ibid.*, p. 82.
142. *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 August 1890; 3 January 1896.
143. In view of his zeal for Freemasonry in Cape Town, it seems surprising that no mention remains of any such involvement while Ornstien was in Melbourne. Perhaps Rintel’s prominence in Melbourne Lodges may have been a factor. For an examination of Jews and Masonry, see Margaret Chapman’s article, “Jews and Freemasonry in the colony of Victoria 1840–1900”, *AJH.S. Journal*, 11(3), 1991.
144. Abrahams, *op cit.*, p. 84–85; see also Leibl Feldman, *Oudtshoorn: Jerusalem of Africa*, Johannesburg, 1989, p. 151. (Feldman assesses that Ornstien’s “moral courage and zeal somewhat exceeded his tact and charm ...”).
145. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol 12, Jerusalem, 1973, p. 1473.
146. This devotion included a continuing rejection of “Reform” innovations. One congregant observed: “I can safely prophesy that it will be many years before an ‘organ-shool’ will rear its head in Cape Town”. *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 July 1891.
147. *ibid.* Accounts of Ornstien’s sermons in Cape Town indicate that his preaching had lost little of its vigour in the years since he left Melbourne. See, for example, *Jewish Standard*, 10 October & 24 October 1890.
148. Abrahams, *op cit.*, p. 79–80.
149. Elazar & Medding, *op cit.*, p. 173; Herrman, *op cit.*, p. 263.
150. *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 February 1888.
151. Abrahams, *op cit.*, p. 79. Louis Herrman notes that Ornstien’s South African ministry was dogged by “interminable differences” over Kashrut within the Cape Town community. For detail, see Herrman, *op cit.*, p. 262–263.
152. Abrahams, *op cit.*, p. 81.
153. *ibid.*, p. 85.
154. Ornstien’s illness was subsequently blamed on his “inveterate” cigar-smoking. *Australasian Hebrew*, 21 February 1896.
155. For instance, he was too ill to officiate during the 1893 High Holydays. *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 October 1893.
156. Abrahams, *op cit.*, p. 84; Herrman, *op cit.*, p. 265.
157. Ironically, Ornstien was elected to this new congregation’s interim committee at a meeting which had to be translated into Yiddish for the benefit of many in attendance. *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 September 1895.
158. Abraham Ornstien was survived by his wife Julia, who died in Cape Town in 1910. Their son John married a cousin, Natasha(?) Emanuel, changed his name to Orenstein, and died in 1951. Rebecca m. Bernard Arenstein, d. 1924; Frances m. Julius Vogl, d. 1945; Dinah m. Jacob Levenburg, d. 1942; Marie m. Mark Cohen, d. 1940; Kate m. Henry Brooks, d. 1958; Rose m. Joseph Kossuth, d. 1927; Grace m. Herman Lee, d. 1969. Ornstien’s nephew (another Abraham, son of Phineas) also entered the South African ministry; born in 1863, he served the Kimberley congregation briefly before his untimely death in 1885. (Information from Bob Metter and Jewish Museum, Cape Town).
159. *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 January 1896.



## "A DISGRACE TO CHRISTENDOM": AUSTRALIAN REACTIONS TO THE DREYFUS AFFAIR

Hilary L. Rubinstein

One hundred years ago this year Alsatian-born artillery officer Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the only Jew on the French army's General Staff, was wrongfully convicted of offering military secrets for sale to Germany. He had been charged on the basis of an intercepted document judged to be in his handwriting. The ensuing Dreyfus Affair (1894-99), heavily charged with anti-Semitism, was one of the seminal events in modern Jewish history. It rocked *fin-de-siècle* Europe, and led eventually to the downfall of France's rightwing government. As an example of the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism even in western Europe, moreover in a country which since its Revolution had been regarded as the very crucible of liberalism and toleration, the Affair led directly to Theodor Herzl's conversion to Zionism. Herzl, who had covered Dreyfus' trial and degradation for a leading Viennese newspaper, wrote *Der Judenstaat* (published in 1896) as a result of what he had witnessed: thus the Affair led, in a sense, to the eventual establishment of the State of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

The bare facts of the sensational Affair are well-known. Still loudly proclaiming his innocence, Dreyfus began a lifetime's imprisonment on the notorious Ile du Diable off the coast of French Guiana; later the implicating document was traced to another General Staff officer, Major Ferdinand Walsin-Esterhazy, who was nevertheless triumphantly acquitted by a military tribunal; the novelist Emile Zola thereupon published an open letter entitled "J'Accuse" to the president of the republic, denouncing by name the General Staff members associated with the condemnation of Dreyfus; the man who in the meantime had become chief of the intelligence service, Colonel Hubert Henry, admitted forging a decisive document pertinent to Dreyfus' conviction and promptly committed suicide; a retrial for Dreyfus, demanded by his wife Lucie, brother Mathieu, Zola and their supporters was subsequently granted; despite the overwhelming evidence in his favour, the second courtmartial (held at Rennes in 1899) convicted an innocent man rather than undermine the honour of the army and sentenced him to ten years' imprisonment; in the face of such a travesty and amid furore the French president, Emile Loubet, immediately granted a pardon to Dreyfus whose supporters fought on until 1906 when his name was cleared and his army career restored.<sup>2</sup>

Less well-known than those milestones is the reaction to the Affair which was manifested throughout the English-speaking world, including Australia, and which would appear to have been largely ignored by historians.<sup>3</sup> While it might be expected that a considerable measure of anti-Semitism would have been engendered by the Affair the exact opposite was the case. In Australia and elsewhere, extraordinary, spontaneous support for Dreyfus gripped virtually all of public opinion, involving dozens of "elite" members of society and opinion and policy-makers in rallies and speeches on behalf of Dreyfus, often accompanied by robust denunciations of anti-Semitism and expressions of philo-Semitism. Since in the light of all the startling information which had become known since 1894 Dreyfus was clearly innocent, an enormous wave of disbelief and disgust swept the western world, particularly English-speaking countries, when the verdict of the Rennes courtmartial was announced. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* editorialised:

To say that this decision will be received by the civilised world with surprise is to put the matter mildly. The judges have found "extenuating circumstances", in consideration of which the sentence of 1894 — deportation to and confinement in a fortress for life — has been



reduced to confinement in a fortress for ten years. How can there be "extenuating circumstances" in a case of this kind? The saddest thing is that from this decision there is no appeal.<sup>4</sup>

In the wake of the verdict demonstrations of support for Dreyfus and his family were held in numerous towns and cities, especially in the English-speaking world; newspaper correspondence columns were filled with letters expressing outrage at the verdict; manufacturers threatened to boycott the upcoming Paris Exhibition; the French flag was destroyed. "Never before in the history of nations was there such a spontaneous and unanimous outburst of indignation over the result of a trial as has been witnessed during the last few days" editorialised the *South Australian Register* on 16 September 1899. "Rulers and governments have adopted a neutral attitude; but in every civilised country the verdict has been publicly denounced in almost vitriolic terms."

Dreyfus seems to have been reluctant to ascribe his arrest and initial sentence to Jew-hatred, and doubt has been expressed concerning his reputed outburst to one of his guards shortly after he was arrested that the reason he was "being persecuted" was because he was a Jew. Unlike his wife, who preserved an attachment to Judaism, Dreyfus was apparently virtually indifferent to his ancestral religion.<sup>5</sup> He was an arch-assimilationist (in the integrationist, not absorptionist, sense). Still, he was not an apostate nor an advocate of apostasy. He was a Jew, and France's anti-Semites had made merry with that fact, however big or small the part actually played by anti-Semitism in his arrest and conviction.<sup>6</sup> And much of the sympathy with him in France and overseas, including Australia, was couched in terms of solidarity with him as a victimised member of an historically persecuted people. In fact, the extent and strength of the support seems to have surprised Jewish observers as much as it delighted them. "One's Christian fellow countrymen seem to be trying to do their best to make reparation for a wrong done a co-religionist by a foreign nation", marvelled the Melbourne *Jewish Herald's* London correspondent. "So strong are sentiments of appreciation and reverence for the Jews at present ... we are having quite a boom..."<sup>7</sup>

That "boom" held Australia in its grip no less than other western nations. "Australian opinions on the verdict have been much appreciated..." commented that same correspondent. As elsewhere, Australian manifestations of support for Dreyfus erupted spontaneously across the country, in capital cities and rural townlets, and took the same form as in Britain, North America, parts of continental Europe - and indeed in New Zealand too.<sup>8</sup> Jewish leaders, used to Australian goodwill and tolerance, were nevertheless overwhelmed by it all. For to them Dreyfus had become a symbol of persecuted Jewry. Reverend A.T. Boas of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation, for example, spoke of his

deep commiseration and burning pity ... for our much-oppressed and persecuted co-religionist ... who has unjustly suffered martyrdom ... Angels in Heaven must weep for such a national crime ...

He noted that the Rennes verdict had "created almost a consternation among all right-thinking men and women throughout the world."<sup>9</sup> Reverend I.M. Goldreich of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation declared that Jews "could rest assured that by God's will Dreyfus would yet be able to triumph over his persecutors ... Dreyfus was not a traitor in need of a pardon, but a man true both to his country and to his religion."<sup>10</sup> Through its president Jacob Marks, its minister, Reverend Dr. Joseph Abrahams, and two other officials, the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation wrote of "the long suffering and cruelly injured martyr."<sup>11</sup>

It had not always been thus. When Dreyfus was initially convicted, most if not all Jewish leaders in Australia assumed that Dreyfus was guilty and took pains to distance



themselves from his case. In this they were not unique: Herzl himself at first believed that Dreyfus must be guilty.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it seems to be an arguable point whether anti-Semitism was the sole or even the main reason for Dreyfus' initial conviction, as he himself seems to have recognised, despite the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism, much of it extremely nasty, on the anti-Dreyfusard side. Dreyfus' Alsatian (as distinct from Jewish) origin and the fact that he had brothers who after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 chose German citizenship, rather than French as he had, apparently made the charge against him at least plausible.<sup>13</sup> Reverend D.I. Freedman of the Perth Hebrew Congregation described it as "an unlucky accident" that the accused was a Jew.<sup>14</sup> Indeed it was. It was unlucky because it brought the anti-Semites out of the shadows; it was unlucky because mud thrown at one Jew would stick to others, and because the misdeeds of one Jew would rebound upon them all.

The London correspondent of the *Jewish Herald* tried to put a brave face on things: he suggested that Dreyfus might yet prove to be a romantic kind of spy, a French agent deliberately selling bogus information to the Germans.<sup>15</sup> Such a fanciful, even desperate, notion carried no weight with the paper's eminently commonsensical editor, Reverend Elias Blaubaum of the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation. It was, he knew all too well, the era of antisemitic parties in his native Germany and in Austria, of demagogues such as the infamous Viennese mayor Karl Lueger, who exploited Jew-hatred for their own political ends, and of increased persecution of Jews in Russia. Blaubaum was prepared for the worst. Continental anti-Semites, he warned, would henceforth make maximum capital out of "the despicable act of the Jew, Albert [*sic*] Dreyfus." Probably, Blaubaum was also fearful of an anti-Semitic backlash in Australia and other English-speaking lands. Not long since, a babble of protests had greeted a press report that up to 500,000 impoverished Russian Jews were arriving in Victoria under a scheme devised by Baron Maurice de Hirsch. Those protests staggered Blaubaum, a man with an exquisite sense of social justice and a seemingly boundless faith in the goodwill of the generality of residents of his adopted country. It seems clear enough that the root cause of the protests was fear of cheap labour and consequently depressed wages, and would have greeted the introduction of a huge influx of any foreigners, whatever their nationality — and probably even British workers. However, some of the opposition was expressed in undeniably anti-Semitic terms. The fact that the Russian Jews were supposedly coming to set up agricultural colonies did not seem convincing to people accustomed to think of Jews as urban-dwellers, and it was widely believed that such colonies would not last and that the newcomers would inevitably drift to the cities and compete for jobs. Though Blaubaum, arguably the most vigilant and redoubtable of all colonial Australian Jewish leaders, still rarely hesitated to thrust, as it were, a "terrible swift sword" at anyone denigrating Jews or Judaism, his confidence in the essential and widespread tolerance of Australians was apparently shaken; he cautioned Jews to ensure that their behaviour was impeccable to give gentiles no grounds for prejudice. It was the slow beginning of that cult of circumspection and group inconspicuousness which would reach its apotheosis — perhaps nadir is a more appropriate word — in the interwar period.<sup>16</sup>

Like most other Jewish leaders in 1894 Blaubaum had no doubt that Dreyfus had been justly convicted. "We feel sure that no class of people regrets more than we Jews do not only that such a heinous crime should have been committed, but also that it should have been committed by one of our race." Always censorious of Jews who were lax in their observance, befitting his calling, Blaubaum almost sought comfort in the possibility that Dreyfus might be counted among them: "We are, of course, not in a position to know to what extent the culprit lived and acted generally in accordance with Jewish principles..."<sup>17</sup>



It is surely no mere coincidence that the first Australian Jewish leader who called publicly for justice for Dreyfus was Reverend Freedman of Perth. Young and somewhat impetuous Hungarian-born Freedman was a Zionist, a supporter of Chovevei Zion who was soon to be a political Zionist in the Herzlian sense.<sup>18</sup> On 15 August 1898, when the catalogue of dirty deeds in the Affair had become generally known but before Colonel Henry had admitted to forgery, Freedman gave a two-hour lecture in Perth on the Affair on behalf of his congregation's synagogue building fund. "Dreyfus was a Jew, and, therefore must be guilty. Here was a splendid opportunity for those who wished to exclude Jews from the army ... proof that no Jew could be patriotic."<sup>19</sup>

Sitting alongside Freedman in Perth's St. George's Hall was Sir Alexander Onslow, chief justice of Western Australia, who introduced the lecture and added some pertinent remarks of his own. The Affair was "one of the most hideous and cruel cases on record ... a miscarriage of justice" which must surely be set to rights. Such a "scandal" could never happen in British lands.<sup>20</sup> That was a fortnight before Colonel Henry admitted culpability, after which Lucie Dreyfus demanded a retrial for her husband. Onslow, therefore, would appear to have been the first prominent Australian to speak out on the Dreyfusard side.

In light of subsequent events, he was joined by scores of his peers, as well as by hundreds if not thousands of ordinary Australians across the country. Thus in September 1899, as soon as the verdict of the Rennes courtmartial was announced, an enormous outpouring of sympathy for Dreyfus swept Australia. It was not an orchestrated campaign, but a spontaneous manifestation of outrage which was demonstrated by numerous individuals — public figures and private citizens — and dozens of newspaper editorials. For almost a fortnight the tribulations of the convicted man dominated newspaper columns under headlines bearing such words as "Jew-baiters" and "iniquity",<sup>21</sup> alongside reports of the deepening crisis in the Transvaal which led to the Boer War. A visitor to Sydney named Gustave Adolphe Blumenthal, who claimed to be a second cousin of Dreyfus, gave an exclusive interview to the local *Evening News*.<sup>22</sup>

When, in 1894, the Australian press carried reports that a French army captain had been convicted of passing secrets to the enemy, the Jewishness of the accused had scarcely rated a mention. Perhaps that in itself is a guide to levels of anti-Semitism in Australia. The *West Australian*, for one, suggested that anti-Semitism might have been a factor in the verdict itself, but kept an open mind. Whatever the case

it is many generations since such a universal condemnation has been heard. Whatever may be the explanation ... there can be no doubt that the civilised world has in its turn sat in judgment on the trial, and has given its judgment in the plainest terms. Probably not in our time has such a stirring of the world's conscience been witnessed.<sup>23</sup>

Many newspapers did not hesitate to cast Dreyfus in the role of persecuted Jew. "The fastening of the charge of treachery on Dreyfus was plainly due to a wave of anti-semitic feeling which was then passing over France," reported the *Sydney Morning Herald*. "He was a Jew, the only Jew on the headquarters staff in Paris."<sup>24</sup> "In 1894 Dreyfus was made the scapegoat to bear the sins of others", declared the *Australasian*. "Treachery was going on, and the traitors found it expedient to cast the blame on a Jew, against whom the flame of anti-Semitic feeling was easily raised."<sup>25</sup> The *South Australian Register* described Dreyfus as "the martyr of a corrupt military system" and the Rennes verdict as "simply infamous", a "scandal", a product of "wickedness" and it carried a chronology of the Affair which asserted that "Dreyfus, being a Jew, is suspected."<sup>26</sup> Similarly, many of the Australian public figures and others who clamoured for the Rennes verdict to be overturned spoke explicitly of Dreyfus' Jewishness as a major if



not the principal reason for his plight. For example, J.C. Neild, a member of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, observed that "Dreyfus was a member of an ancient race which was by no means popular in France."<sup>27</sup> J.C. MacCullagh, the Anglican archdeacon of Bendigo, "felt keenly and bitterly that one reason why Dreyfus was persecuted was because he was a Jew."<sup>28</sup> Such spoken assertions met with support from their listeners. Additionally, other speakers implicitly referred to Dreyfus' Jewishness. Lady Darley, wife of the chief justice of New South Wales, remarked that the plight of Dreyfus "made one imagine that we had returned to the dark ages."<sup>29</sup> Victorian parliamentarian W.A. Hamilton MLA expressed "horror and indignation that such a thing could happen in the nineteenth century."<sup>30</sup>

It is entirely likely that had an obviously innocent non-Jew been wrongfully convicted as Dreyfus had, a huge wave of liberal opinion in Australia and elsewhere would have similarly clamoured for justice. Yet it seems improbable that the wrongful conviction of a non-Jew would have struck quite the chord that this case did. The entire Dreyfus Affair was laced with anti-Semitism, much of it extremely vicious, and it seems undeniable that those clamouring for justice understood that they were acting on behalf of Dreyfus the Jew as well as Dreyfus the man, even if they did not explicitly say so. That this was a *Jewish* cause is indicated by the large number of Christian clergymen who rallied to it in an obvious spirit of regret for Christian anti-Semitism, and by the wording of some of the resolutions passed at public meetings, which demanded justice for all irrespective of race or religion. The Ballarat Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures described the verdict as "a disgrace to Christendom".<sup>31</sup>

Australian Jewish leaders had no doubt that it was a *Jewish* cause, and for that reason they were glad that gentiles had made the running. The fact that gentiles had taken the initiative in arranging public meetings and issuing protests — sending denunciatory cables to the tacitly Dreyfusard Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro* was a favourite — not only indicated the amount of goodwill in Australia; it made it difficult for people to claim that Jews had orchestrated the campaign.<sup>32</sup>

The first shots in that campaign were fired, it seems, in Balaklava, a small township in South Australia, several residents of which cabled *Le Figaro* to record their outrage at the Rennes verdict, an example quickly followed by residents of the New South Wales settlement of Yea.<sup>33</sup> Similar condemnations poured forth from various forums. Major public meetings were held in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth — it seems likely that they were held in Adelaide and Brisbane too — as well as in many smaller centres.<sup>34</sup>

In Melbourne the proposal to hold a mass protest rally "to express their detestation of the cruelty and injustice of which the unhappy Dreyfus has been the victim, and at the same time their heartfelt sympathy with his wife and children" was made in a letter to both local dailies by Dr. Alexander Leeper, warden of Trinity College, University of Melbourne. "If the same course were adopted in all great centres of population in the civilised world it might do something towards an awakening of the moral sense of a once noble people, and at any rate, the assurance of universal sympathy might bring some ray of comfort to the sufferers in their terrible affliction. It would be to the glory of Melbourne to lead the way in such a cause."<sup>35</sup> The following evening, 13 September 1899, a preliminary meeting of citizens was held in the Athenaeum Hall to plan the public rally: the place was thronged, and Leeper and W.H. Embling MLC, who chaired the meeting, were greeted with cheers. There were further cheers when Leeper announced that during the afternoon both houses of the Victorian parliament had decided to cable Madame Dreyfus expressing sympathy. The committee which was appointed to plan the big rally and frame the resolutions contained such well-known names as Embling (chairman), Leeper, future Australian prime minister Alfred Deakin,



MLA, John Anderson MLA, Sir John McIntyre, Judge Johnson, historian Henry Gyles Turner and his wife Helen, F.T. Derham (chairman of the Melbourne Chamber of Manufactures), Dr. G.O. Vance (Dean of Melbourne), Canon Potter, and Rev. E.H. Sugden (principal of Queen's College). Several other clergymen served on the committee, as well as other people, including women. In a typical exposition of Jewish communal reluctance to take the spotlight away from gentile supporters, E.L. Zox MLA declined to serve, but he did move a vote of thanks to Leeper for convening the meeting.<sup>36</sup> Maurice Brodzky was also involved in preliminary arrangements: he seconded a motion at the Athenaeum Hall meeting, pressing the reluctant lord mayor of Melbourne for permission to use the Town Hall for the rally.<sup>37</sup> Even so, at the planning stage Jews were conspicuous by their relative absence.

Initially, the Lord Mayor had proved opposed to making the Town Hall available, explaining that while he felt "as strongly as anyone" towards the "injustice" at the Rennes courtmartial, he balked at "any public action in Melbourne to criticise [the] action of [a] foreign state."<sup>38</sup> However, he changed his mind — probably after an undertaking that the speakers would choose their words carefully — and the rally went ahead at short notice on Friday, 16 September. Despite the fact that it took place during office hours (perhaps to enable Jews to attend) the Town Hall was crowded. In the absence of the Mayor, who was in Queensland, Alderman Ham MLC was in the chair, and on the platform sat Embling, Leeper, Godfrey MLC, Richard Toutcher MLA, F.R. Godfrey, Henry Gyles Turner, Canon Potter, Reverend J. Hoatson, and German-born Reverend Pastor Herman Herlitz. The latter, based in the Geelong suburb of Germantown (now Grovedale) was the senior Lutheran clergyman in Victoria. He had been born a Jew. Telegrams of solidarity were received from the Dean of Melbourne, from Archdeacon Langley, Reverend A.R. Edgar and Reverend Dr. Rentoul. Also on the platform were five Jews, who deliberately refrained from making speeches: Reverend Joseph Abrahams, Sir Benjamin Benjamin, Councillor Jacob Marks, Nathaniel Levi MLC and E.L. Zox MLA. It would be one of the last public appearances for Zox, who like Levi could always be relied upon to defend Jewish interests; he died shortly afterwards.<sup>39</sup> The *Jewish Herald* believed that the most effective speech came from Canon Potter, "well-known for his whole-hearted sympathy with all who are wronged or oppressed — Jew, Turk or Chinaman alike."<sup>40</sup> Potter, in seconding the first resolution (moved by Toutcher) described the verdict as "not a mere accidental failure of justice ... an absolute perversion, and it had only to go on a little further to turn the whole country [France] into a race of brigands." That resolution, carried unanimously amid cheers, stated: "That this meeting of the citizens of Melbourne ... records its indignation at the verdict of the courtmartial on Captain Alfred Dreyfus at Rennes, and expresses its heartfelt sympathy with the accused, his wife and family." The second resolution, also passed amid cheers, was moved by Embling, who declared that "The movement in which they were assisting was one of the most wonderful of the civilised world." Seconded by prominent Anglican businessman F.R. Godfrey (known as a champion of the Aborigines), the resolution ran: "That this meeting, in the name of our common humanity, which recognises no prejudice of nationality, race or religion" — at this point cheers erupted — "appeals to France to which the world's progress owes so much to deal out even justice in the Dreyfus case." The third resolution, moved by Henry Gyles Turner and seconded by S. Mauger, head of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, was also carried unanimously. It read: 'That the chairman transmit the resolutions at once by cable to Madame Dreyfus'. A suggestion by Maurice Brodzky that the cable should be sent to Madame Dreyfus via *Le Figaro* was deemed inappropriate by the chairman.<sup>41</sup>

In Sydney "a considerable gathering of gentlemen" assembled at the Hotel Australia to plan a mass meeting in response to a call by Archibald Forsyth JP, who was in the chair.



Forsyth declared that he "felt more indignant" at the Rennes verdict "than on any other matter he remembered. J.C. Neild called the Affair "the crime of the century" and said 'every lover of justice and humanity should put aside bashfulness and take action in this case.'<sup>42</sup> The ensuing mass meeting carried resolutions protesting the Rennes verdict; expressing the utmost sympathy with Dreyfus, his wife and family; appealing to the French nation to insist that full justice should be done, and expressing admiration at the heroic efforts of Madame Dreyfus, Colonel Georges Picquart, and Emile Zola.<sup>43</sup>

A mass meeting was convened in Perth under the chairmanship of the mayor, Alexander Forrest MLA, in response to a petition by ratepayers. As at comparable meetings in other centres, local notables, including Christian clergymen, played a prominent part in proceedings. B.C. Wood MLA seconded one of the resolutions. Like its counterparts in the eastern colonies, the local Jewish community appears to have stayed largely in the background. The principal resolution recorded the meeting's "abhorrence of the shameful outrage on justice" at Rennes and of 'the shocking "inhumanity" shown towards Dreyfus, as well as "admiration of the brave fortitude with which [he] has borne his tortures and wrongs." It paid tribute to "the noble conduct" of the Affair's heroes — Zola, Picquart and Mathieu Dreyfus — and expressed "heartfelt sympathy" to the Affair's heroine, Madame Dreyfus. The meeting closed amid three cheers for Dreyfus himself.<sup>44</sup>

Capital cities were not the only venues for packed meetings. For instance, a cable advised French prime minister René Waldeck-Rousseau that the citizens of Bendigo "sympathise with Dreyfus and family, and hope that France will do justice."<sup>45</sup> A well-attended meeting of Geelong citizens, which included T.C. Harwood MLC, cabled Madame Dreyfus, President Loubet, and *Le Figaro* with its expression of "deepest sympathy with the sufferer, his wife, and his family" and asked "in the name of God and humanity, that the innocent be exonerated and the guilty punished."<sup>46</sup> An Italian string band which started to play the "Marseillaise" at the annual dinner of the Geelong Coursing Club was forced to stop by the indignant crowd.<sup>47</sup> After the report of Dreyfus' pardon was received, public subscriptions enabled the mayor to cable *Le Figaro*: "It cannot be sufficient to pardon an innocent man whilst the guilty are allowed to go free."<sup>48</sup> By contrast, a public meeting in Ararat, chaired by the mayor, expressed its "keen sense of appreciation" at Loubet's action which had been instrumental "in saving the honor of the French Republic." This resolution was sent to the French consul in Melbourne for transmission to the president himself. A resolution of sympathy with Madame Dreyfus was also carried.<sup>49</sup>

Practising Christians and their clergy were swift to condemn the verdict. Canon Hayman of Christ Church, Hamilton, for instance, described it as "the most appalling prostitution of justice that the modern world has known."<sup>50</sup> Reverend A.S.C. James of St. Andrew's Church, Bendigo, called it "one of the foulest crimes and one of the bitterest outrages of the nineteenth century."<sup>51</sup> James chaired a meeting in Bendigo of representatives of the Ministers' Association and Council of Churches, to express sympathy with Dreyfus and to draft resolutions for submission at a public meeting they convened under the chairmanship of the local member, Dr. (later Sir) John Quick. On the platform at that meeting were several clergymen, including Archdeacon MacCullagh and the local Jewish minister, Rev. J.D. Goldstein, three members of the Legislative Assembly, A.S. Bailes, W.A. Hamilton, and D.C. Sterry, and municipal dignitaries. The meeting carried three resolutions:

Presuming on the honesty and truth of the reports in the daily press, this meeting views with regret and indignation the miscarriage of justice in connection with the Dreyfus trial.



As justice is a principle dear to the hearts of all higher humanity, this meeting desires to earnestly protest against justice being rendered subservient to expediency in the case and to express its sympathy with those in France who are endeavouring to uphold righteousness, truth and justice.

That this meeting presents profound sympathy with Captain Dreyfus and his wife and family.<sup>52</sup>

In Ballarat at the eighth diocesan festival of the Church of England, which occurred just after news of Dreyfus' pardon had been received, the local bishop, Dr. Samuel Thornton, remarked on the attention given to the Affair by the newspapers. At the mention of Dreyfus' name the 500 men and women present burst into thunderous applause and gave "three ringing cheers" for President Loubet's action.<sup>53</sup> Also after the pardon, Reverend J.A. Soper was responsible for an enthusiastically carried motion in Ballarat: "That this meeting rejoices in the release of Captain Dreyfus, and deeply sympathises with him in his determination to assert his innocence."<sup>54</sup> And in his presidential address to the Church of England Assembly, Dean Vance said: "I rejoice that the first cry of the infant Commonwealth has been a unanimous protest in the name of humanity against such an act of monstrous perfidy and intolerable wrong, and I rejoice that it was one of ourselves, a member of this assembly [James] who on that occasion sounded the rally and led the city voices." His remarks were "heartily cheered."<sup>55</sup>

The widespread esteem in which Madame Dreyfus was held was captured in a letter to the *Argus* which applauded

the courageous and devoted young wife of Captain Dreyfus, who has so truly and heroically performed the noblest of the "rights of women," namely whole-souled devotion to her husband and children. To her unceasing efforts for redress, when all was obscure, revision was mainly due; and her magnificent devotion to her husband, her unwavering faith in the ultimate triumph of justice, and her noble fortitude under trial and persecution call for special recognition and true womanly sympathy from her sister-women, for truly such as she are the greatest glory and ornament of our sex.<sup>56</sup>

Meetings of women were held in some centres. Such a gathering in Sydney, under the chairmanship of Lady Darley, passed the following resolution:

That the women of New South Wales beg to assure Madame Dreyfus of a feeling of deep sympathy with her in the unexpected conviction of her husband. They sincerely trust that steps may be taken in connection with the matter which will prove satisfactory to the world at large and to humanity.<sup>57</sup>

In Launceston a meeting of women cabled a message of sympathy with Dreyfus to his lawyer at Rennes, Fernand Labori.<sup>58</sup> Clearly, Australian opinion was determined to make itself heard in France.

These demonstrations of solidarity with Dreyfus were not intended as impotent gestures. There was a genuine feeling that through force of numbers they would be able to exert moral pressure on Paris. As Leeper explained:

We were a practical people and not in the habit of doing things that we did not think would result in great good... Then let us swell that voice of protest that had issued from every civilised land on the face of the earth ... Melbourne alone, of course, could not do much ... but Melbourne would not stand alone.

There were signs already that world opinion was having an effect.<sup>59</sup>

How is this great eruption of sympathy with Dreyfus to be explained? Was philo-



Semitism at the root of it? Or was it merely a stick with which to beat France?

It might be expected that many Australians, with their sense of deep loyalty to the Empire, saw the Affair as an opportunity to embarrass France. At that time Britain and France were imperial rivals: the two countries almost went to war in 1898 over the Fashoda incident, which involved Franco-British colonial rivalry in central Africa. Only with the *Entente Cordiale* of 1904 did the two nations achieve *rapprochement*. It is possible that a strong sense of British patriotism propelled some people into demonstrative condemnation of the Rennes verdict. Yet such a motive does not clearly emerge from the historical record. The general tenor of the speeches at the mass meetings and other public forums reflected the avowal of one prominent speaker that their protest "cast no reflection on the French people" with its "historic reputation for chivalry."<sup>60</sup> There was an oft-repeated view that the entire French nation could not be held responsible for the misdemeanours of those such as Esterhazy and Henry who had been implicated in the dirty tricks integral to the Affair, and those who handed down the verdict of the second court-martial. As W.H. Embling MLC put it when planning the Melbourne mass meeting, they had no intention of condemning France — "that great and gallant nation — for the evils of a few."<sup>61</sup> For obvious reasons, that line was commended by Jewish leaders. In the words of Perth's Reverend Freedman:

Though a few persons or perhaps a few millions are responsible for the act of heartrending injustice, we must not forget that the flashlight of truth was thrown on the case by non-Israelitish Frenchmen themselves... We must therefore be very careful in our judgment. We must blame the guilty only. We must not blame the entire nation of France.<sup>62</sup>

There was also general agreement that the French government was not to blame for the Rennes verdict; hence there was no widespread support for calls by private individuals — none of them Jewish, so far as can be ascertained — for Australia to boycott the upcoming Paris Exhibition.<sup>63</sup> The lord mayors of Melbourne and Sydney, while avowing sympathy with Dreyfus, refused to make the town halls of their respective cities available for the mass meetings on the grounds that to do so would be improper, since the decision of a foreign state was to be criticised. (Apparently, the lord mayor of Melbourne eventually softened his stance.) The lord mayor of Perth cautioned speakers at the mass meeting chaired by him to comment temperately on the Rennes verdict.<sup>64</sup> As it was, few speakers at any of the meetings seem to have spoken of the French government in any but measured terms.<sup>65</sup> The Port Melbourne branch of the Australian Natives' Association was asked by one of its members to consider a motion expressing "disgust and contempt" at the Rennes verdict and predicting that unless it were rescinded France would be overtaken by "disgrace and ruin", and after an initial discussion the branch shelved the resolution — probably because of its overly forthright tone.<sup>66</sup>

Rather more visible as a factor in the outrage at the Rennes verdict was a firm belief in the superiority of British justice, which gave rise to the conviction that nothing comparable to the Affair could occur in Britain. As speakers at the Bendigo mass meeting declared (to loud applause) "the Dreyfus case could be considered as purely a question of the administration of human justice" and they protested against "justice being made subservient to expediency." Being people of British stock, "they had a right" to interfere in any country in the world where justice was compromised "because Britons were the custodians of the freedom, and liberty of the human race."<sup>67</sup> Dr. Thornton, Bishop of Ballarat, echoed many when he observed that the trial "had been conducted in a manner totally opposed to British ideas of justice and righteousness."<sup>68</sup> Indeed, it seems that a sense of unity with the mother country was a motivating factor on the part of many. "They were British people, with the British sense of justice, and they were there



to protest against injustice," declared Toutcher at the Melbourne mass meeting. Their action "would strengthen the hands of those who were fighting the battle for Dreyfus at home."<sup>69</sup> The *Ballarat Courier* evidently felt that Britain need have no fear of the French military. "The ethics of the general staff reek of hysteria and sordid opportunism", it declared. "And an army which must persecute and martyr one poor artillery officer named Dreyfus in order to save its miserable existence is a chlorotic force no self-respecting people need be afraid to encounter."<sup>70</sup>

It seems reasonable to assume that many if not all participants in the rallies and many if not all of the newspapers which condemned the Rennes verdict would have expressed their solidarity with an obviously innocent man whatever his religion or ethnicity. Not all of those who spoke or wrote against the verdict referred to Dreyfus' Jewishness or to anti-Semitism, but there is an underlying sense that most took for granted the latter as a key force in the development of the Affair. Hence the passage of resolutions such as that passed by the Victorian Trades Hall Council, which as well as recording its "indignation" at the "cruel and unjust" verdict and expressing sympathy with Madame Dreyfus asserted its belief "in granting freedom and fair play to all, regardless of religion or race."<sup>71</sup> As Lady Darley's remark implied, there was a realisation that the Affair reflected Jew-hatred, together with a sense that such a prejudice was an atavistic relic of a less enlightened age and utterly undeserving of tolerance.

Perhaps some saw the Catholic church as the fount of such an atavism. The Australian clergy who denounced the Rennes verdict were overwhelmingly, it seems, Anglicans and members of other Protestant denominations, who probably admired Jews as the "People of the Book." When the Melbourne mass meeting was being planned, E.L. Zox stressed that "it would be very unwise to allow any suggestion of the sectarian element to be introduced", and Archdeacon Langley observed that "unless there was representation of all denominations it would be better to have a lay committee altogether."<sup>72</sup> Yet Catholics appear to have been under-represented among the prominent persons at that mass meeting and its counterparts in other centres. Moreover, there do not seem to be any reports of denunciation of the Rennes verdict from Catholic pulpits. Probably leading Catholics, especially clergy, considered themselves to be in an invidious situation, since their French clerical and pro-clerical co-religionists were generally anti-Dreyfusard. The Australian Catholics, therefore, might have been reluctant publicly to take sides against them. Perhaps, too Australian Catholics detected elements of sectarianism in the local eruption of sympathy with Dreyfus.

That such sectarian elements existed seems irrefutable. In that deeply sectarian age it was likely that anti-Catholicism was far stronger among Australia's Protestant majority than anti-Semitism. Possibly it was no accident that Dr. Alexander Leeper, the driving force behind the Melbourne mass meeting, would later emerge as one of the principal Catholic-baiters in Australia. What might first appear to be a glaring example of sectarianism occurred at that meeting when a man who identified himself as Joseph Symes strode to the platform from the body of the hall and announced that he wished to move an amendment to the first resolution, as follows: "That in the opinion of this meeting the Jesuits and Romish priests are the real criminals in this shocking affair." He found an eager seconder. On the other hand, when the amendment was put to the vote, only "about a dozen in various parts of the hall" raised their hands in its favour. An evident unwillingness to introduce a spirit of divisiveness into a meeting so united in its aims was prevalent. This was undoubtedly reinforced by the fact that Symes was a well-known and militant secularist, who had antagonised practising Christians with his campaigns against Sunday observance. His attempt to use the occasion to peddle his contempt for organised religion was unquestionably deeply resented. The mood was



exemplified by one of the prominent attenders, who vowed to "hunt him [Symes] off the platform if no one else will." Leeper described Symes' amendment as "inconsistent" with the purpose of the gathering, though he fell short of condemning it. It is tempting to assume that there was probably a conviction on the part of many, though they were not game to say so — "it is not within the right anyone to spoil this meeting"<sup>73</sup> the chairman had counselled — that Catholicism (at any rate in continental Europe) was a superstitious impediment to progress and tolerance which had worked its mischief in France and which was behind the persecution of Dreyfus. And such a feeling was presumably not confined to those who demonstrated in Melbourne.

Today, we tend to take it for granted that anti-Semites would be in the majority a century ago, but evidently in Australia the opposite was true. Moreover, there is simply no evidence that Dreyfus had any vocal detractors in Australia, not even the anti-Semitic *Bulletin*. The society in which Isaacs and Monash rose to the highest places supported Dreyfus.

Popular feeling seems to have been accurately reflected in a heartfelt letter of support which the celebrated Australian diva [Dame] Nellie Melba wrote from London to Madame Dreyfus after the captain was pardoned:

I feel the impulse to address a few words to you to be quite irresistible. I am sharing with you so deeply the joy of the freedom of your beloved husband that I find my eyes continually filling with tears. For many months, nay years, I have followed your fortunes and his with the same intensity of emotion. This is needless to say — I have but shared the sympathetic interest of many millions. But I often wonder if any of the others shared the experience which I am about to relate to you. It was this: When in 1894 I read, with horror, the details of the degradation the thought came to me *what if he be innocent?* That thought grew to stay - to remain in my mind with a strange insistence which grew into a positive, but purely instinctive belief, that a hideous blunder, or a hideous crime, had been committed. With a mind so possessed ... with what a passionate interest I have followed the later developments of your husband's case; have hoped and despaired with you, have wept and prayed with you. And now that the end is reached ... I ask you to accept the kiss of felicitation ...<sup>74</sup>

And what of Australian Jews? They had kept a low profile during the Affair, but some Australian Hebrew congregations were now emboldened to send messages of support to Lucie Dreyfus on behalf of their executives and members. That from the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation extended its "heartfelt sympathy" with her and her "heroic husband" in their "terrible ordeal" and noted her "superhuman fortitude" and the "worldwide" interest in the "atrocious verdict."<sup>75</sup> The widespread demonstrations of sympathy with Dreyfus were not lost on Australian Jews. Nor were other lessons. "The Dreyfus case has furnished the text to many a sermon, and numerous articles on the modern Jew in the various magazines have taken their start from it," observed the increasingly wary Elias Blaubaum.

Friend and foe alike have freely criticised our people, and though to object to criticism would be an admission of weakness on our part, we could but wish that a fairer standard of justice were applied to us. No one, for instance, would deny that there are some Jews who do not reflect credit upon their race, but such men are to be found amongst other communities likewise. Why should they in the case of the Jews be held up as fair specimens of the whole race, when no such conclusion is drawn in the case of other denominations? ... The fact is that the Jew is not sufficiently understood by any of his critics. It will take time to enable men to look at him in a fair unbiased light. In the meantime Jews everywhere, and of all grades of society, would do well to set their house in order and to show the world no vulnerable spots.<sup>76</sup>



The conclusion to the Affair in 1906 when Dreyfus was readmitted to the army with a higher rank was interpreted by Moses Moses, Blaubaum's successor as editor of the *Jewish Herald*, as a sign of the immortality of Jewry and yet another reason to view Jewish history optimistically:

Is it not a splendid ending? ... The Jew survives everything. He rises above all conditions, however terrible they may be. And when we ask ourselves why it is so let us bear in mind the unswerving faith, the indomitable pluck and the untiring persistence of Major Alfred Dreyfus.<sup>77</sup>

## APPENDIX

Sydney *Evening News* interview with Gustave Adolphe Blumenthal, as reproduced in the *South Australian Register*, 23 September 1899:

There is at present in Sydney Mr. G.A. Blumenthal, a lecturer on mental science, who claims relationship with Captain Dreyfus. The late confinee of the *Ile du Diable* is, in fact, Mr. Blumenthal states, a second cousin of his.

In the course of an interview with an "Evening News" reporter, the visitor remarked:- "The French nation cherishes an intense hatred of the Jews. I am a Jew by descent and birth, though a Frenchman in heart, a German by compulsion, and a Britisher by adoption. My father having been a Jew, and my relatives being Jews, I can claim to have no ill-feeling against them. But the French nation has at times been hard hit by Jewish financiers and by Companies which, having Jewish Directors, went smash, and ruined thousands of people. The French cannot forget that. Alfred Dreyfus came from Alsace. I am an Alsatian also. In that province the Jews are regarded as the Germanizing element, and the Dreyfus family are among the leading Jews there. Bismarck said, you may have heard, when Germany assumed control of Alsace, that it would take fifty years to make a German people of the residents. His words are coming true, and the French people, who naturally view the fact with patriotic dissatisfaction, blame the Jews for it."

"The Alsatian love for France, though, dies hard," Mr. Blumenthal went on. "I am a Frenchman in heart; I would not for anything be a German. As a man I like the German - as a people I hate them. Like others of my age, I can remember as a boy the scenes of horror surrounding the war; my countrymen shot down. We boys had to tear up linen to bind their wounds, and we are not likely to forget it. The generation is passing away, though, and German influence grows stronger. The Germans use tact in the government of the province. The Emperor treats the people well, and has wise and tactful rulers under him who are careful to do nothing to inflame the racial feeling."

"Political parties in Alsace at the present time," Mr. Blumenthal continued, "are three in number. They are the clericals, or Catholics, represented by the priests; the class who always protest against German Government: and the People's Party, or Liberals. The Liberal Party, which has at the present time not only seats in the local Parliament, but also half a dozen seats in the Reichstag, was founded some six years ago by my brother, who also founded the paper which is its mouthpiece. Most of the Jews belong to that party, which favours German rule. This fact is a thorn in the side of the French. Poor Alfred Dreyfus has been made to suffer for it, not directly, but indirectly, for this fact, and the fact that a great number of the men who were foremost in the agitation on his behalf were men of whom the people of France had bitter memories, disarmed his friends, and strengthened the hands of his enemies."

"Do you remember Dreyfus?"

"Distinctly; though I was never well acquainted with him. But perhaps I had better explain. Fifty years ago my father, who was the son of a rabbi in Wilna, a district of Poland, was



concerned in an insurrection against Russia, and with a leader named Dombrisky, who afterwards was shot, he fled to Alsace-Lorraine, where he settled. There he married Therese Haas, a cousin of the Dreyfus family. My father became a Christian and had his family baptized as Christians, thereby arousing the greatest indignation among the other Jews in the province. I can well remember that, as we went to our Church," he went on, "old Dreyfus used to gaze scornfully at us from one window of his house, where he regularly sat and smoked a great pipe, while the sons, at the other window, showed their contempt in every way possible."

"The Dreyfus family were all engaged in commercial pursuits, and were not only wealthy, but were connected with all the other wealthy Jews in the place. Alfred, as I remember him, was the best rider in the district, and was what you might describe as an "exquisite." He was always faultlessly dressed, fond of a game of cards, fond of women, and generally "went the pace." Against his parents' wish he chose a military career, for no good Jew can take the position of an officer in the army of a Christian Power. But he wanted to be a "swell," and the officers in these crack regiments fancy themselves somebody, you may be sure."

"No doubt his entry to the military profession gained him hosts of enemies, partly by reason of his being a member of the detested Jewish race, and partly because he would be a richer man than those around him. Probably, Alfred Dreyfus would be worth £8,000 a year in his own right, as near as I can estimate his fortune. Thus, when trouble came for those with whom he was associated, what would be more natural than to make a scapegoat of him?"

"Yes," said Mr. Blumenthal; "he joined the army in 1873, but the German Government made no opposition to Alsations taking a commission in the French service, if they pleased. Most Alsations sent their children to French schools, and so on, the feeling at that time being very strong against Germany."

"The officers of the army," continued Mr. Blumenthal, "are men of position and distinction. I was highly amused at the Australia meeting the other day to hear Mr. Neild, who is, I believe, a lieutenant-colonel here — talking of Dreyfus as a man whose cause had been championed, in spite of his low and unimportant position, or words to that effect. Why, it takes years and years of the strictest military training in France to become a captain in the army, and, the position once reached, it is one of high honour. To become an army captain in France is a very different matter to becoming a lieutenant-colonel in New South Wales — very different."

## NOTES

- 1 See, for instance, Ernst Pawel, *The Labyrinth of Exile: a Life of Theodor Herzl*, London: Collins Harvill, 1990, pp. 206-10, 351-52, 359, 360, 377, 396; Theodor Herzl, *L'Affaire Dreyfus: reportages et reflexions traduits par Léon Vogel*, Paris: Imprimerie des Deux Artisans, 1958.
- 2 Among the best accounts of the Affair are Guy Chapman, *The Dreyfus Trials*, St. Albans, Herts.: Paladin, 1974, and Robert L. Hoffman, *More Than a Trial: the Struggle Over Captain Dreyfus*, New York: Free Press, 1980; the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 September 1899, provides a narrative of the Affair as it had unfolded.
- 3 For example, the *West Australian*, 12 September 1899, could assert: "... it is not too much to say that it is many generations since such a universal expression of condemnation has been heard." Insights are provided by Ronald K. Huch, "British Reactions to the Dreyfus Affair," *Social Science*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1975, pp. 22-28, and Richard D. Mandell, *Paris 1900: the Great World's Fair*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967, pp. 93-96. Huch sees anti-French sentiment as the root cause of the strong feeling in Britain against the verdict. Perhaps in so doing he underestimates philo-Semitic feeling. Patrice Boussel, *L'Affaire Dreyfus et la presse*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1960, while concerned mainly with French press reactions, also in passing describes the attitudes of certain overseas



- newspapers. Also useful is Louis Snyder, *The Dreyfus Case: a Documentary History*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973, especially pp. 345-86.
- 4 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 September 1899. The Rennes guilty verdict had been arrived at by five out of seven judges. The *West Australian*, 12 September 1899, editorialised that "Beside the verdict of the second Court-Martial ... every other question of public interest must sink for the moment into obscurity in the eyes of Europe."
  - 5 See Pawel, *op.cit.*, p. 206; cf. Michael Burns, *Dreyfus: a Family Affair 1789-1945*, New York: Harper Collins, 1991, pp. 96, 129, 132, 212, 302.
  - 6 Alfred Dreyfus, *Five Years of My Life*, London: George Newnes, 1901, pp. 122, 175, 187, 207, 255, shows that Dreyfus (and his wife) called their shared ordeal their "Calvary", a term hardly derived from Judaism! The use of the term "assimilation" by French Jews during the nineteenth century has been commonly misunderstood by historians. On this topic see Phyllis Cohen Albert's important "Israelite and Jew: how did nineteenth-century French Jews understand assimilation?", in Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds., *Assimilation and Community: the Jews in Nineteenth-century Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 88-109.
  - 7 *Jewish Herald*, 27 October 1899.
  - 8 There were several publicised manifestations of outrage in New Zealand at the Rennes verdict. Most members of the New Zealand parliament signed a cablegram to Madame Dreyfus expressing sympathy. The premier was included among exceptions. At Te Aroha a performer representing the United States at a tableau tore the French flag into tatters to a "storm of applause". In Auckland women promoting an all-nations fair in connection with the New Zealand Natives' Association decided not to have a French stall. *Age* 14 September 1899; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 14 September 1899; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 and 15 September 1899; *Argus*, 18 September 1899. In the Tasmanian Legislative Assembly, G.C. Gilmore, member for Georgetown, tried to move without notice that it be recommended to the premier to communicate with the premiers of the other Australian colonies with a view to adopting an address to the Queen expressing regret at the "failure of justice" at Rennes. But the premier regretted that such a motion should have been sprung on the House, as careful thought would be required "to avoid committing any impudence", and leave to move the motion was denied. *Ibid.*, 14 September 1899.
  - 9 Yom Kippur sermon, *South Australian Register*, 16 September 1899.
  - 10 Yom Kippur sermon, *Argus*, 15 September 1899.
  - 11 Melbourne Hebrew Congregation to Madame Dreyfus, 18 September 1899, *Jewish Herald*, 29 September 1899. The signatories were Marks, Abrahams, Leon Crawcour (treasurer) and Reverend Solomon M. Solomon (secretary). See also letter from H. Isaura Ackman, *Age*, 14 September 1899.
  - 12 For the reactions of French Jewry, for instance, see Michael R. Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: a Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971; Stephen Wilson, "Antisemitism and the Jewish Response in France during the Dreyfus Affair," *European Studies Review*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1976, pp. 225-48.
  - 13 For an incisive analysis of the Affair see Albert S. Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank) 1894-1915*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 57-128. Dreyfus was born in Mulhouse, Alsace, in 1859 and went to Paris after the Franco-Prussian War, when Alsace and Lorraine, French since the seventeenth century, were ceded to Germany. The name Dreyfus denotes a familial origin in the German city of Trier. See *South Australian Register*, 21 September 1899.
  - 14 Lecture, "The Dreyfus Case" 15 August 1898, *Jewish Herald*, 2 September 1898.
  - 15 *Ibid.*, 28 December 1894.
  - 16 See Hilary L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: a Thematic History. Volume 1: 1788-1945*, Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1991, pp. 116-22; Hilary L. Rubinstein, "From



- Jewish non-distinctiveness to Group Invisibility: Australian Jewish identity and responses, 1830-1950", in W.D. Rubinstein, ed., *Jews in the Sixth Continent*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987, pp. 22-50.
- 17 *Jewish Herald*, 11 January 1895. Blaubaum added: "Unprejudiced people will, of course, admit that it is more reasonable to conclude that the man committed the crime in spite of being a Jew than he did it because he is a Jew; but from the anti-Semites nothing in the way of reasonableness or fairness can be expected. Nevertheless, the arguments which they are likely to base upon this deplorable occurrence will not be very strong. There is absolutely no fault to which Jews, as Jews, are less prone than want of patriotism ... Hence a general charge of disloyalty cannot be deduced from the unfortunate case under notice ..."
- 18 *Ibid.*, 2 September 1898.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 See, for instance, *South Australia Register*, 15 September 1899; *Age*, 12 September 1899.
- 22 The interview was reproduced in the *South Australian Register*, 23 September 1899, and is appended verbatim to this article.
- 23 *West Australian*, 12 September 1899.
- 24 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 September 1899.
- 25 *Australasian*, 16 September 1899. The *Australasian* was the stablemate of the *Argus*; both papers were politically conservative. The theme of "scapegoat" recommended itself to other sympathisers. For instance, Reverend Dr. Roseby of Sydney told the YMCA. that the "gang of military conspirators in Paris had contrived to make a scapegoat of Captain Dreyfus." Roseby's condemnation of the Affair was loudly applauded. *South Australian Register*, 19 September 1899.
- 26 *South Australian Register*, 16 September 1899. This editorial did not, however, mention Dreyfus' Jewishness, so it is not clear whether in its view he was a martyr to anti-Semitism, though that seems to be implied by its condemnation of his fate at the hands of "a clerico-military oligarchy with reactionary tendencies". For the report see *ibid.*, 21 September 1899.
- 27 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September 1899.
- 28 *Bendigo Advertiser*, 19 September 1899.
- 29 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September 1899.
- 30 *Bendigo Advertiser*, 19 September 1899.
- 31 *Argus*, 13 September 1899.
- 32 *Le Figaro* was probably chosen because it was a well-known newspaper which was sympathetic to Dreyfus, albeit in a tacit way. Apparently the only Australian Jew to take a major speaking role at the public rallies was F. Lyon Weiss of Perth, who moved the first resolution at the big Perth meeting. See *West Australian*, 19 September 1899.
- 33 *Argus*, 12 and 13 September 1899. There are no indications of the identity or religion of these residents.
- 34 *Age* and *Argus*, 12 September 1899.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 15 September 1899. The other committee members were: Rev. Prof. Rentoul, Archdeacon Langley, Rev. Dr. Archibald Strong, Rev. J.T. Kearns, Mrs. Annie Low, Mrs. E. Gough, Thomas Luxton (Pahran City Council), Councillor Davey, S. Maugher (chairman, Metropolitan Fire Brigade Board), F.R. Godfrey, Bernard Hall, Thomson Moore, L.L. Smith, C. Crook, H.H. Champion, Marshall Lyle, H. Richardson, J. Lake. *Age*, 14 September 1899. McIntyre said "a large number of Victorian parliamentarians would have attended the Athenaeum Hall meeting had the House not been sitting." Apologies at that meeting had been read from Deakin, F.T. Derham, Mica Smith (director of the Ballarat School of Mines), Rev. Dr. Strong, Rev. E.S. Hughes, and others. *Ibid.*,

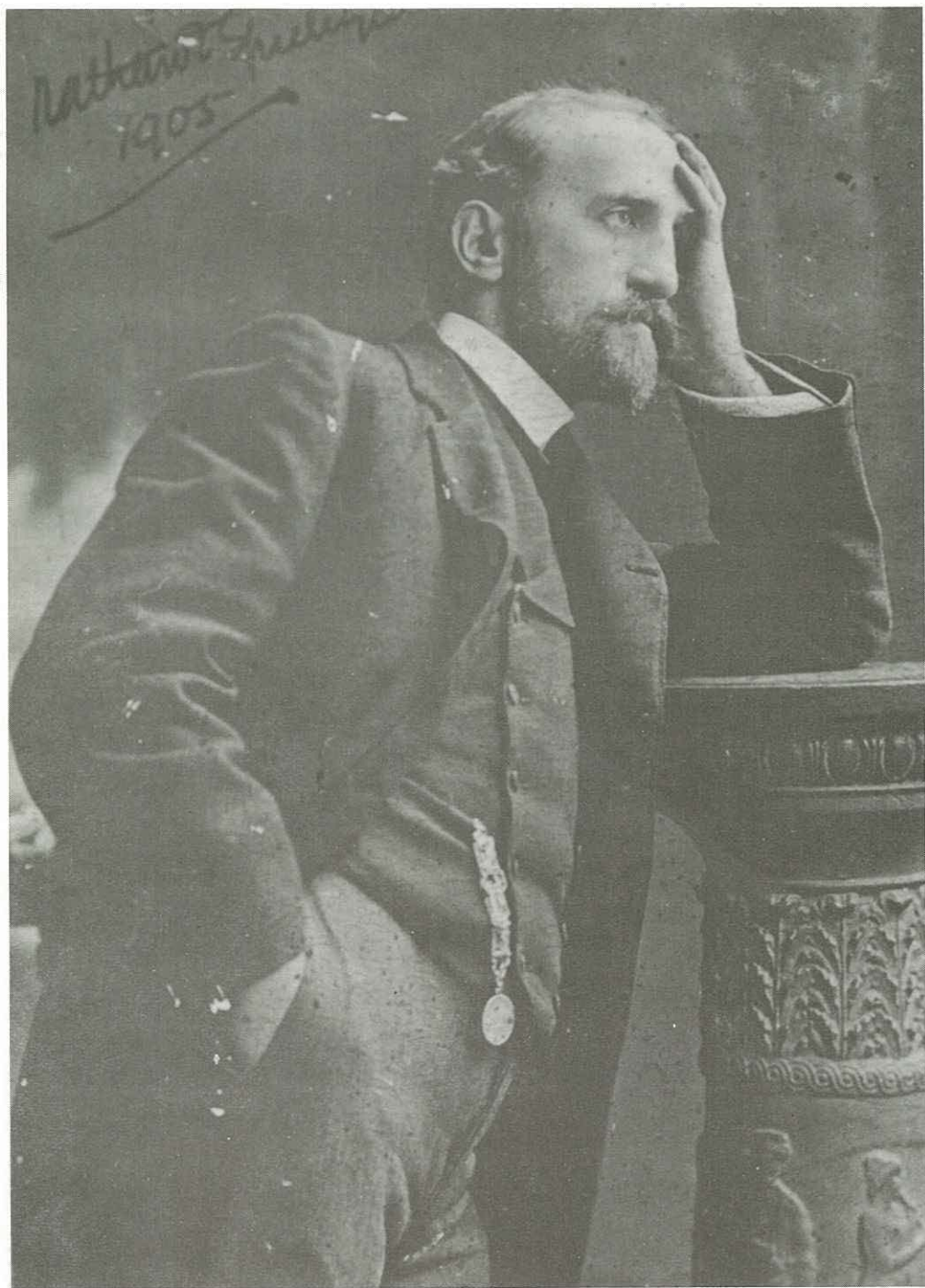


- 14 September 1899. On 19 September a meeting was held at Prahran Town Hall to enable local residents to express solidarity with Dreyfus. It was chaired by the Mayor, Councillor H.M. Gooch, and brief addresses were delivered by J. Harris MLA and F.C. Gray MLA among others. *Age*, 20 September 1899.
- 36 *Argus*, 14 September 1899.
- 37 Cable from Lord Mayor of Melbourne, in Brisbane, to Town Clerk, Melbourne, *ibid.*
- 38 *Ibid.*, 16 September 1899; Anderson sat for East Melbourne, a constituency with a significant number of Jewish residents.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 29 September 1899. That opinion was probably editor Blaubaum's; for Zox's obituary see *Jewish Herald*, 27 October 1899.
- 40 *Jewish Herald*, 29 September 1899.
- 41 *Argus*, 16 September 1899. The first two resolutions had been reworded since their initial drafting, to make them "just as strongly ... but ... more courteously worded", as Embling put it. Toutcher was a Deakinite liberal; a namesake of his had introduced a motion at the Port Melbourne branch of the ANA deploring the verdict.
- 42 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September 1899. George Pile and Reverend W.I. Carr-Smith also spoke. The following were appointed to a committee to frame resolutions for the mass meeting: Archibald Forsyth, J. Hardy, Alderman Dymock, Alderman Wayne, C.H. Lyons, S. Bryon, R.J. Paling, J.A. Lopes, H. Willis, M.J. Hammond, J.H. Collins JP, F.A. Franklin JP, J. Waddington, M. Woolf, A.H. Hewlett, F.J. Thomas, W. Stoddart, H. Daly, W.H. McNamara, C. Mackay Smith, J. Hampsen, J. Lasker, S.E. Pile, J. Harris, M. Isaacs, Dr. Crowther, Miss Helen Hart, with George Pile as secretary.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 23 September 1899. For Godfrey see *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 4, Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp. 257-8.
- 44 *Age*, 18 September 1899, reported that 2000 people attended the Perth meeting; *West Australian*, 18 and 19 September 1899. The first resolution was moved by F. Lyon Weiss, who presumably was Jewish. See also letter from Reverend D.I. Freedman, *ibid.*, 23 September 1899.
- 45 *Age*, 20 September 1899.
- 46 Among other local notables were George M. Hitchcock, James Wighton, H.F. Richardson, F. Apted and Solomon Jacobs. *Ibid.* The meeting was convened following receipt of a petition to the mayor, who expressed his sympathy. *Argus*, 20 and 25 September 1899.
- 47 *Age*, 16 September 1899.
- 48 *Argus*, 25 September 1899.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 *Ibid.*, 18 September 1899.
- 51 *Bendigo Advertiser*, 16 September 1899.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 16 and 19 September 1899. The platform included Revs. James, Stark, Adamson, and Scott, R. Stevenson (vice-president, Bendigo Stock Exchange), James Williams (president, Miners' Association), and J. Swift (president, Enginedrivers' Association.)
- 53 *South Australian Register*, 22 September 1899.
- 54 *Argus*, 26 September 1899.
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 Letter from K.M.K., *Argus*, 16 September 1899.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 15 September 1899.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 *Age*, 14 September 1899.
- 60 J. Toutcher, *Argus*, 16 September 1899.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 14 September 1899.
- 62 *West Australian*, 23 September 1899.
- 63 Such a call was made at the Ballarat Chamber of Commerce, *Argus*, 13 September 1899; see also letter from "Homo", *Age*, 14 September 1899.



- 64 *Argus*, 20 September 1899; *West Australian*, 19 September 1899.
- 65 See, for instance, report of Geelong meeting, *Argus*, 18 September 1899, 20 September 1899.
- 66 *Ibid.*, 13 September 1899.
- 67 *Bendigo Advertiser*, 16 September 1899. After all, Queen Victoria herself had expressed "profound sorrow" at the Rennes verdict. See Burns, *op. cit.*, pp. 280-81.
- 68 *Argus*, 19 September 1899. The member concerned was J. Toutcher.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 16 September 1899.
- 70 *Ballarat Courier*, 13 September 1899.
- 71 *Argus*, 16 September 1899. This motion was moved by J. Robb and seconded by Mr. Gilbert.
- 72 *Age*, 14 September 1899.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 16 September 1899. The vow came from H.E. Tolhurst. The chairman was Alderman Ham. For Symes, born a Wesleyan, see *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 6, Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1976, p. 237. For an insightful discussion of the philo-Semitic strand in British Christianity see Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews in Georgian England 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society*, Philadelphia, 1979, pp. 50-85.
- 74 Nellie Melba to Mme. Dreyfus, 23 September 1899, in Snyder, *op.cit.*, pp. 362-63.
- 75 Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, 18 September 1899, *Jewish Herald*, 29 September 1899. For the signatories see *supra*, note 11.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 27 October 1899. See also letter from H. Isaura Ackman, *Age*, 14 September 1899.
- 77 *Jewish Herald*, 27 July 1906.





*"Just back from England" (1904–05)  
Nathan Spielvogel aged 31*



# NATHAN SPIELVOGEL'S FICTION AND VERSE

Peter Mansfield

[Note: the Township of Ballarat East existed from the 1850s until 1921 when it was forced to amalgamate with the City of Ballaarat (West). The single City was Ballaarat; the geographic area was Ballarat.]

## INTRODUCTION: A LIFE OF WRITING

Nathan Spielvogel was born into an Orthodox Jewish family in Ballarat in 1874. He became a schoolteacher and author who wrote poetry and short stories for almost sixty years. His first story was published in 1894. One of his books (*A Gumsucker on the Tramp*) sold in excess of 20,000 copies, and his last short story was published in 1955. Most of Spielvogel's material was initially printed in magazines such as *Lone Hand*, *Westralian Judean*, the *Bulletin* magazine and in Jewish and regional newspapers. Today the name "Spielvogel" is remembered by only a few older Ballarat residents and is virtually unknown in terms of Australian literary history. He is not mentioned in the standard texts which refer to Australian literature including Green (1961), Hergenhahn (1986), Goodwin (1986, 1990) or McLaren (1989). Dutton ignores Spielvogel in *Literature of Australia* (1964) but briefly mentions him in *Snow in the Saltbush* (1984). One of Spielvogel's poems is included in Hammer's (1988) *Pomegranates: a Century of Jewish Australian Writing* and more recently Rubinstein (1991) makes a passing reference to Nathan Spielvogel's literary output within the broader parameters of Jewish settlement and assimilation in Australia.

As a Ballarat resident Spielvogel was a member of "the most Orthodox Jewish congregation in Australia" and he remained a lifelong adherent of his faith even though the local shule was involved in serious factional disputes as a result of the influx of poor, illiterate Russian Jewish refugees towards the end of the nineteenth century. Simultaneously he had a deep-seated love of Australian culture and history and many facets of his Jewish-Australian heritage can be identified in his poetry, short stories and local history.

In broad terms Spielvogel the young man growing up in Ballarat regarded himself as a Hebrew. Later, whilst working for the Education Department he portrayed himself as an Australian socialist and claimed that his thinking and writing was strongly influenced by scholarly European authors. As he advanced through middle-age there was a notable shift back to his Jewish heritage and specific Jewish themes which had been briefly addressed in such works as "Solachti" (1907) and "The Call of the Wandering Jew" (1911) became a pre-occupation from the 1940s. For example "My Aunt's Story" (1954) is a short story in which he describes the migration of his mother to Australia in the 1870s and many of his other stories also focus on the same period.

Although part of this research is necessarily chronological it is not biographical. Instead the emphasis is on the development of Spielvogel's literature within the broader context of Australian society. Spielvogel drafted an autobiography, "How My Life Was Spent" in 1941 and although never published, parts were used by Fredman in 1964 and Blake in 1971 and 1984.

Based on this self-portrait he describes himself as a young scholar who was influenced by European literature and the great socialist movements from the 1870s and it could be assumed that the aspiring author would elect to write material that was similar to the output of Bernard O'Dowd, Thomas Bury, Jennings Carmichael, and John Shaw



Neilson — regional contemporaries of Spielvogel — who were also attempting to gain acceptance into the dominant British market. Instead Spielvogel the Jewish writer in rural Victoria sought acceptance by writing Bush yarns in a similar vein to that of the more aggressively Australians such as Dyson, Lawson and Rudd. Spielvogel's early literary and historical output was primarily directed towards school pupils, teachers and rural communities who were interested in his Australian images of heritage and culture.

His later Bush stories were not responsive to the changing social attitudes of the period from 1919–1939 and Spielvogel's last collection of school stories was not accepted for publication. By 1939 he had moved away from general fiction and his writing now focused on the depiction of Jewish culture in nineteenth century Australia. Spielvogel's portrayal of his Jewish heritage represents an important case study because his interpretations of Jewish culture were influenced by his devout upbringing in Ballarat and by the cultural and literary influences of several generations of Jewish immigrants. It is also argued that an understanding of Nathan Spielvogel's life and literature cannot be fully appreciated without a prior understanding of the history and evolution of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation, the nature of the early and latter immigration patterns and the role of Spielvogel's family within the shule. Often conflicting images of assimilation, nationalism and ethnicity recur.

### PARENTS, CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLING IN BALLARAT

Spielvogel's parents, childhood and schooling are dealt with extensively in his unpublished autobiography (1941) and by Blake (1984) and will only briefly be mentioned here. His father Newman Frederick Spielvogel "of the Hebrew tribe of Levi was born at Kolomea in Austria in 1830" and migrated to Smythesdale, Victoria in 1853. In the years from 1853–66 Newman Spielvogel frequently travelled to Ballarat to attend services at the Ballarat Synagogue — one of the few goldmining townships to have a sizeable Jewish population at that time — before obtaining employment as a signwriter in Ballarat (Spielvogel, 1941, p2-4). Spielvogel senior later owned a drapery store in Bridge Street, Ballarat, opposite Heinz the butcher and the 1869 Ballarat Municipal Directory records the mis-spelt notation Newman Spielbogel, Clothier. At the age of 37 Spielvogel married Hanna Cohen, a 20 year old German immigrant. The wedding took place at the Ballarat Synagogue on 25 December 1867. Their fourth child Nathan Frederick Spielvogel was born in Ballarat on 10 May 1874. Nathan later recounts his parents courtship in a short story entitled "My Aunt's Story" in the *Australian Jewish Herald* (10 April 1954) and this will be analysed in more detail below. (In his autobiography Spielvogel says his mother was Hanna Cohan from Germany but in "My Aunt's Story" (1954) he says she was Hana Cohen from Poland.) Newman Spielvogel died in 1891, aged 61, leaving a widow and six children. Hanna Spielvogel died a decade later on 20 January 1901.<sup>1</sup>

Spielvogel attended Ballarat's famous Dana Street Primary School [No. 33] when he was four years of age and remained there until 1892. Total enrolments at the school exceeded 1000 pupils and Spielvogel later said:

Much is written about the joys of school days. Mine had little joy. I was teased constantly but I had one great solace. I read at all times. My younger brother and myself lived in two worlds, one the rough and tumble of school life and the other, the home full of religious rites and observances. Every night from seven to nine we sat with father in the dining room and translated the Bible from Hebrew to English. We attended synagogue service sometimes ten times per week. But I had a secret world, quite unknown to father, mother, sisters and brothers. And that was the realm of fiction. I have little recollection of school days, save of some brutal teachers who vented their spleen on us poor lads in cruel fashions. (Spielvogel, 1941, p. 4)



This observation was also written with the benefit of more than half a century of hindsight. When his father died in 1891 and his mother was left to care for six children, Nathan was offered full-time employment with the Education Department. There is no suggestion that he sought employment with a Jewish businessman in Ballarat or Melbourne - one of the great stereotypes about Jewish immigrants and a popular topic in the Ballarat *Courier* newspaper throughout 1891. When accepting the position of pupil teacher at Dana Street Primary School, the head teacher picked me out of the sixth grade and made me a pupil teacher at 4/2 per week. I was only half-educated and there was no encouragement to become more so (Spielvogel, 1941, p. 5).

Clearly there was some inducement because he did obtain the necessary Certificate of Competency from the Education Department and remained at his old school until 1896. Spielvogel said that he was "the enemy of my pupils" in the classroom but claims that once outside the school he was a timid boy who was constantly teased about his Jewish heritage. He described himself as thin, not very attractive, volatile in spirit and admitted that he "lived in a world of unreality". As often as possible he retreated to the local Mechanics Institute reading room where he immersed himself in the literature of Carlisle, Ruskin and Milton. An examination of the catalogues of the Ballarat Mechanics Institute Library and the Ballarat East Free Library suggests that he didn't have a great deal of choice in the 1890s because those libraries had very little Australian literature in stock.<sup>2</sup>

### SPIELVOGEL'S FIRST SHORT STORY PUBLISHED

Whilst employed as a pupil teacher he became the secretary of the Ballarat Chess Club, a prolific reader and had his first short story, "Mike Hardy's Folly" published in the Ballarat *Courier* in December 1894. This story is about two men who were involved in a feud which started years earlier and ended in bizarre tragedy on the Ballarat goldfields. The melodramatic story in which both men fall off a tightrope strung across an open mine shaft is very different to his later fiction but the seed of creativity is there. Mike Hardy's tragedy is a parable about old troubles and new worlds — a theme that was an integral part of goldfields life a century ago and one that recurs in Spielvogel's fiction when he later addresses the concepts of alienation and assimilation by his friends and Jewish ancestors.

"Mike Hardy's Folly" represents the beginning of a sixty-year writing career. Spielvogel was justifiably pleased with himself — "a proud lad of 20" — and had good reason to be thankful that the local newspaper accepted his story because in the 1890s Ballarat's two daily newspapers allocated very little space to Australian literature. Ballarat's *Star* and *Courier* newspapers were high quality dailies that "embodied and defined Ballarat's ethos and self-image via a rare strength of debate and reporting." (Bate, 1978). There are numerous examples of local poetry in the Ballarat newspapers but in the 1890s British fiction which relied on the successful formula of death, crime, "fallen women" and handsome villains was the only fare. Serialised English novels in Australian newspapers were stereotypical and reinforced the dominant values of provincial England; specifically the importance of the rule of law and the maintenance of British social structures.<sup>3</sup> For several years Spielvogel attempted to emulate this style.

It has been argued elsewhere (by Kirk, 1971 and others) that the publication of any fiction in monographs and colonial newspapers had the net effect of keeping all fiction in front of a large Australian audience but this must have been a poor consolation to other Ballarat writers who were contemporaneous of Nathan Spielvogel — including Bernard O'Dowd, Hannah Fisher and Edward Dyson — because they too had great difficulties persuading the local newspapers to print their material. More recent comments by



Rierner (1992) and Docker (1992) serve as powerful reminders that for very different reasons British literature was the literary benchmark for generations of Australians both before and after the Spielvogel era. This dominant British model was both imposed and regarded as the ideal. Rierner (1992) is a Hungarian Jew who migrated to Australia in 1946. He argues that as a city boy in the 1950s the "hard beauty and peculiar delicacy of the Australian bush" did not enter into Australia's suburban experience. His teachers did not mention the bush and this cultural and literary gap was filled by English poetry

Tennyson's words represented for us an essential experience which we could not approach in any other manner. His poetry, and that of Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley...provided an escape from and a consolation for the ugliness and meanness of the world in which we were forced to live. The literature of England conducted us into the world of the 'romantic imagination which served one of the essential needs of adolescence.

Conversely Docker (1992) claimed that his Jewish parents were Communists and therefore he grew up with no understanding of the Jewish religion or Australian literature. These comments are important reminders that the Australian "legend of the nineties" was not so powerful as to remove the desire to gain a knowledge of British literature when Spielvogel was a member of the Ballarat Mechanics Institute library.

It can be demonstrated that Spielvogel wrote extensively about his Australian experiences but it would be incorrect to imply that Spielvogel was immune to British and European literary trends. In fact the successful publication of "Mike Hardy's Folly" may have been a temporary impediment to Spielvogel's career because the aspiring author continued to write English melodramas and it was not until he received wider experience and rejection slips from the *Bulletin* that he elected to write about family life in the Australian bush. "Mike Hardy's Folly" is not representative of our often idyllic memories of Australian literature in the 1890s. Following the tragic death of the two men in the story, Spielvogel writes that the crowd of on-lookers returned to their tents and "thought of their loved ones in the Dear Land far away".

### LEAVING HOME AND TEACHING IN ISOLATED RURAL SCHOOLS

In 1896 the Education Department appointed Nathan Spielvogel to the position of head teacher at Brim Springs State School. At the time he described himself as follows: I weighed seven stone and eleven pounds, knew thousands of lines of poetry, knew nothing of science and less than nothing about the realities about life (Spielvogel, 1941, p.12). From this unpromising start Spielvogel was to experience a series of exciting changes in his life. Bush teaching, European travel, and the publication of his first book called *A Gumsucker on the Tramp* quickly followed his transfer to the first of several rural schools in north-western Victoria. Although called the head teacher he was the only teacher in charge of both the Brim Springs and nearby Wartook schools. Once again Spielvogel paints a picture of personal naivety and claims that he had no understanding of life in the Australian bush. Spielvogel's reading had expanded to include the works of H. Rider Haggard and Plato, Hall Caine and Huxley, Stevenson and Karl Marx. "I became what was to later be called a Socialist" (Spielvogel, 1941, p.8) but it is not possible to locate evidence of the community reaction to their teacher's philosophy or ideas! During this year he gradually developed new skills and in this isolated environment Spielvogel began to write short stories and verse based on life in Wartook, Brim and Dimboola. In later years he recalled that the township had no books and because he lived at the Post Office he often resorted to slipping magazines out of their wrappers, reading the contents and then returning the journals to the letter boxes. Spielvogel was frustrated by the standard of his teaching and by numerous literary false starts and letters of rejection. He portrays himself as a hopeless housekeeper who drank most nights and



lived in a filthy house. This situation was far removed from his lifestyle in Ballarat where he regularly attended the Synagogue and for whom religion and family ties were important aspects of his life. Spielvogel had written a few articles for the *Bulletin* magazine but was generally 'drifting along' in every sense of the word. The absence of any reference to his Jewish faith suggests that rural Victoria offered almost no religious contact and that he was culturally alienated in these small townships.

At the Little Snowy Creek school he took to his new teaching position with renewed vigour and outside the school formed an Improvement Club for district men and women. The Education Department then made a courageous or foolhardy decision when it transferred Nathan Spielvogel back to Dimboola in 1899 (it was another school in the same town) where he made great efforts to ensure that he was not drawn into his old habits. Spielvogel obtained board with a more respectable family, taught the children with a gentler hand and concentrated on his writing. For a short time a fellow lodger was another "fringe dweller", the Rev. Glanville Hicks with whom he talked of literature and ideas. He also attended a teachers' summer school at Melbourne University in 1902. This was an exciting period but didn't take his mind away from the harsh realities of life in the drought stricken Wimmera in the early 1900s. He was acutely aware of the needs of those isolated children who knew so much about coping with the vagaries of the weather but so little about maths, literature and ideas.

In 1903 he received a small inheritance following the death of his mother and used the £125 to travel overseas. In 1904 he went to Europe for six months. He travelled extensively and many of his observations were later printed in the *Dimboola Banner* under the general title of "The Wonderjahr — a backblocks State School teacher with an ambition to see the lands of the past". In the following year these articles were compiled by Melbourne publisher George Robertson and Co and published in a book called *A Gumsucker on the Tramp*. Spielvogel found Europe stimulating and enjoyed being an Australian tourist; he once described himself as the "Duke of Dimboola" to a group of tourists. He wrote with confidence and it appears that he coped with overseas travel more successfully than he had handled his early days at the Brim Springs school. He visited Jewish friends in London and by now a new image of Nathan Spielvogel is beginning to emerge. A studio portrait taken in London shows a dapper "European" young man and the look of confidence in the photograph matches the tone of his writing. Both are very different from the pen portraits contained in the early chapters of his autobiography. Spielvogel was pleased to return to Australia and the last page of *Gumsucker on the Tramp* included his poem "The Wimmera":

Silent river 'mid the gum trees,  
Where I have my nest.  
All the world I searched for pleasure,  
You I seek for rest.  
Fertile Nilelands, beauteous Rhinlands,  
Torrents washing Gothard's crest,  
Silent river 'mid the gum trees,  
You I love the best.

and the following passage

I came back to Australia feeling proud that I have come back to a country where freedom is more than a name. I am once more back in Dimboola, delighted that I have my work to do, perfectly satisfied that notwithstanding all the beauties, the treasures and grandeur of the whole world, I prefer to live here my simple life with its few pleasures and still fewer pains.



And so I drop back into the old groove - into the once disliked but now appreciated routine — perfectly contented. My own land is the best land. Adieu.

The paperback edition of Spielvogel's *A Gumsucker on the Tramp* quickly went into four print runs and is reported to have had total sales of 20,000 copies. Book reviews included wildly enthusiastic endorsements; "The young man that can write this is a philosopher worth knowing". *Sydney Mail*. The publication of *A Gumsucker on the Tramp* quickly established his reputation as an Australian author but I believe that the next book was even more important.

### OLD EKO STORIES AND *THE COCKY FARMER*

1907 was a crucial year because Spielvogel published another book called *The Cocky Farmer* (1907) and I would argue that this was the most important milestone in the literary and cultural development of Nathan Spielvogel during the next twenty years. First, the publication is important for three reasons. The stories demonstrate why Spielvogel adopted the Australian model as distinct to the dominant British model. Secondly, they tell us a great deal about Spielvogel's attitudes to the broader issues of cultural isolation and nationalism in the early decades of this century. Finally, the commercial success of his bush yarns determined his future literary direction for many years.

There is a vast amount of material in the field of Australian literary criticism which demonstrates that the latter decades of the nineteenth century generated a dramatic increase in Australian nationalist sentiment and much of this has been analysed by Serle (1973), Hergenhahn (1986), Alomes (1988, 1991) and others. Russel Ward (1958) argued that the division between loyalty to British or Australian traditions was usually determined by class and social status; viz local patriotism was common among working and radical Australians whereas imperial loyalty was identifiable among the prosperous and conservative members of society. It is possible to find evidence to support this view at both the national level and in Ballarat. For example the literary aspirations of Bernard O'Dowd (born in 1866, educated in Ballarat), Grace Elizabeth Jennings Carmichael (born in 1867 in Ballarat) and John Shaw Neilson (born in 1872 and lived in the Wimmera) are noteworthy because these poets were contemporaries of Spielvogel and preferred the British model.<sup>4</sup> O'Dowd, Carmichael and Neilson (and Kendall) struggled to write serious, lyrical verse that tended to be "romantic in its attention to the relationship between the poetic voice and Australian nature" (Hergenhahn, 1988).

For a short time Bernard O'Dowd was also a Ballarat school teacher and later published long and technically complex poetry. When "The Bush" was published in 1912 it incorporated many of O'Dowd's ideas about Australian nationalism and Fabian socialism where the Australian bush was couched in religious, comforting, innocent and innovative terms. There is not enough available evidence to determine Spielvogel's real or perceived socio-economic status but there is *prima facie* evidence that Spielvogel would also opt for the British model but such was not the case. By the turn of the century it was his bush stories with their clever blend of tall tales, nostalgia and optimism that proved more popular with publishers and Australian readers.

Thus Bernard O'Dowd, the son of Irish immigrants, and Neilson, the son of Scots immigrants, sought recognition and acceptance by writing to European standards whereas Nathan Spielvogel, the son of Jewish immigrants, sought recognition and acceptance by writing to the standards of the emerging Australian bush balladists. His interest in oral traditions, community gossip and phonetics were ideally suited to the emerging genre of the Bush yarn and Australian nostalgia.



## THE INFLUENCE OF THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH

*The Cocky Farmer* (1907) describes hardworking farmers on small allotments in the Wimmera and north-central districts of Victoria and most are narrated by two fictitious school teachers named "Mr. Genung" and "Old Eko" — pseudonyms used by Spielvogel over many years — who lived in these isolated rural communities. Jupp (1991) suggests that Jewish settlers have aspired to be part of the dominant model of Australian society and not surprisingly the concepts of alienation and acceptance are the major themes of *The Cocky Farmer*. Joe Brady is not identified as a Jew although his persona is deliberately ambivalent. But it is apparent that Spielvogel is clearly pleased with his taciturn, Shakespearean reading, morally upright farm working hero who is never fully accepted into the rural community. *The Cocky Farmer* is a long and emotionally charged love story set in the village of Wininio, somewhere "west of Stawell". The discontinuous stories focus on the courtship of the farmer and the female school teacher although broader issues pertaining to Australian society are important and recurring themes. These incidents have a strong biographical undertone.

Throughout the novel Spielvogel uses the behaviour of the children as a metaphor to highlight Australia's vulnerability in a national sense and the problems of assimilation and alienation at the local level. In 1907 Spielvogel was understandably hesitant about making his hero a Jewish settler and hence the stereotypical model of the bushman is used. A generation later Spielvogel was more willing to use Jewish immigrants in his fiction.

Spielvogel's early recollections of life in the Wimmera in 1896 are vastly different from those described in *Gumsucker* in 1905, and his portrayal of life in the Australian Bush from the 1890s also tells us about the other literary forces at work during this period. Spielvogel notes that some of his earlier material had previously been published in the *Bulletin* under the name of "NFS", "Ato" and "Ahaswar" whilst other material had been "repeatedly insulted" in the correspondence column of the *Bulletin*.

The role of the Australian bush and the celebrated disputes between Patterson and Lawson about rural hardship and heroes are so well documented that they do not require any explanation here, but it must be noted that Nathan Spielvogel deserves a significant place in Australian literature because of the ways in which he reacted to and portrayed the Australian Bush. He chose to write about the bush in an extreme way and relied on tall stories and droll yarns to explore his sense of belonging. Equally importantly Spielvogel was influenced by the power of the Bush yarn and was establishing his reputation in an era (1900–20) when an entire generation felt that the promise and potential of the 1890s was lost and was already beginning to take on the golden glow of nostalgia. This for some brought about a sentimental reworking of the past with constant reference to goldfields, Cobb and Co and bushrangers as well as the plight of the small selectors. (See footnote<sup>5</sup> relating to Ballarat authors and the importance of nostalgic themes). It was the same period in which Spielvogel's "Old Eko" stories were at their peak.

When writers such as Lawson, Dyson, Baynton and Rudd wrote about the harshness of the bush they were often horrified by drought, hardship and loneliness. But Spielvogel was not dwelling on the totally isolated bush worker in the manner of these better known authors. The famous icon of the Drover's Wife represented isolation in every conceivable sense. By contrast Spielvogel identifies with the marginalised settlers and rural families and the stories in *The Cocky Farmer* describe the daily lives of uneducated, hardworking farmers who make their own opportunities and amusements. Referring to the arid landscape he writes: "but ingenious inventors have overcome the difficulties, and by



means of stump-jump ploughs and harrows and strippers and harvester, this land is cultivated ... The once despised Mallee is now a great wheat field and is becoming one of the feeders of the world" (p. 38).

Unlike Lawson and Baynton who focus on the dehumanising qualities of the land, Spielvogel, the cultural "New Chum" looks at the inhabitants of bush towns and sees positive signs of family relationships, educational progress and limited cultural diversity. Characters in his stories have opportunities; for example the portrayal of himself as the lonely teacher who reads all the magazines at the Post Office before they are delivered, the kids waiting at the fence for their teacher to arrive, a father giving the teacher free board in exchange for extra lessons for his children. This sense of communal existence is a recurring theme in Spielvogel's fiction. When describing the impact of a drought Spielvogel emphasises the generosity of the local storekeeper whose lines of credit kept the town afloat. (*The Cocky Farmer*, p. 95).

Many of Spielvogel's characters are noisy and argumentative but most realise that they must work together; there is no suggestion that they intend to quit their land or their family responsibilities. The stories in the *Cocky Farmer*, the short story "Amy's Other Man" (published in 1907 and re-printed in the *Lone Hand* on 1 May 1909) and material contained in the author's autobiographical notes clearly demonstrate that Spielvogel was an alien in both the cultural and geographic sense but he no longer portrayed himself as totally isolated.

### BUSH SCHOOLS

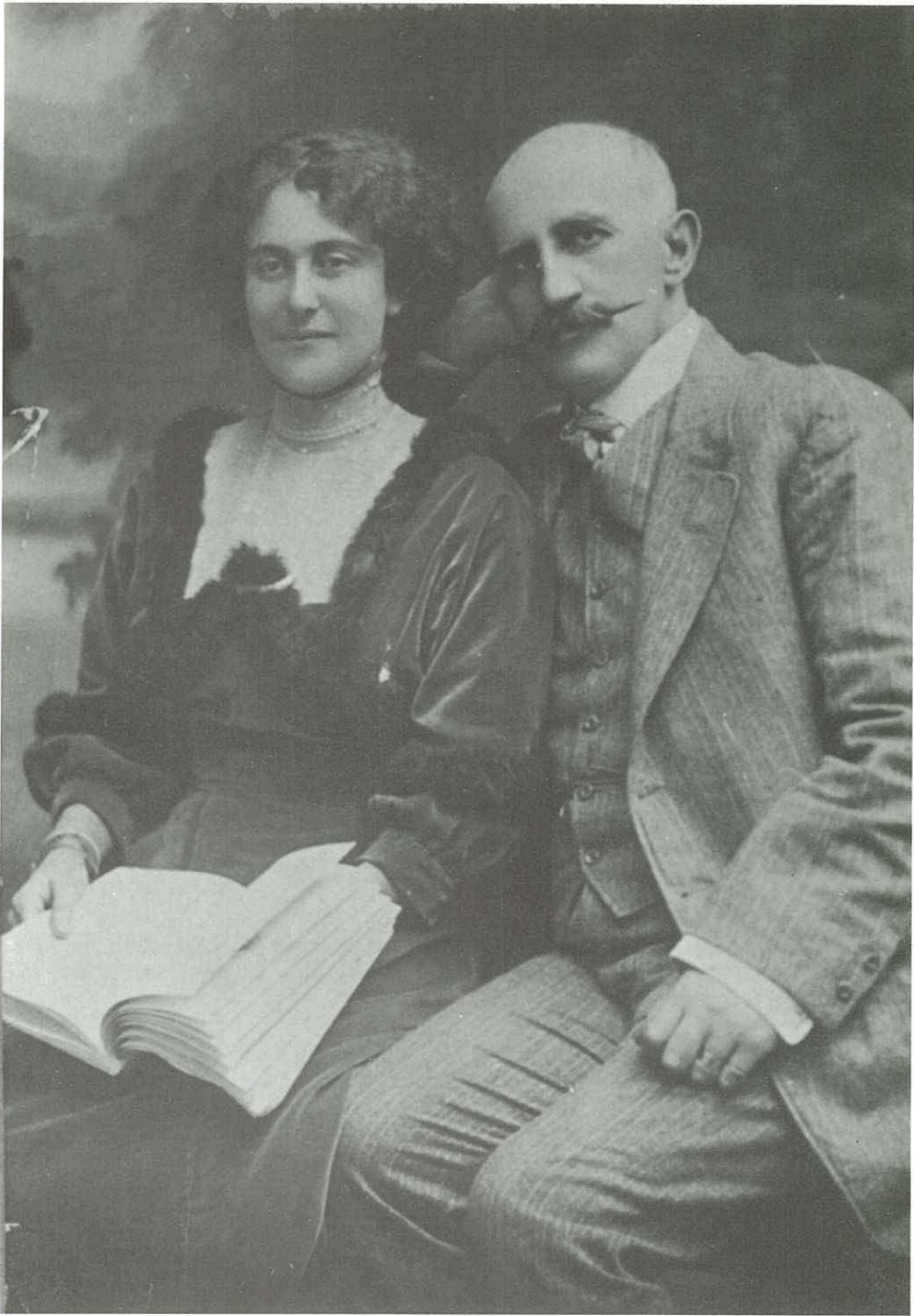
Spielvogel left the Wimmera in 1907 to take up teaching positions in Orbost in 1908, Spring Gully near Bendigo in 1909 and Longwood in 1911. Several important pieces of verse were published including "The breaking of the Chain", "On the road to Orbost" and the first instalment of the "The Affair at Eureka" appeared in *Lone Hand*. Spielvogel was paid £20 (or four weeks pay) for this feature article. "Our gum trees" was printed in the *Bulletin*. In 1911 he also travelled to Sydney and announced his engagement to Jessie Muriel Harris, daughter of Alfred Harris, owner of the *Hebrew Times*, and whilst in that city visited the *Bulletin* office and was greatly impressed by what he saw.

Next day I paid my first visit to the *Bulletin* office. I got a warm welcome. I met Archibald a very sick man, James Esmonds a serious faced chap in shirt sleeves. Hop looking a very Puritan person, Bertram Stevens who took me to lunch and a most likeable bloke Henry Lawson a lonely tragic figure with dreamy eyes. I also met Roderick Quinn, Stone the novelist a queer bird and that wonderful woman, Mary Gilmore. Phil Harris, my future brother-in-law took me to see Harry Julius the artist. (Spielvogel, 1941, p64)

Another volume of short stories called *Gumsucker at Home* was published in 1913 and the Education Department then transferred him to the Melbourne suburb of Mitcham in 1914 where the outbreak of World War One had an immediate impact on his life and literature. Spielvogel said *Gumsucker at Home* was selling well until the war "killed not only millions of men but also anything that came from a man with a German name". His public comments were often challenged by parents in the years immediately preceding the war and his literary aspirations were severely hampered. Spielvogel said that during the war his only literary output was the weekly Bowls Club column.

After the war he transferred to Wangaratta from 1919–1923 and by this stage Spielvogel had a well deserved reputation as an evocative writer about the Australian bush and was "an educational innovator" (Blake, 1971). He applied for the position of head teacher at his old school, Dana Street in Ballarat, and returned to Ballarat on 9 March 1924. He remained in the city of his birth until his death.





*"The day before we were married, 5 September 1911"  
Nathan Spielvogel (aged 37) and Jessie Harris*



## A CHANGE IN DIRECTION

During the years from 1907 until approximately 1930 the first phase of Spielvogel's writing career and reputation flourished within the confines of a growing sense of nationalism. By the 1920s his "Old Eko" stories were very popular and still drew excited applause from the Education Department. Today it could be argued that *The Cocky Farmer* is enjoyable although some of the stories are overly sentimental and by the time *Old Eko's Notebook* was released in 1930 his stories were "too tall". With hindsight it could be argued that the author kept writing bush yarns well beyond their 'use by' date but the fault wasn't entirely Spielvogel's. His short stories were still very popular and the publishing houses were anxious to maintain the output. Spielvogel's greatest supporter in the 1920s was the Education Department itself and interviews by this researcher have found Ballarat citizens who recall reading Spielvogel's stories in class in the 1950s. This seems ironic given the questionable grammatical style adopted by a schoolteacher-author and implies that the Education Department was not alone when it continued to support an author who promoted the virtues of assimilation, nationhood and our rural heritage in his fiction. Director of Education, M. Hansen wrote in 1930:

I venture the prophecy that many people besides teachers will read this book with great interest and pleasure. The author has succeeded in creating a fine character, the philosophic schoolteacher. The character of Old Eko is nobly conceived and brilliantly sustained. I would advise every young teacher going to his (or her) first rural school to take a copy and read it frequently. (Blake, 1971)

It was not until the 1950s that a new caution was introduced and Fredman (1964) writing in the *AJHS Journal* said of Spielvogel's fiction in general:

we should not exaggerate Spielvogel's merits as an author. We published the limited edition [*Selected Short Stories of Nathan Spielvogel*] to pay respect to one who did much for the self-respect and self-expression of Australian Jewry. Furthermore a popular, capable and well read author of a second rank may often provide a better mirror of his time than a strong minded and creative author. Like Rolf Bolderwood he also gives a different and more contented side of bush life from that of Henry Lawson.

*Selected Short Stories of Nathan Spielvogel* (1956) were examples of another and better genre and focus entirely on Spielvogel's Jewish ancestry. This, the third facet of his writing career will be analysed below.

Australian book publishing statistics are notoriously vague but the following table is a guide. Cantrell (1977) *et al* are unable to differentiate between the Australian and British sales but it is obvious that Spielvogel's *Gumsucker on the Tramp* was a very important book in terms of sales.

Lawson's <i>While the Billy Boils</i> 1896-1916	32,000 sales
Lawson's <i>In the Days When the World was Wide</i>	20,000
Ethel Turner's <i>Seven Little Australians</i> (1894)	20,000
Steele Rudd's <i>On our Selection</i> (1899)	20,000
Paterson's <i>Man from Snowy River</i> (1895-1906)	35,000



## LOCAL HISTORIAN IN BALLARAT

The second phase in Spielvogel's literary career flourished when he became Ballarat's historian in the 1920s–30s. In his home town Spielvogel maintained a very high profile as the active president of various local societies. The influence of the First World War and the Depression had left its mark on every aspect of Australian life and the concerns about the more serious issues of life coincided with a wave of interest in Australia's history which in turn culminated with this city's centennial celebrations in 1937–38. Concurrently his writing moved away from laconic and overworked bush yarns which had been so popular at the turn of the century. Ballarat was going through that phase of self-congratulation which afflicted nearly every Australian town and city in the period between the Great Depression and the outbreak of the Second World War. Bate (1993) notes that Ballarat suffered grievously as a result of job losses in the heavy engineering sector in the years 1903–12 and had also lost a substantial part of its population as a result of both Wars but from 1935 it was able to celebrate its survival and Spielvogel was ideally suited to assist with this task.

Spielvogel's research and writing skills were such that he had figuratively "found another goldmine" in gaining access to valuable records in his home city. The old records of the Ballarat based Australian Historical Records Society — the first historical society in Australia (Mansfield, 1989) — were available to Spielvogel and as early as 1870 Ballarat had a written history of the city — (Withers' *History of Ballarat*, 1870 and 1887). The titles of the publications written by Nathan Spielvogel give a clue to the work and output of this author during the period: *History of the Ballarat Mechanics Institute* (1919), President of the Ballarat Historical Society (from 1933), *History of Ballarat* for Ballarat City Council (1935), fifty-six radio talks on local history broadcast on Radio 3BA (1937–38), various articles for the *Courier* newspaper on local history, President, Ballarat Chess Club, President, Dads Association from 1939, etc. It is worth noting that the first published draft of "The Affair at Eureka" and the history of the Mechanics Institute were both written when Nathan Spielvogel was living and teaching in the bush so he had obviously maintained his links with this city but suspended them in a literary sense during the "Old Eko" period.

By the late 1930s Spielvogel ceased writing "local history" and his literary output had already passed through two distinct phases. Although a bibliography has yet to be produced the trends are obvious: Spielvogel the scholar and socialist at the turn of the century attempted to write dramatic fiction but quickly abandoned this genre. He then wrote an enormous amount of material about the Australian Bush and published his work in numerous journals and it could be assumed that he would continue to write this nostalgic fiction in the 1920s because the school stories received wide public acclaim. His return to Ballarat saw him drawn into the history of this city and for some years he researched and wrote about local organisations. However it is also apparent that his return to Ballarat brought about a profound change of direction in both the literary and cultural sense. Prior to the mid-1930s Spielvogel had written only a few Jewish stories but after that date his ethnicity became the focal point of his writing for the remaining twenty years of his life. He was thus moving away from genres which had rewarded him with popular acclaim (bush yarns and local history) to another genre (Jewish fiction) that had not existed in Australia when he was a young, aspiring writer.

## JEWISH LITERATURE

As Spielvogel matured and returned to Ballarat his fiction concentrated almost exclusively on Jewish themes. It is argued that Spielvogel's portrayal of his Jewish heritage



represents an interesting case study because his interpretations were specifically influenced by his upbringing in Ballarat and by the cultural impact of several earlier generations of Jewish immigrants in this city.

In the decade prior to the First World War the author published a few Jewish stories and poems including "Solachti" (1907) — about a chance meeting with another lonely Jew in a small town — and "The Call of the Wandering Jew" (1913) — about the religious pressures on all Jews. These works suggest a tentative beginning and are important because they focus on the sense of alienation felt by this young Australian Jew at a time when Australian mateship was a dominant model in our literature. In 'Solachti' the author portrays himself as a lonely school teacher who enjoys a chance encounter with a Jewish hawk. This story is a powerful reminder that his religious convictions are still important; however, these two pieces were exceptions and it was only when he returned to Ballarat that his creative writing also returned to Jewish themes. But even then he did not write contemporary stories about unemployment, anti-Semitism, rural isolation, ethnicity or the other social issues of the 1930s–50s.

Like so many other Jewish authors including Waten (1949) and Brett (1990), Spielvogel preferred to write about the years when his parents settled in this country. It is possible that this occurred because the author was now regarded as a local historian and not the teller of contemporary folk stories, but I would argue that the reasons are far more complex and that the role of Jewish settlement in Ballarat from the 1850s played a unique role in this process.

### JEWISH ASSIMILATION

In an era when the policy of multiculturalism dominates parts of Australian society, many contemporary researchers are troubled by the perceived problems or benefits of the earlier policy of assimilation. As will be demonstrated below there is a common belief by Rubinstein (1987) and Markus (1989) and others that Jewish migrants assimilated to such an extent that they voluntarily relinquished or risked losing their cultural identity. The broader aspects of the debate are clearly beyond the scope of this paper but when examining Spielvogel's life and literature it can be demonstrated that this perception of the loss of ethnic identity was not necessarily true at an individual level; Ballarat Jews of the 1890s held very definite attitudes about the ethnicity of the second generation of Jewish immigrants and Spielvogel remained a deeply religious Jewish Australian and within the context of this research it is necessary to remember that typecasting and over-generalising was as common a century ago as it is today.

### BALLARAT'S JEWISH POPULATION

Even though historical research by Jupp (1988), Blainey (1991), Rubinstein (1991) and others constantly identify the token Jewish convict and bushranger, all agree that it was not until the 1850s that significant numbers of Jewish free settlers were attracted to Victoria and Ballarat. A century ago statisticians reported that Jewish people accounted for only one-half of one percent of the Australian population. (Commonwealth of Australia *Yearbooks*). More recently the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (1989) reports that immigrants from 140 countries have settled in Australia but neither Table 1.2 "People who spoke another language at home" (2,002,800 people) or Table 1.3 "Population by birthplace — overseas" (3,247,400 people) identify "Jews" or "Hebrews" as a separate entity.

Even though Jews have been statistically marginalised in many historical sources, Jupp (1991) notes that Jewish people have featured prominently in a cultural sense and that more has been written about Australian Jews than on any comparable ethnic minority



other than Aborigines. Jupp (1991) argues that Jews have contributed significantly to Australian society

... Australian Jews have always been law-abiding, honest, decent, hard working and thoroughly successful. Consistently forming one in two hundred of the population for over a century, Jews make up one in twenty of the professional and business elites. They are a thoroughly middle class community.

The Jewish settlement in Ballarat occurred for two reasons. In a relative sense Ballarat in the 1850s was a politically and religiously tolerant community with few if any legal and political restrictions against the Jews - although in keeping with political attitudes of the latter decades of the nineteenth century a generally racist and specifically anti-Semitic community attitude was evident throughout Britain, Europe and Australia. This Australian 'anti-everyone' attitude (Jupp, 1988) at the turn of the century was probably similar to Britain's but less virulent than many other nations. Brasch (1955) portrays an almost idyllic situation when he claims that

The history of the Jews in Australia is a record of both friendship and pioneering endeavour. From its very beginning it is distinguished by closest contact and co-operation ... it has never known any anti-Semitism or significant discrimination. ... Nowhere in the world have Jews in proportion to their numbers attained such prominence as in Australia

whereas Blakeney's (1985) research covering the same period examines the treatment meted out to Jewish refugees who migrated to Australia and later sought permanent status as Australians. This study leads him to conclude that anti-Semitism has been a constant factor in our history and cites the 'well known instances' of the *Bulletin* and *Smith's Weekly*.

Nineteenth century Ballarat was a popular destination because it offered scope for merchants, gold-buyers and small businessmen to prosper. By the 1870s it was estimated that the occupational breakdown of Jewish men in Australia was as follows; 35 per cent were middle class merchants and professional people, 50 per cent lower middle class and small retailers and only 15 per cent were working class. (Commonwealth of Australia, *Yearbooks*). Based on Ballarat municipal directories and other demographic factors it would appear that the Ballarat workforce percentages were very similar to these national figures although Bate (1978, pp.107 and 149) notes that the Jewish concentration was much higher in Ballarat East than the national average:

by the mid-1850s Ballarat's Main Road was more European than any street in Victorian history [and this remained the case until] the post-World War influx of migrants to the inner-Melbourne suburbs. There were 300 Jews in Ballarat East and whilst they only accounted for 1.85 per cent of the entire population this percentage was still much higher than the Victorian state average...Most national groups had special rendezvous, usually hotels or eating places. "La Polonaise" was kept by a Polish Jew and his daughter.<sup>6</sup>

The national and local figures complement the other trend which saw an extraordinary concentration of Jewish people in the larger cities. Australia was already famous for its urban populations and as early as 1874 it was estimated that 96 per cent of all Victorian Jews lived in Melbourne. The assimilation of the Ballarat Jewish population, the survival of the local Synagogue and the role of the Spielvogel family is therefore a remarkable tale of perseverance in regional Victoria and these factors in turn played a crucial role in the development of Spielvogel's literary persona.

In simple terms the early Jewish settlers were anxious to be regarded as British Hebrews who were able to assimilate into the local business community. Newspaper reports and research by Bate (1978) suggest that early Jewish immigrants such as Charles Dyte,



Emanuel Steinfeld and Wolf Flegeltaub regarded themselves as "London Hebrews" even though the latter two were born in Poland, migrated to England for a few years and then permanently migrated to Ballarat in the decade from 1853–64. This self-definition of "English Jew" or "English Hebrew" was very important. Rubinstein (1991) said:

Like the Jews of Britain, the Jews of colonial Australia sought to avoid pejorative stereotypical images associated with the word Jew. They preferred to call themselves Hebrews or Israelites and their congregations were always "Hebrew Congregations". Many of the philanthropic organisations deliberately omitted the word Jew.

In the short story "The Beginning of Things", Spielvogel (1938) refers to his ancestors as Hebrews whereas he often uses the word "Jew" to convey the more derogatory community attitudes. For example "Mr. Bronstein Learns his Lesson" (1942) is a story about life in a small country town in 1914. Bronstein was a successful businessman and the citizens said that "we all thought he was a Hebrew" before the outbreak of War but later Mr. Bronstein was attacked as both a German spy and a Jew during the war.

### THE FIRST GENERATION IN BALLARAT

The first Jewish settlers in Ballarat were goldfield merchants and businessmen in the fledgling township. Spielvogel's "Beginning of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation" (1940) notes that a very small group of Jewish people had settled in Ballarat as early as the first gold discovery in August 1851 but it was not until 1853 that Charles Dyte invited twenty local Jewish men to join together for religious worship at the Clarendon Hotel. Included were Cohen (who sold picks and shovels), Bernstein (shirts), Morvitch (Montezuma Hotel theatre), Hollander (auctioneer), Levy (bootmaker), Benjamin (clock maker), Harris (publican), Abraham (gold buyer), Davis (tents) and Levine (cigars). Only Josephs, Salmon and Isaac were identified as miners. The fact that it was possible to name most of Ballarat's Jewish male population is a powerful reminder that the community was very small indeed.

During this turbulent first decade the local Jewish community remained a small but dominant force on the Ballarat East goldfield. As early as 1855 a permanent synagogue was erected in the township of Ballarat East and this resulted in the local Jewish population remaining in close proximity to their work, their kin and their place of worship. Most of the other religious denominations eventually built their churches in the City of Ballarat (West) whereas the Jewish community resisted this move to the more prosperous suburbs and, as such, theirs remained a neighbourhood place of worship in the true sense of the word. Secondly the small Jewish congregation in Ballarat appears to have suffered the same problems as the *minyans* in other goldmining townships. Throughout Australia's history immigration has been recognised as the only way of maintaining a "viable" population base and although it caused them problems the local Jewish community was aware that more Jewish immigrants had to be admitted into their ranks (Rubinstein, 1991; Stretton, 1992). Declining attendance and the perennial encroachment of assimilation as their young men "married out" of the faith were constant problems. Cohen (1944) notes

"the sad situation in Australia where Jewish men were 'forced' to marry gentiles on goldfields. [On behalf of the NSW and Vic community] London Jews approached Caroline Chisholm in August 1853 to send 20 Jewish women to Australia in September 1853".

The question of Jewish women emigrating to Australia is also repeated by Rubinstein (1991): "Our leading men (of the London Jewry) would be doing a good service to the Jewish young men out on the goldfields by sending out a few respectable girls, for it would save many a young man from marrying a Christian." The practice of sending



single women was abandoned in 1857 — unless they were accompanied by their parents.

Spielvogel's account of his mother's migration to Australia suggests that she was privately sponsored by relatives. Nathan Spielvogel also claimed that he did not marry until the age of thirty-seven because he had promised his then-deceased mother that he would not "marry out". The first event took place in 1867 and the latter in 1911 so the shortage of young men and women was definitely a long term problem. (Spielvogel, 1952 and 1954).

Sources other than those mentioned by Bate (1978) and Rosenthal (1979) are indicative of the local Jewish community's permanent involvement in Ballarat society. As early as 1857 a portion of land in the Ballarat Old Cemetery was set aside for Hebrews and the marriage register of the Ballarat synagogue indicates that there were 77 weddings in the years up to 1890; one third of the brides were aged nineteen or younger. In the same year the Ballarat Hebrew Philanthropic Society was founded to assist those Jews who felt alienated in Ballarat and required support in terms of jobs or loans. Another indicator of the Jewish presence in Ballarat is contained in "An Interrupted Romance" (1955) in which Spielvogel states that twenty-seven boys had their Barmitzvh in 1887. However progress was far from smooth and the construction of a permanent synagogue could not disguise the underlying tensions that were about to re-surface. By 1874, the year in which Nathan Spielvogel was born, the congregation had declined to forty-five members, twenty-five "seatholders" (paid-up but non-voting members) and another thirty district members. The Spielvogel family attended worship every day of the year and were among the core of Jewish families in Ballarat.

#### THE BALLARAT HEBREW SYNAGOGUE AND THE ARRIVAL OF THE SECOND GENERATION OF JEWISH IMMIGRANTS

The laying of the foundation stone of the Hebrew Synagogue in Barkly Street, Ballarat East took place at 8 am on Friday 25 January 1861. It was reported in the Ballarat *Times* newspaper that the building cost £900 and was completed by March 1861. The following decades saw a rapid turnover of ministers, the first of whom was Isaacs, "an easy going bachelor whose private life didn't suit some members so he left in 1863." He was replaced by Samuel Herman from 1864–84; Herman too was described as an important scholar and also left "under a cloud". The list of ministers is contained in Rosenthal (1979) but more importantly the same core of Jewish families re-appear on annual lists of office bearers and members.

Building renovations were a frequent occurrence and life was very ordered. In 1881 the Synagogue was again renovated and provided "plenty of room in the gallery for ladies." This work cost a further £600. The president was S. Cohen, the treasurer was Wolf Flegeltaub, the secretary was John Marks and the committee still consisted of members of the goldrush or "pioneers" generation; S Hamburger, Charles Dyte, Solomon Marks, Joseph Josephs and Newman Spielvogel. The Synagogue was actually built over a lead of the Britannia Mine and in 1890 the mining company paid them a fee of £400 to work under the building — provided that the mining took place at a depth of 200 feet below the synagogue foundations. The congregation was not poor but membership fell to a low of only thirty-six full and thirty-eight seat-holding members in 1893.

The Ballarat congregation's equilibrium was upset by the influx of a second wave of poor Eastern Orthodox Jews in the 1880s. Membership of the Ballarat Synagogue in the 1890s now included Russian refugees who worked as fruit sellers and sold their produce from wheelbarrows in the streets. It was claimed by the earlier, established generation



of Jewish businessmen that these new arrivals required only hard manual work in order to make a living for themselves in Ballarat. This rather scathing suggestion highlighted a very immediate social division between the assimilated "British Hebrews" and the newly arrived Jewish refugees. The compendium *Ballarat and District in 1901* was a finely bound and self-congratulatory publication that praised the worth of its leading citizens and is typical of the many publications of the era. The essay in praise of Wolf Flegeltaub inadvertently highlights the scope for conflict at the turn of the century.

Flegeltaub was born in Poland in 1841 and, with his parents, migrated to London in 1854. There he married Phoebe Goldberg in 1862 prior to the family's migration to Ballarat in 1867. Wolf became a produce importer who supplied small shopkeepers and hawkers, who in turn competed with the larger stores. His business was situated in a two-storey brick building in Ballarat East, but more significantly it was reported that he lived in "a palatial brick residence 'Ellerslie' in Sturt Street, Ballarat West with upwards of 7 acres of ground including floral gardens, tennis court and croquet grounds". Flegeltaub was the president of the Philanthropic Society, trustee of the Cemetery Board and Jewish Congregation and President of the local branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association. He was also a mason and member of the IOOF. Flegeltaub was not alone when he told the poorer immigrants that with hard work they too could reach his level of success — which was clearly defined by the social customs of British society.

This attitude toward the poorer European Jews cannot be lightly dismissed as an isolated example of nineteenth century social behaviour. Docker's (1992) essay demonstrates that ethnic rivalry was active in Sydney between the two World Wars. He recalls that his English Jewish grandmother told his mother not to play with the poor Polish Jews. Noting that Russian Jews and Hungarian Jews disliked each other, he was conscious that being of British stock was a uniting and solid state of affairs which his mother aspired to (and to which he does not).

The concept of *Kol Yisroel Achim* was severely tested on numerous occasions in Ballarat. Records demonstrate that the 1850–70 Jewish immigrants came from Germany, Poland and Holland as well as the usual arrivals from England. Rosenthal (1979) reminds us that like most other religious groups there were several factions and informal groups. Based on their knowledge of oppression in Europe in the 1840–50s and their minuscule numbers in Ballarat in the following decades it could be assumed that the embattled Jewish community would resolve to stay together at all costs.

In the period 1877–1885 there had been a simmering dispute between the established Central Hebrew Congregation and the recently arrived Eastern European Jews. The former faction included Rosenthals, Simons, Levy and the Spielvogel family. Spielvogel's father Newman, a pioneer of the 1850s, was one of those who objected to the latter arrivals even though he and they came from Poland. By the 1890s (when his son Nathan Spielvogel was a teacher) the second generation of Jewish immigrants were regarded as non-English speaking Jews of a lower class and were never described as "Hebrews". Spielvogel's father represents an interesting case study because of his heritage and attitudes. He was a stern Orthodox Jew who argued against those who wouldn't close their shops on the Sabbath and yet the new arrivals were even more conservative and accused the first generation settlers of being lax in their adherence to the faith. Economic differences were said to be more important than the disputes over religious Orthodoxy but the arguments were also about schooling for the children, the debates about "old world" cultural traditions, language, access to the relatively wealthy merchant class and assimilation into British society.



In Ballarat and elsewhere the dispute over religious Orthodoxy and assimilation flared up again in 1891 because of the expulsion of thousands of Jews from Russia. Newspaper reports conveyed the drama and wild guesswork associated with the number of people involved and their likely destination. The following news reports demonstrate the intensity and irrationality of the public debate

"The exodus of Jews from Russia continues" ... The oppression practised by the Russian Government on this persecuted people driving them to seek shelter under a more humane power...It is announced that 2000 Jews are on the eve of departing from Russia for England. Their ultimate idea is to emigrate to Australia. (*Ballarat Courier*, 29 April 1891)

Two days later the *Ballarat Courier* (1 May 1891) reported that 500,000 Russian Jews might emigrate to Australia and Brazil. Several letters to the Editor were printed on the same day; "Excelsior" said that the ban against Chinese immigration should be extended to include Jews whereas "Cosmopolitan" asked: "how can we compare a thrifty, ambitious Hebrew to a hovel loving Chinaman?". A special meeting of the Melbourne branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association stated that only "sturdy agriculturalists with adequate means, willing to pioneer and open up new country were suitable for emigration to Australia, and that whilst heartily sympathising with the philanthropic endeavours of the poor Jews in Russia ..."

George H. Wise, president of the ANA, held a very decided opinion on the subject:

I have no hesitation whatever in saying that the people of these colonies must regard as a menace and a danger the persistent attempts which are apparently being made to make Australia the receptacle for all the remnants of humanity other countries are most anxious to get rid of. I refer more particularly to this question of the invasion of Victoria of the Russian Jews — for invasion it is nothing more or less ... (*Ballarat Courier*, 9 June 1891)

These comments<sup>7</sup> are of great significance because they demonstrate that the Ballarat of Spielvogel's youth was a community with definite opinions about "foreigners" and assimilation. At this time most of Ballarat's first-generation Jews had readily adopted British traditions and most had chosen to come to Australia for commercial reasons. Following the Russian pogroms of the 1880s and 1890s there was an influx of poorer Jewish refugees who migrated for religious, social and commercial security and in selecting Ballarat, Brasch (1955) notes that "Victoria was famed to have had, in Ballarat, one of the most Orthodox congregations within the whole of Australia ..." which may have appealed to the rural peasantry of northern Europe but as Rosenthal (1979, p.58) notes, guaranteed that a clash was inevitable in the host city:

the result was an influx of Russian Jews with little capital. It is a matter of regret to record that they were not greatly welcomed by a section of the community. It was amazing to hear them called "foreigners" by the very men who, thirty years earlier, had been roused to fury by the insulting taunt of "foreign refugees".

This public debate about the "invasion" of Australia by Jewish immigrants does not give the impression that they were assimilated or were expected to assimilate. It should also be noted that a similar proposal by the Salvation Army's General Booth to transport thousands of London's slum-dwellers to Australia was met with a similar reaction.<sup>8</sup>

In 1908 there was another dispute at the synagogue. Ballarat's first generation of business men and the second generation refugee Jews were again in conflict over the level of Orthodoxy. The dispute was so serious that the church split and a second *shule* was formed. Each had its own minister, held separate religious services and established their own schools. Luckily the breakaway group returned to the main congregation in



1912 and having settled their differences the entire congregation contributed £400 to again renovate the synagogue in 1914.

Rosenthal (1979) demonstrates that religious issues were discussed within the Ballarat Jewish community but participation in Ballarat society was still a very important goal of the merchant class of Ballarat East and they in turn contributed greatly to the general wellbeing of society. For example the minuscule Ballarat Jewish community produced five mayors, two members of parliament, six masters of lodges plus presidents of the Benevolent Society, Hospital, Orphanage Asylum, Bowling Clubs, Public Library, Historical Society and Mechanics Institute. There is no mention of women in this patriarchal society. In the City of Ballarat which prided itself on being the most "loyal of all cities in the Empire" (Bate, 1978) the Synagogue still stands as a living reminder to a tenacious and public spirited group of people who have contributed greatly to Ballarat's history.

The local synagogue was a point of worship and social interaction but the evidence suggests that the Jewish community was proud of its place on hospital boards, its role in civic affairs, the impact of their leaders and their involvement in the mainstream of local society. However Rubinstein (1991) argues strongly against the "success" of this process of assimilation when she claims that

previous generations were deficient in some respects in not being Zionists, not building a school system and not resisting assimilation.

but it can be demonstrated that this encroachment in Ballarat was far from complete and that the problems facing the Ballarat Jewish community in the nineteenth century are very similar to the present day debate about the ethnicity of most other cultural minorities. The evidence suggests that they feel alienated, harassed, scattered and isolated — the very problems facing both the first and second generation of Ballarat's Jewish settlers and so often described by Spielvogel. Referring to Jewish settlement in the 1890's Rubinstein said

most Jews who assimilated were victims of circumstances and did so by default. At risk were the children and grand-children of pioneers and the Australian born who felt the tug of two cultures. (*Chosen*, p90)

Maclean (1988) interprets this as akin to likening assimilation to a disease and Markus' review of Rubinstein (1987) and Rutland (1987) in *Australian Historical Journal* (September 1989, p.74) notes that Rubinstein regards assimilation as an "unmitigated evil". Within Nathan Spielvogel's social world the question of assimilation and ethnicity remains one of degree and there is evidence to support most viewpoints; the debate about shop trading hours was never a one-sided issue and Spielvogel's strict promise that he would never 'marry out' are indicators that ethnicity, not a deliberate process of assimilation, remained a more powerful force in his community.

### JEWISH LITERATURE

It has been demonstrated that Ballarat's Jewish heritage had many distinctive features and accordingly had a direct impact on Nathan Spielvogel's creative writing but what of the more general aspects of Jewish literature in Australia? Blainey's speech (1985) at Judah Waten's funeral reminds us that the Waten household

was conscious that it was cut off from its cultural roots ... and in the years before WW1 there was little movement of Jewish people from one land to another. Accordingly the few tangible links were cherished. It is fair to say that to the Jews in Australia these memories of distant European heroes were more than memories, they were precious icons. Waten loved folk



stories and Australian language. He also attended his local Carnegie library at an early age and was a radical who went to England at twenty and eventually returned to Australia as a short story writer.

Based on this broad summary it is apparent that Waten (1911–1985) in a later generation replicated some of the important aspects of Spielvogel's life in that both men felt a need to travel to England before returning to Australia to establish a writing career in this country. However Keesing's (1978) assessment that

there is not and never has been an identifiable school or groups of Jewish writers of fiction in Australia (and) for that matter there are not and never have been many Australian Jewish writers of fiction

is too restrictive because it is apparently based on the small Jewish population who wrote in Yiddish or Hebrew. She also claims that very few first or second generation migrants become good fiction writers and that the majority of material contained in her anthology came from authors who had strong English language backgrounds. If accurate this comment demonstrates the even greater level of isolation that must have been felt by Spielvogel when he made those tentative steps toward the portrayal of his Jewish heritage in the period 1900–1910. Referring to the inclusion of Spielvogel's "Mr. Bronstein Learns his Lesson", Keesing states that this story is about misguided Australian patriotism during World War One, but, given Spielvogel's comments about his treatment by bigoted families of Box Hill in 1914, Keesing is remiss in not describing this story as a description of blatant discrimination as well.

In contrast to Keesing, Houbein (1984) demonstrates that there have been many ethnic Australian writers with Jewish backgrounds. Houbein claims that Solomon Stedman (1894–1979) may have been the first ethnic writer to have material published in the *Bulletin* although this assertion seems unlikely if we accept Liberman's bibliographical research. (For example Benjamin Farjeon also wrote fiction in the 1890s.<sup>9</sup>) A survey of Australian Jewish literature is also contained in Kalechefskey's *Jewish Writing from Down Under* (1984) although this research is scathingly reviewed in the *Journal of AJHS* (1985).

### SPIELVOGEL'S JEWISH FICTION

On the one hand it has been demonstrated that Spielvogel was already a member of the dominant Edwardian society in that he was employed by the Education Department, wore "western" clothing and belonged to various community organisations. However his Jewish fiction was not orientated toward mainstream Australian literature; rather Spielvogel's Jewish fiction was directed at a readership that had not existed at the turn of the century but was to become an identifiable "market" in the 1930s. The impact of Jewish literature within the broader context of Australian literature is obviously subject to debate but Judah Waten is in no doubt about the significance of Nathan Spielvogel's work. Waten (1949) claims that

there have been several writers of Jewish origin in Australian literature and today there is a considerable body of Jewish literature in this country. But none with the exception of Nathan Spielvogel have concerned themselves with Jewish life or subjects and they cannot therefore be regarded as having made any contribution to Jewish literature. Many were Yiddish writers who were aloof from life in Australia ... only with Nathan Spielvogel is there the beginnings of a Jewish literature. Writing (in English for) the Hebrew *Standard* Spielvogel wrote about many aspects of Jewish social and communal life in a comparatively short lived and isolated Jewish community in Ballarat. (He made) a fine and original contribution to Jewish literature and until the nineteen-thirties Spielvogel was an unusual phenomenon in Australia, a writer



who wrote of Jewish life. Until that time it would have been absurd to speak of the outlines of a Jewish literature yet Spielvogel showed by his work that there existed in the life of the Jewish community all the rich material necessary for the creation of a literature.<sup>10</sup>

The significance of Jewish literature within mainstream Australian literature is still subject to debate but we can assume that the diverse factors such as the arguments within the Ballarat Jewish community, Spielvogel's popularity as an nationalist or author, the influx of non-English speaking Jewish immigrants and greater publishing opportunities for his Jewish fiction all had an influence on the evolution of his fiction and verse and these factors merged in the 1930s.

In his earlier works Spielvogel described himself as an Australian with few reservations or qualifiers. For example the description of his trip to Europe at the turn of the century confirms his Australian nationality and on his return to Australia he is even more committed to the social openness of this country. In *A Gumsucker on the Tramp* (1905) Spielvogel recounted the details of this youthful odyssey and when the material was initially serialised in the Dimboola newspaper it could be expected that this budding author and world traveller was going to use the opportunity to at least briefly explain his Jewish heritage. But Spielvogel's account of the visit to the home of his parents is fleeting and far from sentimental or tinged with ethnicity. Even though his father was a dominant influence on his life, no mention is made of Newman Spielvogel's hometown and the following notation is the entire description of the visit to his mother's birthplace:

I left Berlin for a 200 mile run to Schronlanke in the far east of Germany to see my mother's birthplace and relations. At Kolmar ... where my mother was born and spent her early day, my cousin has a furniture factory and my uncle has a restaurant. The cobble stone roads are worse here (than the rest of Europe). I now understand why she left Germany. (p 58)

The above quotation suggests that ethnicity was not an important element in the early thinking of this author who was then a young schoolteacher in rural Victoria. However Jupp's (1991) claim that

Left to themselves Australian Jews would probably have assimilated into the middle-classes in all respects except perhaps for a nominal adherence to their religion on suitable occasions

is not supported by Spielvogel's "The Call of the Wandering Jew" (1913), his other fiction or a later remark that he was the first Jew to become president of the Ballarat Mechanics Institute in its 67 year history up to 1931 (Spielvogel, 1941, p 106). Nor is Jupp's comment supported by some of Spielvogel's early fiction such as "Solachti", published in the *Hebrew Standard* in 1907. In this biographical short story the author was a young school teacher at Brim and his unknown companion was a hawker, brawler and drunk. Even though they were dissimilar in age, interests and temperament the story describes how the two men were able to spend an evening together during Yom Kippur. Spielvogel makes it clear that his Jewishness was both strict and socially alienating. Referring to various incidents in his life Spielvogel said that his Jewish heritage continued to set him apart from mainstream Australia when "the gibes about my religion burned into my soul and left marks that time has not eradicated". (Spielvogel, 1941, p. 3). His adherence to his religious beliefs were far from "nominal" either then or at any other stage in his life. His much praised poem "The Call of the Wandering Jew" (1913) was published in several journals including the *Bulletin* magazine and it contains the following stanza in which he explains why he felt compelled to travel to the land of his parents.



Hot lava flows in my veins tonight  
 My nerves are jangling mad,  
 The joy of life is a tinsel gaud  
 The sweetest songs sound sad.  
 I feel the drag of the Wanderlust,  
 I see the ghosts stream by,  
 I hear the call of old Ahaswer,  
 And I must go or die.  
 A horde of ghosts from the grave tramp past  
 And each one turns and stares,  
 And each one smiles and beckons me  
 To join with my forbears ...

But I was born in this Southland sweet,  
 In it to manhood grown  
 I love this land, as I love my life  
 I call this land my own.  
 Yet here tonight my blood runs mad  
 To go to these and roam  
 To wander off with these gaunt, grim ghosts  
 That ever seek a home ...

And so tonight while the gum trees sigh,  
 I take my staff and go;  
 I give myself to the Wanderlust  
 That is both friend and foe.  
 Hot lava leaps in my blood tonight  
 My martyred sires go by  
 I hear the call of old Ahaswer  
 And I must go or die.

(The full text of this poem is in Appendix 1)

There can be no doubt that the onslaught of cultural assimilation was far from complete when the author wrote this verse at the turn of the century and briefly encapsulated a theme that was to lie dormant for many years. Likewise Hammer's (1988) compilation of other Jewish fiction suggests that Jupp's comments about assimilation are too sweeping. Hammer's collection includes material published between 1890–1930 and it is apparent that there is one recurring theme. Each of the contributors could trace their immediate ancestry back to Poland, Latvia, Germany or Prussia and the sense of alienation permeates their writing. The majority of the stories address specific Jewish issues and focus on the sense of cultural isolation felt by the Jewish people in various states of dislocation: chance meetings on ships, in warfare and in POW camps. In every instance their sense of nationality, ethnicity and belonging are being tested. For example Falk (1929) in Hammer (1988) states that "the German Jews were as loyal to their country as the English Jew to theirs and yet what a magic hold Palestine has on the soul of the Jew."

The more contemporary literature of Serge Liberman (b.1942) is also noteworthy because of the recurring analysis and description of his transplanted Jewish heritage. Liberman was born in Russia and as a child emigrated to Australia after the Second World War. The author has written numerous short stories and several critical essays on



Australian literature and multiculturalism. Liberman constantly addresses the problems of assimilation and ethnicity in ways that have similarities with Spielvogel. For example "Greetings, Australia! To you I have come" (1983) is a description of his arrival in Australia. There are two important points in this story, firstly the author is perplexed by his parents momentary reluctance to disembark in Australia and secondly the young man later meets his mentor who urges the child to remain true to his Jewish faith. This article has many parallels with Spielvogel's search for explanations although the younger Liberman is able to describe this process in a more literary and urbane manner than Spielvogel. Finally Liberman's more recent collection of short stories in *The Battered and the Redeemed* (1990) again focuses on the place of victims and survivors in new lands. Liberman argues that he has a responsibility to retell the stories of his parents generation. Even the most cursory analysis of Liberman's writing demonstrates that Jupp's analysis is too simplistic.

### SPIELVOGEL'S JEWISH FICTION IN BALLARAT

Returning to Spielvogel it can be argued that his short story called "My Neighbour's Story" (1933) also describes the problems of assimilation - in this case the personality clash between Joseph Pitovsky the immigrant Jew and his new persona of Joe Pitt, the Australian businessman. This is a very similar theme to Spielvogel's "Mr. Bronstein Learns his Lesson" in 1942 — a tale about a Jewish merchant who anglicised his name during the war; a process which Markus (1987) describes as "the cult of inconspicuousness". Spielvogel's return to Ballarat coincided with what several researchers have identified as a dramatic change in the ethnicity of Australian Jews. Spielvogel grew up and then left Ballarat in 1896 at a time when the Ballarat synagogue was small and in disarray. When he returned the older generation of prominent "London Hebrews" was being replaced by the European "Refujews" and the author was very interested in their ancestry.

Spielvogel's fiction provides an important indicator of this changing emphasis. The Ballarat author always mentioned the birth place of his subjects and in every instance they were born in Latvia, Poland or Austria and by the 1930s Spielvogel's fiction makes very little mention of the earlier "London Jews". Between 1935–1950 Spielvogel became a regular contributor of Jewish fiction to such publications as *Westralian Judean* and the *Australian Jewish Herald* and both journals were willing to print articles about European — as opposed to British — Jewish pioneers. Each of his stories have a clever twist at the end but do not disguise the consistent mention of European Jews in a city that had prided itself on its British heritage. Thus in "The Old Jewish Cobbler" (1952) the bootmaker Izzy Kolski was a Russian Jew who had worked his passage on a sailing ship to Ballarat in the 1850s. The bootmaker later helped a young man gain a university education. "One of the Cohens" (1954) is about the descendants of Gershon — later George — Cohen who fled Warsaw and the Czar's army in the 1850s. This story is about a series of courtships amongst a small circle of friends. "Frenchie" (1954) was thought to be an ex-convict and thus very different to the other Polish Jews who spoke Yiddish and attended synagogue regularly. But in his moment of crisis he is supported by the local Jewish congregation and thereafter led a devout life. The salient point of "My Aunt's Story" is that on arrival in Australia, Hanna Cohen could only speak Yiddish.

Each of these stories are nostalgic and depict the lifestyle and attitudes of an older generation who were proud of their ancestry. These same men and women had attempted to Anglicise their lives a generation earlier. However it cannot be said that the twentieth century waves of Jewish settlers — typically poorer, more Orthodox and non-English speaking Jews — severely upset Spielvogel's thoughts or literary style. The



author had previously claimed to be a lifelong opponent of warfare, wealthy businessmen and extreme capitalism ("once I thought Socialism was the method, then Communism but both have failed", Spielvogel, 1941 p. 109) but his literary output did not address these issues and bore little resemblance to the works of more radical Jewish intellectuals such as Judah Waten, Pinchas Goldhar or Herz Bergner who had immigrated to this country after the First World War. Nor are his stories similar to more recent Jewish authors such as Lily Brett. Brett's fiction tells us a great deal about the specific problems associated with Jewish settlement in Australia and is also based on autobiographical accounts of a refugee family who flee post-war Germany and settle in Australia. But Brett's Australian Jews had to re-invent a Jewish past based on a European social order that no longer existed whereas Spielvogel still had first-hand access to people and events within his local circle of friends. Most of Spielvogel's stories are family orientated and success is still portrayed within the capitalist parameters of personal wealth, the ownership of property and education. There are no stories about Ballarat Jews returning to Israel or Europe or "marrying-out". Nor are there stories about the treatment meted out to the refugee Jews by Flegeltaub *et al.* Prentice (1987) has claimed "the Jews in Australia are a special case in the sense that they had a long history of assimilation which has gradually reversed since 1938 — from a mere religious denomination to a fully fledged ethnic group."

But this trend was not evident in Spielvogel's material in the period 1930–50. When Spielvogel did eventually describe the changing ethnicity of the Ballarat Jewish community he did so in an historical and nostalgic sense, "Solachti" may have been unusual in 1907 but in the 1930–40s such stories about his ancestors and Jewish friends were very common and regularly appeared in *Westralian Judean*. His fiction was not an examination of Jewishness in a contemporary sense and does not give the impression that the local Jews were in danger of total assimilation. These stories are about dignity, tenacity and pride — not unwanted alienation — and whilst family life and civic affairs are often indistinguishable, the author's portrayal of women is very weak in that they are assigned the stereotypical roles of sweetheart, mother or aunt. There are no references to women in religious, business or the civic environments.

### FINAL DAYS

In "retirement" Spielvogel continued to write fiction and local history. He was honoured by numerous organisations and most residents knew him by sight and reputation although it is doubtful that they realised that he was such a prolific author because so much of material was being published in Melbourne and Sydney newspapers. Ballarat school children looked forward to his weekly visits and the Synagogue relied on his scholarship and devotion. He assisted with the conduct of services at the Synagogue from 1941 until 1953 — which is more evidence to disprove Jupp's (1991) assertion. For years he kept a diary and one of the last entries, on 31 December 1953 notes

Here I am in my 80th year and still waiting patiently for the release. My legs have grown feeble and I am frail. But still happy and contented. Looking back on happy days long ago.

Nathan Spielvogel died on 10 September 1956.

### CONCLUSION

How do we analyse the literary and social significance of Nathan Spielvogel? Thousands of people knew him by sight or reputation, he wrote numerous short stories, verse and local history for more than half a century and his work was published in national magazines such as the *Bulletin* and *Lone Hand*. He clearly enjoyed the thrill of



submitting material to newspaper editors and radio stations and yet he was prepared to spend untold hours researching a local topic so that it could be used in one speech. Viewed in its entirety Spielvogel's work shows a consistency of tone and style throughout his entire career. Schooled in the *Bulletin* tradition Spielvogel wrote brief articles, offered first-hand accounts, used colloquial language and maintained an optimistic view of life. A researcher could look at his early work and find a few clues which demonstrated the influence of contemporaries such as Lawson, Dyson and Neilson but there is no evidence that the emerging writers of the 1930s and 1940s had a similar influence on his work. The only variation in style was his changing use of dialogue. His last short story was published in the *Australian Jewish Herald* on 23 September 1955 and brought to a close sixty years of creative writing. At a national literary level it is difficult to make comparisons because Nathan Spielvogel doesn't exist within mainstream Australian literary criticism. He is mentioned in Green's and Chisholm's bibliographies but the name Spielvogel or "Old Eko" is not mentioned in any of the standard works of Australian literary criticism.

His reputation should not be so lightly discounted. Spielvogel's Jewish fiction is of great significance to our understanding of Australian nationalism and ethnicity for several reasons. It has been demonstrated that Ballarat's history was greatly influenced by approximately fifty Jewish families who lived, married, and died in this rural city for more than a century. The author knew all these people as well as their ancestry and he used this material to describe an isolated, but not alienated, culture. In addition Spielvogel was able to make a "second start" in his attempt to describe the cultural significance of Australian Jews. As a young writer at the turn of the century Nathan Spielvogel avoided the smothering effects of the British literary model even though he was unable to avoid the pervasive mythology of the Australian bush. However, thirty years later Spielvogel was able to return to Jewish themes and enthusiastically described the cultural development of an ethnic minority that had previously been addressed in only stereotypical clichés about merchants, convicts and hawkers.

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*Nathan Spielvogel on the steps at Dana Street School, 1932 (aged 58)*



## NOTES

1. Newman Spielvogel left home at the age of ten and roamed Eastern Europe for several years before finding an uncle in Istanbul. He then gave up his gipsy-like existence and went into trade with a lace maker. This was not successful and he then continued his wanderings, this time through Egypt, Jerusalem and Bombay before returning to his native village and his native religion. In 1853 he sailed for Australia. He disembarked at Port Melbourne and immediately travelled to the district goldfields including Beechworth and Beaufort. For almost a decade Spielvogel worked in Smythesdale, both as a miner and as a storekeeper and later moved to Ballarat. Nathan Spielvogel remembers his father as a handsome, full bearded man, speaking many languages, hasty in temper, brooking no opposition in the house or the public affairs in which he took part. He hated deceit or hypocrisy and was bitterly opposed to immorality and evil living of any type. Spielvogel senior was a wealthy man at the time of his marriage, but like so many others his business was ruined by one of the periodic floods which damaged so much of Ballarat in the early 1870s. He was forced to start again and the new business was that of pawnbroker in Armstrong Street south, between Bath and Chancery Lanes. He died in 1891, aged 61, leaving a widow and six children.

2. An examination of the catalogues of the Ballarat Mechanics Library and the Ballarat East Free Library in the 1890s would suggest that Spielvogel had little choice but to read British or European literature. Approximately 95 per cent of all stock was imported and the "Fiction, Tales and Sketches" collection was British in content and bias. Less than a decade before Federation there were some interesting inclusions and omissions for Spielvogel to select from:

Will Dyson	1	title
Charles Dickens	19	titles
George Eliot	0	
Adam Lindsay Gordon	1	
Henry Lawson	1	
Charles Harpur	0	
Arthur (?) B Paterson	1	
Karl Marx	1	
Henry H Richardson	0	
Tennyson	12	
Emil Zola	9	

Charles Reade's *Never too late to Mend* (1856) and Henry Kingsley's *Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* (1859) were both in the library. Reade's story was set in convict New South Wales and was a very popular book even though the author had never been to Australia. Kingsley on the other hand had written an 'eye-witness' classic but it was not as popular at the time.

3. For example the Ballarat *Star* newspaper serialised Dora Russell's *A Country Sweetheart* for thirty weeks and immediately followed this with another English novel, *The Beautiful Soul* by Florence Marryat. The rival *Courier* newspaper published another long novel, *Beatrice and Benedict — a romance of the Crimea*, by Hawley Smart.

4. John Shaw Neilson was born in Penola in 1872. His father was a poorly educated farmer and poet. In 1881 the family moved to Minimay where there was no school until 1885. Neilson attended that school for fifteen months. In 1889 the family moved to Nhill and he worked as an agricultural labourer. In 1890 he started writing and in 1893 won an ANA poetry competition. In 1895 the family moved to Sea Lake where he started submitting material to the *Bulletin* etc. in 1919 A.G. Stephens said that Neilson's "Heart of Spring" was "unsurpassed in the range of English lyrics".



5. As to Ballarat's literary tradition, Spielvogel resided in an unusual city in the literary sense. Ballarat has provided the setting for a variety of books of poetry, short stories, fiction and non-fiction and the city has been home for a diverse group of writers who have collectively written more than one hundred and fifty books over the last one hundred and fifty years. The majority have written non-fiction material but Ballarat also has a strong association with creative writers, novelists, poets and short story writers.

The first group were concerned with the battle at the Eureka Stockade in December 1854. This generated a wave of publishing in the decades following the battle and again in the centenary year of 1954. Writers as diverse in their thinking as Raffaello Carboni, Henry Lawson, Mark Twain, Ellen Francis Young, William Gay, John Gavan Reilly, Rex Reinets, Eric Lambert, Catherine Gaskin and Richard Butler have used the theme of Eureka in their literary efforts.

The second group consisted of those writers and poets who lived in Ballarat and wrote about their experiences. The goldfields and the rural lifestyle of last century were important ingredients in their thinking. Mrs. Hannah Fisher may never be recognised as a nationally prominent poet but she certainly had the courage of her convictions. Her beautifully bound book of verse noted that she had "a God given talent to write and an obligation to publish". Others in this category include Adam Lindsay Gordon, "Mona Marie" and J. Mills. The third category is the largest and the most diverse. Novelists such as Henry Handel Richardson and that gloomy old poet Bernard O'Dowd lived in Ballarat at formative stages in their career. Richardson and O'Dowd wrote for a national audience but they were similar to the others in one important aspect: they wrote about events which had occurred a generation before the publication of their books. With only a few exceptions all the novelists and poets adopted an historic or nostalgic view of life in Ballarat. Others include Edward Dyson, G E Jennings Carmichael, Thomas Bury, Norman Lindsay, Wilfred Burchett, Henrietta Drake-Brockman and Hal Porter.

6. Jewish life in Ballarat: The first burial occurred on 9 May 1857 — the stillborn child of Alex Dimant and Sarah Solomon. It would appear that the young mother died soon after because the first marriage at the synagogue took place on 30 September 1857 between Alex Dimant and Kate Samuels of England (Rosenthal, 1979). The office bearers of the Ballarat Hebrew Philanthropic Society were as follows: President, Charles Dyte; Treasurer, Henry Salmon; Secretary, Hyman Levinson; Committee, Jacob Bernstein, Jos. Levy, — Brawn, — Solomon, — Marks. But the relatively small size of the local community can be gauged by analysing the lists of office bearers: the same core of names recur in the Jewish community for 30 years. The laying of the foundation stone of the Hebrew Synagogue in Barkly Street, Ballarat East had taken place at 8 am on Friday 25 January 1861. One hundred people watched as Mr Charles Dyte (the President) and the Rev. Mr Isaacs performed the ceremony. Trustees included L. Meanowski, S. Bernstein, S. Cohen, E. Steinfeld, J. Joseph, A. Scott, J. Levison and Charles Dyte. Dyte recalled that only eight years earlier the local Jewish congregation was so small that the services took place at a hotel and Spielvogel (1940, pp.92-4) notes that the first Synagogue was consecrated on 12 November 1855 in a wooden building in the same street. Later the Ballarat East Town Council demanded the land for its civic precinct and in 1860 it compulsorily purchased the land for £225. At the same time the Jewish community was rapidly expanding and Messrs. Marks, Harris and Abrahams recommended that a new and permanent Synagogue be constructed. (*Star*, 26 January 1861). Designed by T.D. Cameron, it was a tuck-pointed brick building based on the style of traditional European synagogues which incorporated pilasters, columns and revealed windows. It was reported in the *Ballarat Times* that the building had been completed by March 1861 — only a few months after the laying of the foundation stone. It cost £900 and was said to be "sufficiently tasteful without being ostentatious and the interior is remarkable for a simplicity perfectly in keeping with the objects for which it was erected" (Rosenthal, 1979).



## 7. Newspaper reports of Jewish settlement

The Jews In Russia ...The *Pall Mall Gazette* of 28th April publishes a sensational statement regarding the exodus of Jews from Russia. It states that a scheme is in contemplation for enabling 500,000 Jews at present in Russia to emigrate to Australia and Brazil. (Ballarat *Courier*, 1 May 1891)

However, the letter writers had more definite views as the following extracts suggest. These were all published on one day of a long debate:

To The Editor of The Courier: Sir — I read with no little surprise of the projected and objectionable influx of Jews, who it is said, intend to emigrate to Australia. Now, in my opinion, their room would be better than their company. Taking in the first place their mode of business. They undersell our own country men, and employ very rarely any other person but their own caste, and in cases where they do have other employees they generally employ small boys. And, Mr Editor, seeing that you were such a strong advocate against the influx of Chinese, I hope you will show the same spirit against the still greater evil, the projected influx of Jews ... Yours &c., "Excelsior" (Ballarat *Courier*, 1 May 1891)

To The Editor Of The Courier: Sir — I am surprised to find there lives a person so narrow minded and ignorant of Jewish customs as "Excelsior" appears to be. How can he compare a thrifty, ambitious Hebrew to a hovel loving Chinaman? Allow me to correct one of his illusions: He says the Jews will employ only their own caste. Let me inform him ... It is a satisfaction to notice that "Excelsior", in his tirade against the Russian Jews, cannot accuse them of drunkenness. Yours &c., "Cosmopolitan" (Ballarat *Courier*, 1 May 1891)

To The Editor Of The Courier: Sir — I have read your correspondent's letter about the projected incursion of Jews to Australia, and he seems to have great objection to their coming to these shores. My own motto is "live and let live". However "Excelsior" has, I presume, never had much dealings with the Jews. If he had, he would never rush into print with his insulting remarks. Yours &c., "Gentile". (Ballarat *Courier*, 1 May 1891)

To The Editor Of The Courier: Sir — In reference to the letter in today's issue, signed "Excelsior," if it were treated for what it is worth, it would be with the greatest contempt, for any one man, with one grain of sense, would consider it one of a tissue of falsehoods, and the man that wrote it a little less than lunatic. Yours &c., S. Book, boot manufacturer. (Ballarat *Courier*, 1 May 1891)

The Russian Jews ... A special meeting of the committee of the Melbourne branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association was held on Monday afternoon for the purpose of considering the reports which have reached this colony of the proposed emigration of Russian Jews to Australia. Mr E.L. Zox, MLA, the president, occupied the chair; and the following resolution was carried unanimously: — "That a letter be forwarded to the council of the parent body, drawing attention to reports which have reached Melbourne by cable, announcing the possible emigration of Russian Jews to Australia, and urging that it be pointed to the promoter of the scheme of Russo-Jewish emigration that in the opinion of the Melbourne branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association, only sturdy agriculturalists with adequate means, willing to pioneer and open up new country were suitable for emigration to Australia, and that whilst heartily sympathising with the philanthropic endeavour of those who were striving to ameliorate the unhappy condition of the afflicted Jews of



Russia, it would never-the-less strongly protest against any measures that might be adopted to bring about an emigration of a purely pauper class of people to cities which were already over populated and in which the struggle for existence was so great." (Ballarat *Courier*, 6 June 1891)

And still the confusion continued as suggested by this report entitled "Jewish Colony In Australia" from London: "The reports that the persecuted Jews from Russia were about to form a colony in Australia are believed to be unfounded, as no authentic intelligence on the subject has been received, and the subject is not even discussed in Jewish circles in this city." (Ballarat *Courier*, 8 May 1891)

and

Proposed Jewish Colony ... Mr George H. Wise, president of the ANA, holds a very decided opinion on the subject. Mr Wise says: I have no hesitation whatever in saying that the people of these colonies must regard as a menace and a danger the persistent attempts which are apparently being made to make Australia the receptacle for all the remnants of humanity other countries are most anxious to get rid of. I refer more particularly to this question of the invasion of Victoria of the Russian Jews — for invasion it is nothing more or less ... (*Courier* 9 June 1891)

8. Compare this with the comments of General Booth of the Salvation Army who was in Ballarat in October 1891 and also argued that there would be many advantages in moving thousands of London slum dwellers to rural Victoria. Ballarat residents were horrified at the concept which was so similar to the Anglo-Jewish Association's plan.

9. Ben Farjeon was born in London in 1838 and migrated to Australia in 1854; he then migrated to NZ in 1861 then Australia and back to England in 1870 where he died in 1903. His most popular book was *Grif: a story of Australian life* in 1870. Farjeon wrote approximately fifty books and claimed that he was greatly influenced by the literary skills of Charles Dickens.

10. It can only be presumed that Waten based his opinion on the non-fictional material that Spielvogel had already submitted to the *Journal* of the Australian Jewish Historical Society and other non-fiction material such as "Ballarat Ministers" (vol. 1, p93, 1939), "The beginning of things" (vol.1 p110, 1940) and "The History of the Congregation" (vol. 2, p350, 1942).



## APPENDIX 1

"The Call of the Wandering Jew" (1913) was published in several journals including the *Bulletin* magazine:

Hot lava flows in my veins tonight  
 My nerves are jangling mad,  
 the joy of life is a tinsel gaud  
 the sweetest songs sound sad.  
 I feel the drag of the Wanderlust,  
 I see the ghosts stream by,  
 I hear the call of old Ahaswer,  
 And I must go or die.

A horde of ghosts from the grave tramp past  
 And each one turns and stares,  
 And each one smiles and beckons me  
 To join with my forbears.  
 And each one stands and tells his tale,  
 Then grimly passes by,  
 Each stops and speaks and beckons me  
 And I must go or die.

A slave, new freed from the land of Ra  
 I journeyed the desert on.  
 I hung my harp on a willow tree  
 and wept of Babylon.  
 I saw him die on the thorn-crowned Cross.  
 I writhed 'neath Roman whips.  
 My blood dyed red the stones of Tyre.  
 I groaned in Punic ships.

I wandered forth when Holy Flames  
 Lit torches in Castille.  
 I wore the badge of the Ghetto's shame.  
 I died but would not kneel.  
 I fought the Moor in the streets of Fez  
 I heard the "HEP" of hate.  
 I came afresh out of Germany  
 But yesternight's Jew's bait.

I wrote joy songs for the world to sing.  
 I kept a gambling hell  
 I caught the music the angels love  
 I lived to buy and sell  
 I raised the cry of the workers' woe  
 A lord of gold was I.  
 Now Heine, Mendelssohn, Marx with these  
 Are tramping, tramping by.



Begrimed by muck of centuries,  
And smoke of holy stakes,  
Each bends his head, like the osier  
That bows but never breaks  
The nations rise, the nations war,  
the nations fade and die.  
They mock, they kill but the Jew heeds not.  
Goes tramping, tramping by.

Alone comes One who has loved all men,  
the man of peace and tears,  
His eyes meet mine and I rise and stand  
Perturbed by doubts and fears.  
Oh! speak the words that would clear the way!  
Speak! Speak! one word, I cry  
His eyes are dimmed but His voice is mute  
And He goes tramping by.

But I was born in this Southland sweet,  
In it to manhood grown  
I love this land, as I love my life  
I call this land my own.  
Yet here tonight my blood runs mad  
To go to these and roam  
To wander off with these gaunt, grim ghosts  
That ever seek a home.

For all the years like the winds of God  
They seek a resting place,  
And though some hide in the world's byways.  
They all must join the chase.  
Must follow up like the rains of God  
By mountain, plain and wave  
And find the bourne, that they ever seek  
not even in the grave.

And so tonight while the gum trees sigh,  
I take my staff and go;  
I give myself to the Wanderlust  
This is both friend and foe.  
Hot lava leaps in my blood tonight  
My martyred sires go by  
I hear the call of old Ahaswer  
And I must go or die.



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## RELIGIOUSLY CARLTON JEWISH RELIGIOUS LIFE IN CARLTON 1919-1939

*Yankel Rosenbaum*

Durkheim, in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* determined that religion is the foremost integrating force in human society. Perhaps this is true in many instances but it is certainly not so in the case of Melbourne Jewry. For if there was any issue that divided the Melbourne Jewish community, it was religion and religiosity.

It is inappropriate to consider there ever being one Jewish community in Melbourne. At the very least, Melbourne Jewry consisted of two very distinct communities — the Anglicised Jews and the East European Jews. (And even to these there could be considered numerous semi-autonomous sub-strata.) The Anglicised Jews, having come mainly from England, had a major advantage over the East European Jews in that they had no language barrier to contend with and hence were more acclimatised to the new society. Their lack of orthodoxy assisted their integration into the wider non-Jewish community and aided social mobility. However, their ignorance of religious principles prompted many to look down with scorn upon fellow Jews who came from foreign lands and could not speak English.<sup>1</sup> Equally so was the East European Jews' enmity towards the anglicised Jews.

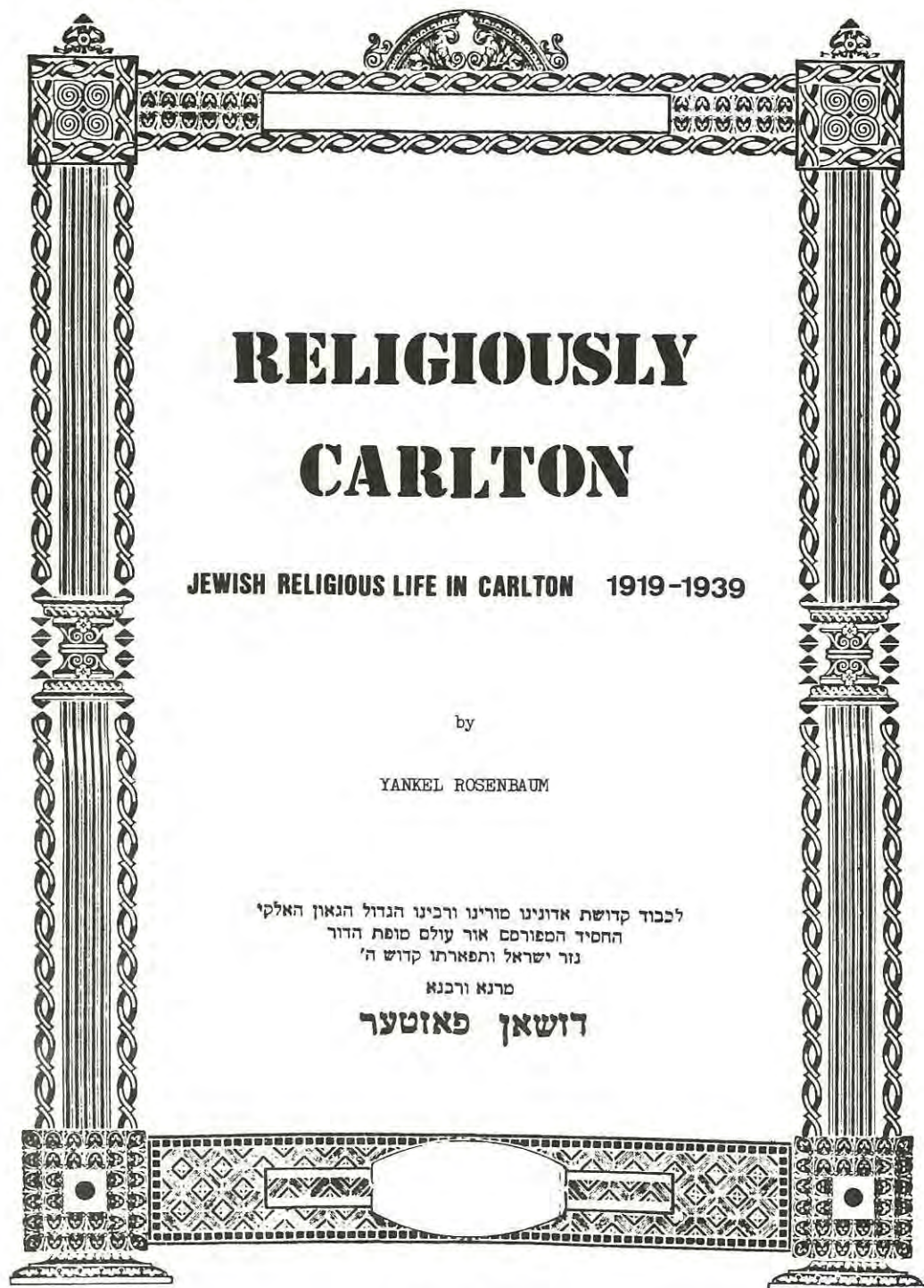
To see Jews who could understand neither Yiddish nor Hebrew, and who openly ignored the basic tenets of Judaism was a matter of absolute consternation. This division in the community pre-empted the move when, in 1857, Reverend Moses Rintel resigned from his position as minister of the only synagogue in Melbourne, the "Bourke Street Synagogue",<sup>2</sup> to establish another place of worship, later to be known as the 'East Melbourne Shul'. Rabbi Safir, an emissary from Israel who came to Melbourne in the 1860s wrote

There are about one thousand known Jews in Melbourne, the majority from England and the minority from Poland. They have two synagogues, one is large and beautiful, called "Sharis Yisroel" (Remnant of Israel), where the English Jews pray. They have a cantor and reader, the wise and respected Reverend E.M. Myers, and they have many rich and honourable men. The second is also nice, and it is smaller than the other one, where the Polish pray. The leaders of this congregation are honourable and knowledgeable, and they have a cantor and reader, the Chochem Morenu vRobenu HaRov Rintel, who was born in Poland and grew up in London.<sup>3</sup>

Hence it is seen that the situation arose where, unlike beforehand where there was a division in the community on ideological grounds, now there was an institutional division to accompany it, with most East European Jews supporting Reverend Rintel.<sup>4</sup>

As Melbourne grew, so too did the Jewish community, with immigrants coming from both England and Europe. This growth precipitated the establishment of various facilities vital for religious observance. A matzo bakery was founded with Mashgichim to ensure the product to be kosher.<sup>5</sup> Ritual slaughterers were brought from overseas to kill meat strictly according to Halochah (although the meat was supplied through non-kosher butcher shops at a separate kosher counter.)

East Melbourne shul organised its own Chevra Kadisha,<sup>6</sup> mikvah,<sup>7</sup> Shomer Shabbos Society,<sup>8</sup> and employed its own shochet to ensure a high standard of kashrus.<sup>9</sup> The Bourke Street shul also opened a mikvah, which soon fell into disrepair and ultimately was leased to East Melbourne shul to maintain.<sup>10</sup>



Title page, 1985



Numerous attempts were made to foster religious education. Ultimately the responsibility rested upon the two congregations who offered weekday and Sunday classes.<sup>11</sup> Although the congregations catered for the spiritual welfare of the community, the community could not (or would not) cater for the material needs of the spiritual institutions, for Jewish education was at a very low standard and the accompanying financial costs involved were simply beyond the shuls' capabilities. This led to the founding of the United Jewish Education Board (UJEB) in 1895, to which the congregations unloaded the burden of Jewish education, but only half heartedly supported. The newly formed St. Kilda community refused to subsidise the UJEB at all, whilst the East Melbourne and Bourke Street shuls gave only token financial assistance.<sup>12</sup>

A *Beis Din* was formed under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, with its main purpose being to "make proselytes whenever necessary."<sup>13</sup> Rabbi Safir explains how this matter of *Gerus* (conversions) arose:

Most of the men who came out to Melbourne were single. Many settlements were totally male until it became known in England that women were scarce, and then many came out, especially from Ireland. Jews also took these non-Jewish women for wives. Some desired to become Jewish and their request was granted and they were married as Jews. Many things however were done in regard to proselytisation which was not according to Halochah.<sup>14</sup>

This whole question of *Gerus* was (and in fact still is) a matter that divided the Jewish community. The basic situation was that the Anglicised Jews together with the Bourke Street synagogue would often allow a non-Jewish spouse to be converted to Judaism so that the Jewish spouse would not be "lost to the fold." East Melbourne shul and its contingent, whilst not refusing all proselytisation, was far more "reluctant" seeing indiscriminate conversions as only encouraging young Jews to "marry out."<sup>15</sup>

Another issue that split the Jewish community was that of "modifications." The Bourke Street synagogue "modified" the *davnin* (prayers), randomly omitting certain passages and saying others in English. A mixed choir was also introduced, all with the approval of the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire!<sup>16</sup> Such behaviour was condemned by the East Melbourne congregation, which by now was considered the only *froom* shul. There is no doubt that eventually, without any influence from new blood, the Melbourne Jewish community would have disappeared. Growing immigration from Eastern Europe, where orthodoxy was strong, ensured the survival of the Jewish community. Though the newcomers discarded some ritual and even some essentials of Judaism, their background and upbringing protected them from assimilation and strengthened the community.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, by the early 1900s there was a failure of the community to progress religiously. Both the Bourke Street and East Melbourne congregations had abandoned Jewish education as their responsibility and had thrown the onus upon a voluntary institution bereft of financial means to conduct its affairs smoothly. An almost open lack of religious zeal contributed largely to the apathy towards Judaism. For most, *Shabbos* observance was non-existent. Only East Melbourne synagogue employed a shochet, with St. Kilda and Melbourne congregations allowing butchers to directly employ shochtim.<sup>18</sup> The Melbourne synagogue also allowed its mikvah to fall into disrepair and Mr. Woolf Davis had to beg the East Melbourne shul to take over the mikvah which he had caused to be built at the City Baths in Swanston Street.<sup>19</sup>

It became such that four most fundamental principles of Judaism — *Shabbos*, religious education, kashrus and mikvah — had little support from individuals or the religious institutions.<sup>20</sup> This led to the highest rate of inter-marriage in the world<sup>21</sup> and numerous conversions. So it was in the prelude to Carlton Jewry.



At this point I feel it necessary to contest the popular notion that all Jews from Eastern Europe were devoutly pious, learned and meticulously observant Orthodox Jews. Although it is difficult to speculate due to the lack of official records, I tend to concur with those studies performed by C.S. Heller and H. Rabinowicz<sup>22</sup> that reach the conclusion that approximately one third of East European Jewry was orthodox. The high visibility of the Orthodox Jew, with a beard, *payes*, *kapotte* and *yarmulke* makes him a sight quite distinct and almost impossible to miss. The non-orthodox Jew, however, cannot easily be distinguished from the non-Jewish person. Hence this factor of high visibility contributed to the stereotype that all East European Jews are observant orthodox zealots.

Especially with the coming of the twentieth century and the political upheavals of Europe, in particular the Russian Revolution, secularism made huge inroads, especially into the *shtetl*, which was till then the bastion of Jewish orthodoxy.<sup>23</sup> Although there was a highly structured institutional system for religious education, the socio-economic demise of the masses made it such that often a child would receive education only till his teens, when by necessity he would be forced to find employment. Thus, many of those who were orthodox were certainly not learned scholars. They simply had a solid education in the basics of Judaism, being capable of reading and understanding Hebrew, Yiddish and the Talmud to some extent.

Nonetheless, Eastern Europe remained the stronghold of Yiddishkeit. Even to those who were not orthodox themselves, there often remained an affinity to orthodoxy rather than to the Reform Judaism promulgated in Germany and America. This is seen by the fact that although secularisation/acculturation gained some popularity, the Jewish Reform movement was largely rejected with their being few such synagogues in Poland or Russia.

Necessarily brief though it is, the above outline suggests it more appropriate to consider orthodoxy as the norm in Eastern Europe, but not the absolute, with many no longer adhering to the rituals of Jewish Law. This point should be remembered when considering the immigrant origins of Carlton Jewry.

With the expansion of the central business district, Melbourne Jewry was faced with the dilemma of relocation. For some time there had been a gradual move to the fashionable locale of St. Kilda, primarily by the Anglicised Jews who had the financial means to afford such. The East European Jews chose in the main to reside in the Carlton principality, their preference to such being due to the financial constraint and the proximity to their religious institutions, especially the East Melbourne shul, which was at that time the only shul serving the Carlton community. For within the phenomenon of orthodox diaspora Jewry there has always been the practice of "ritualistic segregation", resulting in the voluntary formation of a ghetto centred around the shul.<sup>24</sup>

Before very long, the Carlton Jewish community developed from a diminutive periphery to be the foremost Jewish community in Victoria. Demographically, the Carlton community achieved self sufficiency through the influx of migrants from Eastern Europe (who were directed by the various Jewish welfare and welcoming societies to settle in Carlton rather than St. Kilda.) This increased Jewish population in Carlton, together with the rise of the new middle class from the earlier immigrants, initiated the founding of various institutional and entrepreneurial establishments, such as shuls, restaurants, kosher butcher shops, bakeries and a communal hall. Carlton had developed into a vibrant, dynamic and functionally independent Jewish centre, but the residents still perceived themselves as living in the shadow of the St. Kilda community. Although in many ways and on many issues they disagreed and even despised St. Kilda Jewry,



nonetheless they saw St. Kilda as a status symbol and measure of success. To achieve the ultimate was to move to St. Kilda for it showed that you were no longer a foreigner but part of the establishment — it was a matter of *yichus*.

So too in Carlton itself was *yichus* measured by the neighbourhood in which you resided. The locality could be segmented into three regions by which *yichus* was measured — Carlton, North Carlton and Princes Hill. To establish oneself you would settle in a modest abode in Carlton, where rent was relatively low. Upon securing a reasonable livelihood, at first chance one would relocate to North Carlton which was far more fashionable and respectful. And Princes Hill was the "Toorak of Carlton" to which all aspired. Consequently a pattern of urban migration developed where the migrant Jew would initially settle in Carlton, progressing on to North Carlton and eventually Princes Hill when finances sufficed. Beyond this there was the ultimate mark of success — to move to St. Kilda. However, the perception of St. Kilda was dichotic in that although there was a desire to live in St. Kilda "for the *yichus*", there was also a rejection of the ideals and practices of that community. Many who ultimately moved to St. Kilda would return to Carlton for *Shabbos* and *Yomtov*, staying with friends or relatives, and some were known to walk every *Shabbos* from St. Kilda to Carlton,<sup>25</sup> for there was a sense of community and religion in Carlton which was absent in St. Kilda. Perhaps this is best described by the comment "They (St. Kilda Jews) were English *Yidn*. We, we're *Yiddishe Yidn*."<sup>26</sup>

The shul is the pivot around which religious life eternally revolves. Its origins stem from the time of Moses<sup>27</sup> and never has it been restricted to being simply a house of prayer. As its Hebrew title, *Beis HaKnesses* (House of Assembly) infers, the shul is a multifaceted and multifunctional communal centre. Not only is going to shul a religious experience but it is also a social experience. It is where one goes to seek advice and knowledge from the Rabbi, it is where one goes to meet friends, it is where one takes the children to learn and play. And of course it is where one goes to pray.<sup>28</sup> The shul is the foremost Jewish institution.

In 1919 there were no shuls in Carlton. Being in its infancy, there was no great demand or necessity for such. Rather, the Carlton community relied upon the East Melbourne shul, which offered minyonim three times a day for *Shachris*, *Mincha* and *Maariv*.<sup>29</sup> (At this early stage, Carlton had not become a community in itself but rather cleaved to the East Melbourne community, which consisted nominally of earlier immigrants from Eastern Europe.) As the Carlton community grew and developed its own shuls and accompanying facilities, East Melbourne no longer remained the focal centre for the community. As early as 1922 East Melbourne shul reported a fall in membership<sup>30</sup> and by 1927 daily minyonim had ceased.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless there was still a strong nexus between Carlton Jewry and East Melbourne shul. Even in the 1930s when there were numerous minyonim in Carlton, many preferred to walk the extra distance on *Shabbos* and *Yomtov* to attend East Melbourne shul. For East Melbourne shul was seen as part of the establishment, and was recognised as such even by the Anglicised Jews. It was represented on the *Beis Din* and the building itself is architecturally magnificent. The shul formed a choir and chose to employ a cantor as a minister in an effort to attract people from Carlton.<sup>32</sup> Although challenged, many still saw East Melbourne shul as the "leader of Jewry north of the Yarra."<sup>33</sup> However, by the 1930s East Melbourne shul was nowhere near as integral a part of Carlton Jewry as it had been. Membership numbers had fallen and financial difficulties were experienced due to the locational move away from East Melbourne and the subsequent rise of religious institutions in Carlton.<sup>34</sup>

The first shul to be established in Carlton was the Woolf Davis Chevra, commonly known as Stone's Shul. This minyan was originally formed in 1883 by Woolf Davis



because of his objection to the appointment of a Reverend I. Myers at East Melbourne shul,<sup>35</sup> and was located at his home at the corner of Drummond and Victoria Streets. After the death of Mr. Davis, this minyan continued to be held at various locations until 1919 when the Stone family organised the building of a small shul in Pitt Street, Carlton near the corner of Canning Street.<sup>36</sup> It was continually emphasised that the establishing of this new shul was not to harm any existing shul financially.<sup>37</sup> It was founded "on the same basis as established by Woolf Davis, aiming to carry out Orthodox Judaism combined with Sabbath and *Yomtov* observances."<sup>38</sup>

Stone's shul never had a large following, even when it was the only shul in Carlton. This was due to a general rejection of the type of religion promoted by Stone's shul, but equally so was there a rejection by Stone's shul of the Jewish community. The Woolf Davis Chevra never had aspirations of gaining patronage or even approval from the wider Jewish society. Purposely the shul was built to accommodate only forty people. No rabbi was ever employed for the shul as one was neither desired nor needed. They simply arranged and conducted their own shiurim (religious discourses) and services, and provided all monies themselves for the running of the shul without ever appealing to the community for support. Stone's shul was truly self-sufficient.<sup>39</sup> And there was a careful screening of people before they were accepted into the Chevra. Of course people would not be prevented from entering the shul, but outsiders were not made welcome.<sup>40</sup> Unlike the other shuls in Melbourne which had an "open door" policy, Stone's shul was quite selective. Only those who were strictly orthodox would be considered for membership. Those who broke the *Shabbos* would not only be rejected but abused. The story was told that when Mr. Stone would walk on *Shabbos* from his home in North Carlton to his shul in Pitt Street, as he walked along Rathdowne Street past the doors of those Jewish businesses that opened on *Shabbos* he would spit in their doorway.<sup>41</sup>

Not surprisingly, Stone's shul was considered to be fanatical, even by the *from* Jews.<sup>42</sup> In fact, it would be very easy to discard Stone's shul and its adherents as an insignificant fringe element of fanatics who were quite unimportant to the religious composition of Carlton Jewry. But the fact remains that they were the first formal shul in Carlton — unforgivingly Orthodox, refusing to relent or relax their ideals, they were the measuring stick to which the religiosity of all other shuls were compared. Their open defiance in the face of extreme adversity and hostility (from both within and without the Jewish community) must be admired and congratulated, even if their intemperance leaves a little to be desired. Although the Woolf Davis Chevra was insular and segregationist, and did not directly affect the vast majority of Carlton Jewry, it nonetheless challenged people to determine their values and decide the norms for society.

By choice, Stone's shul did not accommodate the needs of the ever-growing Carlton community. This led to the growth and expansion of the Congregation Agudas Achim, commonly referred to as the Carlton shul. As with most shuls, this had modest beginnings, having been established in 1913 by the Dabscheck families. An old warehouse was rented at 427 Cardigan Street to be used for *davnin* (prayers),<sup>43</sup> with services held on *Shabbos* and *Yomtov*. By 1919, weeknight services were included to enable mourners to say Kaddish, but it was not till the mid 1920s that a daily minyan could be gotten for *Shachris* (morning service).<sup>44</sup> On Rosh HaShonah and Yom Kippur crowds were so large that it was necessary to hire one of the local halls to house those who massed to pay homage on those most holy days.<sup>45</sup>

By the late 1920s, with the continuing trend to move from Carlton to North Carlton, the East Melbourne shul became geographically isolated from the Carlton community.<sup>46</sup> This, together with the continuing migrant influx<sup>47</sup> to Carlton made it not only demographically viable but absolutely necessary to build a shul within the Carlton



precinct with the capacity to accommodate those living in the immediate area. By mid 1927, after much fund raising activities, the Carlton shul was built at 150 Palmerston Street. A simple yet impressive building, this shul with a capacity to seat 500 worshippers<sup>48</sup> became a source of pride for the whole Carlton community. No longer did they need to daven in the back room of a house or a converted warehouse — they had a shul.<sup>49</sup>

To be a "real" shul you must have a rabbi, and Carlton shul, realising this, employed the services of Rabbi Goran, formerly the rabbi at Ballarat shul. Initially Carlton shul truly prospered under his guidance, with crowds overflowing into the streets on *Yomtov*<sup>50</sup> and a strong daily and *Shabbos minyan*.<sup>51</sup> However, this insurgence of pride and fervour was soon to become embarrassment when Rabbi Goran, after being involved in various acts of impropriety, necessarily declared himself bankrupt.<sup>52</sup> Much debate ensued as to whether Rabbi Goran could remain as rabbi of the shul, and after much consideration Rabbi Goran was unceremoniously "discharged from his duties",<sup>53</sup> for how could a person manage a community if he could not manage his own affairs. Consequently there was a decline in membership and financial difficulties were experienced, which were increased by Goran's demand for compensation for breach of contract.<sup>54</sup> In an effort to improve its financial position, the shul in conjunction with the Ladies' Committee arranged various fund raising activities, including theatre nights,<sup>55</sup> dances,<sup>56</sup> and of course card nights.<sup>57</sup> But the financial difficulties persisted, and the shul was simply not able to pay its debts.<sup>58</sup> The Depression added to the problems causing a fall in membership, and of those that remained seatholders, many were "unfinancial" and could not pay.<sup>59</sup> The situation was so grave that a special public meeting was held to raise the necessary funds or else the shul would have to close.<sup>60</sup>

During this time, Carlton shul did not employ a rabbi but hired a lay person as a *Baal Koreh* and *Baal Tefillah* (to read the Torah and lead the services). Shul attendances fell dramatically and to ensure a quorum for weekday services four *minyan men* were hired. Even on *Yomtov* attendances fell and a number of seats remained vacant.<sup>61</sup> For weddings it was necessary to procure the services of a rabbi from another shul. East Melbourne shul provided their rabbi free of charge on such occasions,<sup>62</sup> but when Rabbi Brodie officiated at Carlton shul both he and his shul, the Toorak Synagogue, demanded a fee.<sup>63</sup> Eventually Toorak Synagogue refused permission for Rabbi Brodie to officiate at any ceremony at Carlton shul "as he had helped enough."<sup>64</sup>

Carlton shul was desperately searching for a rabbi. Ultimately their prayers were answered with the coming to Melbourne of an emissary from Vilna, Rabbi J.L. Gurewicz. So impressed was the community with Rabbi Gurewicz that a committee was formed to secure the permanent services of the Rabbi.<sup>65</sup> Due to previous obligations he had to decline the offer and returned to Vilna. But Carlton shul did not relent and Rabbi Gurewicz returned to Melbourne in 1932 to take up the position of rabbi at Carlton shul.<sup>66</sup>

With the appointment of Rabbi Gurewicz, Carlton Shul experienced an amazing revival. With a rabbi of such renown, Carlton shul regained its lost status,<sup>67</sup> with the rabbi himself being seen as the leader for the community and a cause for unity and support from Carlton Jewry.<sup>68</sup> Instantaneously the struggling daily *minyonim* reverted back to their former popularity and daily *shiurim* offered by the rabbi were well patronised.<sup>69</sup> So too, his appointment onto the *Beis Din* added to the prestige of the shul. Membership numbers increased, as did the number of weddings and Bar Mitzvahs at the shul, due to the rabbi's reputation and his many involvements.<sup>70</sup>



Albeit, by 1939 there was a marked decline in membership. Efforts to attract the young had failed<sup>71</sup> and the gradual move to North Carlton and Princes Hill found Carlton shul to be in a poor and inconvenient location.<sup>72</sup> Although the shul was strictly Orthodox, few of its members were truly Orthodox, with most ignoring many rituals. But even then, in 1939, when the shul had already begun its decline,<sup>73</sup> it remained as THE shul in Carlton and Rabbi Gurewicz the undisputed rabbi of Carlton.

If one person was to be chosen as the leader of Carlton Jewry, it ineluctably would be Rabbi Gurewicz. Having originally come out to Australia as an emissary for the great Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski *z'l*, collecting donations for the Agudist Va'ad HaYeshivas organisation,<sup>74</sup> he simply overawed Melbourne Jewry. A big man with a full dark beard, black hat and *kapotte*, he was a very impressive sight, who portrayed and represented the *Yiddishkeit* that the migrants had left behind in Eastern Europe. A very articulate, impressive and learned scholar, he projected an aura and personality that inspired the Jewish community. In 1930, arrangements were made to secure Rabbi Gurewicz as permanent rabbi, and in 1932 he returned to take the position as rabbi of the Carlton shul.<sup>75</sup>

The desire by the Carlton community to obtain the services of a rabbi such as Rabbi Gurewicz illustrates their notion of Orthodoxy and highlights their difference of perspective to the Anglicised Orthodoxy of the St Kilda community. Carlton wanted a rabbi of the East European mould — a scholar learned in *Gemarah*, capable of conducting a *shiur* and competent to judge a matter of *Halochah*. (And of course he had to be conversant in Yiddish!) The Anglicised Jews chose a rabbi not according to his scholarship or piety, but by his secular qualifications and personality.<sup>76</sup> And to be fluent in Yiddish was not only unnecessary but undesirable.

The appointment of Rabbi Gurewicz gave the Carlton community a sense of pride it had never before experienced.<sup>77</sup> And he zealously went about performing his duties. He conducted three *shiurim* every day, led the *davnin* in the shul, and took upon himself various pastoral duties,<sup>78</sup> including visiting the sick, whether members or not<sup>79</sup> and helping new arrivals,<sup>80</sup> as well as organising numerous collections for charities in Eastern Europe.<sup>81</sup> He was made a member of the *Beis Din*<sup>82</sup> and both Rabbis Danglow and Brodie would come to his house for private *shiurim*<sup>83</sup> and advice, as his rabbinic knowledge clearly surpassed that of his two contemporaries.

Zionism was a cause that Rabbi Gurewicz promoted strongly. This caused some dissent in the Melbourne community, for at that time the Anglicised Jews largely rejected Zionism for being anti-British.<sup>84</sup> To the contrary, Carlton Jewry did not see it as such, for they too were loyal British subjects.<sup>85</sup> But Zionism was perceived as a continuum to the aspirations of traditional Orthodox messianism, and the founding of a Jewish State was considered a means by which to alleviate the dire circumstances of their brethren in Europe. Rabbi G attended all Zionist functions, and even conducted an annual *Yahrzeit* (Commemoration) service for Theodor Herzl at the Monash House.<sup>86</sup> He became chairman of the local Mizrahi organisation<sup>87</sup> and held lectures explaining the Zionist philosophy.<sup>88</sup> This may seem very admirable to be so dedicated to the Zionist cause — however, an anomaly existed in that Rabbi Gurewicz, when he first came to Australia in 1930, was representing the vehemently anti-Zionist Va'ad HaYeshivas organisation! I can only speculate as to his motivation for such a dramatic ideological antiposition. Perhaps he simply compromised his ideals to conform to the sentiments of Carlton Jewry, or maybe he was always a covert Zionist. Whatever the reason, it is inescapable that there was, in some instance, a matter of compromise and adaptation of principles by the rabbi.



During the years 1930 to 1935, Carlton Jewry developed many institutions to achieve religious independence. One of the more controversial actions occurred in 1932 with the formation of the North Carlton *Beis Din*.<sup>89</sup> This was founded by members of Stone's shul and the Machzikei HaDas *shtibl minyan*, and was backed by the Talmud Torah Hascola and the East Melbourne shul.<sup>90</sup> It was generally supported by the Carlton community, who saw the Melbourne *Beis Din* as being unrepresentative of the Carlton Jewry, led by rabbis of little knowledge and questionable Orthodoxy. The formal reason given, however, motivating the formation of the new *Beis Din*, was due to the poor standard of *shechita* (kosher slaughtering of animals) by the Melbourne *Beis Din*.<sup>91</sup> It was described as 'insignificant' by Rabbis Danglow and Brodie,<sup>92</sup> and Rabbi Gurewicz upon his arrival to Carlton noticeably chose to join the Melbourne *Beis Din* rather than the North Carlton *Beis Din*.

Nonetheless, the North Carlton *Beis Din* served a useful purpose in Carlton organising *shechita*, and was recognised by the Commission for Public Health.<sup>93</sup> Although hostilities remained, there was mutual acceptance for the coexistence of the two *Beis Din* with both performing their functions with a minimum of fuss. However, in 1937 hostilities arose again when Rabbi G left the Melbourne *Beis Din* to become the head of the North Carlton *Beis Din*. His inspiration for the dramatic shift in loyalties was motivated by the departure of the head of the Melbourne *Beis Din*, Rabbi Brodie, who returned to England to "continue his studies".<sup>94</sup> With the position of *Av Beis Din* (head of the *Beis Din*) now vacant, he expected to be given the honour. But the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire placed Rabbi Danglow as (temporary) *Av Beis Din* and ultimately appointed Rabbi Brodie's successor to Toorak synagogue, Rabbi Freedman, as *Av Beis Din*. Rabbi Gurewicz was not impressed, and proceeded to write to various rabbis around the world declaring that he no longer gave his sanction to any meats killed and exported under the auspices of the Melbourne *Beis Din*. (The meat was accepted as kosher by the overseas communities only if Rabbi G gave his sanction and approval.) Rabbi Gurewicz then proceeded to arrange the killing and export of kosher meat with his sanction through the North Carlton *Beis Din*,<sup>95</sup> with monies received being distributed between the religious institutions in Carlton. He wrote to the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv *Beis Din*, describing the Melbourne *Beis Din* as cheats and frauds, and added that Rabbi Danglow has "absolutely no knowledge of these matters (i.e. *shechita*) and has never been seen in the abattoir."<sup>96</sup>

The Melbourne *Beis Din* denied all claims and demanded that Rabbi Gurewicz withdraw all accusations or else "he would not be officially recognised at any functions." To this Mr Mendel Slonim, the president of Carlton shul, responded by stating "this threat is rather belated as your congregations have so acted for quite a while."<sup>98</sup> (Rabbi Gurewicz refused to withdraw or apologise.)

Rabbi Gurewicz was a dynamic personality of Carlton, but from the above it is seen that he was discontent with his position in the community. He sought to become the *Av Beis Din* of Melbourne, and strived to establish his authority by involving himself in matters "exceeding his duty"<sup>99</sup> and interfering in matters not of his concern.<sup>100</sup> When challenged he would respond ruthlessly and did any action necessary to assert his position. His actions led to a sharp division in the Carlton community, and added to the friction between the Carlton and St Kilda communities. Nonetheless he was an amazing man and the undisputed rabbi of Carlton.

Although Rabbi Gurewicz was the rabbi of Carlton, Carlton shul did not represent the whole of Carlton Jewry. There seemed to be a continual array of *minyonim* formed to serve as an alternative for the community. To form a *minyan* is a relatively simple matter. All that is required are ten adult males and a *Sefer Torah*. One does not need a rabbi or



a building specifically established for the purpose of prayer — a room in any ordinary house will suffice. This ease by which a *minyan* can be formed led to the rise of numerous small *shetibl minyonim*<sup>101</sup> in Carlton. Many of these came and went without leaving a trace. But some did persist and are worthy of mention.

The Machzikei HaDas *shetibl* was a small *minyan* held in a converted horse stable near the corner of Richardson and Rathdowne Streets, North Carlton. Although there are no records of its existence, most people questioned were of the opinion that the *minyan* was formed in the mid 1930s, and perhaps as early as 1931. The prime organiser of the *shetibl minyan* as it was affectionately known was a Mr. Shillit who managed the day-to-day running of activities. The main reason for its establishment seemingly was that the *davnin* was held according to the *S'fard* custom where all other *minyonim* were according to the *Ashkenaz* custom. Numbering only fifteen to twenty people at most, they considered themselves and were considered by others to be "more Orthodox", but I was assured that "they weren't as mad as Stone's shul."<sup>102</sup>

Another of the *shetibl minyonim* was the *minyan* Makom Torah v'Avodah, established by Mr. Chaim Teitelblatt at his home at 88 Drummond Street, North Carlton. At the very latest this *minyan* was started in 1937<sup>103</sup> with services on *Shabbos* and *Yomtov*,<sup>104</sup> to which all were welcome. Mr. Teitelblatt was a very learned man, a *Talmud Chochem*, and gained a small following of devoted worshippers.<sup>105</sup> He would hold *shiurim* every *Shabbos*, and built a mikvah in his yard for community use.

The largest of the *shetibl minyonim* and perhaps the most active institution in Carlton was the Talmud Torah Hascola. It was founded in 1928, solely due to the efforts of a Mr. Tugend<sup>106</sup> who, being dissatisfied with the style and quality of the religious education classes offered in Carlton by the United Jewish Education Board (UJEB), decided to offer an alternative for religious education of children.

For some time there had been a growing discontent by Carlton Jewry of the UJEB. Numerous attempts were made by East Melbourne, Stone's and Carlton shuls to establish a Talmud Torah, all of which ultimately failed, not because of a shortage of children but due to a lack of financial and organisational resources.<sup>107</sup> The UJEB was seen as a failure in that it did not succeed in teaching children the basics of their religion. Having its curriculum based on that determined by the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, it emphasised grammar and history.<sup>108</sup> But if a child on completion of his studies at UJEB (which usually ceased at Bar Mitzvah<sup>109</sup>) was capable of reading Hebrew and some of the basic prayers, it was considered an achievement. Classes were offered only twice a week, being held in the late afternoons at the local schools in Lee Street and Rathdowne Street.<sup>110</sup> The major problem with the UJEB was twofold in that it was forever financially destitute<sup>111</sup> and the standard of learning was low.<sup>112</sup>

Mr. Tugend, realising this, decided to rectify the situation. He would go from house to house, begging mothers with a passionate plea to give him a shilling a week so that he could arrange a Talmud Torah where their children would be taught true *Yiddishkeit*.<sup>113</sup> Before long Mr. Tugend collected sufficient shillings to rent an old hall in Amess Street<sup>114</sup> and the Talmud Torah Hascola became a reality. Classes were offered Monday to Thursday, from 4.30pm to 6.30pm, and Sunday 10am to 12.30pm.<sup>115</sup> Teaching methods were based on that used in the Cheders and Talmud Torahs in Europe, where a child would first be taught the Hebrew alphabet and from that would he progress to reading. Only when a child mastered reading would he learn the meaning to the words, by studying *Chumash*. As his standard would improve he would learn *Nach* (Prophets and Scriptures), Jewish laws and customs, prayers (i.e. *davnin*) and after about eight years he would progress onto the Gemorah.<sup>116</sup> By the age of sixteen, a pupil would have completed his learning at the Talmud Torah.<sup>117</sup>



The Talmud Torah Hascola became the centre for Jewish education in Carlton. At any one time there would be up to 200 children attending classes daily. It was supported by all parts of the Carlton community (even Stone's shul) and Rabbi Gurewicz was the Principal,<sup>118</sup> showing that Jewish education was truly a united community concern. The standard of learning clearly surpassed that achieved by the UJEB, even though the UJEB improved markedly, and offered daily classes at Princes Hill and Rathdowne Street state schools.<sup>119</sup> However, only Hascola could enable a child to achieve the standard necessary to be able to learn Gemorah. Nevertheless, Rabbi Brodie, the *Av Beis Din* of Melbourne and minister of the Toorak Synagogue<sup>120</sup> condemned the Talmud Torah as being 'old fashioned and incompetent', and demanded that the UJEB take control of the Talmud Torah Hascola.<sup>121</sup>

Despite such objections, the Talmud Torah continued to prosper and soon it established a daily *minyan* which proved to be very popular, especially due to its convenient location in North Carlton. Being a Talmud Torah, the *minyonim* had a very strong youth contingent, and many special functions were arranged for the children, including plays, the annual *Purim Shpeil*, and special celebrations on *Yomtov*.<sup>122</sup>

In 1937 the Talmud Torah Hascola was forced to move from its location in Amess Street, due to the owner's selling of the property.<sup>123</sup> A building fund was established and soon, with the assistance of fund raising activities of the Ladies' Committee,<sup>124</sup> the Hascola purchased a house at 961 Rathdowne Street, North Carlton.<sup>125</sup> At this location the Hascola continued to prosper, being in the centre of the highest concentration of Jews in Carlton. Daily *minyonim* were well supported, and on *Shabbos* up to 200 worshippers would assemble to socialise and pray. No rabbi was employed — everyone was a rabbi. Not that everyone there was learned and religious — more so everyone wanted to be the *Balabos* (boss). The simplicity of the interior of the Hascola added to the informality of the atmosphere, with it being described as part of the *shetl* brought to Melbourne.<sup>126</sup>

The fact that people would dedicate their time and effort to establish these *shitbl minyonim* shows that there was concern by a significant proportion of the Carlton community and sufficient support to establish such institutions. Rabbi Brodie, as *Av Beis Din* of Melbourne, condemned the establishment of the *shitbl minyonim*, seeing them as unnecessary and undignified.<sup>127</sup> In some ways perhaps the rabbi was correct, in that it did cause rivalries and fragmentation of Carlton Jewry into certain cliques and schisms. Nonetheless each *minyan* in Carlton catered for a specific need and provided a positive contribution to the religious composition of Carlton.

Although the Carlton Jewish community had a flourishing institutional network, many people remained totally unaffiliated to a shul or *shitbl*, bothering to attend only for a family *simcha* (celebration) such as a wedding or bar mitzvah, and perhaps they even went on Rosh HaShonah and Yom Kippur. Some saw the shul as central for religious and cultural survival, whilst others considered it superfluous. With the absence of the traditional constraints and social patterns of Eastern Europe, the principle of religious ritual practice was transformed from being establishmentarianism to voluntarism.<sup>128</sup> Some regarded this liberty they possessed as an opportunity to abandon all things difficult and unnecessary,<sup>129</sup> whilst others considered it a challenge to their identity and survival. Hence, in Carlton there was experienced the full spectrum of religious observance, from absolutely everything to absolutely nothing. These two extremes were seen as equally fanatical, and were condemned and rejected by most of Carlton Jewry. Rather, the majority of people chose somewhere between these two extremes, deciding which principles and rituals were to be retained, and which were to be relinquished.

Asher Ginzburg is said to have stated that more than the Jews have kept the *Shabbos*,



Carlton was indeed the religious centre for Melbourne Judaism. However, petty rivalries between the various *minyons* had a dysfunctional effect, resulting in the fragmentation of Carlton into certain cliques and schisms. Nonetheless, the sense of community was strong, and when necessary the people united to provide religious achievements clearly surpassing that of the St. Kilda community. Antagonism and hostilities between the St. Kilda and Carlton communities grew (and were assisted by rivalries between the rabbis) but there forever remained a desire to move from Carlton to St. Kilda. Although Carlton had superior religious facilities and atmosphere, St. Kilda had the *yichus*. It seemed quite obvious that religion alone did not satisfy Carlton Jewry

## NOTES

1. L.M. Goldman, *Jews in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century*; Melbourne 1954, p. 408.
2. Also known as the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation 'Sharis Yisroel.'
3. *Iben Sapir* by Rabbi Safir; Maintz 1877, pp. 134-138.
4. Although Rabbi Safir refers to Moses Rintel as HaRov (i.e. rabbi), M.C. Davis in *The History of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation* refers to him only as reverend.
5. Goldman, *op.cit.*, p. 128.
6. *ibid.*, p. 392. Initially it was hoped to have a United Chevra Kadisha for the whole community but due to irreconcilable differences this did not eventuate. In 1909 this was achieved however by J. Waxman who formed the United Chevra Kadisha for the purpose of providing funerals for all Jews, whether rich or poor, strictly according to *halochah*. Burials were performed in co-operation with W. Apps & Sons until 1939, when the Chevra Kadisha established a mortuary at the corners of Pitt and Canning Streets, Carlton (*Argus* 3 April 1939, p. 2; *Jewish Herald*, 30 March 1939, p. 17.)
7. Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 173. The mikvah closed soon after opening.
8. i.e. a society to promote Sabbath observance.
9. Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 391.
10. *ibid.*, pp. 1908-9, 380-3. It should be noted that the motivation for the building of a mikvah was principally because of its need for the ceremony of *gerus* (conversion).
11. *ibid.*, pp. 365-6.
12. *ibid.*, p. 392.
13. *ibid.*, p. 172.
14. *Iben Sapir*, p. 136.
15. Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-2.
16. Goldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 318-3.
17. *ibid.*, p. 410.
18. The problem associated with allowing butchers to directly employ *shochtim* is that the *shochet*, now being an employee, is no longer in a position of independence to judge upon *kashrus*.
19. Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 410.
20. *ibid.*, p. 409.
21. *Jewish Herald*, 10 January 1919, p. 10; 24 January 1919, p. 15; 7 March 1919, p. 18.
22. C.S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction*, New York 1977, Chapter 5. H. Rabinowicz, *The Legacy of Polish Jewry*, New York 1965, pp. 108-17.
23. *Sefer HaMichtovim* of the Chofetz Chaim; M. Sklare, *America's Jews*, New York 1971, p. 18, p. 111.
24. M. Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, New York 1967, pp. 417ff.
25. Interviews 1 and 3.
26. Interview 5.
27. *Targum Yerushalmi* on Ex 18:20.
28. Although, according to *halochah*, it is permissible to *davn* privately, it is far more desirable to *davn* with a *minyan*.



29. Some people (interviewees) claimed that East Melbourne shul never had a daily *minyan*.
30. *Jewish Herald*, 20 January 1922, p. 3.
31. *Jewish Herald*, 30 June 1927, p. 6.
32. Interviews 11 and 13; *Jewish Herald* 3 August 1933, p. 9.
33. *Jewish Herald*, 22 January 1931, pp. 3-4.
34. *Jewish Herald*, 15 September 1932, p. 9.
35. Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 330.
36. *Jewish Herald*, 3 October 1919, p. 4.
37. *Jewish Herald*, 10 September 1920, p. 6.
38. Annual Report 1921; *Jewish Herald*, 30 September 1921, p. 20.
39. Interviews 9 and 15; *Jewish Herald* 2 December 1926, p. 5.
40. Interviews 1, 3 and 5.
41. Interview 6.
42. Interviews 1, 3 and 6.
43. *Jewish Herald* 13 October 1922, p. 13.
44. Carlton Shul Annual Report 1926.
45. *Jewish Herald*, 16 September 1921, p. 13; 23 September 1926, p. 8.
46. *Jewish Herald*, 7 April 1927, p. 4.
47. *Jewish Herald*, 16 June 1927, p. 4.
48. *Jewish Herald*, 16 June 1927, p. 4.
49. *Jewish Herald*, 16 June 1927, p. 4; 11 August 1927, p. 9.
50. *Jewish Herald*, 6 October 1927, p. 9; 1 October 1931, p. 2.
51. Interview 5; *Jewish Herald* 15 March 1928, p. 13.
52. *Jewish Herald*, 9 August 1928, p. 15.
53. Carlton Shul Minute Book (CSMB), 12 April 1932.
54. CSMB, 3 April 1929.
55. CSMB, 2 May 1929, 10 April 1930, 30 October 1930.
56. CSMB, 16 May 1929. Although dances are forbidden by Jewish law, they were still frequently held and were often organised by Carlton shul and Hascola! The excuse given for allowing this practice was that if Jewish dances were not provided, the youth would socialise with Gentiles and marry out.
57. CSMB, 12 April 1932.
58. CSMB, 11 June 1929, 5 August 1930, 15 January 1931, 21 March 1933.
59. CSMB, 1 July 1929.
60. CSMB, 21 January 1931.
61. CSMB, 19 January 1932.
62. CSMB, 12 February 1930.
63. CSMB, 6 April 1931.
64. CSMB, 2 October 1932.
65. *Jewish Herald*, 4 September 1930, p. 13; 16 October 1930, p. 12; 30 October 1930, p. 18.
66. CSMB, 2 October 1932, 13 December 1932.
67. Interview 6; *Jewish Herald*, 10 November 1932, p. 4; CSMB, 3 September 1933.
68. CSMB, 3 September 1933.
69. *Jewish Herald*, 8 December 1932, p. 15; *Jewish News*, 21 January 1938, p. 4; CSMB, 3 September 1938.
70. CSMB, 29 August 1937.
71. *Jewish Herald*, 13 January 1938, p. 5; *Jewish News*, 21 January 1938, p. 4; CSMB, 3 September 1938.
72. CSMB, 24 May 1938, 11 September 1938.
73. CSMB, 3 September 1939.
74. *Jewish Herald*, 10 July 1930, p. 11.

75. *Jewish Herald*, 15 September 1932, p. 3; 10 November 1932, p. 4.
76. *Jewish Herald*, 3 March 1922, p. 12; 27 April 1923, p. 8. Rabbi Danglow, the rabbi of St. Kilda Synagogue never performed the studies necessary to become a rabbi. He was simply bestowed with the title by the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire (*Jewish Herald*, 30 November 1933, p. 4.)
77. *Jewish Herald*, 10 November 1932, p. 4; CSMB, 3 September 1933.
78. Interview 13; *Jewish Herald*, 2 March 1933, p. 4.
79. *Jewish Herald*, 29 August 1935, p. 9; 19 September 1937, p. 16.
80. CSMB, 11 September 1938.
81. *Jewish Herald*, 2 March 1933, p. 3; 20 February 1936, p. 4; *Jewish Weekly News*, 1 March 1935, p. 1.
82. CSMB, 12 December 1933. The *Beis Din* limited its activities to the supervision of *shechita*, weddings, divorces and *Gerus* (conversions).
83. Interviews 1, 5 and 13.
84. Interviews 1, 4 and 5. *Jewish Herald*, 3 January 1929, p. 3.
85. *Jewish Herald*, 30 January 1936, p. 4, p. 8; *Jewish News*, 21 May 1937, p. 9.
86. *Jewish Herald*, 20 July 1933, p. 19; *Jewish Weekly News*, 27 July 1934, p. 5.
87. *Jewish Herald*, 7 July 1938, p. 2.
88. *Jewish Herald*, 30 June 1938, p. 5.
89. CSMB, 2 August 1932; *Jewish Herald* 4 August 1932, p. 2.
90. *Jewish Herald*, 4 August 1932, p. 2; 9 May 1929, pp. 4ff.
91. *Jewish Weekly News* (Yiddish; hereafter Y.), 15 December 1933, p. 2.
92. *Jewish Weekly News*, 3 December 1933, p. 2.
93. *Jewish Weekly News*, 8 December 1933, p. 2.
94. *Jewish Herald*, 15 August 1937, p. 2.
95. *Jewish Herald*, 9 September 1937, p. 3.
96. *Jewish Herald*, 29 September 1938, p. 6; *Jewish News* (Y.), 30 September 1938, p. 1.
97. *Jewish Herald*, 15 September 1938, p. 4.
98. *Jewish Herald*, 22 September 1938, p. 18A.
99. CSMB, 14 December 1937.
100. CSMB, 14 December 1937.
101. For all intrinsic purposes there is no difference between a shul and a shtibl.
102. Interview 16.
103. *Jewish News* (Y.), 3 September 1937, p. 11.
104. *Jewish News* (Y.), 18 February 1938, p. 7; 23 September 1938, p. 12.
105. Interview 6.
106. Interviews 6 and 14; *Jewish News*, 7 July 1935, p. 10.
107. CSMB, 7 November 1929, 12 February 1930 to 3 April 1930; *Jewish Herald*, 29 February 1924, p. 17; 9 September 1926, p. 11; M.C.Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-5.
108. *Jewish Herald*, 3 April 1930, p. 7.
109. *Jewish Herald*, 6 July 1923, p. 3.
110. Interview 1; *Jewish Herald*, 19 January 1933. The Lee Street school was abandoned in 1933 due to a general shift to North Carlton.
111. *Jewish Herald*, 6 November 1924, p. 9; 13 August 1925, p. 13; 9 July 1931, p. 4; 22 February 1935, p. 2; 30 May 1935, p. 3.
112. *Jewish Herald*, 12 March 1936, p. 5.
113. Interview 6.
114. 60-62 Amess Street. *Jewish Herald*, 19 December 1935, p. 9.
115. *Jewish News* (Y.) 20 January 1939, p. 6; 11 February 1939, p. 7.
116. *Jewish News* (Y.), 20 January 1939, p. 6.
117. Interview 14.



118. *Jewish News*, 23 June 1939, p. 7; 24 April 1935, p. 4; 16 February 1933, p. 11; *Jewish Weekly News* (Y.), 11 May 1934, p. 8.
119. *Jewish Herald*, 20 May 1937, p. 5.
120. Toorak Synagogue, more formally known as the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, relocated from its Bourke Street site to Toorak Road in 1930.
121. *Jewish News*, 11 January 1935, p. 12; *Jewish Herald*, 16 February 1933, p. 11; *Jewish News*, 11 December 1935, p. 6.
122. *Jewish Herald*, 22 April 1937, p. 5.
123. It seems that the prime role of the Ladies' Committees was fundraising, with them organising a plethora of card nights, dances, bazaars etc. Without the monies provided by the Ladies' Committees, none of the religious institutions in Carlton would have survived.
124. *Jewish News* (Y.), 3 September 1937, p. 11; *Jewish Herald*, 22 August 1937, p. 5. Some people said that the Fink family donated the premises in Rathdowne Street to the Hascola but I could find no documentation to support this.
125. Interview 9.
126. *Jewish Herald*, 20 September 1928, p. 15.
127. See pp. 6-8.
128. Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 410.
129. *Jewish Herald*, 31 December 1925, p. 1; 19 May 1938, p. 10.
130. *Jewish Herald*, 3 April 1930, p. 5; 1 May 1930, p. 11.
131. Interview 14.
132. *Jewish Herald*, 29 September 1922, p. 5.
133. Hertzelia Cafe, 312 Drummond Street; Monaco Cake Shop, Lygon Street.
134. Polonsky's, 797 Rathdowne Street; Smorgon's, Lygon Street; Parush's Poultry, 428 Rathdowne Street; Watkin's, Lygon Street; Zmood's, 148 Rathdowne Street.
135. Grodsky's, 602 Rathdowne Street; Cohen's, 350 Lygon Street; King & Godfrey's, 293-297 Lygon Street.
136. Victorian Matzo Bakery; Goldbloom's, 443 Rathdowne Street; Berland's 166 Princes Street; Snider's, Atkins Street; Glickman's, Rathdowne Street.
137. Tel Aviv Dairy, McPherson Street.
138. Interview 16.
139. *Jewish Herald*, 19 June 1924, p. 3.
140. *Jewish Herald*, 23 October 1924, p. 24.
141. *Jewish Herald*, 10 September 1925, p. 4; 19 June 1924, p. 3.
142. *Jewish Herald*, 25 September 1924, p. 16.
143. *Jewish Herald*, 19 June 1924, p. 3.
144. See pp. 6-8.
145. M. Sklare, in his book *America's Jews*, expounded a theory on ritual practice which I have loosely adapted. However, it should be noted that my research and investigations have caused many notions forwarded by him to be considered irrelevant and incorrect. Accordingly, I have deleted these points and have offered other theories in an effort to explain the religious practices in Carlton.
146. Interviews 2 and 11; *Jewish Herald*, 28 May 1931, p. 3.
147. Interview 5; *Jewish Herald*, 28 May 1931, p. 3.
148. For many girls, the only religious education they would receive would be by observing practices in the home. Most considered it unnecessary for a girl to attend Talmud Torah and only a minority did so.
149. General consensus amongst interviewees confirmed this point.
150. Interviews 2 and 7.
151. M. Sklare, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- 152.

## FROM THE SPREE TO THE YARRA: MEMORIES OF AN EMIGRATION

Robert Exiner

I want to start by saying as much as I can about my father's and my mother's families, and that is very little, I am afraid. I think it is fair to say that both families were solid middle class, with my mother's family being slightly "better", or perhaps better off. Unfortunately I cannot go further back than my grandparents. While the people who would have known, such as my mother or my father's youngest brother Alfred were still alive, family history was not as popular a subject as it is now, and I never bothered to ask. Now it is too late, of course. I am fortunate to have at least my grandfather Exiner's diary, but other than that we have no documents. One would have to go to the small places which were then in East Germany and since 1918, the end of the First World War, were Polish, to see whether any papers are still existing. I would not think the chances are too good. I had hoped that my cousin Jehuda in Haifa would perhaps know something more, but when we met earlier this year this did not prove to be correct. All he could tell me was that a brother of my grandfather, called Samuel, emigrated to the United States in 1897 and that an apparel store "Exiner's" existed in Hyannis, Massachusetts in the 1950s. Apparently the store has disappeared and so have the Exiners from Hyannis, but if one would search there might quite possibly still be some Exiners somewhere in the US.

The name Exiner is quite unusual and we have never struck another family bearing this name, whereas Exner is not uncommon and does not appear to be Jewish. The derivation must come from a little town called — or rather formerly called — Exin which is approximately 200 kilometres north of where my grandfather's family actually lived. My old dictionary says that the place was renamed Kcyn when it went to Poland in 1918, that it had 3560 inhabitants in 1919 and that it was made a city in 1262 according to German law. We have no documents tracing the family back to Exin, but when early in the nineteenth century the German Jews were obliged by the authorities to adopt German second names, many called themselves after the place they lived in or they originally came from, and the ending "er" (like John Kennedy's famous "We are all Berliners") means "inhabitant of" or "coming from".

The *gymnasium* chose for me was the Collège Français, the French *gymnasium*. This was the second oldest high school in Berlin, founded in 1689 for the Huguenots, the French Protestants, who were expelled from Catholic France in 1685. The monarch of the province of Brandenburg realised at the time that it would be of great advantage for his country to get as many of this highly educated and skilled group of people as possible into his country and so a large French colony developed in Berlin. This colony was granted the right to conduct their own school, where the language of instruction was French, except, of course, for German studies. At a later stage also mathematics were taught in German. As I have already mentioned, the sciences were looked on as the poor relations of such important subjects as Latin and Greek. Therefore the standard of maths at our school had been low enough in German, leave alone in French. The Collège Français was situated in a red brick building, looking rather forbidding, near the Reichstag on the south bank of the Spree. I think in first form we were about forty-five; this had shrunk to thirty-two in Form IV and further down to eighteen in the matric class.

Of the original forty-five there were thirteen left in 1934. The school had a very good reputation for enforcing a comparatively high standard of education and the percentage of ambitious Jewish parents who sent their little geniuses there was high. While about



five per cent of Berlin's population was Jewish, we had never less than thirty-three per cent in our class. This included children from Jewish background whose parents, grandparents etc. were either converted or partly Jewish which, of course, became vital when the Nazis came to power and enforced their racial views. Of the matric class there were eight Jews by religion and another four were partly Jewish. In the lower forms the percentage of non-Jews was much higher; a lot of them seem to have fallen by the wayside. I do not wish to reflect on whether this proves something. Apart from Jews there was a high percentage of children of the diplomatic corps and, of course, children of French parents who lived in Berlin. French at that time was a much more important language than it is now, English having taken its place due to the increasing influence of the United States. I did not enjoy school in the lower forms, mainly through a lack of friends. In the first form the class was split in two halves, those politically on the right and those on the left, or if you like, one group mainly Jewish and the other mainly non-Jewish, with some of the part-Jews siding with the non-Jews. There were fights every day and I did not enjoy that. I was not even very comfortable with Robbie (a relative) for a few years, not for political reasons but because he had other friends and I was lonely and somewhat jealous. All this changed completely in the middle forms and I really enjoyed the last four years of school and had no personal problems.

An interesting case are the von Klemperer brothers, the younger one Klemens, and the older Alfred. They came from an old Berlin Jewish family on their father's side, who had become well-known bankers in the nineteenth century, somewhat like Bismarck's banker Bleichroeder who also had a descendant at our school. Like Bleichroeder the great-grandfather was ennobled and got the prefix "von"; he or maybe his son converted and married into the Prussian nobility like so many. Anyway, I am convinced that the brothers did not know of their Jewish origin until it had to be revealed in 1933. They were prominent in the anti-left group in first form but later on I became very friendly with Klemens. Alfred was an intelligent cynic who eventually emigrated and became a vice-president of J.P. Morgan in the banker tradition of the family. I met him in New York in 1961. He became a prominent Episcopalian, a most conservative Republican all out for Eisenhower and Nixon. Klemens was also intelligent but an idealist. He became involved in neo-conservative politics, in the right wing of the Youth Movement, was anti-Hitler but very nationalistic. The revelation of his Jewish descent must have come as a terrific shock for him in 1933: it separated him from most of his non-Jewish right wing circles. He also went to the United States and is today a well-known historian with important books to his credit, on the Austrian chancellor Seipel, on German neo-conservatism and on the resistance against Hitler in Germany. We are still closely in touch.

You may wonder why I called the separation of the first form partly political, while talking of nine-year-olds. That was nothing surprising in Germany, indeed in Central Europe. We became politically involved at a very early age and the whole atmosphere was so tense with politics that one could not keep detached. I can hardly remember a time when I did not read the political pages of our newspaper in great detail. I knew all the political parties and many individual members of parliament by name and what they stood for from very early on, same as I knew the individual members of the Berlin soccer teams or the names of the German or French athletic teams. I recall exactly the presidential elections in 1925 and my dismay when the archetypal conservative nationalist ex-Fieldmarshal von Hindenburg was elected president of our so-called democratic republic. I was then nine years old.

I think it was due to the rather unhappy early years at the *gymnasium* that I acquired my reading habits. We did not have too many books at home until I got some of my own.



However, I became a member of the very good lending library at the Kaufhaus des Westens, the Department Store of the West, about twenty minutes walk from home. There I waltzed after school to exchange books which I read until the middle of the night, often with a torch under the quilt. I frequently listened at the same time to my crystal radio with headphones. These we used to build ourselves, their efficiency dependent on finding the right spot on the surface of the crystal which had to be touched with a needle with just the right degree of pressure and needed continual adjusting by hand.

I cannot remember doing much homework; there never was any time, it seems, although obviously I must have done some. School finished at lunch-time, although we sometimes did sports in the afternoon. In the higher grades we had a circle of friends who regularly meet after school under the intellectual guidance of Hanns Lukas Täuber. He was the nearest to a genius I have ever met, and it is due to his influence that I and others became interested in all sorts of extra-curricular matters and activities. He was an intellectual all-rounder and quite a charismatic personality. After his emigration he became a well-known microbiologist in the United States. He drowned some years ago while swimming in the West Indies. Many of the things we occupied ourselves with became of great assistance to me when I went to university. He also got me interested in science matters such as astronomy and biology in spite of my non-scientific mind.

But apart from intellectual pursuits our circle also played a competitive crossword-puzzle type of game and we went on many long walks and bike rides to the green environments of Berlin. By long walks I mean *long walks*, thirty to forty kilometres, an experience which helped me later, first in our last year at school when something called *Wehrsport*, i.e. martial sports, were introduced by the Nazis and became compulsory. These involved mainly the throwing as far as possible of simulated hand grenades made of wood, and long forced marches at speed. It was, of course, the ambition of the Jewish boys to do well and better than our non-Jewish classmates and we usually succeeded. It felt good to come first and thus annoy the Nazi gym master. The practice of long walks also helped when I became a member of the Melbourne Bushwalkers shortly after the war.

Our teachers were a mixed lot: some good, some fair and some lousy. The director of the school during my days was Dr. Gaster. He was a great Goethe enthusiast and believed that he looked like him, far more than he actually did. He was a very conservative, nationalistic man but personally very fair to us Jewish pupils. Our school with the Protestant Huguenot tradition celebrated each year Reformation Day, in October, I think. Dr. Gaster told us every year at assembly that he wanted all Jewish pupils to attend in the Berliner Dom, although he did not want to force this. So most of us did, with the result that I became very fond of the great Protestant hymns written by Luther and others which we sang lustily.

Our last class teacher was Oberstudienrat Professor Dr. Levinstein. He was the most prominent of the teachers, and had been at the school since well before the First World War in which he served as an officer. He was of Jewish descent and when he came home from the war he confidently expected to become director of the school. He was, however, passed over for Gaster and resented this bitterly. The two men fought continuously and since Gaster became such a Goethe enthusiast Levinstein concentrated on Schiller, the other great German poet. He was also a Wagner fanatic, and we had to read all Wagner operas in class as German literature which was more than painful. When we had finished with one opera Levinstein would sit at the piano and sing all the important bits for us with a dreadful voice. He almost succeeded in making me a Wagner enemy and then my University of the Third Age audiences would have missed my brilliant Wagner lectures.



After I left school, Levinstein as a part-Jew was dismissed by the Nazis. He was left alone at first as an ex-serviceman but told to present himself for transportation to the East when that status did not protect him any more. He went underground in Berlin with non-Jewish friends, survived the war and immediately afterwards managed to re-organise the school which had been evacuated to Bavaria in the last year of the war. With the help of the French occupation forces in Berlin he succeeded in obtaining use of a building, as our old school had been bombed to the ground. He then became the first post-war director of the school, a nice ending to a long frustration.

Another teacher worth mentioning was our master in first grade, Sprenger. A typical old-fashioned German school teacher, conservative, strict but just, not above giving us a stroke with the ruler occasionally. He made us recite our tables by rote and I cannot say that this sin against all modern rules of education has done my personality any damage. Neither, I feel, did my father to whom I had to answer questions about the various capitals of countries all over the world in the morning when I sometimes crept into bed with my parents.

Finally, I want to mention our gymnastics teacher Hartmann who on 30 January 1933 suddenly wore his swastika with the gold surround, a sign that he was an "old fighter" and had joined the party years before it became fashionable or useful. We had no idea that he was a party member before the day after Hitler's coming to power when the emblem suddenly appeared. He was not personally hostile to the Jewish pupils although he very nastily did not give Robbie, by far the best athlete and gymnast of the class, a "very good" in matric. This is similar to my classmate Doebling with whom we had been in the same class for nine years and who had never told us that he was a Nazi. He also, to our surprise and then still amusement, appeared on 1 February 1933 in class in Stormtrooper uniform. He organised the fiftieth anniversary meeting of our matric class in 1984 and suddenly wrote to me after fifty years. When I wrote back reminding him of the episode of his SA membership and telling him that it was not up to me to ask him about his actions during the Third Reich, he sent me a five page letter in reply. He told me that after a short period of enchantment with Hitler and the Nazis which he shared with so many other Germans, he became disillusioned and helped many Jews to escape. We sent to see him in Heidelberg this year and he showed us around. It was rather exhausting as he is a compulsive talker. Probably he did what he claimed he did.

Other people of some interest in my class include Alberti, a part-Jew and devout Catholic. He emigrated to France and became a priest. We met him on one of our trips in Rome. He was a great disappointment: I expected a liberal Vatican II priest and found a rigid, conservative abbé, just the right man for our Polish pope. Another is Fritz Pfeiffer, who lived around the corner from us and with whom I used to walk to school. He had some Jewish "taint" on his mother's side but it cannot have been very substantial. He joined the civil service and rose to quite some height. He lives in retirement in Bonn. Another was von Schweinitz, of the old Prussian nobility, conservative but despising the common Nazi mob. He shared the belief of so many German conservatives that when Hitler assumed power the old aristocracy, the generals and the industrialists would be able to control the upstart easily enough with their breeding, education, experience and superior social standing. How wrong they proved to have been. Von Schweinitz was to fall at Stalingrad during the war. His family was closely linked to that of Adam von Trott zu Solz, a well-known member of the German opposition against Hitler, executed after the failed assassination plot in 1944.

Generally speaking, Berlin was perhaps the most exciting city in Europe in the 1920s and early 1930s. While I should have been a few years older to fully appreciate it, I am still glad that I at least got a whiff of what it was like to have been a Berliner in those



years. I went to the concerts, the museums, attended many interesting lectures at the Urania, a mixture between a scientific institute and a place for adult education, saw a bit of the marvellous theatre activities, perhaps the summit of what is described as Weimar culture and read the witty, sarcastic and biting commentaries on what was going on in the *Weltbühne* ("World Stage"), a first rate political and literary magazine written by people like Tucholsky, another old boy of my College, and Carl von Ossietzky, later to become a Nobel prize winner and to perish in a concentration camp. Tucholsky committed suicide while in emigration.

Some of the high — or low — lights of my school career were when our team, including me, won the volleyball school championship in 1933; when we published a school magazine, short-lived as it proved to be, named *Die Sammellinse* ("The Convex Lens"), naturally with Täuber as the editor; when one of the teachers was dismissed for homosexual conduct with a pupil during a rowing trip, all very hush-hush but what a mountain of whispering; when the school very hesitatingly began to accept some token girls and we got one in our class which must have been quite some ordeal for the poor darlings: these memories come to mind. I am now extremely grateful to the school for two things. First, and in spite of criticism we all felt at the time and which, no doubt, was often justified, it gave me such a good grounding that I sailed through my first years of university mainly through what I remembered of things taught at school or through what I learnt after school from my classmates. More importantly still, our school, particularly from 1932–1934, was an island of tolerance which protected us Jews from what other Jewish schoolchildren had to suffer at schools where there was no such tradition. This applied mainly to schools in the provinces, but while matters in Berlin were generally better (even in the last free elections late in 1932 Berliners did not give the Nazis a majority but Social Democrats and Communists still prevailed) one still heard ugly stories of what went on in other schools. We were completely protected from any of that. Even when "racial science" was compulsorily introduced into biology in 1933, this was treated as a bad joke. The teachers, no matter how nationalistic and conservative some of them were, behaved very well towards us from the director down, except that they had to order us Jews to stand up when the *Horst Wessel Lied* [the Nazi anthem] was sung in assembly. The school was originally founded to accept people who were persecuted in their own country because of their religion and it must be said to the school's credit that it preserved this spirit under very difficult conditions and against much outside pressure by the authorities for as long as it possibly could.

Now let me tell you how I experienced the coming to power of the Nazis. I had better start in 1930 when in an election, the Nazis, suddenly as it seemed to us, became the second largest party in Germany. This came as a shock to me. Although I read the political pages of the newspapers I was unprepared for this happening, and so were the newspapers. They were papers with a democratic tendency, published in Berlin, which was always far more to the Left than most other parts of Germany. Therefore, even the papers were written in a climate of insulation and did not appreciate what went on in the minds of what would have been called today the "silent majority." They could not see beyond the confines of their own intellectual and social level and did not realise what the "ordinary" German felt, how desperate they were about the economic conditions of the Depression and how their national pride had been hurt by the German defeat in 1918 and the harsh conditions of the Peace Treaty of Versailles. All the journalists in these papers were politically on the Left to varying degrees. Many were Jewish and they had no contact with the bulk of their fellow countrymen, as they existed incestuously in a kind of vacuum. And so did we, of course.



The circle of my parents was exclusively Jewish. We did not know any members of the impoverished middle class, nor did we know any unemployed, the type of people prone to fall under Hitler's spell. In addition to that one must not underrate how wishful thinking can blind one's vision. It just could not happen that the country of Goethe and Lessing could succumb to an Austrian failed painter or that our beloved Fatherland could reject its most loving members whose fathers had just fought a war together with their fellow countrymen. With me this self-deception lasted even longer than with most of my fellow Jews — until 1938, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary which should have been only too obvious.

I know that I read Hitler's *Mein Kampf* sometime after the 1930 elections. It seemed like ridiculous bombast to me. Neither I nor too many others realised that this book was deadly serious and a blueprint of what Hitler was to do after 1933, admittedly somewhat hidden beneath a lot of paranoid and obsessive rambling about subjects as diverse as prostitution and racial myths. But it was all there, for anyone to see who had eyes to take it in, the same as most of the 1920 Party program was eventually made a reality, but all too many did not take it seriously. Politically I veered gradually to the left of the Social Democrats and sympathised more and more with the Communists without ever taking the plunge and actually joining any party or association. There were conscientious obstacles which I could not overcome, yet I stayed a fellow traveller for quite some years, with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

So, back in 1932, Hindenburg had just been re-elected President of the Republic he despised and we have another election in November, after the July elections saw the Nazis as by far the strongest party but not in the majority yet. Lo and behold and for the first time since 1928, the Nazis lost fifteen per cent of their voters, still of course remaining the strongest party. Well, the wise men like my father said that with this loss the invincibility of the Nazis has been disproved, this surely was the beginning of the end and from now on our beloved German people would regain their sanity and the decline and fall of the Nazis would follow inexorably. What in fact happened was that the senile Hindenburg had himself manipulated to make Hitler Reichschancellor at the end of January 1933, two and a half months after the elections. You can imagine how I felt, how we all felt! I was completely unprepared to cope with what was happening. I had been so secure in my German environment, but this apparently secure basis seemed to disappear suddenly from under my feet and I felt like someone floating in the air, exposed to any gust of wind. One was harangued incessantly that one was an alien, nay hostile element, in the midst of people one had considered one's own and that we good patriotic German Jews were in fact our Fatherland's misfortune: "Die Juden sind unser Unglück" was one of the Nazis' most popular slogans which one encountered everywhere in newspapers, on signboards and shouted en masse at Nazi meetings. Our beloved German culture, it was stated, our Goethe, our Schiller, our Beethoven and Mozart, Kant and Lessing, all this was really incomprehensible and alien to Jews and even the way we spoke German was nothing but a bad translation from our "native" Hebrew: thus alleged Dr. Goebbels on the day of the book burning. This attack, I think, hit me more severely than all the other coarse invectives hurled at us. Now, if you are continuously bombarded by your environment you cannot remain unaffected. It triggered off various Jewish reactions and defensive attitudes. Those who had been Zionists before, such as my uncle Martin and my cousins Herbert and Gerda, became even more convinced that Israel was the solution for us and that emigration to Israel — then Palestine — should be speeded up. Many others became Zionists because they felt that they had been right in assessing the Jewish situation in Germany. There was a section of politically right-wing Jews, particularly in the Association of Jewish Returned Servicemen, who felt



that, apart from anti-Semitism, they had much in common with the Nazi views and they believed for a while that some accommodation with the Nazis might be possible. Needless to say they were completely rebuffed. Ironically, the only Jewish organisation to get along quite well with the Nazis were the Revisionists, the right-wing Zionists, the forerunner of the Likud Party in Israel. Their youth association, Betar, was allowed to operate and wear their uniforms long after other Jewish youth organisations were forbidden. When the Revisionist leader Dr. Kareski finally got to Israel, he was beaten up by people who remembered his dealings with the Nazis in Berlin. Others who had the chance and saw the situation more clearly than I did emigrated to other parts of the world as soon as possible. My own immediate reaction was that maybe Zionist uncle Martin had a point, and early in 1933 I joined the same Zionist youth group to which Herbert and Gerda, my cousins, belonged. However, after a few weeks I felt that I was in the wrong place: I had not much in common with the members of this group. I, and quite a few others like me, wanted to remain in Germany where we felt we belonged in spite of what was happening around us. Surely this Hitler nonsense could not go on forever: the mass of our fellow Germans would eventually see the errors of their ways and turn away from National Socialism. We felt that we stood for the old symbiosis of German and Jews which had had so much to be proud of ever since the end of the eighteenth century. We therefore had to remain at our posts to be witnesses, as it were, for the common fate of German and Jews in spite of, or rather just because of, all the hostility we encountered at that time. I am not sure whether it all sounds "double-Dutch" now. Anyway, I met quite a few people who felt as I did and they belonged to a group called the Bund Deutsch-Jüdischer Jugend, the Covenant of German-Jewish Youth. They combined my feelings about Jewish fate in Germany with many ideas taken from the German Youth movement.

Until I was sixteen years old I had not had any active involvement in the youth movement, Jewish or otherwise. For the next two years I learnt a lot about it through two friends and became very attracted to the revolutionary social ideas as well as to the trappings — the activities and symbols I wrote about in my essay. I was seriously looking for a "home" where we Jews could assist one another to cope with the environment we had to live in. After my short acquaintance with the Zionist youth group earlier on, I joined immediately after matric the Association of German Jewish Youth, and this organisation as well as the people I met through it became all important for me during my last years in Germany. The influence is still alive today. It was most important for me that I had found a group of people I frankly felt more at home with than with my parents. It enabled me to do what I felt was impossible at home, namely to talk about all the problems we had to face under Nazi rule and how to cope with them. And there was enough to cope with. If you are being constantly told by the people amongst whom you live that you are inferior, several reactions are possible, and I witnessed them all at the time. One is that you really believe yourself to be inferior and you develop a first class inferiority complex. The opposite reaction is to acquire a completely unrealistic view of the importance and the superior qualities of your group. What we very consciously tried to do was to keep our sense of proportion and to feel neither worse nor better than we really were. I am sure that I did not succeed altogether. I must have fallen victim to depression or to euphoria from time to time, but on the whole I feel that I did not do too badly. However, this is only my personal opinion, my family and my friends are most likely better judges of whether I succeeded or not.

After matric the question arose what I could do in the way of job or profession. The universities where I would normally have enrolled were closed to me, as a Jew. At that time I did not want to emigrate to study or work abroad for the reasons I have explained.



Finally, the Higher Textile College at Cottbus agreed to accept me, not for the full textile engineering course but for three shorter specialised courses over a period of two years. This appeared to be a solution which offered both an academic study of sorts and the possibility to learn a trade. The textile mills in Germany employed each a bunch of young men in beautiful white coats who did all sorts of jobs, such as designing the materials which were to be woven, play around in the laboratory of the dyeworks, adjust the looms and the spinning frames, calculate with slide rules the cost of each article produced or to be produced and generally assist the management to which they all hoped to be promoted in good time. Accepting the offer of the Textile College did not seem to be a bad idea to me and my parents, so off to the College I went. Cottbus was a city of approximately 60,000 inhabitants, 120 kilometres south east of Berlin; its main industry consisted of the manufacture of textiles, like all the other small places around Cottbus (the Lausitz district) which I came to know while I lived there. It had a small Jewish community of maybe 700 people, a synagogue, a local group of the Jewish Returned Servicemen's Association, a Jewish sports club, but no youth group. I found a room to live with a Jewish widow whose son had left home and who let three rooms to young men — no women, by request — who had to be of good character. One of them was Guenter Abraham who also had enrolled at the Textile College and we became very friendly. He afterwards went to Chile where he actually did what we all intended: to make a successful career in a textile mill. Ten years ago he moved back to Europe and lives now in Strasbourg, France.

Textile College proved to be an interesting experience. I had to work in the attached spinning mill during the day to gain at least some practical experience while starting on my first theoretical night course. It was the first manual work I had ever done and I was not too good at it, much to the sarcastic disgust of the mill manager. The theoretical course I did not find hard at all. I also became much more ambitious than I had been at school, mainly I think because of my exposed position as a Jew. I just felt I had to show "them". The practical training, however, was pretty poor, as I realised when trying to hold down a job in Australia.

I experienced for the first time what it meant to live in a completely non-Jewish environment. After all, at school there had been a large percentage of Jewish pupils and while I was not really aware of it, all my closer friends were either Jewish or part Jewish. Suddenly in Cottbus I had to operate in an environment of over 1000 students of which there were at varying times, two, three or four Jews. Naturally everyone knew us and we felt that very keenly. We were at all times under close observation. We could imagine ourselves being in a fish bowl with huge crowds constantly looking at us with amazement, keen interest, antipathy or a mixture of whatever their attitudes might have been. This resulted in us feeling obliged to behave perfectly at all times as we believed, and I think justifiably so, that all Jews would be judged by our example, particularly as most of our fellow students had never met a live Jew before. What they knew about us they would have read in *Die Stürmer*, or from similar sources like the *Angriff* or the *Völkische Beobachter*, the Nazi newspapers. One thing was clear to us: we were never, never to initiate any communication; we were to speak to our fellows only when spoken to, otherwise we might experience a more or less rude rebuff. Of all this I was continuously conscious for two years; it was a tremendous strain. Surprisingly though, quite a few co-students did speak to us, but we remained always on our guard. Up to that time I had never had a personal anti-Semitic experience. This was not so peculiar seeing that I grew up in Berlin where there was less anti-Semitism than in the rest of Germany and was lucky enough to attend such an exceptional school as the French *Gymnasium*.



The window of my room in Cottbus was overlooking the market place where the Nazis' parades were held and I remember the Hitler Youth marching to the song "Wenn's Judenblut vom Messer spritzt geht's uns noch mal so gut" (When Jewish blood splashes/ spurts from the knife we will be twice as well off!). When this hopeful hypothesis was put to the test some years later the expectations remained unfulfilled, of course. But even in Cottbus, at least seventy to eighty per cent National Socialist, I never had any personal trouble. I do not want to make too much of that, and no general conclusions about the relationship of Germans and Jews should be drawn from it. I was just extremely lucky to have to cope only with what I read in the papers, heard on the radio, or saw in the streets. I had one peculiar experience though. The leader of the National Socialist student organisation, a very important personality on campus, also the highest Hitler Youth official in Cottbus, once addressed us students at assembly and also touched on the Jewish problem. I think what annoyed me most was his snide remark about the German Jews' lack of participation in the First World War. It was nothing that I had not heard or read a hundred times during the previous two years but that time somehow something snapped. This Nazi Youth leader happened to live in the same house as I did, one floor below. So without thinking of the danger I exposed myself to I knocked on his door, told the man that he got it all wrong and informed him of the true facts. I think he was so flabbergasted that he took it like a lamb and I never heard about the incident any more. Sometimes you can be lucky!

The first thing I did at Cottbus was to found and lead a local chapter of our youth organisation and I did this until I left after my courses were finished. Naturally, having come to the youth movement at a comparatively ripe old age I had no experience in that kind of thing and had to learn as I went along. Normally people joined the movement aged eight or so and rose through the ranks gradually, observing what their elders were doing. I had to draw on what I had read and what I worked out for myself, and somehow I got away with it. I remember one problem I ran into for ideological reasons. The Jewish Returned Soldiers' League organised a social with dancing for the community. The youth movement was diametrically opposed to tangos and foxtrots. Only folk dancing was permissible. Furthermore, I felt that it was undignified for Jews to hold a dance while their existence in Germany was at stake. I therefore forbade the members of my group to attend this orgy with their parents, which caused endless difficulties with parents and the organisers. I forget what the outcome was.

I went home practically every weekend, not so much because I could not stand it without my parents, but mainly to spend a day at the headquarters of the organisation, getting to know all the senior people, assisting in their work and picking up any kind of useful knowledge for my own group in Cottbus. They finally got so sick of me that they made me leader of all local groups in the province of Brandenburg so that I could not bother them, as I had to visit other groups during my weekends. I had acquired a few skills, like playing the mouth-organ and the harmonica to accompany the singing of folk songs, et cetera. I never graduated to the guitar, the traditional instrument of the youth movement.

There was another thing I and many like me had to catch up on. The fact of being Jewish had never mattered much to me before 1933. I accepted it as a fact of life that we had to have some Jewish religious instruction of sorts at school instead of Protestant or Catholic lessons like my fellow pupils. Our teacher, Rabbi Nobel, was a nice and wise man who realised that with boys of our kind of background he could not be too heavy with the passing on of Jewish knowledge. The lessons were not compulsory, and he wanted to prevent us from staying away. So what he often did was to take us to a nearby coffee lounge and play chess with us. I also accepted without much questioning that I had to accompany my father three times a year to the synagogue where the service could



not be over soon enough for me. I also became Bar Mitzvah there, largely a social event but not of the magnitude of an Australian or American Bar Mitzvah. I did this under the famous Rabbi Leo Baeck, later to become the leader of German Jewry under Hitler who was to survive the concentration camp of Theresienstadt. He was also a great scholar and had many books to his credit. With me, however, he did not bother very much. He probably did not think I was worthy of much effort, so all I had to speak in Hebrew was the blessing. I was allowed to read the Biblical chapter in German. All this passed me by without making too much of an impression on me, either positive or negative. Under the Nazis, however, being Jewish became something all important, forced on us by a hostile environment which continuously pointed out our evil Jewishness. So I, and many like me, felt compelled to get better acquainted with our Jewish heritage, to find out, as it were, what all the fuss was really about. After all, if something in you is the object of so much hatred and general rejection you have to know something more about it; so I set out to improve my knowledge of Judaism. Many others I knew, coming from similar non-specific backgrounds, felt the same way. We also very keenly felt the responsibility to instruct the younger children in our groups about it, to give them a more solid base on which to develop a defence mechanism. We started to read the Bible we knew so little, with the commentaries our sages had written over the centuries. We studied Jewish history to see whether the past held any answers to the questions of the present and attended lectures on the religion and philosophy of Judaism. There was great popular demand for such lectures which, incidentally, were also amongst the few activities the authorities permitted to go on quite freely during those first few years of the Nazi regime. In response to the increased need, Jewish study centres, called *Lehrhäuser*, sprang up in all the major communities and those already existing had to be expanded. Old and young alike became pupils and listened to such famous Jewish philosophers as Martin Buber, who travelled all over Germany to spread his message of consolation, co-operation and hope. We also avidly studied the writings of Franz Rosenzweig, a philosopher who had died in 1929 and who had tried, as we did, to clarify and establish a Jewish position in a German environment with all its inherent problems and contradictions, yet avoiding the altogether negative conclusion the Zionists had reached about this difficult symbiosis. The neo-Kantian philosopher, Hermann Cohen who had addressed these questions before the First World War, also became an important figure for us. These endeavours were reinforced by camps which our Bund held for its leaders in various parts of Germany, thus establishing firm links and friendships with like-minded people all over the country. What I personally found in Judaism was a philosophy of life which appealed to me, even without the religious context which had little meaning for me. The idea of a personal God as devolved in the Bible was and is unacceptable to me. However, I found in the prophets, for instance, ideas of social justice, equality and freedom of thought I could identify with. So was yes-saying to life and the senses, a concentration on the here and now, a playing down of the hereafter and a concept of evil being a deviation from the right path rather than setting up an absolute evil opposed to the good and a messianic hope for the future open to many interpretations.

In 1935 my father died, and as mother had decided to spare me the news about his serious illness, I was called to Berlin when it was already too late. Mother decided to move in with uncle Jolly around the corner and his flat became my home base until my emigration. She also decided to carry on father's business, as I have already related. My Cottbus college courses finished at the end of 1936 and I spent another six months in Sommerfeld, about fifty kilometres from Cottbus, where the Jewish owner of a textile mill had agreed to occupy me in an unpaid and unofficial capacity, which consisted in mainly standing around and watching people work; again I did not learn very much about the practical side of textile manufacturing. One of the last events I remember from



my stay in the provinces was a command from the German army to present myself for examination for compulsory service. I had to go through the complete rigmarole with my "Aryan" fellow candidates, was thoroughly examined, declared specially fit to become a sharpshooter, but was, of course, eventually classified "reserve II", the lowest army category for non-Aryans. I still remember my embarrassment when I was in a comparatively small room with one hundred naked men and was given a vessel to pass water. I was absolutely unable to do so for quite some time until I managed to squeeze out some miserable drops.

My time in Sommerfeld did not do much to improve my professional skill. My main interest was concentrated on keeping in touch with my comrades in the Bund Deutsch-Jüdischer Jugend, assisted by many weekend visits to Berlin. Eventually the National Socialist trade unions began to make noises about Jewish employees in the mill, so I had to stop my daily social visits to the factory. Finally I moved back to Berlin where I spent the rest of my time until my emigration in June 1938. While I was still in Cottbus a friend of mine who also studied at the college had heard that the Australian government had decided to issue a very limited number, I think fifty, of entry permits for German Jewish refugees who were "technical craftsmen". This friend saw the situation much clearer than I did and was very keen to get a chance to emigrate. So when it was announced that the Australian government had appointed an emissary from Woburn House, the Jewish welfare agency in London, to go to Berlin to interview candidates and pick the best, he wanted to visit Berlin to see him. My friend tried to persuade me to come along and apply also for a permit, but I was at that time determined to stay in Germany, and anyway, who would want to go to Australia which was "full of blackfellows and kangaroos", that is about the sum total of what we knew of the country. Finally, I agreed, more as a joke, to come along for the ride and the inevitable happened: I was accepted and he was rejected. I must have "interviewed well": it certainly could not have been my technical proficiency which gained me this success. Incidentally, my friend later managed to emigrate to Shanghai, converted to Buddhism and became a monk in a monastery in Sri Lanka. For some years he used to send me literature to Australia which tried to link up Buddhism to the latest findings of quantum mechanics and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle before we lost touch. The Australian immigration permit was granted the following year, 1937, but I still did not want to leave the "Fatherland". I remained for over twelve months in Germany with the permit in my pocket, being declared a lunatic by all and sundry. I also negotiated for a job in Tilburg in Holland which I very much preferred to Australia, it being so conveniently close to Germany so that one could promptly come back when all this craziness would be over. "None are so blind as those who do not want to see", to coin a phrase! Finally when I had to leave Germany in circumstances I will relate later, the permit had expired and I had to apply for an extension. Had I succeeded in getting that job in Tilburg I most likely would not have been able to write this story, of course, as most Dutch Jews ended up in Auschwitz.

Life in Berlin was very exciting for me during this last period in 1937-38. My uncle Jolly employed me in his business in the administration, again unofficially, and for an nominal salary only which, no doubt, came out of his own pocket. If I had worked in one of my jobs officially as a paid employee for no more than one week I would now get a handsome pension from Germany, like most of my age group do. In the meantime my Bund had been dissolved by the Nazi government. At first, in 1935, we were allowed to continue operating, but without being allowed to wear our uniforms and insignia. Finally in 1936 all Jewish youth organisations were forbidden altogether. Strangely enough, this was not a specific anti-Jewish action but came along with the Reich's youth leader Baldur von Schirach's campaign to forbid all traces of the old German youth



movement: the Scouts, the surviving remnants of the old Bünde, but mainly the Protestant and Catholic youth organisations who were then still reluctant to join the Hitler Youth and insisted on their separate existence. The majority of the members of these groups were, of course, Nazis or Nazi sympathisers, but they did not want a merger with the large national organisation, not only for religious reasons — the Hitler Youth was not Christian-oriented — but rather for snobbish and elitist reasons: some “better class” young people looked down on the Nazi youth organisations as working class and common. Finally, the Nazis clamped down on all of them and we were caught up in the net, also. We decided at least to keep our individual groups going and stay in contact with other leaders as closely as possible. And that is what we did, as best as we could. Another area where activity was still possible in Berlin was the youth social work organisation of the Jewish community there. This we infiltrated systematically and occupied as many youth workers’ jobs as possible which by now were mostly voluntary. We also got our group members to join the weekly youth work meetings which could be held in community centres and which we organised as similar to our old group evenings as possible, with the same German and Jewish songs and the same study objects. We also arranged to meet with one another at the synagogue services on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. The evening services were usually followed by a little festivity called Oneg Shabbat where blessings over the wine and the bread were spoken, followed by supper which gave ample opportunity to talk and pass on messages. In 1936 we had a final fling. We arranged for a camp meeting in Upper Silesia which had remained separate from the rest of Germany and was administered by the League of Nations since the Treaty of Versailles in 1918. In 1938 a plebiscite had to be held to decide whether Upper Silesia was to go to Germany or to Poland. The majority vote then went to Germany, as it did in the Saar District which had been under a similar League of Nations administrations. In 1937 our Bund Deutsch-Jüdischer Jugend in Upper Silesia was still in full operation, uniforms — grey shirts, grey and white cravats with leather woggles, short blue pants with wide leather belts with special buckles; you should have seen me, I looked a real treat, and all. When we arrived there after travelling separately, we were received by those groups. After the camp finished and we had exchanged views and restated our resolve to remain in Germany as German Jews we returned to our homes, again carefully travelling as individuals, not speaking to one another to avoid raising suspicion. The long coat came with me to Australia. After a week in Sydney it was shortened quite considerably to fit the Australian fashion, as people used to make fun about our long coats. The other thing I had to get immediately in Sydney was a hat; until the war every man was wearing a hat, you would not have dared look for a job or go to work not wearing one, and luckily for Alfred Ruskin who was a hatmaker, the hat industry was a huge manufacturing enterprise in Australia. The third thing required for our assimilation was to give away our satchels in which we carried our lunches. Every Aussie had a small suitcase or valise for this purpose. That was the beginning of our Australianisation, no matter how atrocious our accents were. I never adapted to the blue three-piece suit most men wore with their hats and valises even in the middle of hottest summer.

Now I come to the event that finally forced me to see the light, only just in time, to emigrate after all. It was a curious enough happening. The Don Cossack Choir visited Berlin early in 1938 and the usual audience gathered. Many young non-Jewish people attended, not in uniform of course, that would have been impossible, but still dressed in a way that showed their loyalty to the former youth movement; they may have been in short pants, or with one of the old blue uniform jackets, but with shoulder tabs removed; anyway, it was the thing to do to show up like that in public. A few of us Jewish leftovers also went to that concert, and with me were Julius Stern and Inge Borchardt (Littauer).



When we left the concert there was the SS outside and arrested anyone looking in the slightest way "suspicious" — as if he or she might have belonged to Baldur von Schirach's pet hate youth groups outside the Hitler Youth. We three were picked up also, together with many non-Jewish suspects. We were taken to Gestapo headquarters in the Prinz Albrecht Strasse, justifiably infamous for the terrible things that happened there to anti-Nazis. We were not treated all that badly, just shoved along gently with rifle butts and then lined up for hours along a wall in the cellar particularly notorious for torturing, until we were quite exhaustively interrogated. We denied everything, of course, and eventually they let the three of us go. We were fortunate that in this action by the Gestapo, the Nazi secret police, Jews were not the main target. We were just incidentally caught in the general net which was laid out for non-Jewish young people opposed to the Hitler Youth. Therefore the Nazis just went through the motions with us without showing too much interest. Furthermore they, correctly, must have assessed us as completely harmless. Of course we did not know this at the time which made it more unpleasant. My investigating officer told me that he let me go this time but if I would come to his attention a second time ...! This experience gave me the final push, and when I applied for an extension of the Australian permit it fortunately was granted. Alfred Ruskin had also somehow managed to obtain a permit and we decided to emigrate together. My aunt Grete's travel bureau arranged for our passages and ultimately in June 1938 my mother accompanied us to Hamburg, our port of departure. I must confess that I was not feeling much emotion at the time, neither about leaving my mother behind nor at parting from Germany. First, I was really quite scared by now and anxious to leave. I was confident that my mother would follow soon. Then, of course, this was quite some adventure to enjoy and a new life to begin. First we travelled across the Channel to London, then on the French boat *Champollion* to New York, then by train to Vancouver, right through the beautiful Rocky Mountains. I remember mainly the taste of real eggs and milk and butter on the boat, so different from the inferior food we had eaten in our last year in Germany. Then we boarded the *Niagara* (later to be sunk in the Pacific during the war) and set off for Sydney. We stopped over in Honolulu where we admired the variety of races and race mixtures one met in the street, and at Suva where we were impressed by the Fijians playing soccer barefoot and kicking the ball prodigious distances. When we arrived in Sydney we happened to be playing bridge, and I am ashamed to say that we did not interrupt the game to admire the bridge and the harbour.



*Robert Exiner, Berlin, 1938*



## SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

As we landed we were received by a representative of the Jewish Welfare Society who sent Alfred and me to a room in a house in Coogee. I remember that I was surprised during the tram ride to our new home how different from their European counterparts the Sydney suburbs looked with their many small timber houses and equally small gardens as against the long rows of large blocks of flats of European cities. I felt even then that the life style "down under" would be different from that we were used to. I forgot to mention that at the time each newspaper employed a reporter whose job it was to meet the arriving ships and interview passengers. On the day following such interviews I could read in the *Sydney Telegraph* that German textile expert R.E. had forecast the imminent end of the Australian wool business due to the advance of synthetic textile materials, a prognosis which fortunately did not eventuate (at least not until fifty years later!). Furthermore, this same guru R.E. had declared Hitler to be A Bad Thing and that war would be inevitable; so at least I got two out of three right. In these early days we were constantly asked about Hitler and the possibility of war. When we expressed our serious concerns, people used to pat us on the back comfortingly and say: "There, there, it is quite understandable that 'you people' are somewhat over-anxious, just don't worry, and relax. When you have lived a little longer in this wonderful country of ours you will undoubtedly regain your sense of proportion" (or words to that effect). As to newspapers, what struck me were the headlines: "England Collapses" and "The Don Unconquered!". I thought that the catastrophe which I had foreseen had come much earlier than expected and that the war must have started already. And who was "The Don"? Don Quixote? Don Giovanni? I soon learnt that the dramatic reporting was all about a mysterious game called cricket — was not that some insect or other? — and that the sacred rules of this sport were a book with seven seals, forever excluded from the grasp of anyone not having had the blessing of an Anglo-Saxon education. Alfred and I took that as a challenge which had to be met and conquered. Naturally anything deserving headlines on the front page of the papers *had* to be understood by us. So we spent many a Saturday afternoon at some sports ground or other, trying to figure out what those thirteen men in white flannels tried to do to a red ball and why two men with pads were apparently on one side, and another one with pads as well as ten mates on the other side. Slowly and gradually we learnt to appreciate what Bill O'Reilly, Syd Barnes, and the immortal Don, now Sir Don, tried to achieve and what it was all about. I became fascinated by the game and have retained this knowledge and interest to this day.

We left our first lodgings in Coogee after one week; I have never been colder in my life than in that place in August, not even in the middle of a European winter. We were used to brick walls and double windows, large stoves or central heating and there we had a one-bar radiator. I developed frostbite immediately and suffered from it every winter until twelve years later, when we moved into our family house in Carnegie, Melbourne. After Coogee I found myself a room in a boarding house in Harford Place just off King's Cross, where I paid twenty-seven shillings and six pence for full board including having my washing done. Two things were remarkable. One was my lunches which consisted of things I had never struck in my life before: spaghetti sandwiches, baked bean sandwiches, and banana sandwiches! I thought the people who gave them to me were joking. The other was a group of very nice young ladies who hung around the house all day long and then seemed to disappear in the evenings. They were kind enough to sew on buttons for me and were generally friendly but — somewhat strange — I could not work out their life style. Another curious thing: the display of sign boards outside fruit shops reading "Shop here before the Day goes". That took some time before it sank in: Day goes — dagos; such a pun imagine in our present multicultural paradise!



Australia in 1938 would have appeared very strange to you; everyone spoke of "Home"; "going Home", "wanting to go Home", "going back Home if only one could afford it", et cetera, meaning England of course. All this died with Menzies, I think. The only foreigners one noticed were the Italian fruiterers and some Chinese who were also either fruiterers, kept restaurants or were carpenters. Otherwise Australia was ninety seven per cent British, and proud of it.

I started to look for a job after buying the compulsory hat. This endeavour proved to be much easier for Alfred than for me. He was a really skilled hatmaker who had actually worked as one for years in Germany. Due to the large hat industry developing in Australia in those days he never had any trouble in finding well paid jobs. I soon realised that my training in textiles had been quite insufficient for Australian conditions. Here there were no packs of young men in white coats employed in textile factories. Here, where absolutely everyone seemed to be technically gifted, everyone did his own plumbing, carpentry, gardening, painting et cetera: one boss seemed to fill the jobs all these young men in white coats used to do in Germany. The calculations these bosses arrived at were rough and off the tops of their heads, yet usually accurate enough, and textile designs were copied, not created. After a very short time I did not bother any more to take my Cottbus certificates along to show to possible employers. Nobody took any notice of them, anyway, so I just tried to convince people that I was a practical expert, something I did not really believe myself. It was quite strenuous to get around by public transport or on foot to visit the various mills which were widely distributed all over the outskirts of Sydney and after a while I found it harder and harder to knock at the office windows to try and see the bosses. Economic conditions were pretty tough. We had struck the tail end of the great Depression which had hit Australia in the thirties at least as hard as Germany, and there were many unemployed still and few job vacancies. Furthermore, our English was poor, and we — Alfred and I — both resolved to remedy this short-coming. We therefore decided to go to the pictures as often as we could, usually all day long on Saturdays, watching three or four different pictures in a row in order to get used to the sound of the English language and to understand it better. Little did we realise that we saw mainly American pictures with accents to match, that is when we were not watching cricket. At least we learnt the tune of "God save the King" (later Queen) which was played religiously at the beginning of each picture show. Then there was a real large orchestra to play some numbers, or at least an organist on a Wurlitzer organ. The show consisted of a newsreel, a shorter introductory film and the main picture. All this went out with television and higher wages for artists. We also read the newspapers carefully every day and looked up the words we did not know. But the most difficult thing was to understand people talking on the telephone, particularly the type of Aussie who spoke very softly, hardly opening his/her mouth. Alfred had an advantage over me as he acquired an Australian girlfriend. I did not have the benefit of this linguistic tool until the war. Later, when first I and then Alfred moved to Melbourne, we lived there with Otto Strauss who was also very keen to get the real hang of the language but was far more methodical than we two. He forced us to speak English amongst ourselves and to systematically study the style, vocabulary and pronunciation both of English and Australian. In spite of all this I still have not managed to pronounce "th" properly. Between looking for jobs I used to go to Hyde Park, eat my spaghetti sandwiches and then lie in the sun to acquire a tan in these happy days when the damned dermatologists had not spoiled all the fun for us with their skin cancer scare. Finally I managed to get a job in a weaving mill as a loom tuner where I lasted for three days. The girls who worked the looms knew more about fixing them than I did. Then I got a job for a few weeks in a towel-weaving mill in Leichhardt as a weaver during the night shift, an opportunity, if you can call it that, which only came my way because women, who



almost exclusively did the day shifts, were not allowed to work at night. I did not enjoy the job, understandably enough, but at least I managed to hold it as long as I wanted it which restored my confidence to some extent. Being still very interested in the youth movement, Alfred and I joined a Jewish scout troop and went on weekend camps with them, singing German songs for them in two voices, not always quite exactly in tune. However, after the German youth movement the spirit of the whole organisation did not appeal to us. The object of scouting here in Australia was to educate the young to become good, responsible and patriotic citizens, whereas we had tried to revolutionise bourgeois lifestyle and morals. For some time in Sydney I must have been renting a room without board with Alfred because I remember sumptuous dinners where we cooked ourselves six soft boiled eggs each — that was of course long before the current cholesterol scare.

### MELBOURNE

At last I decided that as my ticket was booked through to Melbourne I would try my luck there; this was in October 1938. Again my boat was met by a representative of the Jewish Welfare Society. Here in Melbourne it was Jean Danglow, daughter of Rabbi Danglow, who welcomed me and put me up in a boarding house in Fitzroy Street, St. Kilda, which was then the centre of Jewish life for immigrants from Germany and Austria. At the time most Poles and Russians still settled in Carlton and no one yet thought of venturing into the wilds of Caulfield. I enquired at the Welfare Society about Otto Strauss, a Bund Deutsch-Jüdischer Jugend comrade of mine whom I had met on a camp in the Rhineland. We had kept in touch and I knew he had intended to go to Melbourne. I found out that he had arrived the same day as I, directly from Germany. We met and he took me along for dinner that night to the place of someone who had befriended him during his sea voyage. The host turned out to be Alick Mushin, the oldest of the Mushin family. Meeting him started my relationship with the Mushins which was to be quite decisive for my personal life particularly in the early years, as well as for my professional life. Through Alick I met his brothers Aaron and Dr. Mac (Maccabee) as well as the Warhafts, a sister, and a large circle of Russian Jews, quite a new experience for me. They impressed me as being a very stimulating group of people, with strong political affiliations to various sections of the Left. During the war they all played a part in the Jewish Council Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism, a very active body before and during the war, but for my liking somewhat too Stalinist in outlook. Though economically they ranged between being well off and wealthy, all were sympathetic to the Communists. Some of their friends, like the slipper manufacturer Isaac Gust (father of the writer Amirah and the immunologist Ian) were party members.

All the Mushin crowd was terribly nice and helpful to us. They opened their homes to us, fed us copiously with very welcome meals, introduced us to interesting people, such as the writer Judah Waten, and gave us good advice and information on the Australian scene. They organised lectures, in Yiddish, on Jewish culture in Eastern Europe by Mr. Giligitch, a very learned Latvian Jew who spoke a beautiful "classical" Yiddish which we could follow. They never made us *Yeckes* (German Jews) feel that the generation of our parents had lacked in compassion in their feelings towards and treatment of eastern immigrants in Germany. They were open to all cultural and political influences, and this was reflected in the high spirited and interesting conversations at social evenings. Aaron and Cecile Mushin were quite well known collectors of art.

Otto and I decided to move into the same place, so after a week we found a large room and balcony at "Wingfield Manor" off Brighton Road in Elwood. The balcony proved to be handy when Alfred eventually joined us in Melbourne, for there I slept right through a Melbourne winter, protected by a canvas blind on one side only. I must have



been much harder in those days than I am now. Otto played the cello and we had some marvellous "jam sessions" with Otto playing classical or popular music for us, sometimes joined by me on the accordion. This instrument was sold soon to get in some ready cash, and so were others of my goods and chattels. Before leaving Berlin we had met a dentist who had been to Australia and New Zealand, who told everyone that the indispensable basic requirements for a satisfactory social life in Australia were not just dinner jackets, both black and tropical white, but also tails. Being the son of a father in the tailoring business I was duly equipped in style. First I sold the black tails, next the white dinner jacket, keeping the black one which I have still got and fit into! This did prove to be a real asset; people dressed up much more often for all sorts of functions and people in dinner jackets and women in long frocks riding on the trams were a common sight. Only the rich had cars or used taxis. Contrary to the experiences of many other refugees I found the Anglo-Jewish circles very friendly and quite open to me. I was invited to many homes of people like the Dangelows, Hallensteins, and Michaelises but finally decided that they did not feel as congenial to me as my Russian group. Alfred married into the Anglo-Jewish group of third or fourth generation British and Australian Jews. Other than that the Temple Beth Israel became an important centre for me, mainly in the person of Rabbi Dr. Herman Sanger, an extraordinary scholar and orator, as well as a remarkably tolerant and outwards oriented Jew; he bar-mitzvahed some of my family.

The Temple also possessed a social centre in Temple House where we had lectures and dances and could meet nice Jewish young ladies. Then there was Professor Billigheimer. He had been a senior secondary (*Gymnasium*) teacher in Germany and also had a deep interest in Jewish philosophy and history. During the Hitler period he had taught in a Jewish *Lehrhaus* and had been a friend and colleague of Martin Buber. He began to give lectures and hold discussions on Sunday nights in his home very similar to the type we had been used to in Germany, and we all went, including Walter Schnock whom I had also met earlier on and had become very friendly with. The other important event of that period was a camping trip to Waratah Bay in Gippsland. Alfred, Otto and myself were taken on by the Mushin family in January 1939, which was great fun. On the way home we had to pass through the terrific bushfires which occurred in that year — quite an experience, although we did not get really too close for comfort.

Otherwise I played a lot of reasonably good tennis (C class pennant) and did a lot of swimming and sunbaking. Every Sunday we religiously wrote a letter home. Alfred was a very strict taskmaster and kept me to it, else I might not have been so conscientious. The news of Crystal Night with so many of our friends who had not managed to emigrate being detained for some weeks in concentration camps really shook us, particularly Alfred whose brother Hans was one of those caught up in it. I had a bad conscience of sorts, having saved myself, with my friends in trouble — quite an awful feeling, though we had been trying all the time to get permits for some relations and friends to come to Australia. I finally managed to get one for my mother. I vaguely remember going to see Wilfred Burchett's brother who was very active in helping refugees to get their relations out of Germany. Wilfred Burchett was the famous or infamous reporter who was to follow the Korean and Vietnam wars on the "wrong" side, Menzies' pet hate. At last I was successful, again with the help of the Mushins who guaranteed for my mother's livelihood if she came to Australia. This was early in 1939. Then began the rather nerve-racking time of whether or not she would be able to get out of Germany before the war which everyone except the Australians expected to break out any day. Finally mother left in July and was near South Africa on the boat when war ultimately did break out, yet her boat made it safely to Australia. At the time I did not succeed in obtaining a permit



for Uncle Jolly nor for some of my friends. After the war and again with the help of the Mushins we could bring out Jolly and his wife of seven years' standing, Auntie Trudy.

When my mother arrived we moved into a flat in Hotham Street, East St. Kilda. I stayed there until I got married and my mother stayed on there for quite a few years. The outbreak of war changed our way of life to quite some extent. The poor Australian authorities did not quite know what to do with us. Technically we were enemy aliens and it did not sink in for quite a while that we were really on their side and were not plotting to establish a Fifth Column. Anyway, who can blame the Australians for getting confused when even the British did, who were so much closer to events and who should have known better. They interned Jewish German and Austrian refugees first on the Isle of Man and later sent them for further internment to Canada and to Australia, to the latter on the infamous prison vessel *Dunera*. In Australia the authorities decided in 1939 that refugees had to live entirely within the suburb they happened to inhabit so that the police could keep an eye on them to prevent treacherous activities. If you worked in another suburb you had to apply for a special permit which allowed you to go to your workplace and back on the same tramline once a day on weekdays. I decided that these regulations were silly and went on my bike wherever I wanted to. I got caught twice, but many members of the police force were much better acquainted with the refugees than the people at headquarters and administered the regulations most leniently. There was a bit of community hysteria rampant though; people were told to speak English on trams and in the streets. Telephone conversations were often interrupted and some telephonist who apparently had to listen in to catch us potential spies directed us to speak English or else she would cut us off. We were, however, much better treated than non-Jewish German nationals, who were interned without discrimination whether they were Nazis or not. There was then, of course, a Nazi organisation in Australia dating from years back, particularly strong amongst German settlers in South Australia. The German Club in Melbourne was known to be under strict Nazi control. The worst feature of that period was the worry about relatives and friends who had not managed to leave Germany in time. We tried to keep in touch via the Red Cross, but communication was most uncertain and if it worked at all it took many months.

I must now talk about my professional "career", if that is the correct word to use. When I arrived in Melbourne I found myself in exactly the same difficult situation as I had in Sydney, except that my English had improved and I had better personal contacts through the Mushin circle. I got my first job in Melbourne without the Mushins, though. It was at a weaving and spinning mill in Spotswood, far away on the other side of the Yarra, and I had to work as a sizer. After the yarn for weaving is wound up on a long beam it has to pass through a sizing machine where it gets a coating of size to reinforce it and smooth it suitable for weaving. This is done by a huge machine in a special shed where the yarn runs through a drier after being immersed in the size. Steam-drying creates considerable heat: this was in the middle of summer with temperatures up to 40° Celsius. Inside the shed it must have been 60°. I knew all about the theory but little of the practice, but I had a junior to work with me who knew the job. He was, however, most unwilling to work and I could not do it by myself while he disappeared for hours. Naturally our production dropped and, having heard so much about Australian mateship, I was foolish enough not to complain to the manager as I did not want to do him in. In the end I was the one who got the sack. After unsuccessfully looking around for a while I got a job in a weaving mill producing elastic ribbons, again on night shift, of course. The factory was owned by a friend of the Mushins, a very prominent member of the Jewish community, particularly in the Jewish Welfare Society, whose name I will suppress for charitable reasons. I received the basic wage, at that time about £4 per week, and only got two or three shillings extra for night work. On Fridays, after I got paid, I had to go and see this



man and hand him back £1! This practice of undercutting the basic wage was then quite a common practice amongst employers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who gave jobs to refugees. As the money had to be handed back in cash no breaking of the law could be proved. Low language skills and lack of technical know-how by these employees was used as an excuse for the bosses. However, with the type of low skilled job I could get it took not too long to catch up to the standard of my fellow workers, yet no attempt was made in my and other cases to put us on full pay. Only when one was confident enough to resign and look for another job could one expect to get paid properly. Ribbon looms are very big machines where 50–100 ribbons, elastic or otherwise, are woven at the same time. All you had to do was watch when threads were broken, mend them, and also exchange the bobbins when they ran empty, an exceedingly boring occupation. My friend Otto Strauss was also employed in the same mill. Even the £3 were just enough to live on while I was by myself, but what would happen if and when my mother would join me?

Shortly before she arrived I applied for and got a job in the ribbon weaving plant belonging to Alick Mushin, where I received my full wages, which then were sufficient to keep mother and myself at a very modest standard of living. My shift was from 6pm to 2am. The mill was off Swanston Street, Carlton, and when I knocked off I had to walk down Swanston Street to Victoria Street where I could catch the small trams which ran every thirty minutes right through the night. At this hour Victoria Street was very busy indeed. Along it drove long rows of Chinese fruiterers with their one-horse carts to buy and sell supplies at the Victoria Market. Now and then a herd of sheep was driven along Victoria Street by stockmen on horseback on their way to the abattoirs in a cloud of dust, giving the city a real whiff of the bush. They were, of course, allowed to do that only at night. The Chinese fruiterers were quite a feature of Melbourne in those days. They owned many fruit and vegetable gardens, for instance in suburbs like Moorabbin and Clayton, which are now suburban streets with double-front brick veneers. Where we were to live later, in Carnegie, there were mainly vegetable gardens and fruit orchards. The Chinese would drive their horse carts through all suburbs during the day, shouting or ringing bells, so that housewives could buy their supplies from home. Milk was also delivered every morning by milk carters running alongside their horse carts, filling up however many bottles one had left at the front gate. Iceblocks also were so delivered until refrigerators became common. Thinking back over this era it is the rural picture of Victoria Street at 2am I will always remember.

When war started I tried to join up but was, of course, not accepted, being an “enemy alien”. War had the effect, though, of ending the economic Depression. Australia tried to become industrially self-supporting (being so isolated geographically), and many new factories opened up, producing everything from hand-grenades to garbage bins. At the same time labour became very short in supply as so many men had enlisted. Some jobs were filled by women, but jobs were still easy to get. I also changed my job, and became a ribbon-weaver in a small mill in Hawthorn which produced mainly chevron ribbons for sergeants and corporal stripes on uniforms. This factory did not have large looms but about sixty tiny looms weaving individual ribbons which you had to keep going. My working time was 6pm to 6am, four days a week, with me being the only person in the factory during this time, quite a peculiar experience. The pay was good, though, and I quite liked the isolation and odd conditions, although I could never get used to sleeping properly during the day. I grew more and more tired in spite of the long weekends.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour and declared war, the Australian authorities had second thoughts about the reservoir of manpower they had in us “friendly” enemy



aliens and also about people from Allied or neutral countries living in Australia. It was decided that while they were not eligible for fighting units they could volunteer for the Australian Military Forces (the AMF), but not for the AIF, whose members had offered themselves for overseas service. Australia had then, as it were, two armies. The AMF consisted of conscripts and, by law, could not be sent to fight outside Australia. This was a consequence of the well entrenched anti-conscription tradition ever since the First World War when in two referenda Australians decided that no conscripts would be forced to fight overseas. The AIF was the volunteer army which did the fighting. The AMF was used inside Australia for lines of communication et cetera, although late in the war against Japan the law was amended and AMF members actually fought in New Guinea, but nowhere else. Absurdly enough we refugees were the only volunteer members of the otherwise conscripted AMF. The army in Victoria formed first one and then another Special Employment Company for us and decided to send them to the NSW border to work in loading and unloading of railway goods. At that time we had no unified railway gauge, each of the Australian states in the nineteenth century had built its own railway system independently of what the "foreigners" across the border in New South Wales or South Australia were doing, choosing their own gauge. The result was that when Victorian trains reached the state border, goods had to be transferred to New South Wales trains and passengers also had to change trains, and the same happened on journeys in the opposite direction. War had caused a tremendous increase in goods traffic, so one Employment Company, the Fourth, was sent to Albury, and the next, the Sixty, some weeks later to Tocumwal in the Riverina. Again I tried to enlist in the Employment Company to be together with my friends who were already in uniform, but with our mill being a supplier for the Defence Department, I was in a protected occupation and not allowed to leave my job. I was, however, determined to do just that, mainly because I was thoroughly sick of weaving ribbons at night and also physically affected by four years of working at odd hours. I also wanted to join my friends Alfred Ruskin, Walter Schnock and many others who were already in uniform. So I started a campaign against the Defence Department to let me leave my job and after a few weeks they got so tired of me that I was allowed to join up. After a few days in Melbourne, where I was supposed to sleep in the stands of Caulfield racecourse, but in fact slept at home, I was sent on to join Walter and Alfred in Tocumwal as the proud wearer of a must unfitting khaki uniform, not a very martial spectacle I can assure you.

Our camp then was very beautifully placed in a bend of the river Murray. However, there were only three water-taps for the use of several hundred men. There were long queues in the morning and the ablutions were rather superficial. However, our company commander Captain Richardson, a former bank manager so he claimed, but in reality probably an ex-teller, explained to us that if facilities were good enough for him they should certainly be sufficient for us. This did not go down well with the troops and he was booed. We were rather a disrespectful lot and had inhaled enough Australian air to be rebellious and undisciplined towards our superiors whom we did not consider to be our betters. All the officers and non-commissioned officers were then native Australians. The army had not selected its elite human material to lead this non-combatant horde of "bloody foreigners", with the exception of our regimental sergeant major who was a good returned man from the First World War. Our officers were only saluted when we could not avoid it. The company was composed of the most extraordinary collection of individuals. There was our group of "reffos" from Germany and Austria, some up to fifty years old, including judges, lawyers, academics, merchants and the like. Then there were a few "genuine" Germans who had been thoroughly vetted and considered safe, such as a quite extraordinary Baron von Gans who felt congenially inclined towards me apparently as another "superior" type, and Otto Dietrich, a brewer from Ballarat, built



like a weight-lifter who could carry three times as much as I. And then there were specially selected anti-Fascist Italians who had not been interned, most of them fanatical Communists (the war was now "kosher" after Russia had become involved, not any more a capitalist conspiracy like in the first year of the war). In addition, neutrals like Greeks, Jewish and non-Jewish Poles, as well as oddments like a huge Finnish timber-worker who became the first non-Australian sergeant, made up the weird mob. I was in very good company in my tent where we played poker and bridge until late into the night. I soon decided that the railway work was not all that congenial to me. Alfred, with two years of medicine in Germany, had immediately manoeuvred himself to be in charge of the medical hut. Soon he requisitioned Walter, a trained chiropodist, to be his assistant. Walter really knew something about medicine from his training in England.

After a few weeks we had to abandon our camp due to an invasion of tiger snakes which came right into our tents. I remember once throwing a hammer at one and, by some extraordinary fluke, killing it — not the recommended method exactly. So the camp was shifted inland to a safer but much uglier site and we had a huge tent fitted out as a medical hut under the direction of our Medical Officer, Captain Lee Tet from Seymour, an Australian-Chinese and the laziest man this side of the black stump. He left most of the work to Alfred and Walter and only interfered in serious cases when he absolutely had to. The work grew and grew, with many of our comrades being quite hypochondriacal and always willing to go on sick parade to get out of a day's work. So Alfred managed to get me into the medical work as well and we divided it up between ourselves. I had done a first-aid course in the youth movement and I learnt as we went along. Before we got our medical Captain we had a civilian local doctor to look after the company. He was a fine man with a pretty daughter whom I took swimming quite often. Alfred ran the medical hut most efficiently with medicines and ointments in neat rows in military order, just like he still keeps his clothes. This kind of work was preferable to shifting boxes at the station; we had a lot of free time between the sick parades in the morning and at night, and some looking after of patients in the camp hospital, as the serious cases were sent to Seymour or Melbourne. Then there were the rewards: tins of fruit and eggs from the mainly Greek kitchen staff to improve our diet in exchange for some sick days granted and so on — we were happily corruptible in this regard. We did the most illegal things such as giving booster injections to a commando company stationed nearby, with those brave big blokes fainting all over the place at the sight of the needle, with Captain Lee Tet looking in every hour to see how we were doing. After a while Alfred managed to get himself transferred to the Medical Corps of the Army and was sent for training to Puckapunyal. Shortly afterwards Walter got transferred as an army chiropodist to Melbourne's Royal Park camp, so I was left to my own devices.

I recall certain memorable incidents in Tocumwal. Once I had to march the sick parade to see the doctor in the "city" and when we came back I ordered them before dismissal to make a wrong turn in front of all the officers. I still wake up screaming in the middle of the night dreaming about this. A very pleasant feature of Tocumwal was the formation of a string quartet with a local cellist, a railway official, whose rehearsals I attended; or walking through the tent-quarters and hearing someone playing a Bach violin concerto on the mouth-organ. On investigation I found the artist to be Yosli Bergner, the painter, who later went to Israel and with whom I am still in occasional contact. One day Captain Lee Tet got sick and was sent home to Seymour and for some months I was left completely by myself in full charge of the sick, only sending away cases I considered to be serious. I was lucky enough not to lose anyone during this period. Soon I applied for transfer to the Medical Corps myself, claiming quite falsely to have had some two years of medical study in Germany — who could prove me wrong? I was then



transferred to the 124th Special Hospital, Puckapunyal, a place for patients with venereal diseases, well patronised by the army, where Alfred had preceded me earlier on. There I was trained in prophylactic treatment against infection for people who had just been naughty, and was then promoted to corporal and posted to a depot in a cellar of Flinders Street railway station, with steps going down from Flinders Street. Only a sergeant and myself shared the twenty-four hour service on alternate days — 24 hours on and 24 hours off. There was a camp bed in the place where I could sleep; as you can imagine I was frequently awakened during the night. I made good use of the free time I had on as well as off duty, did correspondence courses in accountancy and management which did not do me much good, and read and read and read, more than I had ever done in my life before or after. Promotion to corporal was important, because instead of six shillings a day one got ten shillings, quite a difference in those years. My mother got family allowance from the army, so we were not too badly off. I slept at home every second night, so that was okay, too. Apart from being sent now and then on relief duty to other depots in Victoria, Flinders Street was where I spent the rest of the war, fighting an enemy more deadly than the Japanese, so we were told. In 1944 I was naturalised, swore allegiance to His Majesty King George VI, and immediately joined the AIF, volunteering for service overseas where, however, I was not sent any more. This naturalisation, one of the first amongst my refugee army comrades, had a comical epilogue. At that time you had to advertise in the daily papers when you applied for naturalisation so that people who knew something unfavourable about you could prevent your becoming an Australia, and a letter attacking my application appeared in the now-defunct newspaper *Smiths' Weekly* in 1944. Still, it gave me superior status again to the one I had acquired by joining the "real" army of the Medical Corps as against all my friends who were "only" in the Employment Company. I even received a VX129206 number as against the ordinary V of the AMF as well as "Australia" shoulder clips and a grey surround to the colour patch on my Digger hat, a veritable king amongst the refugees. On my days off I went to symphony concerts (where my future wife already spied sitting in the organ gallery of the Town Hall this handsome soldier whom she actually was to meet very much later), but also went to the many entertainment places available to soldiers like a canteen in Swanston Street, the Australia-Soviet Friendship League, and the dance halls like the Trocadero, where the Arts Centre is now, and Leggett's which used to be in Greville Street, Prahran. All were then dominated by our American Allies, also the Free Dutch, who were all much better paid and had much more handsome uniforms. They also all had kid sisters of which the girls they met reminded them, or so they said, a great line to get a good start. The war ended in 1945, but not yet for me. Everybody else got out quickly, but I was a much needed specialist and they kept me on for almost another twelve months. Finally I had to fight my way out of the army, same as I had fought my way into it.

An acquaintance of mine had started a hand weaving business early in the war and had done extremely well. That was something I had learnt, so I got myself a small hand loom and started to weave scarves. It went quite well for a while. I even got a second one and my mother helped me, all in Hotham Street. A wholesaler in Flinders Street took all our output and urged me to go on to full width materials. Otto Strauss was interested in coming in with me so I used all my deferred pay and ordered a large hand loom to be built by a special carpenter in Moorabbin. We also hired a loft behind an old house in Windsor, which used to be a hay loft in the old days, to put the loom in. Otto then decided to do something else and I was left by myself. When I had my first piece of cloth ready my wholesaler explained to me that the hand-woven fashion, so lucrative during and immediately after the war, had faded away and that unfortunately he could not take my cloth any more. As I was about to look for other outlets, which I probably would not have



found since the wholesaler had summed up the situation quite correctly, I was asked by Aaron Mushin whether I could help him out. He and Maurice Miller had founded Mushin & Miller late in the war after Aaron had ceased to be a director of Felt & Textiles, a very large business which, with government help, had expanded immensely during the war and started factories all over Victoria to produce cloth and other things required for the war effort. When the firm's management changed and Aaron did not want to go along with the new direction, he resigned and returned to his own business now in partnership with his nephew Maurice Miller. They were then suppliers to the shoe trade only, acting as wholesalers to sell everything that went into the manufacturing of shoes and slippers with the exception of leather. Behind his offices and storeroom at 219 Johnston Street, Fitzroy, Mushin & Miller had a small vacant factory building. In it they installed some machines which transferred yarn from one type of spindle onto another, thus making it suitable for weaving. Aaron had three people working there but there was apparently a lot of trouble as the machines were not running properly and it appeared hardly worthwhile to get someone to fix them. Knowing about my loom, Aaron suggested that I should put it into his factory where I could continue my weaving, save the rent of the loft and keep an eye on the winding. This appealed to me. I took my loom to pieces and shifted it into the factory. I decided to first of all fix up the winding machines and to spend a few days on that full time. Once things were in order I would assemble my loom in peace and do my weaving without major worries. This I did very successfully with my inborn technical knack. My gift for engineering had been certified in black and white. When I was finally demobilised from the army in Royal Park, part of the routine procedure was to be given an aptitude test which was supposed to point to manual and/or intellectual potential. The psychologists decided that I had a specific mechanical gift and that I should utilise this in my civilian career. I was rather surprised with this assessment, but who can argue with the experts?

Now back to Mushin & Miller. On the day I wanted to start assembling the loom, Aaron asked me to do him another favour and spend a week in the office as his partner, Maurice, was going on a short business trip to New Zealand and he was short-handed. What could I do? After all, one week would not make that much difference to my weaving career. Maurice, however, met Judy in New Zealand, got married and stayed away for six weeks. By that time I was so securely anchored within the Mushin & Miller office that I never assembled that loom. It was stored away somewhere in the organisation and disappeared after some years, never to be found again. This was the beginning of my brilliant career at Mushin & Miller which was to last thirty-two years.



## KARL DULDIG: THE WAR YEARS 1940–1945

*Eva de Jong-Duldig*

The following notes on the work of Karl Duldig during the war years in Australia are intended to place these works in their historical and personal context as well as inform the reader of their place in his artistic *oeuvre*.

The life and work of the artist Karl Duldig are closely intertwined and the extent to which his work was influenced by the circumstances in which he found himself is remarkable. Conversely, it is, however, significant that aspects of his style and his attitude to art were sustained throughout his career, irrespective of the environment in which he worked or the medium which he chose.

In his recollections from his boyhood, Duldig always spoke of his love of drawing and the immense impression made on him by his first conscious contact with a drawn visual image. He made three-dimensional models and attempted his first self-portrait in plasticine as a young teenager. These interests were entirely self-motivated as nobody in his family encouraged him or acted as a role model. In fact, very much against the preferences of his family he decided to pursue a career as an artist.

His first encounter with his revered teacher and mentor Anton Hanak, the professor of sculpture at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna, was in the master's studio in 1921. Perhaps inspired by Hanak's sculptures around him Karl picked up a small flat scrap of plaster lying on the floor and began to carve a relief with his pen-knife. Hanak was later most impressed by this relief of *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden*. The figure of Adam had been inspired by Hanak's lifesize figure *Farewell* which was at that time in the master's studio.

Hanak was to exert considerable influence on the work of Karl Duldig. He encouraged his students to apply what was, at that time, an innovative practice — the concept of carving directly into the stone without any preparatory drawings, models or maquettes. Good reproductions of the work Duldig completed under Hanak using these methods may be seen in the Karl Duldig monograph of 1966.<sup>1</sup> They were exhibited for the first time as a group in an exhibition mounted at the National Gallery of Victoria entitled *The Viennese Sculptures of Karl Duldig*, a major component of the exhibition of *Vienna and the Early Twentieth Century* in 1990.

These methods were entirely contrary to the still accepted academic teaching which adhered to the traditions requiring sculptors to work from models through the different stages of drawings, maquettes, scaling up and plaster models before a work was ready to be carved in stone or cast in bronze. Although Karl was later to undergo the long and arduous undergraduate and post-graduate training required at the Academy in Vienna, he never forgot Hanak's methods and applied them throughout his life.<sup>2</sup>

Karl's boyhood portrait of himself in plasticine was the forerunner of a lifelong interest in the sculptured portrait bust. First under Hanak, then throughout his academic studies and also after his graduation he constantly sought out models to hone his skills as a portraitist. In the beginning the portraits were mainly of members of his family, his mother, his nephew and niece, but he also executed portraits of his fellow students including his wife to be, Slawa Horowitz. Later as a freelance sculptor in Vienna the portrait often provided him with a source of income which was difficult to come by from other sculptural commissions. Strangely it was also this skill that proved to be a life-



saver during the critical time when the Duldig family was forced to leave Vienna in 1938.

As a result of a number of fortuitous (with hindsight) incidents Karl left Vienna first leaving his wife and baby daughter, Eva, behind. He managed to get a visa to Switzerland through some sporting connections. (He had been a top-ranking tennis player in Austria and had toured the Swiss tournaments on a number of occasions prior to 1938.) Whilst in the small city of Zug he happened to mention to the local emigration officer that he was very concerned about the safety of his wife and daughter who were still in Vienna. He offered to make a portrait bust of this man, whose name was Ernst Speck, and asked if he could assist the family to leave Vienna. Speck suggested that Slawa should send her passport to Switzerland and he would stamp it with a return visa. It could then be sent back to Vienna and using these papers Slawa and Eva would be able to enter Switzerland. The portrait was completed and Karl's wife and daughter joined him in Switzerland soon after.

As the Duldigs only had temporary visas in Switzerland they were forced to seek a country where it would be possible for them to emigrate. This was exceedingly difficult as most countries would not take refugees. Permits were almost impossible to procure without sponsorship or bribery. In the end the Duldigs had three options. They could join Karl's mother and brother in Poland, where the Duldigs had property; they had been fortunate to get a permit for Palestine; and finally they had the opportunity to go to Singapore. This last came about through the intervention of Karl's niece who was married to a Belgian citizen and at the time living in Singapore. She sent him a telegram suggesting he could get work in this British colony. Partly because it was the furthest optional destination away from Europe where each day the outbreak of war seemed more imminent, the Duldigs decided to opt for Singapore. They arrived on 15 May 1939.

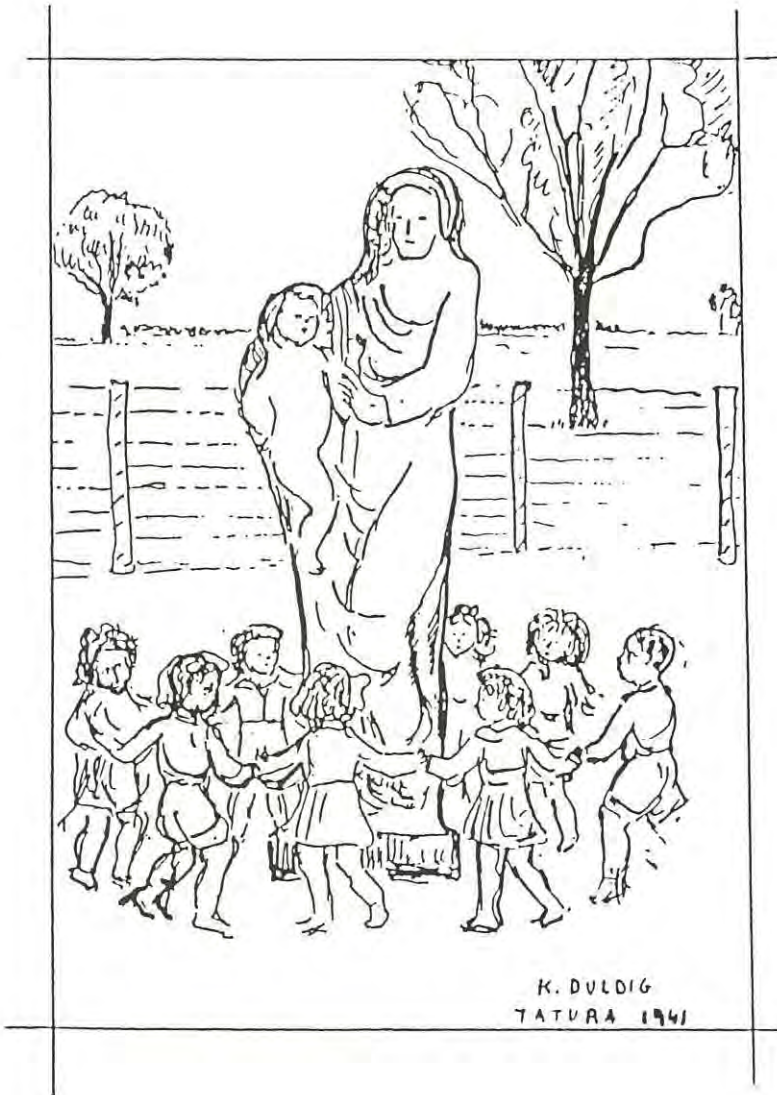
Although in the beginning life on this tropical island was exceedingly difficult, Karl and Slawa Duldig managed to adjust more quickly than they could have imagined and found to their delight that they could earn a comfortable living from their art. Karl was in demand for commissions and among others completed work for the Sultan of Jahore and Aw Boon Haw, the Tiger Balm King. It was a short, but exceedingly stimulating period of their lives and if it were not for the critical political situation preceding the war in the Pacific, they would no doubt have been very happy to remain on the island.<sup>3</sup>

After the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, the British government regarded all persons of German, Austrian or Italian origin as enemy aliens. They therefore decreed that persons holding these nationalities, irrespective of their refugee status, present themselves for deportation from the Colony. The Duldigs were among approximately 250 other people, men, women and children, who were rounded up and transported to Australia on the converted troopship, the British liner *Queen Mary*. They arrived in Sydney on 26 September 1940 and were taken by train and truck to Tatura in Victoria.<sup>4</sup>

Internment in Tatura was a cultural shock for these people. Conditions were spartan, and the loss of freedom weighed heavily on them. Although the internees made every effort to petition the Australian and British governments for what seemed to them an unjust internment, neither government was prepared to take responsibility for the predicament of the internees, and as the months dragged on they were forced to adjust to the monotony of camp life. The inmates of Internment Camp 3D Tatura, where the Duldigs were placed, consisted mainly of families, many of whom had young children. Every inmate had his or her rostered duties and generally they organised their lives to relieve the inevitable boredom and depression resulting from their restricted environment.



Karl Duldig was given the job of chopping wood and, always self-motivated, he soon found an outlet for his artistic energies. With his axe he carved a head out of one of the eucalyptus logs he was cutting for firewood. This carving, *Fragment*, is now held by the Newcastle Regional Art Gallery.<sup>5</sup> He also persuaded the camp commandant to allow him to go outside the compound to carve an over-lifesize sculpture from a fallen limb under an old gum tree. This was later brought into the compound and stood as a focal point in the camp. As the contemporary drawing illustrates the child inmates of the camp used to dance and play around its base.<sup>6</sup>



Karl Duldig.  
*Ring-a-Ring-a-Rosy*; 1941; Pen and ink.



In that environment it is hardly surprising that Karl chose as his subject matter for this monumental work the "mother and child" theme (*caritas*). He was of course familiar with this theme from his studies in Europe, but it was only after the birth of his own child that he sought ways of expressing himself through this subject, first in Singapore and later in Australia. In 1961 Duldig carved another lifesize *caritas* sculpture in eucalypt. This work, *Magna Mater*, very different in style from the earlier sculpture, is held by the National Gallery of Victoria.<sup>7</sup>

Apart from the drawing of the "mother and child" sculpture there are among the drawings from Tatura other sketches which illustrate his interest in this theme. The barbed wire fence which separated the inmates from the freedom of life outside is evident in nearly all the Tatura drawings. Also held by the Duldig Studio is a remarkable ceramic head of a woman signed and dated *Tatura 1941*, the only surviving portrait study by Duldig from the camp.<sup>8</sup>

In the meantime, constant applications for release, a change of government and the bombing of Pearl Harbour by the Japanese in December 1941, combined to produce a change of heart on the part of the authorities. The formation of a Labour Corps, the 8th Employment Company under Captain Edward Broughton resulted, offering the opportunity to able-bodied male internees to enlist and to serve the war effort.<sup>9</sup> After some initial difficulties (due to a congenital back problem) Karl Duldig was able to join this company and joined the original intake on 7 April 1942. The families of the enlisted soldiers were released from internment soon after and the Duldigs settled in Melbourne.

The refugee soldiers had nothing but high praise for their commanding officer, Captain Broughton. He was an enlightened leader who saw his duty extending well beyond the narrow parameters of his brief. Under his caring command the soldiers were given duties according to their abilities and no effort was spared to bring meaning to their often menial labour-intensive tasks. He knew every member of the unit by name, knew their personal histories and helped many further non-military careers.<sup>10</sup>

There was a mutual respect and rapport between Karl Duldig and Captain Broughton, and as a result Duldig was allowed to pursue his art within the daily routine of the work of the Corps. In a rent in Royal Park Duldig executed three portraits of officers, one of which was a bust of Captain Broughton. All three were exhibited in an exhibition titled *All Australian Exhibition of Art by Australians in the Services* mounted at the Athenaeum Gallery in Melbourne in 1943.<sup>11</sup>



Karl Duldig  
Captain E.R. Broughton, 1942  
bronze; ht. 50cm



Broughton later purchased his own bronze bust, but unfortunately the present whereabouts of this work is unknown. In 1992 the Duldig Studio produced a further bronze cast from the original plaster mould. The second portrait was of the Duldig family's great friend, Padre Charles Young. This portrait was initially cast in 1972 after the death of Padre Young, when his family wished to retain a bronze of this bust. During the casting process a faulty cast was founded which was retained by the artist and became the poignant memorial *Lest We Forget*.<sup>12</sup> The above two portraits are among the best portrait studies Duldig ever completed. He was at the height of his physical and artistic prowess and his immense regard for both these men was no doubt reflected in the images he created. Although the portrait of Captain Skrzecka of the US Military Forces is itemised in the catalogue of the exhibition cited above, nothing further is known of this work.

Along with other works from the war years, mostly masks and heads in terracotta, is a work obviously intended to serve as an emblem for the Australian Armed Forces which has survived in the plaster form. It consists of the semi-profile head of a soldier in the famous Digger hat in high relief to which a sculptured relief map of Australia has been attached above. (A sandstone carving of the Digger in the slouch hat is also held by the Studio. The reproduction of this work was used as the frontispiece for the catalogue of Duldig's first solo exhibition in Australia, held at Kozminsky's Gallery in Melbourne in 1945. There is also a photographic record of a further sandstone carving of the slouch hat on its own.) Surviving drawings, mostly in pencil, range from sketches for sculpture to a number of portrait studies of soldiers' heads or figures in uniform with one or two topographical sketches of the camp sites.<sup>13</sup> Spontaneous sketches such as these on scraps of paper or in sketchbooks were typical of Duldig's *oeuvre*. In 1988 an exhibition titled *Karl Duldig at Scheherazade* showed a series of sketches of patrons of a well-known Melbourne restaurant, all executed spontaneously on serviettes, odd bits of paper as well as in sketchbooks.<sup>14</sup>

Unrelated to the army subject matter are three surviving carvings executed from potatoes and done whilst Duldig was on kitchen duty in Royal Park. Apparently he often carved small figures such as these, cast them in plaster and presented them to his officers.<sup>15</sup> In keeping with the earlier examples already mentioned (the *Adam and Eve* relief in Hanak's studio, and the carvings with an axe from firewood in Tatura), Duldig applied his artistic ability to the medium and tools on hand. Other soldiers testify they remember Karl carving in pumpkins and other "appropriate" vegetables. The large potatoes supplied to the Australian Army ideally suited his purposes. He carved directly and spontaneously in the potato with his knife using the method first learned as a student in Vienna. "Carve directly into the stone," Hanak had said. Of the three surviving small sculptures, the *Mother and Child* group bears a striking resemblance to the drawing of the original lifesize Tatura sculpture in eucalypt. Whether Duldig already knew that this major work had been destroyed by the next inmates of Camp 3D is a matter of conjecture. The half-kneeling female figure, the subject of the other two works, was one of the dominant subjects of Duldig's artistic *oeuvre*. Their individual treatment is, to some degree at least, influenced by the shape of the original potato from which they were carved. An "eye" of the potato is still clearly visible on the back of the head of one of these works. All three works were first cast in bronze by the Duldig Studio in 1992.<sup>16</sup>

In conjunction with his discharge from the army on 23 September 1942 Captain Broughton wrote a reference for Private Karl Duldig, V377986: "I wish him every success in the future, and I feel certain that so talented a creative artist as Pte. Duldig will surely win recognition." Following Duldig's discharge from the army his first job was with the Australian Porcelain Insulator Company Pty. Ltd. in Sunshine. Soon after, he obtained a position as a lithographer with Victory Publicity, a firm that produced posters



for the war effort. In 1944 he applied for a job as an art teacher at Mentone Grammar School. The principal, Mr Thorold, was not only impressed with Duldig's qualifications as an artist, but also saw considerable merit in employing a man who had a proven record as a sportsman of some repute. Duldig held the position of Art Master at Mentone Grammar till his retirement in 1967.<sup>17</sup>

As Captain Broughton had correctly foreseen in 1942, Duldig gained considerable recognition in Australia for his sculpture. He is represented in major public collections including the National Gallery of Victoria and the Australian National Gallery; by monuments in Australia, Israel, Vienna and Hong Kong, and in private collections both here and overseas. Two monographs have been published on his life and work, and his work is also documented in a number of selected references.

The work Duldig completed whilst in internment and during his short period of service in the Australian Army is important in the context of the unusual circumstances under which it was produced, but also, in hindsight, in its artistic context. Harking back to his European roots these works nevertheless already reflect the artist's response to a new and entirely different environment.

In 1993, the Australian War Memorial acquired Karl Duldig's bronze portrait bust of Captain E.R. Broughton. In her acknowledgment of this acquisition Jean McAuslan, Curator of Sculpture and Graphic Art at the War Memorial, wrote that she was interested to learn "... of the artist's perception of Broughton as an officer who showed compassion and encouragement to Europeans who, as a result of the Second World War, had so recently arrived in Australia. And of the place held by this portrait in the artist's work, marking a beginning in the process of adaptation to Australia. In this respect the work holds great significance for the Memorial's collection ...". The War Memorial also acquired the small Duldig figurative group titled *Mother and Child* (1942).

#### NOTES

1. Pamela Ruskin. *Karl Duldig Sculpture*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1966. Reproductions Nos. 1-21.
2. *Gallery*, monthly magazine of the National Gallery Society of Victoria, May 1990, pp.18-19.
3. Eva De Jong-Duldig. *Karl Duldig Survey, Sculpture and Graphic Works 1922-1982*, Melbourne 1982, pp.15-19; also Tribute by Robert Payne, *ibid.*, pp.50-52.
4. *Age* newspaper, 6 October 1990, Extra 3.
5. Ruskin, *op.cit.*, Reproduction 27; De Jong-Duldig, *op.cit.*, p.21.
6. De Jong-Duldig, *op.cit.*, p.20.
7. Ruskin, *op.cit.*, Frontispiece; p.41. De Jong-Duldig, *op.cit.*, pp.4, 26-27.
8. *The Duldig Ceramics: a Retrospective*; catalogue, City of Caulfield Arts Complex, March 1988. Helen Bond, p.4.
9. *The Dunera Affair: a Documentary Resource Book*, edited by Paul Bartrop with Gabrielle Eisen, p.121.
10. Jacobs, Horst. *Dunera News*, No. 24, June 1992, pp.4-5.
11. *All Australian Exhibition of Art by Australians in the Services*, catalogue, Athenaeum Gallery, 26 January to 6 February 1943.



12. *Sun*, 12 November 1970, p.41.
13. All works mentioned in this section are held by the Duldig Studio.
14. *Karl Duldig at Scheherazade*, May 1988. Flyer published in conjunction with an exhibition of Karl Duldig drawings to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Scheherazade Restaurant in Melbourne.
15. De Jong-Duldig, *op.cit.*, p.22
16. *Karl Duldig Army Carvings*. Flyer, 1992.
17. James Rundle. *Against All Odds, a History of Mentone Grammar School 1920–1988*, p.198.

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Note: Additional information about the work of Karl Duldig can be found in Ken Scarlett, *Australian Sculptors*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1980, and Graeme Sturgeon, *The Development of Australian Sculpture, 1788–1975*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1978.



## HOBART HEBREW CONGREGATION: 150 YEARS OF SURVIVAL AGAINST ALL ODDS

*Hedi Fixel*

1995 will be a significant year for the Hobart Jewish Community as it marks the 150th anniversary of the consecration of the Hobart Synagogue, the oldest still existing synagogue in Australia. Today the Synagogue appears exactly as it was originally built. In this feature I will give an overall picture of the early period of the Jewish history of Hobart and I will concentrate on the last 50 odd years, the period when my late husband Ferry and I were personally involved.

Jewish presence in Van Diemen's Land goes back much longer than 150 years. Jews were amongst the early convicts and settlers, and in 1807 Bernard Walford arrived in a transport from New South Wales when authorities transferred emancipists from Norfolk Island to Van Diemen's Land (hence the township "New Norfolk" in Tasmania). Walford was given a grant of land to make a fresh start and he prospered in Van Diemen's Land. He must have been very conscious of his Jewish roots, for in 1828, when he felt that he might soon die, he approached Governor Arthur for a plot of land for a burial ground. The land was granted and became the first Jewish cemetery in Harrington Street. Walford was the first person to be buried there and his tombstone has been transferred to the present cemetery in Cornelian Bay.<sup>1</sup>

In 1819 the brothers Judah and Joseph Solomon arrived as convicts. They were from the Thames estuary town of Sheerness and were part of the small Jewish community there, supplying provisions to the Royal Navy and convict hulks anchored in the Medway.<sup>1</sup>

The brothers were soon able to establish themselves successfully in business. Judah built a mansion in Argyle Street, the very same building which has been carefully restored by the government and is one of the few still existing Georgian houses.

This building remained in the possession of the Solomon family until about 1922 when it was sold to the YMCA. The grandson of Judah Solomon, Samuel Benjamin, and his family were the residents.

In 1834 Louis Nathan arrived in Hobart Town as a free settler and started a business as a store keeper, ships' provedore, and later, owner of whalers and trading vessels. His brother-in-law, Samuel Moses, arrived in 1841 and joined the firm: the business name was changed to Nathan and Moses.<sup>2</sup> It became one of the largest importing and exporting houses in Van Diemen's Land.<sup>3</sup>

Louis Nathan had taken an interest in the well being of the Jews from the time of his arrival. They were mostly convicts and emancipists.<sup>2</sup> In 1842 a number of young free Jewish settlers arrived who were appalled that there was no place for worship, and a meeting was called in the home of Isaac Friedman, who had a wide background of Jewish knowledge. He became minister of the Sandhurst (Bendigo) congregation in 1858. Subsequently Nathan convened a meeting and it was decided to erect a synagogue.<sup>3</sup>

The foundation stone for the synagogue was laid on Wednesday 9 August 1843 and the consecration was on Friday, 4 July 1845. Although Governor Arthur had granted a block of land for a Jewish Burial Ground in 1828 on the application of Walford, the Governor, Sir John Franklin, had refused to grant land for the building of a synagogue, as he said it would be used for an "Unchristian" institution. So Judah Solomon donated part of his garden for this purpose. The impetus to create a congregation had come from Edward Isaacs, its status from Louis Nathan and its money and land from Judah Solomon.<sup>3</sup>



A tablet, paying tribute to Judah Solomon is in the synagogue and on the opposite wall is a very ornate board inscribed:

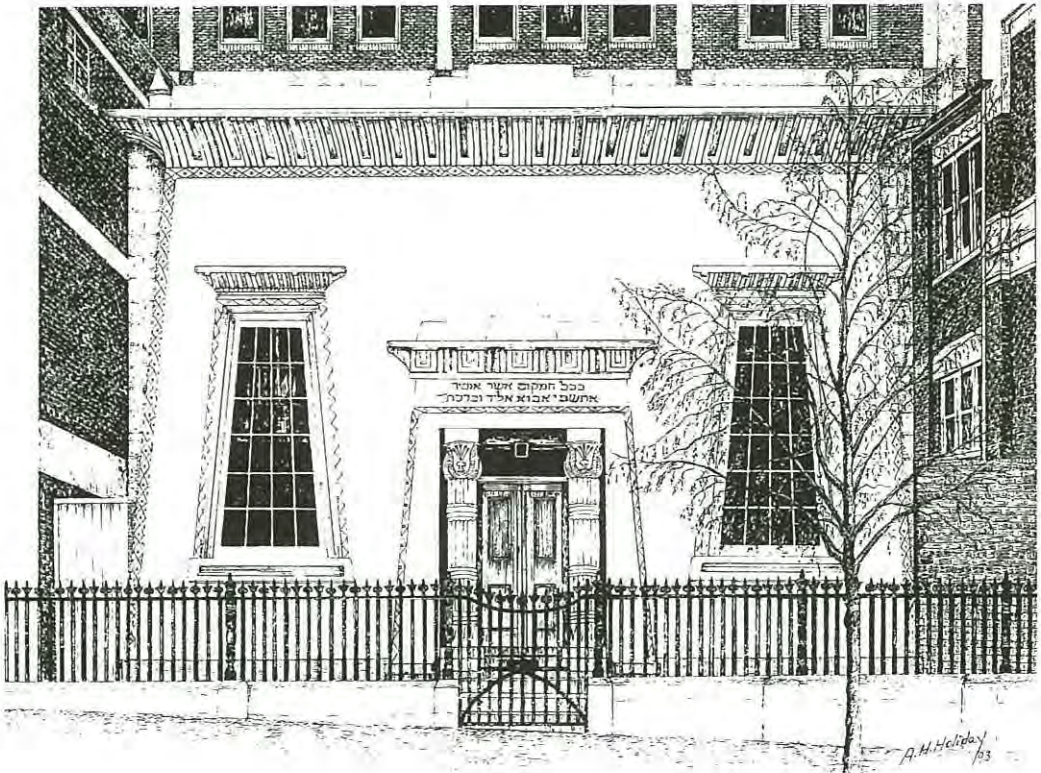
THE FOUNDERS OF THE SYNAGOGUE

President	Louis Nathan
Treasurer	Judah Solomon
Committee:	Messrs. David Moses, Isaac Solomon, Philip Levy, Samuel Moses, Isaac Friedman, Robert Hart.
Trustees:	David Moses, Samuel Moses, Isaac Solomon
Hon Secretary:	Phineas Moss

Sir Moses Montefiore KMT  
Messrs. Moses Son & David  
and numerous other names are listed as contributors  
29th Sivan 5605

Over the entrance to the Synagogue is a meaningful inscription:

"Wherever my name is mentioned there I will come and bless you"



*The Hobart Synagogue, 59 Argyle Street*



The words are symbolic in that they apply to every House of Worship and signify the universal ethics of Judaism.

When the synagogue was erected the Jewish population in Van Diemen's Land is given as 452 souls, but soon dwindled, due to the Goldrush, and to permission for emancipist holders of conditional pardons to settle on the mainland. Still, the synagogue in Hobart struggled on and its doors were kept open for Sabbath services.

Various ministers came to Hobart, but usually stayed only for a comparatively short time and moved to bigger communities. However, there were always lay readers to conduct at least Shabbas services, but the congregation laboured under disabilities by not having an ordained minister, to act as reader, shochet, mohel and teacher. In May 1910, Reverend I. Morris, from Newcastle, was engaged and he remained in Hobart until May 1921. His impact on Hobart could be felt for a long time. While he was in Hobart, quite a number of children were growing up and they got an excellent Jewish education from him. The quality of this education enabled our late president, Clyde Epstein, who passed away in 1983, to act as lay reader whenever needed.<sup>4</sup>

In December 1943, Reverend Ansbacher was engaged. He had arrived in Australia on the infamous *Dunera*, the vessel which deported "enemy aliens" from England to Australia in 1940 and they were interned in various camps. Efforts were soon made to free the internees and Joseph Ansbacher, who is descended from a long line of rabbis in Germany, came to Temple Beth Israel in Melbourne.

In the late 1930s and 1940s several Jewish refugees had found their way to Hobart and efforts were made to find a minister. So Reverend Ansbacher came, but unfortunately he stayed only for one year. He later changed his name to Asher and became senior rabbi of Temple Emanuel in San Francisco, California. He died of cancer in 1990. Whilst in Hobart, he researched the history of the congregation which was published in the *Australian Jewish News* of 9 February 1945, and I quote from it:

It is touching to hear how during these years one man who had arrived fifty years earlier from New Zealand opened the Synagogue every Sabbath and Festival. He had never left Hobart because he would never wish to miss an occasion to open the Shule on a Sabbath morning where only he, and sometimes one other Jew, sat for half an hour to say their prayers, if not in Hebrew, then in English. I wish to pay tribute here to the late Mr. Reuben Benjamin who died a year ago.

By that time, old Mr. Schloss was already living here with his family, and as he was rather knowledgeable he conducted Sabbath services regularly after Reverend Ansbacher had left. There were also a few children, and concern was felt that they should get some Jewish education.

Hans Jacob had arrived in Hobart with his family in 1938 and he had set up Port Huon Fruit Juices, an offshoot of an old established Tasmanian co-operative. He had been invited to join the Board of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation in 1943 and from that moment the newcomers were involved with the running of the congregation.<sup>5</sup>

Another very dynamic refugee, though not a resident in Hobart, was Paul Morawetz. He opened a paint factory in Hobart with the support of the Tasmanian government. Mr. Morawetz worked closely with the Jewish Welfare Society.

Mr. and Mrs. V.A. Coronel and their two daughters had come to Hobart from Melbourne in 1938. Mr. Coronel took up a position with the Public Works Department as an architect. The Coronels immediately took a great interest in the Congregation and it was



not long until Mr. Coronel was elected president. His expertise as an architect was most helpful at all times, as the condition of the synagogue frequently caused concern.

In 1945 the old cemetery in Harrington Street was finally sold to the Education Department. Mr. A.G. Benjamin had been able to negotiate the sale at a price of £1,000.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately Mr. Benjamin, a son of the late R. Benjamin, could not keep up his practical interest in the Hobart Hebrew Congregation and gradually the affairs of the congregation were run by the Epstein brothers, Mr. Coronel and the newcomers.

V.A. Coronel was president for several years, Clyde Epstein vice-president, Hans Jacob worked as treasurer, L Hayes, Fritz Coniston, Stan Kiffer, Leslie Lustig and nearly all the other men were one time or other on the board. Hans Jacob became president in 1951 and most of the time I was secretary.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry was set up in January 1945. The Hobart Hebrew Congregation was a member right from the start. Its first secretary was Paul Morawetz, who was at the same time a delegate for Hobart.

At this inaugural meeting reference was made to the Kimberley project, dealing with the proposed settlement of Jews in the Northern Territory (see *Australian Jewish News*, 26 January 1945). When the then Premier of Tasmania, Mr. Cosgrove, heard about the plan at a Premiers' Conference he took an interest and invited Dr. Steinberg, the proponent of the scheme, to investigate whether a Jewish settlement would be feasible in Tasmania. Dr. Steinberg came to Hobart and had most cordial discussions with representatives of the Tasmanian government and subsequently Critchley Parker of Melbourne made further investigations. Unfortunately Parker went into the wilderness of Port Davey on his own, contrary to all prudent mountaineering principles and he perished. He was an impractical visionary. Whilst lying in his tent, knowing that he might not survive, he wrote an extensive diary, how the area around Port Davey could be developed. Hilary Rubinstein gives a most fitting description of him in "Critchley Parker (1911-42) Australian Martyr for Jewish Refugees", Vol. XI, Part 1 of this *Journal*. Critchley Parker left a will and made a bequest to the Hobart Walking Club, and this made it possible for the Club to publish its annual magazine, the *Tasmanian Tramp* in January 1945, where due credit is given to Critchley Parker.<sup>7</sup>

Many Jews from Central Europe had migrated to Shanghai during the Hitler period, and Australia opened its gates to them. Somehow we heard of a Mr. Warschauer who was a rabbi in Shanghai and wanted to migrate to Australia. Besides being a rabbi he was a qualified teacher for deaf and dumb people and also a trained singer, so it was hoped that if he came to Hobart he might be able to work as a teacher at the Institution for Deaf and Dumb people and devote time to the congregation. After much effort an immigration permit was obtained for him and his wife and he arrived in Hobart in February 1947.<sup>8</sup>

However, things did not work out as hoped and he left soon for Sydney where he was offered a position at the Temple Emanuel. He and his wife had been in Hobart from February 1947 until October 1947. He later changed his name to Warse.

So Hobart was again without a minister and teacher for the children and Mr. Schloss took over and also Fritz Coniston, a very knowledgeable person, assisted. In about 1950 another young minister came to Hobart: he had a similar background to Reverend Ansbacher and had already worked at Temple Beth Israel. But he came to Hobart with the clear understanding that he was coming to an orthodox Synagogue. That was George Walter Ruben, who stayed here for seven years, conducting services and teaching the children.<sup>9</sup>



Financially it was a great struggle for the community, although some support came from mainland synagogues, organised through the Congregational Committee of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. The income of Mr. Ruben was minimal but he was very modest.

In the late 1940s three young men came to Tasmania under the auspices of the Welfare Guardian Society. All three had a great impact. Tom Schlesinger soon showed an interest in congregational activities, stayed in Hobart with a short interlude in Melbourne, and since 1984 has been the president of the congregation. Leslie Lustig had a good Jewish knowledge, so he could assist with divine services. In 1952 he married Adrienne, the older daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Coronel. Reverend Ruben was the marriage celebrant. The Lustigs have four children, but to give the children a chance to grow up in a bigger Jewish community they moved to Melbourne in 1962.

George Sandor, the third "Welfare Guardian Boy", lived in Launceston with the Crawcour family. Through their help his parents and brother came from Europe to Australia, his brother John married Beth, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S Crawcour, and the Sandors are now the stalwarts of the Launceston community.



*Hans Jacob holding the scroll donated by Lady Ezra, at the consecration ceremony on 18 November 1951, together with Rev. George Ruben (L) and Rabbi Hugo Stransky (R)*



A very happy event in Hobart was the consecration of a magnificent Torah Scroll in a silver casing, a donation from Lady Rachel Ezra of Calcutta. On one of his frequent overseas trips, Hans Jacob had spent a Friday evening as guest of Lady Ezra, and she showed him the synagogue with numerous scrolls. Mr. Jacob mentioned that Hobart could do with a scroll, so Lady Ezra graciously said she would donate one. The scroll arrived in Hobart in late 1951 and Rabbi Stransky, from Melbourne, was invited for the consecration on 18 November 1951. So we had two ministers, Rabbi Stransky and Reverend Ruben, for this event. The scroll creates much interest and is always shown with great pride.<sup>10</sup>

Chief Rabbi Brodie visited Australia in 1952. Tasmania was included in the itinerary. The Chief Rabbi and Mrs. Brodie were received with due ceremony in Hobart; a car was placed at their disposal by the Tasmanian Government. A special service was held at the Synagogue and the Rabbi expressed his compliments to Reverend Ruben on the conduct of the service.<sup>11</sup>

One year later, in November 1953, Syd Einfeld, then president of the ECAJ and the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, together with Walter Brand from the Welfare Society Sydney, paid an official visit to Hobart. Mr. Brand promised that the Welfare Society would try to divert some migrants to Tasmania.<sup>12</sup> (During the late 1940s and 1950s we did gain some new members who came for various personal reasons, but not through the help of the Welfare Society.)

The old problem of repairs to the synagogue cropped up again. Costs of repairs were estimated at £2,500, a sum well beyond our means. Whilst investigating how to raise money, it was found that there was no proper Title to the synagogue and Hans Jacob was most anxious as to how this could be rectified.<sup>13</sup> It was suggested that the best way would be if a Bill were passed in Parliament, to clarify the legal position of the congregation and the premier promised his support. Amongst our local members there was at the time no lawyer and in spite of the efforts of Mr. Jacob no lawyer on the mainland could be found to act for us. Eventually, several years later, Mr. W.C. Hodgman QC, and member of Parliament, undertook the legal work.

His Excellency, Mr. Max Nurock, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Israel, and Mrs. Nurock, paid an official visit to Tasmania in February 1955. We had our first taste of a diplomatic visit.<sup>14</sup> The premier hosted a reception at Parliament House and the Lord Mayor a morning tea reception at the Lady Mayoress' Room, whilst the congregation arranged an evening at Wrest Point, and our members and visitors from Launceston had a chance to meet the guests informally.

His Excellency and Mrs. Nurock attended Sabbath services and he gave a most informative address and spoke especially to the children after the religious services. It had been a great pleasure to meet the Nurocks and to have first hand information about the newly established State of Israel.

Since then, nearly every ambassador as well as consuls-general and other representatives have visited Hobart. In such a small and tightly-knit community as Hobart, such visits are a great stimulus and help to keep the community together and better informed, as everyone has the chance to personally meet the guests.

The financial situation became rather precarious. Repairs were essential, the promised subsidy came most irregularly, so Hans Jacob made an Australia-wide appeal for "mainland members" to keep the congregation going.<sup>15</sup>

The Appeal proved most successful, although it did not reach the desired number of 200



"mainland members", but enough money came in to help us along, and for a long time the mainland membership contributions continued.

Late in 1955 Reverend Ruben went for his annual holiday to the mainland, but prior to leaving he asked for permission to endeavour raising funds for the very much needed repairs to the synagogue. Reverend Ruben approached Sir Archie and Lady Michaelis, of Melbourne, who had a family connection with Louis Nathan, the first president of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation. They had already been generous in the past, and now they made substantial donations and asked relatives to do likewise. So with the funds Reverend Ruben collected plus other donated moneys, the most essential repairs could be undertaken.<sup>16</sup>

However, during the same trip Reverend Ruben organised another position for himself, minister at a newly established Temple in Perth, but we had not known it at the time. In March 1956 Reverend Ruben submitted his resignation, to take effect from the end of April, to enable him to officiate at a *Barmitzvah*, and as it happened there was also a *B'rit Milah*, the younger son of Michael and Hatara Hasofer, a newly arrived couple. Since Reverend Ruben left in April 1956, there has not been a resident minister in Hobart, but numerous visiting ministers.

In the meantime more efforts were made to settle the legal affairs of the Congregation. Syd Hartstein, who had come to Hobart with his family as Registrar of the Bankruptcy Court, suggested that an approach be made to Mr. W.C. Hodgman QC, member of Parliament. Mr. Hodgman was most helpful. It was decided the best arrangement would be to establish the congregation as an incorporated body through an Act of Parliament. Mr. Hodgman had got leave from his party to bring the necessary Bill before Parliament, and the premier had given his support. At the same time, Fritz Coniston, together with Syd Hartstein, compiled an up to date set of by-laws, which was placed before the members and was accepted.

However, when the Hobart Hebrew Congregation Bill was ready to be placed before Parliament, one of our members had strong reservations, approached the premier and Chief Secretary, who became reluctant to go ahead with the Bill. The President, Hans Jacob, and the Vice-President, Clyde Epstein, called on the Chief Secretary, Mr. White, and he accepted their explanation. The Bill was passed, Number 77 of 1958.<sup>20</sup> (An Act to provide for the incorporation of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation, for the transfer of certain property to, and the application of certain trust funds held for the purposes of that body, and for purposes incidental thereto. 19th December 1958.)

Subsequently, the newly accepted by-laws and Hobart Hebrew Congregation Act were printed in a small booklet with a most attractive cover, showing a sketch of the synagogue. This sketch had been donated by the noted artist and teacher Jack Koskie, at the time a resident of Hobart with his wife Hanna. Good use was made of the design for Rosh Hashanah and blank cards.

It must be placed on record that Mr. Hodgman did not render an account and acted for the Congregation in an honorary capacity. Likewise no charge was made by the State Government. By the time the legal work was finished and the booklet printed, Hans Jacob and his family had left Hobart to reside in Sydney.

At the Annual General Meeting held on 30 November 1958 Mr. Jacob submitted his "swan song":

Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a pleasure to welcome you all at this AGM, which will be the last one you have to endure under my chairmanship. As you know, my family and I will be leaving



Hobart to take up residence in Sydney. Yet, according to my arrangements I will spend an aggregate of some 10-12 weeks each year in Hobart and I would take it as an honour if my wife and I could remain members of the Congregation without a voice nor vote, just "paying our dues".

I would like to express at the end of my presidency, thanks for the support you have given to Marianne and me during my term of office. If I acted often somewhat rushed, or as others might term it, "Dictatorial", just forgive me. You know my nature and it is hard to go against one's nature. However, believe me if I tell you that I had at all times and at all occasions only the best in my mind and heart for the functioning of Jewish life in general in Hobart.

Clyde Epstein was elected president and he remained in this position until his sudden death in 1983.

Late in 1955, a few months before Reverend Ruben left Hobart, Mr. Michael Hasofer with his wife, Hatara, and young son, arrived from Israel. They soon had another son, Baruch Mordechai, and the *b'rit* of this baby was the last official act of Reverend Ruben. This "boy" is now well known in the Australian Jewish community as Motty Hasofer.

After Reverend Ruben left, Fritz Coniston with Leslie Lustig, conducted the Sabbath services, but gradually Michael Hasofer took over. Michael had a good knowledge of Hebrew. He studied how to conduct divine services and took advice from every visiting rabbi. As a matter of interest, Michael started his working life in Hobart at the zinc works, but he soon showed his brilliance and entered a part-time university course, which became full-time. Now he is Professor Michael Hasofer, professor of mathematics and very well known in orthodox circles.

For the High Holydays in 1956 we were fortunate that a young man offered to come, who was very interested in religious education for children in isolated areas. This young man went to England to further his studies and he is now Rabbi Raymond Apple, of the Great Synagogue, in Sydney.

Several young academic families came to Hobart and made quite an impact on Jewish life. Dr. Arpad and Kitty Got came with their young daughter, after the Hungarian uprising. Kitty was lecturer in the Chemistry Department of the Hobart University, and Arpad, a medical practitioner, had at first to work in Flinders Island, but eventually could set up a surgery in Hobart. Now the Gots live in Armidale, New South Wales.

Dr. Laurie Jacks and his wife, Dianna, were for several years in Hobart and three of their four children were born here. Dr. Jacks built up a great reputation as an obstetrician. They always planned to go on aliyah and in the 1960s spent one year in Israel. After the Six Day War, Dr. Jacks was in the first medical team from Australia to go to Israel and eventually they settled for good in Israel. Unfortunately Laurie passed away at a comparatively young age.

Abraham Harari came with his wife Micki and young daughter, and in January 1963 they had a son. Mr. Harari was lecturer in law at the university, whilst his wife worked as a librarian.

Another newcomer was George Stern, with his wife and three daughters. George was a teacher at the Clarence High School and did some further studies at the University. The Hararis and the Sterns had lived in Israel and, naturally, they soon became friendly with the Hasofers.

There was suddenly the chance to set up religious and Hebrew classes for the children and Michael Hasofer was most efficient in organising the teachers. He also suggested



setting up a children's library and he and Mrs. Harari chose excellent books and the library is still in existence. Of course the congregation paid an honorarium to the teachers. In case of need the congregation gave small loans and I am sure these were helpful to recipients.

In November 1962, Rabbi Prof. L.I. Rabinowitz was the emissary for the United Israel Appeal and he insisted on a visit to Hobart. This visit, and probably the publicity Hobart got through the feature by Rabbi Rabinowitz in the *Australian Jewish News*, showed the way that Jewish life in Hobart could be stimulated.<sup>21</sup>

For Chanukah 1962 the Beth Din sponsored a visit with Rabbi Sholem Gutnick. The rabbi arrived on Friday and was present at the lighting of the candles in the synagogue, in the presence of the children from the religious classes. The rabbi conducted Friday night and Shabbas morning services, with very appropriate sermons. On Saturday night the whole congregation was invited to the home of Erich and Poldi Jacob to meet the rabbi. The rabbi invited questions and we were most impressed with his wise council and tolerant views.

Several weeks later, in February 1963, the first visit of the B'nai B'rith Lodge of Harmony took place. It had been organised by Mr. Frank Durra, who had approached the congregation in November suggesting that he should regularly visit Hobart with several Lodge brethren and their wives, together with a rabbi. From memory I recall that Frank Durra often acted as cantor, which added special dignity to the service. The first rabbi to come with the B'nai B'rith was Rabbi Chaim Gutnick, and this visit too was most successful. The Rabbi conducted services Friday night and Saturday morning, attended religious classes on Sunday, and addressed the lunch-time forum of the United Nations Association on Monday, his topic being "United Nations: the Hope of the World". On Saturday night a social occasion was organised by the ladies of the WIZO and this gave a good chance for social intercourse between visitors and locals.<sup>22</sup>

The B'nai B'rith visits became annual events, lasting until 1982, and proved extremely beneficial to Hobart, and greatly stimulated Jewish life. The original idea had been to alternate between orthodox and liberal rabbis, but it did not always work out in this way. Hobart Jewry had the great pleasure of welcoming several of Melbourne's rabbis: Rabbi S. Gutnick came several times, so did Rabbi Levi. Rabbi Lubofsky, Rabbi Sanger and several other inspiring speakers came, and I do hope the rabbis and visitors enjoyed their "pilgrimage to Hobart" as much as we enjoyed welcoming them.

The foundation stone for the synagogue had been laid on the 13th day of Av, 5603, 8th August 1843, and it was decided to celebrate the 120th anniversary. Rabbi Chaim Gutnick with Reverend A. Adler, from the Elwood Talmud Torah, came as did Mr. L. Lasky, President of the Jewish Board of Deputies of Victoria, with his wife, and Mr. Max Gordon, the historian who later published *Jews in Van Diemen's Land*. He could give an eyewitness account of the festivities of the weekend of the 9th and 10th of August 1963. Special Divine Services were held Friday night and Saturday morning and we arranged a social evening at the CWA (Country Women's Centre) for our visitors.

Several weddings had been celebrated, children had been born and members left for the mainland for various reasons. Five children had been sent to a Jewish Youth Club assisted by the Congregation.

1967 was a tragic year for Hobart with the big bushfires in February. Our good friends, the Conistons, lost their beautiful home with all its contents. They were left with their car and the clothes they had worn. After several months they managed to buy another house in Princes Street, a very central location. The house stood in a big garden with



swimming pool, tennis court and extensive outbuildings. Through the hard work of Fritz it soon became a very comfortable home, eminently suitable for entertaining, indoor or outdoors and has been freely made available to the community. Innumerable functions have been held there and we are most indebted to the Conistons for their hospitality. Unfortunately, Fritz could not enjoy their new home for too long: cancer caught up with him and he passed away in May, 1970. His death was a great loss, not only for his wife Betty, but also for his many friends within the congregation and the general community. Betty, who had always supported Fritz in all his efforts, continues to make her home available whenever required.

A memorial service was held for Fritz in the synagogue and in the minutes of the AGM held on the 20th September 1970 is recorded: "that the Congregation gratefully acknowledges the services rendered by the late Fritz K. Coniston for many years as honorary treasurer, Reader at services and he continued with these activities till shortly before his last illness."

Several months earlier, following the death of Mr. R. Chase, who had asked to be cremated, Mr. Epstein expressed concern about cremation, and it was decided to obtain the opinion of Rabbi Lubofsky and Rabbi Levi so that a generally acceptable solution could be reached. Mr. Epstein stated at the AGM of 20 September 1970 that "As cremation is contrary to the orthodox Jewish Burial Rites, a Chevra Kadisha Service cannot be held in such cases. This would not affect memorial services in memory of the deceased at a later date, either at the synagogue or at home".

In the 1970s, schools became interested in comparative religion and requests were made to the congregation for information about Judaism, and visits to the synagogue. Ferry Fixel was only too happy to oblige. The first school to come along was St. Michael's Collegiate School: the teacher was most appreciative and had the girls write letters of thanks to Ferry. In this way he had feed-back on what was of most interest to them. News about these synagogue visits spread in Hobart; more and more schools came along, and also groups of adult visitors requested to see this historic building. For some sixteen years Ferry was able to take visitors through the synagogue, until his health deteriorated. Now this important public relations work is done by Amelie Rauner.

A number of children had reached school age, and it was suggested that Mrs. Debbi Brown and Miss Peggy Allen should hold classes for them to introduce them into the basics of religious knowledge, Bible and Hebrew. Peggy is not Jewish but has a very thorough all-round religious knowledge and has studied Hebrew. Rabbi S. Gutnick approved and gave Peggy good advice. Debbi Brown, one of our members, had attended Mount Scopus College. She soon stopped teaching but supported the classes in other ways.

Peggy had a special way to make the lessons enjoyable for the kids and they looked forward to them. At all times it was a labour of love for Peggy. For Chanukah, a little party was arranged in the synagogue by Miss Allen and the parents. The children sang the songs they had learned and each child received a small gift from Peggy, and sweets from the congregation. I am sure that Peggy spent more on the children than the small honorarium she received from the congregation.

In later years the annual Chanukah Party became a "Latkes Party" at the home of Betty Coniston, with candle lighting and sweets for all the kids. I am always amazed how many children and adults turn up for this happy event, yet do not come to synagogue.

The B'nai B'rith came for their annual visit from 9-11 March 1973 with Rabbi S. Gutnick and a big number of visitors. By then the Casino had been established at Wrest



Point and this may have been quite a draw card!

In 1975 the B'nai B'rith brought Rabbi Lubofsky for the second time, and an "Ecumenical Brains Trust" was held, to which an invitation had been extended to Reverend Ian Williams, minister of Wesley Church, and his parishioners. Lively discussions took place between Jewish and non-Jewish participants in the spirit of common empathy and tolerance. It was possibly the first time many of the parishioners had ever met a Jew, let alone a rabbi.<sup>23</sup>

The B'nai B'rith visits gave inspiration and stimulus to our sadly depleted community, depleted through migration to the mainland and the death of several members. Our president, Clyde Epstein, referred in several of his annual reports to the very poor attendance even at High Holyday Services, when we specially brought a rabbi to Hobart. Several times minyan was only achieved thanks to visitors and students attending the university here.

In 1974 the synagogue had been listed by the National Trust, so there was the chance to obtain a subsidy for necessary repair work. Mr. Schlesinger ascertained that funds were allocated by the Australian Heritage Commission following application made through the National Trust. Criteria for assistance are the community and architectural value of the building.

The funds of the congregation were greatly helped by donations from B'nai B'rith visitors, and Mr. Epstein had got into the habit of regularly "checking" at Wrest Point on Jewish guests. In this way he obtained quite a few donations, even if the donors did not attend services.

Mr. Epstein was very highly regarded by the management of Wrest Point, so much so that when it became essential to make an expensive repair to the roof of the synagogue, a donation of \$1,500 was received from Wrest Point. An application for a subsidy from the Heritage Commission was approved, and an appeal for funds was launched through the Jewish press. Accordingly, the repairs to the roof could be made.<sup>24</sup>

Migrants from the Soviet Union had started to come to Australia, and we learned from one of our members that relatives of his were at present in the transit camp in Rome and wanted to come to Australia. We were delighted to hear of this chance to get new members and we contacted the Australian Jewish Welfare Society about the financial assistance available to immigrants. The Welfare Society, for its part, were interested in ascertaining the job situation for immigrants, and Rodney Benjamin from the Welfare Society came over. He had learned from the Federal Immigration Department that the Tasmanian Government was anxious to have refugees and migrants settle in Tasmania. The Welfare Society would supply the needed financial assistance, and the Hobart Hebrew Congregation promised to give every moral support.<sup>25</sup>

Eventually the Goberman family, father, mother, aged grandmother and teenage son and daughter arrived and were made most welcome. It was a very delightful family. However, Mr. Goberman and his wife, highly qualified engineers, could not obtain congenial work, and as soon as this was established they decided to move to Melbourne. We were most disappointed. It showed again how difficult it is to find new settlers for Hobart. We are glad to know that the Goberman family soon got well integrated into Melbourne.

B'nai B'rith had their annual summer camp in the hostel at Carlton, near Hobart, and visited the synagogue and afterwards had lunch in Betty's lovely garden. Several weeks later girls from Beth Rivkah College were here and visited the synagogue. About this



time Mr. David Clark regularly attended Sabbath Services, and proved very helpful with various small repair works.

Robert Hanner, a medical student at the Hobart University, with an excellent Jewish education, was keen to foster and spread Jewish life in Tasmania. He managed to locate several interested Jewish families in the northern part of the state. Robert, together with other young people, and the most active support of Betty Coniston, set up an "unofficial Jewish Sports Club". Betty made her home, with the big garden, swimming pool and tennis court, available so the young people, and some not-so-young ones, met there every Sunday for a very happy day and to enjoy Betty's famous home made bread. Robert organised High Holyday Services, and the Clarks gave hospitality to the visiting officiating students and teacher, so that the costs were greatly reduced.<sup>26</sup>

In June 1983, Mr. Epstein passed away after a very short illness. His death ended an epoch in Hobart. The high standing Clyde had enjoyed is reflected in the obituaries. "Watchman" in the *Australian Jewish News* (Melbourne edition) of 24 June 1983

A part of Hobart and Communal life has died with the passing of Clyde Epstein, who had been President of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation since 1959. But Clyde Samuel Epstein, born in Hobart some 80 years ago was far more — he was proud keeper and custodian of Hobart's historic Synagogue, for many years he represented Tasmania on the ECAJ and represented this small but devoted community at Vice Regal, State and Civic functions. . . He called almost daily at the Casino to seek out Jewish guests, and described himself as 'unofficial', but no less enthusiastic, public relations man for Wrest Point and Tasmanian tourism.

Mr. Peter Barnard, Casino Manager (Wrest Point Federal Hotel Casino, Hobart) stated

all his many friends and acquaintances at Wrest Point were saddened to hear of the death of one of our best known and respected local friends, Clyde Epstein . . . I, personally will miss Clyde as a friend and also mentor in things Jewish. Who will remind me when it's time to send New Year cards?

An Extraordinary General Meeting was called for the 24 July. Dr. Sam Ginsberg was nominated president, but he was very reluctant to accept this position, being professionally a very busy person. However, after it was decided to elect two vice-presidents, namely David Clark to look after the religious aspect, and Eric Hayes who would shoulder the responsibility of representing the community to the outside world, Dr. Ginsberg agreed.

In February 1982, the newsletter of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation had come into existence with Sol Beer as editor and strong support from David Clark and Tom Schlesinger. It came out somewhat irregularly, but I am grateful for the information it has provided about events in Hobart, details of which had slipped my memory.

At the AGM of 16 October 1983, Mr. Schlesinger referred to the need for extensive repairs to the Synagogue and on suggestion of Mr. Taylor, president of the National Trust, Tom had approached Mr. Peter Spratt of England, Newton Spratt & Murphy, Davey Street, Hobart, to inspect the synagogue. His verdict was that structurally the synagogue was in good condition but various "cosmetic" repairs were advisable. Mr. Spratt is a very experienced man and was in charge of the reconstruction work at Port Arthur. It was decided to engage Mr. Spratt to prepare a report on the synagogue, to be the basis for our application to the National Estate for a grant.

Tom had been treasurer for three years, but as from now on his time would be fully occupied with organising the restoration work, he suggested that Mr. Stephen Graetzer be appointed treasurer, and today Stephen is still our treasurer.



Events during 1984-85 have been described to our members in the annual report, submitted to the AGM in October 1985. At this meeting Tom was elected president and Miss Amelie Rauner honorary secretary. Both are still in the same position. The following excerpt is taken from the Annual Report.<sup>27</sup>

The outstanding event this year was the Restoration of the Synagogue. The National Trust of Australia had set up on our behalf a Restoration Fund, and donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

To support this Fund, Wrest Point Casino invited long standing friends of the Casino and the Shule to a weekend in Hobart, together with Rabbi and Mrs. John S. Levi from Melbourne, 19-20 October 1984 and we benefited to the tune of \$13,090. Further donations towards the Appeal were received Australia wide and are coming from Jewish and non Jewish sources.

The Appeal is to run for 3 years, starting 23rd July, 1984 and subject to an Annual Audit by the National Trust.

Furthermore we were promised a grant of \$10,000 from the National Estate and this had been paid over to us after completion of the first stage of the Restoration work, which had been carried through in April, May, June 1985.

About 80% of our members were involved physically in firstly clearing out the building prior to the start of the work which, as we had been warned, would be a very dusty affair (3 loads full of accumulated dust and debris were carted away by the builders from under the roof!)

With so many of our members giving of their time and energy to improve the Synagogue it is obvious that they are active members even if divine services are not attended every week.

The Synagogue was in constant use apart from the period when the work was carried through. An innovation is the service, conducted every second Friday in the month at 6.15pm, followed by an Oneg Shabbat and these Friday night services have been extremely well attended.

For Rosh Hashanah the Service was a "do it yourself" affair with Mr. Fixel reading the prayers assisted by Mr. Andrew Wyman and Mr. Gelbart who blew the Shofar. (Mr. and Mrs. Gelbart have only recently come to Hobart for a limited period and it was most fortunate that they came to Shule for the Service, and could help).

After the Erev Rosh Hashanah Service the whole Congregation moved to Mrs. Betty Coniston's for a very pleasant buffet meal, and Maxim Shashani showed slides on Israel.

For Yom Kippur we had as Reader, Mr. Potash from Melbourne, a young student who gave a very pleasant service, supported by Messrs Clark, Beer and another young student, Jeff Katz. Dr Goldsmieth from Launceston attended the Yom Kippur service, whilst a number of our members had gone to Launceston for Rosh Hashanah services.

We are very happy to welcome Maxim, Tali and young Shackel Shoshani in Hobart and we hope to see a lot of them.

As to seating of ladies, it had been agreed at our Board Meeting of 15 November 1984 "that ladies are free to use the gallery if so desired and if services are taken by an Orthodox rabbi who insists on it. Otherwise services to continue as before, and Liberal services only to be held Friday night."

H.E. Yissakhar Ben-Yaacov, Ambassador for Israel and Mrs. Ben-Yaacov paid their first official visit to Tasmania from Monday 29 October to Friday 2 November when the Ambassador read the Hebrew part of the Liberal service and the guests attended the Saturday morning service. On Saturday night a social evening was held at Victoria League House which was extremely well attended.



On request of the Ambassador we invited Mr. and Mrs. Harry Don of 134 Trevor Street, Ulverston, 7315, who had been declared "Righteous Gentiles" by Yad Vashem, and they accepted our invitation.

Mr. and Mrs. J.A. Helleman of 63 North Street, Devonport 7310, who likewise had been declared "Righteous Gentiles" declined our invitation. Mr. Helleman had passed away and his widow did not want to attend.

The Ambassador stressed in his address how Mr. and Mrs. Don had helped Jewish people to survive during the Holocaust, thus endangering their own lives and he would always be at their service should the need arise.

The Ambassador also spoke about the problems of the small Jewish Communities, isolated from the mainstream of Judaism, but by respecting each other the essence of Judaism, LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS YOU LOVE THYSELF can be fulfilled.

The Ambassador and his wife were accompanied by Mrs. Sara Segal, the sister of the Ambassador, and Mrs. Coronel invited the two ladies for a special Morning Tea in her home, to give our ladies the chance to meet the guests and get first hand information about Israel.

Special thanks to Ruth Johnson for Friday Night Services and to Mrs. Betty Coniston who always makes her home available, must be recorded.

For Chanukah a very happy "Latkes Party" was held there, and several Friday night services, in addition to the usual Sunday afternoon sports parties which seem to draw in numerous Jewish people passing through Hobart.

David and Pnina Clark must be specially thanked for their hospitality and for offering accommodation to visitors like Mr. Potash, the Reader for Yom Kippur. They also organised a Shabbaton in a private capacity, 19 to 21 July with visitors from the Yeshiva, Melbourne, which was very successful. It is good to see that the Synagogue is in frequent use and we can meet the inclinations of all our members. Many thanks to all our members who help to keep the Congregation running smoothly.

HEDI FIXEL

Although the members of our congregation have a varied approach to religious services, the unity of the congregation had been preserved by exercising utmost tolerance, and the divine services had been conducted in a "middle of the road" way. However, after the death of Clyde Epstein strong outside influences came to bear on Hobart and tried to impose an entirely different regime. Ferry, together with Curt Ilowski, David Clark and Sol Beer, continued the regular Sabbath services, but feeling themselves somewhat inadequate, accepted offers of help from the Yeshiva, via Robert Hanner. Several rabbis came to Hobart but they did not realise that in such a small community tolerance and tact is essential for survival. The drastic alterations they tried to impose were quite unacceptable to the majority of our long standing members. Their "outreach" approach had quite the opposite result and alienated especially those members whom we had managed to "bring into the fold" through our tolerance.

Although great efforts were made to reconcile the divergent views and to reach a compromise acceptable to all sides, this was not successful and eventually, in December 1990, the congregation split into Reform and Orthodox groups, with the one and only synagogue being used alternately by both sides.



During 1986 Mr. Leslie Caplan, president of the ECAJ and his wife, Sophie, the noted historian, came on an official visit to Hobart. It had been many years since a president of the ECAJ had come to Hobart, although Hobart had always been represented at their annual meetings either by the president or a delegate. We had carefully attended to all correspondence and submitted annual reports and promptly paid the fee.

The personal contact established with the Caplans continues to be of benefit to Hobart to this day. Mrs. Caplan used the visit to interview several of our members about their experiences before coming to Australia, and we are indebted to her for various interesting books. Of course, the social get-together in honour of the Caplans was held at Betty's. I cannot count for how many functions Betty has opened her home, quite apart from the unofficial sports club and the regular Sunday lunches. The Hobart Hebrew Congregation owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Betty for her ever ready co-operation.

Against many odds the Hobart synagogue has been kept open for 150 years, most of the time without a spiritual leader. The Jewish population in Hobart fluctuated greatly. At times there were only very few worshippers to say their prayers on Sabbath. But like the miracle at the time of the Maccabees, when the "Good Oil" lasted just long enough until fresh supplies could be made, there always turned up devoted persons to keep the synagogue open. Special credit must be given to non-Jewish-born spouses, from the very early days of the synagogue right to the present day.

Tolerance was not a feature in the 1840s, but tolerance kept the synagogue alive during the last 50 years. I think tolerance in the congregation started with Reverend Isaak Morris, who was greatly involved in what today would be called ecumenical work. On his departure from Hobart, a letter appeared in the press "to offer a word of praise for his pleasing tolerance towards all sections of the Community ..." (See Anne Andgel, *AJHS Journal* Vol. XI, Part 6). This tolerant attitude may have made him so willing to accept into the Jewish faith genuine applicants, very much in opposition to the prevailing attitude of other synagogues.

And with tolerance exercised from all sides the synagogue can be used by all who wish to worship in it for the next 150 years.

## NOTES

The major source for the early history of Hobart Jewry is *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers 1788-1850* by J.S. Levi and G.F.J. Bergman, 1974. Other useful references include the following issues of the *Journal* of the Australian Jewish Historical Society: Vol. II, Part I, July 1944 "A Century of Hobart Jewry", by Herbert I Wolf; Vol. III, Part V, July 1951 "The History of Hobart Jewry", by Rabbi L M Goldman; Vol. XI, Part 6, June 1993, "The Rev. Rabbi Morris", by Anne Andgel. Also the following publications: *The Jews of Van Diemen's Land*, by Max Gordon, 1965; *The Jews in Australia*, by Hilary Rubinstein, 1991; and, *Edge of the Diaspora*, by Suzanne Rutland, 1987.

- 1 J.S. Levi and G.F.J. Bergman, *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers, 1788-1850*, Adelaide: Rigby, 1974.
- 2 L.D.J. Nathan, "Thirty Eight Presidents", *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol. IX, Part 7, p. 489.
- 3 J.S. Levi and G.F.J. Bergman, G F J, *op cit*, p. 268.
- 4 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Board Meeting Minutes, 7 August 1943.
- 5 *ibid*, March 1943.
- 6 *ibid*, 11 May 1945.



- 7 I.N. Steinberg, *Australia the Unpromised Land*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1948; Leon Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1993; *The Tasmanian Tramp: Annual Magazine of the Hobart Walking Club*, No. 6, December 1945.
- 8 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Board Meeting Minutes 3 February 1947 and Annual General Meeting October 1947.
- 9 Letter to Reverend Ruben, 12 December 1949.
- 10 Tablet in Hobart Synagogue.
- 11 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Annual General Meeting, 15 September 1952 and *Annual Report*.
- 12 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Board Meeting Minutes, 19 November 1953.
- 13 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Annual General Meeting, 20 September 1954 and *Annual Report*.
- 14 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Board Meeting Minutes, 14 September 1955.
- 15 *Australian Jewish News*, 23 December 1955 (refer to extract below in Appendices).
- 16 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Board Meeting Minutes, 9 January 1956.
- 17 *ibid*, 13 March 1956.
- 18 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Annual General Meeting, November 1957.
- 19 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Board Meeting, 20 July 1958.
- 20 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Board Meeting, 9 November 1958.
- 21 *Australian Jewish News*, August 1962 (refer extract below).
- 22 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Board Meeting, 17 March 1963.
- 23 *ibid*, 6 April 1975.
- 24 *ibid*, 26 July 1978 and Annual General Meeting, 24 September 1978.
- 25 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Informal Meeting, 20 November 1978.
- 26 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, Annual General Meeting 12 October 1982 and *Annual Report*.
- 27 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, *Annual Report*, 1984-85.

## APPENDICES

Extract from the Australian Jewish News, 2 December 1955

Article: "Oldest Synagogue in Australia is Dying ... but 200 Jews all over Australia could MAKE IT LIVE" by H. J. Jacob.

"You know that the Hobart Jewish Community is the second oldest in Australia and the oldest Synagogue still stands, how long this will be the case depends now whether 200 generous and thinking Jews are still living in Australia who are prepared to become Members of this old Congregation for the small yearly contribution of £2/2/-.

"If this is the case we can and will live, if not we will be extinct as a Community within six months.

"Now hear the story. Twice over the last 111 years of Hobart's Jewish History a similar position was reached. In decade 1890-1900 through migration of Hobart Jews to the mainland Jewish life became nearly extinct, but through just enough immigration from Eastern Europe caused by Pogroms, life kindled again and the community was built up and gained sufficient strength to survive till the mid 1930s when more or less the same position was reached.

"But here again 'The Oil' lasted just long enough to burn through until victims of Hitler reached the shores of Tasmania to just make such numbers to keep life flickering.

"This has lasted 20 years, but strength is running out again ..."

The article continues by elaborating on the financial plight of the community.



"We know that many a mainland Jewish family hail from our community and we know that many touring mainland Jews derive some pleasure during their holiday and/or business trip from our Services, and to those groups in particular and to all others in general now goes my emergency call."

**"Are there 200 staunch Jews over the whole and wide Australia who could become members of this Congregation for only £2.2.0 per year? ... which includes a seat for the High and Less Holidays and Sabbath in our Synagogue." ...**

"On behalf of Board Hobart Hebrew Congregation,

Yours faithfully,

H. J. Jacob,

President"

Extract from the Australian Jewish News, 31 August 1962

Article: "MOTHER COMMUNITY OF AUST." by Rabbi Prof. L. I. Rabinowitz

"It was at my own insistent request that Hobart, the capital of Tasmania, together with two other small and dying communities, was included in my itinerary.

"The Directorate of the United Israel Appeal, on whose behalf I was visiting Australia, were naturally concerned solely with potential financial returns, and from this point of view my visit to those places was not 'worth it'.

**"... to me, it has always been a source of deep spiritual satisfaction to seek out my scattered brethren, to conduct services where otherwise there would be none, to bring them the message of Judaism and of Israel redeemed.**

"In the other two communities, although both possessed synagogues and in one of them even the financial response was surprisingly good, I had the painful experience of seeing once flourishing communities dying before my eyes.

"Complete assimilation to the extent of abandonment of faith was evident on all sides, intermarriage, with the Jewish parents attending the Church weddings of their children, a commonplace; those left mostly bachelors, spinsters and widows.

"It was after those two depressing experiences that I visited Hobart and spent my last Sabbath there. From one point of view the conditions were similar, and were sufficiently indicated by the fact that the lay leaders of the Roman Catholic community were named Abrahams, of the Anglicans, Solomons, while I even met a Christian Rabinovitch! But on the other hand Jewish life, weak though it is, gave some hope of survival."

Rabbi Rabinowitz continued to identify three differences between Hobart and the other two communities. There were two Israeli lecturers at the University of Tasmania, the enthusiastic devotion of the President, Mr. Clyde Epstein, and the influx of a number of refugees. The article then went on to briefly describe the history of the community with some interesting anecdotes.





*Interior of the  
Hobart synagogue  
(photographs courtesy  
Hobart "Mercury")*





## JEWISH INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

*Philip Mendes*

The disproportionate Jewish contribution to Communist movements throughout Europe, the USA, South Africa and even the Middle East has been extensively documented.<sup>1</sup> Much less is known, however, about Jewish involvement in the Australian Communist movement. Some authors have suggested that Jewish involvement in the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) *per se* was small and insignificant.<sup>2</sup> Others have hinted that the opposite conclusion might well be drawn.<sup>3</sup> My intention here is not to present an empirical case for either viewpoint, but rather to let the Jewish activists themselves shed light on the Australian Jewish Communist experience through the following testimonies.

### LAURIE AARONS

(Laurie Aarons was born in Sydney in 1917. He joined the communist youth movement in 1932 and the CPA in 1937. He was elected to the Central Committee in 1951 and served as National Secretary from 1967 to 1976. He is still a member of the party.)

Speaking for myself, I've never regarded myself as being "Jewish" but as a person of some Jewish genetic inheritance. Jews themselves, so far as I know, would not regard me as Jewish, since my mother wasn't Jewish, though my father was. My father and his sisters, whose parents were Jewish but radical (being members of the Victorian Socialist Party and then the CPA), went to shule but so far as I know this was for community reasons and not religious. And my father was atheist from the time I was born (and indeed before that); and I have never been religious. Therefore, since I'm neither genetically Jewish (though mixed) nor religious, it has never seemed to me that I was Jewish or even Jewish-Australian (except in the sense of being half-Jewish genetically.)

However, it's a bit more complicated than that. I grew up in the thirties, when anti-Jewish prejudices were very strong (much more than today) and at the time of Hitler's rise to power. It's important to understand just how deep and bitter anti-Jewish feeling was and how it pervaded society, percolating down from the top. As an example, read John Buchan's books to see how ignorant, intolerant and hating most members of the British elite were. Therefore, as a communist (which I was before Hitler's coup) I empathised with Jews since they were the target of Hitlerism (and the extreme right in Australia), along with the communists (and there were many Jewish communists, making them doubly oppressed and doubly hated).

Since my name made it obvious that I was Jewish, some of the prejudice rubbed off onto me and I had no intention of evading this by saying "But I'm not Jewish". And being a communist, I both received a double dose of prejudice and also stood by the principles of internationalism (as I do to this day), therefore bitterly opposed racial prejudice (and anti-semitism was the main form of racism in those days, unlike today when it's only one and perhaps not the most virulent). So I did feel myself to be Jewish in that limited sense; Leon Feuchtwanger's historical novels were among my favourite fictional reading, for example.

I was not personally involved with the Jewish community at any time, but in that period I met quite a few Jewish refugees from Nazism (mostly communists or other revolutionaries). My aunt, June Mills, was very active in the Jewish left movement. I met quite a few refugees through her; some were also in the CPA and I met them then. The left was a major advocate of the entry of Jewish and other victims of Nazism; for



example, Wilfred Burchett was active in aiding Jewish people to escape from Germany and indeed his first wife was one of these.

Hilde Andrews is still in the CPA; she and her sister (now deceased) were refugees from either Germany or Austria). Another CPA member is Zara Splayford (née Symonds, from a big Jewish family on the left). Others I knew include Eve Hyman (from Poland), Les Symonds and his wife Judy, Sam Mane, Bernie Rosen, Lou and Ann Levy, Jock and Jeanette Levy, Elsie Docker (née Levy) and Zoscha Sussman from Poland.

### ITIEL BERESON

(Itiel Bereson was born in South Africa in 1927 and came to Australia in 1947. He was a member of the CPA from 1949 to 1951)

I was a student at Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg at the end of the war and I had burning feelings of injustice to my people. I was horrified at the revelations of the Holocaust. I was a very firm Zionist and hated any aspect of colonialism and imperialism and identified more with the socialist Zionist movement than with the Irgun. I sympathised with my people who were subjected to British domination. I transferred my hatred from the immediately defeated Germans (although that remained burning within me) to those who were still murdering my people. It had nothing to do with isms, although I did join a movement called the World Federation Movement. Before I left South Africa, I did have a police file, even though I was not a member of any party other than the Zionist movement. But I was a World Federationist and a political creature and I attended a number of meetings which deprecated the then Smuts Government's acquiescence of violence towards the Africans. When I left South Africa and applied for a passport, I was shocked to find that the police at the passport office knew of my attitudes and attendances at political meetings (for example: the strike of the Africans around Benoni for extra money). They thought that I was a member of the Communist Party.

It was with that background that I turned up to the University of Melbourne in 1948. My own interest was the question of the State of Israel. At the university, I got involved with visiting speakers and had an altercation with Mr Menzies. I had tremendous fights with both the Left and the Right in Jewish circles. I could not associate with the Left at that stage because of Stalin's book on the national question (I felt the Jews were more than a people, they deserved nationhood), although I had an affinity with the movement and supported its stand on the liberation of the Asian and African peoples from British imperialist domination. I had equal arguments with the Danglowists, the Anglophiles who couldn't stomach the Stern Gang and the Irgun, and who were Australia First Jews.

I joined the Labour Club and at that stage I didn't realise the club was an organ of the CPA. CPA policy was anti-Zionist, but pro-establishment of the Jewish state. Another issue for me was freedom for the South African blacks. My own experiences as a Jew made it easy to identify with their sufferings. The apartheid laws were similar to Hitler's anti-Jewish laws. Once I spoke at the Public Lecture Theatre to an audience of 700 people on South Africa. But, the CPA was not interested in apartheid. Malaya, the Menzies CPA Bill and industrial-based issues were the predominant areas of discussion and action.

In 1949, I was approached to join the party. I said that I was a Zionist and that this contradicted the National Question. But, my recruiter assured me that pragmatism was of the essence and that they had no argument with my views. To my amazement, I found that all my associates had been CPA members. I had to be a secret member because my parents saw Communism as the antithesis of Judaism and I didn't want to hurt them.



I had no specific association with leading members or with youth members of the Jewish Council. My main concern was Israel which I visited in 1950, staying till 1951. Then Slansky happened and I began to realise that my Zionism did matter and the National Question did matter and I could not square my conscience in remaining a member of the party, although I felt very deeply for its cause in its world context. I decided then that I was a member of Mapam which allowed me to identify myself in terms of Israeli politics.

It was not political theory that brought me to the CPA. It was my Jewishness and my reaction to the callousness of alleged liberators of European Jewry and their hypocrisy that made me throw my force behind those who I felt were equally concerned for the underprivileged masses of the world and who I hoped would have the abiding sympathy and tolerance for the travails of my people as I had for all the other peoples who were oppressed.

### **SHERYL BERKOVICH**

(Sheryl Berkovich was born in London in 1956 and came to Australia in 1983. She joined the CPA in 1984 and has been a member of the CPA State Committee for the last 4 years)

On my mother's side of the family, a lot of her cousins had been in the British Communist Party and left after the Czech events in 1968. When I got married in 1976, my husband's family had been Communists and involved in the anti-fascist opposition to Mosley. So from being born until my early twenties, I was always surrounded by Jewish Communists or ex-Communists.

In Australia, I became involved in PND and met people from the CPA then and joined the CPA a few months after the Taft group left. I've done party work in the gay movement and the peace movement. I've worked as a journalist with *Tribune* for one year and was Victorian State Organiser in 1989. I also organised the CPA's Women's Collective.

Since I joined the CPA, I have realised that there were a lot of Jewish people involved in the past and most seemed to have left. The Jewish people that I know that were around and the few that are left now have talked about it. It gives the impression of a much more structured Jewish involvement in the past. It's hard to know because that sort of thing is often myth. Nowadays, there are very few Jewish people.

I've had no Jewish friends here until recently. I don't really live amongst the Jewish community so in that sense I have more of a CPA identity than a Jewish identity, although from a personal point of view, I still have a Jewish identity. I was involved in the Jewish feminist movement in England and was involved in a Jewish lesbian group in Melbourne, which got together after the Gay and Lesbian Conference in 1984-85. It was a discussion group of about 7 or 8 people, which fell apart because people couldn't agree about Israel.

I haven't experienced any overt anti-semitism in the party. A few times I've heard people say they can't imagine why Jews are doing what they're doing in Israel after their suffering in the war. The CPA has been saying for a long time two states: Israel and Palestine. The CPA doesn't have a Zionist position as some people say, but it's not virulently anti-Zionist.

### **MANNY BIEDERBERG**

(Manny Biederberg was born in Galicia in 1915 and came to Australia in 1938. He joined the CPA in 1941 and left to join the Socialist Party of Australia in 1971)



I was born in 1915 in Galicia. I came from an assimilated and wealthy Jewish family. My oldest brother was a revolutionary who took part in the Bolshevik Revolution. He revolutionised the whole family. They were rich, bourgeois Jewish communists.

By the time I matriculated, there was a *numerus clausus* restricting Jewish entry to university. So I went to Belgium and studied there. I left Poland in 1938 when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. There was an outcry from the Polish people to invade Czechoslovakia from the East and I was mobilised as a young officer and that speeded up my departure. My father gave me 500 pounds sterling and I arrived in Australia as an immigrant with my young wife. We had no friends or relatives here.

I had done a course as a surveyor in Poland assessing forests and I found a job with Australian Paper Mills in the bush. I had to ride big horses and lasted there for two and a half months. It was the most informative school about Australia -working with bushmen. Some took part in the 1928-29 timber strike. They called me a 'Reffo Jew Bastard', but I was accepted.

I joined the CPA the same time as Bernie Taft in 1941. St. Kilda, where we lived, had a few Jews who joined the CPA. I became Secretary of the St. Kilda branch. The mainstream of Jewish communists lived on the other side of the Yarra. There was the Gezard in Canning Street which had up to 100 members and a Yiddish-speaking branch. Most of them were tailors who worked for Jewish manufacturers in Flinders Lane and spoke no English. Ralph Gibson was a sort of rabbi to them.

In 1968, some of the leading members of the CPA came out openly in support alongside very reactionary people, even in platforms alongside Santamaria. From then on, I mistrusted the leadership in the party who expressed views that were anti-Marxist. I joined the Socialist Party in 1970-71 and remain a member.

Jews were not disproportionately involved in the CPA. By 1941, out of 30,000 Jews in Australia, there might have been 100 Jewish party members. Jewish activists included David Aronson, Olga Silver, Sol Gotlib (whose father was one of the oldest communists in Melbourne) and Sam Saffir. The Jewish community contributed a lot of financial support to the party. Sam Brilliant and Samuel Wynn used to give donations to the party. The Kadimah was greatly influenced by people like Pearl, Zemel and Hyam Brezniak. They were the hub of Jewish Yiddish intellectualism.

Broader organisations grew out of the Jewish communists such as the Jewish Progressive Centre. The leadership of the Progressive Centre were new arrivals who didn't want to involve themselves openly politically because there were already dossiers on people like myself and Saul Factor. So, they stayed outside the party, even though most of them had been party members in Poland. They were craving something that for centuries existed in Poland, being steeped in Yiddish literature and tradition. They still had the mentality of the Jew living in the ghetto atmosphere of Poland and were not ready for the freedom of Australia.

We were quite a big group and would have meetings of 60/70 people. We were linked with the Communist Party of Israel and invited Rakah delegates to Melbourne (one Jew and two Arabs) in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The CPA never openly opposed the philosophy of Zionism. Zionism was originally founded as a reactionary movement in Europe. The CPA was opposed to Israel because of the stand it took after the 1948 War in relation to the Arabs, not those reactionary Arabs who were organised by British imperialism. The Jewish comrades opposed (particularly after Ben-Gurion died) the policies of Golda Meir and the terrible



persecution of Arabs. We were not opposed to the State of Israel *per se*. We were in favour of Israel and were the first ones to collect money for Israel at the Kadimah after the foundation of Israel in 1948.

The first time Soviet anti-semitism became obvious was when the Kichko book came out. We didn't come out early enough with a clear statement saying that the Doctors and the Jewish writers were innocent. It was difficult because it was outside the general party movement which was based on the trade unions and the working class. The Australian party members were not able to comprehend the Doctors Plot and it was quite possible that they thought the USSR could do no wrong. There was never a struggle between the Jewish party members and the general party membership on that basis.<sup>4</sup>

I was once asked to speak to the Jewish Council by Joseph Redapple. I was involved in industry and they wanted me to give my view as a Jew and a Communist working in industry during the war. They knew that Waten and Gust and Factor were CPA members, but we were never told to carry the ideological part of the CPA into the Council. We understood that that would only do harm.

### SIMON BRAND (PSEUDONYM)

(Simon was born in London in 1934 and migrated to Australia in 1949. He joined the CPA in about 1952 and resigned in 1984.)

I was born in Hackney in the East End of London and was barmitzvah at the Heathfield Park Synagogue in Willesden Green. On arrival in Australia in 1949, my family settled in Sydney initially where I went to work as a printing apprentice. My early background as a blue collar worker separated me off from most of my Jewish friends at the time who tended to be from mercantile or professional backgrounds. I was exposed from the start (to fairly atypical for a Jew) experiences, namely working for a boss and learning to swear convincingly.

My foreman was a former member of the Industrial Workers of the World. He pressed uplifting books onto me and one of the first of these I read was *The Socialist Sixth of the World* by Dr Hewlett Johnson, known as the Red Dean of Canterbury. It was a very Stalinist book, but nevertheless I found some of its arguments, especially about war and poverty, fairly persuasive.

As most other Jews can claim, large numbers of my family disappeared during the Holocaust. This made a very powerful impression on me and led to the precursor of my political attitudes, militant atheism. I'd go along to Jewish functions in my mid-teens and start arguments about God and religion which I saw as nonsense. Thanks to my IWW foreman, I read almost everything R.G. Ingersoll [the nineteenth-century American agnostic] ever wrote.

I got to meet people who were CPA members. There was one guy of Jewish background: Bernie Rosen. He'd come around to factories in our area once a week selling *Tribune*. The first overtly political function I attended was a Saturday night dance of the Eureka Youth League which hired a hall at the Ironworkers building in George St, Sydney. I joined the EYL which was the junior arm of the CPA. It was my horror and initially my disbelief at what happened to Jews and others in the Holocaust that pushed me in the CPA'S direction. A number of other Jewish people were in the EYL, including Harry Stein, later to become a *Tribune* journalist. I knew one person who joined the EYL because he found Jewish organisations too small-minded and petty. His parents didn't object until they found out that the EYL wasn't a Jewish organisation; they withdrew him quickly.



I joined the CPA about two years later, the Bondi branch. It had about three or four Polish Jews on its books. A number of CPA Jews were refugees from Europe including concentration camp survivors who couldn't adjust to mainstream modes of thinking after their experiences.

We used to go out doorknocking, selling *Tribune* and taking part in election campaigns for CPA candidates. I once spoke in public in Paddington where the CPA candidate was Bill Brown who regularly scored 3000-4000 votes. I was addressing a public meeting for Bill outside a pub and someone threw a cabbage at me. He missed. I also used to do occasional book and film reviews for *Tribune* and published articles in the party's theoretical journal, the *Communist Review*. I also worked on the EYL's periodical, *Challenge*.

I went overseas in 1964 and worked as a journalist and sub-editor in London. I visited Poland in 1965 as a tourist and ended up working as a journalist in Warsaw for eight years. There is anti-semitism in Poland as in all European countries, but what I didn't expect was that anti-semitism would be accepted as just another point of view, not regarded as a form of barbarism as it is elsewhere. Most Poles are not anti-semites, but are prepared to tolerate anti-Semitic views. I don't see anti-semitism as a Polish monopoly. I had a lot of Catholic friends whose families had suffered grievously at the hands of the Nazis during the war. I don't believe in an exclusivity of Jewish suffering.

Jews were respected in the CPA and there was no overt anti-semitic feeling; my gut feeling is that there were a fair number of Jews in the organisation, but not a disproportionate number. In Britain and the USA, a very high number of Jews were involved in Communist politics in the 1930s and 1940s. There was a very large Jewish working class there, especially in England. An uncle of mine was a member of the Communist Party's Unity Theatre in London in the 1930s and suffered a cut hand in the Battle of Cable Street.

The CPA was never hostile to Israel as such. It was always hostile to Zionism as a form of nationalism. Nationalism and socialism were seen as mutually exclusive. It was only in later years, partly through the actions or the perceived actions of the Israeli Government, that a note of identifiable anti-semitism crept into left-wing politics. Earlier, Jews were regarded as martyr heroes in the CPA, but this image faded due to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. In the highly simplified view of the world that the Australian Left has in which everything is seen in black and white terms (yay & boo), over the last few years Israel has been seen as a boo nation, rather than a yay nation.

Soviet anti-semitism was denied by a number of Jews later on in the Socialist Party of Australia. They saw such allegations or at least, openly discussing them as putting weapons in the hands of the class enemy.

The Jewish Council was seen as a Communist Front organisation with some justice, but so what? Numbers of Communists were involved in it, but not all were party members. Besides, since when has it been reprehensible to want to heal the world? Naive, perhaps, give the obvious power of selfishness, but never reprehensible.

### **ZELDA D'APRANO**

(Zelda D'Aprano was born in Melbourne in 1928 and joined the CPA in 1950. She resigned from the party in 1971. She was also one of the founders of the Women's Action Committee in 1970 which led to the formation of the Women's Liberation Movement in 1971)

Through my mother's influence I grew up with a very strong feeling as regards being concerned for humanity and I genuinely believed (witnessing all the injustices around



us day after day) and in the world at large, that Socialism was the answer to the problems of the world. And, although in my young life I was adamant that I would never be involved in politics, my own experience of poverty and insecurity drove me into the Communist Party, because I at that stage believed that the CPA was the only vehicle through which my idea of Socialism could possibly be established.

However, when I started to acknowledge my experiences as a woman and the problems of women as such, I became very disenchanted with the CPA. The unhappiness of women was never even seen as an issue in the CPA. In fact, any problems associated with living, apart from economics, were considered to be private and, therefore, had nothing to do with politics.

I started to look at the total male dominance of the CPA and their total lack of recognition of anything women ever did. I saw their exploitation within the CPA, I saw the sexism of the Communist men and their oppression of their women. And the superficial approach, the denial by the CPA towards all the suffering that was going on in our society, an obliteration of this reality for the sole purpose of the recognition of economics. Added to that was my reluctance to accept more of the male wheeling and dealing. I wasn't prepared to overlook the games that men were playing, the insincerity, the opportunism, the go-getting, the ambition, everything else that I had seen over the years and refused to question deeply because I felt: "What else is there?" So I kept quiet and put up with it even though there was so much that rankled within me. And, of course, the more I got involved in the women's struggle, the more insincere the whole CPA was becoming and ultimately through my own experience, I had to accept that they were a party of expediency and often untruths, a total cover-up for their male games.

I don't think Jews were disproportionately involved in the CPA. There were different periods and perhaps during each different period the situation varied. In my mother's time, she was involved in an organisation called the Gezerd and that was a left-wing Jewish group. They were part of the Jewish community. From when I joined the CPA (round about 1950), I was not part of the Jewish community. I was in the CPA, but I doubt that I could say I was part of the communist community. I don't think that for the majority of CPA members, they had a community. You went to your meetings and had a sense of belonging to this amorphous group, but that didn't mean we were friends. I could count the people I considered my friends on one hand and most of my fingers would be vacant.

I would say that my mother definitely transferred her allegiance (not from the synagogue) but from the basis of the Jewish religion to Communism in a religious sense. Mum was more inclined to be religious apart from the Jewish rituals. She had a very strong feeling about the Ten Commandments. Those commandments concerning truth and honesty and not stealing or killing and caring for others as you would for yourself; that sort of religion was my mother's religion. And she came to hate the hypocrisy that she witnessed about her amongst the religious Jews. She wasn't looking at their performance of the rituals or their attendance at synagogue, she was looking at how they treated other human beings and this to her was the religion. And, therefore, when she reached a stage where she felt that there was no way that the Jewish religion was ever going to bring into practice her ideals, then she just transferred her allegiance to the cause of Communism, but it didn't alter her or her beliefs in any way whatsoever, except that she became bitterly anti-religious.

My daughter had her early childhood in very close relationship with my mother and she understands Yiddish. And when a debate with several party members was taking place when my daughter was fourteen years old and I argued that being a Jew was more than



just being religious, they refused to accept this argument and the fact that to me, I had grown up with Jewish language and culture. They weren't prepared to accept my argument that they're two of the main basics that go towards making a person aware of their Jewishness and they turned around to Leonie and asked her having spent so much time with her grandmother: Would she say there is a definite Jewishness in her grandmother's home? And without hesitation, she said: Yes. The first generation Australian of any nationality who grows up with their parent's language (in almost every case) can only respond emotionally on a deep plane to this language. And that remains with you for life. So, growing up with the Jewish language, that became my emotive response language.

Despite my feeling of Jewishness, I have never been part of the Jewish community. The main reason was that I was from the working class and I could only ever see myself as being of the working class because I didn't believe in the exploitation of one human being by others and this is something that kept me apart from the majority of Jews in the CPA. Many CPA Jews were working class, but the majority of CPA Jews were middle class, ambitious; they needed status and wealth and I always felt there was something wrong when you can on the one hand advocate a society free from exploitation and on the other hand you are an exploiter yourself making the best of the capitalist system whilst donating money to the CPA which the CPA was glad to take irrespective of how it was made. I was unhappy being with these people. Perhaps if they had established industries or businesses where instead of exploiting the workers, they had established workers' control and profit sharing and enabled people to be part of the decision-making process, to show an example of how it can be done, I have no doubt that I would have had the greatest respect for them.

Being a party of expediency, those sorts of things didn't matter and many of these middle class people were highly regarded in the CPA and there was an elite in the CPA and many of these middle class Jews were part of this elite. And, here I am with all my ideals, one of the exploited. How could Jewishness possibly overcome this? I had nothing in common with them. At times, I even worked for Jewish employers in the rag trade as a machinist. And, of course, I was exploited by them. And I can think of three other Jewish working class women who also had nothing in common with the middle class Jews in the party. We all married non-Jews, but that doesn't take away our Jewishness. I have never hidden the fact that I'm a Jew, and as long as Jews are persecuted, then I will be Jewish.

Originally, the CPA was not hostile to Zionism and was in favour of the establishment of the State of Israel. What happened was that they eventually became anti-Zionist when witnessing the way the Israelis dealt with the Arab people.

The majority of ordinary Jewish members didn't know whether there was anti-semitism in the Soviet Union and would have disbelieved it if they had been told so by outsiders. They would have said: They're lying. The leaders of the CPA and the Jews who were in high positions must have known and I seriously believed that they covered up.

### LEWIS LEVY

(Lewis Levy was born in London in 1916 and came to Australia with his family in 1928. He has spent all his adult life as a Marxist and a Communist)

My parents were born and bred in London's East End, within the sound of Bow Bells and they took a Cockney pride in their origins. My father had soldiered through the 1914-18 War unscathed (he was ninety-two when he died) and though he was assured, on the highest authority that he had fought for England, a land 'fit for heroes', either he



had not been sufficiently heroic or somehow the 'highest authority' had erred. The only skill he acquired from his army service was driving (he was in Army Transport) and in civvy street he eked out a precarious living driving a London taxi.

I don't know precisely why he decided to uproot himself and take his wife and three children to Australia. It could have been that he imagined being poor in Sydney was preferable to being poor in London or that his children would have greater opportunities than London offered, or it could have been the blandishments of one of his brothers. I think it was the latter, because he was supposed to meet us on our arrival.

In the event there was no uncle with home and furnishings and a job for my father when we arrived. There was nobody. In the end the Salvation Army took pity on us and installed us in the People's Palace.

We naturally gravitated to a tenement in the working class suburb of Paddington. I stayed at Paddington Junior Technical School until sixth class, which was as far as their syllabus could go. To take my education further, I sat for and won a scholarship to Sydney Technical School, then situated in Albion Street, Darlinghurst.

My memory of that school is hazy, but I do remember the interminable playground fights, and the reasons for them. They were twofold: I was identified as a Jew and I wore the wrong clothes. The mystery of Jewishness still intrigues me, for we weren't practising Jews, whatever our surname implied. When we were still living in London, my parents paid a small sum (I think it would have been sixpence, or thereabouts) to have the local rabbi tutor me and my brother once a week in the rudiments of the faith. I don't think it was their piety; more probably it was the accepted thing to do. But, whatever the motive may have been, rabbinical scholars we were not. We truanted and headed for the nearest canal and watched the laden barges glide past.

My first job came from the efforts of my sister, two years m;y senior, who worked as a machinist in a clothing factory. I graduated from general rouseabout, climbing under sewing machines to repair broken leather belts and flick them back onto the whirling shafts without stopping the machines; to seam presser, welding a fifteen pounds electric flat iron, to finally learning the trade of tailor's cutter.

My sister, my brother and I joined the Communist Party and my sister and I became members of the Clothing Trades Union, an organisation unbelievably conservative. Though we strived mightily, our most militant achievement over some few years was to force the union into marching in the annual May Day procession.

I was not able to get a job in Melbourne in my trade, but I do not think that I was such a notorious radical that employers feared me. What was most probable was that my unemployment was the product of the depressed economy of 1939. I had made contact with Ralph Gibson, then the C.P. State Secretary, who suggested that I could work for the party, and this I did with alacrity. I felt honoured to be involved so directly in the class struggle even though all the party could offer me was thirty shillings a week. I had a general brief to raise funds for the party from Jewish Left and liberal supporters, speak at factory gate meetings and, generally, do whatever I could to encourage the Jewish community to participate in the anti-fascist struggle. This latter I did by becoming involved in a Jewish cultural organisation, the Kadimah, located in Carlton, liberal-leftist in its political orientation, in which I formed a theatre group. The Kadimah enjoyed a very wide support particularly among those Jews who had not moved from the wrong side of the tracks to St. Kilda, the goal of the upwardly mobile. I remember two plays which enjoyed a wide audience, both of which I had been associated with in Sydney, Zangwill's *The Melting Pot* and *Israel in the Kitchen*.



There were two people whose friendship I acquired in my late teens to whom I shall remain eternally grateful. One was Syd Mostyn, a gentle man, a bootmaker. Mostyn's gentleness was in stark contrast to the woman he lived with. Bella Weiner was (and still is) the most remarkable woman I have ever known. She was not just dynamic, she was of its very concentrated, triple distilled essence. She had fled Poland because of that country's anti-semitism. There she had been a member of the Bund, a Jewish Social Democratic Party, but when I met her she was a Communist.

It seemed to me that she never had the depth of knowledge of Socialist theory as had Mostyn, for she usually deferred to his view in matters of theory, but she was a political creature par excellence. She knew everybody in the Sydney Jewish community, their political views and their likely contribution to any particular cause.

If Bella did not see herself as the Lenin of the Australian revolution she most certainly considered herself its Krupskaya [Lenin's wife – Ed.]. I saw her not only in that role but as our Rosa Luxemburg and La Passionara. She enveloped us in her fervency. The fire did not just burn in her belly, it raged. She seemed to glow with a special kind of incandescence. Weiner was irresistible.

Mostyn and Weiner were instrumental in forming a Jewish branch of the Communist party which included my sister Elsie, my brother Jock and the two Hyman brothers, Bizzy and Buzzy, and me. It was from this group that emerged the idea that we should form a Jewish Youth Theatre.

We wanted to destroy the stereotype of the Jew as wealthy, a merchant, entombed in the Old Testament and the synagogue and show them as working people, struggling for a livelihood whose circumstance tied them to the working class, and whose emancipation was inextricably linked with a radical and militant political party. We sought to be a rallying point, a meeting ground for those whose interest in theatre could be extended to a critical examination of the social and political ideas of the playwright.

One of the problems was the paucity of translated Jewish dramatic literature. We played and read Shalom Aleichem, Peretz and Israel Zangwill, but there just was not enough to exclusively occupy a theatre group determined to perform at least four plays every year. We were thus driven to widen our choices and this we did by selecting plays which could inspire an audience to the adoption of a socially critical view.

Our first theatre was rented on the first floor in Macquarie Place and there enthusiasm, like faith, moved mountains. Timber was scrounged and under the guidance of a carpenter with a touch of genius, we built a stage, sewed curtains and even made our own spotlights.

Somehow Bella had conjured up some chairs, this trade union gave us some paper, that trade union the use of a Gestetner — and the Jewish Youth Theatre was born. For some reason (I think because I was more studious, or, more probably, because no one else was willing) I became the producer. Unlike Lawrence of Arabia I had but two pillars of wisdom, Stanislawski's *An Actor Prepares* and Namirevitch-Danchenko's *My Life in Art* and between us we produced Maxim Gorki's *Lower Depths*, Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Green's *Hymn to the Rising Sun* and a host of interesting and provocative plays.

We created a sizeable audience, both Jewish and non-Jewish, and a group of enthusiastic participants who took the aims and objects of the Jewish Youth Theatre seriously. The sharing of a common purpose seemed to forge personal links of uncommon strength. The Jewish Youth Theatre years were exciting and stimulating. There was the constant challenge of creating a performance. There was always the stimulation of ideas, the



discussions, the friendships, the music with Syd Mostyn. But like so much else, the theatre became a victim of Hitlerism. In 1940 the men (and I was one) were called up for military service, and the women into essential industries or into military support auxiliaries. The audience dwindled.

The CPA never at any time required its members to suppress their Jewish identity. Jews were seen to be a persecuted national minority (urbanised Aborigines if you like) who were basically victims of capitalism.

Jewish Communists were strongly opposed to Zionism which they saw as essentially reactionary, the ideology of the orthodox Jewish community leadership, an ideology which advocated flight to a distant homeland, counter to the interests of its indigenous population, instead of fighting for social justice in one's own land, or the land in which you had settled.

I think Zionism as ideology was the main target of CPA opposition. Post-1945 [*sic*] opposition to Israel was based on its perceived role as a client state of the United States and its attitude to its non-Jewish population.

We were never aware of Soviet anti-semitism, except for the denigration of Jewish doctors by Stalin. It is difficult for me to precisely define my own views. Some were persuaded by J.D. Blake that somehow Jewish doctors were anti-Soviet, others (like me) put it to one side because they were more pre-occupied with other issues, but it was (and is) a festering sore that was too easily glossed over, though it should be noted that a few years ago Blake made a public apology for the position he then took. I am not aware that any other contemporary leader of the CPA publicly identified with Blake.

CPA Jews most certainly did influence their children by discussing and justifying their own attitudes and social values, and my wife and I participated in that process. We saw ourselves as atheists and saw Jewishness more as a cultural than a religious phenomenon and tried to separate the two elements - we fully accepted Marx's position on religion.

#### WERNER LOWENSTEIN

(Werner Lowenstein was born in Germany in 1922 and came to Australia in 1939 as one of the 'Dunera Boys'. He joined the CPA in 1945 and resigned in 1968. He was Vice-President of the Miscellaneous Workers Union and remains active in the Peace Movement)

I was born in Berlin in 1922. My father was an orthopaedic surgeon who'd won the Iron Cross in the First World War. We celebrated Jewish festivals and I was brought up in a liberal Jewish family. I had a barmitzvah and went to a German *gymnasium*, a high school with a humanistic stream. I was banned from school in 4th form and then spent one year in a Jewish technical school where I learnt mechanical drawing. Then, *Kristallnacht* happened and my dad was sent to Oranienburg Concentration Camp for three months. Until then, he believed nothing would happen to him. My eldest brother had already left for Argentina.

There was an English organisation called Movement for the Care of Children. Tens of thousands of children were sent to England unaccompanied and placed in homes, farms, et cetera. So in April 1939 I was put on a train. Mum and dad said goodbye to me at the Berlin station. I never saw them again. They joined my brother in Argentina, but I was never able to visit them. I had an aunt in England who arranged for me to be put on this list. I was put on a ship in Hamburg and landed in Southampton and went by train to London. My aunt had found me a sponsor. He was Elliott Cohen, a converted Jew who owned Selfridges in London. I was sent to a town called Newbury in Berkshire to work on a farm as a farm labourer. I learnt how to milk cows, et cetera.



War broke out in September. All enemy aliens were classified A, B and C from most dangerous to no danger. They made me a B who would be interned if things got dicey. After the German occupation of France, two burly cops came to the door and said: Pack your suitcases, we've got to take you, it will only be a couple of days. They took me to a prison cell in Newbury, then we were sent to the Reading Community Hall and then to an internment camp near Liverpool.

One morning roll call, we were told we were going to Canada. We went by train to the dockside and there was a ship there and as soon as we went up the gangplank, it was on. There was soldiers with bayonets. They took our jewellery, money, passports, et cetera. It was terribly overcrowded. It was supposed to be room for 1500 troops and there was 2600 of us. It was terribly unsanitary; we were badly treated, we were beaten. They were told we were German parachutists. Two days out of Liverpool, we were torpedoed. The U Boat captain who torpedoed us later wrote a book. He saw our German papers in the water and thought we were POWs so ceased his attack.

We ended up in an internment camp at Hay in New South Wales. The Menzies Government were told by the British Home Office that we weren't POWs, but Austrian/German Jews and anti-fascists. The English sent over a Major Layton who had the power to either send people back or release them in England, but not to be released in Australia. The only way I could get out was to join the British Army. I was sent to a camp in South Australia near Renmark on the Murray River. We were put to work building barbed wire entanglements. Then Curtin got elected and all of a sudden we could join the Australian Army. We were sent fruit picking to Shepparton where I was billeted with a nice family from Eretz Israel called Snyder. I served four years in the army in a Labor Company.

I became a bit anti-semitic during the war when we were still in internment camp. We had visits from rabbis and the Jewish Welfare Society and they said the best thing you can do for the Australian war effort is to stay behind barbed wire. We were furious with them and practically chased them out of the camp. The Jewish community in Melbourne was run by the Anglo-Saxon Jews and they had this fear that if 2000 more Jews were let out here it would cause anti-semitism.

I met a number of German Communists (Jewish and non-Jewish). They started organisations called Free German Youth and Free Austria. I had contact with them and I was always inclined to the Left. I used to attend dances at Australia/Soviet House in Flinders Lane. It was only when I met Wendy, my wife, that I got organised. Her family were all Fabian Socialists and Communists. She'd been in the Eureka Youth League (EYL) and we arranged that we would join the CPA together on the same day when she turned 18 years old in 1945.

There were a number of Jewish people in the CPA. But I was so happy to be an Australian, I didn't feel the need to mix with Jewish people. Most of the Jewish people I met in the CPA weren't interested in Jewishness. We were trying to save the world from capitalism.

We lived in South Melbourne where there were no CPA Jews except for myself and Walter Kaufman, a German writer who returned to the German Democratic Republic. Loni Genin and I used to sell the EYL paper *Youth Voice* in front of the Village Belle. I knew Lou Jedwab then in the EYL, Paul Rappaport, Jacques and Marcel Adler, Eve Rosenberg, Henry Zimmerman, and Harry Stein who grew up in Carlton and was Secretary of the EYL. Then, we moved to the Prahran Branch where there was Stan Robe. We knew Bernie Taft because he was once a Director of Marx School where Wendy worked briefly.



I've never been a Zionist, although I think the idea of Israel is a good one and I did feel that sometimes the CPA went overboard with following the Russian line: everything was the fault of the Zionists.

We said at the time (wrongly as I now know) that there wasn't any anti-semitism in the USSR, same as we said a lot of things about the USSR that were proved wrong.

### BERNIE RECHTER

(Bernie Rechter was born in Poland in 1924 and came to Australia in 1934. He joined the CPA in 1943 and resigned in 1956)

I joined the CPA in 1943. It was the middle of the war against Nazism. I was a student. My political interests had already developed through the appeasement and Chamberlain issue. It was a natural gravitation to the student group, initially the Melbourne University Labor Club (of which I became Treasurer) and then the CPA Branch which was most active in its support for the war and its welcoming of students from a wide range of backgrounds. At that time, Jewish students had no organisation, but the Labor Club was the one group that welcomed Jews unreservedly — both local-born and foreign-born — many of whom were never anywhere near the CPA, but were old-style social democrats from Germany.

The Jewish membership of the CPA branch was not disproportionately large, but the Jewish membership of the Labor Club was. Shalom Borenstein was an active Labor Club member till the end of the war when he returned to Poland. There was a large number of students at university from refugee families (such as Peter Herbst and the Buchdals) whose background was the social democratic Left in Europe. They were intellectuals and found a comfortable niche in the Labor Club which was free of xenophobia.

My CPA involvement was mainly working in the University Labor Club. In elections, we worked for ALP people. We worked actively, for instance, for the return of John Dedman, the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction in Geelong. It involved defending the ALP Government against attacks. For example, Calwell, as Minister for Information, censored the newspapers at one stage and Holt as Shadow Minister came to the university to speak at a meeting and accuse Calwell of having acted illiberally. The leadership of the Labor Club was anxious not to be seen to be defending censorship; on the other hand it was keen not to allow Holt to attack the government. A complicated motion was put up and passed that the attack on censorship was really an attack on Labor. Holt stormed out in a fury ... A lot of activity centred on campaigning for a conclusion of the war without compromise with Nazism, for unconditional surrender.

I was active at the same time as a leader in the Jewish Students' Study Group which modelled itself in part on the Labor Club. Ephraim Ehrmann and I ran it together. It was a great success because it was non-sectarian and pluralist in its attitude to Jewish issues. It resisted annual moves to affiliate with the Zionist Federation because it didn't want to be aligned solely with one particular section of the community. We did ensure a fairly liberal pattern to the activities.

Another activity was the Youth Festivals that were conducted by the Communist movements in Eastern Europe. I went to the one in Budapest in 1949 as a representative of the Melbourne Jewish Youth Council. Isi Leibler and others opposed the connection with these activities.<sup>5</sup> There was a bitter fight over sending the late Margaret Sternbert to the Berlin Festival. That was one of a number of activities where young Jewish Leftists tended to follow through a line without thinking enough through the implications for their Jewish sensibilities. I visited Poland in 1949 and found a fair degree of anti-



semitism in the Polish youth movement. I questioned the Deputy Minister of the Interior in Yiddish on anti-Jewish events occurring in the Soviet bloc and he went red and said: It's not our business.

There was a move by a number of us to form a Jewish Students' Society. The CPA opposed the idea because the Labor Club was worried that its Jewish membership would be diverted into other activities. I eventually helped found MUJSS (Melbourne University Jewish Students' Society). I remember we met in Paul Freadman's office; Reuben Medding was among those there. It represented for me the battle between my Jewish involvements and my loyalty to the Labour Club. On some issues, they were congruent - for example, in the opposition to German migration and the re-establishment of full relations with Germany and the visit of the pianist Walter Geiseking. We (the Jewish Left) shamed the Zionists into doing something. We gave out leaflets at the doors of the concert. The next night, two Zionist youth representatives took some doves in and released them in the concert hall. We protested at the wharves and were detained by the police when the first ambassador from Germany arrived.

Increasingly, there were reports of anti-semitism in the Soviet Union. Yet, when Slansky was put on trial [in 1952], I persuaded myself that there wasn't any anti-Semitic element in the trial. I spoke in a public meeting with Geoff Masel who insisted that there was anti-semitism in the trials. In the CPA, if you were active, you occasionally had to defend an indefensible position and suppress your doubts.

Throughout this whole period, there was a very strong opposition to anti-semitism throughout the Communist movement. The Left in Australia was the one group that could be totally relied on to fight anti-semitism. I remember meeting an old Communist wharfie who told me that he'd belted some anti-semites because We know that anti-semitism is the weapon of the oppressor. He'd never met a Jew. That explains somewhat the tendency to ignore the anti-semitism that was rife in Eastern Europe.

I became increasingly disillusioned and left after the Hungarian uprising of 1956. I had been chastised by the CPA back in 1949 for my negative views and criticisms, but there was a close personal link with so many people. The Labor Club represented an enormous element in our lives. It took a long time to recognise the enormity of what had been happening in the Soviet Union.

A very small number of Jews were involved in the CPA. There were very few older CPA Jews and only three to four from the Jewish Progressive Centre were actually CPA members. Many were CPA sympathisers. The CPA didn't want a Jewish branch formed because the Jews weren't regarded as a nation.

There was a Jewish faction (a group centred on the CPA) which met to consider tactics within the Progressive Centre and the Jewish Council. It had a hard core of three or four members plus a few outsiders. There was also a big youth fraction. A fraction was a group of people who supported the CPA and worked in a particular area.

Those (few) Communists who were involved in the Jewish Council would probably accept today that they were wrong and the non-communists were on many issues right. For years, the Jewish Communists refused to acknowledge anti-semitism in the Soviet Union because of their loyalty to the CPA, yet ironically, their daily life was very Jewish. They were not non-Jewish Jews. Most were very Jewish and knew more about Jewish culture and literature and history than most of the 'kosher' Jews.

There was a very strong opposition to political Zionism as a solution to the Jewish problem which was seen as different from support for Israel. Israel was supported by



many Jewish Communists as a haven for refugees and as a progressive state, but there was a strong streak of anti-Zionism due to the historic Zionist/Communist battles.

The Jewish Left worked independently of any central direction. If Jewish groups wanted a CPA speaker who was acceptable, they would choose Ralph Gibson who had a good mind. But, he was never a director of Jewish groups. The CPA concentrated on the unions and didn't consider the Jews as particularly important.

Many young Jewish Communists were very much involved in Jewish cultural activities. Their Jewishness was pretty deep-seated. They did encourage their kids to be heavily involved in Jewish activities. Their kids went on aliyah. Very few went to the Right. Many joined social democratic groups and went to Yiddish schools.

### BERNIE TAFT

(Bernie Taft was born in Germany in 1918 and arrived in Australia in 1939. He joined the CPA in 1941 and was elected to its National Executive in 1967. He served as Vice-President and Joint National Secretary of the party before resigning in 1984.)

I was born in Hanover, the son of Polish Jews, in 1918. I grew up in very religious surroundings. My parents were modern orthodox Jews. In my early youth, I went to *cheder* and used to sit with this old Jewish teacher studying Gemorah. What brought me to the Left were two things: I was a youngster in the Depression and it was also the period of the rise of Nazism. It was the combined effect — the injustice of the Depression, the poverty amidst plenty, the utter misery that I saw around me — that violated my sense of justice. The other factor was the rise of Nazism and anti-semitism. I was very Jewish and very conscious of my Jewishness. I saw the Nazis as a real threat to not just the Jewish future, but to people generally. It was these two things combined which drew me to the Communist movement. To an idealistic, serious young man who wanted something done, the only party that was militant and opposing the fascists was the Communist Party. I joined the Young Communist League. We were full of idealism, we saw the Soviet Union as a country which had no unemployment, that had an answer to all things that we saw were wrong. And if our views were simplistic, they were a natural product of the era.

Subsequently, we left Germany in 1933 and went to Palestine, living there for two years. I was again drawn to the Communist movement for similar reasons. I was fully in support of a Jewish state, Jewish settlement and a Jewish future, but I was unhappy at the way the Arabs were being treated as second class citizens, which seemed again to violate my sense of injustice. And the Communist Party of Palestine was an organisations that stood for equal rights for the Arabs. I joined the Young Communist League which was an illegal organisation and I got into a bit of strife. We blocked out half of Haifa on the eve of the First of May, putting out slogans for May Day. Then, we went back to Europe and I matriculated in Vienna. My father was determined to get us out of Europe. He was convinced that war was going to come and wanted to rescue his family. The world was closed to most Jewish people in those days. Finally, in a desperate attempt to get out of Europe, we went to Tahiti for three months, then to Noumea where the permit arrived in March 1939 and we got to Australia just in time. Thereby, we were spared the fate that overtook many of my relatives including my dear grandmother who finished up in Auschwitz. The whole branch of the family that lived in Poland vanished. Then in Australia, I had some misgivings about the Moscow Trials, but I saw the war coming and saw the USSR as the only power that could stand up against Hitler.

I joined the League of Young Democrats and I remember attending a class in Swanston Street and asking questions. They thought that was strange, they weren't used to people



asking questions and some people thought I was a Trotskyist. I didn't join the party because the Russo-German Pact worried me. Then, when the Germans attacked the USSR, I joined the party. I was very confident that the Russians would win. In Australia at that time, the debate was between the pessimists and the optimists. The optimists thought the Russians would last three months, the pessimists said three weeks.

I wanted to help the war effort. I couldn't join the army because I wasn't naturalised. I had Polish citizenship. Whilst in Palestine, I had done two years of technical school and the government was recruiting people to train them for essential industries during the war and on the advice of the party I joined that course and went to work at Ansett Airways repairing planes that were surplus for the airforce. I became very active. The CPA grew by leaps and bounds under the impact of the Red Army and it became very popular. We built a shop committee there and I took an active part, so much so that Ansett's management thought I was behind it all. I stood out a bit, being foreign with an accent and Jewish. I came to the attention of the party leadership and in 1945 I was encouraged to work for the party. The CPA organised an educational institution called Marx School and it had 300 to 350 students each term. I was appointed Director and occupied that job from 1945-49, and then I came into full-time party work and became Secretary of the Melbourne CPA Committee. During that period, I already came into conflict with the leadership. I wasn't happy with the authoritarian way in which the party was run. Some things didn't fit my concept of democracy, but I thought the fault must lie with me: my middle class, petty bourgeois background.

There was a crisis in 1954-55 when I was seriously considering giving up full-time party work. I would have, but I was selected to go to China on a study course. I spent eighteen months there. That gave me a different view of things. Then there developed a big battle in the CPA. We were really the precursors of Eurocommunism, for democracy and independence. The main leaders of that group were Rex Mortimer and myself. We were called the Italian-liners.

We had discussions with Isi Leibler over Kichko. We publicly criticised the Soviet trials of Daniel and Sinyavsky. We made public protests which the Soviets were very annoyed about. I was in Prague in 1968 and had been selected as Australian delegate to a preparatory meeting for the last worldwide Communist Conference in 1969. I moved into the International Communist movement and the USSR regarded me as one of their chief bete-noirs. Laurie Aarons and I publicly protested the invasion of Czechoslovakia. I met up with Dubcek and got to know the Italian Berlinguer very well. A real opposition group of Eurocommunists emerged at that conference.

The CPA took an independent position, but whereas most European Communist parties moved to the right (that is for more independence, democracy and openness), the CPA was very much influenced by the leftism of the student movement and moved into a different direction to the Eurocommunists, to a more fundamentalist Leninist position. It had to emulate the Cohn-Bendits and the Rudi Dutschkes. A conflict developed between us (the Victorians) who stood for a Eurocommunist position, and the party leadership and some of the extreme leftists who supported them who stood for fundamentalist positions. Finally, at the beginning of 1984, one-third of the Australian National Committee and nearly the whole of the Victorian leadership left and formed the Socialist Forum.

My earliest Jewish connection in the party was during the war when I was quite closely involved with Jewish comrades such as Bella Weiner and Hyam Brezniak who were active in mobilising the Jewish community. We had big meetings and big functions around the war effort. When I first applied to join the party, my first application was to



the Jewish branch and I was rejected because Schwarz said I was a Trotskyist. I was later admitted to another non-Jewish party branch. I remember Shlomo (Samuel) Wynn at meetings. He made a substantial donation to the party. Once I became involved in the mainstream of the party, I had less connection with the Jewish group as such.

I never felt my Jewishness to be in contradiction to my Communist views. I was somewhat proud to be a Socialist and a Jew, particularly looking at the Jewish contribution to history and to culture. I always regarded my Jewishness as an extra gift and bonus. The CPA did help people like me and others integrate into Australian society because we believed we were part of a world family in which being Jewish was certainly not a handicap. There was no suggestion of anti-semitism in the party. In fact, there was very strong opposition to it. I remember a pamphlet that was being widely distributed in those days by Earl Browder which had a heading: Anti-semitism is cannibalism.

There was a Jewish branch which Ralph Gibson used to attend, and I did know Jewish comrades such as Lou Jedwab who were involved in the Jewish community. In those days, there was a lot of Jewish sympathy. The reason was that the Russians were attacking the Nazis. That support evaporated very much after the war and the Doctors case in the USSR and Polish anti-semitism in the sixties. Jewish support for the CPA went from one extreme to the other. There was very little Jewish support in the long-term.

The leading CPA Jews were more part of the Communist community. Although in the party leadership, Laurie Aarons is half-Jewish, but not really Jewish. I have an interest in Jewish culture, speak Yiddish and Hebrew and have Jewish roots. Laurie hasn't and never has had. The same is true of Eric Aarons. I was the only Jew in the leadership in the sense of being connected with Jewish life and having some roots in Jewish culture. I always had Jewish connections and quite a lot of Jewish friends.

The CPA adopted the official line on Israel. It was critical of Zionism, it certainly wasn't hostile to Israel because the Russians supported the State of Israel. The CPA leadership just followed the Russians and supported the establishment of Israel. The problems only commenced in 1967. Until then, you didn't have any anti-Zionist propaganda in the CPA. We got some after that. It was part of this leftist push. Dave Davies and I had big battles in the CPA against crazies who fought for a secular, democratic state. We, the Victorians, stood for Israel's right to a secure, independent existence. The influence of anti-Zionist elements of the student movement was reflected in the CPA. During the whole of the 1970s and early 1980s: the overriding difference in the party was between Melbourne and Sydney. Sydney stood for leftist positions on Israel. Denis Freney was writing strong anti-Zionist stuff, and Henry Zimmerman argued against him in *Tribune* and other places. At one National Congress, we had to agree to a statement endorsing the secular democratic state as an ultimate, desirable, long-term objective. The Aarons leadership itself had a certain sympathy to that view.

Judah Waten denied that anti-semitism existed in the Soviet Union. Saul Factor came back from the USSR and wrote a pamphlet denying that there was any anti-semitism there. We took on Soviet anti-semitism in 1964 against the Kichko book. I never came across any anti-semitism in the CPA as such. But anti-Zionism very easily reaches the borders of anti-semitism.

In regard to the Jewish Council and other sympathetic bodies, there was never a Do this, do that relationship. That's a phantom of the extreme Right. Neither were they totally independent. In all areas, including unions, the CPA put forward a view that was often followed. Loni Genin was in the CPA from 1949-54 and worked with the Jewish Council for a while.



## HENRY ZIMMERMAN

(Henry Zimmerman was born in Germany in 1923 and came to Australia in 1938. He joined the CPA in 1941 and remained a member until 1979)

I was born into a Communist family in Essen, Germany, in 1923. My father had been a member of the KPD since its foundation. My mother joined somewhat later. I joined the Young Pioneers, a KPD children's group, and later on the Young Communist League. My father was connected with the Jewish choir in Essen and involved in Jewish plays. I attended a Jewish school since schools in Essen were organised on the basis of religious denomination.

We left Germany in 1933 shortly after Hitler came to power. My father was arrested and was in Esterwegen concentration camp. When released in 1937, he could not find any country to go to which would allow him to stay. Finally, he got a permit to go to Australia in 1937. We went to Paris in 1933 where I joined a Jewish children's organisation of the Left, the French Young Communist League and later on the German Democratic Youth Movement.

When I came to Australia in 1938, I didn't speak any English. My first political activity was during the period when the CPA was illegal in 1940 when I went to a Kadimah Younger Set meeting which was discussing German anti-semitism. The KYO was controlled by the left-wing. There was a very strong left-wing in the Jewish community. While I was there, somebody approached me and asked me to join the Komsomol (the Jewish branch of the Eureka Youth League). They worked within the KYS. I became active in the KYS after I joined the EYL branch. I became secretary of the no.5 district which was a district consisting of branches which were concerned with working within bourgeois youth organisations. Our branches worked within the Kadimah. I came onto the State Executive of the EYL and was approached by Hyam Brezniak to join the CPA. I joined the Jewish branch of the CPA in 1941. The party was still illegal then. The Jewish branch consisted of people like Pearl and Schwarz. Most were Polish Jews and spoke Yiddish, but the branch meetings were held in English. Schwarz (when he got emotional) broke into Yiddish. I remember one meeting when Ralph Gibson was present and Schwarz said in Yiddish: Wait till the mumser's gone, then we can talk. My Jewishness was really quite irrelevant as far as all this activity was concerned. It was just accidental that I was Jewish. I was the EYL representative on the Jewish Youth Council. We soon decided there should not be a Jewish branch as such, but that Jewish people should work within the general CPA branches that they lived in.

In 1960, I was selected to go to the party school in Moscow. After twenty-four hours, I wanted to come home. It was quite clear that the society was completely different from what we'd expected. It was clear that corruption was widespread and that there was no democratic rights at all. After that, I made it quite clear that I wasn't going to judge the USSR by any other yardstick than I'd judge a capitalist country. Shortly afterwards, I sent a copy of *The Lucky Country* to East Germany. It was returned with a note saying 'illegal import'. I wrote an open letter to Walter Ulbricht, the leader of the East German Communist Party, in which I said that this sort of behaviour was unacceptable to Socialists. It was alright for fascists, but not for us. I got back a lengthy letter from the Socialist Unity Party trying to prove that East Germany was not a fascist country, and was abused by the then Secretary of the Jewish Council, Ernst Platz. He told the East Germans that I was trying to get onside with the Melbourne *Herald* because they published an article of mine and referred to this criticism as the first sign of an open Left: they were beginning to apply general principles to Socialist countries. After that, I got increasing information that Polish anti-semitism was growing, particularly in 1968.



Lifelong Jewish Communists were being thrown out of the country as agents of Zionism. I felt this was something we ought to protest about. There was an interview published in *Tribune* with the Polish Consul-General in which he simply said: This is all nonsense. So I took some of the actual evidence and published it as an advertisement.

By that time, I was greatly involved in the whole question of Zionism and anti-semitism, mainly because I saw these questions as being the basic flaw in what was happening in the Communist movement. In 1966, a split occurred in the Israeli Communist Party. The majority of the Communist Party were Jews and on the question of the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state, a split occurred and the majority of Jewish members led by Mikunis and Sneh opted for the existence of a Jewish state. That party became known as Maki. The opponents (mainly Arabs) became Rakah led by a Jew called Vilner. When Sneh's pamphlet *Arafat the Adored, Lenin the Ignored* came out, I was asked by the Jewish Progressive Centre to translate it and familiarise the Left with the material. Sneh's approach was Internationalism = Inter-nationalism. It is the connections between nationalism, it is not the denial of nationalism. I got abusive telephone calls and *Tribune* ignored it. But many Jews and non-Jews on the Left sent money to help finance it. It helped in clarifying the ideas of many of the Jewish Left. I wrote extensively. My first article was published in a dissident Communist journal called *Outlook*, later on we had *Paths To Peace*. I spoke at ALP and Trade Union branches. I had debates with Ralph Gibson and Judah Waten in the CPA. *Die Yiddishe Naies*, the Yiddish part of the *Jewish News* translated some of my articles into Yiddish. It was a prolonged campaign at that time.

I remained in the CPA till 1979 and left because of its hypercritical attitude to the invasion of Afghanistan. The CPA took the attitude that this was a bad thing and then wrote a long article claiming that the Americans were worse than the Russians.

The Jews in the CPA, mainly those who came from Europe, particularly Poland, were a very strong element inside the CPA. The Jews were disproportionately involved as they were in the European Communist movement. In the late 1940s, I was Secretary of the CPA Branch at Melbourne University. The branch existed inside the Melbourne University Labor Club whose chief theoretician was Shalom Bornstein. About one quarter of the club members were Jewish, including Bernie Rechter and Amirah Gust.

After the 1950s, a lot of people left the CPA, but a large proportion of people of Jewish origin remained. There is still a group of Stalinists active in Melbourne today called the Itzik Wittenberg Group. Recently, they held a celebration of the seventy-third anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Being a minority and persecuted for a long time, Jews look for a better society in which they can live with equality. For many years, that dream was best expressed by the Communist movement.

There were Jews in the CPA who were not Jews in any real sense of the word such as the Aarons and Sol and Victor Marks. There were dozens of such people. There were Jews who denied their Jewishness. Others were part of the Jewish community because they came from a background of strong involvement in Jewish and Yiddish culture (Pearl, Shwarz, Brezniak, et cetera.) They were actively involved in the Jewish community. They were non-religious and anti-Zionist. Their anti-Zionism was similar to that of the Bund.

There was a religious fervour and belief involved. The 'Pope' was Joe Stalin. Anything he said was accepted as being the truth. If we didn't understand it, we didn't understand Marxism-Leninism well enough. Your own insufficient understanding was always involved. It was not until 1968 that the CPA broke from this religious-style subservience.



A lot of CPA Jews spoke Yiddish, but only those who came from Poland or Russia. The German Jews didn't speak Yiddish. There were CPA Jews who were working class. The vast majority of CPA Jews were middle class, relatively well-educated and probably the most internationalist section of the CPA. They were free of chauvinist Australian views.

The CPA didn't provide a means of entry or act as an agent of social integration for foreign-born Jews into Australian society because it meant that you carried a double burden. To join the CPA meant that you were one of the most hated people in the community generally. You were a minority in a minority. You had the double burden of being a Communist and a Jew. Anti-semitism was still relatively alive in the late 1930s and early 1940s. ALP politicians often made disparaging remarks about Jews. The CPA did provide an entry into the society that foreign-born Jews understood better. They felt at home with political activities. It provided a haven where they could go.

The CPA was always traditionally hostile to Zionism. It was seen as a bourgeois nationalist ideology. The Communist movement claimed to be internationalist in character and Zionism diverted the class struggle into a nationalist struggle. During and immediately post World War Two, the Soviet Union justified the creation of Israel and therefore the CPA supported that. They still distinguished between supporting Zionism and supporting Israel. The CPA then followed all the vagaries of Soviet foreign policy in the Middle East. This came to a head in the Six Day War period when all the evils in the world were blamed on Israel. They abandoned all pretences at speaking for the Israeli working class. All Israelis were, by nature, bourgeois fascists.

The CPA believed that the Soviet Union couldn't be anti-semitic. During the Prague Trial, there was a meeting held by the Progressive Centre at Monash Hall in Carlton. It was a pro-Moscow group. Its leaders (Factor, Schwarz, Zemel) were all CPA members. The meeting was broken up by Bundists. The JPG denied that there was any anti-semitism involved in the trial. Those charged were just agents of Zionism. Anti-semitism in those countries could not exist by the nature of those societies and those who raised it were using it as a cover for anti-Communism. When it became clear that this was no longer tenable, Leibler wrote a pamphlet on Soviet anti-semitism and an answering pamphlet was written by Taft and Mortimer. By that time, whenever I came into the party rooms party leaders always greeted me with, "Hello, how are you, you Zionist?" It was meant to be funny because I was accused by the party hardliners of being a Zionist. The Victorian branch took a line closer to mine than to the party leadership at that time, the Aarons, et cetera, in Sydney who took a traditional Stalinist position. One day I went to the Friends of Hashomer Hatzair and Isi Leibler called me the 'Communist Zionist'.

Ralph Gibson was a perfectly honest, modest person. He had a great deal of understanding for the Jewish Left and of Jewish problems generally and a sympathy for Jewish people and Jewish ideals. He spoke frequently at the Kadimah. He attended Jewish branch meetings and was the expert on Jewish matters on the Central Committee.

A lot of the Left (whether Jewish or not) took their ideological lead from the CPA. The Communists worked inside other organisations in a particular way. They didn't necessarily become disloyal to the organisation they belonged to. For example, I was a member of the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union in my younger days. We would have Communist fraction meetings in the AMWU and would decide what policy we would put forward. We would come to meetings with a prepared, organised position and therefore we won most of the time. We were always there, we were the activists and our influence was disproportionate to our members. The same thing applied to the Jewish Council. They didn't transform it into a CPA organisation, but they did fight for the CPA



position within it. Right towards the end of the existence of the Jewish Council, they invited me to speak to them about Poland and I was accused of anti-Sovietism etc. by these people whom I knew were members of the CPA, even though they didn't openly admit it. The Jewish Council had discredited itself, because having taken the lead from the CPA they fell into the difficulty of being inevitably up in arms when any whiff of anti-semitism came from Western countries, but when it came from Eastern Europe they had nothing to say.

## NOTES

1. See Rothman, Stanley and Lichter, S. Robert, *Roots of Radicalism: Jews, Christians and the New Left*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982; Leibman, Arthur, *Jews and the Left*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1979; Cohen, Percy, *Jewish Radicals and Radical Jews*, Academic Press, London, 1980; Tatz, Colin, 'Liberalism and Communism in South Africa', *Dissent*, Winter 1963; Beinlin, Joel, *Was The Red Flag Flying There? Marxist Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel 1948-1965*, University of California Press, 1990; and Laqueur, Walter, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*,
2. Rechter, David, 'Beyond the Pale: Jewish Communism in Melbourne' M.A. thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1986, p29.
3. Johnston, Craig, 'The Communist Party of Australia and the Palestinian Revolution 1967-76', *Labour History*, November 1979, pp91-92.
4. The "Kichko book" was *Judaism Without Embellishment*, an explicitly anti-semitic work published in the Soviet Union in 1964. The first overtly anti-semitic book published in the Soviet Union, it was deeply shocking to many Western Jews close to the Communist party. The "Doctors' Plot" was an anti-semitic conspiracy trial fabricated by Stalin shortly before his death in 1953 at which thirteen doctors, eleven of whom were Jews, were arrested and accused of poisoning Communist officials. [Editor].
5. This may well not be accurate, as Isi Leibler was only fifteen in 1949. [Editor].

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## THE NUREMBERG TRIALS AND THE HOLOCAUST: CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY AS VIEWED FROM AUSTRALIA (1945–46)<sup>1</sup>

*Paul R. Bartrop*

When Australia went to war in September 1939, it did so in order to halt German aggression in Poland. The idea of also defeating Nazism and destroying Nazi ideology was at this time not considered. Six years later, after both the German army and Nazism had been destroyed, the leading members of the Nazi government and military forces were put on trial by the victorious Allies for war crimes. The defendants were arraigned on some or all of the following counts: (1) "*The Common Plan*", that is, taking part in conspiracy to commit crimes against the peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity; (2) *Crimes against Peace*, that is, participating in the planning and waging of wars of aggression in violation of international treaties and agreements; (3) *War Crimes*, that is, murder and ill-treatment of civilians in occupied territory or on the high seas; deportations for slave labour; murder or ill-treatment of war prisoners; killing of hostages; plunder; exacting collective penalties; wanton destruction and devastation; conscription of civilian labour; forcing civilians to swear allegiance to a hostile Power; and Germanisation of occupied territories; and (4) *Crimes against Humanity*, that is, murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against civilian populations before the war and during the war; and persecution on political, religious, and racial grounds in the common plan mentioned in count (1). The Trials took place at the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg.

Given the indictments, it will be apparent that the issues most pertinent to the Nazi Holocaust against the Jewish people were to be covered by count (4) (*Crimes against Humanity*). Yet right from the outset it is important to record that the International Military Tribunal which sat at Nuremberg was *not* set up wholly and solely to punish the leaders of the Third Reich for the Holocaust; on the contrary, the major focus of Nuremberg was to try those who were held to have been responsible for bringing about World War Two, and to hold them accountable for the damage and loss of life that had been caused as a result of it.<sup>2</sup> Because of the shocking nature of the revelations made during the Trials about atrocities committed against Jews, however, from an early date Nuremberg came to be seen first and foremost as a Tribunal which judged the evils perpetrated by the Third Reich against innocent people. The "crimes against humanity" indictment was not the first on the list, but it rapidly became the count which most clearly represented the abhorrence held by people around the world at what they understood Nazism to mean.

How was the event viewed in Australia? In what was generally considered "the greatest trial in history", and given the original reason for the country going to war in 1939, was there much interest shown by the Australian people in the proceedings at Nuremberg in 1945–46? A short and immediate answer would be in the negative, as a thorough investigation of the Australian Archives accessions dealing with matters pertaining to war crimes trials reveals that the major focus of Australian attention was directed towards Japanese war criminals rather than Nazis, and that — on those rare occasions where Nazis *were* concerned — the Australian government was only interested in relatively junior prisoner-of-war camp officers of German camps where Australian servicemen had been held. So far as the Australian government was concerned, the International Military Tribunal which sat at Nuremberg between 20 November 1945 and 1 October 1946 was none of its affair. In fact, even the Parliament showed little



interest in the proceedings at Nuremberg, only one reference having been made to the Trials — and this some three weeks after those Nazis condemned to hang had gone to the gallows.<sup>3</sup>

This is not to say that the Australians had no interest in the concept of war crimes. On the contrary, if a “League Ladder” of war crimes trials were to be established, Australia would be up there with much larger Powers in prosecuting war criminals after 1945. No less than 275 separate trials were conducted by the Australian military authorities in pursuance of the *War Crimes Act 1945*, resulting in 644 convictions and 148 executions. But these were Japanese; Australia played no part in the trial of European war criminals other than where Australians had been directly involved as the aggrieved party.

The fundamental reason, perhaps, is not too difficult to discern. Although Australia had originally gone to war in opposition to the Nazis, the “real” enemy was always seen as the menace to the north, Japan. It was the Japanese who had, it was believed, almost invaded Australia; certainly they had bombed its towns from the air, and brought the war into Sydney Harbour. But most importantly in the public consciousness, the Japanese were responsible for horrific actions against Australians within the theatre of war, such as machine-gunning nurses in the waters off Java, executions by means of beheading, and the perpetration of innumerable and sustained horrors against captured Australian diggers at Changi and on the Burma Railway. Against this, the crimes of the Nazis, though of course shocking, seemed a very long way away. What happened in Europe was terrible, but it happened to other people. The atrocities of the Japanese happened to *us*, and therefore commanded the greatest part of *our* attention, *our* legislation, and *our* spirit of vengeance.<sup>4</sup>

Australia’s official face regarding the war crimes issue after 1945 was not the same as the media response. Newspapers saw a story at Nuremberg — a big one. Those responsible for the war in Europe were being put on trial (with the exception of Hitler, presumed dead, and Goebbels and Himmler, undeniably so), and the media quickly realised that this would be far more momentous than the otherwise predictable expedient of punishing Japanese war criminals. Here, real questions concerning justice, responsibility and complicity would be explored, and all the world would see the degree to which Nazism should be held accountable for the corruption of Western civilisation and the evils perpetrated in its name.

On Tuesday 20 November 1945, the day on which the Trials opened, Adelaide’s *Advertiser* published a story from the renowned American correspondent William Shirer, a journalist who was syndicated throughout many of the Australian newspapers. Focusing on the educative aspect of the trials, Shirer observed that:

We Allies can learn much by following the Nuremberg trials.

We can learn why we had to fight this last time. We can learn the real nature of the Germans, who came so close to beating the Allies and conquering the world. ...

How many people sitting in their peaceful, comfortable homes realise even today the enormity and bestiality of the Nazi crimes?<sup>5</sup>

Evidence introduced during the trial would tell them. Earlier, the *Sydney Morning Herald* had introduced a word of caution by noting the “some way must be found through the absurd technicalities which ‘fair trial’ is allowing defending counsel to put forward”<sup>6</sup>, even though the official Australian position was one of approval of the procedure to be adopted by the United Nations.<sup>7</sup> Speculation such as this was, however, quickly sorted out once the defendants actually stood in the dock.



The opening day of the Trial, 20 November 1945, was certainly a newsworthy one. The lead headlines in all the major Australian newspapers said it all: "HISTORY'S GREATEST TRIAL OPENS" (*Advertiser*, Adelaide); "GREAT NAZI TRIAL TO OPEN TO-DAY" (*Courier-Mail*, Brisbane); "MEN WHO LOOSED WAR ON TRIAL" (*Mercury*, Hobart); "GERMAN CRIMINALS ON TRIAL TO-DAY" (*Age*, Melbourne); "NAZI GANGSTERS FACE JUDGES" (*Argus*, Melbourne); and "TRIAL OF TOP NAZIS OPENED" (*Sydney Morning Herald*). The general assumption was that this would be a mammoth effort in which the men who launched the war would be punished for doing so. The fundamental issue, from the outset, concerned fixing blame on those who had plunged the world into war, and everything else was to spring from that.

Editorials in some of the newspapers testified as to this attitude, while also expressing hope that the accused would be convicted and suffer the maximum possible penalty. Hobart's *Mercury*, for example, argued that

the Allies will present a case which rests primarily on the premise that aggressive war is an international crime. ... Every individual who can be proved a party to that violation is guilty of the most terrible of all crimes — the crime against peace.<sup>8</sup>

The *Argus*, from Melbourne, looked at the issue from the simple perspective of morality:

It is fitting that the chief criminals should be tried *en masse*. Whatever their individual guilt — and that is a heavy enough load — their collective responsibility for murder and destruction is symbolic of the beastly organisation that they directed: a system in which the individual is dwarfed by the mass and human ethics are lost in the ramifications of an infernal doctrine.<sup>9</sup>

The *Advertiser's* editorial referred to the Trials as "the most sensational and significant *cause célèbre* in history", which "marked the slow but inexorable progress of the machinery of post-war justice". It also acknowledged that the Trial was taking the world down an as-yet untrodden path, with no precedents upon which it could base itself:

The trial promises to be an extraordinary affair, in a courtroom described as "a sort of mixture between a cinema and a telephone exchange". The law that will be administered is a compromise acceptable to Britain, America, France and Russia. The tribunal will be presided over by representatives of these four Powers; even the bench, therefore, will have no common language. To add to the difficulties of the interpreters, evidence will doubtless be adduced in all the tongues of Europe. Proceedings that were slow to begin, will almost certainly be slow to develop.<sup>10</sup>

This summarised the position well, and drew readers' attention to the dilemmas of a judicial process of this kind. Clearly, this would not be summary justice. While guilty verdicts would of course be sought, there was no suggestion that justice would not be seen to be done. For any educative purposes, a lengthy trial, in which all the legal arguments were canvassed, might well be the best solution.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* topped things off with a nice turn of phrase:

This is the first time that the primary authors of aggression — the real warlords — have had to answer at the bar of world justice for the misery they caused; there is no modern precedent for the trial of an aggressor nation's leaders. ... The trials due to begin today will demonstrate finally that the rulers of an aggressor nation are answerable for the crimes committed in their name, and that even the head of a State can be arraigned as a common criminal and forfeit his life. Hitler has cheated justice, but his henchmen have been brought to its bar.<sup>11</sup>

The opening day of the Trials showed one thing more: that Australia *did* have an official interest which had so far not been apparent. In small type, both the *Age* and the *Sydney*



*Morning Herald* noted — with a stunning sense of self-importance — that Australia had a part of its own to play at the Trials. As the *Age* reported, Australia was “the first and at present the only British Dominion to appoint a special representative at the tribunal”. Major J.L. Lenehan, an Australian Army solicitor attached to the British forces in Europe, “will be given all the privileges of the highest ranking personages at the trial, and will stay at Nuremberg’s Grand Hotel, which is reserved for distinguished visitors”.<sup>12</sup> The story was intended to demonstrate to the Australian public that Australia was a major player in the bringing of Nazis to justice — but in view of what the public already knew about Nuremberg and its Four-Power constitution, the idea of inflating Australia’s importance in this way came across as just a bit silly.<sup>13</sup>

Far from silly were some shocking revelations concerning Nazi Jewish policy which began coming to light on 27 November 1945. The headlines ranged in their coverage of the topic. While the *Sydney Morning Herald* led with “NAZI LEADERS ON JEW-BAITING”, the *Age* headed its story “DIABOLICAL NAZI PLAN TO ELIMINATE JEWS”.<sup>14</sup> The story was identical in both cases, and concerned a verbatim record of a meeting of high Nazi officials held in Berlin on 12 November 1938 (two days after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom). Interestingly, the reference was to the elimination of Jews from German economic life, rather than to the form of elimination which ultimately took place and which was by now well known to Australians.<sup>15</sup>

Much worse concerned the screening of so-called “horror films” at the Trial, as reported on 29 November 1945. Both the *West Australian* and the *Canberra Times* referred to the court seeing films which showed “thousands of corpses rotting in Nazi concentration camps and S.S. men beating helpless women and children”.<sup>16</sup> With this report, the perception that the accused were on trial for the war alone was diminished: henceforth, it would be assumed that the Tribunal was also sitting in judgement over a system which allowed for brutality and degradation over innocent people whom the Nazis had singled out for such treatment.

The theme of concentration camp “horror films” persisted in the Australian press for several days. On 1 December 1945 most of the newspapers reported the reactions of the Nazis to the showing of these films. The *Sydney Morning Herald* sought to convey to its readers a spirit of what was being shown to the court, and referred not only to the individual camps highlighted in the films, but also to some of the crimes which took place in them. In addition, it recounted some of the responses of the accused as they sat and watched these films.<sup>17</sup> Other newspapers in all states examined the same responses, quoting the observations of two Allied psychiatrists present at Nuremberg. The consensus was that the Nazis were shamed by the films they were viewing: while not stating it outright, there was an implication that this was precisely the intention of the prosecution. The *Age* and the *Mercury* both noted that:

All the defendants were obviously affected. The majority felt profound shame at what they realised was Germany’s disgrace before the world.

The accused mostly reacted with amazement and depression, and showed the effects of severe emotional strain.<sup>18</sup>

A few days later, as part of a more general report on Nuremberg, the *Canberra Times* noted that the Allies had located the wife of Rudolf Franz Hoess, former commandant of Auschwitz, “with a house full of clothes and jewellery taken from Jews sent to their death in the Auschwitz gas chambers”.<sup>19</sup> The alignment of Jewish horrors with the International Military Tribunal was, in this way, becoming more apparent as each new day dawned.



The month of December 1945 was perhaps the most important period in the life of the whole Tribunal insofar as this phenomenon was concerned. As the attention of the Tribunal moved to the SS and SA as criminal organisations, the position of these bodies with regard to Jews was highlighted by the Australian press. Hence, on 5 December, the *West Australian* published details of a concentration camp in Poland "where Germans were said to have made soap from human bodies and purses and ersatz leather goods from human skin".<sup>20</sup> In the middle of the month, a number of reports on a similar theme came in concerning the presentation as evidence of a shrunken human head and a piece of human skin that had been taken from the Buchenwald concentration camp.<sup>21</sup> These items, however, were but a prelude to news of the prosecution's accusations of systematic mass murder of Jews, which were reported from 15 December onwards. Quoting a series of German documents which had been released at Nuremberg, several Australian newspapers outlined the details of "a calculated plan to starve millions of Jews to death by shutting them off from supplies and stopping them working land from which they might get food".<sup>22</sup> Under the heading "DONE TO DEATH/6,000,000 JEWS", the *West Australian* printed a story in which an affidavit from SS General Wilhelm Hoettl stated that he had helped to compile a report for Heinrich Himmler "estimating that the Germans had killed 6,000,000 Jews in Eastern Europe". Further references were made in the story to the Madagascar Plan for the Nazi resettlement of the Jews, and to Himmler's wish to kidnap "Aryan-looking" children "from inferior faces" [*sic*].<sup>23</sup>

Stories such as these were accompanied over the next few days by a retrospective on Nazi antisemitic policy during the 1930s. In what was clearly a mistake, however, all newspapers carried the account of US Prosecutor Colonel Robert Storey, who referred to a pogrom against Jews taking place in Germany on 9 October 1938, rather than the correct date of 9 November. The accounts were harrowing, however, and the mistake might well have been missed by Australian readers amid a more general chronicle of terrible events from the *Kristallnacht*.<sup>24</sup> To a reader perusing the morning paper, there could be little doubt as to what the *Kristallnacht* represented: all one needed to do was to consider headlines such as "MURDER OF JEWS WAS CONDONED"<sup>25</sup> or "ORGANISED MURDER/HOUNDING OF JEWS"<sup>26</sup>, and it was obvious that a deliberate policy rather than a spontaneous outburst was under discussion here. The point was further reinforced when newspapers followed up these stories one day later with references to the destruction by the SA of thirty-five German and Austrian synagogues in a forty-eight hour period.<sup>27</sup>

Adelaide's *Advertiser* then weighed in with a report on further concentration camp atrocities, and immediately prior to the court going into a Christmas recess at the end of December it told of Gestapo methods against Jews in Ruthenia in October 1941, where a senior German army officer had complained about the burial of seriously wounded Jews who were not yet dead. It was, the officer said in a written report at the time, "such a base and filthy act that the incident should be reported to the Führer".<sup>28</sup> The *Mercury* and other papers were able to add numbers to this grisly anecdote, quoting "liquidations" from White Ruthenia in which 37,180 Jews had been killed; another 3,145 Jews had been shot at Ghitomir in the Ukraine because "they were regarded as carriers of Bolshevik propaganda and saboteurs".<sup>29</sup>

The revelations continued when the court resumed in early January. In the first report after the recess, the *Advertiser's* headline said it all: "S.S. REIGN OF TERROR/MASS SLAUGHTER OF JEWS".<sup>30</sup> In gripping detail, the report outlined the testimony of SS General Otto Ohlendorf, Himmler's chief of security. Under cross-examination, Ohlendorf revealed the nature of Jewish murders by means of gas vans in Poland and



Russia, and admitted that it was his idea to institute a policy of deception so that there would be no panic among the victims. A few days later further murderous images were reported, as testimony was taken of conditions at the Mauthausen and Natzweiler concentration camps, as well as in Nazi-occupied Oslo.<sup>31</sup>

As the newspapers continued reporting incidents such as these throughout 1945, developments in other parts of the world jockeyed with Nuremberg for news space. This had the effect of strangling a lot of detailed comment on the International Military Tribunal, and reduced the type of news Australians were receiving into an ongoing series of small line items rather than serious headline material. The first year after the war was a big one. The American atomic tests on Bikini Atoll, the resumption of the Chinese Civil War, a new nationalist campaign against the Dutch in Indonesia — all these competed heavily with the frequently dry trial process at Nuremberg. Much more exciting was the continued struggle between Jews, Arabs and British in Palestine, which culminated in July 1946 when the King David Hotel in Jerusalem was bombed by the Irgun Zvai Leumi, with heavy loss of life.<sup>32</sup>

Australian reportage of the attack is filled with anomalies. While denouncing the bombing in the most powerful terms, many newspapers were also quick to demonstrate their sympathy for the survivors from the Holocaust who were at that time beginning to emerge from Europe's Displaced Persons' camps. Curious juxtapositions of stories and headlines appeared. On the same page as a story concerning the methods the British were going to adopt to "punish" the Jews of Palestine, for example, Hobart's *Mercury* published a photograph of Jewish refugees from post-war Polish persecution arriving in Austria.<sup>33</sup> Alongside the heading "HOTEL OUTRAGE DISRUPTS PALESTINE GOVERNMENT", the *Argus* produced a story concerning the death sentence proclaimed over Slovak quisling Anton Vasek for the murder of 50,000 Jews during the war.<sup>34</sup> The *Canberra Times* reported the Pope's attempt to have a death sentence passed on ex-Gauleiter Greiser rescinded, alongside a story on the curfew placed on Jerusalem's Jews after the bomb attack.<sup>35</sup> At the same time as the *Age* was blaming Jewish youth for the King David Hotel outrage, it was also describing the American Chief Prosecutor at Nuremberg, Robert H. Jackson, who was at that time on the offensive against the antisemitism of the Nazis at the war crimes tribunal.<sup>36</sup> It seemed as if there was a collective confusion in the minds of Australian newspaper editors. While Jews who killed British soldiers in Palestine were evil and duplicitous, the mass murder of Jews in Europe was even worse, though clear parallels — as many papers reported — existed.

The Nuremberg process as reported in Australian newspapers therefore focused on the complicity of the Nazis in promoting war, and for many Australians the indictment of "Crimes against Humanity" was now synonymous with Nazism and did not need to be overtly addressed in order to be appreciated. As early as 1 March 1946 an *Advertiser* editorial, commenting on the fact that the prosecution's case had closed, offered the following insight:

It is quite unnecessary to say that no other story was ever related. No comparable horrors were so much as dreamed of, indeed, in the pre-Hitler era, even in a criminal lunatic asylum. ... Even today, after three months of proof officially produced at Nuremberg, it is difficult to believe that the worst of the Nazi atrocities are more than an abominable nightmare. The normal human mind does its best to reject the conclusion that men could ever have been so infinitely vile. It is the virtue of Nuremberg that it sternly forbids incredulity and denial. The evidence has been as overwhelming as it has been revolting.<sup>37</sup>

This seemed to sum up the position nicely so far as all the Australian papers were concerned. The Nazis in the dock were guilty for the war, and for all the death and



destruction brought about as a result of it. That included the annihilation of Europe's Jews — a conclusion which did not need to be stated as it was obvious to anyone who considered the issue.

For at least one man, however, the issue was not quite so straightforward. The words of the American Owen Cunningham, defence counsel to the former Japanese Ambassador to Berlin General Hiroshi Oshima, were reported at length in Brisbane's *Courier-Mail* on 28 September 1946 — just days before the Nuremberg tribunal was due to hand down its verdict. Cunningham made an observation which must have come as a shock to many who had followed the Trials and who felt they were witnessing the pursuit of true justice:

The Nuremberg court was not much interested in the discussion of legal propositions. The full theory of rule by law, rather than rule by force, has taken a holiday as in few other periods in our history.

If there were no Jewish question and no persecution of minorities, there would not be a very strong case against the German accused. Otherwise this war was not much different from hundreds of others.<sup>38</sup>

These were startling words, to say the least, and certainly the first words of dissent over Nuremberg that had been displayed in the Australian press since much earlier debates which had queried whether there should be a trial at all. (Proponents of this view had held that the Nazi accused should be summarily shot, instead.) Interestingly, the *Courier-Mail* was the only major Australian paper which featured the story of Cunningham's outburst in any detail. The *Mercury* quoted London's *Daily Mail* correspondent on the story, but did not provide the content of Cunningham's statements, other than to say that some in official circles regarded them as "highly indiscreet"<sup>39</sup> — a wonderful understatement in view of the prevailing attitude at that time.

When the judges of the International Military Tribunal handed down their decision at the beginning of October 1946, there were few surprises. Six of the accused were found guilty on all four counts, and sentenced to hang; another six were similarly sentenced after having been found guilty of some of the counts. Others among the Nazis received long prison terms ranging from life to ten years, while three were acquitted and (after some delay) released.<sup>40</sup> Presenting a case-by-case analysis of each of the verdicts, some of the Australian newspapers acknowledged that there was more to Nuremberg than just responsibility for the waging of war. Both the *Courier-Mail* and the *Mercury*, for example, placed direct blame for atrocities committed against Jews at the feet of specific figures such as Hans Frank, Fritz Sauckel, Wilhelm Frick, Ernst Kaltenbrunner and Julius Streicher, whilst acknowledging that *all* those who had been found guilty bore responsibility for the climate which had led to crimes against humanity such as those experienced by Europe's Jews.<sup>41</sup>

There was no doubt that Nuremberg resulted in landmark judgements. Never before had a tribunal of victor nations sat to deliver verdicts over a vanquished foe, and never before had there been such a vast set of compromises made across often competing legal systems in order to reach a convergence of opinion. In rendering its decisions, the Tribunal rejected all the major defences offered by the defendants. First, it rejected the contention that only a State — and thus not individuals — could be found guilty of war crimes. The Tribunal held that crimes of international law are committed by people rather than States, and that only by punishing the individuals who commit such crimes can international law be enforced.

Secondly, the Tribunal rejected the argument that it was an illegitimate body because it was sitting *ex post facto*. The judges ruled that such acts as were being tried at



Nuremberg were not new; they had been regarded as criminal before the outbreak of war in late 1939, and had continually been drawn to the attention of the Nazis and their allies throughout it. The Tribunal, though comprised of representatives of the victorious nations, was not a victors' court; the accused stood in the dock in order to answer for crimes against existing international law.

Finally, the court ruled that offering a defence on the ground of obligation to obey superior orders was in fact no defence at all. Basing itself on a general theory of morality and what determined right conduct, the Tribunal held that there are certain standards in Western society to which everyone must adhere, and that one of the cardinal rules in this regard is that obeying criminal orders renders the perpetrator just as guilty as the person giving the order. The rejection of this point, the so-called "Nuremberg defence", has since become one of the major legacies of the Trials to be handed on to posterity.

Reflections on these matters dominated the editorials which appeared after the verdicts had been handed down. They all shared the view that Nuremberg represented a landmark in world justice, and that here was a real mechanism for the pursuit of international peace in the future. The *Canberra Times*, for example, expressed the view that the

chief importance of the Nuremberg trial is ... not that the Nazi criminals are to be punished, but that it is a landmark from which the United Nations must press on to police and enforce world peace against all potential or actual disturbances of the peace or crimes against humanity.<sup>42</sup>

The *Courier-Mail* noted that the guilty men "were responsible for causing untold thousands of people to die after terrible sufferings and in horrible conditions of misery and degradation", but that, by being tried in a courtroom, the Nazis "have been spared much which their victims had to endure". The *Courier-Mail* went on to outline a very important — and probably definitive — position on the rationale behind Nuremberg:

The real purpose of the Nuremberg trial has been to vindicate and advance one of the great causes for which the late war was fought — the cause of international justice.

A very big advance was made when the Governments of Britain, United States, France and Russia agreed to arraign the surviving principals and organisers of the German war conspiracy before an international tribunal and when that decision was approved by the vast majority of their own peoples and by the Governments and peoples of many other lands.

This laying of criminal charges, punishable with death, against the leaders of a nation for planning and waging aggressive war against other nations, broke right away from a conception of unlimited and irresponsible national sovereignty which all nations had clung to tenaciously. ...

The end of the Nuremberg trial can be the beginning of a new chapter in the relations of nations. It can be a precedent upon which may be built an ever-increasing rule of international law.<sup>43</sup>

It can be seen from this that the major emphasis lay in bringing to justice those who had upset the international order by waging aggressive war — not those who had exclusively committed crimes against humanity. In this light, it could be argued that the four counts at Nuremberg were like the spokes of a wheel; useless by themselves, but acting together in unison to keep the whole together and provide it with direction.

In Melbourne, the *Age* argued essentially the same points as the *Courier-Mail* had done, but with a twist: Nuremberg represented



a great historic landmark, a step in the endeavour to retrieve man's moral standards from the mire into which they were plunged. None who has thought about the hideous things done in the Nazi name — the cruelties, the oppressions, the enslavements, the mass executions, the plundering of peaceful neighbours and all the sickening story of the last ten years — could feel sympathy with the condemned. The inglorious exit of these pitiful wrecks is a fitting fifth act to the tragedy of Europe, and a proper denouement to the days of their unbridled arrogance and power.<sup>44</sup>

For the Age, the issue was one in which not only would there be the prospect of a new international future based on law and justice, but also one in which the wickedness of the Nazis and their ideology would be brought home to both an observing world and the Nazis themselves. The *Mercury* put it more simply: "the Nazi gangsters have reaped the harvest of retribution which they so barbarously sowed. They have survived many millions of innocent victims; at last their time has come. And so perish all who do the like again".<sup>45</sup>

A few days before the scheduled execution of the condemned Nazis, one of the very few public pronouncements on Nuremberg by a major Australian figure was made when the Catholic Archbishop Dr. Daniel Mannix expressed the view that carrying out the death sentences might have the effect of making the Nazis into martyrs for the German people. In what was clearly a political statement, Mannix stated that his preference would be that the condemned men not be put to death, but that instead they would be sent "to a place where they would be harmless for the rest of their lives". This Napoleonic solution should be taken in view of the fact that "the Germans were not alone in their guilt of murder and rape", and that — in a direct slap at the Soviet judges on the Tribunal — "some of the people who sat in judgement might have been trying their own nationals". Mannix finished his statement by venturing the opinion that "extreme penalties did not always bring about the desired end". His speech was made at the thoroughly inappropriate venue of the opening of a new church hall at Drysdale, in rural Victoria.<sup>46</sup>

There were certainly others who concurred with Mannix in the view that the condemned Nazis should not be executed, but such expressions rarely made it into the letters pages of the newspapers. Only Melbourne's *Argus* went so far as to allow a correspondents' debate to take place, and this took the form of claims that the execution of convicted criminals was or was not in keeping with Christian doctrine. One letter-writer, a clergyman, ventured the comment that the execution of the Nazis "would not deter others from doing what these men have done"<sup>47</sup> — a clear refutation of the point that had been made by all the editorials and other expressions since the Trials began.

Almost alone among the major Australian newspapers on matters concerning Nazi genocide was the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which referred explicitly to the annihilation of the Jews in an editorial on the day the executions of the condemned men took place. Among other things, the *Herald* remarked:

At the patient and impartial trial which, to their own surprise, they were accorded, their real accusers were not the Allied prosecutors but the six million Jews whose extermination they sanctioned, ... the men and women of Belsen, Buchenwald and Dachau. The evidence against these evil men, with its record of murder and torture coldly employed as instruments of German policy, is so terrible that the human mind finds it hard to compass its enormity. There can be no pity to-day for those who knew no pity.<sup>48</sup>

Few newspapers approached the *Herald* for its articulation of this point. The *Courier-Mail* noted simply that the doomed men "had to die because they were once so powerful in Nazi Germany",<sup>49</sup> while the *Canberra Times*, furious at the suicide of Hermann



Goering just hours before he was due to hang, used the opportunity presented by the Nazi executions to ask for like treatment to also be handed out to the Japanese.<sup>50</sup> The Trials and the executions, once over, were then quickly allowed to fade away — their message not lost, but put to one side until the next time.

There was one area in which the newspapers sought to bring home the relevance of Nuremberg to the Australian people, however, when on 12 October the *Advertiser* provided an update of the current state of play regarding other war crimes trials and convictions around the world:

In Europe, cases tried by Britain, France and America total 1,018, in 392 of which a death sentence has been imposed. In 438 cases imprisonment has been ordered, and in 188 cases those tried have been acquitted.

In the Far East, Britain, Australia and the United States have charged 1,120 persons, 326 of whom have been sentenced to death, 554 imprisoned, and 240 acquitted.<sup>51</sup>

With this item — a small one almost buried among other line items, and in very fine print — the links could be drawn between what had been happening at Nuremberg and the wider relevance of the war crimes process for Australians. More would be revealed when the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, sitting at Tokyo, handed down its verdicts in 1948.

Assessing the overall position of the Australian press on the International Military Tribunal leads one to the conclusion that the whole process provided both good newspaper copy and an opportunity to moralise on the evils of Nazism, whilst simultaneously reinforcing the absolute integrity of the Allied cause throughout six years of war. Australian newspapers had on the whole been dependent upon external sources for their foreign news, but from the end of the war onwards the major papers began employing their own correspondents at key overseas postings. The days of a full-scale foreign bureau were a long way off, but the war years broke forever the previously total Australian reliance on overseas sources in order to inform readers of what was happening in other parts of the world. Nuremberg provided a good testing-ground for this; a number of papers had correspondents covering the Trials, while others employed local stringers to do on-the-spot reporting on their behalf.

As stated earlier, however, the Nuremberg Trials did not represent the major focus of interest for Australians in matters pertaining to the punishment of war criminals. When the *War Crimes Act 1945* was promulgated, the Australian mind-set could be discerned quite easily. Although the Act referred explicitly to “any war in which His Majesty has been engaged since 2 September 1939”, the type of court to be established under the Act was to be a *military* court, not a civil one. And the only prisoners then in Australian custody and subject to Australian military jurisdiction were Japanese. While in no place spelling out who was in its sights, the Act left no room for doubt as to who would be tried for war crimes, and this remained the case until the passage of the *War Crimes (Amendment) Act* in December 1988.

Nuremberg should be seen as more than a Tribunal which sat in judgement on the Holocaust, as this was not the case. Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess and Joachim von Ribbentrop, the three leading Nazis, were arraigned in the first instance because of their complicity in planning and prosecuting aggressive war, not for war crimes or crimes against humanity. That such crimes took place during the Nazis’ war only served to further highlight the criminal nature of the regime, but nothing was seen in the first instance as being more criminal than the foisting of aggressive war upon a world which was clearly committed to avoiding it.



Australians in 1945 and 1946 were aware of this, perhaps more so than Australians of later generations. Half a century after the end of World War Two, the perception is strong that the Holocaust led as directly to the Nuremberg Trials as did slavery to the American Civil War. Such monocausal explanations demonstrate a clear failure to acknowledge a great many other — and far more important — bases upon which understanding can rest. The Australian response to the Nuremberg Trials was, on the whole, a predictable one. The Nazis had plunged the world into war; those same Nazis, now defeated, must pay for having done so. Any of the horrors which accompanied that war had also to be addressed, but not before the main charge — conspiracy to wage aggressive war — had first been dealt with. Far from being a Trial for the Holocaust, Australians instead perceived a Trial in which a wide variety of war-related matters were dealt with, of which the Holocaust was but one. At no time was Nuremberg seen as an exclusively Jewish issue, nor, given the conditions prevailing at the time, could it have been. The Trials had been conducted of necessity, and for the betterment of all humanity. Removing this universalistic perspective and replacing it with a specific prosecution for crimes committed against one group of people only, would have had the effect of diverting attention from the main point of the trials, which was to punish those responsible for a global catastrophe. Australia's newspapers expressed nothing other than the accepted view prevailing in all the Allied countries. The true realisation of the Holocaust's wider implications for Western civilisation — indeed, for all humanity — was still some way off.

## NOTES

- 1 Parts of this article were presented as "The Nuremberg Trials as Viewed from Australia: Perceptions of Inhumanity and Justice", at the Australian Association for Jewish Studies 8th Annual Conference, Sydney, 2–5 July 1994. I am indebted to Ross S. Lane for his substantial contributions to the researching of this paper, and to him I would like to express my gratitude.
- 2 I am grateful to Professor W.D. Rubinstein for his comments to me on this point; in his words, the Nuremberg Trials have to a large extent been "highjacked" by the Holocaust, such that the other intentions of the Trials have become increasingly passed over in popular memory.
- 3 This statement was made by Archie Cameron in the House of Representatives on 7 November 1946. See Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, vol. 189, 7 November 1946, pp. 62–63.
- 4 I use this latter word in its most literal sense, as the Australians did not appear to be motivated by any quest for justice in their treatment of Japanese war criminals after 1945. This issue, to a large degree untouched by Australian historians, requires much deeper treatment, given that so many of Australia's contemporary psychological preoccupations with Japan are yet to be resolved. Some excellent work on the racist dimension of the Pacific War has already been done with regard to the involvement of the Americans, however; see, for example, John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.
- 5 *Advertiser*, 20 November 1945, p. 4.
- 6 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 1945, p. 2.
- 7 *West Australian*, 7 November 1945, p. 7.
- 8 *Mercury*, 21 November 1945, p. 3.
- 9 *Argus*, 24 November 1945, p. 2.
- 10 *Advertiser*, 21 November 1945, p. 6.
- 11 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 November 1945, p. 2.
- 12 *Age*, 21 November 1945, p. 1; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 November 1945, p. 1.



- 13 See also *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 November 1945, p. 3, where it was noted that Major Lenehan was at Nuremberg to collect information on procedure, "which will be used in preparations for the international trial of major Japanese war criminals".
- 14 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 November 1945, p. 3; *Age*, 27 November 1945, p. 2.
- 15 See, in this regard, Paul R. Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust, 1933-45*, Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994, chapter 10 ("News About the Holocaust: The Press Reports 1939-45").
- 16 *West Australian*, 29 November 1945, p. 1; *Canberra Times*, 29 November 1945, p. 1.
- 17 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 December 1945, p. 3.
- 18 *Age*, 1 December 1945, p. 1; *Mercury*, 1 December 1945, p. 2.
- 19 *Canberra Times*, 6 December 1945, p. 1; see also *West Australian*, 6 December 1945, p. 8.
- 20 *West Australian*, 5 December 1945, p. 8.
- 21 *Canberra Times*, 14 December 1945, p. 1; *Mercury*, 14 December 1945, p. 2; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 December 1945, p. 3.
- 22 *West Australian*, 15 December 1945, p. 9; see also *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December 1945, p. 3; and *Age*, 15 December 1945, p. 1.
- 23 *West Australian*, 17 December 1945, p. 7.
- 24 *Argus*, 19 December 1945, p. 24; *Age*, 19 December 1945, p. 1; *West Australian*, 19 December 1945, p. 7; *Advertiser*, 19 December 1945, p. 7.
- 25 *Argus*, 19 December 1945, p. 24.
- 26 *West Australian*, 19 December 1945, p. 7.
- 27 *Courier-Mail*, 20 December 1945, p. 1; *Age*, 20 December 1945, p. 1; *West Australian*, 20 December 1945, p. 7.
- 28 *Advertiser*, 22 December 1945, p. 1.
- 29 *Mercury*, 21 December 1945, p. 2; *Courier-Mail*, 21 December 1945, p. 1; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 1945, p. 3.
- 30 *Advertiser*, 5 January 1946, p. 11.
- 31 *Advertiser*, 30 January 1946, p. 7.
- 32 On some aspects of the Australian reaction to this assault on the British Empire, see Paul R. Bartrop, "'This is mass murder!': Australian Press Responses to the Attack on the King David Hotel, 22 July 1946", paper presented at the Australian Association for Jewish Studies 5th Annual Conference, Melbourne, 6-9 July 1991.
- 33 *Mercury*, 30 July 1946, p. 1.
- 34 *Argus*, 27 July 1946, p. 7.
- 35 *Canberra Times*, 24 July 1946, p. 1.
- 36 *Age*, 27 July 1946, p. 1.
- 37 *Advertiser*, 1 March 1946, p. 8.
- 38 *Courier-Mail*, 28 September 1946, p. 1.
- 39 *Mercury*, 30 September 1946, p. 10.
- 40 They were not fated to enjoy a happy retirement. Hjalmar Schacht, Franz von Papen and Hans Fritzsche were brought to the bar of the post-war German authorities after they had been discharged by the International Military Tribunal, and found guilty according to various charges. All consequently underwent periods of imprisonment in German prisons.
- 41 See, for example, *Courier-Mail*, 2 October 1946, p. 1, and *Mercury*, 2 October 1946, p. 2. The *Advertiser*, 2 October 1946, p. 1, is also a useful source in this regard.
- 42 *Canberra Times*, 3 October 1946, p. 4.
- 43 *Courier-Mail*, 2 October 1946, p. 2.
- 44 *Age*, 3 October 1946, p. 2.
- 45 *Mercury*, 2 October 1946, p. 3.



- 46 *Age*, 14 October 1946, p. 5; the story was also reported in part in the *Mercury*, 14 October 1946, p. 6.
- 47 The Reverend Robert H. Green (Richmond, Victoria), in *Argus*, 5 October 1946, p. 12; see also further correspondence to the editor of the *Argus* dated 10 October 1946 (p. 6), 11 October 1946 (p. 6), 12 October 1946 (p. 16), and 16 October 1946 (p. 8).
- 48 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 October 1946, p. 2.
- 49 *Courier-Mail*, 17 October 1946, p. 2.
- 50 *Canberra Times*, 18 October 1946, p. 4.
- 51 *Advertiser*, 12 October 1946, p. 1.



## WHAT DO AUSTRALIANS KNOW ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST?

### A Survey by the Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs and the American Jewish Committee

*W.D. Rubinstein*

In June 1994 a survey of over 1000 randomly-selected Australians was carried out by the Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs (AIJA) and the American Jewish Committee (AJC). It showed that Australians have a surprisingly wide degree of knowledge about the Nazi era and of the Holocaust of the Jews of the Second World War. Down the years, this *Journal* has reported on many Federal Censuses and other social science surveys of Australian Jewish life, and this article aims to present the findings of the study "What do Australians know about the Holocaust?"

The survey, which was conducted by Irving Saulwick and Associates, reveals that Australian awareness of the events of the Holocaust is comparable with that found in similar recent surveys in the United States, Britain and France. Entitled "What do Australians know about the Holocaust?", the poll was the first time such a comprehensive research project has dealt with these issues in Australia. The trial questions are basically the same as those previously asked in foreign surveys, but were modified for Australian conditions by Peter Adler and Leora Harrison of AIJA and Professor Bill Rubinstein, AIJA's research consultant, in discussion with Irving Saulwick and after agreement with David Singer of the AJC.

Knowledge of the historical facts of the Nazi era is extremely high for events which occurred fifty years ago in a distant country. Over ninety-six per cent of respondents — chosen randomly from voters' lists throughout Australia — correctly identified Adolf Hitler as "the leader of Nazi Germany." Eighty-five per cent of those surveyed were able to identify Auschwitz, Dachau and Treblinka as "concentration camps" and seventy-two per cent of respondents knew that Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe were forced to wear a "yellow star." Although nearly seventy per cent of the population has heard claims made by neo-Nazi groups that the Holocaust never happened, "Holocaust denial" is *rejected*, virtually unanimously, by all respondents. Only 3.7 per cent of respondents believe that it is "possible" that the Holocaust never happened, compared with 93.2 per cent who are "certain that it happened." Nearly seventy-three per cent of respondents believe that it is "essential" or "very important" that Australians "know about and understand the Holocaust" compared with only three per cent who regard it as "not important."

The survey "What do Australians know about the Holocaust?" was conducted by the Saulwick Agency as part of its normal opinion polling process, with 1010 randomly chosen respondents interviewed in all parts of Australia. The margin of error in this survey is much the same as with polls conducted of Australian Federal election voting intentions, about 3–4 per cent. It might be noted that at the most recent Federal election the final Saulwick voting poll, taken the day before the election, was accurate to within less than one per cent of the actual outcome, predicting that the ALP would be returned with a margin of about 0.5 per cent over the Coalition. As noted, very similar surveys of knowledge of the Holocaust have been conducted during the past two years by local polling agencies in several foreign countries by the AJC. The poll carried out by the AIJA was closely modelled on these surveys, with the active cooperation of the AJC.



I should also note as clearly as possible that the outcomes found by the Saulwick poll were unknown to the AIJA (or to anyone else) before they were compiled and indeed, were the subject of a good deal of advance speculation by the Institute.

A number of questions were asked, whose aim was to ascertain how much respondents know about the events of the Holocaust. Respondents were asked "as far as you know, what does the term 'the Holocaust' refer to?" and had to reply spontaneously, without being given any clues. No fewer than eighty-eight per cent gave a relevant answer, an astonishing figure for an event which occurred half a century ago in Europe. That the Holocaust was specifically the extermination of the Jews was known by fifty-six per cent of all respondents, with seventeen per cent knowing it referred to "concentration camps", "Hitler", or the like, and fifteen per cent of those interviewed giving some answer relating to "death", while, remarkably, only 0.5 per cent of respondents (eleven persons out of 1010) claimed never to have heard of the Holocaust before. (Nearly all of these were young women.)

Impressive levels of knowledge were also shown when respondents were asked a series of factual questions. Asked "who was the leader of Nazi Germany?" and given the names of Stalin, Hitler, Hirohito and Churchill as possibilities, 96.1 per cent replied Hitler (including ninety-one per cent of 18-24 year old respondents.) This may seem self-evident, but it seems unlikely that anything like this percentage would be able to identify, say, the present Governor-General of Australia or the Premier of Queensland, let alone the dictator of a remote country half a century ago.

Asked "many Jews in Europe were forced to wear a symbol on their clothes during the Second World War. What was it?", seventy-two per cent correctly identified a "yellow star", compared with twelve per cent answering a "swastika" [!], eleven per cent "don't know", and tiny percentages a "red cross" or a "hammer and sickle". Asked "from what you know or have heard, what were Auschwitz, Dachau and Treblinka?" a quite remarkable eighty-five per cent correctly identified them as "concentration camps", compared with thirteen per cent "don't know" and very small percentages for other answers such as "battle sites". Other factual questions revealed, perhaps, less accurate knowledge. Asked "approximately how many Jews were killed in the Holocaust?" with a list of possible figures read out, forty-seven per cent correctly stated "six million". The other possible responses were as follows: 25,000, two per cent; 100,000, nine per cent; one million, twelve per cent; two million, ten per cent; twenty million, six per cent; "don't know", fourteen per cent.

Respondents were also asked the following: "in addition to the Jews, which of the following groups, if any, were persecuted by the Nazis?" and a list of groups was read out. Answers here (in percentages) were as follows:

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Gypsies	49	30	21
Poles	75	13	12
Homosexuals	47	22	30
Aryans	9	62	29



These answers would appear to show at least some familiarity with the events of the Nazis' reign of terror, although the failure of more Australians to know of the fate of the Gypsies during the war is unfortunate. All of these responses compare quite favourably with results found in parallel surveys elsewhere. For instance, "yellow star" responses to the Jewish symbol question were as follows: France, eighty-eight per cent; Britain, forty-seven per cent; USA, forty-two per cent. It is certainly remarkable that twenty-five per cent more Australians gave the correct answer to this question than did those surveyed in Britain. That Auschwitz, Dachau and Treblinka were "concentration camps" was known by ninety per cent of those surveyed in France, seventy-six per cent in Britain, and sixty-two per cent in the United States; again Australians' eighty-five per cent of correct answers is surprisingly high.

Respondents were asked "from which of the following sources, if any, have you learned about the Holocaust?", and a series of sources was read out. In descending order, eighty-two per cent learned about the Holocaust from "television", seventy-three per cent from "movies", forty-four per cent from "school", forty-three per cent from "people I know" and nine per cent from "churches and synagogues". Three aspects of this question require some analysis. First, despite the recent popularity of *Schindler's List*, the movies have not been as significant in increasing knowledge of the Holocaust as other sources, especially television. Among young (18–24 year old) respondents, sixty-eight per cent learned about the Holocaust from television, compared with fifty-four per cent from movies. Secondly, those public institutions in Australia normally seen as the primary transmitters of learning and morality — schools and churches — have generally failed to provide information about the Holocaust. In particular the churches have failed to provide information about modern history's blackest moment, although the low percentage of those learning about the Holocaust in church might be a reflection of the emptiness of their pews. Those concerned with education about the Holocaust might also like to ponder on the fact that forty-four per cent of respondents learned about the Holocaust "from school". The results here, on closer inspection, are more encouraging, for sixty-eight per cent of 18–24 year olds and fifty-six per cent of 25–39 year old respondents learned about the Holocaust "from school", far above the national average. Finally, the figure of forty-three per cent learning about the Holocaust from "people I know" seems remarkably high. Can it really be that millions of Australians spontaneously speak to each other about the Holocaust as this implies?

Respondents were also asked other questions of interest. Asked whether "the Holocaust is not relevant today because it happened almost fifty years ago", seven per cent "strongly agreed", nine per cent "mostly agreed", twenty-three per cent "mostly disagreed" and fifty-seven per cent "strongly disagreed". The very strong majority who reject the notion that the Holocaust is "irrelevant" (eighty per cent) is certainly very satisfactory and even extraordinary, as is the fact that younger respondents (aged 18–24) disagree with this proposition much more than older ones, with eighty-two per cent of younger respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. A second question in this area elicited responses which the Jewish community might find less satisfactory.

In preparing the survey, the Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs also included a number of questions that had not been a part of the earlier surveys, but were felt to be of particular interest to the Australian Jewish community. One of these questions asked "do you think that the topic of the Holocaust is sufficiently important to warrant it being taught as a special subject in Australian secondary schools?", forty-one per cent of respondents replied "yes", but fifty-five per cent replied "no" (with four per cent giving "no answer".) There were considerable differences among types of respondents, with women much more likely to respond "yes" than men (women: yes, forty-seven per cent;



no, forty-eight per cent; men: yes, thirty-five per cent; no, sixty-two per cent), and intending ALP voters more likely to reply "yes" (forty-six vs. fifty-two per cent) than intending Liberal voters (thirty-seven vs. sixty-one per cent) though not, curiously, intending National Party voters (forty-five vs. forty-seven per cent). Younger voters (18–24) were less likely to say "no" (forty-nine per cent) than their elders, but university graduates were much more likely to say "no" (sixty-three per cent) than others. These results may well reflect differing views of the best curriculum for secondary schools rather than of the Holocaust as such, with those viewing secondary education as the prelude to a career wishing to exclude non-career oriented courses.

A somewhat similar question was posed, asking respondents "in your view how important is it for Australians to know about and understand the Holocaust?" Again, the results here were very satisfactory, with twenty-nine per cent of respondents stating that it was "essential", forty-three per cent saying that it was "very important", twenty-three per cent replying that it was "somewhat important", and only three per cent claiming that it was "not important". A series of questions was asked about the likelihood of another Holocaust or similarities between the Nazi period and events today. Asked "in your view, how likely is it that the Jewish people could be subject to another Holocaust somewhere in the world in coming years?", fifteen per cent said "very likely", thirty-four per cent "somewhat likely", forty-eight per cent "not very likely", with four per cent being "don't know" respondents. Older respondents were much more likely to reply "very likely" than younger ones, although in general there were few differences among groups.

The survey asked "are there any situations similar in nature to the Holocaust going on in the world today?" A rather surprising seventy-seven per cent replied "yes" with only sixteen replying "no". The nature of the survey did not permit more detailed investigation here, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that "yes" respondents had Bosnia and perhaps Rwanda in mind. Readers will have to judge for themselves whether these analogies are accurate. Younger (18–24) respondents were much less likely to reply "yes" to this question (fifty-five per cent) and more likely to reply "no" (twenty-six per cent) than their elders. Another question asked: "in your view how likely is it that any other people could be subject to an event similar to the Holocaust somewhere in the world in coming years?" Forty-one per cent replied "very likely", forty per cent "somewhat likely", with only thirteen per cent responding "not very likely" and only four per cent "not likely at all". Younger respondents were much less likely to believe that another Holocaust was imminent than their elders, a pattern found throughout the survey.

For most Jews, the most interesting part of the AIJA poll is that relating to so-called "Holocaust denial", the view put forward by extremists that the Holocaust never happened or has been exaggerated. The survey first asked: "some people claim that the Nazi extermination of the Jews never happened. Have you ever heard this claim, or not?" Seventy per cent of respondents had heard this claim, compared with twenty-eight per cent who had not heard this claim. This finding in itself appears — if accurate — to be rather surprising, since it is difficult to see when "Holocaust denial" claims have ever received genuinely widespread publicity in Australia apart from the David Irving affair. Many more younger respondents had not heard this claim than older respondents, although in other ways the findings were similar among most groups.

The survey then asked whether respondents believed "Holocaust denial" claims in two separate ways. This rather odd procedure was done because in the parallel survey in the United States, a double negative in the original phrasing of this question seemingly produced the very disturbing result that twenty-two per cent of respondents believed that



the Holocaust might not have occurred; when the question was rephrased in a more straightforward way and asked in a second survey, this percentage declined to only three per cent.

In the Australian survey, about one-half of respondents were asked "does it seem possible to you that the Nazi extermination never happened, or do you feel certain that it happened?" Only 3.7 per cent of respondents claimed that "it seems possible it never happened" with 93.2 per cent replying that they "feel certain it happened" and 3.1 per cent "don't know". Among 18–24 year olds *only one per cent* of respondents claimed that "it seems possible it never happened", powerful disconfirmation of the view that neo-Nazis are making headway among Australian youth. About one-half of those surveyed were asked the same question in a slightly different form: "does it seem possible or does it seem impossible to you that the Nazi extermination of Jews never happened?". For whatever reason, the results here were at least marginally more disturbing, with seventeen per cent replying "it seems possible" and seventy-nine per cent replying "it seems impossible". (Again, youth were much *less* likely to respond "it seems likely" than their elders.) Why this discrepancy exists, and what its source might be, is extremely difficult to ascertain. It might be noted that 626 respondents were asked the first of these questions compared with only 415 who were asked the second, meaning that the first, more satisfactory, results are more firmly based in an accurate statistical base.

The results of this survey have very profound implications, which ought to be widely discussed and debated. In my opinion, fears that the Holocaust will be forgotten when the survivors die off is — thankfully — completely baseless. Indeed, as time goes on, there is increasing evidence that, on the contrary, the Holocaust has become one of the most universally internalised events of modern history, arguably, indeed, virtually the only facet of the Second World War which is not only widely known but a living reality to people today, including today's youth. The very uniqueness of the Holocaust, with its unique and unrelenting evil, has ensured that it has become entrenched in the consciousness of humanity in a way which is arguably unique, even in a country as remote as Australia which was unaffected by those events.



## THE ARCHIVE OF AUSTRALIAN JUDAICA AFTER TEN YEARS

*Marianne Dacy*

It is now more than ten years since the Archive of Australian Judaica was established at Sydney University. The project was launched in July 1983 with an initial grant of \$10,000 from the Australian Research Grant Scheme, and the appointment of Marianne Dacy as Librarian/Archivist/Research Assistant to the project directors.

Since its inception, the project directors have been Professor Alan Crown (head of the Semitic Studies Department), Dr Neil Radford (University Librarian) and Ms Jennifer Alison (Gift and Exchange Librarian), who retired in 1990. In the beginning, it was planned that the project would run for three years. However, since that time, it has become clear that the Archive fills a vital gap in the collection and preservation of the records of the Australian Jewish community, and that it should remain as a permanent and ongoing repository.

When the project was launched, the directors were aware that the Jewish community is one of the oldest non-indigenous, non-Christian communities in Australia, an estimated six to fourteen of its members having arrived with the First Fleet. Already, a good part of its history of self-government, detailed in community records, had been lost, underlining the urgent need to preserve records of organisations for which no definite provision for preservation had been made. In addition, the directors felt the urgent need to provide on-campus resources for the research of scholars in a whole range of disciplines which could be assisted by ready access to archives. Such facilities were not available at the University of Sydney or elsewhere in Australia.

It was also realised that both official and unofficial Australian attitudes towards migrants are reflected in microcosm through the history of the Australian Jewish community. In addition, it was believed that the growth of the Australian Jewish community and its changing settlement patterns shed light, first, on the general movement of migrants in response to world events of history, and secondly on town-country population interchanges with regard to minorities. Several studies based on original resource material in the Archive have revealed certain general patterns shared by other nationalities as well as the fact that the Jewish community has certain distinctive characteristics. This was ably represented in the film *Admission Impossible*, a documentary by Film Australia, which brought to light certain unfavourable official Australian attitudes towards migrants in the early 1950s. The Archive was able to provide the film makers with some unique documents.

A major reason for creating the Archive stemmed from the lack of a central research archive of Australian Jewish records. Though the Jewish community had established an Historical Society, first in Sydney and later in other states, records tended to be scattered at different locations, and primary resource material was obtained with difficulty by researchers. Thus, for example, papers of some organisations, such as the Zionist Federation or the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, were kept in two locations in Melbourne and Sydney, as the headquarters moved every two years between the two capitals. Many records had been thrown out when space became a problem, and others were deteriorating through lack of proper storage. Records of some organisations were in private hands, and runs of Jewish newspapers tended to be fragmented.

Hence an urgent need existed to gather together and preserve the physical resources for research into the field of the history, structure, and concerns of the Australian Jewish



community, in one central repository. It was essential that it should be easily accessible to scholars, and administered professionally, with sufficient funding to make it viable.

Thus, the Archive was to be created to

- (1) serve as a research tool for scholars writing on any aspect of the history of Jewry;
- (2) allow researchers to study the social structure of the Australian Jewish community, both for its own sake and as a microcosm of Australian official and unofficial attitudes towards minorities;
- (3) allow biographers to define, describe and write the life histories of important Jewish personalities and community leaders who have been active in the wider Australian community or in the Australian Jewish community, or in both areas;
- (4) provide a bibliography of Australian Judaica in the form of 'on line' access to bibliographical data;
- (5) preserve and safeguard the records of individuals and organisations that might otherwise be in jeopardy or lost;
- (6) assemble and film runs of all the major nineteenth and twentieth century Australian Jewish periodicals.

In essence, the Archive has achieved aims set out at the outset. The research which is supported from this material is broad-based, falling within the realms of demography, history, economics, international relations, law and politics, and embraces any research field where there is a legitimate concern about minority reactions and roles in the community. The Archive is essentially a collection of source materials relating to Jewish life in Australia from the origin of the Jewish community up to the present day. The greater portion of the holdings date from the period of the Second World War. The Australian Jewish Historical Society has older material, such as the original minute books of the York Street synagogue and many historical photographs. The two supplement one another in their work, and have worked together in several co-operative ventures.

The University Library is host to the Archive, integrating it into the routine framework of library activities while the Archive retains its own identity, receiving financial support from non-library resources, in latter years almost entirely from the Mandelbaum Trust, with running expenses and microfilming needs being supplemented from donations of Friends of the Archive. It is able to function within the Rare Book Library. Since its initial stages, the Archive has been advised and helped by the School of Librarianship (Archives) at the University of New South Wales, with several trainee archivists assisting the Archivist with cataloguing and shelving substantial acquisitions.

The focus of interest has remained Australian Jewry. Some material relating to the European background of individual donors of material, who came to Australia after the Holocaust, has been retained where appropriate, or potential donors directed to other institutions dealing directly with European Jewry.

The Archive houses a variety of records including anything of an archival or ephemeral nature, which reflects the multifaceted nature of Jewish life in Australia and its social interactions with the broader Australian community. As such, the term Archive is probably a misnomer for the professional archivist, as the material being collected covers a far wider range than might technically be considered as archival. The type of



material being collected varies from records and minute books of Jewish societies, individuals or institutions, to journals, newspapers, annual reports and newsletters issued by the Australian Jewish community. Books, pamphlets, memorabilia, ephemera, cassette tapes, videos and photographs are also collected. These diverse kinds of material accurately reflect the subtle nuances of Jewish life in this country.

The Archive now contains

- (1) over fifty collections from individuals, which include papers of a personal nature relating to their involvement in Jewish organisations in Australia as well as papers from these same organisations. Some of these individuals include Aaron Aaron, elder of the New South Wales Association of Sephardim; the papers of Max Joseph, a Holocaust survivor and a foundation member of North Shore Temple Emanuel; Yehuda Feher, active in Zionist youth activities and subsequently involved in many Jewish organisations; Rabbi Alfred Fabian; Joseph Linton, the Israel plenipotentiary to Australia; Benzion Patkin, whose papers contained rare Zionist material; and Nancy Keesing, a well-known Australian Jewish writer.
- (2) the records, partial or whole, of over thirty Australian Jewish organisations, including synagogue records. These include the archives of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Antisemitism, the Zionist Federation and State Zionist Councils, the Australasian Union of Jewish Students and the Wollongong Synagogue.
- (3) photographs of persons and places of significance to Australian Jewish history — synagogues, book launches, early Jewish agriculture in Shepparton, personalities, and *Dunera* photos. Several have appeared in books recently published on Australian Jewish history.
- (4) audio tapes, covering matters of concern to the Jewish community and personal reminiscences of activities within the community. These include the programmes of the Jewish Radio Hour from its inception in 1976, *You don't have to be Jewish*; the early seminars of the Australian Association for Jewish Studies; and oral histories. In recent years, the Australian Institute of Holocaust Studies has also lodged over 160 interviews with Holocaust survivors in New South Wales, as part of the Twelfth Hour Project of preserving testimonies of Holocaust survivors. These are kept under restricted access and may only be consulted for research with permission of the Australian Institute of Holocaust Studies.
- (5) videos have also begun to be collected, and include an interview with a Holocaust survivor, videos of the first two functions of the Jewish Arts and Culture Council, and the opening of the new Sydney Jewish Museum.
- (6) books and periodicals; early in the existence of the Archive a decision was taken that books and periodicals acquired by the Archive would be housed with the regular research collections of the Library and would be catalogued in the usual way. However, in situations where there is no parallel subject holding in the Library, e.g. printings of the Yiddish press in Australia, the books and periodicals remain in the Archive. The Archive houses a comprehensive collection of Yiddish works written by Australian writers and published here.
- (7) theses; researchers using the collection are encouraged to deposit their



earlier theses in the Archive. A condition imposed on Doctoral candidates making extensive use of the Archive is that they provide a copy of any current research work based on archival papers. Current bibliographical resources are scanned, and relevant theses from Australian universities are ordered for the Library.

(8) subject files are basically drawn from periodical and manuscript materials, and include clippings from journals and photocopies of articles. Files are kept on such topics as Jewish education, immigration, the Freeland League, Jewish communities and organisations and on individuals, and are continually being updated.

(9) it is now recognised that transient documents, generally termed ephemera, have a unique importance for social history and related disciplines. Though generally discarded, except by a few dedicated collectors, this material often provides background to historical events, and small details not preserved in official records. This material includes invitation cards, concert programmes, broadsheets and posters. A substantial collection, filed under the name of originating organisations, now exists in the Archive.

As some of the records and minutes deposited in the Archive are of a semi-confidential nature, organisations have asked for these records to be placed on restricted access. In order to keep faith with donors and depositors, researchers seeking to use restricted access papers are to bring a signed authority from the organisation concerned.

A structure which greatly facilitated the Archive's work and made it known was the setting up of publication priorities. One month after the Archive was begun, a bulletin was issued, outlining the progress made and the research aims of the Archive. This was sent to departments within Sydney University, to other universities in Australia and to academic Jewish institutions around the world, as well as persons who expressed interest in our aims. It is still published about twice yearly. Since 1986, a catalogue of the Archive's holdings has been published, at first yearly and now every two years. This serves the double purpose of making known the contents of the Archive to potential users, and also acts as a index to and catalogue of the collection.

At the end of 1993, an annotated index of early Australian Zionist material in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem was published. It is designed to act as a guide to this material for researchers, and to identify material which will be microfilmed for the Archive when sufficient funding can be obtained. Very little of this material has been preserved in Australia, and researchers into early Australian Zionism have been severely hampered by lack of resources in this country.

The Archive, although designed for researchers requiring information on different aspects of Australian Jewish life, provides material which also encompasses cross-disciplinary fields such as anthropology, geography and sociology. Users include

(1) researchers from Sydney, interstate and overseas needing original documentary material for their higher degrees.

(2) authors writing the history of Australian Jewish organisations. In latter years, especially around the time of the Bicentenary of the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, a large number of monographs on Australian Jewish history have been written, where many of the authors have used the Archive as a source of primary documentation. Such monographs include Suzanne Rutland's *The Edge of the Diaspora* (1987); a two-volume work on the Jews in Australia from 1788



to the present co-authored by Hilary and William Rubinstein (1991), and a history of the Jews of Perth by David Mossenson, *Hebrew, Israelite and Jew* (1992).

(3) individuals who need to check periodicals or original records, or the records of current organisations whose earlier papers are lodged with the Archive.

(4) creative writers of articles, books, scripts or television documentaries about the Australian Jewish community.

Requests for information arrive from a host of international and national sources, and include queries about the activities of Jewish individuals or groups who came as refugees to Australia from Europe, or were political prisoners. Now that the Archive has acquired a modem and joined the Jewish Ozzies' International Network, there are greater possibilities for exchange and the sharing of resources on Jewish studies.

Australia has had a particularly rich publication history in the matter of small magazines, journals, institutional newsletters and similar publications. In 1986 an annotated bibliography of Australian Jewish journals was published, and a second edition is in preparation. The first edition lists over three hundred journals, but since that time, over four hundred have been identified. One problem is the fragmentation of journal holdings, necessitating the searching out of private owners, and the investigation of incomplete holdings in various state libraries, so that more complete runs can be assembled. The year 1987 was marked by the publication of Serge Liberman's *Bibliography of Australian Judaica* (edited by Joy Ruth Young) with a second edition being published in 1990. This venture was supported by the Archive and financed by the Mandelbaum Trust.

Microfilming of Australian Jewish journals is an important aspect of the work done in the Archive. At this stage, most of the nineteenth century Australian Jewish papers have been filed, as well as the major twentieth century Australian Jewish newspapers. These are usually co-operative cost-sharing ventures with the Mitchell Library, the National Library or the Australian Jewish Historical Society. Many of the originals for filming were obtained from the latter.

The establishment of the Archive of Australian Judaica, and the appointment of a part-time researcher in July 1983 was made possible by an initial grant of \$10,000 from the Australian Research Grants Commission (ARGC) and the infrastructure and support given by the University Library. Financial support for the project was provided for a further three years by the ARGC and then in 1987 the Mandelbaum Trust undertook to pay the salary of the part-time archivist. Any money for filming or publication must come from other sources. Most of this is provided by a body of Friends of the Archive, who each year undertake to give donations to the Archive. The present funding allows for the archivist to run the Archive for three days a week. Researchers requiring material on the other days are directed to the staff of the Rare Books Library.

It is envisaged that the microfilming and assembling of more complete runs of Australian Jewish journals will continue. Filming projects for the future include the filming of the *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, the *Bridge*, the *Zionist*, journals of B'nai B'rith, and various synagogues. There are also hopes that more of the older records of Australian synagogues will be filmed, including those of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation, the York Street Synagogue (the predecessor of the Great Synagogue, Sydney) as well as records of the latter, records from the Hobart Hebrew Congregation and Margaret Street, Brisbane. Filming of records from the Perth Hebrew Congregation



was carried out by the Batty Library, and copies of records from Hobart and Queensland actually filmed by the state libraries have been obtained for the Archive.

A great deal of early Australian Jewish material was not preserved, but material on Australian Jewry is kept in Jewish archives outside Australia. This material is to be found in the USA, Britain and Israel. In June and July 1993, the archivist listed and viewed Australian material in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, so that when sufficient funds are available, selections of this material can be microfilmed for and made available to researchers in Australia. It is also known that Australian material exists in a great number of Jewish archives in Britain. The material is widely scattered, and often not indexed, making the identification of this material difficult. Research into Australian material in British archives would be a worthwhile project for the future, being likely to yield material about colonial relationships hitherto not properly documented. An initial investigation of Jewish archives in the USA has revealed the presence of Australian material in the YIVO archives in New York, and in the Abba Hillel Silver archives in Cleveland, Ohio.

### **PUBLICATIONS OF THE ARCHIVE OF AUSTRALIAN JUDAICA**

- 1983+ From August, a bulletin which is published about twice a year. Entitled *Casual Bulletin*. Archive of Australian Judaica. Early issues written by Alan Crown, and now continued by Marianne Dacy.
- 1984 Marianne Dacy, "Archive of Australian Judaica". *Australia/Israel Review*, vol. 9, no. 14, 2-15 August 1984.
- Marianne Dacy, "Archive of Australian Judaica". *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 12, no. 2, November 1984.
- 1985+ From 1985, a catalogue of the holdings of the Archive has been published yearly.
- Monograph no. 1, *Archive of Australian Judaica. Holdings to 1985*. Edited by Jennifer Alison, Alan Crown, Marianne Dacy and Neil Radford.
- Monograph no. 3, *Archive of Australian Judaica. Holdings to 1986*. Compiled by Marianne Dacy, edited by Jennifer Alison, Alan Crown and Neil Radford.
- Monograph no. 4, *Archive of Australian Judaica. Holdings to 1987*. Compiled by Marianne Dacy, edited by Jennifer Alison, Alan Crown and Neil Radford.
- Monograph no. 5, *Archive of Australian Judaica. Holdings to 1988*. Compiled by Marianne Dacy, edited by Jennifer Alison, Alan Crown and Neil Radford.
- Monograph no. 6, *Archive of Australian Judaica. Holdings to 1989*. Compiled by Marianne Dacy, edited by Jennifer Alison, Alan Crown and Neil Radford.
- Monograph no. 7, *Archive of Australian Judaica. Holdings to 1990*. Compiled by Marianne Dacy, edited by Jennifer Alison, Alan Crown and Neil Radford.
- Monograph no. 8, *Archive of Australian Judaica. Holdings to 1991/2*. Compiled by Marianne Dacy, edited by Alan Crown and Neil Radford.
- 1986 Marianne Dacy (author), Jennifer Alison, Alan Crown and Neil Radford (editors). Monograph no. 2. *Periodical Publications from the Australian Jewish Community*. 169pp.
- 1988 Marianne Dacy. "The Jewish Press: try and try again". *The Australian Jewish Times*, 10 June 1988, p. 24.



1983-1993 Marianne Dacy. Several short articles published in the Church Archivists' Society Newsletter, and in Lib, the University of Sydney Library's newsletter.

1993 Monograph no. 9. Early Australian Zionism. An Annotated Index of Records in the Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem. Compiled with an introduction by Marianne Dacy. General editors: A.D. Crown and N.A. Radford.

*In preparation*

A second edition of Monograph no. 2, Periodical Publications from the Australian Jewish Community and Monograph no. 10, Archive of Australian Judaica. Holdings to 1994.

*To appear in 1994*

"The Archive of Australian Judaica at the University of Sydney" (to appear in the volume devoted to the history of the Jewish people of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies), and "Unusual Collections" in a Festschrift dedicated to a librarian of a large theological collection.

Practical editorial assistance was given, and the following bibliography was published, by the Archive jointly with the Mandelbaum Trust.

1987 A Bibliography of Australian Judaica. Compiled by Serge Liberman. Edited and Indexed by Joy Ruth Young. Sydney (Mandelbaum Trust, University of Sydney). This edition incorporated Periodical Publications from the Australian Jewish Community.

1991 A Bibliography of Australian Judaica. Compiled by Serge Liberman. Edited by Laura Gallou. Sydney (Mandelbaum Trust and the University of Sydney Library).



## 100 YEARS AGO: EXTRACTS FROM THE *JEWISH HERALD*

*Compiled by Lorraine Freeman*

**100 Years** is a selection from the *Jewish Herald* of 1894, chosen to give you, the reader, the flavour, interests and values of the time.

The year 1894 fell in the midst of the economic Depression years. Unemployment, and the need to raise money for charity, accompanied by sensitivity to signs of anti-Semitism, were the worries of the Victorian Jewish community, and the arrival of Jews from Russia had strained communal resources.

An appalling crime which horrified all Victoria occurred early in the year, when Isaac Crawcour, a young medical student, was fatally wounded by a burglar.

The year ended with the last issue of 28 December containing reference to an infamous crime when "Our London Correspondent" mentions the arrest of Captain Alfred Dreyfus. The Correspondent hopefully suggests that Dreyfus might yet prove to be a heroic agent deliberately selling false information to the Germans on behalf of France.

*Shechita* was very much an ongoing concern and a major struggle erupted at the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation about the appointment of a *shochet*. The proposed amalgamation of the Melbourne and East Melbourne Hebrew Congregations to solve financial burdens, and the threat of Reform Judaism were other preoccupations.

Some of the pleasures and entertainments have also been included.

MISS FLORENCE MENK-MEYER (we learn from our Home files), the celebrated Australian composer and pianist, has just concluded a series of most successful piano recitals in Brussels, and a few weeks ago made her *debut* in Antwerp before an overflowing house. Miss Menk-Meyer was to enter upon her engagement for Holland, after that playing at The Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Leyden, &c.



JANUARY 26, 1894.]

## A BRAVE JEWISH YOUNG MAN.

CRUELLY MURDERED BY A BURGLAR.

**H**OW young Crawcour came by his sad death everybody has read in the daily papers. Isaac Samuel Crawcour, a medical student, aged 21, and the only son of Mr. Michael Crawcour, of Williamstown, was raised from his sleep early on Friday morning, 12th January, by his mother, who asked him to go downstairs to assist his father, who had preceded him thither under the impression—only too well founded—that there were burglars on the premises. Without a moment's consideration, and in no way armed, young Isaac proceeded downstairs just in time to see one of the fellows decamp through a back-room window after having fired two shots at Mr. Crawcour, senior, which, fortunately, however, missed their mark. But Isaac swiftly perceived that there was another robber on the premises, and with him he closed. The struggle was short but fierce, and when the fellow found that he was overpowered he used the revolver he carried with him, sending a ball right through young Crawcour's body. Though mortally wounded, Isaac gallantly stuck to his man until his father relieved him of his charge. Then, and only then, did the brave young man think of himself, and running outside into the street, and having called for assistance, he dropped on the footpath from shock and exhaustion by loss of blood. A working-man from the neighbouring gasworks, and also a policeman, soon appeared on the scene, and when the robber was apprehended and secured attention was directed to the wounded young man. He was carefully carried into the house, and two medical men were at once sent for, but alas! it was at once seen that his condition was all but hopeless. The bullet had penetrated the pleural cavity and the diaphragm, perforating the left lobe of the liver, the walls of the stomach, and coming out just beneath the twelfth rib, 2½ inches from the spine. During the day, Friday, he rallied somewhat, and it was hoped that his splendid constitution would carry him through, but alas! the rallying was only the last glare of an expiring ember, and soon after mid-day on Saturday, 13th January, Isaac Crawcour passed peacefully away, to the deep regret of almost every man, woman and child in the community. Amongst people of his own age especially he was a great favourite, having been a prominent athlete, and in every way a genial companion.



The second burglar, who had escaped, was also soon apprehended, and at the coroner's inquest, which was held on Monday, 15th January, and continued on the following Friday both were committed for trial, the one on a charge of wilful murder, the other on being an accessory before the fact.

The funeral of the deceased took place on Monday, 15th January. Proceeding from Williamstown early in the afternoon, the *cortège* halted at the Bourke-street Synagogue, where it was joined by a very large gathering of people who knew the deceased, and who deeply sympathised with his parents in their bereavement. Indeed, Mr. and Mrs. Crawcour have received letters and telegrams of condolence from all parts of the colony, amongst others a telegram from the Hon. J. B. Patterson, the Premier. Keen as their grief must be they will find some consolation, however small, in the knowledge that their beloved son lost his life in a manful struggle for the maintenance of law and order, ever as it befits a loyal citizen of this free and Heaven-favoured country. ה'תשס"ה

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FOR the Passover holidays, as for those of the New Year and the Day of Atonement, we always look forward to large attendances at our synagogues; but it is never safe to calculate in this respect without taking the weather into account, and this year the clerk of the weather once more played us false. It was indeed thought that, Passover falling late this year, the weather would be more settled than it usually is at the change of the seasons, but such was not the case, and there is no doubt that the inclement and boisterous weather on the first day of the festival affected the attendance considerably, especially as far as the ladies were concerned. Many of the male sex who did not put in an appearance on the first day did so on the second, which happened to fall on a Sunday—a very convenient day; but in these times, when the religious thermometer does not range much above zero, one has to be thankful for a good attendance at any time.

### NOTES AND NEWS.

ON the occasion of the Rev. Dr. Abrahamis preaching a sermon in memoriam of young Crawcour, the president and treasurer of the East Melbourne Congregation occupied seats in the *Parnass* box of the Bourke-street Synagogue. This seemed to augur well for the successful solution of the amalgamation movement. There was a good congregation on the same occasion, including some non-Jewish visitors.



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MELBOURNE, FRIDAY, 4th MAY, 5654—1894.

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THERE can be little doubt that the coming winter will witness more distress than has been seen for many a year, and it is equally certain that the Jewish community will have its fair share, if not more. By the general public we are, as a rule, considered a very wealthy community, and one amongst whom a destitute person is a *rara avis*. This, however, is far from being the case. At the present moment the managers of the two Jewish charities in Melbourne, for instance, find themselves face to face with an altogether out of the way number of applications for relief, and a depleted treasury, and a short time ago the principal Jewish charity in Sydney was in precisely the same position. That these charities should receive the heartiest support from everybody goes without saying. Nor is it to this alone that we would call attention. What we would impress upon our communities is this—that at a time such as the present *all* our efforts should be concentrated upon the support of our recognised institutions. Unfortunately, the sources of charity, even those that used to flow most generously, are at present considerably crippled. Everybody finds his income reduced and has to practise economy. It follows, therefore, that whatever there is available for the relief of the distressed fellow-man should be so laid out as to do the utmost amount of good and should be given to the most deserving of the poor. Now, whatever some people may say against the management of our charitable societies—and let it be remembered no human institution is absolutely perfect—they make inquiries into every case that presents itself to them for relief, and their action in each case is the result of the joint deliberations of many heads, which are proverbially better than one head.

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WE notice with great pleasure that Mr. B. A. Levinson has recently gained the Bowen Prize for English essay at the Melbourne University. He is, we believe, the youngest student to whom that honour has fallen. Another University distinction, the Mollison Prize for Modern Languages, has been awarded to Mr. Walter Rosenhaim, a very promising undergraduate. Both these gentlemen were educated at Wesley College. Mr. P. C. De Beer gained the Waugh Scholarship at that college at the end of last year.



## KOSHER MEAT.

(TO THE EDITOR OF THE "JEWISH HERALD.")

SIR,—There are two questions at the present time enthusiastically engaging the attention of our community, viz.:—That of the amalgamation of the Bourke-street and East Melbourne Synagogues and the *Shouchatim* question. These are considered matters of serious and urgent importance. I venture to say that there is a matter of still more importance affecting our community at this present moment owing to the depressed times and the poverty that is existing in our midst, and which should arrest our attention more seriously than that of either of the above causes, because, firstly, should the two synagogues amalgamate the very next day another congregation will spring forth, so that there will still be two congregations, and with respect to the *Shouchat* I think the executive of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, especially, have no cause to quarrel, because it is immaterial to them which *Shouchat* is elected; then again, I don't see any benefit in their quarrel, because they have already a *Shouchat*.

If an amalgamation is to take place, I would suggest that it should be in the form of the two congregations combining to assist our poor in securing *Kosher* meat at a price within their reach, as at the present time it is much beyond their means. Take, for instance, the price of meat in the butcher shops of our non-Jewish neighbours. Being a judge of meat for human consumption, and a very close observer of the many butcher shops I pass, I can frankly say that I have seen prime ribs of beef selling at 3d. per lb., bolla of beef and top rib at 2d. and 2½d. per lb., and short rib at 2d. per lb., and fore-quarter of mutton at 1½d. per lb. Then why should our poor Jews pay for theirs 6d., 5d. and 5d., and 4d. per lb. for chops? I know myself there is a little trouble attached to our mode of slaughtering—viz., that of roping the bullock—but there is no extra trouble in killing sheep; therefore, surely if the Jewish people would be charged 15 per cent. above that of our Christian butchers' prices, it would be ample recompense for the slaughterman's trouble.

If the two congregations were to combine together to rectify this important matter, they would deserve more credit and receive in abundance the blessings and best thanks of the Jewish community in general, and at the same time confer a great boon upon wives and mothers, to whom every penny in these times is an object.—Hoping I have not trespassed too much upon the space of your valuable journal, I remain, yours, etc.,

RIGHTEOUS.



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*MELBOURNE, FRIDAY, 10th AUGUST, 5654—1894.*

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### A SILVER WEDDING.

MR. and Mrs. S. Jacoby, the Mayor and Mayoress of St. Kilda, celebrated on Saturday last their silver wedding at their private residence, "Tudor Lodge," Victoria-street, St. Kilda. In the morning Mr. and Mrs. Jacoby, accompanied by their daughter and three sons, as well as by Mr. Horwitz (Mrs. Jacoby's father) and Miss Horwitz (her sister), attended the local synagogue. The gentlemen were called to the *Torah*, and made liberal offerings. During the day a large number of friends called and tendered their congratulations, while absent ones sent congratulatory telegrams. Mr. and Mrs. Jacoby were also the recipients of a large number of handsome presents and floral tributes. In the afternoon the councillors of St. Kilda in a body waited on Mr. and Mrs. Jacoby, and over a glass of wine made a very handsome presentation to them, consisting of a silver and glass punch bowl. The Hon. George Turner, M.L.A., in making the presentation, spoke in highly complimentary terms of the esteem in which Mr. and Mrs. Jacoby were held by all classes of citizens, and of the valuable services Mr. Jacoby had rendered in the capacity of Mayor of the city. Mr. and Mrs. Jacoby have the happy knack of making many friends wherever they may reside, and their removal from Hamilton a few years ago was as much regretted as their arrival in St. Kilda was hailed with pleasure. During their residence in the latter, no less than in the former, place, they have always been foremost in promoting charitable movements, and cultivating good fellowship amongst all classes of society. Hence the general expressions of good will towards them on the 25th anniversary of their wedding day. In the evening a few of their most intimate friends were invited to a theatre party at the Princess', and afterwards returned to "Tudor Lodge," where a most pleasant day was brought to a conclusion by a supper party. It is to be hoped that Mr. and Mrs. Jacoby may be spared in perfect health and happiness to celebrate their Golden Wedding.



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MELBOURNE, FRIDAY, 7th SEPTEMBER, 5654—1894.

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THE proposed amalgamation of the two Melbourne Congregations has now been disposed of, the first clause of the scheme affirming the desirableness of such amalgamation having been rejected by a majority of the members of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation. It is a pity that the Board of Management of that congregation did not first consult its leading members on the subject, in which case the valuable time and labour which was spent in drafting the scheme would have been saved. If a scheme that conferred all possible advantages on one side was still unacceptable to that side, then it was clear from the commencement that amalgamation was out of the question. And, after all, what is the good of an outward amalgamation as long as true brotherly feeling, so essential to unity, is absent; as long as one section of the community, for reasons best known to itself and to itself only, considers that it is so much superior to the other? Even if the scheme had been carried by the one body the probability that it would have been carried also by the other was extremely remote. For the members of the East Melbourne Congregation are too clear-headed a body to readily abandon all the advantages on their side merely to satisfy a sentimentality which attaches the utmost importance to the Bourke-street Synagogue, when, as a place of worship, it has outlived its usefulness. To give and to take is the rule in all sorts of combinations, but in the scheme under consideration the taking was all on one side and the giving on the other. The scheme lacked every condition of its being safely piloted through.

The amalgamation question being now a thing of the past, each congregation will, of course, go its own way and do the best it can. Let there be by all means emulation; it is the mother of good results. But let there be no unseemly rivalry in which unfair means are employed. We are all Jews, and profess to have the interests of our holy religion at heart. Let us remember that these interests are not served, nor do we raise either our religion or ourselves in the estimation of others by internal dissension. Sir Benjamin Benjamin's ungenerous and uncharitable remarks concerning the other congregation may be taken for what they are worth, and that is nothing. Anyhow, the members of the East Melbourne Congregation can afford to look upon them with a contemptible smile. No reasonable man will blame them for what Sir Benjamin blandly calls

"going round with the hat," but what people of a more generous disposition would call making an appeal for aid in getting rid of a crushing overdraft. To do that is better than to go deeper into debt from year to year. Such appeals have been made before, and have always met with a fairly liberal response. Let the East Melbourne Congregation gather its forces, and work harmoniously together, and it will have the sympathy and good-will of an overwhelming section of the whole Jewish community. There is but one royal road to the prosperity of a congregation, and that is שלום—peace and harmony. There is little fear that the East Melbourne synagogue will be closed on account of the foreclosure of the mortgage. If such a thing came about, as Mr. Zox justly pointed out, it would be a stigma upon the whole Jewish community. On the other hand, Sir Benjamin may institute reforms in every direction from the Chief Rabbi's administration down to *Erev Tarsheelin*, time will show whether by that means he will perceptibly increase the attendance at Divine Service any more than equally ardent, and perhaps a trifle more capable, reformers did in other parts of the world. Improve the religious feeling of the community, and a good attendance at the synagogue will follow as a natural consequence. This, however, may be safely asserted, while the leading men of the community launch out in disparaging remarks about their co-religionists, those that stand aloof from the synagogue are not likely to be drawn any nearer to it.

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## OUR HOME LETTER.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

London, 16th November, 1894.

AS I anticipated in my last letter, the Czar's death, which was then imminent, has since become a matter of history, and although he is even now unburied, his actual demise took place several days ago. It is a little difficult for a Jew to write all that he feels on the subject. We are taught not to rejoice when our enemy falleth, but he is not the less our enemy when he does fall. We may feel the deepest sympathy with his relatives, especially with his widowed Empress; we must have human regret for his personal sufferings. But it were cant and hypocrisy to pretend that as Jews we do not feel a sensation of relief that the arch-enemy of six millions of our co-religionists is now removed from all chance to further oppress or further torture us. Nor does it in the least detract from such a sensation that we may, as many of us do, believe that the late Czar was conscientiously and *bona fide* under the impression that, in carrying out his policy of Jew-baiting, he was



fulfilling a solemn religious duty. It is not for man to judge of the motives of man. We can but deal with deeds and facts. Alexander has been summoned to the judgment seat, and there will he render an account of his stewardship, and there, perhaps, will he be able to justify. But in the judgment which, ever since the days of the Pharaohs, all peoples have held upon all dead kings, he will not, he cannot, justify. In the judgment of history Alexander of Russia must rank with the Ferdinands and Tituses and Pharaohs of the past.

It has been stated in the Press that the Jews of England, with a generosity described as truly Christian, but which would surely have been merely inhuman, had prayed and wept in the synagogues of London for the dying Emperor, as though he had been a very saviour of our race, loving us and by us loved. Such conduct, had it taken place, would have sufficed to make us the laughing-stock of our neighbours, and would have surely justified the stigma of insincerity and dishonesty and lying with which some people are only too ready to stain us. It is not the fact that in any English congregation the Jews offered up prayer for the Czar, with the one exception of a prayer meeting, summoned and addressed by the Rev. B. Schewzik, and duly reported, magnified and exaggerated by the papers. But Mr. Schewzik is entirely unattached; he is a Russian of but few years' residence in England; he himself describes himself as neither "restrained" nor "responsible," and, though of some influence as a demagogue in Whitechapel, it would be absurd and ridiculous to characterise him as in any sense a representative man.

In France, however, it is the fact that there were organised special services in synagogue as well as church to pray for the "Friend of France." The Grand Rabbi, Dr. Zadoc Kahn, preached eloquently on the occasion, and, though even in this case many people have thought that it was a work of supererogation to strain the sincerity of a Jewish congregation to such a pitch, the matter is ever so much more excusable in France than it would have been in England. France has been so long isolated in Europe, and her children are so passionately patriotic, that sentimental affection for the one potentate who of late years has extended to her the hand of friendship is almost intelligible. And in France the Jews have always been prominent amongst their fellow-citizens in the Army as in the Forum and the Chamber for being loyal and devoted to their country almost to excess.

This very fact makes the sad case of Captain Dreyfus, who is charged with the most sordid of crimes—that of High Treason for pecuniary profit—all the more galling to the French Jews. Men who know him say that they cannot conceive it to be possible that he should have betrayed the secrets of his country and sold them to a foreign State. It is difficult to imagine a motive strong enough to impel him to such a crime. He was rich, and needed no money; his social position was excellent, and his wife charming. He had everything to lose and apparently nothing to gain by proving himself unworthy of the high rank he held in the French War Office. The incident has naturally enabled Drumont and his crew to give tongue and proclaim the impossibility of Faithfulness and Honour in a Jew. Many of the newspapers clamour for his blood—a few, very few, suggest that the crime has not yet been established. He is under arrest, but not yet sentenced or even condemned. Some suggest that an Italian Delilah may have stolen the documents from him, and that the offence, if any, is the more venial for not being venal. The Opposition journals complain that the French Government is only half-hearted in their persecution, and that “powerful protection” may finally result in his wrongful acquittal. But may not the very fact of the Government’s lukewarm procedure supply the key to the mystery, for a mystery it undoubtedly is? May not Dreyfus turn out to be of the romantic kidney of Cooper’s spy, who pretended to betray his country for his country’s good, and that what he did he did to hoodwink a possible enemy, and that the plans he pretended to purloin were specially prepared for the purpose? If this be the truth, it is certainly better than the general suspicion; but even so we would not defend it, no, not even we English who, less than a hundred years ago, accorded to Major André a monument in Westminster Abbey. But enough of this subject, which at the best is not a savoury one.

Russia is now ruled by a new Czar, and our hopes are high that Nicholas will make good what Alexander spoiled. And, indeed, the young Emperor has commenced well. Even his Jewish subjects have been graciously thanked for their sympathy. A Chancellor of the Empire is to be appointed and Pobiedonostzew shelved, and there are even whispers of a Constitution to be promulgated and an elective Assembly brought together. If, indeed, this be done, then may Nicholas the Third rest assured that in all the Russias he will have no subjects more devoted or more satisfactory than the Jews, who have so long had to endure in the shade of his Imperial father’s displeasure and injustice.



## WHAT REFORM HAS DONE IN AMERICA.

AT the present time, when leading members of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation are clamouring for reforms in the service—and reforms of a most radical character—it might be both interesting and instructive to consider an incident which happened in New York a few months ago. It appears that a certain Mrs. Esther J. Ruskay, a lady who has certainly the courage of her opinion, was invited to read a paper before a women's meeting held in the Temple Emanuel, of which Dr. Gottheil, formerly of Manchester, is the chief minister. The Temple Emanuel, it may be explained, is the chief stronghold of reform in the United States. It has its own ritual, an organ and a choir, the members of which need not necessarily be Jews or Jewesses; as long as they are artists they are eligible for the choir. Men and women sit together, and the former with uncovered heads. The *Tallith* is dispensed with, and so is "the calling up" to the *Torah*. Yet in this stronghold of reform, Mrs. Ruskay, in the paper she read, was bold enough to attack the reform policy and to expose the mischief it has done, or, at any rate, to show that, to a large extent, it has failed to realise the anticipations of its advocates. This she did, to all appearances, so successfully that Dr. Gottheil, contrary to the rules of etiquette generally observed towards a lady, felt impelled to interrupt her with the remark that he did not believe her statements to be true. Mrs. Ruskay, however, proceeded with her paper. She stated that among the Jews of America there was no family life, because parents had allowed themselves to drift away from the time-honoured observances of their faith. The Jewish young people were becoming indifferent to the teachings of the Hebrew faith, and Christmas and Easter had practically taken the place of Hebrew festivals. She wished, she said, to see a reawakening of the old spirit of Judaism.

SPEAKING of the Jews in Russia reminds us of some remarks made recently by the *Jewish World* in reference to the question whether or not Australia, *at present*, offers a suitable field for Russian Jewish agriculturists. Our English contemporary says :—“ Our Australian contemporary, the *Jewish Herald*, paints a very gloomy picture of life in Australia, and says all it can to discourage the immigration of Russian Jews to that country. Its arguments, however, are far from convincing. There may, indeed, be a scarcity of work for skilled artisans in the establishments of manufacturers, whose capital has been diminished through participation in the general over-speculation that has operated so injuriously in Australia ; there may also be no room for men who want to make a big commercial success out of farming ; but while there is an abundance of valuable land not yet brought under cultivation, and which can be had for the asking, Australia would seem, of all countries, one of the best adapted for the Russian Jewish agriculturist, with his indomitable industry, frugality and sobriety, to succeed in. The victims of Russian persecution would not go to Australia to invest money, neither would they go to beg aid from the Government. All they desire is the opportunity to live by their labour unoppressed, and with the free right to observe their religion and customs. This they could do in a fertile country like Australia if merely placed upon the land. Their labour would, however, not only be their own salvation, but a decided benefit to the country, for its waste land would be brought under cultivation, and its resources developed.” Now, all this reads well on paper, but how would it work if put to a practical test ? The *Jewish World* will please remember that it is not on freedom alone that men are able to subsist ; they want something else besides. And if our own farmers, for a variety of reasons over which they have no control, are unable to make ends meet, how can Russian Jews do it, men, however industrious and frugal they may be, are still placed at many disadvantages in comparison with those already settled on Australian soil ? It is not a question of making a big commercial success out of farming, but of making a bare living. When in the best Victorian farming districts, milk, of first-class quality, fetches no more than threepence a gallon delivered at the butter factories, and wheat is sold at a price which will not pay the cost of production, surely making “ a big commercial success out of farming ” is not to be thought of.



IN addition to all this there is another, and, perhaps, equally potent reason, why at present Jewish immigration to Australia should not be encouraged. There is amongst the working-classes a strong feeling against *all* immigration. They consider that until sufficient work has been found for the colonists already here anything in the shape of wholesale immigration is undesirable, and we may be sure that, in the case of Russian Jews coming in large numbers to this country, a very strong feeling, something like anti-Semitism, would at once spring up. Only a short time ago, when about half-a-dozen Russian Jews were sent up the country to work as farm-hands, an agitation was set on foot by the Ballarat Trades Hall against this, to their mind, very undesirable thing. Of course, we know that all this is more prejudice, but it is not desirable that such a latent feeling should be fanned into a bright flame, and while there are other countries where Russian Jews are more likely to succeed in earning their bread by the sweat of their brow, Australia might very well be left out of the question.

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(TO THE EDITOR OF THE "JEWISH HERALD.")

SIR,—With reference to the letter of Mr. A. Davis in your last issue, in which he states that I admitted to him that I had certainly promised my assistance to Mr. Goldsmith (meaning thereby that I had promised him the vacant position of *Shouchat*), I must beg of you to permit me to give that statement an absolute and unqualified denial. The only time that the subject was ever mentioned between Mr. Davis and myself was in the presence of Mr. G. Eilenberg, who will bear me out in my contradiction of Mr. Davis' assertion—I am, yours, etc.,

JACOB LENZER.

40 Napier-street, Fitzroy,

## BOOK REVIEWS

### A CASE TO ANSWER: THE STORY OF AUSTRALIA'S FIRST EUROPEAN WAR CRIMES PROSECUTION

*David Bevan*

*(Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1994; 264pp; Paperback. \$16.95)*

Australia has a long history when it comes to bringing war criminals to justice. Under the *War Crimes Act 1945*, no less than 275 separate trials were conducted by Australian military authorities after the Second World War, resulting in 644 convictions and 148 executions. These were almost all Japanese; Australia played no part in the trial of European war criminals other than where Australians had been directly involved as the aggrieved party. The legislation did not allow for civil courts, so it was only where military jurisdiction held sway that the Australians were able to intervene.

The situation was changed by major revisions to the Act in the late 1980s, and this book is an account of the first European war crimes case prosecuted as a result of the *War Crimes (Amendment) Act* of 1988. It is a very good book; my broad conclusion is that as a journalist David Bevan makes an excellent historian. Here we have a tightly-written work which neatly develops its story and — in the long run — reads like a racy courtroom drama. Once Bevan gets into his account of the trial process of Adelaide's Ivan Polyukhovich, it is difficult to put the book down. This is a captivating piece of writing.

Ivan Timofeyevich Polyukhovich, 73, was charged in January 1990 with the murder of 24 people in the Ukraine between 1941 and 1943, and of complicity in the murders of about 850 others during a Nazi pit killing of Jews in the village of Serniki in 1942. The Adelaide press corps, of which David Bevan was a member, had a field day with the two trials which followed. Sensational images were portrayed on a daily basis: Nazis, Jews, a befuddled old man who seemed not to know what was going on around him, protesters, the spectre of racial tension; all of these were employed to the full.

There were pictures of swastikas and barbed wire, as well as some wonderfully juicy and sensationalist headlines to tempt readers. Story lines and editorial comments were often questionable in terms of quality, but few people seemed to care: the war crimes circus was exciting, and that seemed to count for more than media objectivity.

Often the question of war crimes was portrayed as an issue between "Jews" and "Nazis", with "the Australians" on the sidelines; from time to time the issue was seen as Federal politics intruding on States' rights; almost always, the picture was of an aged Adelaide pensioner, innocent or not, who was being forced to live again through the horrors of fifty years ago. It seemed as though no section of the media could resist adding the word "pensioner" whenever the accused's name was mentioned. Only rarely did the media report the case as being one of due legal process in accordance with the Law of the Land — a law, by the way, which had been upheld and legitimised by a decision of the High Court.

This book goes a long way towards rehabilitating what might be described as the ongoing irresponsibility of the media over the war crimes issue. Written by one of their own — David Bevan was throughout much of the Polyukhovich case a court reporter for Adelaide's *Advertiser* — the book shows us the painstaking attention to detail which



the Australian Federal Police brought to the case, the intricacies of courtroom procedure, and the manner in which both the prosecution and the defence sought to present their case. We see the impact of the trial on the lives of the main protagonists; the investigators, the witnesses, the barristers, the junior counsel and those sitting in judgement.

Interestingly, the only person portrayed as a bystander throughout the trials was the accused himself. Bevan displays a sensitivity for Ivan Polyukhovich which seems to emanate from a sincere concern for this elderly man's physical and mental well-being. It is all too rarely, however, that we actually get to see (and even less, hear) Polyukhovich. The text is crammed with the people to whom I referred earlier; it was they who took over the Polyukhovich case, along the way relegating the man himself to nothing more than a bit player. Depictions of the trial as nothing but an expensive playground for lawyers were frequent during throughout the proceedings, and it was through citing these that opponents of war crimes prosecutions often found considerable support among the wider population. David Bevan's book should, I hope, go a long way towards disabusing people that the war crimes process was nothing but a money-making racket for lawyers, for the situation was indeed far more complex than that.

Furthermore, Bevan skilfully explores the nature of the very important relationships that are built at times like these, and through which so much of the "real" business takes place. We learn about some of the hidden and open agenda, and are taken into the behind-the-scenes world which the public never got to see during the phase of hysterical media reportage. We see, for example, that the lawyers of the prosecution team developed a genuine concern for the justice they were pursuing, and that they formed a special — even pastoral — relationship with the witnesses they assembled from various parts of the world. Equally, the defence team developed its own close connections with the accused, doing all they could to have him acquitted. Bevan is keen to point out that both sides were determined not to allow the case to get carried away in a flood of emotional rhetoric, and fought the case strictly on points of evidence and the nature of justice rather than on the furphy of whether war crimes trials should or should not have been held. There was a lot of playing to the court, but little or no posturing to the public. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that both sides of the case conducted themselves in an exemplary manner. We see from this book that the two Polyukhovich trials were far from being the "kangaroo courts", "star chambers" or "witch hunts" which their detractors so frequently asserted they would become.

Bevan is far less generous in his depiction of the judge in the Supreme Court trial, Justice Brian Cox. He indicates from courtroom vignettes that Cox was not always on top of the precise nature of what was happening in his own courtroom, and that his instructions to the jury members prior to them retiring to consider their verdict was clearly prejudicial to the prosecution's case. One discerns not only the enormous frustration experienced by the prosecution; Bevan depicts Cox's approach as one which seemingly brought the impartiality of the justice system into question. Bevan, in describing Justice Cox's summation, clearly empathises with the prosecution; not over the rights or wrongs of the case, but on simple grounds of fair play and adherence to procedure.

The final feature of the trials Bevan conveys is the manner in which the State's case against Ivan Polyukhovich became increasingly whittled away by those who had presided over the various stages of the trial process. From what had originally seemed like a series of open-and-shut cases of first degree murder and second-degree participation in mass murder, the Bench ruled in numerous instances that various aspects of the prosecution's case were inadmissible. This happened with such frequency that in the



end there was hardly any case left for the defendant to answer. The Supreme Court trial on which a jury of Adelaide citizens were required to render a verdict finally came down to such a minimal case of participation in war crimes that most of the prosecution's plans were rendered untenable. On this basis, irrespective of Justice Cox's directions to the jury, there would seem to have been little on which a conviction could have been brought against Ivan Polyukhovich. Again, Bevan conveys admirably the frustration felt by the prosecution team at this ongoing reduction of the charges brought against the accused; his construct is one in which the cards were stacked against the State from the word go.

And so, having run the full gauntlet of the Australian justice system, Ivan Polyukhovich was cleared of all war crimes charges previously laid against him.

Under Australian justice it was not beyond reasonable doubt that the perpetrator of the crimes in Serniki was Ivan Polyukhovich. David Bevan does not offer any personal judgements as to whether *he* thinks Polyukhovich was guilty or not, and I think that is a good thing. We must be prepared to accept that our laws and the system which administers them should be upheld until repealed or amended in the proper manner. If we are to feel comfortable living in this society, it is vital that we acknowledge and accept the indispensability of due process as an integral part of our democracy.

As David Bevan shows, once the jury took the decision to acquit Polyukhovich the prosecution team took only a short while to conclude that it was not going to be worthwhile launching an appeal in this instance; tried by a jury of his peers, Ivan Polyukhovich was found to be not guilty. End of story.

Of course, we know it is not the end of the story. As this review is being written, war crimes investigations pertaining to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina are taking place in The Hague. Earlier this year, genocide erupted in Rwanda, and countries around the world wrung their hands doing nothing while hundreds of thousands were slaughtered. In other trouble spots, massive racial and cultural abuses are taking place on a daily basis. Australia's *War Crimes (Amendment) Act 1988* does not encompass the perpetrators of these new horrors, but the experience of the Polyukhovich case will certainly have served its purpose if Australians now see more clearly the need to act morally in the face of brutality and racist violence. There is surely no coincidence in the fact that, as we see in the final pages of David Bevan's book, several of the leading lights prosecuting Ivan Polyukhovich have since joined the war crimes investigations at the Hague. We await with interest the outcome of their work.

Dr. Paul R. Bartrop

## I WAS A TEENAGE FASCIST

*David Greason (Ringwood, Vic.: McPhee Gribble, 1994. xi, 311pp. Paperback. \$16.95)*

This is the story, so to speak, of an apprentice who never practised the craft which he was taught. That is comforting news, for that craft was right-wing extremism of the racist, anti-Semitic sort, and among the masters who, for a time, deeply impressed the lad, was our old nemesis, Eric Butler, head of the Australian League of Rights.

Greason, born in 1961, is the son of working class migrants from Lancashire who settled in Melbourne's western suburbs. An adolescent interest in politics and a thirst for "the



truth" which led him to collect avidly the ephemera of countless parties and groups right, left and centre, mainstream and not so mainstream, saw him drift into the orbit of the League of Rights and later the National Front. This book, which is entertainingly written, provides an illuminating account of what makes right-wing extremists tick, and the conspiracy theories which fester inside the minds of people who produced and devoured what Greason so aptly calls "the grotty pamphlets of the anti-Semitic right".

The young Greason, who even had a brief stint as a copyboy on the *Australian Jewish News* (he applied as a joke), so successfully penetrated the League — after all, a supporter of such tender years was a decided novelty for its old and crusty stalwarts — that he even got to see inside what was perhaps the unholy of unholies, Butler's personal library. That is recalled as "an absolute tip full of bizarre books and pamphlets", anti-Semitic and white supremacist. We are also treated to an evocative description of the dusty and decrepit Heritage Bookshop, run by the League, with its myriad of yellowing hate-filled tomes and leaflets amid the "respectable" offerings, and its cross, crabby staffers perceiving Jewish "power" everywhere.

We learn some interesting euphemisms for Jews in these circles, some obvious and some not so obvious. We meet the pathetic soul who "whiled away his ample spare time marking off Jewish-sounding names in the telephone directory" (so that, as he explained, "we'll know where they are when we take power") and reading the bankruptcy section of the *Commonwealth Gazette* at the GPO in order to gloat at "all the Yids who'd gone down the gurgler."

All this is fascinating stuff, and some if it is valuable. However, it is important for the reader to keep a sense of proportion: the views and personalities paraded in these pages are crackpot and marginalised, entirely unrepresentative of Australian society. Similarly, totally unrepresentative of the League, with its ageing membership, was a teenager in its midst. Luckily, as Greason matured, he put away fascist things. Ironically, his own consciousness of Jews as "the other" began with the British comedian Ernie Wise who, to the best of my knowledge, was a gentile!

Dr. Hilary L. Rubinstein

## OUT OF STEP: A DANCER REFLECTS

*Alida Belair (Melbourne University Press, 1993, 275pp., \$39.95)*

Alida Belair is a gifted and renowned ballerina who has danced with the Bolshoi Ballet and in famous companies in New York and London. She is also a Holocaust survivor who migrated with her family to Melbourne in 1950, grew up here, and hence became an internationally-known Australian Jewish artist. Her very interesting autobiography is thus an extremely valuable document on several levels, and deserves to find a place in the libraries of anyone interested in contemporary Australian culture in the Australian Jewish community.

Ms Belair (*nee* Alida Glasbeek) was born in January 1944 to Belgian Jewish parents hiding in southern France. Her parents — unlike so many other European Jews — managed to find sympathetic Gentiles in rural France who looked after them until liberation came in August 1944. Her account of her early years here, where her family came to be with relatives, is also very valuable, and adds to our better first-hand accounts of the post-war immigration process.



Despite poverty and language barrier, it was evidently possible for someone with Ms Belair's talents at dance to mount the ladder of success, and the struggles of a would-be ballerina in post-war Australia have seldom been told with such colour. Her perpetual battle against weight gain is an interesting feature of this book which non-dancers will readily understand. 'Dancers must be thin,' she was warned, but their mothers always told Jewish girls to eat. She starved herself, suffering anorexia in her resolve 'to obtain a slim *Gentile* body' (p. 69). Eventually she toured Australia and, in 1962, made it to the Royal Ballet and then, amazingly, to Moscow and the Bolshoi. These are often extremely frank memoirs and are genuinely interesting for the personal detail they provide, even to readers with no special interest in dance.

Prof. W.D. Rubinstein

## WHY GERMANY? NATIONAL SOCIALIST ANTISEMITISM AND THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

*John Milfull (ed.), (Providence, R.I./Oxford: Berg, 1993; vi+ 257pp)*

This is a collection of sixteen essays by historians and others about Nazi Germany and its European context. Our *Journal* does not normally review books on Nazi Germany, but in this case an exception has been made, for most of the authors in this collection are Australians — thirteen out of sixteen — and *Why Germany?* must thus be one of the few collections of essays exclusively on the Nazi experience written from this country. As such, it is especially interesting in providing evidence of how Australian scholarship in this area has matured and how it compares with its equivalents overseas. One of the most notable features of this work, too, is the fact that I could easily name eight or ten other Australian scholars whose work falls in this area and yet are not represented here; conversely, although I think I am fairly familiar with Australian scholarship in this field, many of the names, especially those working in literary history and the history of culture, were new to me.

How, then, does this volume stack up? Regrettably, not very well at all, and I had a feeling of considerable disappointment when I finished reading *Why Germany?* To be sure, there are some good things here: Konrad Kwiet's "From the Diary of a Killing Unit", concerned with a bicycle-battalion of SS men which carried out thousands of executions in Russia, is both original and bizarre. It is very similar in quality to any essay appearing in *Yad Vashem Studies* or a similar source, and makes an original contribution. Two other essays, Jacques Adler's "The Changing Attitude of the 'Bystanders' Toward the Jews in France, 1940-1943", and Carole Elizabeth Adams' "Anti-Semitism in the Political Culture of Wilhelmine Germany: The Case of White-Collar Workers", are notably good, the latter making the point that anti-Semitism was a "weak" force in "motivating white-collar workers" before 1914.

Thereafter, it is downhill all the way, I am afraid. Most of the other essays are simply mediocre, making an unoriginal point in a pedestrian way. The many essays in literary history here are often naive and ingenuous, showing their authors' unfamiliarity with history and how to write it. Several of the essays are more promising, but appear to be very much works in progress, of which the articles here are unsatisfactory first instalments. Evidently many of these papers were delivered at an academic conference, but the book provides no information on where or when this was held, or what its theme might have been.



Two essays, however, stand out as memorably egregious. Silke Beinssen-Hesse's "Weininger and the Time Honored Analogy Between the Inferiority of Women and Jews" deals with Otto Weininger (1880–1903), whose *Sex and Character* (1902) is one of the most notorious artefacts of neurotic *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, likening Jews to women as inherent inferiors; Weininger committed suicide at twenty-three. There is ample material here for an interesting essay, but the author has managed to miss every single opportunity. Although she terms the "analogy between the inferiority of women and Jews" as "time-honoured", she also notes, rather confusingly, that no one made it before Weininger. It is also very doubtful if Hitler and the Nazis regarded Jewish "inferiority" in any way like that of women. On the contrary, to Hitler Jews were an incredibly powerful and evil biological entity, inevitably gaining control of their "host" nation, and it was for that reason that they had to disappear from "Aryan" Europe. Ms. Beinssen-Hesse does, however, actually manage to find something new to say about the Holocaust when she states (p. 27) "We shall probably never know how many of the Jews of the Holocaust went to their fate secretly convinced that they deserved no better because they were Weininger's spiritual brothers or his disciples". Before this author, in all of the thousands of works on the Holocaust no one had ever asked whether the Jews on the way to the gas chambers thought they deserved it. The grotesque absurdity of this question, whose unbelievable offensiveness is founded in a naïveté equally vast, is, I am afraid, indicative of what is wrong with very much of this book.

Another disappointing essay is Margaret Sampson's "Jewish Anti-Semitism? The Attitudes of the Jewish Community in Britain Toward Refugees From Nazi Germany: The *Jewish Chronicle*, March 1933—September 1938" (conciseness is not this author's long suit). The problem here is where to start; let me summarise the situation by saying that in my opinion Ms. Sampson has given an account of Anglo-Jewry's reaction to the refugees which is the diametrical opposite of the truth: no Diaspora community showed more generosity for them, pulled more strings on their behalf, raised more funds, or was so deeply affected. For Britain's Jews "anxiety about Nazi Germany overshadowed all other preoccupations. It dominated every aspect of Anglo-Jewish life in the 'thirties and stamped its character on the community": Bernard Krikler, one of the founders of London's Wiener Library, thus accurately summarised the situation. Ms. Sampson utterly fails to understand this, and her essay, although the product of considerable research, provides a completely distorted picture of Anglo-Jewry in this period. Its unrelenting negative description of Anglo-Jewry borders on group defamation and is simply unreasonable, especially in that no one in Britain in the 1930s could foresee Nazi genocide.

What, then, do the essays here add to our understanding of the question somewhat grandiosely posed by the book's title, *Why Germany?* Virtually nothing whatever, I am afraid: the book's few good essays only occasionally discuss Germany and shed little light on the question of why it went down the Nazi road. It would be interesting to know why the book disappoints. The distance of the source materials are an obvious answer, but a blunter one might be that, with very rare exceptions, we simply lack the "critical mass" to study the Holocaust in Europe in new, interesting, or non-derivative ways. If so, this is a great pity, for the very distance of Australia from these events might itself have been productive of new and important insights. I for one certainly hope that these new insights will eventually emerge from Australia, even if this volume does not make one sanguine.

Prof. W.D. Rubinstein



## IDENTITY AND INVOLVEMENT II: AUCKLAND JEWRY, PAST AND PRESENT

*Ann Gluckman and Laurie Gluckman (eds.) (Palmerston North, New Zealand: The Dunmore Press, 1993; Australian distributor: Nyroca Press, PO Box 90, Hawksburn, Vic. 3142)*

This work is the companion volume to another book, edited by Ann Gluckman in 1990, also entitled *Identity and Involvement: Auckland Jewry, Past and Present* (Dunmore Press, Auckland, 1990). Like its predecessor, it consists of a series of essays on Auckland Jewry, but occasionally touching on wider topics. In all, this volume contains no less than forty-six such short essays, each by a different writer, in its 249 pages. More than half offer biographies or short biographies of Auckland Jews and their families. The others touch on such topics as "Synagogues of Auckland", "New Zealand Jewish Justices of the Peace", and "Auckland University Jewish Students' Association". Of special interest is a series of essays under the heading "Of Evil and Good", where reminiscences of refugees, especially Holocaust refugees and survivors, are recounted. These should be noted in bibliographies of survivor testimonies.

Two essays in this work are particularly interesting: Jack Delowe's "Covert Anti-Semitism in New Zealand, 1930-1950", dealing chiefly with New Zealand's very poor record of admitting Jewish refugees, and Walter Hirsh's "A Private Perspective On a Very Public Position", recounting the author's experience as New Zealand's highly visible Race Relations Conciliator from 1985-1989.

This is a very valuable collection which, like its previous companion volume, should be in the library of everyone concerned with Australasian Jewish history and affairs. As Ann Gluckman notes in her introduction to her previous volume, there is no authoritative recent history of New Zealand Jewry, Rabbi L.M. Goldman's 1954 *History* now being clearly out of date, and these two volumes must serve as the next best thing. These volumes are both satisfactory and interesting, and the authors are to be congratulated for coordinating and producing a work of this kind.

One must, however, look forward to a new full-scale history which will place New Zealand Jewish history in an international perspective. For instance, the New Zealand Jewish Welfare Society, formed in 1938, plainly drew on its Australian namesake for its inspiration. This is not noted in Delowe's excellent essay. It would seem that New Zealand represented a country with virtually no anti-Semitism, where Jews were present from the earliest days, but which was far more hostile to significant refugee migration during the Nazi period than was Australia, and which developed a notably strident anti-Zionist Left during the 1970s. A sophisticated account of the history of this small community, stressing both its survival and the obstacles to its survival, is now long overdue.

Prof. W.D. Rubinstein



## A LEAF ON THE DIASPORA TREE

*Zelman Bornstein (Melbourne: The Author, 1994)*

Zelman Bornstein arrived in Australia from Poland on 19 September 1938, and has lived in Melbourne ever since. He was one of the lucky ones: virtually all of his family and his neighbours in Leczyca, Poland, perished a few years later. Since then, Mr. Bornstein has become a well-known member of our community through his frequent letters to the editor in the Jewish and general press and, more recently, through his leadership of Yiddish cultural events at the Montefiore Homes and elsewhere.

He has now published a very interesting collection of essays on a wide variety of topics, among them several especially valuable autobiographical essays. They certainly deserve to be read by anyone interested in recent Australian Jewish history or in the Holocaust, and how those European Jews who came to Australia managed to survive it. Mr. Bornstein himself secured a permit through a clothing-manufacturing brother-in-law to come to Australia with his wife in 1938.

His recollections of the oppression and poverty of Jews in pre-war Poland — although also, as he clearly notes, a society virtually free of crime and family collapse — are vividly portrayed. So, too, is his journey out here, a voyage on which his wife took ill and was forced to enter a hospital in Germany run by heel-clicking Nazis who shouted "Heil Hitler" at every opportunity. Safely in Australia, they lodged initially in a house run by a woman who, on hearing that they were Jewish, "asked if we were Baptist Jews". Although Mr. Bornstein and his immediate family prospered here, they never saw any of their family in Poland again.

Mr. Bornstein's writings range from "Israeli Stamps" to "Jewish Humour", plus a collection of his trenchant letters to the *Melbourne Age* and other newspapers. In the 1980s, when I was heavily involved in defending Israel from the avalanche of biased and one-sided reporting and criticism, I remember looking forward to Mr. Bornstein's vigorously argued pro-Israel letters. These at least went some way to balancing the tendentious critics, including those in the Jewish community.

At 84 Mr. Bornstein is still hearty and active at the Montefiore Homes. His many friends hope he will still be in good health at 120.

Prof. W.D. Rubinstein

## JEWISH FOLK CENTRE IN SYDNEY: FIRST FIFTY YEARS, 1941-1991

*(Jewish Folk Centre Library, Woollahra, NSW, 1993)*

Yiddish culture in Sydney has always suffered from the double handicap of the slow erosion of its base through assimilation and, moreover, from being situated in Australia's lesser centre of Yiddish life. Since 1941, however, a hardy group of enthusiasts have kept Yiddish culture alive, and this is their story.

The English text published in this interesting and well-produced pamphlet, by Nate Zusman, first appeared in 1992 in Volume XI part 4 of this *Journal*; one-half of *First Fifty Years* appears in Yiddish. There are numerous photographs, and the leaders of Yiddish culture in Sydney, from the early 1940s are each given their due in a few biographical paragraphs, making this a valuable reference tool. It might not be irrelevant

to note that the Kadimah in Melbourne has yet to produce its own history or an equivalent volume, one of the more significant gaps in Australian Jewish historiography.

Prof. W.D. Rubinstein

## PATHWAYS TO UNDERSTANDING: A HANDBOOK ON CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS

*Marianne Dacy (ed.) (Working Group on Christian Jewish Relations,  
Victorian Council of Churches, Melbourne, 1994)*

It is a genuine pleasure to introduce this valuable set of essays, by members of the Council of Christians and Jews, on relations between the two faiths. Each of the fourteen essays here is important in its own right, and serves a necessary role in the volume's overriding purpose of fostering better understanding between the two groups. On the Jewish side, there are contributions by Rabbis John Levi, Raymond Apple, and Selwyn Franklin, Bernard Boas, and Professor Alan Crown; on the Christian side by Sisters Marianne Dacy, Rosalie Hanley, and Very Rev. Holyhead, Archie Crowe, Rev. Robert Gribben, Rev. Prof. Robert Anderson, the late Dr. John Foster, Dr. William Leadbetter, and Joseph Kinsella.

It would be invidious to single out any of these excellent articles for special mention, but Rev. Holyhead's "A Shoah Memorial Service for Christians" — to be used for Christians to mark *Yom Hashoah* — is a meritorious innovation, while the "Guide to Jewish Australia" by Marianne Dacy and "An Introduction to Christianity in Australia" by Marianne Dacy and Joseph Kinsella, are important reference tools. This is a fine book, especially praiseworthy for being produced by the Victorian Council of Churches, not so long ago rather notorious in Jewish circles for its often venomous, ideologically-constructed anti-Zionism.

Prof. W.D. Rubinstein

## SHORT NOTICES

*The Scheherazade Restaurant: 35 Years in Acland Street* (available from the Scheherazade Restaurant, 99 Acland Street, St. Kilda 3182), published in 1993 with text by Eva de Jong-Duldig, celebrates the anniversary of Avram and Masha Zeleznikow's landmark Jewish restaurant, founded in 1958 by the former Vilna ghetto partisan fighter and communal figure. For two generations it has fed Melbourne's East European Jews and Bohemian Australians, and Karl Duldig's drawings now decorate its walls. This attractively produced booklet includes a 1962 menu (Bar-B-Q chicken, 11/6) — a feast for the nostalgia buff as well as the palate.

Barry York, *Admitted: 1901–1946 — Immigrants and Others Allowed into Australia Between 1901 and 1946* and *Admitted: 1947–1957 — Annual Returns on Persons Admitted into Australia and Their Last Places of Residence* (Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, Australian National University; \$35 for both volumes). These valuable works include hitherto unavailable data on persons admitted to Australia by



country of origin and help to answer many important questions posed by historians of Australian Jewry. For instance, in the Nazi period the number of Germans admitted to Australia was as follows: 1934, 308; 1935, 316; 1936, 496; 1937, 878; 1938, 2295; 1939, 5583; 1940, 262.

Michael Neuhauser, *Fifty Years of Mizrachi in Melbourne: A Personal History of Events and Personalities of the Organisation* (Mizrachi Organisation, Melbourne, 1994). An interesting and original history of the Mizrachi organisation in Melbourne, with chapters on the history of Leibler-Yavneh College, Emunah, B'nei Akiva, the eruv, etc., valuable biographical information on leaders of the Mizrachi movement from its foundation in 1942 to the present, and a year-by-year account of major events. An important booklet for historians of Jewish religious life in Melbourne.

Elchanan Blumenthal, *Trial and Challenges* (Jerusalem Academy Publication, Jerusalem, 1994). Rabbi Blumenthal, who was born in Fulda, Germany, in 1915, came to Australia as a "Dunera boy" and was an important figure in the life of Orthodox Jewry in Sydney during the early postwar years, before moving on to Cape Town and then to Israel. His autobiography, published in English in Jerusalem earlier this year, recalls those days in several chapters before recounting Rabbi Blumenthal's later career.

Mary Mennicken-Coley, *The Germans in Western Australia: Innovators, Immigrants, Internees* (Department of Language Studies, Edith Cowan University, Mt. Lawley, WA, 1993). This 155-page history of the German community in Western Australia includes a brief discussion of German Jewish immigrants, including refugees and internees.

Louise Hoffman and Shush Masel (eds.), *Without Regret* (Centre for Migration and Development Studies, University of Western Australia). Contains twenty-eight personal narratives of Jewish Holocaust survivors now living in Western Australia. A full review will appear in our next issue.

Prof. W.D. Rubinstein

## REPORT TO MEMBERS

In Victoria we have completed another busy year in our work to further the aims and objectives of our Society, that is, to research, record, preserve and publish all aspects of Australian Jewish history. We have published four issues of our Members' *Newsletter*, as well as producing another fine *Journal*, on schedule and containing our usual large assortment of scholarly articles and other material.

In our *Newsletters* we extend congratulations to those of our members who have celebrated happy occasions, as well as condolences to those who have lost loved ones. Also noted are achievements such as the awarding of higher degrees, publication of books and major articles, and professional advancements. Of particular note is the election of our corresponding member for England, Dr. Anthony Joseph, as President of the Jewish Historical Society of England.

Although we held off fee increases for more than six years, it was decided to raise all categories of membership by five dollars as from 1 January 1994. Individual membership is therefore \$30; Family membership \$35; and Organisations \$45.

Several of our members are involved with projects which will be of great help to scholars and other researchers in the future. Horst Eisfelder continues sorting and indexing correspondence files from the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, having already completed the years 1914 to 1950. Previous sorting and indexing of these records was done by Jeremy Freeman (1885 to 1896) and by Beverley Davis (1901 to 1919). Beverley Davis is also continuing work on her computer database of inscriptions from Jewish gravestones in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands; it is possible that the completed work may be published as a CD-ROM. Miriam Pollak has presented to the Reference Library a printout of her highly detailed computerised index to births marriages and deaths appearing in the *British Jewish Chronicle* during 1900, and is continuing this exciting work.

We continue to acquire current and past publications, microfiche and microfilms, using contributions to our tax-deductible Reference Library Fund resulting mainly from the work carried out by our honorary secretary in lieu of formal research fees; thus we are able to provide resources for a wide range of researchers. A major purchase this year was a six-bay compactus storage unit which greatly eases the problems caused by the wonderful growth in our library and archival deposits. During the year a large quantity of material was placed in our custody by the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV), formerly the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies (VJBD), and by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ). Work is continuing on sorting and describing these valuable records; access will be restricted to bearers of a letter of authorisation from the appropriate originating body.

Volume 13 of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography, A-De, 1940-1980* contains many contributions from and/or about Australian Jews, many of whom are or have been involved with the Australian Jewish Historical Society.

Our Annual General Meeting was held on 21 April 1994, and resulted in the return of all current executive and committee, as follows: President, Dr. Howard Freeman; Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Beverley Davis; Treasurer, Dr. Serge Liberman. Committee: Dr. Paul Bartrop, Dr. Harvey Cohen, Trevor Cohen, Rabbi Dr. John Levi, Dr. Hilary Rubinstein,



Professor Bill Rubinstein, Isidor Solomon and David Sonenberg. The guest speaker was Peter Mansfield, Central Highlands Regional Librarian, who spoke on "The Fiction and Verse of Nathan Spielvogel". We will be publishing this important work in two parts, the first of which is in this issue of the *Journal*.

A most unusual topic was addressed on 6 October 1994 at a meeting held at the Magid Resource Centre, Temple Beth Israel. Len Henderson, the Archivist and Newsletter editor of the Numismatic Association of Victoria, spoke on "Jewish Trade Token Issuers of Victoria". At the same venue, on 3 November, Judith O'Donnell spoke on "Charles Dickens and the Jewish Convict, or, Did Fagin Come to Australia?". Her paper appears in the current *Journal*.

On 20 November our President Howard Freeman, helped once again by members of our committee, led a guided walking tour of parts of East Melbourne visiting places of Jewish interest, this time on behalf of the Victorian Council of Christians and Jews.

This year marked two significant anniversaries: first, the fortieth year since the publication of Rabbi L.M. Goldman's ground-breaking work, *The Jews in Victoria in the 19th Century*. The other anniversary is the twentieth year since publication of John Levi and George Bergman's *Australian Genesis*.

To end on a fascinating note: we have always thought that the Victorian section of our Society was founded in August 1954. However, Beverley Davis has found documents in our archives which report on "the first meeting of the Victorian group of the Australian Jewish Historical Society" which took place on 17 October 1949, almost five years previously! The two guest speakers on that occasion were Judah Waten, speaking on Contemporary Australian Jewish literature, followed by S.B. Gurewicz on the role of the Jews in the political development of Australia. Therefore the year 1994 marks our 45th birthday.

Beverley Davis  
Honorary Secretary, AJHS — Victoria Inc.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

**Dr. Paul R. Bartrop** lectures in Race Relations at the University of South Australia. His latest book, *Australia and the Holocaust, 1933-45*, was published earlier this year.

**Sister Marianne Dacy** has headed the Archive of Australian Judaica since its inception. She is the author of *Early Australian Zionism: An Annotated Index of Records in the Central Zionist Archives*.

**Beverley Davis** is honorary Secretary of the AJHS — Victoria Inc.

**Eva de Jong-Duldig**, the daughter of the late Karl Duldig, was a noted athlete and is herself an artist.

**Robert Exiner** migrated to Melbourne as a German Jewish refugee in 1939. He was later a businessman and wrote his autobiography — sections of which appear in this *Journal* — for his family.

**Hedi Fixel** has been a member of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation for many years.

**Lorraine Freeman**, a member of the AJHS — Victoria Inc., has been preparing each instalment of "100 Years Ago" since 1988.

**Peter Mansfield** is Director of the Ballarat Regional Library. He recently completed a thesis on Nathan Spielvogel at Deakin University.

**Philip Mendes** has written widely on the modern Australian Jewish Left. His book, *The New Left, the Jews, and the Vietnam War, 1965-1974*, was published last year.

**Judith O'Donnell** is a member of the AJHS — Victoria Inc. and has been engaged in research on Fagin's Australian origins.

The late **Yankel Rosenbaum**, whose tragic death in New York in 1991 became the subject of world-wide publicity, completed an honours degree and an M.A. at Melbourne University prior to Yeshivah training.

**Dr. Hilary L. Rubinstein** lectures on modern Jewish history at Monash University. She is currently undertaking research toward a history of philo-Semitism.

**Professor Bill Rubinstein** is Professor of Social and Economic History at Deakin University. His book, *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain*, will be published by Macmillan in 1995.

**Dr. Malcolm J. Turnbull** recently completed a doctoral thesis at Deakin University on "Judaism in Melbourne, 1870-1970".



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