

# AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL



VOL. XIV 1998



PART 3

# AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

The Australian Jewish Historical Society was founded in Sydney in August 1938. The Victorian section of the Society was founded in October 1949. A branch exists in Canberra, and Western Australia has its own Jewish Historical Society.

The Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society has been published since 1939. From 1988, production of the Journal has been shared by Victoria (November edition) and New South Wales (May edition).

Members of the Editorial Committees are:

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Mrs Judy Shapira, BA, DipEd

A complete list of the Society's office-bearers is printed on the back cover. Information about membership in the Society and its other activities and resources may be obtained from the Honorary Secretaries in Melbourne or Sydney.

The Editors welcome suggestions for articles and manuscripts dealing with any aspect of the Australian Jewish experience. 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 3.5inch Macintosh or DOS or Windows computer disk, saved in TEXT or ASCII or RTF format. Please indicate the software and version used (Microsoft Word is preferred). The disk should be sent with an identical double-spaced printout, 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 to the Editors: Dr Malcolm J. Turnbull, PO Box 608, Carnegie, Victoria 3163; or to Dr Suzanne D. Rutland, Mandelbaum House, 385 Abercrombie Street, Darlington, NSW 2008.

## **Front cover:**

*Illuminated address presented to Mendel Cohen, 1903*

*by East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation*

*(Courtesy Denis Joachim)*

*See Page 481*

# AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

November 1998

Vol. XIV

Part 3

	TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
	Editor's Introduction .....	373
	A tribute .....	375
1.	<i>Peretz Hirschbein's travel pictures: impressions of New Zealand and Australia</i> Serge Liberman (translator) .....	377
2.	<i>Australia's first Shtar Chalitzah?</i> Beverley Davis .....	404
3.	<i>My mother's folk in Russia, China, Australia, Canada and the United States of America</i> Morris S. Ochert .....	406
4.	<i>The Beginnings of the Brighton Hebrew Congregation</i> Malcolm Morris .....	417
5.	<i>'A gross discourtesy to His Majesty': the campaign within Australia, 1930-31, against Sir Isaac Isaacs' appointment as Governor-General</i> Hilary L. Rubinstein .....	425
6.	<i>The Jewish Council, Communism, and the State of Israel</i> Philip N. Mendes .....	459
7.	<i>Mendel Cohen (1838-1909)</i> Robert C. Sheezel .....	468
8.	<i>'Spare the rod and spoil the child'!</i> Howard A. Freeman .....	489
9.	<i>A synagogue in Coburg</i> Laurie Burchell .....	492
10.	<i>Jews in the 1996 Australian census</i> W.D. Rubinstein .....	495
11.	<i>The Reverend Isidore Myers (1856-1922)</i> Malcolm J. Turnbull .....	508
12.	<i>Alien registrations in Western Australia during World War One</i> Beverley Davis .....	529

## Book Reviews

1. **Philip N. Mendes**  
Review essay: *Bono Wiener remembered*..... 533
2. **W.D. Rubinstein** ..... 538  
Rodney Benjamin, 'A serious influx of Jews'  
Robert Manne, *The way we live now*  
Bernard Hyams, *The history of the Australian Zionist movement*
3. **Rodney Gouttman** ..... 545  
Suzanne D. Rutland & Sophie Caplan, *With one voice*
4. **Judith O'Donnell** ..... 547  
David Carter (ed), *Judah Waten*  
Margaret Helfgott with Tom Gross, *Out of tune ...*
5. **Isidor Solomon** ..... 550  
Rudolph Brasch, *Reminiscences*
6. **Malcolm J. Turnbull** ..... 551  
Bernard Hyams, *Surviving*  
Don Garden, *Theodore Fink*  
**Short notices** ..... 554  
Inga Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust*  
Barbara Falk, *Caught in a snare*  
Univ. of Melbourne, *Genocide*  
Doba-Necha Cukierman, *A guardian angel*  
Bryan Cheyette & Laura Marcus (eds), *Modernity, culture and 'the Jew'*  
Aubrey Newman & Stephen Massil (eds), *Patterns of migration ...*  
Livia Käthe Wittmann, *Interactive identities*  
Judith Samuel, *Jews in Bristol*  
Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, *Patterns and images*  
AJHS Victoria, *The Australian Jewish experience, a Colloquium*  
Corille Fraser, *Come to dazzle ...*  
Joseph Aron, *History of the JNF of Australia*  
Anna Rosner Blay, *Sister Sister*  
Judith Buckrich, *The Montefiore Homes: 150 Years of Care*

## Other Material

1. Letters to the editor ..... 558
2. Obituary: Lila Stone ..... 562
3. Report to members ..... 563
4. New members ..... 564
5. Notes on contributors ..... 565

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

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Once again I am pleased to be able to present readers with a tantalising compendium of scholarly essays, genealogical reminiscences, book reviews, analysis of documents and more lighthearted articles, all of which should add to our knowledge and understanding of the history of the Jews in Australia. My New South Wales editorial counterpart, Dr Suzanne Rutland, has noted that a diverse mix of contributions from amateur and professional historians to each issue has become a tradition for the Australian Jewish Historical Society *Journal*, while my Victorian predecessor, Professor Bill Rubinstein, maintains that the mix and range of material included makes the *Journal* 'virtually unique' of its kind. In my view, this distinctive variety is one of the publication's enduring charms.

A particularly intriguing feature of the current issue is an English translation (by Dr Serge Liberman) of the personal account of a visit to the southern hemisphere by the revered Yiddish playwright Peretz Hirschbein. Best remembered today for such staples of the Yiddish stage as *The Haunted Inn* and *Greenfields*, Hirschbein (1880–1948) spent time in New Zealand and Australia in 1921 as part of a world tour which also encompassed South Africa; he subsequently recorded his impressions of the countries in *Felker un Lender* (1929), part of which was reprinted in the first *Australian Jewish Almanac* (1937). Although a section of Dr Liberman's translation has previously appeared in the *Melbourne Chronicle*, our publication of 'Travel Pictures in Australia and New Zealand' is the first complete rendering in English of Hirschbein's response to the beleaguered Jewish communities he encountered in the far reaches of the Diaspora.

In a delightful companion-piece to his article 'Bondi Jewry between the Wars' [*AJHSJ* 11(4), 1992], Morris S. Ochert OAM recounts the hazards and tribulations endured by his forebears during their emigration to Australia (via China) in the early years of this century. Professor W.D. (Bill) Rubinstein provides an update to his previous analyses of the Australian Jewish community, this time based on the 1996 census. Dr Philip Mendes extends his previous research into the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Antisemitism with an article which charts the Council's evolving attitudes towards the State of Israel. In an important contribution to our knowledge of the life and work of Sir Isaac Isaacs, Dr Hilary L. Rubinstein utilises previously unaccessed archival evidence in describing and analysing the 1930–31 campaign against Isaacs' appointment as Governor-General.

On a lighter note, Dr Howard Freeman shares with us some comic highlights from the 'punishment register' which was maintained by teachers at the Melbourne Hebrew School in the late nineteenth century. (The register

is one of many items in the collection of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation which will be sorted, catalogued and transferred by the AJHS Victoria to its archive at the Jewish Museum of Australia.) In 'Australia's First *Shtar Chalitzah*?', our honorary archivist Beverley Davis OAM describes what appears to be the earliest Jewish marriage document extant in Australia; elsewhere Mrs Davis highlights the potential value to genealogists and other researchers of records held by the National Archives in her listing of Jewish names on the 1916 Register of Aliens then resident in Western Australia.

Several articles in this issue deal with Jewish congregations in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Laurie Burchell records the foundation and functioning of the Coburg Beth Yaacov Synagogue, one of several now-defunct *minyanim*, the emergence of which reflected shifting migrant settlement patterns north of the Yarra river before and after World War Two. (Contributors to previous issues of this *Journal* have focused on other congregations in Melbourne's north, notably the Thornbury *shul*, the Brunswick *Talmud Torah*, the Carlton Synagogue and miscellaneous facilities in the Carlton-Fitzroy area). Malcolm Morris (a grandson of one of the institution's founders) examines the beginning and first years of another congregation, this one in Melbourne's southern suburbs. Founded in 1947, the 'Southern Districts' *minyan* was the forerunner of two important *shuls*, Brighton and Moorabbin. Two papers look at the lay and spiritual leadership of the East Melbourne congregation in the late nineteenth century: Mendel Cohen, whose exemplary service on the Albert Street board of management encompassed multiple terms as president, is the subject of a detailed biography by his descendant Robert Sheezel. A contemporary (and sometime adversary) of Cohen, the Reverend Isidore Myers was a gifted scholar and clergyman who served the Sandhurst (Bendigo) and East Melbourne congregations with distinction in the 1880s. He settled ultimately in the USA where he pioneered political Zionism in California and was also associated briefly with the fledgling motion picture industry.

Vol 14(2) of the *AJHS Journal* concludes with reviews of notable recent publications in the field. As always, Beverley Davis is to be commended (and applauded) for the expertise she has brought to the physical production and layout of this issue. Thanks also are due to our printers, Robert Mosley and Blueprint Pty Ltd, for their skill in bringing the *Journal* to completion.

Malcolm J. Turnbull  
Editor

## A TRIBUTE

Beverley Davis OAM retired in April 1998 after 21 years as Honorary Secretary of the Australian Jewish Historical Society Victoria. We would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the committee and membership, to acknowledge and honour the extraordinary contribution she has made over that time.

Beverley has expertly coupled the day-to-day management of an active and expanding Society (membership of the AJHS Victoria has grown from 60 in 1978 to around 560 in 1998) with skilled and enthusiastic service as our archivist, librarian, research officer and newsletter editor. At her hand, the AJHS Reference Library and Archives have developed into an internationally respected repository of books, periodicals, microfilms and original documents, available for use by students, family and academic historians, and the general public. Among Beverley's many achievements have been the transcribing, recording and computer indexing of inscriptions on all Jewish gravestones in cemeteries in Australia and New Zealand; liaising with Jewish organisations throughout Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific in order to promote record preservation; co-ordinating the microfilming of scholarly material; and negotiating the transfer of primary records of individuals, congregations, communal bodies and other Jewish organisations, into the control and care of the AJHS. (Earlier this year, for instance, she supervised the transfer of records of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation to the Society's holdings at the Jewish Museum of Australia). She has also lectured widely on aspects of research into Australian Jewish genealogy. Given her zeal, knowledge and capacity for 'getting things done', therefore, we are delighted that she has agreed to continue to serve as the Society's Honorary archivist.

In addition to her many other responsibilities, Beverley has undertaken the desktop publishing of the Victorian issues of the *AJHS Journal* since 1988, and has produced a number of indexes and other publications. She has also found (or made) time to manage the records of a number of other organisations over the past two decades, including the Victorian Association of Psychotherapists, the Psychotherapy Association of Australia, the Adult Education Association (Camberwell), the Australian Association for Jewish Studies, and the Jewish bereavement support group Chesed. In 1979 she published *Be Fruitful and Multiply* which won an 'honourable mention' in the prestigious annual Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies Alexander Henderson Award. Beverley completed a Graduate Diploma in Archives



and Records Management at Monash University in 1991, and has been both a Professional member of the Australian Society of Archivists and Associate member of the Records Managers Association of Australia since 1993. Most deservedly, she was honoured for her service to the AJHS and the general community with the award of the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in 1995.

In her two decades as Honorary Secretary of the AJHS Victoria, Beverley Davis has made an unmatched contribution to the Society's archives and its publishing program, to raising the Society's public profile, and to facilitating and encouraging original research into the Australian Jewish experience.

So, thank you Beverley, for all you have done for this Society — and may we continue to benefit from your skills for another two decades!

Howard A. Freeman (President)  
Malcolm J. Turnbull (Journal editor)



# PERETZ HIRSCHBEIN'S TRAVEL PICTURES: IMPRESSIONS OF NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA

*Translated from the Yiddish by Serge Liberman*

## PART 1: NEW ZEALAND

A grey morning springs out between sky and water. The sea pirouettes and drives its waves to the wooden-hilled strip of land that arises to the right half-enclosed in mist. A sullenness looks out from between the trees and an iciness from the naked cliffs that reach to the water. No village or settlement can yet be seen. That is how it appeared one hundred and fifty years before when Captain Cook was carried on these waves in his ship *Endeavour*. That is how the land must have appeared when the Maori-Polynesians gave themselves up to the sea — who knows why and from where? — and let the winds carry them here in their canoes.

One enters Cook Strait which divides New Zealand in two and where the waters are seldom still. To right and left, big cliffs appear. An entire labyrinth of sharp rocks that bathe in the grey angry sea. A coldness drifts from that region and penetrates the spirit. Then comes a quiet nostalgia.

The voyage from San Francisco has taken twenty-four days. On each of these days, the clock hands have been turned. The net result: one whole day lost. Went to sleep Sunday night and awoke on Tuesday morning. Monday lost forever. But who bemoans lost days, particularly in the twentieth century? My one regret is not to have made this journey fifteen years ago when *Palorus Jack* still came from the depths in precisely these parts and escorted the ships on their arrival to New Zealand through the rocky path to that place where the city of Wellington now lies. It is no legend. There was such a fish, of the dolphin family. A huge fish, perhaps fifteen feet in length, that for many years awaited the ships and when a ship approached, leapt out of the water, rejoicing and dancing, and leading the way showed the path for the ship. New Zealand has a law that prohibits the killing of this fish. It is the darling of New Zealand and among the Maoris is regarded as a water-god who showed the way to their great-great-grandfathers when they passed between the rocks to the shores of New Zealand.

There is a law. But *Palorus Jack* is no longer. There are still passengers who look out for him to show them the way. But the story is told that foreign fishermen came from Norway to catch the whales, but in error killed *Palorus Jack* as well. And when these fishermen learnt what they had done, a great fear fell upon them. There was no longer any place for them in New Zealand and quietly they returned to their homes in Norway. Futile now is the searching of the passengers among the waves. The water-god does not appear before us.

Our ship emerges into still water, surrounded with high slopes and small islands. A broad hilly shore appears on which a town is scattered. A new town. The red roofs make the town look newer than new. Low houses lie strewn up and down the slopes and between them are to be seen a web of streets and lanes.

### WELLINGTON, THE CAPITAL OF NEW ZEALAND

And one wonders — why did one have to wander for twenty-four days so far from home and to lose a day in order that on the twenty-fifth day one should see these low houses with their red rooftops?

The *Marama*, our ship, has already cast anchor in the harbour and she lets out a whistle, announcing that we have arrived. From the shore, there approaches a small motor boat. Clerks, officials with serious faces, dry and cold. English, but still drier than English. Looking at us as if we have come to disturb their peace.

We are told to stand in a line and one by one to go through the smoking-room. In the centre stands a young man, a doctor, with roaming watery eyes. He examines each one's right hand and nails. He looks into the eyes and the ears, looks under every hat ... Everyone who is examined by him leaves crimson with shame or pale with anger.

Then we are told once more to stand in a line and one by one to enter the dining-room. There sit more strange people with serious faces awaiting us. Half-sour and half-sad, they sit at the tables with papers and books and inkwells — study with suspicion the arrivals who enter from the outside in a long line.

A passport is not enough. Questions, questions. Who was your father? your mother? your grandfather? your grandmother? Where were you born? What is your nationality? What is your religion? They examine you to see if you can write. We arrive at nine o'clock; it is already noon and so we fumble through the day in a confusion of red tape. Green gall rises to the heart, like a storm on the sea, to see strange hands probing into one's bags and parcels, shoving, mixing, groping and rummaging, themselves not knowing what they want.

The good dolphin that lived in the waters around New Zealand, that, leaping and dancing, showed the way to strange ships like a loyal dog — perhaps the Norwegian fishermen did not kill him. Perhaps he was indeed a water-god that took upon himself the guise of a friendly fish. So, in fact, do the Maoris believe. Perhaps he did not die at the hands of evil fishermen.

He must have heard about the law concerning him that was issued in 1911 that should any man harm him, that man shall be fined one hundred pounds. And he was ashamed. Ashamed of man and his conduct; ashamed of man and the ways of his love and friendship; and left the area and disappeared to play with other dolphins of his kind ...

It was windy in the town. Wellington has a reputation as a windy town. The town is new. Modern. It has some seventy thousand inhabitants. But even before I gave thought to the four walls of my room, there awoke in me a desire to see Jews.

I took up the telephone directory and in alphabetical order sought out Jewish names. There were some on every page. A Jewish people! And here is a Dutch name, but preceded by the title Reverend. [*Reverend Herman Van Staveren – Ed.*] Perhaps it is a Jewish rabbi? I rang him.

A youthful energetic voice answered. 'Who is calling?'

'Pardon me, but are you the Jewish reverend?'

'Yes, I am the rabbi of Wellington. And who are you?'

'A Yiddish writer from America. I have just arrived and wish to meet a Jew.'

'Very well. I shall come right away.'

It was quite clear to me that I was speaking to a young man, both because of the energetic ring in his voice and his readiness to come immediately. But I was quite overcome when a half-hour later I was confronted by a hoary grey-haired man of more than sixty. Tidy, in a long coat and cylinder hat. He looked more like an old convert than a Jewish rabbi.

Our chat began quite warmly on his part, with a welcome and several other Hebrew phrases. But when I began to ask him about Jews in New Zealand — their numbers, their life, their place in the community — he suddenly became quiet, looked at me sharply and asked rather harshly:

'Why do you ask so much about our brothers the children of Israel?'

'Simply, I am interested in the condition of Jews in distant lands. I am after all myself a Jew. And I am keen to know how many Jews there are in New Zealand.'

'One cannot or should not speak of them in great numbers.'

'That, God forbid, the Evil Eye should not fall upon them?'

'Our neighbours do not need to know how many we are. In Wellington, there are perhaps seven hundred Jews. Our neighbours believe that there are only two or three hundred.'

'If they did know the actual numbers, would that be so bad? The New Zealanders are a liberal people. Why should we not speak openly about the numbers of Jews here?'

'My young man', he says to me, 'I know what I am saying. And above all, they ought not to know how many Russian Jews live here. Their number is greater than ours. I am here already more than thirty-five years. I gathered together the first ten Jews. All went smoothly until the Russian Jews came and brought quarrels, criticism — they are no good.'

'I would like you, rabbi, to acquaint me with these Russian Jews.'

He looked at me, in his face latent anger and displeasure. I sensed that he regretted having so lowered himself as to come to me. He did not reply to my request. He stood up energetically, looked towards the door and then turned back to me:

'We have a fine museum; if you wish, I can take you there.'

I became uncomfortable. Nevertheless, I agreed. It was rather silly, I thought, that instead of introducing me to living Jews, he led me instead to the local museum. Several small rooms where, covered in dust and cracked, stood a variety of stuffed animals, shrivelled birds in different poses on artificial branches and similar things, which at that moment did not interest me. Emerging

from there into the park, I was delighted to see a number of mimosa roses full with their finely-golden downy heads. I did not speak. He did not speak. There was nothing more to talk about. In silence we walked through the streets. A heavy strained relationship developed between us, until we reached a clothes-store.

'Here I shall introduce you to your Jews', he said, 'and should you leave tomorrow, may you travel in good health.'

He led me into the store, introduced me to the Russian Jews and left with a proud expression.

The Russian Jew, a middle-aged man with a gentle face, began to question me and discovering that I came from the same province, began to weep like a child, while his son, already a young man and born in New Zealand, also wiped away his tears upon seeing me.

The Jew caught his breath and somewhat ashamed of his tears smiled and became agitated.

'I must advertise at once that you have come. A Yiddish writer. Are there really Yiddish writers? I have already been here more than thirty years. Left home for London as a boy. Then came here. My son was born here. He is twenty-six. Are you leaving so soon. Perhaps you will speak to us? We have, may the Evil Eye not fall upon us, a Jewish community. I shall call them right away.'

And he began to telephone one Jew after another. One by one, they showed up at the store and in awe looked at me. Customers, even gentile ones, instead of selling them the goods they came for were introduced to me. Far from being secretive, they spoke in loud tones about their Jews. One could have come to believe that not seven hundred Jewish souls inhabited Wellington, but many, many thousands.

It came as a big surprise indeed when, several days later, more than three hundred people attended my lecture in Wellington. Fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, grandfathers, grandmothers, grandchildren. It was with intense eagerness that they awaited the speaker. And when the chairman, in introducing me, apologised that the speaker would be speaking in Yiddish, he was overcome by great joy which was matched also by all of those present.

I spoke for a long time, told them of Jews in other parts of the world, of our life in America and in other lands, as far as I was familiar with them, told them also of our literature and writing. The audience listened with bated breath. My reward came after my lecture when there approached me several young children, among them a girl of twelve who said in a stumbling Yiddish:

'We thank you that you spoke to us in Yiddish and told us that the language of my father and mother is spoken in the whole world.'

I remained among the Wellington Jews for several more days. The rabbi later sought me out once more and invited me to his home. In his circle, among his grown-up children, his sons and daughters, the Russian Jew was not suffered. He complained to me: 'They have no respect.'

On the other hand, the Russian Jews complained: 'He has been among us for more than thirty-five years. He has more appeal among the gentiles than among us. Perhaps he likes the gentiles more than the Russian Jews.'

Nonetheless the gaunt grey bearing of the Wellington rabbi impressed itself strongly in my memory. I left his house late at night. It was a cold night, a starry night. He saw me out and stretched out his pale hand to the sky and remarked:

'Look, see how big are the stars over New Zealand.'

And later, whenever I walked alone in the cool starry nights of New Zealand, I remembered that white hand that pointed out the stars.

## SHEEP

New Zealand is now greyish-green. It is the beginning of summer and the *manuka* bushes that grow thickly everywhere are laden with white flowers and give New Zealand its grey-green appearance. Here and there a tree is decked with red flowers and its redness contrasts with the deep-blue sky. In New Zealand, the skies curve low over the earth and earth and sky come close together, literally extending a hand. At night, the starry sky is so low that one need only reach out a hand to pluck a star. And of stars, New Zealand has an abundance, and big are they and radiant. As the evening star sheds its rays upon the sea, a clear way spreads across the water — one could imagine that a full moon showed itself among the stars.

The region is a hilly one. It is hard to find an open space where one's vision can carry far and wide without interference as in the plains of Canada or South America where the sky extends into the distance to meet the earth.

New Zealand is full of volcanic mounds. At every step, one recognises traces of extinct craters. There are sites in New Zealand where the ground refuses to become silent and still smokes and shoots up fire in hot, boiling streams. But there, where the volcanoes have become forever silent, they have left a mountainous region and where once there were craters, there are now deep-blue and blue-green lakes.

The land covers more than one hundred thousand square miles. It is divided across the middle by a furious strait that is sixty to ninety miles wide. That is the well-known Cook Strait. And so the country is separated into north and south. South — the cold island; North — the warmer island. The highest mountains, all year covered with snow, are in the south. There is found Mount Cook which is more than twelve thousand feet in height. The south island also has flat lands and hot springs. But the north island is more colourful and the mountains, though not so tall, still roar with the sleepless turmoil of the half-active volcanoes. It is here that one finds Rotorua where the earth will not rest for a moment, where the earth burns and refuses to let itself be decked in green.

Once, New Zealand was covered with dense forests — one could not see through them. The Maoris know their secrets. The Maoris wove their legends and sent them into the depths of the forests, where the legends grew and appeared to the brown race in the form of gods and heroes. But with the arrival of the children of the white race, an affliction befell the forests. Without cease, the white race burnt the forests. Now the winds tear freely across the land from one end to the other. Formerly, the forests obstructed the abandoned

path of the wind. The north island is a mere two hundred miles wide at its widest. And in some places, it is only six miles wide. So the winds blow from all sides, and wind joins hands with wind over hill and dale. In some areas, the people long once more for those burnt-out forests and plant new woods to protect themselves from the wind.

New Zealand breeds sheep. For sheep, one needs pastures. So trees are felled, forests are burned and grass is sown in their place, even though new forests are being planted. But because of man's privileges, no forests are permitted to grow and mature. Sheep, sheep, sheep. White innocent sheep; on their side a branded symbol. A sign to whom they belong.

As one cuts across the land in the train and one looks upon the grazing lands studded with sheep, one may well believe that a man is here of secondary importance and that the most important thing by far is the sheep. For hours, the gaze roams about the curved green slopes, looking like cropped heads, and from that greenness appear numerous white spots. Every so often, these spots move, sometimes spread out, sometimes closer. And sometimes, they come so close together that they form a stream and the stream suddenly pours down the slope: a flock of sheep suddenly startled by a bird and running frightened down the slope.

One rides for hours on the train and seldom is a grain-field encountered. It is not profitable. It is easier to burn a forest, sow grass, and on the green pastures release flocks of sheep. But how sad it is to look upon a burnt forest — for a green forest will not let itself be burnt totally to the roots, despite the will of the arsonist. The tree catches fire, the twigs flare, the crown of the tree flames and cracks and shoots out fire and smoke in all directions, but the trunk remains, smouldering, half-burnt, here and there an entire tree wholly preserved and standing out green in the midst of the other burnt-out trees. He lives still and watches how the forest around him dries and succumbs. Sheep stray almost half-witted and pluck at the grass around the burnt trunks. To look upon such a forest fills one with sorrow.

The train continues further, further, and one comes across the Wanganui River. It is strong and wide; its bed is deep; and it cuts deep into the reefs of the hills. The limestone shores hang high over its stream. At the moment, the waters are not very deep and one wonders why its bed is indeed so wide. Suddenly, the Wanganui comes to a tight and rocky area, the walls and the river bed become narrow and the waters become deep. Deep and slow and brooding, reflecting in its mirror the sky above and the hills to either side. But once the Wanganui negotiates these straits, it catches breath and its course broadens once more. The stream becomes broad and splintered and reaches out hands into all directions, each hand washing along a different course.

Rarely does one see a house. Rarely does one see a man walking among the green hills and the white, white sheep. The land is liberally distributed. It belongs to someone; or perhaps to several 'someones.' And each has enclosed his large portion with rows of barbed wire. And should a sheep wish to climb through the fence, it leaves on the wire a piece of its white wool and must withdraw its head. And even if it is to succeed and cross into a neighbour's pastures, that is not so bad. For on its hide it bears the brand of its owner and

just as that brand will never escape it, so it will never escape its owner. A shepherd with a faithful dog watches over them. The owner does not have to waste his time in the desolate field. Even without him, the grass will continue to grow. Even without his blessing, the sheep will continue to produce its wool. And when, here and there, a house is to be seen, no sense of desolation blows from it. One is aware that within there is abundance and comfort.

It happens that one encounters a small village, several houses together, a tiny township with a church and a pitiful cemetery, flat white stones at the heads of the graves, and wives and children, old and young. One sees one or two old bent Maoris who own no land ringed with barbed wire. One is led to think: 'All rivers run to the sea and here a man distinguishes his life with a cord of loneliness and greyness, of dust and dejection'

The way continues through hill and dale. The sky is low over one's head. Very soon, one believes, the train will cut through the borders of the blue sky and tear through the mountainous region into the free and open world beyond. But the hills only increase and to those borders of the sky, it is still so far ...

### OLD WAYS

New Zealand has her own charm, a miniature land with little pockets of delight. But above all, it is people who give a land a name, and it is these people with their orderliness who create its face. Not the seas which surround New Zealand, not the cliffs and the harbours, not the hot or cold lakes that sway in the mountains and the extinct volcanic craters — not they are the first to offer welcome. The land looks at you with the eyes of its inhabitants.

The New Zealander loves his country. The love looks out from the youthful pale poetry. And there is indeed what to sing about in praise of her nature. But New Zealand also looks with the eyes of a proud people. A people of one million souls — spread out amongst several cities, the largest of which, Auckland, has little more than one hundred thousand inhabitants. And that is a big city, the biggest in the world, the most beautiful in the world. What does one not do for love? What does one not say out of love? Only one million souls but New Zealand is nonetheless a country with its own people, a nation. An Anglo-Saxon nation with sport, with an abundance of meat, with tobacco pipes and woollen socks in summer.

Only a mere seventy years ago did New Zealand establish an independent government. Someone wanted to set the communal life on firmer foundations. Who is that someone? The spirit of the people? No. There are no signs of a life that has truly luminous sides.

In the end, the Englishman never really went very far away, never left for distant lands there to create new forms of life. The Englishman always sought new lands there to transport old mouldy patterns of evidence. And the Christian missionaries were the first to lay down the foundations for those particular patterns. Could anyone else have displayed or created so much banality in a new land as these representatives of Christendom? With a large brush in one hand and a bucket of grey paint in the other, these messengers of the Christian faith go forth everywhere to create the same grey picture, to

render grey all life from the foundations to the roof. Those who come after them already find the door open into the old-man church, find already a worn-out trail. And in our own day, at a time of wireless telegraphy, of newspapers and world wars, the Christian world sharpens itself on its own whetting-stone. She whets one face for the whole world.

I have often heard that the structure of New Zealand is a socialist one, that it already possesses what the rest of the world is still dreaming about. In truth, New Zealand is conservative, as conservative as any country can be, where the land is divided into enormous tracts among a few individuals, where there is a sufficiency of bread and butter and meat. The labour question is not a burning issue as the country does not have a working-class of any importance. Among seventy members of parliament, there were in my time eight socialists.

The country has sound industrial laws, perhaps incorporating more regulations than other countries. But industrial laws in a land with neither a working-class or administration are like unoiled wheels on a sandy path. The condition of the worker is here no better than in England. Basic wages. Miserable apartments. An emaciated face. As in England, the owner-employer looks down upon the worker from above and the worker has to look up at the employer.

The land of New Zealand, long ago split into two parts by the Cook Strait, is portioned out among its land-owners. Each possesses a thousand, ten thousand, perhaps a hundred thousand ploughshares; each has acquired his portion by cheating the Maoris or by other means. It makes little difference. In Parliament sit the representatives of the land-magnates. These representatives strengthen the hands of the politicians and leaders. The government, too, owns a number of tracts of land which it sells to no one — although it does lease it out for a number of years. One could interpret this as meaning that this land belongs to the people. But neither does the government own the best lands nor does it offer much assistance to those who do come to it to lease the land. The North American government also owns an excess of deserts and rocky regions. And the Canadian government, too, owns plenty of land, almost to the North Pole. And the same with Argentina and Brazil. Nonetheless, no one will say that in those countries the land belongs to the people. That someone governs the land and gives little aid to him who comes to establish himself upon it. As in England, so here one sees clearly the wealthy man and on the side the poor man. There is no lack of beggars in the streets of the smaller and larger cities who hold out their hands for alms.

The terror cast upon the young distant countries — that Germany intends to engulf them — in order to draw them into the world war — is only now developing. The fear of Japan is doubly great. For that reason, compulsory conscription has been introduced. From adolescence onwards, a man must learn how to hold a gun.

There is also some good in this country which the United States of America could emulate. Here no attempt is made to annihilate the fifty-odd thousand Maoris that live in New Zealand. And even though the best lands have been taken from them either by deception or by force, and even though

they have been driven towards the volcanic regions and the hot lakes, nonetheless America can still take the example of New Zealand in relation to its treatment of its Indians. The Maoris are not confined in separate enclosed reservations. They have their privileges and freedoms. They have leaders in Parliament, their own representatives. There is almost a traditional regard in New Zealand for these brown-skinned Maoris.

Overall, New Zealand is a loyal child of England. The blood of Mother England. I do not know whether the mother so trembles over her children as her children plead for their mother. Both the good and the bad have been inherited. Even though the way is long, nonetheless they sail towards their mother and see how things are among their older brothers and sisters, particularly in London.

New Zealand has some very fine museums where, with great affection, all things pertaining to its history have been gathered — particularly regarding the Maoris. Also libraries, with old manuscripts as in London. Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand, has an art gallery. Although the paintings are almost entirely by English artists, and not among the best, yet for New Zealand it is more than plenty.

And as a stranger moves from one institution to another, he feels that in New Zealand there lives a young-small-old folk with well-established notions and ways in life — its own way from which the old world has already tired.

## FLOWERS

On a hot sunny evening, I arrived in Auckland which has over one hundred thousand inhabitants, among them about five hundred Jews. I found it hard to stay in my hotel room once I swept from myself the dust of the road. The evening was too beautiful and the waters around the city drew me towards them. And when after a stroll through the tidy, colourful, built-up streets, I returned to the hotel, I was handed a visiting card and a bunch of fresh flowers. From their variety and freshness I could tell that the flowers did not come from a shop but had just been cut from a garden. But more surprising was to read on the card the name of the Auckland rabbi. Although in passage one loses many sentimental streaks, nonetheless there remains a place in one's being for unexpected flowers when they are brought by a person from whom never in one's life could one expect flowers.

Again I imagined the rabbi to be a young man. How can it be otherwise? But a while later, there was a knock on the door. I bade my visitor to enter and there before me was the rabbi [*Reverend Samuel Aaron Goldstein – Ed.*] A hoary man; in his seventies. With a clever and weary face, with all the signs of a learned man in his expression.

Yes, he was the one who had earlier brought the flowers.

In his welcome was the warmth of a beloved uncle rather than the haughtiness of a grandfather or elderly rabbi. I could not stop myself and remarked:

'It seems to me that those flowers came from a private garden.'

'Yes, from my garden.'

'It is a surprise.'

'Yes, from my own garden', he said proudly. 'Everything that I loved in my boyhood, even now have I not discarded it. Several days ago, we had a mighty storm and it wreaked havoc in my garden.'

'Tell me, how long have you been here, Rabbi?'

'I was still a young man when I arrived here from England. But I was born in Lithuania. I don't remember the precise place, nor the city.'

We went outside and he led me along the aristocratic street where the synagogue was located. A white clean building that looks out over the outlet to the sea. On the ground-floor is the Sunday-school for children. That is where I was first led. After that, when he had told me of his life, his work and his childhood weaknesses, he went into a dark side-room and brought out a dust-laden case and from within took out a violin-cello.

'I used to play in my younger years. But now I have let it lapse. Do you like to hear *Kol Nidrei*?'

I sat in the corner and contemplated this elderly Jew who was in love with his youth and was now rabbi somewhere at the end of the world. And before the stranger who came from far away, it occurred to him to play nothing other than *Kol Nidrei*. One could tell from the dust on the case that he had not played for a very, very long time. And the violin-cello was angered by its futile disturbance. And as he sat now bowed over the cello and struggled with his bow upon the strings, I saw that everything was lost. His hands trembled — and then not only his hands ...

Now his heart, his whole being trembled and impelled his fingers to stray over the four taut strings as through an enormous labyrinth. Looking upon the stranger from his corner of the seven seas, he remembered his youth and his own way here. And I saw before me not a rabbi but an old Jewish traveller looking out with a new and burning gaze.

His fingers trembled over the strings. The tremor of his whole hand dominated the fingers. The *Kol Nidrei* came out broken, ruined, tragic and moribund. When he finished, he remained seated, his head bowed, in thought, over the cello. Standing up, he remarked:

'Yes, the hands tremble. One never knows until one has tested the fingers upon the strings.'

That same evening, he showed me his large library with its many books in different languages relating to Judaism. We strolled between the flower-beds that were behind his house.

I learned later how beloved he was by his congregation, and what a fine spiritual guide he was to his congregation and to his fellow-Jews, most of whom were Russian.

But when several days later I held a lecture in the Sunday-school hall, there came no more than twenty Jews, even though the rabbi himself publicised my lecture and was, himself, the chairman that evening. A fine guide he is certainly and our Russian Jews have let themselves be led by him to one side of a hill from which one may contemplate our dispersed multitudes.

I came to like Wellington far more, where the rabbi was no scholar and where our Russian Jews refused his leadership. Sadly I walked through the attractive, bright and built-up streets of Auckland and in this way on one occasion noticed an elderly patriarchal Jew preoccupied with his serving in a small tailor-shop. I went inside and interrupted him. He thought someone had come to be fitted. From behind his glasses, he studied me from head to foot. Without preamble, I said in Yiddish:

‘And how goes it for a Jew in New Zealand?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Simply, I see a fine Jew with such a clear Jewish appearance, so I ask how it goes with him in such a far country.’

‘My young man, I am not a Jew.’

‘But you speak Yiddish and your look is Jewish.’

‘I am a Catholic.’

‘How is that possible?’

‘Yes, my young man’, he said with growing anger, ‘why do you wonder so? My son is a Catholic priest, so I became a Catholic. And what of it if I do speak Yiddish?’

He said no more and returned to his work, basting a black garment with white thread. That is how one sometimes receives flowers in distant lands.

## ROTORUA

The New Zealand earth stirs quite often from sleep. It refuses to quieten down and remain wholly subdued. Here and there still smoke volcanoes. Boiling streams flow through the earth’s veins seeking a way into the free world without. In Rotorua one can still look into the blood of the earth and smell the hot sulphur fumes that come out of the depths.

Rotorua — two lakes. The Maoris hold this place as sacred and have webbed it around with legends. Two lakes, but in their language, which contains only half of our alphabet, it rings more musically: Rotorua.

Rotorua. One lake is blue, the other green. Both deep. Cold. Located in the very mouth of extinct craters.

But not these two lakes afford the region its greatness, with which New Zealand prides itself. It is, it is true, the most beautiful corner in the country. But its beauty is a greyish one, an ancient and burning one, a young and furious one. For miles and miles, the wild angry beauty lies spilled out. For miles around are scattered mounds of lava and mountains of rock. Naked. Unsmiling. In their restive lakes, hot and cold, green and blue. Not a single corner of Rotorua is seen to smile. Even Mount Rainbow that rises above the other mountains and shines with its stark nakedness is wrathful in its play of colours and gives out warning: ‘Stay away from here!’

And the deeper one enters into the region, the more acutely does one sense that the area throws over one its mantle and that at any moment one will become stoned or petrified. Even in Colorado, in Arizona, one does not feel so oppressed by the angry kingdom of stone. On the contrary, gradually one

becomes a brother to the stony cliffs. But here — not even the most experienced guide can lighten one's spirits. The guide, a young slender Maori with spurs on his boots, walks and relates:

'Over there, in the valley, where you see steam rising, there used to be a village of several hundred Maoris. The earth then trembled and covered them completely with hot lava.'

'Then what persuaded your people to settle there?'

'Wanting to live beside the hot waters. And do you see there, where it boils and blows on the sand? There used to be the red and white terraces which people came from the whole earth to see.'

'Where are the terraces now?'

'The fires of the earth tore them apart. Yes, sir, the fires of the earth tore them apart. The explosion was heard hundreds of miles away. Our great king saw one day before, how from the hot lake there arose a canoe, and in it a great leader who pointed towards the red and white terraces. Everyone understood the sign. The next morning, it happened. It will be a long time before new terraces are formed. The streams will boil and spray out from the depths and will form other terraces, more beautiful ones, before the great leader will again show himself in his canoe over the hot lake.'

The rocky hills and the volcanoes that continue to smoke all around, the deep rumbling that carries everywhere, and the smell of sulphur, iron and copper — all these distract the thoughts from the guide and his patter. From behind a hill rises a hot dense vapour. It boils inside. The noise — like that of a lake seething in the depths — is muffled by a hill. From time to time, a stream spurts out together with the vapour. The water boils for a while outside and runs downhill. From somewhere, a small red river appears from which there rises the smell of rusted iron. From another direction comes a green stream, a deep green, and along its borders gathers the rust of copper.

Such is the Rotomohana! The hot lake. Boiling hot. How deep it is nobody knows. The mouth of its crater, perhaps a mile long and wide. Its water is green, sulphur-green. Or perhaps like the delicate green of the birch-leaves that unfold from the buds. Overland flies a white water-bird, flies towards cold water and crossing the Rotomohana mirrors itself in it — its white feathers, belly and wings.

To the surface of the water rise bubbles and blisters and diamonds which burst with a softly ringing tinkle. In the depths flare fires and the abyss seethes and boils.

A motor-boat takes us across the Rotomohana, across the mouth of the crater. I feel the fires that throb in the depths — the fires that burn out in the arms of the Rotomohana and the intensifying noise of the boiling waters as one approaches the opposite side to a row of cleft and scattered cliffs. Cliffs from whose crevices the vapours shoot and whistle and wheeze. Pillars of hot vapour. Streams of boiling water.

Not only the sound of water carries from the depth, but the reverberations of distant thunder. Of hard solid collisions. One feels the whole region trembling. The abyss trembles. One forgets that in other places the earth has

become temperate and subdued; that there, men sow and reap; that the earth is decked in green and trees are covered with white blooms or endowed with juicy and fragrant fruit. Suddenly, one believes that one has been asleep and has woken to find that the good earth has become annihilated. Fires have sprung from the depths and have destroyed everything that once covered the gentle land. Everything lies buried under the mounds of lava and only I have escaped and survived and have been cursed and condemned to roam in this Sodom, to breathe in its odour of hot sulphur and to listen to the cries and the moans of agony arising from the layers of lava.

Presently, there comes a cold current. A cold spring pulses out of the earth. With less noise. The water is clear and transparent. A cold transparency.

How have the streams eluded each other beneath the earth? It is as if the cold stream has come from an iceberg as the sun begins to melt the ice, rather than out of the earth.

How do they flow there side by side, the hot and the cold currents, the hot sulphur-streams and the pure cold gushing waters?

No wonder that the Maoris created gods here. Merciful gods and angry, furious gods.

And the names of all the gods: Rotorua, Rotomohana, Wakarewarewa, Tikateii ...

One hears a sound emerge from the boiling waters. A sound of boiling — hot streams in the depth. A sound of fire and water-currents that encounter one another yet flow apart ...

## THE MAORIS

In New Zealand, the Maoris are encountered everywhere. In the city or in a village, in the field or on a train, around the lakes or near the springs, one meets everywhere with their mysterious glances. Their land has been purloined yet they are free to move about at will. For them, there are no hemmed-in paths.

There live about fifty thousand Maoris in New Zealand — fifty thousand amongst a total population of one million, and that million self-consciously white. In the Maori's eyes one sees the volcanic New Zealand.

When did the Maoris come to New Zealand?

They have no recorded history. Instead they possess a multitude of rich traditions that begin with one war and end with another. Legends still bound up with cannibal instincts. But one thing is clear — that, by the fourteenth century, they were already in New Zealand. Every corner of the country bears a Maori name — old names whose meaning even the priests and elders have already forgotten. With the exception of the several larger cities, such as Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and perhaps a few more, all the names of the rivers, lakes, waterfalls, springs, mountains and valleys are their names. And these are the names used also by the white race: Aratiano Waterfall, the Karapiti Caves, Hamarana Spring, Tarawera Lake, Wanganui River. And so are woven the half-forgotten traditions from one end of the country to the

other. Their mythology is probably as interesting as the Scandinavian, their gods inhabited all the forests and all the waters that both surrounded New Zealand or lay within it. Other gods were cursed to be transformed into islands and others into cliffs to face the roaring sea. It is a people that counts neither the days nor the nights. One does not ask: how many days have you been here? how many nights have you been here?

They have sold their souls to thousands of gods and brought sacrifices to each. One god demanded the blood of the smallest bird, another — the flesh of a child.

They number about fifty thousand, the greater proportion of these Polynesian tribes on the South Island. Not so attractive as the Tahitian, but with more power of resistance. Only a hundred years ago, the Maoris were among the most brutal cannibals. Barely a hundred years ago, they ate the flesh of the enemy and offered human hearts as sacrifice to the gods. Their canoes are the finest and their carvings are to be wondered at. Their houses are carved both without and within with the finest symmetrical lines and splendidly drawn figures. Until the white man came, they knew nothing of iron and steel. Out of stones and bones did they make hatchet and knife, chisel and needle — from human bone the instrument with which to tattoo the flesh, and from human bone the spear with which to capture fish. And how could one with a mere stone create such remarkable carvings? Out of the carvings stem thought, fantasy, religious philosophy. Out of the carvings looks out a full-blooded people.

The face is pale brown, the eyes black. The men broad-shouldered. Others with eagle's-nose, black beards and thick black smooth hair covering the head. The women sturdy, graceful, with a transparency in the brownness of their faces. The lips somewhat puckered, adding charm to the face. There is something Semitic in that face. One feels a closeness towards them. But what an abyss yawns between the old and the new generation.

The lips of the older mother are still tattooed with blue paint and little blue circles cover her chin down to her neck; for until one generation ago a married woman was not permitted to go out into the street if her lips were not tattooed in blue. After her marriage, the natural red lips were a disgrace. And the older father — such a strong mystical intensity looks out of the eyes of the old man whose face too is covered with circles, tattooed both broad and long, and whose soul still bathes in the mist of the old cannibal traditions; against which from the younger generation, man or woman, boy or girl, there emerges so much inborn goodness and gentleness and natural laughter and joy. How is it possible, one wonders, that all these charming brown girls and youths are children of the most belligerent tribes? Children of the bloodiest tribes that through all the generations sought better ways to annihilate their neighbours and how to intensify the lust for annihilation.

Such was the Maori in earlier days. Although tribes of one blood, almost of one language, yet dispersed between different forests, hills and lakes, they were lured and drawn by the hymn of battle against each other. Between the tribes wandered Tu, the god of War. Seldom did Tohu, the god of Peace, show

himself. War for the sake of War. War for no reason. So did the mighty god desire who dreamt that an alien tribe had offended him. So demanded the mighty ruler with his heavily-tattooed face. And if one tribe did live in peace with another, it was only to combine forces against another neighbouring tribe. They showed no less skill in warfare against England. One of their last wars against England, which continued for ten years — from 1860 till 1871 — showed that quite clearly. England did not conquer them. They became subdued not by war but by politics. Through cunning compromises; by giving them 'rights', by granting them representatives in Parliament. Christian belief deprived them of the strength for war and the *kakati* and *patu* fell from their hands. From their weapons of stone, they made jewellery. Perhaps somewhere in the North Island there still sits an old ruler with a tattooed face: brow, cheeks, nose and chin, dressed in his feathered cape, surrounded by elderly zealots, teaching them the lore of war. But that is mere *kabbalah*. Tradition. Religious mood and ecstasy. There are no more wars. The young generation is no longer heroic. Together with the ecstasy for war, god worship and cannibalism have vanished for the young. Their god demanded human sacrifices, human blood. The priest ate the heart of the enemy. Gifts of animal flesh were sent to favoured friends. The heads were dried and treasured, prized. Such dried heads are still seen in the museum and bear witness to an age. Beside them, their weapons too are seen. Old leaders still live — one-time kings with tattooed faces. And the younger generation is ashamed of the deeds of their grandfathers. He is also ashamed of his language and mixes it readily, willingly with English. And if one is to ask him the meaning of a name, he replies, happily:

'We do not know the meaning anymore. Our fathers, too, no longer know.'

I ask a young woman: 'Why are your lips not tattooed? You are after all already a mother?' 'It is not attractive', she says solemnly.

And yet fifty years ago it was attractive. When a girl was being prepared for marriage, it was with great ceremony that her lips and chin were tattooed. With a fine sharp instrument made from human bone, the flesh of the puckered rosy lips was torn apart and blue paint poured into the wounds. Little circles were cut into the chin and blue and red paint were again poured into the open wound. And these blue and red circles remained forever in the skin. And then it was attractive. And during the tattooing ceremony a song was sung:

Lie down, lie down, young bride,  
 Tra-la-la-la —  
 Let your lips be coloured  
 Tra-la-la-la —  
 So that none shall say  
 As you come their way  
 Tra-la-la-la —  
 There goes the woman with the naked lips  
 Tra-la-la-la.

And now the young generation beautifies with his own face the face of New Zealand. The young generation regards New Zealand as his own country and

talks with resentment about the white government. The young generation holds its head high. It can't be any different, for the feeling of slavery has always been alien to the Maoris. Slavery is to them a dark symbol. The slave never raised his head. The captive never entertained any hope of ever returning to his tribe. He who allowed himself to be taken as captive was unworthy to bear the name of his tribe. His own people would have torn him apart and the priest would have eaten his heart.

They do not regard themselves as conquered, for, indeed, they were never conquered. Perhaps they feel offended, for, indeed, they have been offended; although by whom, the younger generation cannot determine.

Now they are Christian.

Today, the young generation scoffs at the one-time might of its old leaders, scoffs at the excommunication or taboo that they could impose upon all things. For when the king or priest entered a house, that house became holy and no man could any more step across its threshold. The king could sanctify rivers and lakes. And if he chose a name for himself, the very word he chose became holy. And were he to call himself Long River or Great Eagle, these words were to be thrown out of the language and new words found for river and eagle. Today, as the language becomes piecemeal forgotten; today, when the girl no longer goes out to seek her husband but he instead seeks the steps of his beloved — today is the excommunication dead and with it die the gods and traditions. There die the gods of the mountains and the gods of the rivers. The great god of the seas is already dead. The young do not bemoan or bewail their downfall. They smile when one talks of their traditions.

Today, when there comes a visitor of importance, he simply passes through the door. No wall needs to be broken down for him. And when there comes a guest of truly great renown, then he simply passes through the gate. No fence needs to be pulled down on his behalf.

And yet nature is seen in the eyes of the young generation. One sees the children whose parents reckoned the months according to the moon and the stars and who reckoned the seasons according to the plants of the earth and the blossoming of the trees.

The Christian missionaries first came one hundred and six years ago. They already found all the good things that the white traders brought here in their sailboats. They already found among the Maoris gun-powder and guns. They already found injurious spirits and highly contagious diseases. Civilisation and Christianity joined hands. And civilisation with a Christian face, with a devout countenance, always carried a curse instead of a blessing. It is easy to recognise.

They are the fifty thousand amongst a million. That million has many million more beyond the seven seas. But these fifty thousand do not have many thousand more beyond the seas. And if there are several thousand more somewhere on scattered islands, it is so arranged that they should remain far apart and forgotten. In the end, the fifty thousand will disappear. The white race will absorb their blood into its veins. Millions shall be counted, but not the fifty thousand.

## PART 2: AUSTRALIA

For travellers of olden times who, abandoning themselves to vague desires, drifted on distant seas towards still uncharted lands, how great was the torrent of rejoicing that sprang from the heart when, after months of wandering, there appeared suddenly before them first a shore-line and then a grey or grey-green strip of land! — A new world discovered; how the blood danced with joy.

For today's traveller who wanders with hazy thoughts and uncertain purposes, not only once does he become disillusioned when after a stretch of days or perhaps of weeks of travel, he is finally confronted by the long-awaited land — without sun, and pale.

So does Australia's coastline appear on one hot morning — grey and flat. That is the impression from afar. A sandiness breaks through the haze on the distant horizon. All the passengers hurry to the deck nervous and excited, everyone's gaze is drawn towards the jellied strip of horizon.

One young man cannot conceal his disappointment. 'That is Australia? For a month to vomit green bile just to see this?'

This, a young slender blond lady cannot endure. His words hurt her. Colour rises to her cheeks as she interrupts: 'Just wait a little; we shall hear what you will say when the ship enters the harbour. The most beautiful in the world!'

'You won't convince me,' the young man is adamant. 'The most beautiful harbour in the world is in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro. There, too, did I arrive on a morning such as this. But what a comparison! Already two hours earlier did the whole area rise to the clouds in its greenness and vegetation. There is the finest harbour in the world.'

But the young lady, a daughter of Australia, defends herself with tears in her eyes. 'Wait, wait until we enter. Our harbour is a secret, a hidden one as long as one is not in it. How can it even be imagined that Brazil and not Australia has the most beautiful harbour in the world? And I say that not because I was born in Australia and the land is dearest to me — I am deeply convinced of it.'

Looking upon her, one is inadvertently moved to think: How did the very same shore appear some one hundred and thirty years ago to the first thousand immigrants, when they saw this strip of land from a distance after months of travel? They were convicts, criminals of the time. Both for petty thefts and great crimes did their Mother England transport them to Australia, to the end of the world. Rarely did any man come here of his free will. Perhaps amongst them was to be found this lady's great-grandfather? Today, from what one hears, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren are ashamed of the names of their ancestors — English criminals and pioneers. And just as it is difficult for the eyes to penetrate through the fog that settles low upon that strip of land, so it is difficult to look upon it with an Englishman's eyes. And now there stands a daughter of Australia who compels us to strain our eyes and seek out beauty where it is difficult for the very thought to conceive of it.

As one comes closer, one sees the contours of low rocky cliff-like hills ahead. Our boat cuts through a granite wall that rises out of the sea. The first impression is one of certainty that we will strike the cliff before us and it is hard to see from a distance any passage through which we may come upon land. It is told that not a few ships have been hurled upon these cliffs in a storm; and even Captain Cook who in 1770 circuited along these same shores did not trust these cliffs and anchored his *Endeavour* in Botany Bay well away from them.

Finally, our boat is quite close. The boat leans to one side and through a small crack between the cliffs one's eyes fall upon a totally different world. The boat follows one's gaze. A sudden revelation. A new world, full of light. Before one's eyes is suddenly uncovered the full green and succulent breadth of the Sydney harbour. A still, calm water surrounded by high hilly borders. The true children of the land, the eucalyptus trees, grow dense and tall, glow under the sun with their naked trunks and their scent transcends the smell of the sea. Small wooded islands lie dispersed over the still blue waters. The city border softens the contours of the city that extends far beyond the shore. The entire harbour breathes with vastness and hidden concert, embracing our small boat in her broad arms. Here, I think, could all the ships of the world find secure refuge from the cyclones that so often buffet the land.

But the closer one approaches, the greater becomes the height and the stronger the breath of the big city. The smell and the smoke of all big harbour-cities today, as one enters them from the sea, is always the same. And Sydney has the air of a big city.

The heat is savage and dense as the day progresses. As one approaches still nearer, one sees how the trees and vegetation along the coast lie as if in a languid dream. In the north, it is winter. And what a summer — burning and without rain. But the Australian whom one encounters, whether man or woman, young or old, smiles good-naturedly. The children of the land are tall and strong. It seems that in their friendly gaze, the very earth itself, so dry, smiles with friendship.

'Have you brought anything new with you?', asks the customs officer as he examines our cases upon our crossing the threshold into the country.

'My companion and I are the only new things we have brought into your land, but our cases — they are old.'

He appreciates the joke and it pleases him. He leaves our luggage alone and remarks, 'You are welcome guests.'

And that is worth a lot in a new country when it has taken a month to reach it.

## SYDNEY

As one emerges from the harbour into the town and the first tremor passes, one is confronted by the reality. I have long given up hope of finding in distant worlds a new life that the European has created. That he is simply unable to do.

Somewhere in the tropics there are white ants that eat up one's shoes at night as well as one's leather suitcases. These ants too are builders, building palaces for themselves even as they destroy someone's shoes. Perhaps it is a bit far-fetched but such too is the behaviour of the white man in distant lands. I mean the European with his civilisation. He builds, but he also destroys. Of course, every man goes to distant lands with the finest of intentions and to Australia he is drawn on the wings of his imagination. Sydney, the largest city in Australia, that has almost one million inhabitants, is witness to excessive civilisation on a grey scaffolding of culture. Almost completely European. English. Still a young city, only a little over one hundred years old, but with wrinkles on the face and mud in the plants.

As soon as one emerges from the beautiful harbour, one stumbles upon such plants. One enters into narrow crowded streets where poverty stalks the alleys, where there live the working masses. Here one sees the labourer, lean and sweaty — in no way like the well-fed, tall and healthy men I saw earlier. Here one sees poor pale women and pale ill-nourished children. And were it not for the great heat and the blinding sun, one could well imagine that one was wandering lost through the poor workers' quarters of London.

The people move briskly through the streets of the city. The streets teem with life. Many men show the distinct signs of the last war. So in Europe, so in Australia. A fact is that of Australia's five million inhabitants, half a million sons were sent off to war. Here a man stomps by with a wooden leg, there a man with an empty sleeve, and another with a deformed face. Beggars in the street. Amazing. One begs with music, the other with an outstretched hand. And often a drunkard comes along the way, one who appears to be a good and good-natured fellow.

A young man, an Englishman, accosts me on the way. 'Hello, how are you? Don't you recognise me?'

'Me? ... Where have I seen you before?'

'So, you don't recognise me. Why then did I recognise you?'

'Remind me, where have I seen you?'

'I am a brother of yours ... Don't you know that all men on earth are brothers?'

'Thank you very much for reminding me. I had nearly forgotten it. And what can I do for you, brother dear?'

'Just give us something for a whiskey. That's all'

And perhaps that is a lot ...

In the windows, all sorts of goods. Worldly goods. Manufactured in America, England ... The life on the streets pulsates with an American rhythm. Advertisements shout with American loudness. The language is replete with slang. Life is full with sport. In the newspaper, the first newspaper I buy to read along the way — sport, sport, sport. Horse-races are being held on the day of my arrival; no room is available for rent in any city hotel. It is necessary to live on the outskirts, near the sea. Perhaps it is better like this. For as long as one faces the wide and distant ocean, the thoughts assume an exotic texture. One is brought to wonder even as one feels the big city behind one's shoulders.

One thinks of the wild sea which men have subdued in coming here. One thinks of the solid foundations that the white man has laid down in remote Australia and forgets even the big gaol-fortress that one has encountered on the sea — the gaol with the high massive walls that the transported convicts have built for themselves and their fellows. Before one's thoughts are spread vast ploughed expanses and expanses still waiting for the tall strong man with his plough to make a way through them.

But Sydney is not the city a traveller should encounter first of all. More apt would it be to arrive and breathe in the scent of the eucalyptus trees; more apt perhaps to arrive and warm oneself in the sun; and perhaps to hear the turmoil of the cyclones that arise from the distant south.

I read the newspaper. A dispute: the second big city Melbourne, the biggest in the state of Victoria, rebukes Sydney for being lewd and debauched rather than pious. Sydney overindulges in alcohol. The streets are too bright at night when they should be subdued. Sydney indulges too much in this — worldly pursuits. And Sydney knows how to reply and how to reprove in turn her pious sister that is to me still unknown.

One reads, one learns that somewhere there are strikes. There are strikes in the coal-mines; there are strikes in the factories; there are strikes in the opal mines.

The people come to the sea to escape the great heat. They are erect and in high spirits and remind me vividly of the folk in California. Here I learn that Australia has imbued in many people a feeling of living with nature. The people tell me that many of their brothers and sisters work only six months of the year — in the winter months. In the summer, they gather to the sea where they live in tents — an entire summer and to a high degree.

The eyes seek out the local native-born inhabitant, the Aborigine, who once lived in the area. I look for these black, dark-haired, curly-bearded men — but they are nowhere to be seen. The people here are white. The true child of the country is a vestige somewhere along the equator. In the Europeans' midst, there is no trace of them.

Along the shore I see a house. On the house, there is a sign: ladies' tailor. The name is familiar, intimate. The tailor himself stands in the doorway; on the steps his wife and a couple of children cooling themselves in the sea-breeze, looking at me with slightly frightened eyes. I greet him a good-morning in Yiddish and ask further: 'Have you lived long in Australia?'

'Ha?' I see that he believes neither his eyes nor his ears.

I say: 'You are a Jew, or am I mistaken?'

He is silent. He and his wife glance at one another. I ask further:

'How long have you lived in Sydney?'

He is still silent and looks at me with suspicion. I suspect he wants to leave me and retreat within. But I stand firm.

'How are things here with you?'

'Why do you ask? Do you want to open a tailor's shop here?'

'No, God forbid.'

'Then what are you doing here?'

He stands close to me and I see clearly in his eyes that he is suspicious that I have come to undermine his business.

'I have been unable to find a room in the city, so I came out here.' In this way I try to reassure him. But I see that his anxiety is still pronounced.

'I have watched you for several days', he says. 'For some reason you are wandering around here, thinking, exploring and I say to myself, 'Perhaps he is a competitor''

'No, I am not your competitor. I am in no way a competitor. I shall soon be leaving here for Africa'

The Jew breathed more freely and even smiled. He said, 'Yes, you are doing the right thing. They say that for our occupation Africa is much better. Were only I able to move there.'

However, he was not reassured. I saw how day after day he followed my steps. A competitor.

So I am in Australia. Something blows with distance and breadth. A whole continent. Perhaps it would have been better not to have come to Australia through Sydney. The ship should have taken me to another shore, even though Sydney's harbour is one of the most beautiful in the world.

### WITH THE WIND

The wind is a burning fire. It comes from the north, from the equator, as happens very often in Australia. The energy flags yet one is nonetheless drawn onward. Such is the nature of him who is forever seeking new places in which to engrave his step.

There is much humidity in the air and the wind tends to fall asleep. But just as even on the stillest day the seeds of the trees on the shore tend to stir, so too there always arise unexpected winds to relieve one's oppressed will. In Australia, a man could afford himself a little more idleness. Even though many workers leave off their work in summer and with wife and child give themselves up to God's mercy and live by the sea in tents, in the city whole currents of people stream through the streets, ignoring the fact that the temperature reaches 115 degrees Fahrenheit. How can one sleep among the awake? Even though the blood itself talks of sleep.

The scent of flowers on such a day drew me to the Botanical Gardens. For a long time Sydney possessed the most beautiful Gardens in the world until it was overshadowed by those in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro. But who now thinks about those? Only the two rows of enormously tall and slender palms of the Brazilian gardens sway dreamily in my spirit.

The scent of the flagging mimosas fills the entire surroundings; the very limbs become drunk with it. It transcends the odour of all the other flowers. Only the scent of the eucalyptus-tree carries from a distance, goes its own way, stirs and revives. To the right and left stretch long rows of plants from all corners of the world. It is easy to recognise among all these trees and flowers which of these are at home and which are alien. The child of the tropics is in a faint. For the green of the leaf is not a tropical one. Nor is here to be found the

green of the Amazon valleys. I must confess that since I began to visit tropical lands, where the soil yields under its massive green, I have lost the taste for botanical gardens where every tree and every flower is classified and labelled with a wooden sign at its base: who and what and whence. A kind of passport or notice of pedigree. Perhaps the bees that fly from tree to tree, from one flower to another are interested in the pedigree. For myself, I suddenly find myself yearning for the slender frost-encrusted birch. I have seen her here but not recognised her. Here, her bark is yellow.

The hot wind has led me also to the Zoological Gardens. As far as I am aware, the Sydney Zoo is one of the most modern in the world where wild animals roam free under the sky. As I enter the first path, I am suddenly confronted by a big brown bear coming down the slope. A little further on, I see a group of well-kept lions. One lion stands on a rock, tossing his head with its heavy mane, truly ready to pounce upon me. But that is the modern prison for beasts. They do not sit in cages with iron bars, yet are nonetheless in captivity. There, where summer reigns an entire year, it is easy to create such a prison for beasts.

For such a park, an area is selected where there are many hills and slopes. Each small rise is fenced in with built-up walls on three sides while on the fourth side a steep broad pit is dug out. Before the pit, a railing is erected so that the spectators will not fall in — and that is all. From a distance, the pit is not seen, only the raised hill, the mound on which the animals stand. And when the lions gather themselves to their full height, one can believe that no wall or prison stands in the way. Yet they are captive.

The strongest impression is made by a huge orang-outan with a beard, that is in fact kept in a cage. His cage is two-storeyed. He sits on the heavy floor of the upper storey, a mass of wild energy, even on such a hot day. He does not remove his eyes from me as with his feet — one-two! one-two! — he pounces on the floor with such force that the whole edifice trembles. Each bang is heavy and steady. When one leaves him, he becomes quiet and occupies himself with putting in order the various fruits he has been given, but no sooner does anyone approach his cage than he once more beats his wild rhythm: 'I am not trapped! I am not captured!'

Not far different to my eyes seem the enclosed areas where the Aborigines are to be found. These are the Australian natives, the true children of this land. Most of them no longer exist. Some ten thousand of them live around the equator [sic] in Queensland to where the remnants were driven. But here, in New South Wales, are found a few concentration points where they are, like animals, enclosed. One such centre exists around Sydney beside the coast in Botany Bay.

I believe that Captain Cook in 1770 named the area 'Botany Bay' because of its diverse and luxurious vegetation. The area is now a sandy one. Winds have heaped up mounds of sand and thorns grow out of the sand.

Here and there grow trees which were planted at a later time. To this place were gathered several hundred souls, old and young, and surrounded with wire fences. Tin huts are scattered across the sands. There they breed and there they perish. To escape from such a prison is simple. Over the fence and

that is all there is to it. But where does he escape to? What does he do with his brown, his black skin, and his curly hair or beard? They have been moulded into good devout Christians; among them are to be found white missionaries preaching in His glorious name.

Beyond the fence roam children, born here yet nonetheless in enclosed territory. A boy of ten with a black face and blue-black eyes approaches me and extends his hand that I should give him something.

I ask him: 'What is your name? Why are you fenced in?'

'Because I am not allowed out.'

'Who told you that you are not allowed?'

He stares at me, and from my side I want to penetrate his gaze and find there at least a hint of unhappiness. But in his black eyes there sleeps only apathy, as in the kangaroo, also a native of Australia, that I have seen in the Zoological Gardens on the very same day.

Later I talk with a middle-aged woman who has already some white man's blood in her veins. The fire in her eyes is quite different.

'How do you feel here?', I ask.

'A white man should ask such a question?'

She answers no more of my questions. In her silence is concealed the bitterness of the orang-outang. Her expression is certainly the result of the white man's blood within her, but it is not the white man who will give her and her tribe peace and freedom. In Tasmania, the last of the natives has already long vanished from God's earth. Children are taught about Tasmania in the schools. They are taught what Tasmanians look like. But there are no more natives in Tasmania. That is how it will be with the Australian Aborigines in a short time. And that is the same destiny as that of the Red Indians in America.

A man with a curly beard, slightly grey, and with a missing eye, was pointed out to me.

'In his youth, he was one of the boldest fighters and heroes. He lost one eye while fighting for his freedom. Now he's quiet. Satisfied with his lot. Content to boast of his one-time strength.'

He looked at me with his only eye. I read something in it. 'Amongst you we are lost, doomed.'

Once, in the park in Sao Paolo in Brazil, I saw a big eagle. It sat alone in a cage. In its struggle for freedom, it too lost its right eye. And its remaining eye, too, spoke with both anger and pride: 'We are lost among you; doomed.'

## WHITE AUSTRALIA

The way from Sydney to Melbourne, that takes half a full day to travel, brings much pleasure, despite the heat. One becomes aware of the efforts expended by men in cultivating a young country. And when one considers further how little rain falls here and how poor the land is in rivers and lakes, one begins to respect the white folk in this big country. One becomes aware how often the plough has cut through the fields and how often the soil has been turned over; and one becomes aware, too, how much grain has already been harvested and how much more will be reaped.

White Australia. The people are proud of that name. It seems to me that no other country has such firm laws and restrictions in relation to non-whites as Australia. The Negroes cannot enter, and no better is the fate of all the children of man whose skins are not totally white. The country would have far greater appeal for me were its sixty thousand native dark-skinned children to enjoy at least the modest place they deserve. For, as people tell, in no young country has the native been so brutally treated by the white settler as the Aborigines of Australia. In certain areas, they have been simply poisoned. How noble, then, how tall does New Zealand stand in my estimation where the Maoris have been treated, in part at least, like human beings! The Maoris like the Australian Aborigines are a folk culture. It is preferable by far that all primitive notions of colour and skin should die out, rather than these primitive tribes. — These thoughts come precisely when one passes through the cultivated regions and the better deeds of the white man are considered, at such times when the very earth sings to him a hymn of praise.

To the right lie the Blue Mountains; a blue mist enfolds them. And the eucalyptus-tree grows all around. Australia is their home. From the distance, they appear single-toned. The bark does not cling to the trunk and continually falls off. Their naked bodies shine. But that is the impression only from a distance. As one sees the eucalyptus from close-up, one's being is seized by a gentle tremor. Their nakedness is not a dry nakedness of dead trees whose bark is torn off and left scattered on the ground. Here in the very nakedness of the trunk and branches of the eucalyptus-trees one feels the presence of life. Some are bluish-white, others bright-red like the skin of a newborn chick. The naked branches, where they grow out of the naked trunk are so full of living creases in their rosy flesh that one is led to think that were one to cut into them blood would pour out as if from a delicate body. And the green, juicy, long and narrow leaves and the deep-green and silver kernels high up whose scent diffuses throughout the air around the eucalyptus bear witness to the numerous juices in the earth beneath. There are other eucalyptus trees that grow to such a height that one has to raise one's head greatly to see their crowns. And the nakedness of such a tree beckons at one with both strength and gentleness.

Perhaps it is the very white-skinned colour of the eucalyptus that has psychologically worked upon the blond people who have vowed to remain white under the burning sun?

The Australian parrot is also white. And so is the cockatoo, with the pure whiteness of a white dove and with a yellowish crop of feathers on its head which stand when it crows or is in anger. I saw them in the morning darting between the trees, shrieking harshly.

Is he the symbol of white Australia?

Or perhaps the guilt falls upon the white, too-aristocratic streak in the people, upon the pioneers who were convicts transported to Australia from England. It is not important what garb those convicts wore in England. It is certain that their grandchildren want to be whiter than white; whiter than the eucalyptus tree, whiter than the feathers of the Australian cockatoo.

But that will always disturb the natural development of the people. For, while on the one hand, one wonders how in such a short time a convict settlement became a nation of five million people, on the other, one wonders too why the English language did not help to make the population still far greater.

And on the same day as I think these thoughts, I am given to see how a hunter riding on a swift horse, his rifle to his chest ready to shoot, chases a kangaroo — that notable Australian creature with its head like an antelope's, two enormously long hind-legs, two short fore-legs and a heavy long tail on which it leans when it sits, its hind-legs folded beneath it. The kangaroo ran away, jumping on its hind-legs. Perhaps it was a female with a child in its pouch that nature blessed her with? The hunter came upon it too easily, for already from a distance I saw the awkward helpless creature stretched out and the hunter galloping over it. In the short paws of the kangaroo barely long enough to scratch its ears, there lies a symbol of the white man in his distant newly-seized, newly-colonised lands. For Australia it is certainly a symbol. It is also a symbol for the new forms of government that from a distance seem so fine and from close-up so good, as in all places in the whole world where one lives are led by white men with short hands.

It can also be read as symbolic that the express train linking Sydney and Melbourne, stops at the border of the two states, New South Wales and Victoria. All passengers must transfer to another train for the gauges of the railway lines are different and the train from one state cannot enter the other. I do not know which state has the wider gauge, New South Wales or Victoria. But it makes no difference. One thing is clear — that the two states cannot have one direction in life.

Nearer Melbourne, the earth appears more cultivated, the animals well-fed — mostly sheep. The houses of the settlers impress with their breadth. The region is flat and over the fields hangs a thin glowing mist. But the eucalyptus-scent carries strongly through the air and thus one arrives in Melbourne.

A big city. The opposite of Sydney. Broad streets. Numerous gardens. The people seem sturdier, aristocratic, very English.

Melbourne is the crown of white Australia.

## JEWS

As a Jew, I wandered through Sydney for three weeks, a stranger among strangers. In the first few days, I sought two English Jews, respected men of Sydney. They had received communication from New Zealand about my journey to Australia. The first, a banker and ardent Zionist, received me courteously, almost with friendship, and after a short unimportant chat, said upon farewelling me:

'If you stay here longer, I will tell the *shammass* at my synagogue to give you my seat should you wish to pray there.'

The second, a celebrated lawyer, received me with no less courtesy than the first. He gave me some information about Jews in Australia and upon

farewelling me asked me to wait a little as he wished to give me something. He found an old dusty year-book weighing several pounds that the Australian government publishes. A thick book with a mass of facts about households, sheep, cattle, trains, and with calendars, maps and figures, and not even finding it necessary to remove the dust handed me the volume and said: 'It is for three years, but for you that should not matter. I hope that it will prove useful to you.'

I found nothing about Jews in that year-book, although I know quite well that in Sydney there lived more than eight thousand Jews. Almost unawares, already in my fourth week, I entered a clothes store. Jewish faces. Man, wife, a couple of assistants, a few gentile customers.

'It seems to me that you are Jews', I open a conversation.

'Yes, we are Jews', the man answers in English.

A healthy Jew in his middle years. No sooner had he answered than he became pale and felt uncomfortable before the gentile customers.

'Have you lived long in Australia?'

'Take him into the other room', he said to his wife.

His wife beckoned me to enter the back of the store where there lay many packs with old clothes, and a mild excitement played on her face. She was not ashamed to show her pleasure that a Jew, a stranger, came into her shop. And after I told her that I was a stranger here and wanted to meet with our Jews, she understood the word 'our' in her own way:

'I suppose that you want to meet a Jew with a beard. There is such a Jew amongst us; we can bring him here. He lives not far from here.'

'No', I said, 'all Jews are worthy. Not only those with beards.'

In the meantime, the proprietor entered, shut the door behind him and greeted me with an outstretched hand. I explained to him that I needed nothing, that I wished simply to meet Jews. The whole story seemed to him an invention. He has lived here for many years and can get by without Jews. In the same way, one understands, can a second Jew, a third or a fourth.

Nevertheless he did obtain for me the key to the Jewish corner in Sydney as I had requested. He telephoned several people and one of them, a young man, immediately came over to his store. He had come to Sydney from South Africa where he had been born and reared. Therefore he was one of 'our' Jews, a man familiar with everything that takes place in Jewish life throughout the world, familiar too with our literature. Thanks to him and several others of his kind, a function was organised where I was to speak about Jews in the world. Some hundred and fifty persons gathered in a large dimly-lit hall and the chairman was the Sydney Chief Rabbi. A man well-advanced in years. A learned man, with great knowledge of music and secular literature. He introduced me in the customary way in English and said:

I present before you a Yiddish writer, a writer in the jargon. To my regret, the jargon has developed, thanks to its writers. One great generation of its important writers has passed away in the last few years. Itzhak Leib Peretz was the last of them. The speaker whom I present to you belongs to a younger generation, also a great generation, perhaps a blooming one. But I am certain that this generation too will die away, and for ever, for there is no

need for either a literature or a language in the jargon. Jews have one language; that is the one for prayer and for reaching out to God, and no other. For other purposes, the language of the country in which they live is sufficient. Here our language is English.

Quite different was my stay in Melbourne where there live some six thousand Jews. Homely Jews, I lived among them for several weeks. The wind carried a group of young people from Lithuania and Poland, some directly from Russia, others through Palestine, and in the remote faraway world they established a Jewish corner. I was taken straight from the train to a library and large lecture-hall. Modern books. Yiddish, Hebrew. Yiddish newspapers from all corners of the world. The language is a lively one. The questions asked are also lively, relevant, topical ones. Bound up intimately with Jewish life throughout the world. At the same time I found in them a love and attachment to their country. That is a healthy sign. While they are not wealthy in Australia, they are free and no-one disturbs them. There are still many pious Jews but also near-empty synagogues. Their life in Australia is similar to the life in all lands where English is the national language. No better than in America, and no worse than in England. One calculates that throughout Australia, there are some twenty thousand Jews. I have encountered a large number that have come here through Palestine and from Palestine. In Perth, in Western Australia, there are several hundred Jews, the greatest number from Palestine. There, they speak Hebrew. So I was told. I was to meet some Jews in Perth, but to my regret, there was an error in correspondence and while I waited for them in the Perth harbour, they waited in the town. We were not fated to meet.



## AUSTRALIA'S FIRST SHTAR CHALITZAH?

*Beverley Davis OAM*

In 1982, the late Rabbi Dr Israel Porush wrote a scholarly and informative article for the *Journal* of the Australian Jewish Historical Society<sup>1</sup> in which he told of the discovery of a *Shtar Chalitzah* written in Melbourne on 30 December 1857 for the marriage of Morris Cohen to Isabella Jacobs Jones, the great-grandparents of Eric Cohen of Melbourne. Rabbi Porush noted that the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation had, on 3 February 1856, resolved 'that when a man made application to be married his brother had to sign an undertaking to give [*C*]halitza should the necessity arise'.

This document attested that [in accordance with the requirements of negating the biblical Levirate Marriage obligations], should the groom die childless, his brother (Laurence Cohen) bound himself to release the widow, after the passage of three months from the death of her husband, from the requirement under Jewish law to marry him. The document was handwritten in 'block' Hebrew letters and specified an amount of £20 sterling penalty payable in case of a delay of six months from the widow's request for *Chalitzah*.

Now, an even earlier *Shtar* (Bond) has come to light<sup>2</sup>, this one dated 7 September 1856, between the bride, Rosetta Hecksher and her groom's brother, Frederick Lewis, of Sandhurst (Bendigo), Victoria. The declaration is written on a double sheet of faded blue foolscap paper, folded along the right hand edge, so that the 'front page' is the Hebrew text (in flowing cursive handwriting), the English translation appears on the inside left-hand side of the double sheet, and the 'title' shows on the top of the back page when the paper is folded.

The English text is as follows:

Know all men by these presents that I Frederick Lewis of Sandhurst in the Colony of Victoria merchant am held and firmly bound to Rosetta Hecksher of Sandhurst aforesaid spinster in the sum of Five hundred pounds sterling to be paid to her the said Rosetta Hecksher. To which payment I bind myself firmly by these presents, dated this seventh day of September in the year of A.D. One thousand Eight hundred and fifty Six. Whereas my brother Henry Lewis of Sandhurst aforesaid is now about to marry the above named Rosetta Heckscher [sic] of the same place and whereas it is required by the Jewish Faith that if my brother Henry Lewis should die without leaving behind him living issue for me to perform a certain ceremony of Release and known as [*chalitzah*] in accordance with the Jewish rites and customs previous to her again marrying with any other person. Now the Conditions of the above written obligation are such That if my abovementioned brother Henry Lewis should die without leaving living issue I shall give my permission and consent to the abovenamed Rosetta Hecksher [sic] to marry any



individual she may think proper. That she the said Rosetta shall not become my wife at any time hereafter and furthermore I shall readily and duly perform the ceremony of Release and known as [chalitzah] in accordance with the Jewish rites and customs when requested by her or by any person in her behalf so to do at any time after the expiration of three calendar months from the time of the death of my aforementioned brother Henry Lewis. Then the above written obligation shall be void and of none effect but otherwise shall be and remain in full force and virtue.



Sealed and delivered by  
[signed] Frederick Lewis  
in the presence of  
[faded/illegible signatures]



The Hebrew signatures show the brother-in-law-to-be as Boruch ben Yehudah Lev haLevi, and the second witness Efraim Shmuel ben Binyamin C'Tz (i.e. Cohen Zedek).

Rosetta Heckscher was born in 1833 in Hobart Town, Van Diemens Land, the first child of David Meyer Hecksher and Susannah Benjamin. She married Henry Ash Lewis (born ca 1822 in Chatham, Kent, England), first child of Louis/Lewis Lewis and Louisa Barnett. Rosetta and Henry had at least 7 children, the fifth being Joel Barnett Lewis (1868–1933) who married in 1905 Ada Rapke (ca 1880–1961); their eldest daughter, Maisie Florence Lewis, died unmarried in 1996, and her executor found the *Shtar Chalitzah* among her effects.

This document now occupies an important place in Australian Jewish history.

**NOTES**

1. See *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society*, Volume IX Part 4, 1982, pages 233–238.
2. David W. Weatherill, godson and executor of the late Maisie Florence Lewis, gave the *Shtar* to the Jewish Museum of Australia, who kindly permitted me to reproduce the document to illustrate this article.

## MY MOTHER'S FOLK IN RUSSIA, CHINA, AUSTRALIA, CANADA, AND THE USA

*Morris S. Ochert OAM*

*How came they here? What burst of Christian hate,  
What persecution, merciless and blind  
Drove, o'er the sea — that desert desolate —  
These Ishmaels and Hagars of mankind?  
Walked with them through the world where'ere they went;  
Trampled and beaten were they as the sand,  
And yet unshaken as the continent.<sup>1</sup>*

In that extract from a poem by Henry Longfellow is encapsulated a little of the poignant narrative of the (pre-Israel) homeless and persecuted Jewish people. Driven from land to land, expelled from shore to shore, they sought refuge in every part of the globe. In scattered cemeteries world-wide can be found their last resting places. Wherever they lived they were discriminated against; when they sought to leave, difficulties were placed in their way. Frequently they were only allowed to take what they could carry. My father told me of little Jewish girls at various borders, the lobes of whose ears were bleeding where brutal frontier guards had greedily ripped away their ear-rings!

The 'Pale of Settlement' of Czarist Russia was not, as has been inferred, the areas in which our people were allowed to 'settle' securely. Rather it was the region into which all Jewish folk were compulsorily concentrated. There, they were conveniently located so that pogroms, discriminations, crippling taxation, stifling restrictions, conscriptions into the Army and confiscations could, all the more easily, be carried out. There they were watched, supervised, terrorised, deprived and brutalised, to suit the whims, the avarice, the spite of what history has called 'That Evil Empire'. For the heartless purposes of the Czar and the rulers of the co-called 'Mother Church', governmental and military chiefs, right down to the petty local police and civic officials, the Jewish people were readily available to be blamed and punished for the parlous condition of the millions of down-trodden Russian citizens.

In my article 'Bondi Jewry ...'<sup>2</sup> I wrote of the conscription into the Russian Army of Jewish boys. Some were as young as eight years. There, they were also inducted into the 'Mother Church'. They were forcibly converted, their Jewish background was blotted out, they were cruelly treated and many could never return home. Not only boys, but Jewish males of all ages were harshly torn from their homes. Some suicided. Others cut off their trigger fingers in the hope of avoiding the draft.

The changing of names and the falsification of personal records was common amongst the Jews of those times and lands. The more obscure were their origins and identities, the less likely were they to be hunted down by the

police and other forces. Families did not dare to record names, places and dates. It was wise not to report the birth of a child or the arrival of kinsfolk from another part of the land. If a son moved away he would be reported as having died. Some were hidden for years or given a false identity. All these precautions were to avoid conscription, which was tantamount to a sentence of death. Therefore, few records were kept by my mother's folk of their departure from Russia or their birth dates.

One day, perhaps about 1860, a young man in pathetic condition stumbled into the Jewish quarter of a Ukrainian township. He simply wandered in out of nowhere. He was not able to, or prepared to, reveal whence he had come, what was his name, who and where were his family and what traumatic experience had brought him to the debilitated, emaciated and demoralised condition he was in. To the day he died, he never revealed anything of his past, such was his fear of being claimed as a deserter from the Army of the Czar. For that, execution would have been the punishment.

He was taken into the home of a compassionate Jewish family, named Sherman and he took their name. When he regained his health and spirits, he married a daughter of that family, named Esther. They settled on a farm by the Dneister River, near a village named Kandel, close by the Bessarabian border. This area had been settled by Christian farmers who had fled from Germany to escape religious and political persecution. The Jewish settlers fitted in well with them — they were no strangers to discrimination! After a time the young couple took a job in Odessa, running a hardware factory there. However, at planting and harvest times, they would return to help on the farm at Kandel. One of their daughters, Sarah ('Soora') married Nochem Chayes, in Odessa. They were later to become my maternal grandparents.

Those secure days finally ended. The anti-Jewish persecution became severe in Odessa under Nicholas II. It even spread to Kandel. When the situation became intolerable, the inevitable decision had to be made to leave Russia. The majority of emigrants were heading towards China. Whether it was to be their final destination, or just a stage on their path to security and peace, remained to be seen.

By that time, all their young family had been born. First there was Rachel (my mother). Then came Rebecca, Leah, Charlie and Lucy, who was only three months old when they left.

In that period great numbers of people were being allowed to leave Russia. Due to mismanagement and corruption, the vast potential of that country was not being properly exploited, so it suited the authorities to unload much of the wretched populace. This included convicts, the aged and invalids. Many of the Jewish people were allowed to leave, provided they left behind most of their possessions. Those who could afford to left by ship. The remainder had to take the long and often dangerous land routes.

Some went west. Most headed east towards China. 'Convoys' of these unwanted folk were assembled at departure centres, where inadequate food supplies were loaded onto horse-drawn drays. Horse-meat, lard, salt, flour, onions, potatoes and bread were provided. The very aged, very young and the infirm were loaded on wagons. Few could have realised what lay ahead of

them, nor that many would die in that attempt to cross Russia from west to east. The way was beset with forests, wildernesses, swamps and emptiness. To suggest that they could have lived off the land was absurd, for there was nothing to live off. Cattle, crops, poultry, fruit and vegetables had long been stripped bare on this inhospitable route. There were no aid facilities on the way, except for some intrepid Jewish welfare workers.<sup>3</sup> When the dray horses died of starvation or exhaustion, they were eaten and the menfolk, emaciated as they were, pulled the wagons. The bodies of the dead and dying lined the route, which followed approximately the track being laid for the Odessa to Peking railway. It was sometimes possible to obtain a lift on the construction wagons for some hundreds of kilometres. Then suddenly, the line would end, the train would halt and the order came — ‘All off; you walk from here!’ Fortunately the construction of the track was proceeding in quite a number of places, so the long journey on foot was occasionally relieved by this rail travel.

The Ural Mountains had to be crossed on foot, on barely-made and ill-defined tracks. Here the temperature plummeted, while snow, ice and endless rain and mud added to the problems and discomfort. To simply say ‘they crossed from Odessa to Vladivostock, a distance of 8,000 kilometres, exposed to all weathers, carrying their infants and their infirm’ does nothing to convey the enormity of their epic journey. It took my folks several months and I believe the trauma of that ordeal remained with them all their lives.

After a period in Vladivostock, they turned back west for a short distance to Harbin, in the Chinese province of Manchuria. Here Nochem was an assistant station master. He quickly mastered the Chinese language, for he had an agile mind for languages and was an avid reader. He already had some knowledge of English and worked as a translator of commercial documents and as a translator for a French railroad. For some reason, the family then went south to Nagasaki (Japan), then up the Yang-tse-kiang River to Hangkow where Nochem was in charge of a large ironmongery, steel and hardware yard. They also lived for periods in Shanghai, where they first met my father, Samuel Ochert. Then to Mar-u-pal and finally they settled in Shoon-te-foo.



*At Mar-u-pal: Rachel (centre) with brother Charlie and sister Rebecca, about 1904*

At one stage in their wanderings over China the family was stopped by a local official. What he lacked in importance he made up in self-importance, obesity and in the comic-opera magnificence of his uniform. In vain did Nochem show him their passports and the many documents which authorised them to travel in China. This fellow was shouting that they had no paper authorising them to cross HIS little area! He and his men were in a great state of agitation, jumping and yelling. Guns were being waved in every direction, even at one another; fingers were on triggers and the noise was great. As usual in such tight situations, the meagre luggage was tipped out on the bare earth and was being gone through violently. Suddenly, up turned 'That Laundry Ticket'. It had been issued for some garments to be washed a few years previously, in some remote Chinese town, but they had forgotten to pick up the laundry before moving on. The 'docket' was far larger than it needed to be; its edges were scalloped in the prevailing style of officialese certificates; for some arcane reason it was printed in several loud colours and centrally it bore a picture of (we assume) the laundry's proprietor. He was an impressive man in extraordinary clothing and with a moustache of unbelievable length. The 'Lord High Executioner' grabbed it with a dramatic swoop. Though he obviously could not read it — for he held it sideways — he loudly proclaimed that the man in the picture was none other than the Emperor himself! What excitement in his little area of jurisdiction! My grandfather was quick to seize the opportunity. 'Of course it is the Emperor. This document is our "Right of Passage", issued by the Emperor himself, allowing my family to travel all over China, and here it says that anyone who impedes us is to be decapitated on the spot!' The officious officiant underwent an amazing metamorphosis. He screamed at his armed party, who immediately uncocked their ancient firearms; he bowed deeply to my *Zaideh*-to-be; he kissed 'That Laundry Ticket' and he escorted them safely out of his bailiwick. My family and I visited Auntie Beck (Rebecca) in 1964, when she told me of the above episode. She said 'That Laundry Ticket' had been kept in an envelope for many years but it had somehow been misplaced. That's a pity. One day it may yet have again proved useful in some border disputation — and there is still that bundle of laundry waiting to be claimed!

It was during the family's stay in China that my mother Rachel received much of her teenage education. She attended Chinese-run schools which were completely unsuitable. However, where available she went to the far superior colleges run by French Catholic nuns. They were, predictably, keen for her to convert, with or without her parents' permission, but they had no success in that regard. Apart from general subjects, she learned to speak French



Rachel Chayes, 1913

and English and attended piano and singing lessons. For the remainder of her short life, her musical skill was admired by many.

There is a photo of Nochem with one of the railroad gangs he supervised, at the railway platform of Ling-Ming-Koan, in the province of Shoon-te-foo. He is at the centre of the photo. On the seat of the *drezeena* is Rachel. On the platform is the armed party assigned to the work-gang. The remainder are the Coolie labourers. They had a dangerous function. China had a severe shortage of scrap metal for smelting into steel. Armed gangs would remove nuts, bolts, fish-plates, steel ties and other railroad hardware for sale to dealers, rendering the track quite dangerous. Nochem's crews had to 'run the track', hopefully replacing missing items before derailments occurred. When a train was derailed these hardware robbers became murderous bandits, killing passengers for their luggage and effects, and plundering the train for removable and saleable items. They regarded Nochem's crews as their particular adversaries, and a massacre could follow when the two groups met. Nochem and his men could be pinned down by gunfire until an Army patrol arrived. Rebecca recalled having been told that, as the Chinese were superstitious about rail travel at night (and would have had good reason to fear a nocturnal encounter with those banditti), all passenger rail traffic, including the Peking Express, moved only by day. Therefore, Nochem's work had to be done at night, adding to its hazards. Rebecca wrote, as recently as 1977, that 'all we children would go to the station to see the "white faces" on the Peking Express, for we hungered for the sight of Western people'.

*Zaideh* Nochem's vital work was rewarded by his being promoted to the position of Regional Supervisor in 1906. This brought his peripatetic family to its final residence in China, in Shoon-te-foo. I have a photo which was taken in the garden of the Regional Mandarin. Seen from right to left are two of his retainers who would have also served as body-guards. Then the Mandarin is seen, shaking hands with my maternal grandfather, Nochem. Uncle Charlie and Aunt Beck are next. Then, the second son of the Mandarin and then a retainer of his two sons. Next we see the eldest son, recorded as a 'Prince', though that was not an official title. Finally, at the left, is my mother Rachel. To honour the occasion of this reception, Nochem and Rachel were attired in formal Chinese clothing. The Mandarin spoke at great length about 'the pleasure he and his retinue gained from the presence of this honoured guest, this highly-placed, distinguished Occidental official, whose skill and bravery are instrumental in keeping the regional railroad system functioning, etc. etc.'

That first visit was an interesting and pleasant function. However, on a subsequent visit it transpired that the 'Prince' had become enamoured with Rachel. He 'came on heavy', as is the modern jargon, and what he hoped was a budding romance was suddenly at an end. He clumsily revealed that he wished to add Rachel to his 'harem' of young wives. Rachel later told Rebecca, who, years later told me, that 'this suitor was skinny, balding, 'pushy', ill-mannered and badly spoiled. He wore thick-lensed spectacles. His only conversation was about himself.<sup>4</sup> In race, religion, education, culture and background we had nothing in common. The family never accepted another invitation. Soon

after, we left China.' (That suits me, for I'd hardly have liked that fellow for my father!).

It seems the Mandarin did not approve of his upstart, underweight son being 'given the brush-off' by a mere Western teenaged girl and, in no time, Nochem was out of a job. It seemed time for him to consider leaving China, for the Mandarin would probably have influenced others to deny him employment. As well, some of the wealthy Chinese had been sending their younger sons to Europe, to gain a Western education. On returning they were, invariably, given the Europeans' jobs. There was another compelling reason to move on. He had four daughters to marry off, and husbands were unlikely to be found for them while they lived an itinerant life in China. It was probably as well that he decided to go to Australia, for most of those who remained lost their jobs and forsook their identity in that Chinese–Russian–French–Catholic environment. Of those who remained, some of their children married non-Jewish partners. Some, who stayed, prospered. Later, they lost everything in the Communist Revolution led by Mao-tse-tung in 1949 and during the Japanese occupation.

On the first occasion that the family was in Shanghai, my father-to-be, Samuel Ocheretiansky (later Ochert) met them. I must digress briefly to tell whence he came. My paper, published by the Australian Jewish Historical Society, 'Bondi Jewry between the Wars', tells that he had lived in Odessa and Kiev; he was a young collaborator of Chaim Bialik in the earliest days of the modern Zionist movement; he was sent to Siberia for that crime; he escaped and somehow reached Shanghai. While he was there (we learn from a letter written by Rebecca) a group of prominent Jewish people staged a concert to raise funds for Jewish refugees, both those travelling the long trail from Russia and those who were in distress in China. At that show, Rachel and Sam met — she had a singing spot in the show. It was, Rebecca alleges, 'love at first sight' and so it remained till Rachel's death. Sam and Nochem seem to have befriended each other, too. Some years later, the two men met again in Shanghai, when the family was about to leave China for Australia. Nochem told Sam his reasons for choosing Australia and Sam said he would follow. Rebecca wrote that Sam was motivated entirely by his love for Rachel.

Nochem's decision to come to Australia was made as follows: on the one hand, American Episcopalian missionaries were pressing him to emigrate to the USA. The family's passages would be paid if they converted and help would be given them on arrival at San Francisco. Apart from religious objections, Nochem had a problem with the USA proposal. He'd grown fond of being the 'serang' (the boss man or ganger) over a group of coolies (unskilled labourers) and being paid to throw orders at them. He liked, too, that most Westerners in China employed a few housemaids and houseboys who were glad to work for bargain-price wages. He realised that these attractions would be absent in the USA, while (to his limited understanding) the Australian aboriginals would constitute a 'coolie class' in Australia, just waiting to serve him. (How wrong he was!) He felt (Rebecca wrote) that 'there were too many whites in USA; he wanted to go where whites were at a premium', so he chose Australia.

The Chayes family embarked in Shanghai, then travelled via Hong Kong, Manila, Thursday Island, Townsville, Brisbane to Sydney, where they settled. Samuel could not afford a boat ticket, but stowed away on a vessel in Japan. It visited India and then Singapore where he transferred his patronage to the ss *Van Spilbogen*, bound, fortuitously, for Sydney! There, an illiterate, acrimonious migration officer anglicised his name on a filthy Woolloomooloo wharf. (But that exciting story is told in my 'Bondi Jewry'.) He arrived in October 1908, about a year after the Chayes family.

On arriving in Sydney, the Chayes family stayed first in Paddington but soon moved to Bondi. After Sam Ochert's arrival, he was their regular visitor. Sam and Rachel were active in the Yiddish Theatre in Oxford Street, opposite the Centennial Park. Rachel's soprano voice was much in demand and they performed in Yiddish plays. When off-stage, Sam was a prompter.

My father, who until then had no trade, first worked hard as a labourer in the arduous rubber industry. He studied the engineering and chemistry appropriate to the production of rubber; was promoted to supervisory positions; furthered his experience at the works of J.B. Dunlop in Akron, Ohio; returned and opened a factory and sales outlets in Sydney. He married Rachel in 1911; Nathan was born in 1914, David in 1916, and I in 1918. The rubber enterprise grew, partly due to its wartime operations. Rachel and her infant daughter, Eve (Eta) passed away in the Spanish Influenza epidemic in 1923.



*Samuel Ochert, 1913*

Returning to the Chayes family: after their arrival the four sisters completed their secondary education, concentrating on music and commercial subjects and they held secretarial jobs. Charlie, who had little interest in study, was a factory hand. So they all contributed to the upkeep of the house. My dim recollection was of Nochem, wearing a well-worn cloth cap, with his big tobacco-stained moustache and a huge smelly pipe, relaxing in a deep lounge chair, with his slippers feet up on another chair, reading a Yiddish or Russian newspaper. At his side was a bronze spittoon. Quite handy was a large cup of boiling, sweet black tea, with a small dish of firm jam (*varenye* is its name) through which he would suck the tea. A big cat slept on his lap. Work was far from his mind. Nochem never seemed able to settle down to a long-term job after his traumatic past: the terrors and

uncertainties of life in Russia, the nightmare of that terrible journey from Odessa to Vladivostock and the largely unsettled existence in China. There, he grew accustomed to supervising unskilled underlings. But in Australia and later in the USA, having no trade and being too old to learn one, who was he to supervise? And, having four daughters and a son all helping to keep the home, and his indefatigable wife to wait on him hand and foot, he probably asked himself 'why work?'. As well, it seems that his will to work had become exhausted. In vain did my father place him in jobs in his factory or office or into small business ventures. He no longer had the volition to work. I feel that this exhaustion of the spirit was as much a scar as those physical ones he bore on his body from his encounters with the Chinese railway banditti.

As for *Boobeh*, she remained what she had always been — the *Yiddishe Mama* who was the soul of her brood, cementing them together, keeping them fed and protected.



*Boobeh Sarah*

The world famous Bondi Beach has long been a favourite stamping ground for Sydney's Jewish youth. In the years in which my mother's family lived at Bondi, the popularity of the sisters was enhanced by the proximity of their home to the beach. On Sundays, numbers of youths and girls would arrive. (Transport to Bondi was by those huge, double-coupled Bondi trams). They would change into what were then called 'swimming costumes' in the area under the back end of the cottage. (The house was built on a steep hill). Then off to the beach for fun and games on the sand and in the surf. Back at the Chayes' home, they all had a riotous time, hosing off sand and salt, on the lawn. Who enjoyed it most? 'Guy', the Collie! This was followed by sandwiches, tea and cake on the big front verandah. Oliver Goldsmith must have had those Sunday-Fundays in mind when he wrote of the 'simple pleasures of the poor'.

Amongst the gatherings at the Chayes' home were what are now called 'singalongs', but were then called 'community singing'. Each sister played the piano and they sang well. The songs which were sung are, today, nostalgic memories for some and forgotten or never known by most. They fell into groups: Yiddish, such as 'Ich bin a boardere by mein veib' ('I am a boarder with my wife'); 'Mein veib kimt bald arein — sie habt a pisk'; ('My wife comes in soon — she has a mouth'); 'Watch your step' (about the traffic hustle in Brooklyn); 'Mein Kleiner' ('My Little One'); 'Abie Mein Boy'. There were 1914 War songs: 'Keep the Home Fires Burning'; 'Tipperary'; 'Mademoiselle from Armentieres'; 'Australia Will be There'; 'There's a Rose that Grows in No-Man's Land'.

Songs from the USA would be introduced thus: 'This is the latest 'hit' from Broadway', and included 'K-K-Katie', 'Abie's Irish Rose'; 'Lena is the Girl from Palestina'; and 'How Ya Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Farm?'. There were Scottish songs left behind by Harry Lauder: 'I Belong tae Glasgae'; 'Just a Wee Doch an Doris'; and sentimental Irish ballads including 'Smiling Irish Eyes', 'Killarney' and 'Mither Machree'. And Russian songs: 'Ochy Tshornye' ('Dark Eyes'), and 'Ai Ukhnem' ('The Volga Boatmen'). No short cuts — the Russian songs were sung in Russian, the French songs were sung in French, the Yiddish songs in Yiddish. And the happy group would be well fed before the evening concluded in time for the visitors to catch the last tram to leave the Bondi Beach terminus.

In my manuscript 'Bondi Oder Bankstown'<sup>6</sup> I told of *Boobeh* and her cockatoo friend 'Cockie'. (I didn't approve of 'Cockie'!). But we three boys loved Charlie's big Collie dog, 'Guy'. We harnessed him (Guy, not Charlie) to a wheeled trolley which we filled with thick grass cut from the front yard. Then down to *Boobeh's* chicken run at the end of the back yard where we unloaded the grass. The poultry appreciated that. The trolley would then be filled with eggs or huge strawberries and assorted vegetables which we pulled from *Boobeh's* cultivated area. This load went round to her kitchen, much to her delight. Then we'd cut another load of the grass for a further circuit. Everyone enjoyed that carefree activity, but no-one more so than 'Guy'! He believed he was a Chayes *mishpocha*.

The next move in the Chayes Odyssey commenced with the arrival into their lives of Issy Gitlin. He had a pharmacy in Oxford Street, Paddington. Rebecca has written to me that he was 'tall, handsome, tolerant of the fiery moods of her father and helpful to the family'. He married her in 1921 and they migrated to New York about 1922. There was a world-wide impression that 'the streets of the USA were paved in gold', and the Chayes felt they may lift their fortunes there. *Zaideh* had heard that many of the Negro population of the US did the menial tasks. At last he may get a job 'ordering the *schwartzim*'. The decision was not so easy for the rest of the family, for they had not yet left for the US when Rachel passed away in 1923 and we three young boys were living with them. But our Dad had no intention of allowing this to be a permanent arrangement. He re-married and re-established his family

on an independent basis and so the Chayes family was free to leave. They did so in 1924.

However, the US quota for immigrants was full at that time. Rather than wait, perhaps indefinitely, they first settled briefly in Canada. On the next 4th July — Independence Day — they packed their essential luggage and themselves into a large car and drove to the nearest US border post. There they claimed to be tourists, keen on seeing the celebrations of America's National Day. (Perhaps they were ready to display 'That Laundry Ticket' if documentation had been demanded). They headed for Brooklyn, where they joined Issy and Rebecca Gitlin.

In New York, Issy had a pharmacy — a 'drug store', to use the American parlance. Rebecca and Lucy held senior secretarial positions. Leah managed a real estate firm for about 40 years. Charlie, like his father when in China, worked for a railroad company. Later, when Lucy was a hæmatologist, she became engaged to David, a Jewish hospital intern. In 1956, he was in an ambulance hurrying to a street accident when it skidded on ice and overturned. David lost his life and Lucy never married. Neither did Charlie.

The Gitlins had two sons, David, an MD, and Sam, a dentist. Leah married an attorney, Joseph Wasserman. Their son, Norman Henry MD, is in regular correspondence with me. Each of the Chayes siblings who married was blessed with grand-children.

Nochem never acquired that supervisory position to which he aspired. He worked at various jobs which all proved temporary. A manufacturing company into which he sank all his capital fell apart, due, Lucy told me, to his desultory approach to his work. He died in 1936. *Boobeh Sarah* died in 1941. Lucy, the last of my mother's generation, passed away recently. Except for my mother, they all lived to a good age, despite the hardships of their lives in Russia and the vicissitudes and uncertainties of their time in China. Of my mother's folk, we can truly say that they were typical of the 'Wandering Jews'. Now that their travels are over, may they enjoy eternal rest.

## SOURCES

Details told to me by my Aunts Rebecca, Lucy and Leah Chayes and my father, Samuel Ochert; letters; notes on old photos; the State Library of Queensland; Professor Max Brandle and Professor Albert Bond of the University of Queensland; Rod Bucknell, Department of Asian Languages, University of Queensland; Makor Resource Centre, Melbourne; Dr. Maria Kravchenko, author and researcher, Russian Department, University of Queensland.

## NOTES

- 1 Some verses from the poem *The Jewish Cemetery at Newport*, by Henry W. Longfellow (1808–1882).
- 2 See my article 'Bondi Jewry between the Wars', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, Volume XI, Part 4, 1992.
- 3 Some aid stations were established along the route by Jewish welfare groups. Within their limited resources, they provided food, medical aid and shelter.

- 4 The immature first sons of some wealthy Chinese families were indulged in every possible way, in those days. They sometimes had a number of girl 'wives'. These youngsters were often humiliated and ill-treated at the whim of their husband. (The 'favoured wife', however, had a life of luxury.) Rarely could they go out of doors. They had to spend their time in trivial conversation and childish games and were left uneducated. When age or illness brought their value as concubines to an end, they could be sold or relegated to menial servitude.
- 5 See my manuscript 'Bondi *oder* [or] Bankstown', submitted to the Australian Jewish Historical Society for publication.

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## THE BEGINNINGS OF THE BRIGHTON HEBREW CONGREGATION

*Malcolm Morris*

Brighton *Shule* — as we know it today — was the dream of three ‘foreigners’ (among others), who decided to begin life afresh in the land ‘down under’ after the traumas of World War Two. These three pioneers were Sam Salter, Nat Morris and Hymie Markoff; their common homeland was England.

Nat Morris and his brother-in-law Hymie Markoff came to Australia on impulse. They arrived from Liverpool in 1947 and built homes for their families in Moorabbin, where market gardens had been sold off to provide inexpensive land for housing. Within a year, they were able to send for their wives (Rose Morris and Phyllis Markoff), their children, and Hymie’s widowed mother, Leah Markoff.

It was all very well that their families would be joining them shortly; however, Nat and Hymie realised that they would be arriving two weeks before Rosh Hashanah. What would mother Leah Markoff say if they were not within walking distance of a *shule*? Alas, the nearest *shule* was miles away. The situation had to be rectified, and quickly. They contacted another English migrant, Sam Salter, a friend from back home who had come to Australia in June 1947, nine months before his wife Murielle and family. They also contacted other Jews with whom they had become acquainted in the short time they had been in Australia, particularly those living in Moorabbin and immediately surrounding areas.

Together they discussed their dilemma and their wish to have some sort of religious service arranged in their locality. After much deliberation and consideration, they decided that their immediate concern was organising a *minyán* for the approaching High Holyday services. The aspiring local residents contacted the well-established Melbourne Hebrew Congregation in Toorak Road, South Yarra, in a bid to obtain assistance, support and advice. Discussion took place and arrangements were made in the little time that was left.

A tiny article in the *Australian Jewish News* of 24 September 1948 reported:

A new departure for Melbourne is the introduction of an English practice of provincial services for the High Holydays. Rabbi Stransky, Chief Minister of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation has instigated a service to be held in Moorabbin for residents of the district and of Ormond, Bentleigh and McKinnon.

The introduction of this ‘English practice of provincial services’ in Melbourne must have been a real treat for the general Jewish community.

The Melbourne Hebrew Congregation was instrumental in obtaining premises for the services; these were the Moorabbin Library Hall for Rosh

Hashanah, and the Moorabbin Town Hall for Yom Kippur. Both were on the corner of Point Nepean Road and South Road, Moorabbin. With a *Sefer Torah* and other *seforim* provided on loan by the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, an empty wardrobe from the Morris home serving as an Ark, and other miscellaneous items obtained on loan, the inaugural services were held in a modest but dedicated atmosphere in the respective halls.

A visiting journalist who lived in the area at this time recalled the services many years later:

Have you ever attended a Rosh Hashanah service in a small, dusty, hired room, where about 15 men were davening, performing the service themselves? My attention was equally divided between:- (a) the sincerity of the men praying; (b) thoughts of how our religion has survived through the centuries because of dedicated Jews such as these; (c) a large packet of Lux which stood on top of a cupboard with other cleaning agents and which was in my direct line of vision every time I looked up!

After the successful and *haymische* Rosh Hashanah services in the library hall, approximately sixty people attended the Yom Kippur service in the Town Hall, with Rabbi Elchanan Blumenthal as guest rabbi. In his sermon, Rabbi Blumenthal stressed:

... the need for responsible Jewish leadership to lend all moral, cultural and religious support to growing Jewish centres in outlying suburban areas.

He emphasised the need for traditional Jewish services, such as kosher meat depots, adequate Hebrew classes and cultural groups. Little did he know that, less than half a century later, these 'outlying suburban areas' would be flourishing, with Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services packed to their capacity and some of the theories he proposed being adopted and practised.

Following the success of these basic services, and at the request of residents in the area, a provisional committee was formed to arrange regular worship and establish a synagogue. The committee also sought to organise and arrange activities and to monitor the extent of Jewish life in Moorabbin and Benteigh and surrounding areas.

Amongst other immigrants into the area at this time was a Mr Nathan Nossel who decided to purchase a home in Moorabbin. Being a religious man, Mr Nossel made inquiries as to the extent of religious life in the surrounding district and made acquaintance with other members of the suburban community. After much discussion and negotiation, it was decided that regular *Shabbos* services be held at his home at the corner of Thomas and Highbury Avenues, only one minute from the Moorabbin Town Hall.

With the festival of Purim fast approaching, it was imperative that a traditional party be held for the many children in the district. Once again the Moorabbin Hall was acquired for the minimal cost of ten shillings. Expenses incurred for the party totalled £9.17s.9d; this was paid by the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation. At about this time, serious discussion took place concerning the need for an official decision-making and organising body. This discussion resulted in the formation of an official Board of Management headed by president Phillip Goldenberg, and vice-presidents Maurice Rynderman and Nat Morris. It appears however that the name of the organisation for which the

committee had formed was still undecided. Much of the initial correspondence, documentation and advertisements were either signed by the Brighton and Southern Districts Synagogue or the Southern Suburbs Synagogue. In the end a compromise was reached and the *shule* became known as the Southern Districts Hebrew Congregation.

Following Purim, naturally came Pesach, and once again the need to hire the Moorabbin Shire Hall for the services. Rabbi Lewis officiated at these first Pesach services for a fee of £10. As well as celebrating the exodus from Egypt, these Jews were celebrating their success to date in maintaining and improving their growing and determined community. The Southern Districts committee began seriously discussing proposals for expansion. It was felt that private homes were no longer sufficient and that the congregation had matured to such an extent that it needed its own premises to cater for the community's numerous religious and social requirements. A letter to the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, dated mid-June 1949, contained the following request:

At a committee meeting held recently it was resolved that you be approached for the purpose of obtaining information as to what extent the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation is prepared to assist our committee financially in obtaining and buying land and the erection of a temporary building and furnishing of same to be used as a Synagogue and Community Hall for our districts.

Only a month later — after correspondence between the two congregations and the informal negotiation of a draft constitution — it was agreed:

... that the Southern Districts Hebrew Congregation affiliate with the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation as a branch thereof, the Southern Districts Hebrew Congregation retaining autonomy in management of local affairs, in expenditure where it does not extend beyond its own income, and in all matters not otherwise covered by the general constitution of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation.

Detail remains vague but it appears that the proposed affiliation did not go ahead after all, leaving the Southern Districts Hebrew Congregation with the same status it had had before the correspondence. It also faced the problem of purchasing land with its own scanty resources.

Cyril Nathan and Sam Salter, among others, rode around Moorabbin and surrounding areas on their bikes, looking for suitable land. On one of these travels, they stumbled on a small site in Marriage Road, East Brighton, only a few blocks from the then quiet and much smaller Point Nepean Road. The prospect of obtaining the land was investigated over the following couple of months, and discussions took place with the Bank of New South Wales regarding obtaining a loan. In the interim, at a meeting at the home of Mr and Mrs Vallon, on 17 August 1949, it was decided that a Southern Districts Hebrew Congregation Ladies' Guild be formed, under president Murielle Salter and vice-president Hannah Rynderman. The women were just as hard-working and determined as their husbands. Their first official function was a card evening held at the home of Cyril and Mrs Nathan on 30 August 1949.

Plans to purchase land and establish permanent premises for the congregation obviously caused some minor friction within the Jewish community. In a lengthy letter to the editor of the *Australian Jewish Herald* on

9 September 1949, Simon Roth — a social worker and member of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies — made the following comment (amongst a number of other criticisms of Victorian Jewry):

In the future, we should be careful before embarking on building new synagogues. I read with interest that it is proposed to build a new synagogue in the Brighton district. In my belief, this is a great mistake. The money should rather be spent on schools and a communal centre in the district where services could also be held. It is important to hold the interest of the young people and this can only be done by provision of proper facilities for their meetings — halls, etc., where social and cultural functions can be held. I should like this problem to be seriously considered by bodies proposing to build new synagogues.

The president of the Southern Districts Hebrew Congregation, Phil Goldenberg, made a stern reply in the next edition of the paper. He explained with confidence that the land to be purchased was convenient for those Jewish families living in the relevant districts — Brighton, Middle Brighton, East Brighton, South Caulfield, Ormond, McKinnon, Bentleigh, Moorabbin, Highett and surrounding areas.

... in these districts there is [sic] resident nearly 250 Jewish families, many of whom are newcomers to this country, many also with young families, and the district is one which is being rapidly populated by new Jewish residents. If the need for a synagogue twelve months ago was great — the need is now twice as great.

Mr Goldenberg continued by emphasising the need for retaining youthful interest in Jewish affairs, but he rebutted Mr Roth's claim that religious services should take on a secondary role:

Jewish religion facilities are a preliminary to and the basis for Jewish social and cultural activities.

With ownership of the land pending, it was essential that the Southern Districts Hebrew Congregation have a constitution, a formal legal document recognising the group's existence as a Jewish synagogue. Under the constitution, a number of fundamental guidelines were established, foremost the aims and functions of the congregation:

The Congregation is established for the maintenance and observance of the laws and customs of traditional Judaism and the worship of God in accordance with the form of prayer as read by the Jews of England under the jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbi of the Jews of the British Empire.

Even though these dedicated migrants were geographically distanced from their homeland, their hearts in prayer were still tied to their roots.

While other parts of the constitution appear to be consistent with those of other synagogues, one interesting element is Section 24 in Part IV:

On the first day of the festival of Tabernacles, immediately after the reading of the Torah, the Chief Minister shall announce the names in Hebrew and in English of the Board of Management for the ensuing year of office.

It can only be assumed that this section of the constitution was inserted by members at that time, to ensure that the complete Board of Management attend at least one service together!

The last section of the constitution is titled 'Miscellaneous', Part VIII, and in it there are a couple of interesting requirements. In Section 53

All officials officiating in the Synagogue or at weddings or funerals shall wear their robes of office.

Although the "robes of office" were not specifically identified, it is assumed that the officials did not need to don top hats and tails, as does occur in other synagogues!

Similarly, *Yahrzeits* are provided for in Section 55

The offering of not less than £10.10s.0d in memory of a deceased relative or friend shall be inscribed on a tablet fixed in the Synagogue, and a Yizkor shall be made upon every usual occasion.

I assume again that the members of the time did not envisage inflation raising the price so high!

The Moorabbin Town Hall was not booked for the 1949 High Holyday services due to an oversight by the committee. With time lacking and no other alternative available, it was decided to hold Rosh Hashanah services at Mr Nossel's house, even though it would mean cramped and uncomfortable conditions for all concerned. The Town Hall was available for Yom Kippur however. Rabbi Gurewicz rendered his services on these occasions for a fee of £40.

The Southern Districts Hebrew Congregation officially acquired lots 26 and 27, Marriage Road, East Brighton, on 4 October 1949. The original trustees were Phil Goldenberg and Morris Bender. Both lots were purchased for a total of £1500, a hefty sum in those days. Now only many work-hours and desperately needed funding stood between the dream and reality of an established focal point for members' Jewish identity.

Yet, with the purchase of the land there began problems which left an indelible mark on the little community's future. The East Brighton site was deemed too distant by Mr Nossel and his supporters who wished to retain services in their immediate (Moorabbin) area. As many members were in close proximity to the block of land, a conflict arose. Ultimately the divergence led to a split in the congregation. (I note that this account differs from the adamant view of some people today who claim that the split was caused by a rift between Polish and English Jews in the area. I find this improbable. Although the Brighton contingent consisted of a British majority, the first two Presidents of Southern Districts were of Polish origin.)

The Moorabbin contingent continued to convene services at the home of Mr Nossel and, at a later date, purchased land on what is now the Nepean Highway, in Moorabbin itself, becoming the 'Moorabbin and Districts Hebrew Congregation'. Supporters of a synagogue in Brighton began services at the home of Maurice Binderman in Hillside Avenue, Bentleigh, and retained their original (Southern Districts) name.

It had always been difficult to obtain a regular *Shabbos minyan* and, with the split, this proved even more difficult for both contingents. On many a

*Shabbos, minyonim* were not obtained at either service and mourners were left with nowhere to recite the traditional *Kaddish*. Fundraising had always been important but, with the purchase of the land and the split, social activities became crucial for the congregation's existence. No matter how practical the men were in dealing with matters of *Yiddishkeit*, they seem to have had not a clue how to raise money. This was where the Ladies Guild came in. Recognising the necessity of raising funds, the women (mostly wives) staged an old-fashioned bazaar in the Salters' backyard in Thomas Street, on 9 November 1949. Some of the women literally walked for days (walking being their only mode of transport), requesting and 'begging' shops and factories for donations of saleable items. Guild President Mrs Salter had another idea. Unknown to Mr Thomas (owner of the land in Thomas Street), the Salter yard contained a 'ton of horseradish', and this horseradish was tediously grated into *chrain* to be sold for seven shillings a bottle.

The survival of the *shule* is literally the result of the 'blood, sweat and tears' of these dedicated women and their families. This bazaar and subsequent ones were the cornerstone of fundraising in the early years. Although many goods were donated by surrounding factories and businessmen, much of the bazaar's most valuable merchandise was made by its own organisers.

Other fundraising events were staged over succeeding months. Some of them, such as card parties and general get-togethers, occurred on a frequent basis. A popular show titled 'Cinders from Flinders', and starring thirty-two talented artists, was also used to raise funds. The concert was held over a week in July and August 1950 in aid of both Southern Districts' school building fund and the United Jewish Education Board. Both the Ladies Guild and the Board of Management held their first Annual General meetings after the 1950 High Holydays. (Services were at the Moorabbin Town Hall.) The Ladies met in September 1950, re-electing Mrs Salter as President, while the Board held its meeting in mid-November.

Although rapid progress was being made, members still had their sights set on their primary aim — a permanent home. The *Jewish Herald* reported on 4 May 1951:

The project embraces, as well as the Synagogue, a Jewish educational centre, and a communal hall. It was with this threefold purpose that the committee was formed — to provide facilities where Jewish youth in the surrounding districts would receive Jewish education and be imbued with the ideals and practice of their faith — to provide a cultural and social centre for Jewish persons of all ages — and to provide a Synagogue in easy access to residents of the district, which would fulfil the basic religious needs of the community.

In the last two years, the number of Jewish residents in the Southern Districts has trebled. For these people, to provide facilities for these, young and old, the committee has continuously laboured.

And 'labour' they certainly did in the lead-up to laying the foundation stone. A Grand Concert was held on 1 April 1951, featuring many well-known Jewish artists, and with proceeds going to swell the building fund. Honorary architect for the project was Mr H.E. Tisher.

With the laying of the foundation stone set for Sunday, 6 May 1951 at 11.30 a.m., the committee was dismayed to discover, less than two days before the big event, that the town planner's signature had not been obtained. A quick call was made to the Council (with *Shabbos* only a few hours away) and the official in question was traced to the nearby Turkish Baths. The resourceful Murielle Salter waited outside the Baths until he emerged, and confronted him with speedy introductions and a desperate plea for his signature. Impressed by Mrs Salter's determination in waiting so long, the town planner obligingly returned to his offices and completed the required document.

The big day itself appears to have been forgotten by many of the participants. The stone itself was laid by Aaron Cohen who had previously donated a substantial amount of money. (Having originally pledged £250, Mr Cohen contacted Mrs Salter the night before the big day, and offered to double his donation to £500 to boost the building appeal). Rabbi Stransky, who officiated at the ceremony, made the following comments:

A synagogue combined with a House of Learning and adjoining localities for Jewish gatherings is to be erected on this land. It will cater for the religious and educational needs as well as for the cultural and social aspirations of the families in the surrounding districts, united in the Southern Districts Hebrew Congregation.

The Jewish community of Melbourne takes with pride and gratification a rightful interest in your constructive contribution to Jewish life. For you do not replace here an old building or existing institution: Your congregation is a new and most needed addition to the Jewish centres that have sprung up in recent years in other districts. They are a sign of the sound development of the Jewish population in our city and will grow into an asset for the country whose natural blessings we enjoy and whose freedom, liberal conduct and humanitarian approach we so much value.

Celebrations presumably followed this main event, but there is little record of what actually occurred.

Activities were abundant over the following year in preparation for the dedication of the building. In the meantime, regular services continued at the Binderman home in Benteigh, with High Holyday services at the Moorabbin Town Hall. Two important functions towards the end of 1951 were the Ladies Guild's first annual ball (at the Brighton Town Hall) and the congregation's farewell for Rabbi and Mrs Stransky (at the Moorabbin Town Hall).

Delays due to the shortage of labour and materials meant that the dedication ceremony had to proceed in front of a partially erected building. In addition, a £700 budget deficit made meeting building payments difficult. The members were undaunted by these obstacles, however, recognising that their goals were in sight and achievable within months. The Jewish press noted:

Despite the difficulties of present day building, work on the new synagogue of the Southern Districts Hebrew Congregation is going ahead so well that Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie will be able to dedicate it during his forthcoming visit.

It was quite an honour that the Chief Rabbi would be dedicating the result of their hard work. The ceremony itself was held before a crowd of over 350 people. The service was conducted by Brodie, assisted by Rabbis Jacob

Danglow, Joseph Lipman Gurewicz and Lazarus Morris Goldman, and Chazan Barci. In unveiling the plaque, the Chief Rabbi stated that he hoped to enshrine in the memory of the young children (who he had requested to sit close to the platform) the significance and importance of the ceremony, and to stress the intrinsic role the synagogue should play throughout their lives.

At a reception held in a large marquee on the site following the service, Rabbi Danglow offered the Southern Districts Hebrew Congregation any assistance it might require from the St Kilda Hebrew Congregation which he represented. He expressed the desire that the optimism displayed by Southern Districts members over the past four years should be nurtured and maintained so that the Centre would continue to flourish and expand in coming years. Emphasising the untiring efforts made by the Board of Management, Rabbi Goldman explained the reasons for the dedication of a partially-completed building and noted the effect on the Centre's activities. Religious classes, for instance, had 'to be held in a football pavilion where the children were receiving instruction under far-from-ideal conditions'.

In his main address, Chief Rabbi Brodie relayed the best wishes of the Commonwealth he represented and praised the congregation for its unity:

He was glad to know that in this Congregation the members came not only from England but also from other countries, and the Congregation was to be commended on this fact.

Continuing, the speaker said that he was very glad to know that the Congregation here was determined to see that their children had been given therewith [sic] the maintenance and the traditions and customs of the Ancient Faith of the Jews — their ancient and glorious faith. He was particularly glad that the children had been given an opportunity of seeing the unveiling of the tablet that afternoon, and he hoped that it would intensify their interest in the Jewish traditions and would increase their loyalty to the Jewish principles.



## **‘A GROSS DISCOURTESY TO HIS MAJESTY’: THE CAMPAIGN WITHIN AUSTRALIA, 1930–31 AGAINST SIR ISAAC ISAACS’ APPOINTMENT AS GOVERNOR-GENERAL**

*Hilary L. Rubinstein*

On 2 April 1930 Sir Isaac Isaacs (1855–1948), born in Melbourne and brought up in the Victorian country towns of Yackandandah and Beechworth, reached the apotheosis of his brilliant legal career when he became Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia. On 22 January 1931, having freshly relinquished that office, he made history as the first Australian, and incidentally the first Jew, to be sworn in as Governor-General, a post hitherto filled by incumbents from Britain. His investiture followed months of strenuous campaigning by groups and individuals adamantly opposed to his appointment, activity which it is the purpose of this article to describe and analyse.<sup>1</sup>



*Portrait by Sir John Longstaff, 1936, now in the new Parliament House, Canberra  
(Courtesy Beverley Davis)*

Remarkably, the campaign against Isaacs' appointment — which was waged with particular vigour in Victoria under the banner of the specially convened Council of Combined Empire Societies — appears never to have been properly examined. As a result, the opposition within Australia, which directly involved distinguished public figures such as Sir William Irvine, Sir Josiah Symon, (Sir) John Latham, Sir James Barrett, and (Sir) Frederic Eggleston — as well as, indirectly, the many who supported the Federal Opposition which Latham led, or belonged to imperial societies — is almost certainly less familiar to readers than the resistance to the appointment from well-placed elements in the United Kingdom, not least from King George V himself.<sup>2</sup>

The present article will describe the campaign against Isaacs' appointment, examining the arguments employed. It will also consider whether anti-Semitism was a factor. As will be seen, the protesters were people on the non-Labor side of politics concerned with the nature of the imperial relationship. If we are not to misinterpret or misrepresent — indeed not to mock — their misgivings relating to his appointment, we must at the outset appreciate the way in which they viewed Australia's place within the British Empire. Our task is vital given the constitutional issues involved and the blatant derision with which some leftist historians — including popular writers such as Manning Clark — have treated the concerns of Australian Empire loyalists of the interwar period.<sup>3</sup>

Little more than a decade after the events described in this article, (Sir) Robert Menzies in a seminal speech which reveals the lens of national self-interest through which non-Labor adherents viewed the imperial tie, justifiably scoffed at 'a lot of drivel about Yes-Men in Australia.'<sup>4</sup> Well-defined by an early Sydney writer as 'men of progress, not of change,'<sup>5</sup> Australian conservatives had been from colonial times surprisingly hard-nosed about their country's relations with Britain, as state and federal *Hansards* reveal. During our period such people were fully aware of the part that the First World War had played in consolidating Australia's sense of national identity and national destiny. They acknowledged, with Latham, that 'as this Australian nation develops, so will our separate interests grow — and possibly in many directions from Great Britain.'<sup>6</sup> But whereas Labor policy between the wars sought, in the restrained appraisal of Eggleston, 'to assert Australia's individuality, free from the trammels of old world influence,'<sup>7</sup> non-Labor supporters cherished and emphasised the imperial connection. While they were, to use Alfred Deakin's famous phrase, 'Independent Australian Britons,'<sup>8</sup> they were also, to use Edmund Barton's less celebrated one, 'Britons of the Empire.'<sup>9</sup> Symon, for example, described himself as 'an Australian in every fibre of his being who is also a devoted Imperialist.'<sup>10</sup> Their outlook was encapsulated in a favourite line of R.G. (later Lord) Casey: 'you can't be a good Imperialist without being a good Australian — nor can you be a good Australian without being a good Imperialist.' There were 'good solid material reasons ... not in any way based on sentiment or emotionalism' (feelings which he admitted could not be ignored) for close cooperation with Britain and the pursuit of imperial unity and of a strong Empire. Australians were well-served by the imperial connection, and 'should seek to cooperate with Britain in every possible way for our mutual good.'<sup>11</sup>

Recognition of that 'mutual good' stemmed from the realisation that the Empire was very far from being a spent force in international affairs. Despite the obviously deleterious effects of the First World War, Britain's position in the world was much stronger than is commonly believed. Throughout the interwar period the City of London maintained its dominance in British economic life and its considerable influence in the Dominions and the world beyond. During the 1930s the Empire regained a lot of the ground it had lost as a result of the war, in large part because the Great Depression adversely affected the United States' economy much more severely than Britain's.<sup>12</sup> With the international situation deteriorating as the 1930s progressed, the United Kingdom government's 'representative' in Canberra detected 'a growing tenderness for England — a reviving realisation of what after all Australia owes to her in the essentials of national life — an increasing regard for the Empire link.'<sup>13</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, a force which was termed 'colonial nationalism'<sup>14</sup> had become discernible in the white settler colonies which had achieved or were moving towards central sovereign governance, achieved by Australia with Federation in 1901. Colonial nationalism sought a *modus vivendi* between the aspirations and interests of the colonies, which sometimes ran counter to the policy and wishes of United Kingdom governments, and — for a combination of sentimental and strategic reasons — continuing membership of the Empire. (Sir) William Harrison Moore, the English-born and educated Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Melbourne, spoke of the value of colonial nationalism in teaching the British 'that these nations have an individuality of their own which must be respected as they respect the individuality of any other nation; they are not mere replicas of England and English life, and to be judged favourably or unfavourably as they faithfully reproduce the original.'<sup>15</sup>

Being 'independent Australian Britons' no less than their compatriots, those involved in the campaign against Isaacs' appointment as Governor-General had upheld this trend. 'Australia today is neither a Crown colony nor an ordinary dependency,' declared one of them, (Sir) Langdon Bonython, at Federation, 'and so there must necessarily be some change in our relationship with the old country.'<sup>16</sup> The *Woman's Paper*, organ of the Australian Women's National League — of which more below — recognised 'the ardent desire of a young and free country to become a nation itself.'<sup>17</sup> For Josiah Symon, speaking before the First World War, the Commonwealth of Australia was 'practically independent'; it was 'not exactly imperium in imperio' but, having ensured as one of the architects of Federation that Australia was 'as completely self-governing as she is entitled to be made,' he considered that she and the mother country were 'in one sense peers.' In the eyes of her people Australia should 'occupy the first place.'<sup>18</sup> The consensual viewpoint, indeed the very ethos of colonial nationalism, had been captured by the conservative *Sydney Morning Herald*, which would also oppose Isaacs' appointment: 'The British Empire is founded upon the liberal principle that each component part of it knows its business best. The British Empire is staked on that principle, and if that principle is not right, then the whole Empire is wrong.'<sup>19</sup>

The evolution of colonial nationalism had coincided with the rise of an imperial spirit, pioneered largely by Disraeli, who in the 1870s had advocated — yet did little practically to achieve — a great policy of imperial consolidation which entailed imperial preference, determining the respective responsibility of Britain and the colonies for defence, and establishing a representative colonial council in London. Of particular significance for ‘independent Australian Britons’ was his assertion that the Empire could not endure without ‘respect for national rights’; they appreciated, too, his statesmanlike handling in 1878 of the Eastern Question, which safeguarded the Suez Canal, the quickest passageway for merchant and passenger shipping between Britain and Australasia, and the Royal Navy’s shortest route from home to antipodean waters.<sup>20</sup> Abetting the rise of the imperial spirit were influential publications by Dilke, Colomb, and Seeley,<sup>21</sup> the arguments of such British statesmen and public figures as Lords Salisbury, Rosebery, and Milner, W.E. Forster, Joseph Chamberlain, and Lionel Curtis, as well as the march of certain events. The latter included the laying in the early 1870s of the Pacific Cable, which made daily communication possible and brought Australians psychologically much closer to Britain,<sup>22</sup> the proclamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India, and the prominent role accorded the colonies in the royal jubilee celebrations of 1887 and 1897. Above all, there were the threats to British interests in the Sudan and the Transvaal, which aroused people of British stock everywhere, and stimulated an imperial cohesiveness which reached its apogee during the Boer War.<sup>23</sup> As political economist Bruce Smith’s *United Australia* — indulging in a bout of mixed metaphors — exalted: no longer were the colonies regarded as ‘a sort of necklace of deadweights’ (as British statesmen of the ‘Little England’ school had regarded them); far from the painter being cut, ‘the boat had been drawn up alongside’ in the mutual interests of motherland and colonies; instead of falling from the branch ‘the fruit has proved to be a new source of nourishment to the parent tree.’<sup>24</sup>

In 1913 the British Empire League (BEL) in Sydney reflected that ‘the Russo-Japanese War galvanised us into life, and the sleepy indifference was dissipated at once and forever. This is the point at which we really became an Empire.’<sup>25</sup> The British Empire League in London had been established in 1894 by several public figures dismayed at the dissolution of the Imperial Federation League the previous year, and assumed the ‘duty of informing and educating the public mind’ on the subject of Empire.<sup>26</sup> The New South Wales branch had been launched in 1902 at a meeting chaired by E.C.V. Broughton MLA, owing to anxieties concerning Sydney-based Professor Arnold Wood’s Australian Anti-War League and suspicions regarding the sympathies of such state Labor leaders as W.A. Holman and Arthur Griffith. Its inaugural president was Sydney’s Anglican Canon F.B. Boyce (its second was Bruce Smith), and it boasted a host of knighted or later-to-be-knighted public figures as vice-presidents. They included Langdon Bonython (later to feature in the campaign against Isaacs’ appointment as Governor-General), John Forrest, Malcolm McEachern, William McMillan, George Reid, and John See, as well as the erstwhile radical republican E.W. O’Sullivan. (Coleman P. Hyman, an active and prominent member of the Sydney Jewish community who eventually moved to Britain,

was Honorary Secretary.) In later decades the branch was reputedly particularly close to Sir Archdale Parkhill, one of the leaders of the fight against Isaacs' appointment. It succeeded in having 24 May, the late Queen Victoria's birthday, recognised as Empire Day in Australia from 1905.<sup>27</sup>

A Victorian branch of the BEL was formed in 1920 under the presidency of Thomas Ryan MLA; it drew support from prominent non-Labor figures both in and outside state Parliament. Its declared 'primary' object was 'To secure the permanent unity of the British Empire,' and, given its involvement in the campaign against Isaacs, its 'principal' ones are instructive. They included 'To encourage the growth of the Empire spirit in Australia, and to spread throughout the Commonwealth a knowledge of the advantages and responsibilities of cooperation in the interests of the British race,' 'To foster the spirit of loyalty to the Crown as the supreme bond of union between all parts of the Empire as an indivisible Commonwealth of free and united nations,' and 'To develop the principles on which all parts of the Empire may best share in its general defence, endeavouring to bring into harmony public opinion at home and in the Dominions on this subject, and to devise a more perfect cooperation of the military and naval forces of the Empire, with a special view to the protection of the trade routes.'<sup>28</sup>

In 1925 the London-based Royal Colonial Institute (RCI), concerned *inter alia* 'to promote patriotism' and to educate the public to '... all that the British Empire means', established a presence in Australia as a result of a visit to these shores by its travelling commissioner. Fellows of the RCI, founded in 1868 and given its royal charter in 1882, had long comprised Australians (including Hyman); now, using these as a nucleus, branches of the RCI, renamed the Royal Empire Society (RES) in 1928, were established in South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, and Queensland. They drew their core from the local political and commercial elites. Sir Josiah Symon became President of the South Australian branch with Sir Langdon Bonython as his deputy; Senator Sir John Newlands and Sir William Sowden, President of the Adelaide Branch of the Royal Society of St. George (see below), and a long-time stalwart of the Australian Natives' Association, were among the members. Sydney newspaper proprietor and industrialist Sir Hugh Denison (formerly Dixson) became President of the New South Wales branch; his prominent members included businessman and ex-MLC G.F. Earp, Sir Henry Braddon and Sir Thomas Hughes. (In 1903 Denison's wife had assumed the foundation presidency of the women's auxiliary of the state BEL.) Under the crusading presidency of the distinguished Melbourne ophthalmologist Sir James Barrett — who was seemingly ubiquitous in the public arena, his diverse causes including the National Federation and the promotion of Australian friendship with Japan — the Victorian branch proved the most aggressive and visible, attracting many notable members, who included Bruce, Harrison Moore, Sir William Irvine, Sir John Peden, Generals Sir Harry Chauvel and Sir Brudenell White, and Herbert and Ivy Brookes (she became President of the all-female Empire Trade Defence Association). In 1930, when the branch joined battle against Isaacs' appointment as Governor-General, Barrett was President (as were Symon and Denison in their respective branches), solicitor and former

President of the Victorian Employers' Federation Ernest E. Keep was Vice-President. On its fourteen-man Council sat men eminent in public and business life: the Bishop of Gippsland, accountant Arthur Barraclough, Frederic Eggleston, Sir John Grice, Sir John Higgins, Edmund Jowett, President of the British Immigration League, John Latham, Ormond College Warden and anti-Catholic firebrand Dr. Alexander Leeper, Sir John Macfarland, E. Lee Neil, Managing Director of the Myer Emporium, engineer W.E.L. Wears, (Sir) Ernest Wreford, Director of the National Bank of Australasia, W.G. Guthrie, and J.T. Tweddle. At the time the Great Depression was already affecting subscriptions, but the branch could claim 350 members.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the RES and the BEL, other societies were established in Australia in the early part of this century and between the wars to remind Australians of the value of the British link and of their ancestral, cultural and spiritual roots in the British Isles. Some were extremely particularist, based on a common regional, or even county, origin and correspondingly limited in membership. Others were broader in scope and aspired to be more visible and influential. They included the Royal Society of St. George, established in 1903 and open to people of English birth or ancestry, and its Scottish and Welsh counterparts.<sup>30</sup> There were also noteworthy societies which attempted when occasion warranted to influence government policy through vigorous lobbying and propaganda campaigns. These included the British Empire Union (BEU) in New South Wales and Victoria; which aimed, in the words of the British parent body 'to inculcate a greater interest in and knowledge of the Empire; to strengthen Empire Unity of Purpose and to make our people increasingly Empire-minded; and to create a fuller realisation of what the Monarchy — the unifying influence of the Crown — means to the British peoples, to the Empire and Commonwealth of Nations, and to our British Way of Life.'<sup>31</sup> There was also the Over-Seas League, linked to the London-based Over-Seas Club, which sought to strengthen 'the bonds of Empire by means of individual service and pleasant social contacts'; the Victoria League in Victoria, which busied itself with the spread of information about the Empire, especially to schoolchildren;<sup>32</sup> and there was, in Victoria, the Empire Reciprocity League, an organisation concerned with trade whose beliefs were indicated in its title. And there were also in Victoria such bodies as the Navy League, which took a special interest in defence, and organisations composed of the parents of returned servicemen. They too were composed of people who were attached to the Empire's cause.<sup>33</sup>

A recent historian has vigorously countered what he insists has been the myth of a special relationship between Britain and Australia during the First World War.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, if the war bred disillusionment and demonstrated how far the interests of the two countries diverged, it also highlighted what they had in common, and how far Australia depended upon the imperial connection for her survival. 'The Dominions,' observed Latham, 'when they fought for the Empire, knew that they were fighting for themselves and for that which made them free.'<sup>35</sup> S.M. (later Lord) Bruce, non-Labor Prime Minister of Australia, 1923-29, declared that 'the war was fought not by Britain or any one part of the Empire, but by a great united people for a cause they

believed to be right and to ensure the future freedom and peace of the world and the prevalence of justice in every part of it.' If the Empire stood together in the peace as it did in the war it would prove equally 'invincible.'<sup>36</sup>

Mainstream non-Labor political parties, to which those opposing Isaacs' appointment overwhelmingly gave allegiance, paraded their commitment to Australia's British link. The Victoria-based National Federation, for example, aimed at 'the preservation of the unity of the British Empire against all disintegrating influences and the strengthening of Empire ties.' It held that 'membership of the Empire is the best guarantee that we shall be able to maintain our nationhood and free institutions.'<sup>37</sup> The Young Nationalist Organisation, founded in 1929 by Victorian parliamentarians Robert Menzies and Wilfrid Kent Hughes, among others, declared itself 'intensely and intrinsically All for the Empire,' and sketched the backdrop against which the drama concerning the Governor-Generalship unfolded:

Today the Empire is an entity ... Its millions, scattered in every continent, are welded together by the spirit of a common need; by ever increasing bonds of trade; by Empire air routes; by Empire broadcasts, by Empire radio beams. They have fought, as an entity, side by side for their lives ...

More than these, they are bound by a common struggle against malicious and disruptive forces ... Their unity ... means survival; their disunity disaster ... the destiny of Australia is the destiny of every other unit of the British Commonwealth ...<sup>38</sup>

The United Australia Party, true to the attitude of its major constituents (the Nationalist Party and the All for Australia League, one of a number of conservative groups in existence at that time) stressed its 'loyalty' and 'affection' towards the Empire and the Throne and campaigned in 1931 with the slogan 'Tune in with Great Britain.'<sup>39</sup>

'To maintain and support the integrity of the British Empire, and to further the development of Australia as an integral part thereof' was one of the essential objects of the New South Wales Constitutional Association, while the Melbourne Constitutional Club conspicuously pledged 'loyalty to the Throne and Empire.' There were comparable bodies in other states, composed of the sort of people who opposed Isaacs' appointment as Governor-General.<sup>40</sup> The Australian Women's National League (AWNL), founded in Victoria in 1904 under the inaugural presidency of Janet Lady Clarke as an anti-socialist body intended to prepare women for the federal franchise, affirmed 'Loyalty to the Throne' as the first plank in its platform. For it, 'Ties of blood, and of religion, and of literature, have bound us and still bind us to the motherland,' but 'one great material reason' for that bond dominated all: 'We stand as the white man's lonely outpost in Eastern seas ... a sparsely settled country with an enormous and exposed coastline'. Those words, written during the ANWL's infancy, reflected its outlook in 1930 when, under the presidency of May (Mrs. Claude, later Dame Elizabeth Mary) Couchman it flung itself with gusto into the controversy regarding the Governor-Generalship.<sup>41</sup>

During this period the bitter sectarianism spawned in Australia by the conscription controversies of the First World War raged fiercely. They

highlighted the polarisation of political attitudes towards Britain and the Empire, with Labor (largely Irish Catholic) adherents openly resentful of centuries of British rule in Ireland — an Irish Free State had, of course, come into being in 1921 — and tending towards isolationism in international affairs which entailed lukewarmness to the imperial connection if not downright hostility ('The claims of the Empire must give place to the claims of the caucus,' declared the AWNL in a verdict that typified the sentiment of people on the non-Labor side.<sup>42</sup>) The anti-British diatribes of Australia's best-known Catholic primate, Archbishop Mannix, who had commenced his Melbourne ministry after half a lifetime in his native Ireland, as well as the comparable outbursts of other clergymen, politicians, and officials of Irish extraction, exacerbated sectarian divisiveness, despite the disavowals of certain 'loyalist' Catholic public figures such as Judge C.G. Heydon, Sir Mark Sheldon, and Sir Thomas Hughes, and the presence in the non-Labor camp of Irish Australians who had defected from the ALP over conscription.<sup>43</sup>

The Victorian Protestant Federation stood for 'God, King, and Empire,' while its counterpart in New South Wales drew support from a body known as the Australian League of Loyalty. (The latter was one of several conservative, imperialist organisations spawned during or immediately following the First World War, of which more below.) The *Vigilant* (with which Herbert Brookes was associated), organ of the Victorian Protestant Federation, a major player in the campaign against Isaacs' appointment as Governor-General, declared that 'It is not true that Imperialism is opposed to Australian sentiment, except those who, for their own sinister ends, are always crying "Australia First." There is an uneasy feeling abroad that this cry is but the prelude to the voicing of their real sentiment of "Rome First".'<sup>44</sup> In both Melbourne (scene of controversial St. Patrick's Day processions which were alleged to be replete with anti-British propaganda and disrespect for the Union Jack) and Sydney, some non-Labor public figures shared platforms at anti-Sinn Fein rallies, alongside the most intemperately anti-Catholic clergymen, and spoke passionately in the Empire's cause. They included Senator Sir Robert Best, New South Wales State parliamentarian Sir Thomas Henley, Sir Granville Ryrie, and Senator R.D. Elliott — all supporters of the campaign against Isaacs' appointment (as indeed in effect were most on the non-Labor side). Elliott, who took a particular interest in Australian-British trade links, told one anti-Sinn Fein gathering that 'the continued independent existence of Australia and its defence lies in the unity and strength of the Empire as a whole. An attempt is being made insidiously to detach Australia from the Empire — not in the interests of this country, but in the interests of her enemies.'<sup>45</sup>

Imperialists were not only outraged by the disloyal utterances of some Irish Australians. They feared that an independent Ireland would prove to be 'the Achilles heel of the Empire' since it could not be counted upon to ally with Britain in wartime or provide sanctuary in its harbours for British shipping.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, another threat to the Empire loomed: Soviet Russia and its Australian supporters. Non-Labor adherents worried deeply about Bolshevik sympathisers and possible agents in Australia. Fear of Soviet penetration and influence

increased with the activities of militant leftists such as trade unionist Jock Garden and New South Wales Premier Jack Lang. 'Communism naked and unashamed has flung its defiance in the face of the State and the Empire' railed the *Sydney Morning Herald* in a representative non-Labor response.<sup>47</sup>

There were sound reasons for the fear of Soviet Russia. As (Sir) Archie Grenfell Price, a sworn foe of 'the Communist Langs and Irish Scullins,' observed: the British Empire 'hems in the Soviets at a dozen points — in the Pacific, India, and Afghanistan. In these last countries, and in China, Russian anti-British propaganda has done immense harm.'<sup>48</sup> Grenfell Price was convenor of the Emergency Committee of South Australia, one of a number of rightwing, anti-subversionist societies, some of them quasi-military in character and particularly attractive to returned servicemen, which sprouted in Australia during the interwar period. Early ones, formed immediately following the First World War, included the Loyalist League in Queensland, the Empire Loyalty League in Perth, the King and Empire Alliance in New South Wales, and the Loyalty League in Victoria.<sup>49</sup> Others, like the Emergency Committee itself, were founded around 1930, in direct response to Langism and other threats to national stability and imperial unity, at a socially disruptive time of labour unrest when — in the words of federal politician (Sir) Henry Gullett — 'patriotic societies were never more essential'. Their existence was 'based on the conviction that the greatest influence for good in the world, and its greatest hope, are to be found in the British race and its institutions.'<sup>50</sup> Such organisations included the All for Australia League, the Empire Honour League, the White Army, the Old and New Guards, the Order of Silent Knights, the League of National Security, the Citizens' League of South Australia, and the Sane Democracy League.<sup>51</sup> Certain key individuals involved in the campaign against Isaacs' appointment as Governor-General were linked to some of these organisations, and while most of the latter were not, *per se*, in the vanguard of that campaign, it is improbable that any of those belonging to them failed to concur in its ends.

The potential for controversy over the Governor-Generalship was lain at the Imperial Conference of 1926, aptly described by the then Prime Minister, Bruce, a participant, as marking 'a turning point in the relations of the different self-governing parts of the Empire and Britain.'<sup>52</sup> The outcome of the Conference was enshrined in the consequent report issued that year in the name of Earl Balfour, Lord President of the [Privy] Council; it acknowledged that the Dominions 'are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.' This crucial statement, often referred to as the Balfour Declaration of 1926 (obviously not to be confused with that of 1917!) was to underpin the imperial relationship thereafter. It led to the establishment in 1929 of an inter-Empire committee of constitutional experts, one of whom was Australia's Harrison Moore, who incidentally had long been, together with several leading national figures including Latham, Eggleston, Herbert Brookes, Sir Thomas

Bavin, and Sir Henry Braddon, a member of the Round Table groups established in Australia in 1910. (The Round Table movement had been formed the previous year by Lord Milner with the object of encouraging influential men in the United Kingdom and the self-governing components of the Empire to consider and discuss the nature and future of the imperial relationship; several of its members in Australia also belonged to the RES.)<sup>53</sup>

Charged with the task of examining the implications of the Balfour Declaration, the committee drafted the Statute of Westminster, the object of which was to deprive the United Kingdom Parliament of its supremacy over the law of the Dominions. The statute provided that the Colonial Laws Validity Act (1865) would cease to apply to future laws made by Dominion parliaments.<sup>54</sup> It was agreed that the statute would not be introduced into the United Kingdom Parliament until Dominion parliaments had requested and approved it. Like its counterparts throughout the Empire, the Australian Parliament carried the appropriate resolutions in 1931, and the statute was enacted at Westminster at the end of that year. But although she had thereby endorsed the statute in principle Australia (like New Zealand and Newfoundland but in contrast to the other self-governing Dominions) made no attempt to carry its substantive sections, which would have made it operative domestically. That did not occur until 1942 under the Curtin government, in the face of furious resistance by non-Labor forces. In the meantime passage of the statute was seen as no pressing matter in Australia, and the public at large was noticeably apathetic.<sup>55</sup> However, Australians from the non-Labor side of politics, particularly those who took more than a passing interest in imperial matters, were intensely worried by the implications of the statute. They feared that it would entail the loss by Australians of their British citizenship. They tended to agree with a former Governor of Victoria, Lord Sydenham, that 'The disastrous Conference of 1926 was the *fons et origo mali*' and that its successor in 1930 'carried on this disintegration policy ... [the statute] will cut us all apart.'<sup>56</sup>

It was against this background, and the perceived machinations of Irish disloyalists and Communist subversives, that (as we have seen) conservatives such as the Young Nationalists identified 'malicious and disruptive forces' threatening the survival of the Empire. And it set the scene for the controversy regarding Isaacs' appointment to the Governor-Generalship.

The Imperial Conference of 1926 had, at the suggestion of Canada, established that henceforward governors-general of the various Dominions were representatives only of the Crown, not of the United Kingdom too. Canada could afford to flex her independent muscle within the Empire because, despite the United States' traditional retreat into isolationism — a retreat which convinced Australian non-Labor sympathisers further of the wisdom of the imperial bond — Canadian security was guaranteed by the Monroe Doctrine. The United States would never tolerate the incursions of a foreign power in the American continent. By contrast, in Australia as in New Zealand, the question of defence was, to quote Eggleston, 'paramount';<sup>57</sup> Australian conservatives were correspondingly wary of developments which might undermine the constitutional unity of the Empire.

The status of the six state governors in Australia remained untouched by the Imperial Conference: they were representatives of both the Crown and of Whitehall, which meant that in principle — it would seldom if ever happen in practice — United Kingdom ministers could still advise the monarch on matters pertaining to the states. By contrast, the status of the Governor-General had been altered significantly. His role had narrowed from that of a United Kingdom representative in the executive affairs of the Australian Commonwealth to 'an entirely domestic role at the behest of local ministries, and any exercise of discretion now must be personal and not based on any kind of reference to Whitehall.'<sup>58</sup>

Appointing a Governor-General had always fallen within the monarch's personal prerogative: the king made his choice following consultation with United Kingdom government ministers. In 1927 the South African Prime Minister, General Hertzog, had in accordance with the position's changed status insisted on nominating his country's new Governor-General. The king, intent on reasserting the principle that his personal prerogative was the fount of such appointments, was accordingly keen to avoid a repetition of his experience with Hertzog when, in February 1930, the search began for a replacement for Lord Stonehaven, who had been Australia's Governor-General since 1925. Owing to the king's conviction that it would be a 'grave mistake' to give Australia's (Labor) Prime Minister, James Scullin, an opportunity to make a nomination, the Dominions Office in London informed Stonehaven that it would be helpful if he could discuss with Scullin merely 'the type of candidate who would, in his view, be most suitable...'<sup>59</sup>

Scullin, however, had already requested and obtained from the Australian Liaison Officer in London, R.G. Casey, the procedure obtaining in the wake of the 1926 Imperial Conference. Casey had advised him that the general practice was for a name or names to be given by the United Kingdom government to the Prime Minister of the relevant Dominion, 'who either agrees or disagrees or states his preference or asks for further names or suggests names himself.' Scullin learned further that even before the conference this courtesy had been extended to Australian prime ministers (beginning in 1920 when W.M. Hughes had been invited to propose a successor to Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson), and that as early as 1921 and in 1927 respectively the governments of the Irish Free State and of South Africa 'made every effort to insist on their right to approach the King directly.'<sup>60</sup> As a result, Scullin, through the intermediary of Lord Stonehaven, informed Lord Passfield, Secretary of State for the Dominions, that while recognising that the king's 'personal wish must be the governing factor,' he and his Cabinet felt 'strongly and unanimously' that Isaacs would be 'by far the most suitable appointment' and asked that the king be so apprised.<sup>61</sup>

Rumours that Scullin had submitted the name of an Australian to the king were soon circulating in this country. On 8 April 1930 two non-Labor members of the House of Representatives, Henry Gullett and Archdale Parkhill, sought confirmation of it from the Prime Minister. They received evasive replies. When Gullett asked whether in the event of such a nominee, federal Parliament would be given the opportunity to debate 'a change in policy of such far-

reaching importance to the Empire,' the answer was in the negative, on the grounds that since the appointment would be the act of the king it could not be debated.<sup>62</sup> The nominee's identity became public knowledge on 23 April, when it was disclosed in the Melbourne *Argus*.<sup>63</sup>

Confirmation of the nomination dismayed Australian non-Labor opinion. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, for instance, described Scullin's recommendation as

a cardinal blunder. In some respects it is far worse. Before such a revolutionary departure from precedent was made Parliament should have been consulted at least. Members not dominated by the Labour machine would thus have been enabled to voice the indignation of the immense body of voters who desire only to continue the present Imperial connection. In particular the Senate, which is happily not Caucus-ridden, would have had an opportunity of expressing the ideals of loyalty and decency which the Labour Ministry has so insolently flouted....

....The plain truth is that under the guise of deference to a supposed "Australian sentiment" a blow is to be struck at Britain. It is inspired ... by men who hate Britain and the Imperial connection and would do all in their power to injure one and destroy the other. These men, or their parents, have brought old world grievances with them to Australia, and they have nourished them so assiduously that all their thoughts and actions have become warped thereby. This rancour often seeks to masquerade as true democracy and true Australianism. It is neither. All Australians who recognise that love of their own land is compatible with pride in the larger Imperial citizenship will resent a gesture which is more suited to Irish irreconcilables than to Australian statesmen.<sup>64</sup>

A vigorous campaign to prevent Scullin's recommendation of Isaacs being accepted by the king swung into action. On 2 May a meeting to discuss concerns and coordinate a plan of action was held in Melbourne under the chairmanship of (Sir) Charles Merrett, who with Sir James Barrett was to lead the assault consequently mounted from Victoria by the Council of Combined Empire Societies. Both men were Melbourne-born of English parents. Merrett was managing director of Welch, Perrin and Company, machinery merchants and manufacturers' representatives, and like Barrett he took a leadership role in a range of causes. Aside from the Empire, these included non-Labor politics (he had been involved in 1910 with the formation of the People's Liberal Party, Victoria, and in 1926 had been one of the founders of the short-lived Australian Liberal Party) and agriculture (he was for many years President of the Royal Agricultural Society, Victoria). During World War One he had served, entirely within home shores, with the Australian Light Horse, and like Barrett he had arrived at war's end with the rank of colonel.<sup>65</sup>

Merrett chaired the meeting, presumably in his capacity as a member of the Council of the BEL in Victoria and president of the local branch of the BEU. Surrounding the latter post was a deliberately concealed irony. In 1916 Merrett had met Alfred Frood, secretary of the Anti-German League in Victoria, which shortly afterwards effectively ceased existence in view of the emergence of Merrett's project, the state branch of the BEU (a body founded in Britain in 1915).<sup>66</sup> With Frood as honorary secretary, Merrett apparently regarded the branch as his personal fief. He and Frood had energy and commitment in

abundance, but — unbeknown to almost everyone — lacked a rank and file. Whether his 'branch' ever possessed, or indeed, ever set out to recruit one, is unclear. It is possible that the Great Depression hit the membership with debilitating force; almost certainly, by 1930 the branch already consisted entirely of Merrett and Frood; it did by 1933, when a disaffected source leaked the news to London headquarters. (Frood sent a rather tetchy headquarters an evasive response to its ensuing demand for clarification!)<sup>67</sup>

The meeting on 2 May ushered into being the umbrella body soon to be known as the Council of Combined Empire Societies, headquartered in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. Merrett was chairman, and the honorary secretary was Ripponlea resident Dorothy Penberthy, who performed the same function for at least one and possibly two of the fifteen original constituents of the Combined Council (as it was unofficially known for brevity's sake).<sup>68</sup> These original constituents were the AWNL, the BEL, the BEU, the Country Party, the Country Party Women's Section, the Empire Reciprocity League, the Melbourne Scots, the Navy League, the Over-Seas League, the RES, the Royal Society of St. George, the Sailors' and Soldiers' Mothers' Association, the Victoria League in Victoria, the Victorian Protestant Federation, and the Victorian Scottish Union. In Merrett's words, they represented 'many thousand members all ranged on the side of a United Empire as opposed to influences tending towards its disintegration.'<sup>69</sup> It was not the first time that the RES, the Royal Society of St. George, the Navy League, and the Victoria League had potentially made common cause. Around the time of the 1926 Imperial Conference they had been invited to combine with several other societies into an umbrella body to be known as the British Association, which pledged 'loyalty to the Crown and Constitution' and aimed 'to endeavour in every way to encourage the ideal and to work for the establishment and maintenance of a united British Empire, self contained, and capable of self defence against possible attack, and to oppose the forces working for the disruption of the Empire.' Another mooted constituent of the British Association, the Sailors' and Soldiers' Fathers' Association, soon joined the Combined Council, and in November 1930 the South African Soldiers' Association, representing 700 Boer War veterans, did likewise, bringing the number of organisations under the Combined Council's banner during its campaign against Isaacs' appointment to seventeen.<sup>70</sup>

On 8 May, in the individual names of all fifteen original constituents of the Combined Council except the Victorian Scottish Union — which was, therefore, probably not represented at the meeting six days earlier — Merrett sent a cable to J.H. Thomas, British Secretary of State for the Dominions:

Suggested appointment of Australian Governor General has not been submitted to Parliament or people. In our opinion majority of Australians do not desire change. Our objection is neither personal nor connected with Party Politics. We are solely concerned with Empire policy.<sup>71</sup>

The Council also issued a printed statement carefully setting out its objections, since 'unless dissent is openly expressed the authorities might assume ... indifference, or even approval,' on the public's part.<sup>72</sup> At a meeting on 27

August, the Council decided to take its case to the Imperial Conference which was due to sit in London in October 1930, with Scullin the senior delegate from Australia. Accordingly organisers of the Conference received the following advice in a letter from Merrett for distribution to all participants:

Understanding that in the course of your deliberations you propose to consider the scope and methods of interchanges between ... The King and the Dominions we respectfully desire to enter our protest against any decision that might weaken our ties with the Throne and the Mother Country ... We further desire to record our conviction that only in such groups of Australians as are insensible to, or ignorant of all that is involved in the close and intimate association of Australia with Great Britain, has any indication been given of a desire to alter the relations of affectionate trust hitherto maintained between the two countries.<sup>73</sup>

Meanwhile the Combined Council contacted its constituents' kindred societies in Britain urging them to support the contention that the parliaments and people of the Dominions be kept informed of issues to be discussed at imperial conferences, so that important questions affecting the Dominions should not be decided without open debate.<sup>74</sup> Lady Allen, President of the Victoria League in Victoria, believed that the power of imperial conferences could be curbed by the establishment of an Imperial Secretariat, which would keep Dominion populations apprised of moves affecting their countries; her suggestion was pursued enthusiastically by Barrett, who had long fretted over the tendency of successive imperial conferences to abrogate functions for which they were not authorised.<sup>75</sup>

A key part of the Council's campaign was a petition addressed to the king: 'With humble duty we ... being your humble and loyal subjects in Australia, respectfully approach Your Majesty with a request that there shall be no alteration in the constitutional mode of appointing Your Majesty's Representatives in Australia, believing that such appointments should be free of political influences tending to weaken the ties binding our beloved Empire to your throne.'<sup>76</sup> An eyewitness described the enthusiastic reaction one Friday afternoon in September when the petition was presented for signing in the Royal Arcade in central Melbourne. Outside that shopper's magnet were

persons jostling each other in an attempt to sign ... and forming a crowd which obstructed pedestrian traffic ...

By 4 o'clock ... the number of persons desiring to sign ... had increased so much that operations had to be suspended.<sup>77</sup>

Instead, the petition was placed on a table outside the nearby Wattle tea rooms in Little Collins Street. Copies were also made available for signing at the Council's Elizabeth Street headquarters, at the offices of the AWNL, the Empire Reciprocity League, the Over-Seas League, the Victoria League, the Victorian Protestant Federation, and the RES, as well as at the premises of the City's conservative daily, the *Argus*, and its weekly stable-mate, the *Australasian*. Additionally, copies were placed at the Royal Agricultural Society's showgrounds in Flemington, well away from the business district, and firms and individuals linked to the campaign also took some.<sup>78</sup>

'I am convinced that with proper organisation this petition would be the greatest in the history of Australia,' maintained a helper in the suburb of Sandringham. 'There are thousands willing to sign it if they be given the chance.'<sup>79</sup> The deadline for signatures was 1 October, but was extended to 31 October, with a call from the Council for voluntary assistance, especially from 'shopkeepers who are prepared to take signatures, ladies to take charge of tables, and all loyalists who will take copies to obtain signatures.'<sup>80</sup> As at 13 October, a total of 46,364 signatures had been collected, of which 13,251 had been signed at the Council's headquarters, and 5,331 at the showgrounds. The rest had been obtained by volunteers from bodies both officially connected and unconnected with the Council: 21,094 via the AWNL, 4,094 via the Victorian Protestant Federation, 953 via the Royal Society of St. George, 504 via the Women's Section of the Country Party, 358 via Melbourne's principal masonic lodge, 326 via the National Council of Women, 303 via the Empire Reciprocity League, and 146 via local Orangemen.<sup>81</sup>

The final total soared to 134,399, owing to a further extension of about a fortnight and to an energetic effort by the AWNL, soon to be described as 'the best Empire-building society in Australia.' Shortly before the petition closed, the AWNL had collected 38,485 signatures, while 73,059 people had signed at the Council's headquarters. The Protestant Federation had amassed 9,299, the Empire Reciprocity League 1,976, the Over-Seas League 1,752, the Royal Society of St. George 1,582, the National Council of Women 1,483, the Victoria League 1,461, and the Country Party Women's Section 1,265. The Royal Empire Society, the Sailors' and Soldiers' Mothers' Association, the Navy League, the Scottish Union, and the Melbourne Scots also reported results, ranging from encouraging to indifferent. It appears that some societies had taken a less aggressive approach than others, presumably in the conviction that since there were several venues at which the petition could be found, word would spread, and active canvassing was not of prime importance.<sup>82</sup> A bound copy of the petition was presented at Victoria's Government House for transmission to the king. Merrett explained, apparently with justification, that copies of the document had not reached everyone who wanted to append their names, resulting in 'many complaints ... nor was the allowed time of sufficient duration'; thus the signatures represented 'but a small number of the King's loyal subjects in Victoria.'<sup>83</sup>

This petition was evidently not the only one received from Australia,<sup>84</sup> although it was undoubtedly the largest. The Combined Council certainly spearheaded the protest in Australia. Imperialists in other states, like Symon and Denison, fretted and fumed over Isaacs' nomination but the Victorians, more than any others, seem to have mounted the toughest and most coordinated campaign — so much so that on this matter the Council tended to become the focus for activists interstate, such as Fremantle-based former stud farm breeder J.R.L. Brinkley, who was in close communication.<sup>85</sup> From Perth, the Imperial Trade Correspondent of the Department of Overseas Trade informed Dorothy Penberthy of his hope that the Victorians' stance would 'squench for ever an element in Australia that is wholly undesirable.'<sup>86</sup> From Adelaide the honorary

secretary of the Advance Australia League wrote with similar praise; he believed that the only organisation in his state which had taken up the cudgels was the Country Party and he wondered whether the state RES was in abeyance, since it seemed so quiet.<sup>87</sup> This was to underestimate the feelings of such men as Symon, Bonython, and Grenfell Price, although it seems that Symon preferred to vent privately his personal expertise on the constitutional and legal implications of the appointment rather than using the state RES as a vehicle, while Bonython had an alternative outlet for protest in the *Adelaide Advertiser*, which he owned. The Country Party's opposition owed much to the pastoralist and federal politician Charles Hawker, who would in 1937 lead a successful behind-the-scenes revolt within the parliamentary United Australia Party and its extra-parliamentary supporters against the Lyons government's attempt to pass the Statute of Westminster. He wielded a great deal of clout in primary-producing circles. And from its formation in October 1930 the Citizens' League of South Australia decisively joined battle.<sup>88</sup>

On 6 November the *Argus* reported that opinion in London was in 'unanimous agreement that the constitutional practice established at the conference of 1926 that His Majesty acts on the advice tendered by his responsible Ministers applies as it does in other matters to the appointment of a Governor-General, and that the Ministers in the Dominion concerned tender and are responsible for such advice.' The report added that Scullin was presumably waiting for the current Imperial Conference to endorse this position before announcing that the nominee has been appointed.<sup>89</sup> It was perhaps no mere coincidence that the Boer War veterans' organisation, bent on 'the good of our country and the Empire in general,' voted that day to join the Combined Council.<sup>90</sup>

Opponents of the appointment were incensed and troubled by Scullin's failure to provide the king with more than one name. The views of constitutional experts of the stamp of Sir Arthur Berriedale Keith, who in 1928 had argued that 'The suggestion that the king can act directly on the advice of Dominion ministers is a constitutional monstrosity, which would be fatal to the security of the position of the Crown,'<sup>91</sup> weighed heavily. The *Sydney Morning Herald* deplored 'a preposterous and impudent attempt to alter a system which has lasted since the institution of responsible government in Australia.'<sup>92</sup> Citing and in effect summarising a forceful speech by Victoria's Lieutenant-Governor and Chief Justice Sir William Irvine, Merrett wrote that 'no agreement has ever been made which conferred upon the Dominions the right to nominate the representative of His Majesty,' and that 'it almost looks as if in the future the sole tie between the scattered Dominions will be the King, and it is the duty of all members of the community to maintain in its strength the prerogative of His Majesty ... to nominate and appoint his own personal representative.'<sup>93</sup>

Extremely reluctantly, the king — who apparently suggested General (Lord) Birdwood as an alternative to Isaacs — decided at length to accept Scullin's nominee. He did so because, in the words of Lord Stamfordham, his private secretary, he realised 'how easy it is to light and fan the flame of agitation by an ill-disposed minority — especially when, as in this case, constituted of

Trade Unions, Communists and Irish, not of the highest class.' He aimed to avoid handing Scullin any ammunition with which to make trouble.<sup>94</sup> Following the announcement early in December that 'His Majesty the King, on the recommendation of Mr. J.H. Scullin,' had appointed Isaacs, Eggleston complained that 'Scullin gave no alternative to the King — but made it a matter of ministerial recommendation to the King in such a way that the King's prerogative was excluded ... This, I suggest, is a gross discourtesy to His Majesty.'<sup>95</sup> Latham told Parliament that

If, as stated, the King acted upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister, His Majesty did not exercise any discretion in the matter. The new Governor-General is the nominee of the Scullin government, and not of His Majesty the King. The appointment, therefore, marks a distinct and most important change in procedure ... There is ... no warrant in the constitution for the practice that has been adopted in this case.<sup>96</sup>

One of the most persistent misunderstandings concerning the opposition to Isaacs relates to the fact that he was an Australian. While one commentator may be correct in stating that 'In 1930 the very idea of an Australian Governor-General seemed to many Australians a contradiction in terms, like an Australian grenadier guard or a British gum tree,'<sup>97</sup> it is unfortunate that the key campaigners against Isaacs' appointment should be depicted as motivated by innate preference for British aristocrats for aristocracy's sake or because they denied that on principle no Australian should hold the nation's highest office. One historian, for instance, has written of 'the unpleasant taste' that the campaign's defeat left 'in polite mouths in Toorak and Bellevue Hill,' while Isaacs' biographer, similarly without further elaboration, attributes to Melbourne's liberal newspaper, the *Age* (4 December 1930), 'a just appreciation of the events' in its claim that some of the resistance to Isaacs' appointment was rooted in 'pure snobbishness'.<sup>98</sup>

In reality neither unthinking anglophilia nor mindless social snobbery propelled the campaign against the appointment. Nor were the campaigners antagonistic to the idea of an Australian incumbent *per se*. The assumption that the latter was indeed the case was undoubtedly fuelled by Scullin's deft manipulation of a question put to him by Gullett shortly before the nominee's precise identity became known. Gullett asked whether, in the appointment of Stonehaven's successor, the government intended 'to depart from the practice which has been adopted since the establishment of Federation,' and when Scullin hedged, he referred to press reports that an Australian was to fill the position. This enabled Scullin, who was not empowered to reveal what had been passing between London and Canberra, to seize the offensive: 'I have yet to learn that it has been laid down that an Australian may not be recommended for the office.' Gullett, it should be noted, retorted that he had 'made no such suggestion.'<sup>99</sup>

Scullin was also quick to exploit Opposition leader Latham's view that the government's action revealed its 'lack of enthusiasm' for the Empire and reflected a 'strident and narrow Australian jingoism.' The Prime Minister asked 'what kind of Australian' Latham was when even the rumour that an Australian citizen may be chosen put him 'into a frenzy,' and observed that Latham must

have 'a weird conception of the Empire' in thinking that such a choice 'would undermine the imperial link.'<sup>100</sup> Yet Latham stressed that his concerns had 'nothing whatever to do with the question of a person, born in Australia, to the office of Governor-General.' The essence of the Opposition's case was that Australia's interests could be better served by the nominee of the King rather than by the nominee of any federal administration.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, Irvine, echoed by Merrett, and by a statement issued by the Combined Council, observed that the issue at stake was 'not really whether an Australian-born citizen' should be appointed Governor-General. 'Most of us recognise that it should not be impossible to find Australian-born citizens capable of holding any office in the Commonwealth.'<sup>102</sup> No 'sensible person,' agreed Western Australian Attorney-General T.A.L. Davy, another non-Labor opponent of Scullin's move, believed that no Australian was fit to be appointed.<sup>103</sup> The Victorian protest petition said nothing about the appointment of an Australian. The nominee's Australianness was not the campaign's focus. After all, reflected Symon, the King could appoint an Australian if he wished. The crux of the matter was whether the King should have the right to nominate and appoint his own representative.<sup>104</sup>

The objection was not to an Australian on the grounds of his being an Australian. Nevertheless, argued some campaigners, there was a fundamental way in which the appointment of an Australian — any Australian, not just Isaacs — disadvantaged Australia. For on the expiry of their term of office, they remained in this country. Nominees from Britain, by contrast, returned to the Motherland, there to disseminate knowledge of Australia and convey Australian concerns. British incumbents thus acted effectively as ambassadors for this country on their return home, and that provided a strong argument for the retention of the traditional system of appointments. This line of argument had been peddled by Barrett for decades, since before World War One. As Dorothy Penberthy, faithfully distilling his views, expressed it, appointees from Britain, 'far from being an extravagance,' were of 'inestimable value' to Australia. Not only did Australia 'reap the benefit of the services of these men of distinction and experience, versed in public and international affairs,' while they were in office; afterwards they took back to Britain 'wide knowledge of this country and its people, which, during the remainder of their lives, they continue to use there to assist the Commonwealth, thus maintaining personal friendly relations and furnishing living links with Australian interests.'<sup>105</sup>

In 1925 when Lang had advocated that state governors no longer be nominated by the King but by respective state governments, Barrett had publicised the above arguments. He had also raised the spectre of imperial disharmony, even disruption, resulting from the 'extreme danger' of such appointments 'being made a party question and settled on party lines.'<sup>106</sup> Now, seeing Isaacs as Scullin's nominee, non-Labor forces believed that the 'extreme danger' had arrived. 'The nominee of the Commonwealth Government cannot, in any real sense, be regarded as the personal representative of the King,' objected Latham.

He will, inevitably, be regarded as the representative of the Commonwealth Government. Accordingly, the new procedure goes far to diminish the reality of the bond of Empire which resides in the Crown. The Opposition in this Parliament is much more concerned to promote the unity of the British Empire, than to insist upon the exercise of any real or alleged right which emphasises separation rather than union .... We deplore any act which may tend to diminish or deprecate the sentiment of attachment and loyalty to the Crown which at present resides in Australia.<sup>107</sup>

The essence of the protesters' case is seen in the objections of Harrison Moore, a conservative despite his hand in the framing of the contentious Statute of Westminster. He recognised that the appointment of a Governor-General of Australia 'by the King on the advice of the British Ministry seems hardly to accord with that equality which is affirmed' by the 1926 Imperial Conference, and that it would be 'neither constitutional nor legal' for the king to make the appointment 'as a personal act without the cooperation of a Minister.' Nevertheless,

That the Dominion Ministry should be the sole constitutional advisers of the Crown in the appointment of [the] Governor-General raises some very difficult questions ... The only local appointment practicable would be a party appointment and the representative of the Crown, who constitutionally stands above all divisions of party as a symbol of unity, would become an emblem of party itself, an alternative of the system not less radical than the abandonment of the hereditary character of the Kingship ...<sup>108</sup>

He argued that in its claim that the Governor-General should now be appointed by the king 'on the recommendation and constitutional responsibility of the Commonwealth Government' and by nominating Isaacs, the Scullin ministry had 'raised a question which involves in effect the significance of the Kingship in the Dominions, and of the common allegiance to the Crown.'<sup>109</sup> Moreover, 'correspondence by cable or mail' was 'inadequate and inappropriate' to so 'intimate and delicate' a matter. 'A system whereby advice is presented to the King by a distant Ministry, with no opportunity for personal consultation is an innovation so grave as to change the very nature of constitutional kingship; its tendency must be to eliminate all personal discretion or choice, or even interest, in the King, and to make the King merely a name for the act of Ministers.'<sup>110</sup>

Irvine warned that 'now, to fight for the stability and continuance of our Empire will be largely to fight to maintain and to uphold the dignity and power of the Crown.' He observed that it was 'doubtful, to say the least' that the Australian people 'would consent to vest in the Ministers a power so far outside that now existing, and to make the King's representative, while in name responsible to the King, in reality responsible to the Government for the time which, as it had appointed him, might with equal rights insist on his removal.'<sup>111</sup> Symon saw the Crown as 'not a mere symbol' but 'a very real constitutional organic bond of union,' the 'unifying power' of which was 'a very real and practical as well as sentimental bond of Empire.'<sup>112</sup> Hence, as Country Party leader Archie Cameron was to observe over a decade later: 'If the King be the sole link which binds the Dominions to Great Britain, even greater necessity exists for the Governor-General to be the personal representative of the King,

and not the nominee of any party government in any of the King's Dominions.'<sup>113</sup>

The campaigners held that appointees from Britain were free of the taint of Australian party politics; Isaacs had been both a state and a federal politician, which detracted from the mystique of his proposed gubernatorial office, and cast doubts on his impartiality. Isaacs' appointment would create a precedent whereby the Governor-Generalship and state governorships would become prizes awarded for political services.<sup>114</sup> As the organ of the Young Nationalist Organisation remarked in 1931 in relation to a replacement for Victoria's governor, Lord Somers, they required someone 'who can see all sides with an unbiased eye ... who can realise that the All-for-Australia man might run the risk of one-eyedness — we want an All-for-the-Empire spirit as well.'<sup>115</sup>

Another concern in Isaacs' case was his status as Chief Justice of Australia. 'It is a general principle that judges should have nothing to hope for and nothing to fear from any government,' declared Latham. He regretted that the principle had been 'infringed' and feared that if the practice was continued, justices of the High Court would come to expect 'further advancement' from the federal government in power.<sup>116</sup> Another worry was that Isaacs might wield unprecedentedly 'large powers' and inappropriately merge two arms of government by combining the Governor-Generalship with his position as Chief Justice.<sup>117</sup>

With these fears in mind, Latham, Symon and other conservative legal authorities argued that Isaacs was ineligible for the Governor-Generalship because Section 8 of the Judiciary Act prohibited a High Court justice from 'accepting or holding any other office or any place of profit within the Commonwealth, except any such judicial office as may be conferred upon him by or under any law of the Commonwealth.' But another body of legal opinion maintained that the provision, while barring a judge from holding another office while he continued in a judicial appointment, did not disqualify a judge who resigned his judicial post and subsequently accepted appointment as Governor-General.<sup>118</sup> Eggleston noted that Isaacs had 'a very special responsibility ... not to take office unless he is satisfied that there was in fact no affront to His Majesty, and no violation of constitutional propriety.'<sup>119</sup>

In light of the opinions of some legal authorities, especially Irvine and Symon, that Scullin's procedure was unconstitutional, campaigners contemplated mounting a legal challenge to Isaacs' appointment. The Combined Council took advice from two Victorian lawyers, Sir Edward Mitchell, who was a vice-president of the State BEL, and (Sir) Wilfred Fullager, whose recondite answers to a number of queries convinced the Council that it had a case.<sup>120</sup> On 19 January 1931 E.D.A. Bagot, honorary organiser of the Citizen's League of South Australia and vice-president of Adelaide's Constitutional Club, addressed the Combined Council on the legal aspects of the question. The League had received advice that if the appointment could be proved to be unconstitutional beyond all doubt, a writ could be served upon Isaacs to restrain him from assuming office as Governor-General. Bagot had come to Melbourne to sound out lawyers there.<sup>121</sup> But the legal option was abandoned with Isaacs'

last-minute resignation of his Chief Justiceship, and his swearing in on 22 January.<sup>122</sup>

Campaigners against Isaacs' appointment remained deeply unhappy about its method, and unreconciled to the changes wrought by the two most recent imperial conferences. The Royal Society of St. George left the Combined Council as soon as a legal challenge to the appointment was mooted, and the AWNL eventually departed, believing the Council's purpose to be at an end. But both soon rejoined. Indeed, the Council, augmented by new constituents, continued to campaign on a variety of Empire-related issues during the early 1930s. (Not many of those who fought Isaacs' appointment could turn the latter into a propaganda weapon as did Sir Hugh Denison, president of the RES in New South Wales, when he observed that the fact that an Australian held the Governor-Generalship proved how egalitarian and therefore successful imperial relations were.)<sup>123</sup>

In 1947, when the Chifley government announced that (Sir) William McKell, Labor Premier of New South Wales, was to become Governor-General, a furore erupted reminiscent of that of 1930-31. Menzies, for example, described McKell's appointment as 'political jobbery ... expressly designed to lower the Governor-Generalship in significance and esteem, and so weaken our vital connection with the Crown.'<sup>124</sup> The furore provoked by McKell's nomination surely reinforces the impression that, to the corresponding one regarding Isaacs' nomination, anti-Semitism was not intrinsic. There have been suggestions, for the most part coy, that anti-Semitism did indeed play a role. Typically, these have been advanced by leftist and republican commentators. However, so sober and respected an analyst as Sir Zelman Cowen maintains that 'we can be sure that ... Isaacs' Jewishness was a factor which weighed with some,' and that 'Isaacs would not have been slow to perceive that there were personal elements in [the opposition], some of them of the meanest and most prejudicial kind.'<sup>125</sup>

Sir Zelman, who does not amplify those last remarks, writes that when, in 1977, he himself became Governor-General, 'No doubt there were elements in the Australian community who did not want a Jew in this position, but I neither saw nor felt it, though I have read in such places as the correspondence of Patrick White peevish and unattractive references to my Jewishness.'<sup>126</sup> No doubt, too, Isaacs' appointment drew the stray anti-Semitic muttering. But it must be clearly understood that anti-Semitism in no way tarnished the campaign against his appointment mounted by imperial and 'loyalist' societies in Australia. As the footnotes reveal, the major sources for the campaign described here lie in two separate archival collections at the University of Melbourne. In all the voluminous mass of relevant documentation contained in each, no even remotely anti-Semitic comment appears. Nor is there any indication of anti-Semitism to be read between the lines of the appropriate items. The latter consist largely of correspondence and memoranda not intended for any contemporary gaze save the campaigners' own. If the campaigners had harboured prejudice towards Isaacs because he was a Jew, they would quite probably have let slip the occasional clue within the confines of such privately circulating material. Moreover, although the campaign did not gather

momentum until after the identity of the intended Governor-General was known for certain, the first scattered shots were fired earlier, amid rumours that Isaacs' predecessor as Chief Justice, Sir Adrian Knox, was the nominee. As shown in an earlier issue of this *Journal*, Sir James Barrett, who was prominently involved in the campaign, was a demonstrable philosemite; he married the (non-Jewish) widow of a Jew, one of his three daughters married a Jew, another a man of Jewish birth, and during the 1930s he embraced the cause of refugees.<sup>127</sup>

Depicted by the overtly anti-conservative historian John Lonie as basically anti-Semitic was Sir Josiah Symon's private remark that 'the great honour conferred on one of the race of Israel cannot fail to impress Sir Isaac's compatriots in the financial world.'<sup>128</sup> But is that remark so reprehensible? Might it not merit the benefit of the doubt, being open to interpretation as Symon's way of consoling himself and other thwarted campaigners with the reflection that the appointment might advantage Australia by attracting overseas investment? Lonie goes on to concede that 'this sort of veiled antisemitism was very rare in any of the [Citizens'] League's public pronouncements on the appointment.'<sup>129</sup> Perhaps tellingly, he offers no further examples of these 'very rare' instances. He does imply what is often termed 'upper-class anti-Semitism' when he tells us that 'Charles Hawker and others of his class for the most part snubbed Isaacs in "a gentlemanly fashion".'<sup>130</sup> Perhaps Lonie's reason for so declaring is the recollection by Lilius Needham, Hawker's sister and biographer, that her brother, along with Bruce, Sir George Pearce, and Gullett 'all disapproved of the King's not having the real option in the choice of his representative, and to show their disapproval they refused to accept the hospitality of Sir Isaac Isaacs.'<sup>131</sup> Mrs. Needham certainly does not imply anti-Semitism. In March 1932, faced with press speculation, Bruce explained that he was invited to a dinner given by the Governor-General on the night of the opening of Parliament, and being unable to attend informed Isaacs' secretary 'in the ordinary courteous way.'<sup>132</sup>

It is, in any case, difficult to lay the taint of anti-Semitism upon Bruce. When head of the Australian delegation to the League of Nations in Geneva during the session 1933-34 he readily allowed an avowed 'political Zionist,' Rabbi D.I. Freedman of Perth, to act as the delegation's spokesman on Palestine. While Australian High Commissioner in London he urged upon the Lyons government in 1938 a 'bold' plan for 'the most practical and sympathetic solution' to the refugee crisis, and recommended that 30,000 persons needing to flee the Reich be admitted to this country over the subsequent three-year period.<sup>133</sup>

Pearce, a member of the Round Table, seems similarly blameless, as indicated below. Gullett, who raised the question of the appointee in Federal Parliament before Isaacs' name entered the picture, must not be confused with his son, H.B. Gullett MLA, who became notorious in 1946 for ugly remarks concerning the influx of Holocaust survivors into Australia.<sup>134</sup>

The campaigners against Isaacs' appointment were perhaps conscious that, since he happened to be a Jew, their stance might be misconstrued. Many hastened specifically to disavow *ad hominem* motives, and it seems reasonable to suppose that in so doing some at least were incidentally disclaiming anti-

Semitism. Their apparent failure to deny anti-Semitism explicitly is possibly attributable to a reluctance to raise gratuitously a delicate issue. To call attention to Isaacs' Jewishness, albeit with the sole purpose of disowning it as an element in their campaign, might well convey the very impression they were anxious to avoid. It would be both impolite and impolitic, with its potential to embarrass Scullin's nominee and to play into the hands of Labor, who would be enabled to claim that an unnecessary, even unsavoury, factor was being injected into the debate. Labor might be tempted to argue that since the campaigners were so obviously sensitive to the fact of Isaacs' Jewishness, in proceeding to announce that it mattered not to them they did protest too much.

The telegram sent by the Combined Council to the Dominions secretary in May 1930 stressing that the objection to Isaacs was not 'personal' typifies the way in which the campaigners, both in public and private, perhaps attempted to deal with a potentially damaging issue. The Citizen's League of South Australia, for instance, stated that 'no objection was taken to Sir Isaac Isaacs personally,' a fact emphasised by Bagot.<sup>135</sup> 'Let me say at once that I have absolutely nothing against Sir I. Isaacs on personal grounds,' J.R.L. Brinkley assured Barrett.<sup>136</sup> Harrison Moore noted that 'Comment or criticism on the constitutional aspects of the matter involves no reflection' on Isaacs' 'high qualities,' for 'his distinguished and honorable career, his ability, learning and experience, are too well-known in Australia to be the mark of any criticism.'<sup>137</sup> Opposing the appointment on constitutional grounds, the *Argus* conceded that

should a departure from custom be contemplated and an Australian be chosen, Sir Isaac Isaacs' claims are undeniable. After a distinguished career in his profession and in the public life of Victoria and, later, the Commonwealth, he was raised to the High Court Bench. Here, with the late Mr. Justice Higgins, he originated and developed the newer principles of constitutional interpretation the effect of which is to extend the powers of the Commonwealth. Hence he may be said to possess the Federal outlook to a peculiar degree.<sup>138</sup>

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, regretting Scullin's 'innovation' regarding the Governor-Generalship, noted the 'honour and esteem' in which Australians held Isaacs' public career. Criticism of 'the departure from an honoured and respected practice, preserved chiefly as a tie with the mother country, will be based upon quite impersonal grounds.'<sup>139</sup>

Of course, in all likelihood the campaigners were so accustomed to regarding Australian Jews such as Isaacs as fellow-citizens differing from the majority gentile population only in the private sphere of religion that to disavow anti-Semitism did not even cross their minds. Many of the campaigners were on personal terms with Jews; Eggleston had a Jewish wife. Jews were active within several of the societies which formed themselves into the Combined Council. Jewish members of the RES in Victoria and its predecessor body, the state RCI, included Sir John Monash (who before the First World War had, like Barrett, sat on the General Council of the Imperial Federation League of Australia), newspaper proprietor and former state parliamentarian Theodore Fink, prominent physician Dr. Felix Meyer, and Frederick Ormiston, a leading figure in the rubber industry whose uncle, the Reverend A.F. Ornstien, had been minister of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation. Dedicated Zionist

activist Dr. J. Leon Jona belonged; in 1934 he addressed the branch on the subject of Palestine, then under the British Mandate and felt by many to be destined to become a Dominion of the Empire. Imperial issues evidently interested several members of the prosperous Melbourne leather goods company Michaelis Hallenstein, one of the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation's first families. Company Chairman Frederick David Michaelis, his wife Esther Zillah, and his sister Alice were members of the RES, while his son Alan was President of the Empire Reciprocity Society. Abraham Adolph Joske also belonged to the RES in Victoria; Major Clive Joske held office in the Suva, Fiji branch.<sup>140</sup>

Moreover, one prominent Melbourne Jew found himself in the thick of the campaign against Isaacs' appointment. P.D. Phillips, of the law firm Phillips, Fox & Masel, founded by his grandfather, was retained by the Combined Council to brief Mitchell and Fullager.<sup>141</sup> As a member of the Young Nationalist Organisation he was known to established and rising non-Labor politicians of the day, and had studied law under Harrison Moore with whom he conceived a lifelong friendship. In 1932 he would join Harrison Moore, Eggleston, and several others belonging to a subcommittee of the Victorian branch of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) in contributing written submissions collectively entitled 'Why the Empire?' preparatory to the upcoming British Commonwealth Relations Conference in Toronto — a document which illuminates Australian imperialists' attitude to the British link.<sup>142</sup>

Needless to say, like Isaacs himself these Jewish imperialists exemplified the quintessential highly integrated Australian Jew, moving easily in gentile circles of a comparable milieu. Those who are tempted to assume that anti-Semitism lurked beneath the surface of the campaign against Isaacs' appointment should heed the presence of these Jewish pro-Empire activists. They should remember too that Monash — who incidentally had also been considered by Scullin's Cabinet as the only rival to Isaacs before it agreed to nominate the latter — was patron of the anti-Communist Empire Honour League (formed shortly before his death). Indeed many of the rightwing citizen's groups which mushroomed around 1930 — consisting of precisely the kind of people who deplored Isaacs' appointment — envisaged Monash as what in a representative comment the organ of the Young Nationalist Organisation described as 'the right man to mount above parties and panjamdrums and jingoism and the apostles of revolution, and reestablish Australia in the eyes of all decent Australians and the world' by seizing control from 'a Federal Ministry ... hanging on from day to day by the skin of its teeth, backed by a party which is disrupted by malcontents and militants and white-anted with selfishness and greed.'<sup>143</sup> Thus in December 1930, even as he prepared to fight Isaacs' appointment through the courts, Bagot was declaring that at its helm the country needed 'A man ... like Sir John Monash: someone who can use and direct the brains of others as well as his own.'<sup>144</sup>

Clearly, those who felt that way were not anti-Semitic, certainly as far as eminent Australian Jewish citizens were concerned. If any ethno-religious prejudice dwelt within Australian imperialist hearts, it was directed at Irish

Catholics, who as we have seen were widely feared to be set on 'cutting the painter' with the motherland. Indeed, at least one anti-Sinn Fein activist, the New South Wales MLA Sir Thomas Henley, specifically contrasted the attitude of Australian Catholics of Irish origin with that of Australian Jews. Vowing to prevent Australia becoming 'an Irish hell' he asked why Irish Catholics proved so bothersome when 'we have no trouble with the Jews ... or other sects?'<sup>145</sup> In 1933 this prominent lay Baptist attended a public rally in Sydney to protest Nazi anti-Semitism.<sup>146</sup>

It is worth remembering that, before squabbles over the precise nature of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the divisiveness engendered by successive White Papers led the British government — and Isaacs! — onto a collision course with the Zionist movement, Jewish national aspirations were welcomed by imperialists. The vulnerability of an area of the globe which served as Britain's gateway to India and beyond had long worried British strategists and politicians, and was of abiding concern to the British-derived communities in the southern seas. They feared particularly that the area would fall to Russia. The fact that, from the end of World War One, Palestine was out of Turkish hands and in those of colonisers well-disposed to Britain afforded people at 'Home' and in the Dominions enormous comfort.<sup>147</sup>

Reports of Nazi persecution affected Sir James Barrett deeply, and in 1933, like many fellow conservative imperialists in this country, he protested the treatment of Jews in Germany.<sup>148</sup> He had long argued that since Australia's 'development and production of raw material and food may become in the near future a matter which concerns other peoples' the country had a 'duty to admit European people capable of being Australianised, in such numbers as the country can absorb, provided that British migrants cannot be obtained in the required numbers.'<sup>149</sup> As President of the British Medical Association in Australia he was a staunch champion — in contrast to perhaps the bulk of his membership — of the admission of refugee physicians to Australia.<sup>150</sup> It has been mistakenly asserted that his signature was among those of 46 distinguished Victorians who signed the manifesto which appeared in the *Argus* (1 December 1939) supporting the Jewish Freeland League's proposal to form a refugee settlement of some 50,000 persons in the Kimberley region of Australia.<sup>151</sup> For some unaccountable reason he did not, for the proposal suited his view. Nevertheless, it is surely not without significance, when we consider the question of anti-Semitism in relation to the campaign against Isaacs' appointment, that among the 46 signatories — who included many representatives of Victoria's conservative elite — were people such as zoologist Dr Georgina Sweet, known to be active in imperial societies, including some stalwarts of the campaign like Charles Merrett, Herbert and Ivy Brookes, Frederic Eggleston, and Sir George Pearce. Signatories also included John Latham's brother, the late Alexander Leeper's son, and Sir David Rivett (brother-in-law to Ivy Brookes, who was, incidentally, Deakin's daughter). There were also a number of people connected to P.D. Phillips through his activities in the Victorian AIIA and elsewhere, such as Professor (Sir) K.H. Bailey, retailer G.J. Coles, stockbroker E.C. Dyason, lawyer E.L. Piesse, and

Professor (Sir) Ernest Scott. Phillips and his father were among the few Jews who put their names to the manifesto,<sup>152</sup> and perhaps he had a role in marshalling gentile signatories, an intriguing thought which awaits investigation.

## NOTES

- 1 This article is a spin-off from a study of Australian conservatism for the pursuit of which I was awarded a Research Fellowship within the Department of History at the University of Melbourne, 1991-93. I warmly thank the university, especially Professor Stuart Macintyre, for making the Fellowship possible, as well as the staff of the university's Archives, particularly Dr. Cecily Close and Ms. Sue Fairbanks, for their unfailing help and courtesy.
- 2 See L.F. Crisp, 'The Appointment of Sir Isaac Isaacs as Governor-General of Australia, 1930: J.H. Scullin's Account of the Buckingham Palace Interviews,' *Historical Studies*, 11, 1964, pp. 253-7; Zelman Cowen, *Isaac Isaacs*, Melbourne, 1967, pp. 191-206.
- 3 C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia*, v. 6, Melbourne, 1987, especially Chapters 7-13 inclusive; see also the works of John Lonie. Andrew Moore, and Stephen James cited in note 51 *infra*.
- 4 R.G. Menzies, 'A Foreign Policy for Australia,' speech before Victorian branch, Australian Institute of International Affairs, 2 November 1944, copy in Sir William Harrison Moore Papers, 11/1/10, University of Melbourne Archives (hereafter abbreviated UMA).
- 5 *Sydney Morning Herald*, n.d., quoted in Barrie Dyster, 'The Fate of Colonial Conservatism on the Eve of the Gold-Rush,' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* (hereafter abbreviated *JRAHS*), 54, part 4, 1968, p. 347.
- 6 J.G. Latham, *The Significance of the Peace Conference from an Australian Point of View*, Melbourne, 1920; cf. S.M. Bruce, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* (hereafter abbreviated *CPD*), v. 115, 1927, p. 63; R.G. Casey, *The World We Live In: a Series of Speeches on Current Events*, Melbourne, 1933, pp. 115-7; F.W. Eggleston, *Reflections of an Australian Liberal*, Melbourne, 1953, pp. 44-5.
- 7 F.W. Eggleston, *Reflections on Australian Foreign Policy*, London, 1957, p. 184; cf. Sir James Barrett to Lionel Curtis, 26 May 1925 and Barrett to L.S. Amery, 28 September 1925, Sir James Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 8 Deakin used the phrase in London's *Morning Post*, 4 December 1900. See A. Deakin, *Federated Australia: Selections from Letters to the Morning Post 1900-1910*, edited by J.A. La Nauze, Melbourne, 1968, p. 8. Several historians have mistakenly attributed it to W.K. (Sir Keith) Hancock, who used it in his *Australia*, London, 1930, p. 66. I believe that Hancock's interpretation of the phrase, followed by Russel Ward, 'Two Kinds of Australian Patriotism,' *Victorian Historical Magazine*, 41, no. 1, 1970, pp. 227, 242, to be erroneous. Deakin (op. cit., pp. 8, 11) specifically stated that 'imperial patriotism is not stronger than that which fires the attachment Australians feel to their native or adopted land.'
- 9 *CPD*, v. 14, 1903, p. 1797. Barton coined the term to emphasise that Australians had not 'forfeited ... any of the rights of Britishers at home, or any of our share in either the glory or the material prosperity of the Empire.' The term struck him as apt for nationalists working out their destiny within an imperial framework. Hancock, op. cit., p. 258 has lifted it out of context and misinterpreted it to imply Australian subordination to British interests.
- 10 *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute 1908-09*, London, 1909, p. 300; see also Josiah Symon, 'Australia and the Privy Council,' *Journal of the Society of Comparative Legislation*, 4, no. 4, 1922, pp. 137, 142; cf. his earlier views given in Alfred Deakin, *The Federal Story: the Inner History of the Federal Cause 1880-1900* ed. J.A. La Nauze, 2nd ed., Melbourne, 1963, p. 61.
- 11 Casey, op. cit., pp. 115-7; cf. his speech at the Summer School, Australian Institute of Political Science, 1938, in W.G.K. Duncan, ed., *Australia's Foreign Policy*, Sydney, 1938, pp. 58-9; cf. *Australian Statesman*, 29 March 1939.
- 12 P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction 1914-*

- 1990, London, 1973; P. Cain, 'British Economic Imperialism, 1919-1939: Towards a New Interpretation,' *Bulletin of Asian Studies* (Osaka), 4, 1994, pp. 233-54; W.D. Rubinstein, 'Britain's Elites in the Interwar Period, 1918-39,' *Contemporary British History* (forthcoming).
- 13 E.T. Crutchley, cited in Ian Hamill, *The Strategic Illusion*, Singapore, 1981, p. 233; see also *United Empire*, 26, no. 12, 1935, p. 670; Barrett to Curtis, 26 May 1925, Barrett Papers, UMA; Menzies, *Argus*, 21 May 1934.
- 14 See Richard Jebb, *Studies in Colonial Nationalism*, London, 1905.
- 15 W. Harrison Moore, *Colonial Nationalism: an Address ... 25th August, 1905*, Melbourne, 1905, p. 6.
- 16 *CPD*, v. 3, 1901, p. 5069.
- 17 *Woman's Paper*, 24 May 1907; cf. 24 May 1906 (this publication later became known as the *Woman*.)
- 18 *CPD*, v. 28, 1905, p. 3778, v. 24, 1904, p. 8342; see also, for example, *United Empire*, 1, no. 4, 1910, p. 249 (Reid).
- 19 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 June 1913.
- 20 See, for instance, *Sir Patrick Jennings, New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, 16, 1885, p. 94; *United Australia*, 1, no. 3, 1900, p. 24, 1, no. 4, 1900, p. 15; Conservative Overseas Bureau, *Conservatives and the Empire*, ed. Robert D. Milne, London, 1952.
- 21 Sir Charles Dilke, *Greater Britain*, London, 1868; idem., *The Problem of Greater Britain*, London, 1890; Sir John Colomb, *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain*, London, 1880; Sir John Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, London, 1883.
- 22 A. Patchett Martin, *Australia and the Empire*, Edinburgh, 1889, p. 212.
- 23 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 February, 4, 8 April 1887; *United Australia*, v. 1, no. 3, 1900, p. 24; v. 1, no. 5, 1901, p. 1; Patchett Martin, *ibid.*, p. 205; [Ernest Scott], 'Australia and the Empire,' *Round Table*, August 1911, pp. 497-500, reproduced in L.L. Robson, ed., *Australian Commentaries: Select Articles from the Round Table 1911-1942*, Melbourne, 1975, pp. 23-5.
- 24 *United Australia*, v. 1, no. 5, 1901, p. 2. Imperial Federationists such as Bruce Smith generally saw Australian federation as a prerequisite of a Federated Empire. See also the arguments of Queensland Premier Sir Thomas McIlwraith, *Brisbane Courier*, 17 March 1888; Edmund Barton, 'Great Britain's Attitude Towards the Australian Commonwealth,' *United Australia*, v. 1, no. 4, 1900, p. 5; J.W. Barrett, *The Twin Ideals: An Educated Commonwealth*, London, 1918, v. 2, pp. 262-3, 312-21; J.W. Barrett, Letter to *Argus*, dated 27 March 1917 (carbon copy), Barrett Papers, UMA. See also Sir William McMillan's views regarding governors-general, in Christopher Cunneen, *King's Men: Australia's Governors-General from Hopetoun to Isaacs*, North Sydney, 1983, pp. 34-5.
- 25 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 May 1912, quoted in M. French, 'The Ambiguity of Empire Day in New South Wales 1901-21: Imperial; Consensus or National Division?', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* (hereafter cited *AJPH*), 24, no. 1, 1978, p. 65.
- 26 Quoted in John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960*, Manchester, 1985, pp. 156-7.
- 27 M. French, 'One People, One Destiny' — a Question of Loyalty: the Origins of Empire Day in New South Wales,' *JRAHS*, 61, part 4, 1975, pp. 240-1; *Smith's Weekly*, 31 January 1920; *An Epic of Empire! "Southern Seas" Broadcast. Empire Day, 1933* (n.p., 1933), copy in Barrett Papers, UMA. F.B. Boyce, *Empire Day*, Sydney, 1921, wrongly dates the BEL's foundation in NSW as 1901. See also *Australian Country Life*, 24 May 1911. The Empire Day movement was founded by the Earl of Meath in 1894, but apparently not until 1916 was Empire Day officially recognised in Britain. For Hyman see *United Empire*, vol. 17, January 1926, p. 37.
- 28 *The Constitution of the British Empire League in Victoria* [Melbourne, 1920]; despite his name, Ryan was not a Catholic.
- 29 Royal Colonial Institute *Historical Sketch, Objects and Scope*, London, n.d. [ca. 1918]; *United Empire*, 17, no. 6, 1926, pp. 401-2; Royal Empire Society, *Annual Report 1930*, Melbourne, 1931: copy in Barrett Papers, UMA, which also contains material relating to

- the BEL in NSW and the Empire Defence Association. Neil, with G.J. Coles, later founded the Citizen's League of Victoria. For Tweddle see *ADB*, vol. 12, p. 298.
- 30 There is a great deal of material relating to most imperial and 'patriotic' societies in Barrett Papers, UMA, and to a lesser extent in Harrison Moore Papers, *ibid.*
- 31 Quoted in MacKenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-7.
- 32 See *A Link of Empire: an Outline of the Work Done by the Over-seas Club during the Present War*, London, 1916; *Herald* (Melbourne), 24 September 1934. The branch in Victoria was known as a 'league'; its successive presidents were Lord Somers and Sir William Irvine.
- 33 Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 34 E.M. Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-American relations during World War I*, Cambridge, 1993.
- 35 J.G. Latham, *Australia and the British Empire*, London, 1929, p. 7.
- 36 Quoted in *United Empire*, 21, no. 6, 1930, p. 336; cf. 15, no. 2, 1924, p. 110, v. 23, no. 11, 1932, p. 688; see also, for example, Senator Sir Robert Best, *Vigilant*, 17 March 1921, p. 6.
- 37 *People*, 8 February 1918, p. 6; National Federation, *Political Platforms, Constitution and Rules*, Melbourne, 1926, p. 1; Graeme Starr, *Liberal Party*, p. 37.
- 38 *Young Nationalist*, 1 June 1931; cf. *Australian Statesman*, 20 March 1937.
- 39 *Ibid.*, April 1943, p. 1; T. Matthews, 'The All for Australia League,' *Labour History*, 17, 1970, pp. 136-47; J. McCarthy, ' "All for Australia": Some Right-Wing Responses to the Depression in New South Wales, 1929-1932,' *JRAHS*, 57, part 2, 1971, pp. 160-71.
- 40 *Australian Quarterly*, March 1930, pp. 5, 7; A. Patience, 'By Passing Liberalism: Constitutionalism in Australian Politics,' in G. Duncan, ed., *Critical Essays in Australian Politics*, Port Melbourne, 1978, pp. 97-113. The Citizen's League of South Australia emerged from the Adelaide Constitutional Club.
- 41 *Woman's Paper*, 10 October 1905, 24 May 1906. See also *Woman*, 1 June 1931; Mrs. C.E. Boliitho, Organising Secretary, AWNL, to Dorothy Penberthy, 13 May 1930; same to same, 9 March 1931; Letter (unsigned, probably by Miss Penberthy) to Mrs. Couchman, 7 March 1931, Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 42 *People*, 26 May 1917.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 26 April, 12 December 1917, 10 April 1918; Loyalist League of Victoria, *The Menace of Mannix and Co.*, Melbourne, n.d. [1919]; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 July 1920. The *Vigilant* (organ of the Victorian Protestant Federation) was replete with pro-Empire, anti-Catholic references.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 20 June 1922.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 17 March 1921; cf. *Sydney Morning Herald* (editorial), quoted *ibid.*, 30 June 1921.
- 46 Loyalist League of Victoria, *The Menace of an Irish Republic*, Melbourne, 1920, p. 5.
- 47 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 April 1931, regarding the adoption by the Easter Labor Conference of a three-year plan for the complete socialisation of industry.
- 48 A. Grenfell Price, 'The Emergency Committee of South Australia and the Origin of the Premiers' Plan 1931-2,' *South Australiana*, March 1978, p. 40; *idem.*, *The Progress of Communism*, Adelaide, 1931, p. 22; see also his speech, *Adelaide Advertiser*, 17 December 1931; cf. *Australian Statesman*, 29 March 1939.
- 49 *Vigilant*, 29 January, 5 February, 4, 18 March, 10 June, 1, 15, 26 August, 16, 30 December 1920, 20 July 1922; letter from Sir Charles Rosenthal (who was not Jewish), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 1920; *Argus*, 7 May 1921, cited in John Schauble, 'Right-Wing Militancy in Australia: the Rise of the League of National Security, 1930-1932,' B.A. Hons. thesis, Dept. of History, University of Melbourne, 1979, p. 5.
- 50 *Argus*, 8 June 1932.
- 51 See Matthews, *op. cit.*; McCarthy, *op. cit.*; William Murchison to Barrett, 18 February 1932, Barrett Papers, UMA; *The Empire Honour League*, Melbourne, 1931; Eric Campbell, *The Rallying Point: My Story of the New Guard*, Melbourne, 1965, p. 6; Keith Amos, *The New Guard Movement 1931-1935*, Melbourne, 1976, pp. 19, 34; Andrew Moore, *The Secret*

- Army and the Premier: Conservative Paramilitary Organisations in New South Wales 1930–32*, Sydney, 1989; Michael Cathcart, *Defending the National Tuckshop: Australia's Secret Army Intrigue of 1931*, Fitzroy, Vic., 1988, pp. 153–82; Schauble, op. cit., pp. 4–5, 35, 132, 216–7; R.N. Wait, 'Reactions to Demonstrations and Riots in Adelaide, 1928 to 1932,' unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1973, p. 167; John T. Lonie, 'Conservatism and Class in South Australia during the Depression Years 1929–1934,' unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1973, p. 132; Stephen A. James, 'God, Mammon and Mussolini: the Ideology and Policy of the Citizens' League of South Australia, 1930–1934,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, v. 37, no. 1, 1991, pp. 39–60; A. Grenfell Price, 'The Emergency Committee of South Australia'; *Citizen's League: Formation, Aims and Objects*, Adelaide, 1931; *The 'Red Peril' in Australia*, Melbourne, n.d. (ca. 1937), *Sane Democracy*, March 1937, p. 14.
- 52 Quoted in W.J. Hudson and M.P. Sharp, *Australian Independence: Colony to Reluctant Kingdom*, Melbourne, 1988, p. 88.
- 53 Harrison Moore Papers, UMA: 11/6/21, 'Summary of Round Table in Australia 1910–1935'; 11/6/2/6, 'Memoranda on Functions and Objectives of Round Table (1933)'; 11/6/2/8, 'Principles underlying Round Table organisation'; Leonie Foster, *High Hopes: the Men and Motives of the Australian Round Table*, Melbourne, 1986; see also Robson, op. cit.
- 54 CPD, v. 130, 1931, pp. 4062, 4064; Sir Owen Dixon, 'The Crown and the Commonwealth,' *United Empire*, v. 49, no. 5, 1953, p. 179; K.H. Bailey, 'Australia and the Statute of Westminster,' *Australian Rhodes Review*, April 1934, p. 122. The committee was known officially as the Conference on Domestic Legislation and Merchant Shipping Legislation.
- 55 Bailey, op. cit., p. 120; see also Bailey to Barrett, 1 May 1936, Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 56 Stephen Mills, *Do You Realise that you are in danger of losing your British Citizenship?*, Melbourne, 1932, reprinted from the *Argus*, 15 February 1932; *The Statute of Westminster vs British Citizenship*, Melbourne [1936]; correspondence, *Argus*, 6 November 1936; *Age*, 29, 30 October, 3 November 1936; Sydenham to Barrett, n.d. [ca. 1931], Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 57 F.W. Eggleston, 'The Problem of the British Commonwealth,' *Nineteenth Century*, May 1922, pp. 746–7.
- 58 Hudson and Sharp, op. cit., p. 91; see also *Argus*, 4 December 1930; Latham, *Australia and the Commonwealth*, p. 20; CPD, v. 115, 1927, p. 66; v. 127, 1930, p. 1073; v. 133, 1932, pp. 40, 47; Harrison Moore Papers, 6/1/20 and 6/2/4, UMA.
- 59 Quoted in Cunneen, op. cit., p. 173.
- 60 Cunneen, op. cit., pp. 173–4; Cowen, op. cit., p. 199.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 CPD, v. 123, 1930, p. 705.
- 63 *Argus*, 23 April 1930; see also *ibid.*, 20 May 1930 (W.M. Hughes' opinion); Cowen, op. cit., pp. 192–3.
- 64 'The Insolence of Office' (editorial), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1930; cf. 'An Australian Governor-General?' (editorial), *ibid.*, 24 May 1930; 'A Pledge of Loyalty' (editorial), *Argus*, 3 May 1930. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Ray Duplain for sending copies of these articles to me in Wales, and for other pertinent information.
- 65 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, v. 10, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 486–7. Merrett, who was knighted in 1934, had in 1910 been involved in the formation of the People's Liberal Party (Vic.).
- 66 Charles Merrett to Sir Isaac Isaacs, 22 January 1935, Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 67 Reginald G. Wilson to Alfred Frood, 4 December 1933; Frood to Wilson, 9 January 1934, Barrett Papers, UMA. For the BEU in New South Wales see J.O. Holt to Secretary (unnamed), Empire Day Movement, 5 December 1932, *ibid.*
- 68 J.R. Farrin Webb to Dorothy Penberthy, 4 June 1930; Farrin Webb to Chairman [presumably Merrett], 27 August 1930; Dorothy Penberthy to W.G. Layton, 1 September 1932, Barrett Papers, UMA; letter from Merrett, *Argus*, 23 August 1930.

- 69 Merrett to Imperial Conference, 30 August 1930, Barrett Papers, UMA; see also *Times Weekly Edition*, 1 May 1930: the RES, Victoria, was 'gravely concerned' about the nomination. Miss Penberthy was Hon. Sec. of the Empire Reciprocity League and also, it seems, of the BEL.
- 70 *The British Association*, n.p., n.d. [ca. 1925]. See also G. Gordon Pearce to Barrett, 8 February 1932, unsigned letter to Barrett, 27 August 1933, and Tom E. Stapleton, Hon. Sec., South African Soldiers' Association of Victoria to Barrett, 9 November 1930, Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 71 Beam Wireless Telegram (punctuation added), 8 May 1930, *ibid.*
- 72 *Memorandum issued by the Council of Combined Empire Societies regarding the appointment of Australians as Governor-General* [Melbourne, 1930], *ibid.*
- 73 Letter from Merrett to President and members, Imperial Conference, 30 August 1930, *ibid.*
- 74 'Memorandum from Council of Combined Empire Societies,' n.d. [1930], *ibid.*; Beam Wireless Telegram, Merrett to Imperial Conference [30 October 1930], *ibid.*
- 75 *Argus*, 18 June 1930; Sir James Barrett, *A Reformed Imperial Conference*, Melbourne, n.d. [ca. 1932].
- 76 *Age, Argus*, 9 September 1930; 'Memorandum from Council of Combined Empire Societies,' n.d. [1930], Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 77 *Argus*, 22 September 1930.
- 78 *Ibid.* Merrett was, of course, the Royal Agricultural Society's President. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Malcolm Turnbull for ascertaining for me the location of the Wattle tea rooms, and for other help.
- 79 Letter from 'Union Jack,' *ibid.*, 30 September 1930.
- 80 Letter from Merrett, *ibid.*, 3 October 1930.
- 81 'Number of Signatures on the 13th October 1930,' typescript memorandum, Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 82 Unsigned letter to Barrett, 27 August 1933, *ibid.*; letter from Mrs. C.E. Bolitho, *Argus*, 3 October 1930; 'Record of Signatures received up to Noon, Thursday, 13th Nov. 1930, typescript memorandum, Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 83 Merrett to Captain Macdonald, Military Secretary to Acting Governor-General, 4 December 1930, Barrett Papers, UMA; see also letters from F.C.W., Middle Brighton, *Argus*, 22 September 1930, and from 'Australian,' Camberwell, *ibid.*, 4 October 1930 regarding the poor availability of the petition for would-be signatories.
- 84 Stamfordham informed Scullin that 'The King has received many letters and petitions vehemently and strongly protesting' against the appointment. Crisp, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
- 85 See, for instance, Brinkley to Barrett, 6 February 1931, Barrett Papers, UMA. John Rowland Lloyd Brinkley was based at a stud farm in Kojonup during the 1920s. His imperial activities remain obscure.
- 86 Hastings C. Reid to Dorothy P. Penberthy [ca. 1930], Barrett Papers, UMA
- 87 H.H. Turner to Dorothy P. Penberthy, 12 September 1930, *ibid.*
- 88 K. Lilius Needham, *Charles Hawker: Soldier, Pastoralist, Statesman*, Adelaide, 1969; *Citizen's League*, *op. cit.*; R.N. Wait, 'Reactions to Demonstrations and Riots in Adelaide, 1928 to 1932,' unpub. M.A. thesis, Department of History, University of Adelaide, 1973, pp. 165-66, 209; Lonie, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
- 89 AAP report, *Argus*, 6 November 1930.
- 90 Tom Stapleton, Hon. Sec., South African Soldiers' Association of Victoria, to Barrett, 9 November 1930, Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 91 A.B. Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions*, Oxford, 1928, p. xiii; see also, for example, Harrison Moore Papers 6/1/20 and 6/2/4, UMA.
- 92 'The Insolence of Office,' *Sydney Morning Herald* (editorial), 25 April 1930. See also Commonwealth of Australia. *Imperial Conference 1930. Summary of Proceedings*, Canberra [1931]. Copy in Harrison Moore Papers, 6/2/21, UMA.
- 93 Letter from Merrett, *Argus*, 18 October 1930; speech, Irvine, Lord Mayor's Luncheon, *ibid.*, 10 October 1930.

- 94 Cowen, op. cit., pp. 204 (re Birdwood), 199 (quotation citing Harold Nicolson, *King George the Fifth: His Life and Reign*, London, 1952, p. 482).
- 95 *Herald* (Melbourne), 4 December 1930. The leader of the campaign in W.A. lamented that the nomination lacked 'in courtesy and consideration [to] the Motherland whose per capita payment towards maintenance of the Empire [is] twice ours.' Brinkley to Barrett, 6 February 1931, Barrett Papers, UMA. Scullin had formally submitted Isaacs' name to the King for approval on 1 December; the announcement's wording showed the King's displeasure, Crisp, op. cit., p. 257; Robert Garran, *Prosper the Commonwealth*, Sydney, 1958, p. 323.
- 96 CPD, v. 127, 1930, pp. 1073-4.
- 97 Gavin Souter, *Lion and Kangaroo. Australia: 1901-1919. The Rise of a Nation*, Sydney, 1978 (c. 1976), p. 313.
- 98 Stephen Alomes, *A Nation at Last?, The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*, Sydney, 1988, p. 87; Cowen, op. cit., p. 205, citing *Age*, 4 December 1930; cf. James, op. cit., p. 42.
- 99 CPD, v. 123, 1930, p. 705.
- 100 See also Crisp, op. cit., p. 254.
- 101 CPD, v. 127, 1930, p. 1075.
- 102 *Argus*, 10 October 1930; cf. *ibid.*, 18 October 1930 (Merrett), 4 February 1930 (Sir Edward Mitchell), *Age*, 29 September 1930 (Harrison Moore), Eggleston to Harrison Moore, 12 June 1914, Harrison Moore Papers, UMA; *Memorandum issued by the Council of Combined Empire Societies*, op. cit.; Barrett had written to the *Argus*, 27 March 1914, concerning the nomination of a Governor for Victoria: 'There is no doubt that if the right type of Australian citizen was appointed he would discharge his duties admirably.' Copy *ibid.* Barrett believed that Isaacs' 'commission was signed by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, Mr. Scullin, who is not the Secretary of State, and whose signature is meaningless.' Sir James Barrett, *The Substance of an address ... at the Pleasant Sunday afternoon held at Wesley Church on Sunday, April 3rd, 1932*, Melbourne, 1932, p. 2.
- 103 *West Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 1931, p. 4204.
- 104 Needham, op. cit., p. 107.
- 105 Letter from Barrett, *Argus*, 18 June 1930; letter from Miss Penberthy (probably drafted by Barrett) to the editors of the four Melbourne dailies regarding the appointment of a state governor but reflecting attitudes towards Isaacs' appointment, 2 June 1933, typescript ms, Barrett Papers, UMA, printed in *Argus*, 3 June 1933, reprinted in *Vigilant*, 14 June 1933. See also J.W. Barrett, *Imperial Federation: the Educational Factor*, Melbourne, 1910, pp. 6-7; *idem.*, letter, *Argus*, 28 March 1914; Barrett to Lord Milner, 31 January 1919, Barrett Papers, UMA
- 106 [Barrett], untitled leaflet regarding the appointment of state governors, issued by RCI, Victoria, Melbourne, 1925; Barrett's toast to 'state governors,' Empire Day 'Southern Seas' broadcast, *United Empire*, 23, no. 8, 1933, p. 460; Dorothy P. Penberthy to Sir Stanley Argyle, 29 July 1932, and to Senator S. Sampson, Prime Minister Lyons, all state premiers, and the prime ministers of Canada, South Africa, and New Zealand, Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 107 CPD, 127, 1930, pp. 1074-5; see also *Memorandum Issued by the Council of Combined Empire Societies*, op. cit.
- 108 Original draft, [Status of Dominions since 1919], untitled, n.d. Harrison Moore Papers, UMA.
- 109 [Harrison Moore], article written ca. June 1930 for *Christian Science Monitor*, Harrison Moore Papers 6/2/4, UMA.
- 110 *Ibid.*
- 111 Irvine, speech, RES, Victoria, in *United Empire*, 21, no. 8, 1930, pp. 440-1.
- 112 Symon, speech, RES, South Australia, *ibid.*, 22, no. 8, 1931, p. 458.
- 113 CPD, v. 172, 1942, p. 1453 (during debate regarding Statute of Westminster); see also Barrett, letter, *Times*, London, 17 February 1931, copy in Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 114 See, for instance, *Memorandum issued by the Council of Combined Empire Societies*, op. cit.; *Argus*, 11 September 1930 (letters from Merrett), 4 October 1930 (letter from

- E.M. Curtis, Organising Secretary, Women's Section, Victorian Country Party); *Age*, 12 September 1930 (letter from Merrett; *Sane Democracy*, 1, no. 1, December 1930, p. 5; *Citizen's League*, p. 13; Lonie, op.cit., pp. 237-8; R.B. Stuckey to J.C. Farrin Webb, 13 June 1930 and Beam Wireless Telegram from Merrett to Dominions Secretary, 8 May 1930, Barrett Papers, UMA; letter from J.R.L. Brinkley, *West Australian*, 19 March 1934.
- 115 *Australian Statesman*, 1 July 1931.
- 116 *CPD*, v. 127, 1930, p. 1075.
- 117 Ernest E. Keep to Barrett, 24 August 1930, Barrett Papers, UMA. Keep belonged to the RES, The Royal Society of St. George, and the Navy League, indicating an overlap in membership between the societies. I owe this information to Dr. Ray Duplain.
- 118 Cowen, op. cit., pp. 196-7; *Citizen's League*, p. 13; Needham, op. cit., p. 107; *Argus*, 20 January 1931.
- 119 *Herald* (Melbourne), 4 December 1930.
- 120 Eggleston and Latham were on the Council of the state BEL: see *The British Empire League* (pamphlet, n.p., n.d.); Barrett to Phillips, Fox, Masel (law firm), 5 February 1931; 'The Australian Governor-General,' undated memorandum, typescript ms. [ca. January 1931]; J.R.L. Brinkley to Barrett, 6 February 1931; Royal Empire Society, Victorian branch, *Annual Report 1930*, Melbourne 1931, all in Barrett Papers, UMA; Symon to Sir Edward Wallington, 18 December 1930, National Library of Australia (NLA) MS 1736; see also *United Empire*, 21, no. 8, 1930, p. 441; *Argus*, 26 May, 10, 18 October, 6 November, 4 December 1930, 10, 12, 13, 14, 20 January 1931; *Sun-News Pictorial*, 10 January 1931; *Age*, 12 January 1931; *Sun*, 14 January 1931.
- 121 *Argus*, 15, 19 January 1931. A Citizen's League policy statement called for a review of the Federal Constitution to consider, *inter alia*, the appointment of High Court justices to the Governor-Generalship. Lonie, op. cit., pp. 238-9.
- 122 Some intransigent campaigners believed that in order to make his appointment as Governor-General valid Isaacs should have resigned that office before resigning the Chief Justiceship, and then be reappointed to the former position. *Argus*, 19 January 1931.
- 123 Letter from Dorothy Penberthy, *The Press* (Christchurch, NZ), 3 December 1930; Barrett, *The Substance of an address*, p. 2; Untitled, printed memorandum by Royal Empire Society, Victoria, signed by Barrett [Melbourne, 1931], Barrett Papers, UMA; J.W.C. Downs to Dorothy Penberthy, 24 January 1931, *ibid.*; Denison speech, *United Empire*, 24, no. 8, August 1933, pp. 458-9.
- 124 Quoted in Souter, *ibid.*, p. 313; see also, for instance, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 February 1947, cited in Cowen, op. cit., p. 205.
- 125 Sir Zelman Cowen, 'My Life as an Australian Jew,' in *A Portion of Praise: A Festschrift to honour John S. Levi*, Melbourne, 1997, p. 279; Cowen, op.cit., p. 207.
- 126 Cowen, 'My Life as an Australian Jew,' p. 280.
- 127 See Hilary L. Rubinstein, 'Sir James Barrett (1862-1945): Australian Philo-Semite,' *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, 12, part 1, 1993, pp. 91-100.
- 128 Lonie, op. cit., p. 238.
- 129 *Ibid.*
- 130 *Ibid.*
- 131 Needham, op. cit., p. 107.
- 132 *CPD*, v. 133, 1932, p. 486.
- 133 *Jewish Weekly News* (Melbourne), 25 January 1935; Bruce to Lyons, 21 November 1938, quoted in Michael Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933-1948*, Sydney, 1985, p. 144.
- 134 *Ibid.*, pp. 302-4.
- 135 *Citizen's League*, p. 13; *Argus*, 15 January 1931; Miss S. Graves to Bagot, Bagot ms 1186, NLA, quoted by Lonie, op. cit., p. 216.
- 136 Brinkley to Barrett, 6 February 1931, Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 137 *Herald* (Melbourne), 4 December 1930.
- 138 'An Australian Governor-General' (editorial), *Argus*, 24 April 1930.
- 139 'The Governor-Generalship' (editorial), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 December 1930.

- 140 I am most grateful to Beverley Davis for background information about some of these persons. My list is incomplete: for interwar members of imperial societies, especially in Victoria, see Barrett Papers, UMA. Other Jewish or possibly Jewish members of such societies which I noticed were J.A. Levy (Victoria League in Victoria), L.J. Levy, Dr M.M. Perl, L.S. Benjamin (Swanston Street), and barrister Dr A.D. Ellis. Mrs Joseph Levi (Kate, née Davis, sister of Boer War hero Major Walter 'Karri' Davis) was an office-holder in the AWNL; in 1933 her son Rupert performed in an Empire-themed tableau. A Mrs Lipshut, 134 Punt Road, Windsor, Vic., sold flags for Empire Day in nearby Chapel Street, Prahran, and environs. Unsigned letter to J. Romanis, Town Clerk, Prahran, n.d., ca. 1933, Barrett Papers, UMA. Rabbi Dr Joseph Abrahams was an executive committee member of the memorial fund which erected a statue of King Edward VII in the Victoria Gardens, St Kilda Road. *Memorial to His Late Majesty King Edward VII ...*, Melbourne, 1920. S.S. Kohan, Premier of the National Speakers' Association, was (like Coleman P. Hyman) a leading member of the BEL in NSW; members included Mr Benjamin (President, Master Retailers' Association) and a Mr. Michaelson. *Smith's Weekly*, 31 January 1920. A.D. Benjamin had an article in *United Empire*, vol. 13, no. 10, 1922, pp. 625-7.
- 141 Barrett to Phillips, Fox, Masel, 'Re Counsels' Opinions,' 5 February 1931, Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 142 Letter to the author from P.D. Phillips' daughter Pat (Mrs. David) Corbett, 30 November 1993; 'British Commonwealth Relations Conference, Memorandum on Why the Empire,' transcript circulated by Chatham House, London, April 1933, Harrison Moore Papers 6/1/8, UMA. I sincerely thank Mrs. Corbett for her very helpful letter and Dr Archie Ellis (W.A.) for further information concerning Phillips, who in 1926 became a foundation member of the Victorian branch of the Australian Group of the Institute of Pacific Relations. Menzies, an admirer, apparently urged him to embark on a federal political career.
- 143 Michael Cathcart, *Defending the National Tuckshop: Australia's Secret Army Intrigue of 1931*, Fitzroy, Vic., 1988, pp. 153-82; Empire Honour League, *Annual Report, 1933*, Barrett Papers, UMA. *Young Nationalist*, 1 April 1931: the paper did not suggest who the requisite leader should be.
- 144 'A Dictator Needed,' draft letter to *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 5 September 1930, Citizens' League of South Australia Papers, NLA, MS 1186, quoted in James, op. cit., p. 390; Bagot, Address to Public Meeting, 11 December 1930, Citizens' League Papers, NLA, cited *ibid.*, p. 47. 'See *United Empire...*' For the involvement of a Colonel C.A.K. Cohen see Moore, op. cit., p. 7. See *United Empire*, vol. 22, no. 11, 1931, pp. 585-6, for an obituary of Monash.
- 145 *Vigilant*, 5 February 1920.
- 146 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 May 1933. Several interwar supporters of the Protestant Federation and/or of imperial societies, including Sir Herbert Phillips (who was on the Council of the RES in South Australia), Senator Sir Robert Best, E.C.V. Broughton, Canon Boyce, Sir David Hennessy, and Auguste De Bavay (a Vice-President of the BEL in Victoria) W.A. Watt MLA and the Reverend W.H. Fitchett, who were on the General Council of the Imperial Federation League of Australia, donated to the relief of oppressed Jews in Russia and/or sympathised with Jews under Nazism. More work needs to be done, but I get the impression that (a) anti-Semitism seldom surfaced in imperialists' proclaimed fear of Bolshevism despite the perceived prominence of Jews in the Soviet leadership; (b) in their frequent attacks on American films (which they regarded as tasteless, even immoral and corroding British culture) interwar imperialists rarely if ever gave voice to anti-Semitism despite Hollywood's dominance by Jewish moguls and the fact that the Australian distributor of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, N.B. (later Sir Bernard) Freeman was a Jew. (Mrs Leah Kloot, also Jewish, was Senior Vice-President, Children's Cinema Council, concerned with standards, *Argus*, 30 November 1932.)
- 147 See, for instance, *Austral-Briton*, July 1919, pp. 5, 17.
- 148 Rubinstein, 'Sir James Barrett,' p. 95.
- 149 Royal Colonial Institute, Victoria, *Annual Report 1925* [written by Barrett, President], copy in Barrett Papers, UMA.

- 150 Rubinstein, 'Sir James Barrett,' pp. 97-99.
- 151 See *ibid.*, pp. 96-7. For an exchange on Judaism between Barrett and 'Leila' [Mrs Benjamin Marks?], 109 George Street, East Melbourne, n.d., ca. 1942, see Barrett Papers, UMA.
- 152 *Argus*, 1 December 1939. The Brookes' and Eggleston might also have been recruited by Phillips, see also note 29 *supra* (re Coles). For Brookes' contacts with Pearce, Piesse, and Watt, among others, see Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-5. There were also noted imperialists, such as Sir Thomas Bavin, Sir Marcus Clarke, (Sir) David Maughan KC, and Sir Frederick McMaster, among the 55 signatories to the pro-Kimberley manifesto in NSW. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 April 1940.

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## THE JEWISH COUNCIL, COMMUNISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL

*Philip N. Mendes*

Over the past 30 years, a plethora of authors — some sympathetic and some hostile — have examined the history and politics of the controversial Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism.<sup>1</sup>

With few exceptions, this extensive historiography has concentrated on the Jewish Council's alleged apologia for Soviet anti-Semitism, and the extent of the Council's links with the broader Australian political Left. Authors hostile to the Council have argued that the Council was strongly influenced (if not directly controlled) by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA).<sup>2</sup> In contrast, authors sympathetic to the Council have suggested that its relationship with the broader non-Jewish Left was more complex and less black and white than has been suggested by its political opponents.<sup>3</sup>

Much of this debate has also addressed the question of divided loyalties — Jewish versus Communist. Authors have expressed varying views on the extent to which the Council prioritised political loyalties on some issues (Soviet anti-Semitism) and Jewish loyalties on other issues (non-Left sources of anti-Semitism).

Surprisingly in the context of this debate around divided loyalties, little or no attention has been paid to the Jewish Council's views on Zionism and the State of Israel.<sup>4</sup> This is remarkable since historically the Soviet Union's antipathy towards Zionism and Jewish nationalism has been one of the key sources of tension between Jews and the political Left. The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to redress this omission, and to identify the major components of the Jewish Council's views on Zionism and Israel. It is hoped that this essay will also shed light on the question of broader Australian Left attitudes to Israel during this period, and provide further information on the nature of the Council's links with the CPA.

The general argument advanced in this essay is that the Jewish Council (with some obvious exceptions) espoused a broadly pro-Zionist and pro-Israel viewpoint throughout its history. This contrasts strongly with the Council's total subservience to the CPA and the Soviet Union on the question of Soviet anti-Semitism. The reason for the Council's independence on this issue would appear to be that the question of Zionism and Israel rated only minimally on the Communist agenda during this period.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, unqualified support for the Soviet Union's internal policies (including its persecution of Soviet Jews) was central to non-Jewish and Jewish Left identity. Put somewhat differently, pro-Israel views were generally acceptable to the broad communist and pro-communist movement from 1948–1967, whereas views critical of Soviet anti-Semitism were not.

This essay (i) considers the period from 1945–1952 during which the Soviet Union maintained relatively friendly relations with the Zionist movement and the State of Israel; (ii) briefly analyses the impact of the anti-Zionist show trials of 1952–1953; (iii) considers the period from Stalin's death in 1953 until the 1967 Six Day War during which Soviet/Israeli relations became progressively more and more hostile; (iv) briefly considers the impact of the Six Day War and its aftermath; and (v) draws some conclusions about the impact of the CPA and the Soviet Union on Council policies.

As early as 1945, the Jewish Council expressed its support for a Jewish National Home in Palestine. A pamphlet by Evelyn Rothfield, the information officer of the Jewish Council, called for free Jewish immigration into Palestine, and the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth.<sup>6</sup> A further pamphlet issued by the Council in March 1947 firmly attacked the British White Paper on immigration, and called for Arab-Jewish friendship and cooperation.<sup>7</sup>

According to Allan Leibler (who views the Council as solely a 'communist front' organisation), the Council displayed little, if any, support for Zionism and a Jewish State during this 1945–1947 period. He suggests that the Council shared the Soviet Union's position in favour of a bi-national Jewish-Arab State. However, Leibler provides little evidence to support his assertion other than a reference to a critical statement by a Council activist Isaac Gust (known to be a communist and virulent anti-Zionist)<sup>8</sup>, which was almost certainly unrepresentative of the Council as a whole. In addition, many Left Zionist groups including Hashomer Hatzair and the small but influential Ihud association also favoured a bi-national state at that time.<sup>9</sup> This position was hardly exclusive to the Soviet Union.

The Council strongly supported the creation of Israel in 1948, and played a key role in promoting Australian sympathy for the fledgling state. The Council set up a joint committee with the Zionist Federation of Australia and the Kadimah to organise pro-Israel broadcasts, newspaper articles and other publications, and public addresses. In addition, the Council organised a mass pro-Israel communal rally to demonstrate the Australian Jewish community's solidarity with Israel.<sup>10</sup>

The Council also organised a statement in favour of immediate Australian recognition of Israel which was signed by the leading civil libertarian Brian Fitzpatrick and 25 other prominent left and communist figures including Jim Cairns, Manning Clark, Clarrie O'Shea, Jim Healy and Vance Palmer.<sup>11</sup> The support granted by the Australian Left towards Israel reflected the friendly relations between the Soviet Union and Israel at that time.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, this friendship was not to last.

During 1949, some tension arose within the Council over statements made by prominent communal personality Paul Morawetz urging all Jews to emigrate to Israel. The Council denounced Morawetz's maximalist Zionist views as defeatist, arguing that Jews have the right to live and settle anywhere they may wish.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the Council seems to have maintained positive relations with the mainstream Zionist movement at least in the short term. ZFA President Nathan Jacobson remained active in the Council,<sup>14</sup> and statements were issued supporting the Israeli position on Christian holy places

in Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup> The Council also engaged the well-known philo-semitic Reverend Burgoyne Chapman, author of *The Compleat Anti-Semite*<sup>16</sup> to deliver a series of pro-Israel lectures.<sup>17</sup>

As early as 1949, relations between Israel and the Soviet Union began to cool due to Israel's pro-western stance.<sup>18</sup> According to Leibler, this was reflected in a series of statements critical of Israel made by Council personalities.<sup>19</sup> However, the views quoted by Leibler (which did reflect the Soviet line) were all expressed by CPA members who may have been active within the Council, but almost certainly did not speak on behalf of the Council.<sup>20</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the Council retained its broadly pro-Israel (and pro-Soviet) policy until its divided loyalties were directly challenged by Stalin's show trials.

During 1952–53, the infamous Stalinist show trials of Jewish communist functionaries and doctors took place in Czechoslovakia and the USSR.<sup>21</sup> The Jewish Council's refusal to condemn these trials and to acknowledge their anti-Semitic intent led to their complete isolation from the mainstream Jewish community.

What is of most interest here is that the Council argued that the trials were anti-Zionist (rather than anti-Semitic in nature), and that this was a supposedly defensible policy. According to the Council: 'An Executive sub-committee was set up to consider all the available evidence, including reports of the Czechoslovakian trial. This committee, consisting of lawyers as well as laymen, came back with the conclusion that there was no evidence of Government-inspired anti-Semitism in the Eastern European countries, although it was evident that Zionism was in disfavour there. Of course it is true that Zionism was regarded as an ideology hostile to those States, but that does not amount to anti-Semitism any more than hostility to Slovakian nationalism can be regarded as evidence of a bias against the Slovak people.'

The Council suggested that the campaign against Zionism reflected a concern about 'spies and traitors' which however unjust was not dissimilar to anti-communist campaigns being waged in the western world. The Council also condemned the role played by 'many Israeli leaders' in contributing to the 'mass of hysterical and distorted matter' concerning the 'alleged' anti-Semitic campaign in the Eastern Bloc. However, praise was levelled at Mr Eliashiv, the recalled Israeli Ambassador to Moscow, who had 'deplored the sensationalist statements and doubted the truth of charges levelled by certain Israeli politicians'.<sup>22</sup>

On returning from a trip to Moscow, Council functionary Norman Rothfield went even further, suggesting that Israel was willingly being used by the USA as part of a potential war base against the Soviet Union. However, Rothfield added that the large number of Israeli signatures to an international peace petition suggested that 'the heart of Israel was sound'.<sup>23</sup> Nor did Rothfield openly support the communist claim that all Zionists were acting as branches of the US intelligence service.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, it was hardly surprising that the Zionist Federation of Australia denounced the Council for defending the Soviet Bloc's 'stamping out of all Zionist organisations and support for the government of Israel'.<sup>25</sup>

The Council's apparent endorsement of Soviet 'anti-Zionism' coincided with local communist attacks on Zionism. In a speech which shocked Jewish CPA members, a CPA leader Jack Blake denounced Jewish comrades for acting 'more like Zionists than communists'. Blake called on party members to spy on and expose comrades who had displayed bourgeois characteristics in order to prevent the emergence into leading positions of enemies such as former Czechoslovakian Jewish communist leader Rudolf Slansky and the Soviet Jewish doctors.<sup>26</sup>

It would seem that attempts were made during this period by CPA members and supporters (with some success) to bind the Council to a narrow pro-communist position tied closely to Soviet policies. On the other hand, there were ALP-aligned Council activists such as Sam Cohen who appear to have maintained a genuine commitment to Jewish interests and to Israel, but who also naively believed that the campaign against Soviet anti-Semitism was simply part of a strategy to promote war and conflict between East and West.<sup>27</sup> The relative independence of the latter group arguably assisted the Council to resume its traditional pro-Israel position as soon as Israel's direct involvement in Cold War tensions eased, instead of the Council retreating to the narrow anti-Zionist position favoured by the CPA.

Following Stalin's death in 1953 and the associated easing of Cold War tensions, the Council resumed its traditional support for Israel. Statements were issued promoting Israel's cause, and supporting peace negotiations between Israel and the Arab world.<sup>28</sup> In October 1955, the Council sent a petition to the meeting of the Big Four Foreign Ministers in Geneva urging them to promote a peaceful settlement between the Arab States and Israel. However, the petition was condemned by the VJBD for failing to criticise the extensive Soviet arms sales to Egypt which directly threatened Israel's security.<sup>29</sup>

The Soviet Union's increasingly pro-Arab position from 1955 onwards<sup>30</sup> re-opened the potential contradictions between the Council's pro-Israel and pro-Soviet sympathies. On the one hand, the Council supported Israel's right to exist in peace and security free of potential or actual attack from Soviet-armed Arab States. On the other hand, the Council was unwilling to directly condemn the Soviet Union's pro-Arab position for (amongst other reasons) fear of exacerbating Cold War tension.

The Council coped with this obvious contradiction by denying its existence. All arms supplies to the Middle East were condemned, rather than just those from the Soviet Union which happened to be threatening Israel.<sup>31</sup> The Council also appeared in some of its statements during this period to adopt a dispassionate/neutral tone in favour of peace, rather than a partial position in favour of Israel.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the Council strongly supported Israel during the 1956 Suez War. Considerable funds were raised for the United Israel Appeal, and the Reverend Burgoyne Chapman was employed to deliver a series of pro-Israel lectures to non-Jewish audiences. The Vice-President of the Council, Sam Cohen, declared that: 'Creation of the State of Israel has added to the status of every single Jew in the world, and we of the Council take second place to none in our love and devotion to Israel.'<sup>33</sup>

The Council's pro-Israel position contrasted strongly with the pro-Arab position adopted by the CPA.<sup>34</sup> Following the conclusion of the war, the Council supported the world wide campaign for a visit by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Dag Hammarskjold, to the Middle East, including Israel. The Council hoped that such a visit would help Israel to attain freedom of navigation of the Suez Canal, and put an end to military raids across the border.<sup>35</sup> The Council emphasised its commitment to 'a strong, prosperous and independent State of Israel, at peace with her neighbours on fair and just terms'.<sup>36</sup> Council representatives defended Israel against Arab attacks at international left-wing conferences.<sup>37</sup>

In the ensuing years, the Council condemned anti-Israel speeches made in the Australian Parliament, defended Israel's right to try the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, and undertook various activities designed to secure non-Jewish support for Israel.<sup>38</sup> Some muted criticism was also made of Soviet hostility to Israel.<sup>39</sup> In addition, Council Secretary Ernest Platz visited Israel as a guest of the Israeli Government, presented Prime Minister Ben-Gurion with a plaque on behalf of the Australian Labour Movement, and praised the vitality of Israel's political and educational institutions.<sup>40</sup>

In 1962, the Council condemned the threat posed to Israel by the presence in Egypt of West German rocket scientists, and by the proposed military union between Egypt, Syria and Iraq. The Council declared that 'the preservation of the State of Israel was absolutely essential to the interests of Jews wherever they may be'. The Council also defended the right of Jews 'to leave any country, east or west, for the purpose of living in Israel'.<sup>41</sup>

Further Council statements supported Israel's right to obtain a fair share of water from the Jordan River.<sup>42</sup> In 1965, the Council openly criticised the Soviet Union's equation of Zionism with Nazism and Anti-Semitism.<sup>43</sup> On occasions, the Council criticised Israel's involvement in the Cold War, and its political and military agreements with West Germany. However, such criticisms were infrequent, and always balanced by broad statements of support for Israel.<sup>44</sup>

The Jewish Council unequivocally supported Israel during the Six Day War. A Jewish Labor Emergency Committee was formed by the Council — in conjunction with eight other Jewish Labor organisations — 'to secure full support for and solidarity with Israel on the part of the Australian people at this crucial hour in the history of the Jewish State'.<sup>45</sup> The Council was also instrumental in ensuring the passage of a pro-Israel resolution at the 1967 Victorian ALP Conference.<sup>46</sup>

The final three years of the Council's existence — from the 1967 Six Day War to its disbandment in 1970 — coincided with the adoption of an uncompromising anti-Israel and anti-Zionist position by much of the radical Left.<sup>47</sup>

The Council seems to have been relatively unaffected by these developments which provoked a split in the CPA-aligned Jewish Progressive Centre. Council stalwarts such as Sam Cohen and Norman Rothfield continued their tradition of broad support for Israel whilst offering some criticisms of Israeli policies towards the Palestinians which they believed would hinder Israel's chances

for peace.<sup>48</sup> These policies (largely based on UN Resolution 242) were continued following the Council's demise by other Jewish Left groups such as the Jewish Radical Association and Paths to Peace.<sup>49</sup> It should be noted that by the time of the Six Day War, the Council had (for a variety of reasons which are beyond the bounds of this essay) effectively distanced itself from any reliance on or subservience to Soviet policies.

This essay has confirmed that the Jewish Council was broadly supportive of the State of Israel throughout its existence. Such a pro-Israel stance noticeably does not coincide with the hardline deference to Soviet positions that the Council demonstrated on Soviet anti-Semitism and other related issues.

The most obvious explanation is as follows: With the exception of the 1952/53 period when Jewish and Israeli concerns about Soviet anti-Semitism threatened to become a major international and Cold War issue, little pressure was placed on the Jewish Council by outside actors to conform to Soviet positions. This was because the State of Israel remained a minor issue on the Left until the Six Day War.

Soviet military support for the Arab States notwithstanding, virtually no one on the Australian Left displayed any interest whatsoever in Israel and the Middle East at this time. The Jewish Council's views on Israel were of no significance to anyone bar themselves and the Jewish community.

In relation to the issue of the Council's links with the Soviet Union and the CPA, the above analysis suggests a grey rather than black and white explanation. On the one hand, the Jewish Council was almost certainly not a straight CPA-front akin to the Australian Peace Council or the Union of Australian Women as suggested by some of its critics.<sup>50</sup> It is highly unlikely, for example, that the CPA would have allowed a front group to express opinions on the Middle East that were so contrary to those of the Soviet Union. There is also virtually no evidence of any organisational links between the Council and the CPA.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, the Council was not a totally independent organisation either. For a start, a number of CPA members and active sympathisers (almost certainly greater than suggested by Sarah McNaughton in her pro-Council thesis)<sup>52</sup> held leading positions in the Council. Apart from open CPA cadres such as Judah Waten, Saul Factor, Isaac Gust, Salomea Genin and Lou Jedwab, other prominent Council activists such as ALP members Sam Goldbloom and Norman Rothfield almost always adhered to the Communist line,<sup>53</sup> although Rothfield became progressively more sceptical after a visit to the Soviet Union in 1957.<sup>54</sup> In addition, ASIO Memorandums (whilst notoriously biased and unreliable) would suggest that at least 4–5 other Council office-bearers may have been CPA members.<sup>55</sup>

However, what is probably most important here is not the actual number of CPA members and supporters in the Council, but rather the extent to which they were able to hold the Council to their views. In answering this question, it is best to view the Council as an alliance of different interests. Some Council activists were committed Communists whose principal concern was the defence of the Soviet Union. Others held vaguely left-wing sympathies, but were mainly concerned with an effective response to local anti-Semitism. Then there was a

middle group of mainly ALP left activists who were genuinely committed to Jewish interests, but who were also vigorously committed to broader campaigns in favour of peace and disarmament in coalition with communist groups and individuals.

All three groups tended to see the broad Australian Left rather than the mainstream Jewish community as their major audience. For the second group and some of the middle group, this was principally a means of securing non-Jewish support in the CPA, ALP, unions etc. for Jewish causes. For most of the communists, however, the means generally equated with the end. Their first loyalty was to the broader Left rather than to Jewish concerns. The Council was useful principally as a means of mobilising Jewish support for Communist causes. When it came to the vote on contentious issues, the communist group was the most organised group within the Council, and was able (when it mattered) to preclude any criticism of the Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup> It did this by securing the support of the middle group of activists whose principal cause was not the specific defence of the Soviet Union, but rather the prevention of war.

These factional alignments almost certainly came to the fore whenever attempts were made to promote a *rapprochement* between the Jewish Council and the mainstream Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies.<sup>57</sup> It is almost inconceivable that the communist grouping within the Council would have allowed a statement sufficiently critical of the Soviet Union's anti-Jewish policies to meet even the minimum demands of the VJBD. Nevertheless, as a trade-off, the communist group was willing to support the Council taking an independent and sympathetic stand on the State of Israel. However even on this question, it still managed to prevent any open criticism of the Soviet Union.

In conclusion, the Jewish Council was strongly influenced by communist views. However, these views were almost certainly the result of numerical and factional alignments within the Council rather than the outcome of direct imposition by an outside body.

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## NOTES

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- 2 Leibler, *op.cit.*; Medding, *op.cit.*, pp. 67–69; Rubinstein, 1991, *op.cit.*, p. 409; Rubinstein, 1995, *op.cit.*, pp. 379–380.
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  - 4 Allan Leibler, *op.cit.*, pp. 121–129, provides a minor exception.
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  - 10 Rothfield, 1993, *op.cit.*, p.960; *Australian Jewish News*, 10 September and 17 September 1948; *Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism* (later *JCCFAS*) *Annual Report* 1948–49, p.4; Evelyn Rothfield, Dolphin Publications, Melbourne, 1948.
  - 11 'Australia and Israel' in *Jewish Council Newsletter*, July 1948.
  - 12 See, for example, the pro-Israel pamphlet issued by Ralph Gibson on behalf of the CPA, *War in Palestine*, CPA, Melbourne, 1948.
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  - 14 *Australian Jewish News*, 5 August 1949; Rothfield, 1997, *op.cit.*, p. 22.
  - 15 *Jewish Council Newsletter*, July 1949.
  - 16 Burgoyne Chapman, *The Compleat Anti-Semite*. Associated General Publications, Sydney, 1945.
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  - 21 Meir Cotic, *The Prague Trial: The First Anti-Zionist Show Trial in the Communist Bloc*, Herzl Press, New York, 1987.
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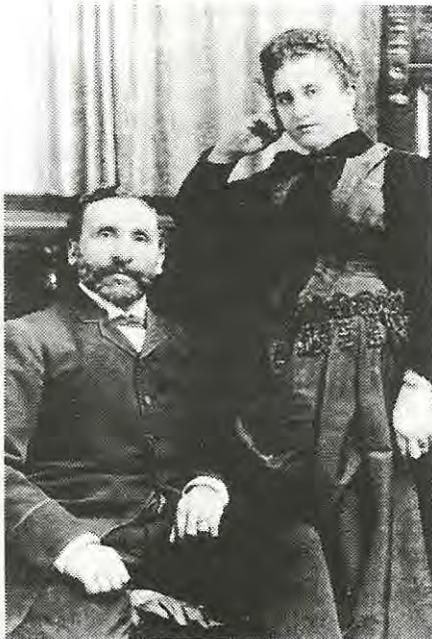
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- 45 *Australian Jewish News*, 9 June 1967.
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- 51 See the comments of former CPA activist Bernard Rechter in Philip Mendes, 'Jewish Involvement in the Communist Party of Australia' in *AJHSJ*, November 1994, p. 598.
- 52 McNaughton, *op.cit.*, p. 55.
- 53 David Rechter, *op.cit.*, p. 13; Rubinstein, 1991, *op.cit.*, p. 408.
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## MENDEL COHEN (1838—1909)

*Robert C. Sheezel*

With a family of ten surviving children, and holder of various positions in the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation at a time when the community was smaller and the pace of life slower, Mendel Cohen became a well-known member of the Melbourne Jewish community. This is an abridged version of a biography which traces much of what is known of Mendel.

Mendel (*Menachem Mendel ben Meir Yosef haCohen*) was born in Kovel, in the Polish part of Russia, about 1838, the son of Myer Joseph and Leah (nee Glagowski) Cohen. This date is taken from his application for naturalisation.<sup>1</sup> He is believed to have arrived in Port Phillip in 1859. In his application for naturalisation in 1873, he stated that, 'to the best of his belief' he arrived on the *Great Britain* on 9 December 1859, from Liverpool, England. However a check of the shipping lists for 1859 shows the *Great Britain* arrived in Port Phillip only once that year, in January 1859.<sup>2</sup> One important point is that the only 'M. Cohen' to have arrived in Melbourne between 1855 and 1861 was a Mark Cohen on the 1859 voyage of the *Great Britain*.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, a cross-check by age is unavailable, as Mark Cohen is one of the few passengers whose age was noted by a slash (/) rather than an age. His occupation is given as 'Laborer' (*sic*).



Nothing is known about Mendel's residences or occupation until 1863. On Wednesday 9 September of that year, Mendel married Hannah Solomons.<sup>4</sup> Hannah was the daughter of Lewis and Charlotte (nee Samuel) Solomons, and was born in St. George-in-the-East, outside London.<sup>5</sup> Hannah, along with her parents, brothers and sister, had arrived in Port Phillip on 25 July 1857 on the *Essex*.<sup>6</sup> They were married by the Reverend Moses Rintel at what was called the Mickva Yisrael East Melbourne Congregational School. Mendel's address at the time was given as 111 Russell Street,<sup>7</sup> and his occupation as 'Jeweller'.

*Mendel and Hannah Cohen*  
(Courtesy Pam Aird)

Mendel first established himself as a furniture dealer and broker in 1864. The City of Melbourne Rates Book shows he was a tenant at both 178 and 180 Russell Street.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that one year before, the tenant at both addresses was one Lewis Solomon.<sup>9</sup> Allowing for the regular dropping of the 's' from Solomons, it is most likely that this was Mendel's new father-in-law, Lewis Solomons. (The still unanswered question is how, when and where Mendel met Hannah for the first time.) The year 1864 also saw the birth of Rebecca, the first of Mendel and Hannah's twelve children. Unfortunately, Rebecca passed away three years later on 20 June 1867. Rebecca was two years old when her sister Amelia (*Amilia*) was born. Amelia was later to marry Solomon Marks Solomon, who was to become assistant minister of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation. The last child to be born at 178-180 Russell Street was Myer Joseph, who was born in 1868.

In 1870, Mendel was listed in the Sands and McDougall post-office directory for the first time as 'pawnbroker.'<sup>10</sup> He also moved to number 132 Russell Street. It was here in the same year that his fourth child, Charlotte, (*Shaynah*) was born. Charlotte was to later marry Joseph Joachim. Charlotte was followed two years later by Solomon, about whom little is known.

Whilst Mendel's occupation at this time was that of a pawnbroker, it also appears he must have been a trader as well. The Jewish community was horrified when one Jew was killed by another in a drunken brawl, but may well have concealed its amusement when Mendel, David Abrahams and Wolfe Brasch, all pawnbrokers at the time, charged a 'Chinaman' with fraud for selling them chests of tea which they later discovered contained bricks and sawdust covered with a layer of the supposed commodity.<sup>11</sup>

Mendel was naturalised on Wednesday 27 August 1873. His supporting papers show his age as 35 and his occupation pawnbroker. The application was supported by Horatio Beauchamp, JP, who claims to have known Mendel for ten years.

Already up to five children in their first nine years of marriage, Rachel (*Rahel*) made it six in eleven years. Rachel later married Isaac Rothstadt. 1876 saw the birth of Albert (*Aharon*), and Miriam Maud (*Miriam*), known as Maud or Maudie, was born in 1878. Miriam later married Charles Sheezel, my grandfather, who followed his father-in-law's example by becoming president of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation (EMHC). Lewis (*Yehuda*), who was to marry Stella Coppel and also become a pawnbroker, was born on 31 December 1880.

The first public mention of Mendel was on 11 September 1881, when he was elected to the committee of the EMHC.<sup>12</sup> Nothing further publicly happened for some time, but in 1884, Ada, who was born in 1883, passed away. Finally, the last of the Cohen children, twins Samuel (*Shmuel*) and Henry (*Tzvi*) were born in 1885. Samuel married Hetty Davis, and Henry married Sarah Bear.

On 11 January 1885, a Special General Meeting of the EMHC was held to consider the resignation of the president, Woolf Davis. No decision could be made, and the meeting adjourned. At the adjourned meeting, the members

were called upon also to consider the resignation of the treasurer, Phillip Perlstein. Although all appeared to have been settled, on Sunday 22 February another meeting considered the resignation of both the president and six members of the committee. Following Woolf Davis' re-election, Mendel was proposed for the position of treasurer. What followed was something that typified the EMHC meetings for many years:

Mr Perlstein wanted to know if Mr Cohen was in arrears.

The Chairman did not know. Before the election he would go through the books with the secretary and apprise any candidate of the fact if he found any gentleman nominated in arrears.

Mr Perlstein insisted on having an answer to his question.

Mr A. Waxman considered the manner in which Mr Perlstein was carrying on exceeded common decency.

Mr A. Levy moved the adjournment of the meeting. He repeated that the law should be carried out in its entirety. Amid considerable confusion, Mr Levy was heard to say that he should stand there until next week, if necessary, until he had a satisfactory answer from the Chairman or Mr Cohen. The institution was £4800 in debt, and unless members paid their outstanding accounts it would be impossible for the business of the congregation to be carried on.

The meeting carried on in this manner until....

Mr Mendel Cohen said he was afraid his nomination was the cause of all the trouble. Mr Perlstein came there to fight him.

Mr Perlstein claimed his right as a member to see the laws of the congregation carried out.

The Chairman ruled that every member had a perfect right to see the rules enforced.

Mr M. Cohen continued, and said that he and Mr Perlstein had been bad friends for some time. If he owed anything he would pay before he took office. A week from then he would allow Mr Perlstein or anyone else to inspect the books.

Mr A Levy objected to the nomination.

The Chairman said that he was satisfied as to Mr Cohen's being eligible for office; and having put his nomination to the meeting, declared him duly elected.

Mr Cohen, in returning thanks, said that he had not been ambitious for office, indeed he had only allowed himself to be nominated at the urgent request of a number of members.

After the election of the committee, the meeting then adjourned.<sup>13</sup>

However, when the adjourned meeting reconvened, Mendel (as treasurer) advised he had since received letters of resignation from the president and several of the committee; under the circumstances, he found it impossible to carry on the business. He therefore resigned, and the meeting again adjourned. (Such resignations and adjournments were to be a regular event over the next thirty years.) On 19 April 1885, Mendel was nominated for president, but refused to stand. Having been voted to the chair, he then had to put up with criticism of his handling of the day-to-day affairs.<sup>14</sup> The affair was eventually

settled at the Annual General Meeting on 30 August 1885, with Mendel not on the committee.<sup>15</sup>

In 1887, Mendel moved his business to 236 Russell Street, a 'brick shop & bath room — 8 rooms.'<sup>16</sup> Nothing else is known about Mendel during 1886 and 1887, as these two years of the *Jewish Herald* are missing from the collection of the State Library of Victoria.

At the 1888 AGM, Mendel, as treasurer, nominated Phillip Perlstein as president. This done and carried, Mr N. D. Harris, in proposing Mendel as treasurer, said: 'considering that Mr Cohen had proposed Mr Perlstein for the position to which he justly entitles, they could not do otherwise than re-elect him for the ensuing year. He had worked hard for the institution and pulled them through troublesome times.' Abraham Joel, in seconding, said that Mendel had steered the ship out from among the rocks into clear water. Louis Josephson, on the other hand, said the committee was a 'syndicate' and that this fact had come through a 'leakage',<sup>17</sup> Notwithstanding the last comment, Mendel was again elected treasurer. The next year he was again to move his business, this time to 198 Russell Street, where it remained until his death in 1909.<sup>18</sup>

Mendel was elected president of EMHC for the first time in 1890, but not at an AGM. At the AGM held on 15 September 1889, Mendel refused both positions of president and treasurer.<sup>19</sup> Phillip Perlstein was elected president, but he resigned in January 1890 after the loss of his wife. Mendel was elected at a Special General Meeting on 26 January 1890,<sup>20</sup> re-elected in September 1890, and resigned on 22 October 1890. The chairman, treasurer M.A. Rapken, read Mendel's letter of resignation, upon which Mendel rose and provided a broad explanation. Phillip Perlstein rose to a point of order, and said he would move for acceptance of the resignation. Mendel rose to correct one of Perlstein's statements but was ruled out of order. The press representative reported

Mr Perlstein, continuing, said that he had yet to bring forward two other points in the indictment against Mr Cohen. Before he had done he would show them how dirty Mr Cohen's public career was. (Great confusion. Several gentlemen rose and spoke at the same time.)

At this stage the meeting became so stormy, and the speakers hurled such nasty epithets at each other, that our representative thought it more in the interest of the Jewish community to withdraw, and leave the rest of the proceedings unreported. ...

We have since ascertained that, after several 'scenes,' Mr Cohen's resignation was accepted by 13 to 8 votes. Messrs. M. A. Rapken and P. Perlstein were nominated for the vacant position.<sup>21</sup>

Before another meeting could be held, some members wrote to Rapken asking that any election be withheld until after Mendel could be persuaded to withdraw his resignation. Mendel did so at the next meeting.<sup>22</sup> The same edition of the *Jewish Herald* reporting the above also carried letters of comment, one of which referred to 'the ever-recurring danger, which is always with us, and which threatens to do more harm in retarding the progress of Judaism than many of the foul-mouthed attacks of purblind anti-Semites,' and, in a vitriolic and flowery tone, criticised the 'minute section' of the members who caused Mendel to resign.<sup>23</sup>

Mendel chaired the next AGM on 19 September 1891. Initially, the meeting went well. He made an interesting in reply to a question as to why 22 members had resigned during the previous year. He explained that amongst the members who had resigned were many of those who wanted to get married and be charged the same rate as members, and as soon as they were married they resigned. However, the decorum soon vanished during a heated debate on changes to rules governing the eligibility of members standing for president and treasurer.<sup>24</sup>

Further trouble occurred when Mendel was accused of threatening to turn off the gas (for the lights in the *shule*) when a learned scholar in Talmud and Poskim, the Reverend A.E. Hirschowitz, wanted to deliver a lecture in the synagogue.<sup>25</sup> Mendel used the press to provide a reply, in which he stated he had agreed to the use of the synagogue provided a fifth of the members agreed to this use. This had not happened.

Mr H. (*sic.*) gathered a crowd around him, including at the utmost only twelve of our members, and attempted to deliver his lecture at the synagogue. Mr Michaelson, our *Shamos*, told him that the schoolroom was lit up and ready for him, but he was threatened with violence if he should interfere. Even the Rev. Mr Lenzer, who told the people that the president's order must be obeyed, was treated in a similar manner. I was not present, but the matter was reported to me. I felt very annoyed, and fearing that a disturbance might arise, causing a public scandal, I told Mr Michaelson to turn out the gas. That gentleman only threatened to do so, which had the desired effect, and I am very glad of it, though my committee thought he should have actually turned the gas out.<sup>26</sup>

It was nearly a year later before any further references could be found. The *Jewish Herald* of 9 September 1892 noted that a retrenchment scheme to be proposed at the annual meeting of the East Melbourne Synagogue [*sic*], and stated that it was one that could not recommend itself to the consideration of any member; 'the officers are hard and earnest workers, and a reduction in their well-earned salaries would be a step that will not rebound to the credit of those who would venture to propose it.'<sup>27</sup>

The meeting, when held, continued the tradition of uproar and resignations. The president (Mendel) occupied the chair, with the treasurer, Solomon Finkelstein, six other committee-men and 70 or 80 members present. Considerable discussion was held regarding the parlous state of the congregation, and the need to reduce expenses. The committee had calculated their expenditure on an estimated receipt-sheet of £2125, but had received only £1630. Although the congregation had 240 members, only 180 were financial, and members' dues owing totalled £1100. They 'had managed on the expiry of the mortgage on 1st July to get a renewal at five and a half per cent, for five years, but that had not been done without many weeks of work.' Also recommended was the closing of the school. (It had cost £244, but the receipts were only £75, leaving a deficit of £169.) It was also recommended that the salary of Reverend Lenzer be reduced from £500 to £375. A letter from Lenzer was read agreeing to a ten per cent reduction in his salary. The treasurer, Mr Finkelstein, seconded the motion to reduce costs. He said he 'had been told that if he exposed the true state of affairs he would be bombshelled. (Laughter)'. After further reference to the situation, he stated that .....

Mr Ham had valued their buildings at £7180, and the mortgage was already £4500. (At this stage the meeting became rowdy.)

The Chairman.—Are you done, Mr Treasurer.

The Treasurer.—No; I am not done.

Mr Sniders.—We will have nothing to do with Mr Ham.

The Treasurer.—But you will remember that I want to take you into my confidence. My information is that we should not reckon ourselves in credit £2000.

The President.—We know it.

The Treasurer.—If you know it, why the D— do you put it on the paper. (Laughter and groans.)

Mr J. Matthews (excitedly).—You have no business to put in the paper anything that is not true.

The Chairman.—I am sorry the treasurer should lose his temper and use such language, and I trust he will withdraw.

The Treasurer.—That I won't, and I will not sit beside you any longer. (Loud cries of 'Withdraw.')

The President—Well, sit down.

The Treasurer.—I will not sit alongside of you. I am no treasurer any more. I am independent of you.

In the midst of the confusion that ensued the treasurer left his seat at the committee's table.

The Chairman appealed to the meeting to support the authority of the chair, and order was once more restored.

After further discussion, some which the reporter described as 'of a most disorderly manner,' the meeting moved on to the election of officers. Mendel was proposed and seconded, and Ber Rapiport commented further that if Mendel did not accept office, 'the Shool would be shut up ...' Mendel accepted and was duly elected. After some five or six gentlemen declined nominations for treasurer, Mr Rapken's name was proposed. He declined, upon which Mendel said that under the circumstances he must decline the presidency — whereupon Rapken accepted office.

At this stage nominations for committee were taken, but the chairman announced that the old members of the committee had resigned, and he was therefore compelled to take the same step.

Messrs M. Nettleberg, R. Rapiport, I. Levinson and A.F. Abrahams were nominated for committee, and the meeting terminated in great confusion and disorder. All that could be made out was that the chairman and the members of the committee had resigned.<sup>28</sup>

One must wonder whether or not the *Jewish Herald's* reporter had had enough, as the report of the adjourned meeting, held on Sunday 18 September, was summarised into one small paragraph. It said not much more that the Reverend

Lenzer was to be paid £400 for the ensuing year, and that Mendel had been re-elected president with Mr Rapken as treasurer, and four others to the committee.<sup>29</sup> Yet it was not until 27 January 1893 that the *Jewish Herald* said something officially, its editorial making the following comment

When will some of the members of the East Melbourne Congregation learn to observe order and decorum at general meetings? Will they never come to understand that noise, angry interruptions or personalities will not advance the views they wish to advocate; but will only bring the congregation into discredit? Every man is entitled to his opinion, and if he desire to impress it upon the acceptance of his fellow members, which he has a perfect right to do, he cannot hope to succeed except by calm and dispassionate reasoning. Bitterness and vituperation will only defeat the object he has in view. Nay, it will do worse, it will drive the better-minded, the cultured members away from such meetings. In these days of severe trial to all communal institutions, no congregation can afford to lose the hearty interest of a single member, and especially not the interest of those members who, by their well-known liberality, by their social position and experience, can and will render valuable services as long as things are conducted in an amicable spirit. Unity is strength, and at no time was it more urgently required than at present. Dissension, on the other hand, does no one any good, and spoils the best interests of any congregation.<sup>30</sup>

However, this editorial appeared five days after Mendel again resigned. After another turbulent meeting, with most others on the committee resigning and then withdrawing their resignations, Phillip Perlstein was elected president.<sup>31</sup>

The committee then looked in another direction to resolve its financial problems. It wrote to the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, requesting a meeting to discuss a possible merger of the two congregations. A meeting between representatives of the two congregations was held at the London Tavern on Thursday 3 August 1893. Mendel was not in attendance, although he would have been able to discuss the matter with not only the East Melbourne representatives, but also with his son-in-law, Solomon M. Solomon, who was elected joint honorary secretary of the conference. Interesting was a later meeting (on 6 August), where Mr Rapken, the East Melbourne Congregation treasurer, showed the conference the last three annual reports, 'by which he sought to prove that the congregation was in a good financial position.'<sup>32</sup> (Did not the president and committee of the Melbourne Congregation read the *Jewish Herald*?) However, all was for nought as the Melbourne delegates demanded, as a first and indispensable condition, that the Albert Street Synagogue should be closed. It was finally agreed that the question of which synagogue should close be put into abeyance, and the meeting broke up without any practical result.<sup>33</sup>

As the sun rises in the east, and sets in the west, the 1893 Annual General Meeting saw the usual performances. After the Annual Report, which amongst other things, referred to the new mikvah at the City Baths (charge 1s. 6d.), the president M.A. Rapken advised he would be travelling overseas and therefore would not stand again. Mendel was unanimously elected president and Rapken agreed to be treasurer. However, when only three members consented to stand for the eight committee positions, both Mendel and Rapken withdrew. Adjournment after adjournment occurred, with Mendel trying to form a committee without success, the contentious issue being a motion that: 'Subject

to good conduct the appointment of Reverend J. Lenzer be a permanent one.' Eventually, the motion was rescinded, a committee elected and Mendel continued as president.<sup>34</sup>

Discussions regarding the amalgamation of the two congregations continued at the end of the year. Mendel attended as president of the EMHC, and immediately expressed the view that he himself was averse to the resolution from the previous conference that, should one synagogue have to close, it be Albert Street. He urged the matter be put into abeyance. Ephraim Zox, from the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, pointed out that the East Melbourne representatives had voted for the resolution, and could not see how Mendel could 'come and put a block on the whole business.' The discussion took so long that the meeting closed with only one constructive result: the formation of a sub-committee to which Mendel was appointed, to form a scheme of amalgamation.

Mendel, and possibly Hannah with some if not all of the children, went to Sydney in May 1894 for the wedding of their son Joseph.<sup>35</sup> His absence meant he missed what was reported to be 'one of the stormiest meetings ever held by the congregation.' The appointment of a *shochet* was a very important matter to the congregation. However, there were two candidates, each with his army of supporters.

By some of the members it was thought that pending the result of the amalgamation movement no appointment was to be made; it was even alleged that a promise to that effect was given by the president. But during the absence of the latter, on the 26th May, passed the following resolution—

'In consequence of Mr Jacob Lohr's office of *Shouchat* expiring on the 30th May, Mr Ben Zion Lenzer be appointed to act as *Shouchat* to the congregation *pro tem*. (provided the chairman of the Melbourne *Beth Din* approves of Mr Lenzer's qualifications as *Shouchat*) at a salary of £2 per week with weekly notice. In case no amalgamation takes place within two months a general meeting of the members is to be called for the election of a permanent *Shouchat*.' ...

To report on the proceedings of, at any rate, the first half of the meeting is a matter of impossibility. As soon as the chairman had taken the chair, and, in a few words, had expressed his pleasure at seeing so large a meeting, the noise began. One point of order after another was raised, sometimes two at a time; while interruptions from all parts of the hall were very frequent ...<sup>36</sup>

When a meeting was held upon Mendel's return, a stormy session ended with Mr Goldstein winning a ballot by four votes. Although two members of the committee said that the committee may resign, Mendel declared the meeting closed.<sup>37</sup> Later meetings resulted in the committee agreeing to withhold any resignations and the matter settled.<sup>38</sup>

The July settlement became unsettled very quickly. At the adjourned Annual General Meeting, held on 23 September 1894, Mendel intimated it was not his intention to accept office again, 'as circumstances might occur during the year necessitating his resigning the position.' Marks Herman was elected president and Mr A. Davis treasurer. However, for unexplained reasons, both resigned the next day.<sup>39</sup> (Surprise, surprise!) Mendel was re-elected

president at a Special General Meeting.<sup>40</sup> There was nothing in the report as to why Mendel changed his mind.

Both the Melbourne and East Melbourne Hebrew Schools came under consolidated educational control when the United Jewish Education Board was formed. The first meeting was held on Monday afternoon 13 May 1895 in the Vestry room of the Bourke Street Synagogue. A statement which created considerable surprise, if not indignation, was made by Mr Perlstein. He stated that, when he visited the East Melbourne Hebrew School the previous Sunday morning, he found a large number of children crowded together in a small passage 'where there was hardly sufficient breathing space for such a number of children. He inquired into the cause and found that the president of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation had refused the grant of the synagogue. Not even the Sabbath school was allowed to be carried on inside the synagogue. The congregation, however, should not be blamed for this — it was solely the action of its president.'

With the Melbourne Congregation agreeing to the use of their synagogue for teaching purposes, but the East Melbourne Congregation refusing the same, Phillip Blashki, as chairman of the meeting, suggested a centrally-situated building would need to be found.<sup>41</sup>

Whilst things appeared to have been relatively quiet for the next few months, the matter of the mortgage blew up in the East Melbourne trustees' faces when it was discovered that the mortgage of £4500, effected in 1892 for what was thought to be five years, in fact expired on 1 July 1895, and the mortgagees had given notice that the money would have to be repaid on 1 August without fail. The trustees made an offer to pay off £500 at once, and a further £500 in December, by which time a substantial amount was confidently expected from a proposed bazaar to be held in November. However, the offer was declined. After some discussion, the mortgagees agreed to an extension until January 1896. 'In the meantime the honorary officers are considerably harassed in mind, since the critical circumstances were quite unforeseen.'<sup>42</sup>

The next AGM, held on 15 September 1895, revolved around the continuing financial problems. It was agreed that ten per cent of each month's gross receipts be put into a Sinking Fund, and that debentures not exceeding £2000 be issued. It was also hoped an Oriental Bazaar would raise another £500. Further discussion arose over a motion proposed by Mendel, whereby the trustees would be allowed to borrow at interest 'for the purposes of paying off any debt or liability of the congregation, such sum or sums of money as they, or a majority of them, may think proper, and all moneys so borrowed may be raised or secured by mortgage of all or any property or assets of the congregation ...' This resolution, recommended by the honorary solicitors, was to allow the trustees to renegotiate the mortgage. (Currently a resolution of members at a general meeting was required.) One member, Mr S.L. Fryberg, opposing the motion, 'strongly advised the members not to be hoodwinked by the previous speakers, for although they said that by passing the resolution the members would be no worse off than before, yet he could assure them that they would be giving unlimited powers to the trustees, and they would be able

to borrow on everything belonging to the congregation, even to the movable assets, such as the seats, *Siforim*, and *Klei Koudesh*, and even more.' After further discussion, and what was called 'slight disorder', the motion was withdrawn. The final motion to be passed was one whereby the annual election of the officials was to be postponed, and the current officials continue to hold office until 1 January 1896.<sup>43</sup>

Things changed when the adjourned AGM resumed on 5 January 1896. When the meeting commenced, Mendel first had to advise that a chairman needed to be appointed, as his term as president had expired. Naturally, he was appointed unanimously. He then addressed the meeting, saying he came before it with a lighter heart that at the annual meeting held last September, when 'he and his fellow trustees and guarantors were then in fear and trembling that at any moment they might be sold off to pay the liabilities of the congregation'. The Oriental Carnival and Art Union was such a resounding success that sufficient funds were raised to pay off the bank overdraft and also reduce the mortgage by £1000. A new mortgage had been negotiated 'on the most favourable terms' for a term of five years at five per cent per annum with 'a gentleman whose treatment would be in vast contradistinction to that of the last mortgagees, who not alone harassed the trustees, but even more so ran them into a needless expense of £25.' When time came for the election of the honorary officers, Mendel refused to stand. When no-one else would nominate for the position, Mendel was authorised to pay the salaries of the paid officers, and the meeting again adjourned.<sup>44</sup>

Mendel was absent from the adjourned meeting, being in Sydney (for reasons not stated). However, notwithstanding his absence, and having previously declined the position, he was again elected president, whilst Mr M. Bentwitch was elected treasurer.<sup>45</sup>

A large gathering attended a presentation on Sunday 12 April 1896 of illuminated addresses to the organisers of the Oriental Carnival and Fair, which was held the previous November in the Exhibition Building. Mendel, as president of the EMHC, made the presentations along with a short speech. The benefits from the Carnival to the congregation were enormous: whereas it was expected that the Fair would raise up to £500, the nett gain was £2600.<sup>46</sup>

The adjourned meeting to discuss the appointment of the second Reader was held on Sunday 28 June 1896 and was such that it prompted one of the longest editorials for many years to criticise a congregation:

Few of the members of the East Melbourne Congregation who attended the meeting on Sunday, 28th June, could have seriously reflected upon the portion of Scripture which had been read in their synagogue the previous day. Therein it was clearly shown not only how the Almighty, in His unceasing care for our forefathers, saved them from the intended curses of Balaam, but also how, by their own unpardonable folly, they threw themselves headlong into the very danger from which God so mercifully wished to spare them. The result was that, as a punishment, God sent a pestilence amongst the people, in which 24,000 of them perished. It is sad to think that what witchcraft and divination were unable to effect was brought about by the people's own folly. We trust our East Melbourne friends will pardon us if we find a strong analogy between the Scripture story and their own proceeding at the before-mentioned meeting. Twelve months ago the existence of the

congregation was in the balance ... But help came in time ... Everybody can remember how hearty the congratulations were that were exchanged at the last at the last bazaar meeting, and how thankful everybody felt that the undertaking had proved such a great success. Today the congregation is a house divided against itself, and the gentleman who has done such yeoman service for the congregation is met with cries of 'Sniders to the ground!' ... And if we ask what is the cause of all this contention — is there a vital principle involved? — the answer must be that the whole difference is one of tweedledum and tweedledee ...<sup>47</sup>

The meeting was certainly one in which the *Jewish Herald* could, and did, use the expressions 'Disorder', 'Fresh noise' and 'More noise' on more than one occasion, even though there was basically only one item for discussion, the appointment of the *Shammos*, Mr S. Michelson, to the position of second Reader. Eventually, Ber Rapiport moved that the decision be postponed until the AGM. Before the motion was put, Phillip Perlstein left the room, stating that whilst he personally approved of the appointment being made, he would not be disloyal to his colleagues on the committee. The motion was put and, after a division, was carried by a large majority.

The Chairman—Gentlemen, the proposition is carried. I now adjourn the meeting. The chairman then left the room, and the secretary also left his seat at the table.

Mr R. H. Alston moved that the chairman's ruling not be accepted. This was seconded and carried.

Mr Perlstein was to take the chair, but he declined so did Mr Isaac Alston. Mr A. Davis was then voted to the chair. He said he took the chair as a protest against the proceedings the members had just witnessed. They had been treated with contempt by Mr Cohen, who ran away from the meeting. Was that the way should be treated? Mr Cohen was elected, not for his own pleasure, but to further the interests of the institution, which the members who signed the requisition had as much at heart as Mr Cohen. He (the speaker) was prepared to stand before the members and defend his action. There was nothing discourteous to the committee in the requisition. Would a gentleman like Mr Kronheimer, who only recently gave £250 to the congregation, have signed the requisition if it were not a proper one? The president had insulted the members. They were not children to go to the meeting, carry a resolution and then go away without doing anything. To expect them to do that was a gross insult. He moved — 'That we proceed with the business.'

The 'meeting' then continued with accusations and counter-accusations. In an attempt to pour oil on troubled waters, Mr Perlstein moved that 'the members in meeting assembled respectfully request the committee to reconsider the recommendation carried at the last annual meeting in reference to appointing Mr Michelson to the position of second reader'. After further discussion, the motion was carried unanimously, 'and the Chairman promised that he would lose no time in forwarding the resolution to the proper authorities. Thus ended a meeting which lasted close to three hours, and was one of the most excited ever held by the members of the East Melbourne Congregation.'<sup>48</sup> It certainly caused a storm, as Mendel, Mr Bentwitch (the treasurer) and several of the committee resigned. A special meeting was held on Sunday 12 July 1896, where the resignations were accepted. Mr Perlstein was elected president and Mr A. Davis treasurer.<sup>49</sup>

All appeared quiet in the Cohen family until 1898, when the 10 June edition of the *Jewish Herald* had the following comment:

#### NOTES AND NEWS

A rather interesting event will take place tomorrow in the East Melbourne Synagogue, Albert Street, when the twin sons, Samuel and Henry, of Mr Mendel Cohen, of Russell Street, a past president of the congregation, will be *Bar Mitzvah*. Being *Cohanim*, the first-named will read the portion appointed for *Cohanim*, and his brother the *Maftir*. In honour of the occasion Mr Cohen intends keeping open house for his friends and well-wishers on both Sabbath and Sunday, whilst the juveniles will be equally welcome on the Monday. A well-deserved compliment has been tendered to Mr Cohen by Mr P. Perlstein, president of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, who has honoured Mr Cohen with the position of *segun* [deputy to the high priest] for the occasion.<sup>50</sup>

At the next AGM, on Sunday 4 September 1898, the committee put forward two recommendations. One concerned alterations to the synagogue, as the exits from the ladies' gallery were unsatisfactory, and the Health Department considered necessary more extensive alterations that had been submitted by the congregation. It was also considered by the committee that, as nothing had been spent in the 21 years since the building's construction, it should be painted inside and out during the renovations. The second recommendation related to the admission of proselytes, a matter that was becoming the major point of discussion of the day. The treasurer, Mr A. Davis, touched on the latter question, saying that although he himself opposed the recommendation, he recommended that members adopt the proposal ... and if any applicant were so clever as to be able to hoodwink the eighteen delegates who would be appointed under the proposed recommendations, then he was surely smart enough to be a Jew. (Laughter.) Mendel, in following, declared himself opposed to both the proselyte question and to the alterations. Later, Mendel seconded a motion to raise the officials' salaries by £66, but two other members proposed and seconded a motion that the salaries remain the same. When put to a division, the vote was seventeen each, and the question was adjourned. Mendel, among others, was nominated for presidency, but declined, and Mr Davis was declared president.

When the adjourned meeting took place on the next Sunday, further debate occurred regarding the salaries but, eventually, they remained the same. Mendel withdrew his opposition to the question of proselytes and the motion was carried. Mendel, Solomon Finkelstein (who had also opposed proselytes) and B. Marks were elected delegates to the Board for the admission of proselytes.<sup>51</sup>

Mendel's election to the Board was interesting, considering his repeated assertions that he was against admissions. This was particularly emphasised when the Board met to consider three applications. Their report stated that Case No. 1 was favourably reported on by the Inquiry Committee, and it was resolved that this case should be 'favourably entertained'. Mr S. Marks then stated that he could conscientiously recommend the applicant who 'I think, would become a thorough Jewess'. Mendel stated, however: 'I am sent here

by the East Melbourne Congregation to prevent any proselytes being made, except in certain cases.<sup>52</sup>

A similar problem was brewing for the United Jewish Education Board. Mendel was unable to attend a meeting of the UJEB in June 1901, sending a letter of apology, advising that 'important congregational matters prevented his attendance at the meeting, but he would inform the president of the Board that personally he was opposed to any other than Jewish children receiving instruction in the school'. This latter comment refers to the fact that it had been discovered that non-Jewish children were inadvertently enrolled at the school. The chairman explained it thus:

How that was brought about was very simple. For instance, a child named Isaac Moses was admitted, and everybody thought that it was a Jewish child; but it was later on found that the child had a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother, and was, therefore, not a Jewish child.

The meeting eventually agreed to allow the children in question to remain, but the chairman agreed to tell all parents concerned that they would 'have to make an application to one of the congregations for the admission of their children into Judaism. The children would then not be compelled to leave the school.' All of which sounded rather confusing!<sup>53</sup>

In an effort to achieve some degree of harmony at the AGMs, Mendel, as president, in opening the 45th AGM 'begged everyone to assist him in conducting the proceedings in an orderly and business-like manner. He would allow everyone who wished to address himself to the report a fair hearing, but he did not wish any disturbance to take place.' In his report, he referred to the fact that the executive had the synagogue suitably draped upon hearing of the death of 'our late lamented Queen'. He also stated that the Salvation Army had purchased the adjoining allotment and 'they claimed the wall now standing there, but we disputed the claim'. After a conference, the committee accepted £50 from the Army, with enough stone to build a fence at the back of the land. When the Army tried to back down on the agreement, the matter was referred to solicitors.

Discussion was also held on the question of a cemetery north of the Yarra. 'We can charge say, half present rates for a grave. If a member wants to purchase a grave, and does not have enough money to pay cash for it, we can let him have it on easy payments. At present, if one goes to the Melbourne Cemetery and buys a grave for two and a half guineas, that is known as a poor man's grave.'<sup>54</sup> Mendel was again returned as president, although the treasurer was not elected until after an adjourned meeting was held. An interesting aside was the passing of a motion at the first meeting that 'the minister should not officiate at the funeral of any person married outside of the Jewish faith.' At the adjourned meeting, a motion 'that officers of the congregation who are *mohelim* shall on no account circumcise the offspring of parents married contrary to the Jewish faith' was lost, 18 to 32.<sup>55</sup>

The efforts expended in the alterations to the synagogue paid off with a wonderful ceremony. Many dignitaries, including the mayor of Melbourne (Sir Samuel Gillott) and the Federal Treasurer (Sir George Turner, MHR) were in attendance:

The whole of the scheme of decorations and the installation of the electric light, designed by the architect, Cr. Frank Stapley, were carried out under the personal supervision of the president, Mr Mendel Cohen, who was unremitting in his attention to the contract being satisfactorily carried out, and reflects great credit on all concerned, including Mr Paul Krug, the contractor for the decorations, and Mr E. Bridger, who so successfully installed the electric light.

It is noteworthy that, owing to the great interest taken by the president, Mr Mendel Cohen, in the decorations and improvements, the whole of the work was carried out under his direct personal supervision.<sup>56</sup>

Mendel did not stand for election at the adjourned meeting. Prior to the meeting's close, the president-elect gave a very eulogistic speech, and proposed (seconded by committee-member Mr C. Shmith [Athol Shmith's father] that 'the best thanks of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation in general meeting assembled be tendered to the retiring president, Mr Mendel Cohen, to the very zealous and effective manner in which he carried out the duties of the office and for his praiseworthy efforts to at all times conserve the interests of the congregation and maintain the dignity of the position which he had so worthily occupied and that the same be duly presented to him in an illuminated address, the cost not to exceed the sum of £10 10s.'<sup>57</sup>

At a well-attended ceremony held on 1 February 1903, Mendel was presented with the illuminated address, and Hannah with a silver tea service. The full report in the *Jewish Herald* covered almost a full page; a small extract follows:

The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, said they had met to do honour to their past president, Mr Mendel Cohen. They perhaps would like to know the 'Mah Nishtanoh', the 'wherefore' of this movement and, without replying to the customary words, 'Avodim hoyeenooch Paroah Lemitzroyim.' he would simply say that they had met to mark their appreciation of the services Mr Cohen had rendered to the congregation for many years past. He joined the congregation in 1865 — thirty-eight years ago — was first elected a member of the committee in 1875, and became treasurer in 1885. During that period there occurred a memorable crisis when, owing to various misunderstandings, the whole of the executive resigned; but, by the unanimous wish of the members at a special general meeting, Mr Cohen became virtually 'Dictator' of the congregation for a time. In this crisis Mr Cohen took the reins, and carried out the duties to the satisfaction of the whole community. At the same period he was elected a trustee, a position which he still held. In 1890 he was elected president, and he held office until September 1892. He again assumed the same office in 1894. A year later the great Oriental Carnival was held, which realised the handsome sum of £2600. That success was owing in a great measure to Mr Cohen's energy. He virtually saved the congregation from ruin. He once more resumed office in September 1900, and continued in that position until 1902, when the members passed a resolution of which the gathering that evening was the upshot. During his last term of office, the synagogue was entirely renovated and decorated, and subsequently reconsecrated. When he (the chairman) was elected treasurer and became officially connected with Mr Cohen he soon found that there was no necessity whatever of interfering with Mr Cohen, for whatever he did was for the best of the institution. There was not another man in Melbourne who could or would have done what Mr Cohen did. (Hear, hear.)<sup>58</sup>

Mendel was re-elected president in 1903 and 1904, with little of note happening. However, in March 1905 Mendel approached the East Melbourne committee asking for leave of absence to go to Europe 'for the benefit of his health'. The

committee granted him six months leave and also provided him with credentials to the Chief Rabbi,<sup>59</sup> but not before a row blew up regarding the *shochetim*. Rabbi Dr Abrahams had arranged for Reverend M. Falk to go to the South Melbourne abattoirs to gain experience in 'the slaughtering of animals for the Jewish trade'. Mendel had advised the owners of the abattoirs that if Reverend Falk attended, the East Melbourne *shochet*, Jacob Goldsmith, would be withdrawn from the abattoir, and therefore the abattoirs 'regret to intimate to you that we must now cancel same'. Mendel replied in the next edition, asking Rabbi Abrahams, as the Chief Rabbi's representative, how it was that the Melbourne congregation could have been without a *shochet* for more than ten years. 'Would the Chief Rabbi have allowed such a state of affairs to exist so long? Surely not.' He also asked how Abrahams could teach *shechita* and also be examiner. He then accused Abrahams of never putting his knowledge into practice. 'Unfortunately, I must say that *rabbonim* and *shochtim* have been created whilst they were asleep. As a Jew, I strongly protest against such notions, and consider that I have only done my duty (as far as it lay in my power) ...'<sup>60</sup>

Members of the executives of the two other metropolitan congregations and also the Perth congregation were present at the send-off for Mendel on Sunday 2 April 1905. Even the manager of the synagogue's bank, the Bourke Street branch of the London Bank of Australia, was present. Eulogy after eulogy was presented, with Reverend Lenzer stating that he 'had had many opportunities of stating in public what opinion he held of Mr Cohen, and the whole may be pregnantly summed up in the following statement: As long as Mr Cohen is willing to work for the congregation, the congregation is satisfied, and the minister is satisfied'. In reply, Mendel said he could hardly find words to return thanks for the flattering remarks. He trusted that his visit to England would enable him to be of use in settling some of the serious questions agitating the community. 'The Chief Rabbi has been appraised by letter of his intended visit to London, and he hoped to have every facility for giving Dr Adler full information of the situation of things here. He was more grateful than he could express for the kindness shown to him, and if the Almighty spared him in health and strength he would only be too happy to continue to devote such powers as he had to the service of the community. (Cheers.)'<sup>61</sup>

Mendel left on the *China*, along with his brother Henry. During his stay in London, he had two interviews with Dr Adler, during which the Chief Rabbi was 'deeply impressed with Mr Cohen's account of Australian Jewish communal affairs, and more especially, the much-vexed 'Guerim' and 'Geuros' question. Mendel was also the Chief Rabbi's guest at his own private residence, and attended the distribution of prizes and scholarships at the Jews' Free School on the personal invitation of Lord Rothschild. It is not yet known as to where Mendel stayed whilst in England, nor if he visited the Continent. He returned to Melbourne on Sunday 8 October 1905, being greeted 'at the station' by members of the executive. (Does this mean he travelled from Sydney by train after leaving Henry there, or simply the train from Port Melbourne?)<sup>62</sup>

The 27 July 1906 edition of the *Jewish Herald* carried a large editorial regarding the proposed establishment of a Board of Deputies. A small excerpt is provided:

The only delegate who took up a hostile attitude to the project was Mr L. Rothstadt, the president of the East Melbourne Congregation, the other delegate sent by the same congregation, Mr R. H. Altson, being strongly and enthusiastically in its favour. In due course the time arrived when the report of the delegates was to be considered by the executive of the congregation, and that body invited Mr Altson, who is not a member of the committee, to attend their meeting on the 19th July, which was specially called for the consideration of the report. Almost the first thing done on the arrival of Mr Altson was the moving of a proposition by Mr Mendel Cohen that he be requested to leave the room. This strange method of securing the advice and co-operation of their delegate not meeting with the approval of the other members present, who evidently thought it was savoured somewhat too strongly of discourtesy, the motion was withdrawn. The tactics of the opposition, however, were not exhausted by this move, as will be seen by what follows.

On the discussion of the draft constitution being started, Mr Cohen rose to a point of order on the first clause, which runs thus: 'The Board of Deputies shall have full authority to represent the Jewish community of Victoria in all matters — not being congregational or synagogal matters — in which it shall think advisable to speak or act on behalf of that community.' The point of order was that since the Board was not to be concerned with congregational or synagogal matters, therefore the congregation had nothing to do with it, and all consideration of it by the congregation was out of order. The most amazing thing in connection with this amazing point of order was that it was actually upheld by the president, in the face of reason and argument, he ruling that it was fatal to all further deliberation upon the delegates' report, and that the only thing left for the meeting was to disperse for the want of business to transact. In this highly original manner the president of the East Melbourne Congregation quashed the whole affair, stifling discussion, argument and explanation at the very outset, imposing by main force his own personal antagonism to the project upon his whole congregation, and depriving every individual member of the right of opening his mouth and giving utterance to his opinion. It is difficult to understand how the committee could have tamely submitted to be dragooned in this autocratic manner, and it remains to be seen whether the congregation as a whole is equally nerveless and spiritless.<sup>63</sup>

Even the *Jewish Herald* acknowledged that the editorial 'caused no little stir in the community, and especially among the members of the particular congregation itself.' As can be expected, the Special General Meeting called to discuss the matter was a 'doozy!' 'The intense interest evoked by the matter at issue between Mr R.H. Altson and the other signatories of the requisition on the one side and Mr L. Rothstadt, the president of the congregation on the other, was shown by an attendance almost unprecedented in the annals of the institution.' Mr Altson spoke for some time (his comments covered three columns in the *Jewish Herald*) after which Mendel spoke. He explained why he had raised the point of order. 'They all knew the stir this ruling of the president had caused, but it would be shown to them that this point of order had been backed up by the highest legal authorities, not only by their solicitors, but by the Hon. Isaac A. Isaacs, the Federal Attorney-General. He (Mr Cohen) was there to protect the congregation, and it would be for them, the members, to judge if he had attempted to dominate the committee, as had been alleged, and if his actions had been in any way wrong or unconstitutional. (Cheers.)' Mr Altson then asked if, apart from the executive, did the congregation have the power to appoint delegates, to which Mr Pirani advised they had no such power.

Mr Marks Herman said all these opinions did not touch upon the question before them. The complaint was that the committee had not been treated justly, and had not been allowed a fair hearing. He had the greatest respect and esteem for the president —

The Chairman: Then God save me from my friends.

After further discussion, a resolution that the congregation declined to entertain the scheme to form a Board of Deputies was moved by Mendel and carried without discussion.<sup>64</sup>

The 1906 Annual General Meeting saw Mendel again elected as president, taking over from Lewis Rothstadt (maybe Lewis had had enough — at least for the moment!) The meeting was interesting from the point that it included reference to a letter of congratulations being sent on behalf of the congregation to Major Alfred Dreyfus, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, upon his 'rehabilitation'. With most of the meeting being taken up in discussion regarding salaries, the meeting adjourned. However, this was not before both Mendel and Phillip Perlstein were nominated for president.

At the adjourned meeting, Mendel rose to explain his nomination for president. He said he had told Mr B. Marks he would not be standing, but would support Mr L. Rothstadt should he stand. If the latter did not stand, he (Mendel) would support Mr Perlstein. However, Mr Perlstein said he would stand against anyone except Mr Morris, and this Mendel took as a challenge. After discussions about the admission of *guerim* and *gueros*, Mendel was elected by eight votes.

What took place, however, towards the end of the meeting, introduced an extraordinary complication which practically nullified most of the election results. Mr B. Marks, the treasurer elect, rose and declared that, inasmuch as Mr Mendel Cohen had broken faith with him in allowing himself to be elected president, he (Mr Marks) felt that he could not act with him, and he therefore resigned the treasurership there and then. Messrs. B. H. Altson, D. Altson, M. Herman and S. Rothberg, the newly elected members of the Committee, alleging the same reason, also signified their intention of not acting, as did also Mr A. Harris, JP, a remaining member of the previous Committee. This is the regrettable position of affairs at present.

The customary votes of thanks having been passed, the meeting terminated.<sup>65</sup>

The sad and sorry state of affairs continued at the Extraordinary Special General Meeting called to elect a replacement treasurer and committee-men. Mendel requested all non-members to leave, 'as he did not wish the proceedings to be disturbed'. Lewis Rothstadt objected, saying this was no way to encourage the young people of the community to take an interest in the affairs of the community. ('Hear, hear'). After Mendel had cut short those who rose to speak:

The President said the only business before the meeting was the election of officers, and he would not allow any speaking.

Mr J. Magnus rose to a point of order.

The President refused to allow Mr Magnus to proceed.

Mr H. Levy moved that the ruling of the President be disagreed with.

The President said he would not allow the motion, and ruled it out of order.

Then, in the midst of a scene of noise, confusion and mutual vituperation, which baffles description, between thirty and forty of the members left the room in a body, leaving only the thick-and-thin supporters of the President, to the number of about twenty-four, to carry on the meeting.

Whilst Mendel continued with the meeting, an 'Indignation Meeting' was held in the Vestry Room by those who had walked out. They eventually passed a motion that 'in the opinion of this meeting it is detrimental to the best interests of this Congregation that the President should have debarred its members from the privilege of speaking and expressing their opinions on the subject of the meeting today, and that a copy of this resolution be sent to the President and Executive of the Congregation and to the Jewish Press'. However, Abraham Harris felt the above was too mild, and moved an amendment: 'that this meeting enter its emphatic protest against the action of the President in stifling discussion on the subject of the meeting held today and against the arbitrary and unfair manner in which the President had conducted the proceedings. And that this meeting has lost all confidence in the ability of the President to conduct the business of the institution in accordance with British custom and in the best interests of the institution.' After discussion for and against, the amendment was carried by about ten votes.<sup>66</sup> The outcome of the whole affair has yet to be discovered.

Mendel did not stand for office in 1907, but was re-elected in 1908. He took only a small part at the AGM, but at one point questioned a matter in the Annual Report, having been absent during the earlier discussion 'due to ill-health'. (This was at the time of the 1908 influenza pandemic.)<sup>67</sup> Mendel was also very quiet at the adjourned meeting, held on 20 September 1908.<sup>68</sup>

Mendel passed away on Wednesday 24 March 1909 at 198 Russell Street from what the death certificate described as 'disease of the heart and kidneys', at the age of 71 years.<sup>69</sup> He was buried on Friday 26 March in the Melbourne General Cemetery, Carlton. His obituary in the *Jewish Herald* covered two columns.<sup>70</sup>

On Sunday 11 April 1909, the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation passed the following resolution:

That this congregation in general meeting assembled place on record their sense of the loss sustained by them in the death of the late president and trustee, Mr Mendel Cohen, who for upwards of a quarter of a century took a deep interest in, and rendered great services to, the institution. And that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to his widow and family.<sup>71</sup>

Business having to continue, Mr Isaac Altson was then elected president for the remainder of the term.

## CHRONOLOGY

First elected to committee	1875
unknown positions between	1876-1880
11 September 1881	<i>Committee-man</i> , EMHC
September, 1882	<i>Committee-man</i> , EMHC
8 March 1885	<i>Treasurer</i> , EMHC
	(resigned 22 March 1885)

1886	<i>Treasurer</i> , EMHC ??
1887	<i>Treasurer</i> , EMHC
2 September 1888	<i>Treasurer</i> , EMHC
26 January 1890	<i>President</i> , EMHC
7 September 1890	<i>President</i> , EMHC (resigned 22 October 1890 but resignation rescinded)
22 September 1891	<i>President</i> , EMHC
9 September 1892	<i>President</i> , EMHC
October 1893	<i>President</i> , EMHC
28 October 1894	<i>President</i> , EMHC
12 January 1896	<i>President</i> , EMHC (resigned 28 June 1896)
6 September 1900	<i>President</i> , EMHC
27 August 1901	<i>President</i> , EMHC
September 1903	<i>President</i> , EMHC
28 August 1904	<i>President</i> , EMHC
16 September 1906	<i>President</i> , EMHC
16 September 1908	<i>President</i> , EMHC (died in office 24 March 1909)

## NOTES

- Petition for naturalisation and supporting papers, No. A728 Vol 1 p. 130, No. 766, No. A727 Vol 18 p. 203, No. 766 and No. A712 73/011520, Australian Archives, Canberra
- Arrivals from English Ports microfiche #158, Victorian Public Record Office (hereafter VPRO).
- English Ports Arrivals card index, 1837–1888, SS *Great Britain* passenger #2627, third class Adult, English origin, VPRO.
- Certificate of Marriage, Folio #03102/63, also Marriage Registrations, VPRO.
- Certificate of Births, London area, September quarter, 1846, State Library of Victoria (hereafter SLV).
- English Ports Arrivals, passenger list from the *Essex*, VPRO.
- A check of the City of Melbourne Rates Book for 1862, Gipps Ward number 133, SLV, shows the tenant of 111 Russell Street as being a Woolf Davies. This was most likely Woolf Davis, who was a witness at the Cohen–Solomons wedding.
- City of Melbourne Rates Book 1864, Gipps Ward number 1916, SLV.
- Ibid, Gipps Ward numbers 1888 and 1887 respectively
- City of Melbourne Rates Book 1870, Gipps Ward number 1819, SLV.
- Lazarus M. Goldman, *Jews in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century*, Melbourne, the Author, 1954, p. 239.
- Jewish Herald*, 23 September 1881, p. 344.
- Ibid, 20 March 1885, pp. 122–123.
- Ibid, 1 May 1885, pp. 106–107.
- Ibid, 4 September 1885, p. 209.
- City of Melbourne Rates Book, Gipps Ward number 1791, SLV.
- Jewish Herald*, September 14, 1888, pp334–335
- Sands & McDougall post-office directory, 1889, p. 599.
- Jewish Herald*, 25 September 1889, pp. 305–306.
- Ibid, 12 September 1890, p. 309.
- Ibid, 21 November 1890, pp. 378–379. Goldman, op. cit., p. 239, states that 'some meetings adjourned at 4 a.m. and some became so unruly and disgraceful that they even

surprised the members of the Congregation who were accustomed to such things. Mendel Cohen resigned as President, and amidst shouting, screaming and standing on desks, the meeting eventually accepted his resignation by 13 votes to 8.'

- 22 Goldman, op. cit., p. 379.
- 23 Ibid, p. 380.
- 24 *Jewish Herald*, 9 October 1891, p. 219.
- 25 Ibid, 15 January 1892, p. 35.
- 26 Ibid, 29 January 1892, p. 43. Goldman, op. cit., p. 368, states that '60 to 70' people came to hear Hirschowitz, and that 'Hirschowitz, a wise and scholarly man, not wishing to cause a disturbance in the Synagogue edifice, ceased his sermon immediately, but the audience, not so wise and scholarly, did cause a disturbance and a rumour spread that a Rabbi had been insulted in the Synagogue and the gas put out on him.'
- 27 Goldman, op.cit., p. 176.
- 28 *Jewish Herald*, 21 September 1892, pp. 186-187.
- 29 Ibid, September 21, 1892, p185
- 30 Goldman, op.cit., p. 36.
- 31 *Jewish Herald*, 10 February 1893, p. 45.
- 32 Ibid, 11 August 1893, p. 165. An interesting aside is the correction in the 8 September issue (p. 186) whereby a resolution passed by the East Melbourne Congregation did not in fact occur. The report was incorrect 'owing mainly to the vagaries of the telephone.'
- 33 Ibid, 8 September 1893, pp. 186-187.
- 34 Ibid, 6 October 1893, pp. 204-205.
- 35 Ibid, 18 May 1894, p. 147.
- 36 Ibid, 15 June 1894, pp. 170-171.
- 37 Ibid, 13 July 1894, p. 198.
- 38 Ibid, 13 July 1894, p. 201.
- 39 Ibid, 5 October 1894, p. 287.
- 40 Ibid, 16 November 1894, p. 332. Refer also to Goldman, op. cit., p. 378, who writes: 'Mendel Cohen, a man who usually filled the breach, stepped in and temporarily held the reins until the election of a new Board of Management ...'
- 41 Ibid, 17 May 1895, p. 182.
- 42 Ibid, 9 August 1895, p. 276.
- 43 Ibid, 16 September 1895, pp. 330-331.
- 44 Ibid, 10 January 1896, pp. 38, 40.
- 45 Ibid, 24 January 1896, pp. 51-52.
- 46 Ibid, 17 April 1896, p. 138.
- 47 Ibid, 10 July 1896, pp. 210-211.
- 48 Ibid, 10 July 1896, pp. 212-214.
- 49 Ibid, 24 July 1896, p. 233.
- 50 Goldman, op. cit. p. 224.
- 51 *Jewish Herald*, 16 September 1898, pp. 318-319.
- 52 Ibid, 21 July 1899, p. 253.
- 53 Ibid, 15 March 1901, p. 107.
- 54 Ibid, 13 September 1901, pp. 287-289.
- 55 Ibid, 19 September 1902, p. 287.
- 56 Ibid, 26 September 1902, pp. 7-8.
- 57 Ibid, 22 October 1902, p. 343.
- 58 Ibid, 13 February 1903, p. 83. The address is rare in that very few illuminated addresses refer to other than the recipient. In Mendel's case, specific thanks were also given to Hannah. Beautifully restored copies of the original address may be found in the homes of some of Mendel's descendants, and it has been reproduced as the cover illustration of this Journal.
- 59 Ibid, 10 March 1905.
- 60 Ibid, 21 March 1905, p. 121 for Rabbi Abraham's letter, and 7 April 1905, pp. 131-132 for Mendel's reply.
- 61 Ibid, 7 April 1905, p. 138.

- 62 Ibid, 20 October 1905, p. 365.
- 63 Ibid, 27 July 1906, pp. 283–284.
- 64 Ibid, 21 August 1906, pp. 311–313.
- 65 Ibid, 21 September 21, 1906, pp. 353–355. The congregation's determination to oppose proselytes continued for many years. In 1913, the congregation passed a resolution barring proselytes, and reaffirmed its stand in 1917 as a pointed censure of Reverend Isack Morris of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation and his (unacceptable) openness to the admission of proselytes. (Malcolm J. Turnbull, 'The Proselyte Debate in Melbourne during the 1920s', *Journal of the AJHS*, Vol X, Part 7, 1989, p. 591, quoted in Ann Andgel, 'The Reverend Rabbi Isack Morris', *Journal of the AJHS*, Vol XI, Part 6, 1993, pp. 934–935.)
- 66 Ibid, 30 November 1906, pp. 428–429.
- 67 Ibid, 18 September 1908, p. 329.
- 68 Ibid, 2 October 1908, p350
- 69 Certificate of Death Folio #2416/09.
- 70 *Jewish Herald*, 2 April 1909, p. 140.
- 71 Ibid, 16 April 1909, p. 155.

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## SPARE THE ROD AND SPOIL THE CHILD!

*Howard A. Freeman*

Within the Archives of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation lies a book which must surely be one of the most extraordinary documents of its type — the Punishment Book of the Melbourne Hebrew School.

In the 1850s there was a growing demand for education that combined both secular and Jewish studies. In 1860 the Melbourne Hebrew School became a Common School, due to the passing of a new Act of Parliament, but it failed to attract enough students to maintain the grant available. A Hebrew Education Society attempted to raise funds to keep the Common School going, but the school was limping along due to competition from more prestigious non-Jewish schools, which received substantial grants.

Then, in 1873, State Aid was removed altogether from denominational schools. Fierce discussion raged between supporters of a separate facility (who favoured a secular education with two hours daily of Jewish instruction), and its detractors, who had an avowed distaste for segregation and could afford private school fees, with religious instruction after hours. The supporters triumphed and the Melbourne Hebrew School opened in January 1874. It flourished for some nineteen years, yet finally closed in 1893 due to small enrolments and lack of funding. It had some excellent teachers such as the Reverend Raphael Benjamin, Rabbi Dr Joseph Abrahams, and a former pupil and dux of the school Joel Fredman, who became headmaster in 1884. The scholastic standards were said by the Inspectors to have been praiseworthy, and the behaviour of the students said to be “good”, comparing well with the better private and state schools.

The punishment book of some 25 pages ruled into columns gives us a delightful view (unpleasant as it was for the students) of the natural history of this remarkable educational venture. Whilst the ‘crimes’ recorded the standard of behaviour of the students, the Inspectors were apparently satisfied that generally, the behaviour was ‘no worse than at other schools. And yet, the punishments meted out clearly escalate to what reads like a frenzy of near-brutality. Such corporal punishment today would place all the teachers behind bars!

Bad behaviour was obviously not a problem for the first couple of years, as the first entry in the book comes in 1876 when Solomon Marks “continued to misbehave after repeated warnings”. For this, Mr J.M. Goldstein administered ‘2 pandies’ — a stroke from a cane or a strap on the hand. The expression was commonly used, and was derived from the Latin *pande manum*, or ‘hold out your hand’, which derivation would have been of no interest to the victim. Occasionally punishments involved simple slaps on the hand, such as that given to Leah Isaacs for ‘bad language’.

An almost arbitrary number of ‘pandies’ was administered by different teachers for the same offence, but — apart from the odd whipping given for ‘eating the luncheons of other children on several days’ and meted out to Arthur Herman, or to Hyman Woolf for ‘impertinence and disobedience to Miss Parish’ — the punishments in the first year or so were invariably pandies. ‘Misbehaviour’ could involve cheating, telling lies, truancy, deception, false accusations or simply for repeatedly coming late to class.

Usually it was the boys, rarely girls, who were punished, and some names appear with regularity, such as Barnett Allen. Poor Barnett was caught in the act of ‘pulling out of his sister’s hand, and tearing up, a letter sent by Miss Parish to his parents, relative to his own idleness’. For this offence, Barnett suffered a whipping at the hands of Miss J. Smyth. Miss Smyth appeared rather

fond of whipping, and before long had whipped Barnett Allen and Jacob Mandelberg for ‘leaving school without permission and stopping away the whole day’.

Barnett failed to learn from this, and three weeks later received the same punishment for a repeat offence. Miss Smyth also rather liked caning, which was suffered by Hyman Woolf at her hands for ‘repeatedly coming to school without doing his lessons and exercises’. Miss Smyth also administered a ‘flogging’ on one occasion, to Samuel Hart, who ‘played the truant for one week’. Samuel’s name never again appears, which might indicate that either his behaviour improved, or he simply played truant permanently!

Although quite fond of whipping, Miss Smyth would occasionally revert to simple pandies, such as for Joshua

No.	Name	Offence	Punishment	Teacher
1	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
2	John L. Loh	for eating	whipping	J. Smyth
3	Arthur Herman	pulling out of his sister's hand	whipping	J. Smyth
4	Barnett Allen	tearing up a letter	whipping	J. Smyth
5	Arthur Herman	leaving school without permission	whipping	J. Smyth
6	Arthur Herman	leaving school without permission	whipping	J. Smyth
7	John L. Loh	for leaving school without permission	whipping	J. Smyth
8	John L. Loh	for leaving school without permission	whipping	J. Smyth
9	Arthur Herman	leaving school without permission	whipping	J. Smyth
10	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
11	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
12	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
13	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
14	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
15	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
16	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
17	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
18	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
19	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
20	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
21	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
22	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
23	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
24	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
25	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
26	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
27	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
28	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
29	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
30	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
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36	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
37	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
38	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
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41	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
42	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
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44	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
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47	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
48	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
49	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth
50	Samuel Hart	playing the truant for one week	flogging	J. Smyth

Abrahams who was guilty of ‘hitting two girls’, or for Henry Fryberg, guilty of ‘knocking about the dipper, out of which the pupils drink’.

However, on the memorable day of 15 February 1877 Miss Smyth was pleased to whip Myer Fryberg, Solomon Hyams, Joshua Abrahams and Mark Davis, for the wholly disgraceful offence of ‘stealing oysters from a shop in Swanston Street, and running up Little Bourke Street to eat them.’[!!!] David Davis ‘hit a boy in the eye with a stone’ (2 pandies, Miss Smyth), which may just have been an accident. However, Sigismund Schlam, for ‘hitting Samson



## A SYNAGOGUE IN COBURG<sup>1</sup>

*Laurie Burchell*

Many people will be surprised to learn that there was once a synagogue in Coburg. They may be even more surprised that the building still exists!

Disbelief is understandable as it doesn't look at all like a religious building, and over twenty years have passed since it was last used for this purpose. Moreover, although visible from the street, the former synagogue is in the back yard of a house at 15 Elizabeth Street, East Coburg. In its day it was identified by a sign, proclaiming 'Coburg Beth Yaacov' on the front wall. While the name undoubtedly referred to Jacob in the Bible, it was also a reminder to the congregation that Jack Zacky Jacobs had built it on his own land, and at his own expense.

Jack Jacobs was technically a Reverend, but frequently referred to as 'Rabbi'. To ordinary people, however, he was always known as Jack; for he was only a part-time clergyman, being in business as a sack merchant with a warehouse in Fitzroy. He was born on 24 December 1907 at Petah Tikvah in Palestine. One of eight children, his father was a rabbi, the family having emigrated from Russia at the turn of the century.

Jack Jacobs came to Australia in the 1930s, settling in Fitzroy. He married Gertrude Helman at the Toorak Road Synagogue on 1 October 1948 and the newlyweds then went to live in a brand new weatherboard house at 33 (now 17) Elizabeth Street, East Coburg. At the time there was a considerable number of Jewish people living in the area and the need for a place of worship within walking distance was pressing. Small synagogues had already been, or soon would be, established in halls or houses in Brunswick (c1930), Moonee Ponds (1939), Ascot Vale (1951) and Thornbury (1954).<sup>2</sup> Jack initiated prayer services at the Andalusia Dance Hall, 11 Bell Street, on the corner of Younger Street (today used as reception rooms with the old hall hidden by 1960 additions). After some time, however, a split developed and one part of the congregation went off to a new venue at 95 Harding Street, while the rest, remaining with Reverend Jack, met in his home in Elizabeth Street. Here he also conducted a Sunday school for the children.<sup>3</sup>

The Jacobs' home was really too small for these purposes so Jack decided to build a small synagogue and school on one of the adjacent two allotments that he already owned on the south side. The cream building (pictured) was erected in 1955, towards the rear of the nearer allotment. It consisted of a hall nineteen by seven metres with attached workroom and store. Later in the same year, assisted by proceeds from the sale of his first house, Jack built a new brick veneer home in front of it. Ten years later he would erect premises on the remaining allotment at 13 Elizabeth Street in order to remove his business from Fitzroy.

The new synagogue attracted congregations of around thirty people, with up to eighty on the High Holydays. As was usual practice at prayer services, the male part of the congregation sat in the front half of the hall, the females at the rear. Separate entrances were also provided. An Ark for the *Torah*, in the form of a built-in cupboard, stood on a raised platform in the front left corner, while a table for the rabbi was placed near the men's door.

One member of the congregation during two years, 1970–72, was Leah Belleli who was then living in Fawkner. Her younger son attended the Sunday school and had his Bar Mitzvah there. She remembers Jacobs as '... a delightful man'. He was indeed held in high regard. Jewish people from other suburbs were referred to him for help and advice on life and family problems. The University of Melbourne recommended him to Christian ministers who needed someone to teach them Hebrew. But the congregation was aging and by the early 1970s the Sunday school ceased to function. People were also moving out to the more affluent suburbs of Prahran, St Kilda and Caulfield. Numbers fell by half. Then during the last years of his life, Jack was ill and often could not preside at services. When the synagogue closed, its *Torah* scroll was donated to the North-Eastern Jewish Centre at Doncaster.

Jack Zacky Jacobs died on 3 May 1978. His widow then sold number 15 to Robert Tyack who, until the early 1990s, used the hall for his dancing classes.

## SOURCES

Leah Belleli.

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Index of deaths, Fiche 7222D, #09576, Public Record Office, Victoria.

*Sands & McDougall Directories* 1950–74.

David Jacobs, Dianne Jacobs, Gertrude Jacobs, Abraham Lissauer, Leah Schultz, Malcolm J. Turnbull, Robert Tyack.

## NOTES

- 1 An earlier version of this paper, titled 'The Coburg Synagogue', appeared in the *Coburg Historical Society Newsletter*, #45, June 1996. – *Ed.*
- 2 See Lorraine Freeman, 'The Brunswick Talmud Torah: an anecdotal record of the congregation', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal (AJHSJ)* 14(1), 1990; R. Leahcim, 'Catching a *mincha* in Moonee Ponds', *Australian Jewish News*, 23 June 1995; Max Lasky, 'Remembering the Thornbury *shul*', *AJHSJ* 14(1), 1997. – *Ed.*
- 3 The original *minyán*, which relocated from Harding to Barrow Street in the late 1950s and appears to have lasted about 12 years in toto, emphasised the provision of Hebrew and religious education, and generally convened services only on Festivals and the High Holydays. Its outreach also included Purim picnics and other 'entertainments'. ('Beth Yaacov', by contrast, offered regular Shabbat services). According to former honorary

secretary Yetta Rich (interviewed in 1992), the original Coburg group was a 'moderate' congregation which once seriously debated affiliating with Temple Beth Israel! (The suggestion was ultimately vetoed by both the committee and Reverend Claude Schwartz of the Temple). Reverend Jacobs' Elizabeth Street *minyan* appears to have been more 'traditionally-oriented'. — *Ed.*



*Aron Kodesh (Holy Ark)*  
(Courtesy Laurie Burchell)



*Reverend Jack Jacobs*  
(Courtesy Laurie Burchell)

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## JEWIS IN THE 1996 AUSTRALIAN CENSUS

*W. D. Rubinstein*

The Australian government holds a census of population every five years. Each such census has included an optional question of religious identity. Statistics from the censuses for the number of Australians who declare themselves to be Jewish by religion constitute the most basic and far-reaching statistics about Jewish numbers in this country. This *Journal* has, down the years, included reports on the census results by Rabbi Dr Israel Porush, Walter Lippmann, Charles Price and myself, and in this article I hope to continue this series with an analysis of the Australian census taken in April 1996.

It is well-known that the census figures understate the actual number of Jews in Australia. The religious question is an optional one which many people, for whatever reason, choose not to answer. Jews, in particular, often define themselves in purely secular terms as part of an ethnic group rather than a religion. Ascertaining how many Jews there actually are in today's Australia is thus one of the primary aims of the researcher on this subject, bearing in mind that the Census figure is certainly lower than the actual number.

Internationally, many observers of Diaspora Jewry have expressed great concern about demographic trends throughout the world. Unusually low birth rates and high rates of intermarriage and assimilation among Diaspora Jewry may well lead to declining Jewish numbers almost everywhere outside of Israel. Clearly, the trends in Australia are of great interest to see whether they parallel these alarming patterns in other Diaspora societies or whether they are more sanguine. The Australian census also provides much other information about the state of the Jewish community, with data available on immigration and on economic, occupational, and educational matters of considerable importance. Some but by no means all of this other data will also be considered here.<sup>1</sup>

### NATIONAL AND STATE POPULATION TRENDS

Overall, the number of persons declaring themselves to be Jewish by religion in Australia increased by 7.6 percent between the previous census in 1991 and the census of 1996, from 74,186 to 79,805. Between 1986 and 1996 Jewish numbers grew by 15.7 per cent, from 69,008. These highly satisfactory trends were not, however, spread evenly throughout all the states. State-by-state changes in Jewish numbers since 1986 are, in fact, notable for their unevenness. These patterns are set out in the following two tables, which detail changes in Jewish numbers in 1991-96 and 1986-96.

Table 1: Jewish Population by State, 1991-96

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD
1996	505	32,652	146	4,506
1991	530	29,614	143	4,278
Difference	-25	+3,038	+3	+228
	-4.72%	+10.26%	-2.10%	+5.33%

	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Australia
1996	1,164	167	35,963	4,702	79,805
1991	1,304	234	33,862	4,221	74,186
Difference	-140	-67	+2,101	+481	+5,619
	-10.74%	-28.63%	+6.20%	+11.40%	+7.57%

Table 2: Jewish Population by State, 1986 and 1996

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD
1996	505	32,652	146	4,506
1986	501	28,197	98	2,631
Difference	+4	+4,455	+48	+1,875
	+0.80%	+15.80%	+48.98%	+71.27%

	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Australia
1996	1,164	167	35,963	4,702	79,805
1986	1,144	160	32,358	3,919	69,008
Difference	+20	+7	+3,605	+783	+10,797
	+1.75%	+4.38%	+11.14%	+19.98%	+15.65%

Overall the Jewish population of Australia experienced strong growth over the past decade. Indeed, the percentage increase in the number of Australian Jews was slightly higher than the percentage increase in the total population of Australia (which grew by 6.2 per cent between 1991 and 1996). The percentage of Jews in the total Australian population has actually risen in the last three censuses, albeit very slightly, from 0.42 per cent in 1981 to 0.44 per cent in 1991 to 0.45 per cent in 1996. The current Jewish percentage is also very similar to the historical overall percentage of Jews in previous censuses — 0.41 per cent in 1891, 0.40 per cent in 1921, 0.42 per cent in 1947. Only in 1961, when after heavy immigration Jews accounted for 0.56 per cent of the population, was it significantly higher.

In the context of concerns about Jewish population trends in the Diaspora these results are particularly impressive; indeed, extraordinary. The Jewish populations of Britain and South Africa (to say nothing of the former USSR) have experienced declines in this period, while most demographers believe that the Jewish population of the United States has grown only marginally, if at all. Indeed, apart from Australia perhaps only one other significant Diaspora community has experienced stronger population growth in this period. (Paradoxically, this is Germany, whose Jewish population has grown from about 30,000 to perhaps 100,000 in this period, swollen by heavy immigration from Russia.)

Nevertheless, it will be seen that the growth in Jewish numbers has been extremely patchy when viewed on a state-by-state basis. Queensland has experienced remarkable growth over the ten-year period (although it slowed down considerably between 1991 and 1996), while Western Australia and New South Wales showed above average growth. On the other hand, the Jewish populations of Tasmania and South Australia declined alarmingly in the five years from 1991 to 1996, and experienced only marginal increases over the ten-year period. The situation in South Australia in particular presents grounds for concern. In the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territories there were also population decreases, although the numbers there were too small to be very meaningful.

As noted, while these figures are, overall, highly satisfactory, it is certain that they are actually an understatement of the actual number of Jews in Australia. Unfortunately, it is impossible to say whether the same percentage of Jewish persons declared themselves to be Jewish by religion in the censuses of 1986, 1991, and 1996, or whether, for instance, the increase registered in Jewish numbers simply represents a higher percentage of Jews declaring themselves to be Jewish by religion. Nor is it possible to say with any exactitude what this actual higher figure of Jews might be. In recent censuses, about one-quarter of all Australians declared themselves to have 'no religion' or gave 'religion not stated' as an answer to this census question. Most demographers believe that the actual number of Jews in Australia must reflect these national patterns, at least roughly. In the 1996 census, a total of 4,499,473 persons out of the overall Australian population of 17,892,423 gave 'no religion' or 'religion not stated' as their response to the census question on religion, or 25.15 per

cent of the population. Assuming that a similar percentage of Jews did not declare themselves to be Jewish by religion (i.e. that only 74.85 per cent of the actual number of Jews declared themselves to be Jewish by religion) thus brings the actual total of Jews in Australia in 1996 to 106,616. Some demographers would wish to raise this figure slightly again to include persons absent overseas on census day and persons missed by the census enumerators. Assuming a further 2 per cent addition to include these categories raises the overall Jewish population of Australia in April 1996 to 108,748.

This figure may sound high, and some demographers prefer a considerably lower estimate of the percentage of Jews who did not declare themselves to be Jewish by religion, in the order of 10 per cent (which would mean that the actual number of Australian Jews in 1996 was about 89,000). Nevertheless, it should also be noted that the only recent comparison between the census figures and an actual count of Jewish numbers in a state suggests that, on the contrary, there may be far more Jews than the 'no religion/religion not stated' procedure indicates. The Victorian Jewish Welfare Society maintains a master list of all Jewish persons in Victoria which is constantly updated. It goes to great lengths to make this list as accurate as possible, and it makes no sense for the Society to include non-existent persons on this list, as it forms the basis for expensive fundraising mail-outs. In 1991 the Victorian list contained about 47,000 names, compared with 33,862 identified by the Census, an undercount in the range of nearly 39 per cent. There is thus simply no way to ascertain the actual number of Australian Jews with complete accuracy, although a figure in the range of 105,000 seems most plausible.

Jews continue to live overwhelmingly in the capital cities, especially, of course, Melbourne and Sydney. The census totals for each capital city and the percentage of all Jews in each state living in the capital city in 1996 were as follows:

Table 3: Jews in Capital Cities

City	Population	Jews in State, Total	% in Capital
Sydney	31,450	32,652	96.3
Melbourne	35,383	35,963	98.4
Brisbane	1,605	4,506	35.6
Adelaide	1,100	1,164	94.5
Perth	4,487	4,702	95.4
Hobart	97	167	58.1
Darwin	77	146	52.7
Canberra	505	505	100.0

Jews are thus overwhelmingly centred, in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, and the ACT, in their respective capital cities. Only in Queensland (presumably because of the significant Jewish presence on the Gold Coast) is this not the case, nor in the very small communities of Tasmania and the Northern Territory. Because of disproportionately rapid growth in Sydney compared with Melbourne (at least as evidenced by the census figures), the two communities are now nearly the same size, with Sydney nearly 91 per cent as large as Melbourne. In 1996 Jews (according to the census figures) comprised 1.1 per cent of the total population of Melbourne, 0.8 per cent of the total population of Sydney, 0.4 per cent of Perth's total, and much smaller percentages elsewhere. Assuming an undercount of 39 per cent in Melbourne, Jews constituted about 1.5 per cent of the total population.

This pattern of concentration is further evidenced by listing the postcode areas in Australia with the highest percentage of Jews in 1996.

Table 4: Areas with High Concentrations of Jews

Postcode	Area	Jews as Percentage of Population
3161	Caulfield North, Vic.	39.7
3162	Caulfield, Vic.	29.8
2030	Vaucluse, NSW	26.4
2029	Rose Bay, NSW	24.1
3183	St Kilda East, Vic.	22.4
2023	Bellevue Hill, NSW	21.8
2026	Bondi, NSW	16.1
3142	Toorak, Vic.	12.8
3185	Elsternwick, Vic.	12.2
2027	Edgecliff, NSW	11.6
2075	St Ives, NSW	10.3
2022	Bondi Junction, NSW	10.3
2028	Double Bay, NSW	9.6
3187	Brighton East, Vic.	9.2
2025	Woollahra, NSW	8.7
3204	Bentleigh, Vic.	7.3
3165	Bentleigh East, Vic.	6.8
3143	Armadale, Vic.	6.5
3144	Malvern, Vic.	6.0
3184	Elwood, Vic.	5.7
3163	Glen Huntly, Vic.	5.6
2071	Killara, NSW	5.5
2017	Waterloo, NSW	5.4

Not surprisingly, Caulfield's 'golden mile' in Melbourne has the highest concentration of Jews, with three other nearby suburbs high up on the list. Somewhat more surprising are the high percentages of Jews in Vacluse and Rose Bay, Sydney. All of these percentages, incidentally, are probably underestimates of the actual Jewish numbers. Outside of Melbourne and Sydney, however, no suburb anywhere has a concentration of Jews as high as 5 per cent.

### BIRTHPLACE AND AGE STRUCTURE

Australian Jewry was still a largely foreign-born community in 1996, according to the census data. Birthplaces of Australian Jews were as follows:

Table 5: Birthplace of Jews Living in Australia

Birthplace	Male	Female	Total	Percent
Australia	18,247	18,998	37,245	46.7
South Africa	3,764	3,771	7,535	9.4
Poland	2,348	2,453	4,801	6.0
United Kingdom	2,176	2,328	4,504	5.6
Hungary	887	1,110	1,997	2.5
Ukraine	910	1,050	1,960	2.5
Germany	790	1,004	1,794	2.2
USA	738	779	1,517	1.9
Austria	375	515	890	1.1
Romania	366	422	788	1.0
New Zealand	311	404	715	0.9
Egypt	288	342	630	0.8
Other Asia	519	651	1,170	1.5
Other Europe	431	479	910	1.1
Americas	259	258	517	0.6
Former USSR	77	81	158	0.2
Middle East	58	62	120	0.2
Other Oceania	8	20	28	0.0
Other Africa	0	3	3	0.0
Born elsewhere overseas	5,633	6,020	11,653	14.6
Not stated	373	497	870	1.1
Total	38,558	41,247	79,805	100.0

The data here (from the 1996 Census Matrix Table E03PCRAT) is certainly not as good as one might wish. In particular, the 'Former USSR' numbers manifestly understate the number born in Russia, who must be concealed in the 'born elsewhere overseas' category, along with many Israelis and others.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, some patterns are clear. As noted, even in 1996 only a minority of Australian Jews (46.7 per cent) were born in this country. The largest foreign-born category are now the South Africans, who comprise over 9 per cent of

the community. Holocaust refugees and survivors continue to diminish in number, although perhaps not as rapidly as one might imagine. The number of Polish-born Jews, for instance, declined from 5,766 in 1991 (7.9 per cent of the 1991 total) to 4,801 in 1996 (6.0 per cent of the 1996 total), with Germans down from 2,037 to 1,794 and Austrians from 1,093 to 890. Speakers of English as a vernacular throughout their lives are now, however, certainly in a majority, with about 65 per cent of the community born in an English-speaking country. Compared with the 1991 census, a very slightly higher percentage of Australian Jews were born in this country (46.7 per cent, compared to 45.7 per cent in 1991), but the overall pattern is one of stability.

The pattern of the age-structure of the community is spelled out in Table 6, which compares five-year age-cohorts in 1991 and 1996. Perhaps the most alarming thing about this table is the apparent decline of 10.5 per cent among Jews aged 0-4.

Table 6: Age Distribution of Australian Jews, 1991 and 1996

	1991	1996	Change/%
0-4	4,546	4,069	-477/-10.5%
5-9	4,868	5,189	+321/+6.6%
10-14	4,939	5,538	+599/+12.1%
15-19	4,901	5,066	+165/+3.4%
20-24	4,027	5,056	+1,029/+25.5%
25-29	3,752	4,251	+499/+13.3%
30-34	4,846	4,269	-577/-11.9%
35-39	5,795	5,546	-249/-4.3%
40-44	6,935	6,503	-432/-6.2%
45-49	4,493	7,429	+2,936/+65.3%
50-54	3,226	4,632	+1,406/+43.6%
55-59	2,717	3,380	+663/+24.4%
60-64	3,311	3,017	-294/-8.9%
65-69	4,390	3,630	-760/-17.3%
70-74	3,692	4,397	+705/+19.1%
75+	6,749	7,833	+1,084/+16.1%

There are some reasons, however, for believing that this is in large measure the result of census underreporting rather than actual fact. A more relevant examination of the 1991 and 1996 data would be to compare the 1991 statistics with the cohort five years later, i.e. to compare 0-4 year olds in 1991 with 5-9 year olds in 1996, 5-9 year olds in 1991 with 10-14 year olds in 1996, etc.

(Obviously, each age cohort of 1991 was five years older in 1996.) Taking the first three age-cohorts of 1991 and comparing them with the relevant cohort five years later, however, reveals some curious findings:

Table 7

Age in 1991	Number	Age in 1996	Number	Change/%
0-4	4,546	5-9	5,189	+643/+14.1%
5-9	4,868	10-14	5,538	+670/+13.8%
10-14	4,939	15-19	5,066	+127/+2.6%

Some of these apparent increases between 1991 and 1996 will be accounted for by either immigration from overseas or conversion to Judaism, although they must be balanced by deaths, emigration overseas, and conversions to other religions. It seems likely, however, that the net increases found here cannot wholly be accounted for by these factors, and that there must be significant underreporting of very young Jews in the census figures, for reasons which are obscure and ill-explored.

At the other end of the age scale, Jews have significantly higher percentages of elderly people than the general population. In 1996, about 18.8 per cent of Australian Jews were aged 70 or older, compared with only 10.6 per cent of the total Australian population. There are many reasons for this, which is a feature of most Diaspora communities. The 'demographic transition' to smaller families occurred earlier among Jews than many other peoples, with the huge families so common prior to 1914 being typically replaced by much smaller families shortly afterwards. There is some evidence that the Jewish lifespan is considerably higher than the national average, assisted by the excellent Jewish welfare network and the widespread notion of family responsibility. In any case, the very significant number of elderly Jews in Australia represents a great challenge for Jewish fundraising, especially as very many of today's elderly are Holocaust survivors who are suffering all of the psychological traumas of the survivor generation.

One interesting point is that a considerably higher percentage of Jews than non-Jews is married. Among persons aged 15 or over, the 1996 percentage statistics were as follows:

Table 8: Marital Status

	All Jewish Females	All Females	All Jewish Males	All Males
Married	54.4	52.3	61.2	54.3
Never Married	21.3	26.9	27.5	34.2
Separated	2.4	3.6	2.5	3.2
Divorced	6.9	7.1	5.5	5.8
Widowed	14.9	10.2	3.3	2.5

According to these statistics, 3.4 per cent of Jews are in *de facto* marriages, compared with 5.7 per cent of Anglicans, 4.8 per cent of Catholics, 3.8 per cent of Uniting Church adherents, 10.2 per cent of 'no religion' respondents and 4.9 per cent of 'religion not stated' respondents. These statistics seem to point to a Jewish community which is stable and conservative in Australian terms.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA

The questions asked by the census also provide a good deal of interesting socio-economic data on the Jewish community, only some of which can be considered here. Compared with the Australian population as a whole, individual weekly incomes among Australian Jews was as follows:

Table 9: Weekly Individual Incomes (By percent of total population aged 15 or more), Jews and Australian Population, 1996

Income	Jews	All Australians
\$0 - \$79	11.4	12.4
\$80 - \$159	11.5	16.0
\$160 - \$299	17.6	22.2
\$300 - \$499	16.5	20.2
\$500 - \$699	14.1	14.0
\$700 - \$999	12.6	9.5
\$1000 - \$1499	7.6	3.8
\$1500+	8.7	1.9

The data here is rather 'raw' and is not really meaningful without knowing such things as the age and marital status of the respondents. Nevertheless, several things are clear. About 16.3 per cent of Australian Jews had an individual income in 1996 of \$1000 per week (\$52,000 per year) or more, compared with 5.7 per cent of the Australian population, that is, nearly three times as high. On the other hand, an even larger percentage of Jews (22.9 per cent) had a weekly income of \$159 or less (\$8268 per year), only slightly less than the percentage among all Australians (28.4). While it is not clear from the figures as presented how many of these Jews are actually poor — it would seem, for example, that university students are included here — it is certainly the case that not all Jews are rich: surprisingly few, in fact.

Data also exists about the highest level of educational qualification obtained by Australian Jews aged 15 or over. By age and sex, the totals were as follows:

Table 10: Highest Level of Qualification among Jews 15 years of age and over, by sex

Qualification	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Higher degree	2,447	6.3	1,339	3.2	3,786	4.7
Postgrad. diploma	624	1.6	1,366	3.3	1,990	2.5
Bachelor degree	7,681	19.9	6,335	15.4	14,016	17.6
Undergrad. diploma	1,200	3.1	2,164	5.2	3,364	4.2
Associate Diploma	778	2.0	847	2.1	1,625	2.0
Skilled vocational qualification	2,648	6.9	995	2.4	3,643	4.6
Basic vocational qualification	428	1.1	1,048	2.5	1,476	1.8
Inadequately described	388	1.0	554	1.3	942	1.2
Not stated	3,010	7.8	4,722	11.4	7,732	9.7
Not applicable	19,356	50.2	21,875	53.0	41,231	51.7
Total	38,560		41,245		79,805	

Among all Australians in 1996 (and not divided by gender), 2.7 per cent held a higher degree, 7.7 per cent a bachelor's degree, 6.1 per cent a diploma, and 10.7 per cent skilled vocational qualification. Here again, the Jewish overrepresentation at the top levels is extremely impressive, especially among women, and particularly in view of the fact that so many older Jews were born in countries like Poland with severe anti-semitic restrictions or were Holocaust survivors, and were often unable to obtain more than a minimal education. The celebrated Jewish 'emphasis on education' appears to be no less true in Australia than elsewhere.

### INTERMARRIAGE PATTERNS

One of the most controversial and potentially disturbing areas of research into Jewish demography concerns intermarriage patterns. From the census data, it is possible to ascertain how many people described as Jewish by religion are married to persons who are members of other religions, or none. Research on this question in the 1996 census has been conducted by Dr Suzanne Rutland and A.C. Gariano, in the context of a more general study of intermarriage among all Australian religious groups.<sup>3</sup> Very high rates of intermarriage in other Diaspora societies are among the most disturbing aspects of modern Jewish life, with intermarriage rates in the United States said to be approaching 50 per cent. According to the data assembled from recent censuses by Gariano and Rutland, in 1996 15.6 per cent of married Jewish males and 12.3 per cent of married Jewish females were married to spouses who did not declare their own religion to be Judaism, or a total of 14.1 per cent of all married Jews.<sup>4</sup> This represented an increase in intermarriage rates of 1.1 per cent for males and 0.9 per cent for females since 1991.<sup>5</sup> However as noted in their article (and in debate in the *Australian Jewish News* and elsewhere with me) these figures cannot be taken at face value. In the first place, many of the non-Jewish spouses of Jews gave 'no religion' or 'religion not stated' as answer to the religious question. It is not improbable that many of these persons are actually Jewish by ethnicity. Excluding such persons reduces Jewish intermarriage rates from 14.2 to 10.2 per cent. This still, however, represents a one per cent increase over 1991.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, it seems plausible to me that some intermarried Jews fell into one of three other categories: recent ex-Soviet immigrants (who were married before their arrival here), divorced and remarried persons, and persons married relatively later in life, and who remained single until then. In addition, older intermarried couples will be the products of Australia before the establishment of the Jewish day school network and of ethnic assertiveness, and represent the associational patterns of many decades ago. Much further work with the census data needs to be done, in my opinion, to ascertain the actual facts of the matter. Finally, these statistics say little about the education or upbringing of the children of intermarried couples. Some of these may, for instance, receive their education at a Jewish day school and regard themselves as part of the Jewish community.<sup>7</sup>

It is also very clear that intermarriage rates increase astronomically as one moves away from the core centres of Jewish life, especially in Victoria. By state, the percentage of Jews married to a non-Jew (including 'no religion' and 'religion not stated' adherents) in 1996 was: Victoria, 9.2 per cent; New South Wales, 15.2; Western Australia, 18.6; South Australia, 36.5; Queensland, 36.8; ACT, 49.0; Tasmania, 61.2; Northern Territories 64.7.<sup>8</sup> The extraordinary rates of intermarriage in the smaller states clearly represent the lack of purely Jewish associational networks there, especially the day schools, as well as the small numbers of potential Jewish marriage partners.

Finally, there are several further points to be made here. First, the intermarriage rate among Australian Jews continues to be remarkably low by international standards, and there is no real evidence of the very alarming trends found elsewhere. Secondly, the key questions of all are how many young Jews, in their twenties and thirties, who intend to have children, are intermarrying, whether there are more than in the past, and whether their children will be raised as Jews. Unfortunately, the Census data cannot answer these questions, certainly without much more detailed evidence from very sophisticated census computer tapes. Researchers in the Jewish community ought definitely to pursue this data as far as possible. Thirdly, in a pluralistic democracy where levels of anti-Semitism are minimal it is inevitable that intermarriage will sometimes occur. The Australian Jewish community can counteract any trends to greater intermarriage only through extraordinary efforts, especially the establishment of a widespread day school system, which it has done very successfully for the past fifty years. It is not self-evident what further steps it can realistically take to counteract intermarriage trends, if indeed these actually exist.

## CONCLUSION

On the face of it, Australian Jewry seemed to be in remarkably good form in 1996. It is growing; it is relatively successful; intermarriage rates are low. Nevertheless, there were also a number of disturbing trends, especially regarding conditions in the smaller states, the very high number of elderly Jews, the apparent existence of a body of relatively poor Jews, and a possible trend to greater intermarriage. More basically, it is unclear whether the persistent inability of successive Australian governments genuinely to ameliorate the failings of the economy would not eventually have very deleterious effects on the Jewish community. With its heavy reliance on fee-paying higher education, an extensive voluntary welfare system, and donations to Israeli and Jewish causes, the structure of the Jewish community appears to be especially vulnerable to economic downturns. Moreover, the very deep divisions within the Jewish world at the present time may well grow stronger once the sources of unity disappear (such as the former struggle for Soviet Jewry) or arguably become less central (such as all-out support for Israel). Serious question marks thus hang over many aspects of Australian Jewry's future — more, perhaps, than at any time since the Second World War — although they are certainly not yet reflected in the census statistics.

NOTES

- 1 Most of the 1996 census data was provided to me by the Reverend Philip Hughes of East Ringwood, Victoria, head of the Christian Research Association, which publishes a series of government-funded reports and pamphlets on the major religious bodies in Australia, (including non-Christian bodies). The 1991 data comes largely from the pamphlet I wrote for the 'Religious Community Profiles' series commissioned by Reverend Hughes, *Judaism in Australia* (Canberra, 1995).
- 2 A clue as to the actual number of recent ex-Soviet Jews is that in 1996 7,023 Australian Jews spoke Russian in the home, or 9.3 per cent of all Jews who responded to this census question. This is probably the second most numerous language spoken by Australian Jews. (52,513 spoke only English and 8,751 'other' languages, which presumably includes Yiddish and possibly [though not certainly] Hebrew.) The total number of Jews in this Census table, for whatever reason, was only 75,737.
- 3 A.C. Gariano and S.D. Rutland, 'Religious Intermix: 1996 Census Update,' *People and Place*, Vol. 5 No. 4 (1997). (*People and Place* is published quarterly by the Centre for Population and Urban Research, Monash University.) I am most grateful to Dr Rutland for sending me a copy of this article, in connection with a revision of my *Judaism in Australia* booklet.
- 4 Ibid., Table 5, p. 12.
- 5 Ibid. The number of married Australian Jews increased by 7.9 per cent in the period 1991-96, from 31,892 to 34,390.
- 6 Ibid., p. 13. In 1991, 7.9 per cent of married Jews were married to spouses with 'religion not stated' and 3.4 per cent of those with 'no religion.' Among spouses who definitely declared themselves to have another religion, 3.4 per cent (1,230 out of 36,207 Jews) were Anglicans, 3.4 per cent (1,223) Catholics, and 0.8 per cent (307) United Church adherents. (Rubinstein, *Judaism in Australia*, Table 12, p. 44.)
- 7 A spouse who was not born a Jew but has formally converted to Judaism is, of course, regarded as a Jew in the census statistics (which are self-defined as answers to the census question).
- 8 Ibid., Table 6, p. 16.



## THE REVEREND ISIDORE MYERS (1856–1922)

*Malcolm J. Turnbull*

In view of this country's geographic isolation and remoteness from the centres of international Judaism, Australian Jewry seems to have been singularly fortunate in the clergymen it was able to attract during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Hilary Rubinstein has noted, any suggestion that the antipodean congregations tended to be served by clerical 'second-raters' fails to take into account the contributions of such outstanding figures as Joseph Abrahams, Elias Blaubaum, Francis Lyon Cohen or Israel Brodie.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, the lengthy and productive careers of Moses Rintel, Alexander B. Davis, Abraham T. Boas, Isack Morris, Jacob Lenzer, Israel M. Goldreich, David I. Freedman and (of course) Jacob Danglow, testify to the considerable skills these men often brought to turbulent congregational arenas, and speak eloquently of the respect each one of them earned over many decades, within both the Jewish and wider communities.<sup>2</sup>

Nor was there any lack of talent among those clergymen/rabbis whose Australian careers were of briefer duration: such often colourful beings as Isidore Bramson, Adolphus T. Chodowski, Abraham F. Ornstien, Abraham Eber Hirschowitz, the controversial Dattner Jacobson (once judged 'the finest Talmudist, and most undisciplined soul, who ever officiated as Rabbi in Australia'),<sup>3</sup> and so on. This paper examines the life and career of one such highly skilled (and, to date, surprisingly neglected) individual, Isidore Myers. Various described by his contemporaries as 'an extraordinary and remarkable man', 'one of the cleverest young men the community ever had', and 'a splendid fellow and real genius' (who managed to combine in himself 'the gentleness ... of a St Francis Assisi', the 'enthusiasm ... of a Savonarola', and the 'self-devotion ... of a St Francis Xavier'(!)),<sup>4</sup> Myers grew up in Melbourne and ministered to two Victorian congregations in the 1880s before settling in North America, where his activities included a brief association with Hollywood and the motion picture industry.

A certain amount of haziness surrounds much of Myers' life, not least his childhood. We know that he was born at Suwalki in Poland on 15 February 1856, and that he was the only child (probably) of Myer (later known as Morris) Myers, Hebrew teacher, and his first wife Rose, whose maiden name was possibly also Myers. The family name was originally Lichtenstein.<sup>5</sup> On the basis of available information, we can speculate that Morris Myers left his wife and infant son behind in Poland, in a bid to better the family's circumstances through emigration. After a short stay in the United States of America, he settled in Victoria, Australia in 1859, and earned his living selling religious books and articles and providing tuition in Hebrew. Young Isidore spent his childhood in Poland, in the Souvalki and Kalwarya district; it seems

likely that his mother died there, prompting him to join his father in far-off Australia.<sup>6</sup> He arrived in Melbourne, aged 13, in 1869.

The boy was clearly what we would now term 'gifted' intellectually. Unable to speak a word of English on arrival (according to the veteran Jewish educator Joel Fredman), he distinguished himself after only a few months at Common School 180 (Melbourne's Jewish Day school) by reciting 'God Speed the Right' at the annual prize-giving ceremony.<sup>7</sup> He enrolled at Scotch College in 1870, matriculating two years later, when the *Australian Israelite* noted that he was Dux of the school in Classics and that his name appeared on the College's Prize list 'no less than six times'.<sup>8</sup> Well-schooled at home by his father in Talmud, Hebrew and Jewish History, he studied part-time throughout the 1870s towards an Arts degree at Melbourne University, graduating in 1882.

Myers quickly made a name for himself within the local Jewish community. It was at his suggestion that the Melbourne Jewish Literary and Debating Society was inaugurated in 1871. The Society, under the chairmanship of journalist Solomon Joseph, provided the forum for him to nurture his decided talent for public speaking,<sup>9</sup> and he soon earned a reputation as a lecturer and elocutionist, able to keep audiences 'profitably entertained' with his set pieces on Mark Twain, the Talmud and American Humorists. Myers similarly spearheaded the foundation of a weekly Hebrew Literary study group and served as that group's instructor. Following in his father's footsteps, he initially earned his living teaching Hebrew and Religious Studies for the East Melbourne Congregation's Sabbath School and at after-hours classes (four evenings a week) at the Trades and Independent Halls. He was appointed as East Melbourne's first permanent congregational secretary in 1876 but soon found himself at loggerheads with veteran President Henri J. Hart. Resentful at being treated as a 'lackey' by the older man, and angered by Hart's refusal to withdraw certain 'unwarranted remarks' about the quality of his work, Myers chose the line of least resistance and did not stand for re-election after his first term of office.<sup>10</sup> There are indications<sup>11</sup> that he subsequently spent an unfulfilling period (probably teaching) in Sydney before taking up his first pulpit, at Sandhurst (Bendigo) in 1880.

By his own account, the young man entered the Jewish ministry reluctantly. Believing himself 'in danger of being drawn into the profession' from childhood, he reportedly 'struggled hard' against his 'fate' — more out of feelings of personal inadequacy than out of any antipathy to the clerical life. ('His ideal of a minister was so high', he insisted, 'that he never hoped to reach it'.) Intervention by the terminally ill Reverend Moses Rintel ultimately caused him to change his mind; Rintel summoned Morris Myers to his deathbed and urged the teacher to induce his son to replace Reverend Isack Stone at Sandhurst.<sup>12</sup> As it turned out, Sandhurst provided the young man with a congenial apprenticeship: he proved immediately popular with his 'flock' who took a distinct pride in the skills of their 'prodigy'. Re-elected unanimously at the end of his first year, he was allowed considerable flexibility in the performance of his duties, including permission to travel to Melbourne frequently to examine pupils at the East Melbourne Hebrew School, to preach at the Albert Street shul on special occasions, or to supplement his income by

delivering public lectures at the Athenaeum Club or Independent Theatre in Russell Street. In August–September 1882, the committee readily gave its blessing to a tour he undertook throughout central Victoria, fund-raising for persecuted Russian Jewry on behalf of the Anglo-Jewish Association. Myers gave his services gratuitously for the tour which saw him convene meetings as far afield as Daylesford, Echuca, Woodend and the Riverina. He collected over 500 pounds in the course of the mission.<sup>13</sup>

Myers worked hard (via guest-preaching stints, contributions to urban activities, and scholarly pursuits) to ensure that rural isolation did not prevent his being active in the broader Jewish community. On one occasion, he intervened between warring factions of the Melbourne and East Melbourne congregations (at odds over the Board of Advice) and managed to effect a degree of *rapprochement*. (Nothing came of his proposal that the two synagogues amalgamate, however). He joined clerical colleagues Blaubaum (of St Kilda) and Goldreich in reconsecration services for the Ballarat *shul*, and during the 1884 High Holydays, he kindly played host to the maverick Dr Dattner Jacobson and Jacobson's daughter at Sandhurst. We can speculate that the visit marked the beginning of a lengthy, albeit disrupted, romance between Myers and Anna Jacobson; they would marry in the United States thirteen years later.<sup>14</sup>

During his Sandhurst ministry, Myers also ventured into print on a number of occasions. Foremost among his publications were two poems: a 'much admired' 250-line sermon in verse, delivered from the pulpit on New Year 1882, and issued (at a shilling a copy) the following year; and *The Casket and the Jewels*, originally delivered during a lecture for the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute in 1882, and published in Melbourne two years later. *The Casket and the Jewels* was a metrical rendering (in thirty-one stanzas) of the Talmudic tale of Rabbi Meir, his wife Beruriah, and the sudden death of their two sons. A review of the booklet in the *Jewish Herald* praised Myers' 'flow of language' and 'wealth of imagery' and assessed that the subject had been 'ably treated'.<sup>15</sup>

Appointed though he was 'against his will and wish', Myers remained at Sandhurst for five years and later recalled his time there with much affection.<sup>16</sup> His departure was greeted with regret on all sides. He was farewelled formally at an 'entertainment' (before 'a thoroughly representative audience') at the Royal Princess Theatre, for which he was both guest-of-honour and star performer. The versatile young scholar dutifully impressed the assembly with his 'efforts in elocution', which included a recitation of 'The Death of General Gordon', a lecturette on Shakespeare (who he dubbed 'this sire of poets, sun of dramatists, renowned philosopher and theologian of the highest order'), and a display of 'artificial memory' ('heartily applauded') in which Myers 'arranged sixty figures read out by the audience in six columns, ten deep, upon a blackboard, and then after committing them to memory, read them forwards and backwards, and added up the columns'. He was duly presented with a parting gift of one hundred sovereigns by the Mayor of Sandhurst, who eulogised: 'Forgetting differences in nationality and religion, the public were one in their appreciation of a man possessing such a manly and upright heart as Mr Myers did'. Myers 'has earned for himself very much respect in all

circles', observed the *Bendigo Advertiser*, 'and his abilities are such as to have rendered his services at all times of much value'.<sup>17</sup> He concluded his performance with an acrostic poem 'Farewell to Sandhurst', which read in part:

T he days that were so happy and benight  
 O h, never during life shall I forget  
 S trange and unknown I came here, sad as night,  
 A nd now I'm leaving, leaving with regrets,  
 N or shall through lapse of time or distant place  
 D ear love and friendship from my heart depart  
 H ow clear the records which we fondly trace  
 U pon the living tablets of the heart  
 R eceive my warmest thanks to every friend  
 S ome debt for kindly words or deeds I owe,  
 T o one and all may God his blessing send  
     from Heaven above and the mines below.

Years later, Bendigo locals would continue to remember the young Jewish minister glowingly, for his 'charitable work and elocutionary entertainments'.<sup>18</sup>

Myers' object in returning to Melbourne was to train as a lawyer. He commenced studying for the Bar in 1885, and augmented his income delivering lectures. However, his studies were interrupted (permanently, as it turned out) by the latest in a series of calls for him to take up the pulpit of the East Melbourne Synagogue.

As I noted earlier, the youthful Myers served a term as congregational secretary at East Melbourne and also taught at the Sabbath School there during the 1870s, and he maintained a close association with Albert Street throughout his Sandhurst ministry. East Melbourne's Correspondence books indicate that he applied for the post of spiritual leader there after the death of the Reverend Rintel (he lost out to the more experienced Reverend A.D. Wolinski on that occasion.) Following Wolinski's departure from Melbourne in 1882, a deputation from Albert Street lobbied Myers to fill the vacant post but their petition coincided with his all-consuming tour of rural Victoria on behalf of Russian Jewry, and he advised the delegates to seek out a more needy applicant (someone with a wife and family to support, for instance). While still at Sandhurst, however, he allowed his name to be put forward (by his father) when the congregation advertised for a permanent minister a year later.<sup>19</sup>

The selection process proved to be singularly drawn out and acrimonious, and it was complicated by a late (and very controversial) application by Dr Dattner Jacobson. One section of the congregation loudly favoured importing an old-fashioned combination *mohel-shochet-chazan*, while a more progressive element just as loudly urged the need for a preacher ('the rising generation ... [being] sadly in want of English lectures and proper religious instruction'). The blind solicitor Ber Rapiport was particularly vocal in his support for Myers, deeming the young man 'the most fit and competent' applicant for the job, and one likely to prove, in time, 'an ornament to the congregation'. (He also had the advantage of being both 'on the spot' and

well-known to the committee). A more cautious Philip Perlstein conceded that Myers was 'a lecturer who could not be surpassed anywhere', but expressed reservations about his lack of cantorial credentials. (Myers was 'definitely not a *chazan*', sniffed J.E. Stone).<sup>20</sup>

Troubled by the dissension unleashed by the selection debate (a succession of stormy meetings saw one after another committee-member resign in outrage), Myers withdrew his application (as did Dattner Jacobson) and no appointment was made. Despite its rather cavalier treatment of him, however, he continued to help out East Melbourne by preaching on special occasions, including the 1885 High Holydays, and in March 1886 he agreed (grudgingly) to act as minister *pro tem*, on condition the committee try to recruit a suitable man from 'home'. Subsequently elected to the post *in absentia* ('against my wish and without my consent and notwithstanding my avowed resolution that I would not accept the office even if offered to me'), he bowed to the inevitable and took on the job formally at the beginning of 1887.<sup>21</sup>



Contemporary chroniclers describe Myers as having been a creative, intensely energetic being, whose multiple congregational and extra-curricular activities encompassed organising a choir at Albert Street, supervising the congregation's Hebrew school, mounting Adult education classes in Hebrew, and teaching English to Yiddish-speaking members of his 'Jewish Intellectual and Social Improvement Society'. He founded and served as first President of the Melbourne Hebrew Choral Society, lectured in Hebrew at Trinity College,<sup>22</sup> and found time to make his own contributions to Jewish scholarship (notably his metrical translations of 'Sayings of the Sages' and 'The Lamentations of Jeremiah', published in the *Jewish Herald*).<sup>23</sup> One observer dubbed him 'with

the exception of Rabbi Abrahams of the Bourke-Street Congregation ... without peer in point of scholarship and eloquence in the Australasian rabbinate'; a gifted linguist, he was reportedly competent or better in Hebrew, Aramaic, Yiddish, Greek, Latin, French, German and Sanskrit.<sup>24</sup>

Myers' ministry at East Melbourne was very much a blend of old and new. The product of both a traditional Eastern European religious training (per his father) and secular studies at Scotch College and Melbourne University, he was best known within the wider community for his English lectures/sermons, yet was still sufficiently 'old world' to preach a traditional Yiddish *drosha* on Festival afternoons.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, he formed a *Beth Hamedrash* in 1890 (although he utilised it primarily to help recent immigrants become familiar with the English language).<sup>26</sup> The Reverend Louis Mendelssohn (1868–1948), with whom he became friendly during Mendelssohn's short term as headmaster of the Hebrew school, once described him as 'a cross between a large-hearted English priest and a Russian "maggid"'.<sup>27</sup>

As a preacher, Myers subscribed to the Victorian-age preference for fulsome discourses. Goldman writes: 'An indication of the respect in which the East Melbournites held him is shown by the fact that many still came to listen to him although they knew him for his lengthy sermons, which sometimes lasted for a duration of one and a quarter hours'.<sup>28</sup> 'The rousing and impressive eloquence of your sermons has been a distinguishing feature of your ministry', seems to have been the majority critical assessment of his oratorical efforts in Melbourne (although occasional complaints were voiced at his wordiness: 'the English of Mr Myers was certainly too high-flown' for one recent immigrant, a Mr Rosenbloom).<sup>29</sup> Important as delivering sermons might be, however (in this regard he subscribed to the Anglo-Orthodox model of the Jewish clergyman), Myers recognised that it was only one of 'the multifarious and arduous duties' which made up his job.

In the synagogue to preach, in the school to instruct, in the home and in the street, everywhere and always are to be found opportunity and occasion where the services of the minister may be turned to good account.

The conscientious cleric 'must be in touch with the spirit of the day', he acknowledged.

[He] is a living emblem of all the institutions, charitable or otherwise, combined. He is a hospital, a benevolent asylum, a prison, a post office and a lunatic asylum personified ... It is he alone who knows to the full extent the sacrifice of time, money and health that he is necessarily being called upon to make ...<sup>30</sup>

Statements such as these were much more than mere rhetoric; Myers was wholeheartedly committed to his clerical ideal and his personal vision of Jewish traditions and demands, and he more than practised what he 'preached'. An anonymous contributor to the *Australasian Hebrew* (probably the paper's editor, and former East Melbourne secretary and teacher, Jacob Goldstein) once paid tribute to his fervour:

Myers was an active man, active in body, mind and sympathy. He would engage in a dispute with a ferocious police magistrate on behalf of some poor foreign Jew in the morning;

bury an outcast Jew in consecrated ground, against the express injunction of his President,<sup>31</sup> in the afternoon; engage nurses and doctors (whom he paid out of his own pocket) to attend to some dying person in the evening; attend a meeting of the University Union after dinner, keeping the room in a roar with his humour and witticisms; then possibly finish up his day by long discussions with a few learned clerics till past midnight.

The same source tells us that Myers' 'belief in the mission of Jews and the divinity of Judaism amounted to mysticism', and that 'his benevolence was practically a craze'.<sup>32</sup> ('He was essentially a bohemian ... who would literally give away his coat to a brother in need', once recalled Mendelssohn).<sup>33</sup> Even so, continues the *Australasian Hebrew*,

It must not be supposed ... that Isidore Myers was 'an innocent'. He was a shrewd, observant man, with a great sense of humour. If we take *eccentric* to mean 'with a centre different to that of most men', he was eccentric. His being was not centred round *self*, unless in the sense that all humanity was 'his other self'.

There are many good stories of his peculiar humour, of which it may be worth while to quote one or two. He called at the office of a fire-insurance company to pay a premium due. The clerk struck him as an ingenuous-looking youth. Dismissing all expression from his face, except that of an eager desire for information, Myers asked: 'This insures the house against fire for the next twelve months, does it?' 'Yes', was the reply. 'What notice must we give you when we have a fire?' was the next question. 'Eh? What?', said the startled youth. 'Haven't we got to give you notice beforehand?' 'No, what do you mean?' 'Oh, thank you so much, I only wanted to know.' That clerk is still puzzling over the reverend arsonist.

When he was leaving the Congregation at Bendigo, they presented him with a purse of sovereigns. His father, Mr Morris Myers, went up from Melbourne to be present at the ceremony. A local reporter asked Myers, junior: 'Who is that gentleman?' 'My father', was the reply. 'Your father!' (in great surprise), 'he looks very young to be your father.' 'Yes, so he does', said Myers without moving a muscle of his face, 'but it was by another mother'. 'Oh, I see', said the pressman, apparently satisfied with the explanation.<sup>34</sup>

Myers prided himself on being a 'rational Jew'. He deplored what he saw as the bigotry and superstition which had crept into Judaism during the centuries of Jewish persecution: 'If the genius of Judaism, which had found development for hundreds of years, had not been arrested in its growth by mediaeval barbarism, the Judaism of today would have been a grander and a nobler thing than it is'.<sup>35</sup> As an Orthodox clergyman and scholar, he resolutely opposed the Reform movement then evolving in Britain (and by extension, locally), and he would continue to do so in later clerical 'incarnations' at Montreal and San Francisco; at the same time, he dutifully saw Chief Rabbi Adler's concession to prayers in English as realistic. Myers recognised that a large percentage of the community failed to attend service 'for the want of an intelligible system of prayer', and speculated that his flock would feel nearer to God 'if some of the prayers were said in English'.<sup>36</sup> ('It was absurd to suppose that in a modern community religion would die out if the Hebrew language were not retained').<sup>37</sup>

Yet, as a dedicated Hebrew scholar himself, Myers saw prayers in the vernacular as a remedial measure, designed to maintain synagogue attendances, and no alternative to a thorough grounding in the Holy tongue. In order for

Jews to be able to read sacred literature in the original, he advocated systematic Jewish education from infancy. 'Hebrew was one of the easiest languages to learn, if properly taught', he declared, and in line with this sentiment, he established a Jewish Infant Day school in 1889. His philosophy of training children in Hebrew and Jewish studies exclusively for one year prior to their attending secular schools was dismissed as 'Utopian' by Reverend Blaubaum, the editor of the *Jewish Herald*. (Blaubaum was decidedly sceptical about the practicality and educational rationale of such an approach).<sup>38</sup>

Myers' four year tenure at East Melbourne was, in many ways, a successful one. He was credited at the time with having revitalised the congregation from its 'low ebb' (in part due to the lack of spiritual leadership following Reverend Wolinski's departure) to relative prosperity by the end of the decade, and most of the members were sincerely sorry to see him go. Of course, East Melbourne's well-earned reputation for volatility ensured that not all was 'smooth sailing'. Almost inevitably, Myers came into conflict with congregational factions or individuals from time to time. Goldman notes that 'the most orthodox of the Eastern Europeans [at Albert Street] could not complain about Myers' piety and energy as a minister', yet the fact that he was unmarried, that he did not sport a beard, and had had a secular education, sorely aggravated some members —most notably the resolutely observant Woolf Davis, who set up his own *minyán* as a result.<sup>39</sup> On one occasion, Myers was the victim of a baseless rumour that he had deliberately eaten *trifah* meat at a wedding reception; indeed, a charge to that effect was levelled by East Melbourne's cantankerous *shochet*, Reverend Simon Greenbaum, and the minister was called upon to explain himself to the committee. Greenbaum subsequently withdrew the accusation and apologised, but Myers must have strongly resented the implied slur on his standard of ritual observance.<sup>40</sup>

He was troubled throughout his tenure by his 'starvation salary' and by the committee's very real dereliction of its duty to him in this regard. 'A Talmudic proverb says, 'Woe is me if I speak, woe is me if I am silent'', he lamented in a letter to the committee in which he castigated his employers for not having paid him money still owing from two years earlier. (His salary was still only a niggardly 300 pounds per annum at the end of his tenure).<sup>41</sup> However, while 'never having benefited to the extent of a pound by his connection with the congregation', he ultimately cited persistent problems with East Melbourne's lay leadership as the cause of his departure.<sup>42</sup> Shortly before the 1889 High Holydays he surprised the members by announcing his resignation, to be effective from the following April. Despite concerted efforts by the committee and rank-and-file, he refused categorically to reconsider his decision.

Myers' decision stemmed from a backlog of minor grievances, and a general frustration at the difference between his and the committee's conception of his role and status within the congregation. ('The truth was they were not in accord with his view of what a minister was'). Insisting that he was 'not a servant of servants, but a servant of God', he denounced the 'ignoble and un-Jewish practice' of treating a spiritual leader as a mere paid official (to do so 'was to rob him of all that was dear to him'). He vowed that he would 'die for

the principles he had learned rather than bow to the mere *fiat* of a layman', and maintained that:

... it was only among English-speaking Jewish communities that he had found the holy and lofty calling of a minister of religion so degradingly estimated as a matter of pounds, shillings and pence.<sup>43</sup>

Myers stated that he had felt 'out of sympathy' with every committee he had worked 'under', and the congregation's records suggest that his complaints were justified. East Melbourne's correspondence books contain frequent calls by one or other executive for the minister to account for seeming neglect of duty or extra-numerary activity. (Examples include Myers' failure to appear for the consecration of a tombstone, his officiating at funerals without the President's permission, a failure to notify the executive of his lecturing work at the University of Melbourne). The final catalyst appears to have been a curt (and deeply resented) reminder that he was required to attend *all* synagogue services.<sup>44</sup>

Predictably, formal discussion of the reasons for Myers' resignation underlined a fundamental polarisation among members over the issue of the clergyman as employee. One faction, dominated by President Philip Perlstein, secretary Jacob Goldstein and Barnett Sniders, posited that 'it was a serious mistake to view the minister as a salaried official', that Myers had never been accorded his due respect by some of East Melbourne's lay leaders, and more recently, had been treated with contempt in some quarters. (Treasurer Mendel Cohen was accused directly of having insulted the cleric). Another faction adhered to the view that, ultimately, the minister was engaged and paid by the congregation and was therefore answerable to its administrators. Declared Solomon Finkelstein: 'The minister should not be allowed to have more power than the Pope ... the committee would have failed in the duty they owed to the members had they allowed Mr Myers to neglect his duties'. Ber Rapiport, who had lobbied strongly for Myers to be appointed five years earlier, seems to have become disillusioned with his protege over the intervening period; arguing that he could refute completely any criticism Myers might level at the executives 'of the last few years' ('they [the committee] had far greater cause of complaint against Mr Myers than he had against them'), he endorsed wholeheartedly 'the province and duty of the executive to keep the minister and all officials to their duties'. Rapiport's faction had the support of the minister's clerical colleague, Elias Blaubaum; in a patronising 'dig' at the younger man, Blaubaum snidely ascribed Myers' inconsistencies to inexperience, and implied that it served East Melbourne right anyway, for not having had its spiritual leader's credentials approved by the Chief Rabbi.<sup>45</sup>

The issue was probably unresolvable, and it seems likely, also, that Myers felt the need of a new challenge. According to the *Australasian Hebrew*, 'he felt cramped in the colonies. Life was too dull; there was much to be done in the world; he wanted a wider spiritual atmosphere'.<sup>46</sup> His own unrelenting idealism was another factor: 'Preaching was easy, but practice was difficult', he said, implying that he had failed to meet his own high standards and so was leaving 'to seek a place where his ideal would not seem strange'.<sup>47</sup>

That Myers, popular and respected though he might be, was altogether too uncompromising (and undiplomatic) a man for the average, prosaic and politics-ridden congregation, is suggested by one contemporary assessment:

In the end, to the sorrow, even of his enemies, and to the relief, even of his friends, he resigned ... No one is to blame that ... [he] has been lost to Australia. He was as little to be fettered as a panther - and without restrictions of some sort no man can hope to remain leader of a high-spirited Jewish congregation.<sup>48</sup>

The community paid tribute to the departing clergyman with a series of testimonials and addresses, including a 300 guinea presentation from the Hebrew Choral Society. In a letter of thanks, Albert Street's committee applauded the energy and enthusiasm Myers had brought to bear during his four years at the helm, and it had the grace to concede that 'you never shrank from fearlessly advocating and impressing upon your flock your conscientious views of what that religion requires from its votaries'.<sup>49</sup> Reverend Jacob Lenzer, imported by the congregation two years previously to satisfy persistent demands for a trained *chazan*, took over his colleague's duties temporarily (and, as it turned out, continued to occupy the combined posts of *chazan* and minister/preacher for the next thirty years).

Myers proposed to enjoy a lengthy holiday in Europe. As it turned out, he was never to return to Australia. He left Melbourne by train for Adelaide on 29 April 1890, and was pleasantly surprised by an informal reception and presentation by Reverend Goldreich and members of the Ballarat congregation when the train made a twenty-five minute stopover at Ballarat West. (According to the *Jewish Herald's* Ballarat correspondent: 'Mr Myers, who was visibly overcome by the surprise which evidenced so much genuine good will, completely broke down in his attempt to acknowledge the compliment, and begged his Ballarat friends to accept his will for the deed on the present occasion').<sup>50</sup> He sailed from Adelaide on the *Austral*. He clearly made himself useful and/or popular during the long voyage: in a letter to his father, he noted that he had been presented with the customary illuminated address and a diamond ring on arrival at Port Said.<sup>51</sup> Myers spent three months in Palestine where, according to one report, he managed to 'rescue' sixty souls from Christian missionaries before moving on to England. Goldman records that he kindly — if shortsightedly — gave away all his money while in the Holy Land and so had to enlist financial help from Melbourne friends before he was able to resume his travels.<sup>52</sup>

In December 1890 he made his debut on the British lecture platform when he delivered his well-travelled address on the Talmud to an audience at Princes' Hall in London. 'Modern culture', he averred, 'has tended to take advantage of the Talmud, in that the scientific spirit of the age recognises the necessity of studying every great literary work for itself and without prejudice'. The *Jewish Chronicle* judged the cleric's first public appearance in England 'an unqualified success' and summed up the two-hour presentation as 'popular in the best sense ... while it was not "learned", it was nevertheless scholarly and accurate'. Myers was deemed an elocutionist 'of considerable power ... his rendering of his own original translations of Talmudic sayings and stories

was often very effective. Opinions naturally differ as to the merit of these poetical effusions, but the delivery was admirable'.<sup>53</sup>

London served as Myers' base for the next four and a half years. An early and zealous recruit to the fledgling Zionist cause, he earned his living fund-raising for the *Chovevei Zion* Association, and delivered an estimated two hundred public lectures in some sixty British cities in the process.<sup>54</sup> He also found time to collate and publish *Gems from the Talmud* (Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., London, 1894) which brought together three hundred and sixty of his rhyming couplet translations of Talmudic sayings and maxims.<sup>55</sup>

It is likely that financial necessity ultimately impelled Myers to end his association with *Chovevei Zion* and Great Britain; looking farther afield, he emigrated to North America in 1895. He spent a few months lecturing to various groups and organisations in New York before bowing to the inevitable and accepting the offer of another clerical post, this time with the Congregation Shaar Hashomayim in Montreal, Canada. Founded by German and Polish immigrants in 1858, as an alternative to the wealthy Sephardi Shearith Yisrael congregation (established in 1768), Shaar Hashomayim boasted a handsome building on McGill College Avenue, consecrated in 1886; Myers' predecessors there included Reverends E. Friedlander (1884-96) and Emanuel M. Myers, former spiritual leader of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, who served in Canada in the 1870s.

Virtually no details are extant on Isidore Myers' brief (one year) tenure at Montreal. The congregation's archivist has discovered that he delivered and published a sixteen page sermon in verse for *Rosh Hashanah* 1896.<sup>56</sup> During the same period, he targeted the Reform movement with another excursion into verse, a sarcastic (if skilful) alphabetical acrostic, modelled on the 'Catalogue of Sins' prayer from the Day of Atonement service. Forwarded to the *Hebrew Standard* in Sydney, under the pen-name 'Primma', and reprinted soon after by the *Jewish Herald*, the poem included the following lines:

For Abandoning (traitors!) our cause  
 And awaiting the Gentile's applause;  
 For the birthright one basely has sold,  
 And bartering a blessing for gold;  
 For the 'covenant' we crave to escape,  
 And the Christian-like customs we ape;  
 For the dangerous doctrines we've taught,  
 And the Damage those doctrines have wrought;  
 For our Eating of foods that's forbid,  
 And for Evils despised by a *Yid* ...  
 Forgive us, Lord, for acting thus;  
 O God of pardon, pardon us!<sup>57</sup>

Myers reiterated his opposition to religious modernism with a public lecture on 'Rabbinical Judaism and Reformed Judaism', 'a masterly and eloquent effort' (according to the *Hebrew Standard*) in which 'the hideousness of reformed Judaism was most ably exposed'.<sup>58</sup> On other occasions during his

Canadian tenure, the *Hebrew Standard* informed Australian readers that Myers had delivered a stirring address on 'Zionism or the modern Daniel Deronda' (at the conclusion of which a formal expression of support for the First Zionist Congress was unanimously adopted by those present), and that he had composed a Special anthem (in Hebrew and English) and celebratory poem to honour Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The English version of Myers' anthem, which paraphrased the Priestly Benediction in part, read:

God bless our sovereign still,  
Guard her from every ill  
Lord, we implore!  
On her Thy face divine  
Gracious cause to shine,  
Grant her Thy peace benign  
For evermore!

Set all sin captives free  
This year of jubilee  
Give light to all!  
May strife and hatred cease,  
May all men live in peace,  
May truth and love increase,  
God bless us all.<sup>59</sup>

In August 1897 Myers accepted a call to take over the ministry of the Congregation Ohabei Shalom in San Francisco. He stopped off first in New York, long enough to marry long-time acquaintance Anna Jacobson. (Born in Vienna, 1867, Anna had settled in Australia with her clergyman father, the colourful Dr Dattner Jacobson, in 1877, and had conducted a private Jewish school in Melbourne in the 1880s. She emigrated to the United States in the 1890s).

The arrival of the newly-weds in California was clearly something of an event, and was duly trumpeted in the Jewish press. (Although unknown personally in the Bay area, 'he [Myers] has not come among us a stranger', observed a local journalist, 'as his good deeds and reports of indefatigable work in the furtherance of Judaism had long preceded him'). Greeted at the Oakland station by a representative gathering of prominent congregational members and their wives, the Myers were driven 'in state' to their new home which was reportedly 'brilliantly lighted and profusely decorated with ferns and bright blossoms in honour of the occasion'. The following Saturday morning saw every seat occupied in the synagogue; Myers thanked his new 'flock' for their confidence in recruiting him on his reputation alone and promised that he would endeavour to work among them to ensure that confidence was not misplaced.

It was interesting to note with what magnetism he held his listeners throughout the discourse ... After service a great crush ensued in consequence of everyone wishing to congratulate Dr [*sic*] Myers on his eloquence. Those who were unsuccessful in getting near enough turned to Mrs Myers, who was very busy being introduced and receiving congratulations

in another part of the synagogue. For a time it looked as though two distinct receptions were being held.

Another overflow crowd heard Myers deliver a well-received address on 'Judaism versus Paganism' at the synagogue the following Sunday evening. The *San Francisco Call* waxed enthusiastic:

Forceful, polished, eloquent, and witty and sarcastic by turns, Rabbi [*sic*] Isidore Myers delivered his first lecture in this city at the Bush-Street Synagogue last evening to a large congregation. In colloquial language, the celebrated lecturer made a decided hit with his audience, their very countenances reflecting his mood with all the gradations lying between the grave and the humorous limits.

The Congregation Ohabei Shalom no longer exists and we are reliant on a handful of Australian press reports for the few details we have of his years in San Francisco. We do know that he helped establish a Jewish cemetery, that he was credited with reinvigorating and stabilising the congregation, and that he was responsible for establishing the Zionist movement in San Francisco. (References exist to Myers' Sunday night lectures on such topics as 'The Love of Zion', 'What Has Saved the Jew', 'Three Months in Palestine' and 'National Judaism', the last of which apparently created 'a great demand for handkerchiefs' among listeners). Anna Myers was also active in spreading the Zionist message to local women's groups. The couple's first child, a son, born in 1898, was named Zion and, when only a few days old, enrolled by his zealous parents in the newly-founded 'Helpers of Zion' movement, thus making him the youngest Zionist on the Pacific Coast, if not in the whole of America. Daughter Carmel was born in 1900; as a child, the budding actress reportedly captivated Californian Zionists with her renditions of Imber's 'Hatikvah', as translated by her father. (According to his daughter, Myers was fond of saying 'that he had three mountains in the family: Mount Zion, Mount Carmel and Mount Sinai').<sup>60</sup>

The family stayed in San Francisco until 1905. Myers reinforced his reputation as a talented orator during his time there, notably with a series of addresses in which he reiterated his opposition to the Reform movement. 'Each Saturday morning we are treated to a sound, rattling sermon, void of fanaticism, yet full of healthy, clear arguments in support of Judaism pure and untouched by the merciless prunings of the Reformer', reported one regular at the Bush Street *shul*. The minister was adamant that services should be chanted 'in the old traditional way, instead of reading them in the Anglican style, as had been the custom before his arrival [in San Francisco] — and the English prayers, which were adopted from the Union prayer-book were promptly rooted out of the services'. In one address, titled 'Is Judaism a Kitchen Religion?', he stressed the importance of observing the Dietary Laws, insisting that 'the food question is as much a part of the religion as is prayer' and that *Kashrut* regulations were 'calculated to keep a sound mind in a sound body'.<sup>61</sup>

At least one observer cited the regular crowded attendances at Myers' lectures as proof of 'what a consistent, faithful teacher of Rabbinic Judaism can accomplish, in spite of the sea of reform raging and roaring around him'.<sup>62</sup> However, he seems to have been fighting an uphill battle with Progressive

elements in his congregation. There are strong indications that he was ultimately impelled to resign his post ('on conscientious grounds') over the question of liturgical modifications at Ohabei Shalom. In 1904 the local Jewish newspaper *Emanuel* announced:

A strict and consistent conservative, he has not wavered in his loyalty to the historical interpretations of our faith and discipline, and he has maintained his position despite the fact that San Francisco and conservatism do not know each other very well.<sup>63</sup>

Possibly also, Myers had already developed relations with a new congregation in Los Angeles, and was tempted to try his luck in sunny Southern California. (The *B'nai Brith Messenger* noted that he had been among those presiding over dedication services at Temple Beth Israel in Olive Street in April 1902).<sup>64</sup> Having resigned from Bush Street, he spent a few months in New York, delivering lectures on behalf of the Zionist cause. He also found time to dedicate a Jewish hospital in Newark, New Jersey, and to supervise a revised and greatly expanded edition of his Talmudic verses (*1,001 Gems from the Talmud* ran to 450 pages and boasted an introduction by Dr Solomon Shechter, revered head of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America), before taking over the Beth Israel pulpit in Los Angeles.<sup>65</sup>

Turn-of-the-century Los Angeles was a far cry from the urban monstrosity it has spawned. Bordered by bean fields, citrus groves and vast expanses of empty land, and boasting year-round sunshine (generally seen then as more than adequate compensation for the inconveniences of intermittent flooding, alkaline water and poor sewerage), it was still basically a large 'hick town', with the majority of its residents concentrated in and around the downtown business centre. Nearby Hollywood, which was incorporated into the City of Los Angeles in 1910, was— before the arrival of the film industry— nothing more than a country village-cum-retirement centre. We can surmise that Myers shared his wife's enthusiasm for the area's aspect and climate and her estimation of the blossoming local Jewish community (around 2500 in 1900); Anna Myers informed the *B'nai Brith Messenger* that Southern California was a haven where the newcomer could find 'all the bolts and barriers removed ... and feel the warm grasp of real brotherhood'.<sup>66</sup>

Isidore Myers only stayed with the Olive Street *shul* for a year. In 1906 he conducted public High Holyday services at the Simpson Auditorium in South Hope Street and, as a result, helped found a new congregation, Temple Sinai, and became its first spiritual leader. Temple Sinai's early services were held at the B'nai Brith Hall; Myers established a Hebrew and Religion school there and the congregation built and dedicated a synagogue at the corner of Valencia and 12th Streets in 1909. Interestingly — and surprisingly, in view of his strong resistance to liturgical innovations — Temple Sinai advertised that it catered 'for acculturated Jews'. Although insisting that 'this congregation stands for Conservative, that is Rabbinic Judaism', a number of 'moderate changes in public worship' were instituted there, including Confirmation ceremonies for girls and the use of an organ. Myers' regular sermons were in English (whereas Yiddish had been the preferred medium at Beth Israel) and a number of the prayers were read in the vernacular.<sup>67</sup>

We can speculate that dissatisfaction with some of these modifications was a factor in Myers' decision to resign his Temple Sinai ministry, after six years, in August 1912. He subsequently led what has been described as a 'People's Synagogue' for a time, conducted annual public High Holyday worship in rented auditoriums, and occupied himself with scholarly pursuits (including publishing a poetic rendering of the *Proverbs of Solomon* and an *Acrostic Dictionary*) and public affairs. The *Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia* states that he campaigned for Woman Suffrage and the abolition of Capital Punishment. He remained an earnest crusader for the Zionist movement, was prominent in B'nai Brith Los Angeles Lodge 487 (from 1910), and augmented his (very meagre) income with public lectures on a range of topics. One very popular address was his response to fundamentalist evangelist Billy Sunday and Mrs West Stevenson's popular *Pilgrimage Play*; titled 'Who Crucified Jesus?', and delivered to the Pilgrimage Club in 1917, the lecture argued effectively against claims that the Jews had been responsible for the death of Christ.<sup>68</sup>

An intriguing sideline to Myers' multiple activities in Los Angeles was his brief but memorable involvement with the pioneer motion picture industry. In 1916 he was recruited, together with Father Dodd, an Episcopalian priest, as Biblical 'advisers' on the Judean sequences in D.W. Griffith's mammoth *Intolerance*. Some confusion surrounds the actual extent of his association with Griffith and the picture. Daughter Carmel once insisted that he served as consultant to Griffith for six weeks *after* the picture's completion, and that, in lieu of payment, the director screentested the aspiring young actress and placed her under contract.<sup>69</sup> (Film historian Kevin Brownlow has observed: 'You can imagine how poor Griffith's heart sank when he heard that Rabbi Myers wanted to put his daughter into pictures!').<sup>70</sup> Other sources indicate that Myers had a more active involvement in the making of the film epic. The great Griffith himself once recalled that the unworldly cleric:

... became a member of our research department while we were making *Intolerance* ... He was a poor man and yet, on payday, when everybody else in the studio would be lined up for the welcome envelope, Rabbi Myers, books under one arm and the contents evidently swimming around in his head, would invariably forget all about the pay envelope and mosey on his way home ... He was a dear old chap.<sup>71</sup>

Legendary cameraman Billy Bitzer has recalled that Griffith spent considerable time conferring with Myers, and that the 'rabbi' supervised the Wedding at Cana scene and also verified costumes and sets for the entire Judean sequence in *Intolerance*. Karl Brown, who worked as Second cameraman (under Bitzer), has written:

In a sense we had three directors on the picture. Griffith was there to make his wants known and to pass on the results. Rabbi Myers was there to direct the Jewish details of this Christian drama, while Father Dodd was there to keep this event in Jewish history in line with Christian beliefs.

Brown recalls that, in the interests of authenticity, Griffith recruited scores of Jewish 'extras' for the picture:

... Real, old-time orthodox Jews from somewhere in the Boyle Heights district, who knew all the traditions handed down from father to son for five thousand years. Nobody had to supply them with beards ... Nobody had to tell them how and where and when to wear phylacteries. They had their own, with Rabbi Myers on hand to make sure there were no mistakes.<sup>72</sup>

An anecdote, possibly apocryphal, which featured in Myers' obituary, credited him with assisting a despairing film director (presumably Griffith) to communicate with unresponsive movie 'extras'. For a scene in which the assembled Jews were required to cry, Myers launched into an emotional oration in Yiddish, and 'soon had the tears flowing copiously'.<sup>73</sup>

Carmel Myers made the most of her opportunity with the Griffith stock company, and in time, became a major silent screen star. Many years later, she recalled auditioning for Carl Laemmle at the Universal studio in 1917, and winning a contract there on the strength of her heartfelt recital of her father's *The Casket and the Jewels*. Her brother Zion also had a minor career as a film director in the 1920s, while Anna Myers augmented the family income writing reviews of the local Yiddish theatre for the *Los Angeles Examiner*.<sup>74</sup> Actress Bessie Love, a (Hollywood High) school-friend of both Carmel and Zion (and, incidentally, the bride in the Wedding at Cana sequence of *Intolerance*), has echoed Griffith's memories of the scholarly — and absent-minded — Reverend Myers; in her autobiography, she remembered '... how it pained him to go into a great library: he acted out how it crushed his head to see the number of precious books, knowing he would never be able to read them all'.<sup>75</sup>

According to Love, Myers had a particular aversion to the proliferation of automobiles in Los Angeles, referring to them as 'messengers of death'. By a bizarre coincidence, his own death was the result of a car accident. He was crossing at the corner of Alvarado Street and Sunset Boulevard, on the evening of Tuesday, 25 April 1922, when (according to the *Los Angeles Times*) 'after going for about twenty feet [he] suddenly turned and retraced his steps' — straight into the path of a Yellow Taxicab. A second car, directly behind the taxi, also ran over him. His skull fractured, Myers died on the way to the Receiving hospital. (The taxi driver, who was arrested on 'suspicion of manslaughter', was cleared by the inquest finding of 'unavoidable accident'). Hundreds reportedly attended the funeral service at the B'nai Brith Auditorium on West 17th Street two days later. Respecting the deceased man's wish that no eulogy be delivered, Rabbi Edgar Magnin 'spoke out briefly about the rabbi's life and his works, and confined his remarks to a few terse statements of the irreparable loss suffered by the community'. Myers was buried at the Home of Peace cemetery.<sup>76</sup> Anna Myers survived him by only five years; she dropped dead from a heart attack on a tram-car while returning home from the movies one evening in August 1927. (She was buried alongside her husband).<sup>77</sup>

Isidore Myers was a committed and conscientious clergyman, whose career encompassed commendable contributions to a number of Jewish congregations in Australia and North America; as well, he was a pioneer of the Zionist movement in Britain and the United States (credited, indeed, with establishing Zionism in San Francisco), a respected scholar and, in his day, a

widely-known preacher and public speaker. As has been noted, he also earned a minor niche in motion picture history for his input into the film classic *Intolerance*, and it is somewhat surprising that not more attention has been paid to his life and work. From the point of view of Australian Jewish history, he deserves wider recognition as one of the more noteworthy 'intellectual products' of the nineteenth century community, and for the contribution he made to the evolution of the East Melbourne Synagogue. Myers' generally successful ministry to two Victorian congregations in the 1880s, and his energetic cultural and literary activity, are convincing evidence that colonial Australian Jewry was often much more fortunate in its choice of spiritual leadership than has sometimes been supposed.



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## NOTES

- 1 Hilary L. Rubinstein, 'Reverend Elias Blaubaum (1847–1904): Minister, Editor and Scholar', *AJHS Journal (AJHSJ)* 9(8), 1985, p. 567.  
For detail on Blaubaum, see *ibid.*, p. 567–81. For Abrahams, see *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB)* 7, and Joseph Aron & Judy Arndt, *The Enduring Remnant*, Melbourne, 1992, pp. 58–73. For Cohen, see *ADB* 8 and Raymond Apple, 'Francis Lyon Cohen: the Passionate Patriot', *AJHSJ* 12(4), 1995, pp. 663–747. For Brodie, see *ADB* 13 and Aron & Arndt, *op.cit.*, p. 78–91.
- 2 For Rintel, see Aron & Arndt, *op.cit.*, pp. 29–33. For Davis, see *ADB* 4 and Hilary L. Rubinstein, 'Cockburn vs. Davis: a Colonial Jewish Scandal', *AJHSJ* 11(3), 1991, pp. 400–14. For Boas, see *ADB* 7 and Louise Rosenberg, 'Abraham Tobias Boas: a Pioneer Jewish Minister, 1842–1923', *AJHSJ* 7(2), 1972, pp. 77–169. For Morris, see Anne Andgel, 'The Reverend Rabbi I. Morris', *AJHSJ* 11(6), 1993, pp. 921–49. For Freedman, see Philip Masel, 'David Isaac Freedman', *AJHSJ* 11(5), 1992, pp. 750–3. For Danglow, see J.S. Levi, *Rabbi Jacob Danglow: the Uncrowned Monarch of Australian Jews*, Melbourne, 1995. For Lenzer, see *Australasian Hebrew*, 29 November, 1895; *Jewish Herald*, 15 August 1913 & 29 April 1921. The best source for Goldreich is his obituary, *Jewish Herald*, 30 June 1905.
- 3 *Australasian Hebrew*, 3 January 1896.  
For Hirschowitz, see Raymond Apple, 'Rabbinic Responsa relating to Australia: (1) Abraham Eber Hirschowitz', *AJHSJ* 9(6), 1984, pp. 434–43. For Jacobson, see Aron & Arndt, *op.cit.*, pp. 46–54, & Hilary L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Victoria 1835–1985*, Sydney, 1986, pp. 57–68. For Bramson, see Israel Porush, *The House of Israel*, Melbourne, 1978, pp. 53–6, & Hilary L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: a Thematic History, Vol 1*, Melbourne, 1991, pp. 246–8. For Chodowski and Ornstien, see my articles, 'The Carlton United Hebrew Congregation: a Short History', *AJHSJ* 12(1), 1993, pp. 116–8, 127, & 'Reverend Abraham Frederick Ornstien', *AJHSJ* 12(3), 1994, pp. 443–66.
- 4 *Australasian Hebrew*, 22 November & 29 November 1895; *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 March 1913; *Jewish Herald*, 25 September 1889.
- 5 Information from Isidor Solomon, 17 January 1996; *American Jewish Yearbook* 1903–4; Details from Isidore Myers' Death Certificate, Los Angeles County Records, Certificate #368. I am grateful to Beverley Davis OAM for noting that Morris Myers is recorded as the son of Myer Lichtenstein in the Burials Register of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation.
- 6 I have not been able to locate any Australian reference to Rose Myers. [Myer] Morris Myers was born in Russia c1834, the son of Myer Myers *né* Lichtenstein and Phoebe (*née* Bloustein). He served as *shochet*, collector and assistant to Reverend I.M. Goldreich at Ballarat in 1869–70, subsequently taught at the Melbourne Hebrew School and served as headmaster there in 1886–8. He ran private Hebrew classes from his Fitzroy home in the 1890s, conducted High Holyday services for Jewish prisoners at Pentridge, and was active in the shortlived *Chevra Sha'ari Tikvah* in Fitzroy. Myers married Rachel Jones of Geelong in 1875, and fathered four sons (Myer, Felix, Edward and Albert) and a daughter (Phoebe). He died in Melbourne on 3 June 1909. Myer, Felix and Edward all pre-deceased their father. Phoebe Myers, who married Joseph Phillips in 1913, was well-known in the community as a Hebrew teacher and a stalwart of the United Jewish Education Board.  
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- 7 Joel Fredman, 'A Former Melbourne Jewish Day School', *Australian Jewish Herald*, 4 February 1937; *Australian Israelite*, 20 December 1872.
- 8 *Australian Israelite*, 20 December 1872.
- 9 See, for instance, *Dialectic*, September/October 1875; *Australian Israelite*, 11 December 1874.
- 10 *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 September 1874 & 21 January 1876; *Dialectic*, June & July 1875; Goldman, *op.cit.*, pp. 210, 247–8.

- 11 *Jewish Herald*, 25 April 1889.
- 12 *ibid.*
- 13 *ibid.*, 25 August & 29 December 1882; *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 September 1882; East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation Correspondence Books (held by AJHS Vic), 9 Oct 1882. See also Hilary L. Rubinstein, "'A Noble Sight to See': Philo-Semitic Responses in late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century Australia to Jewish Crises Overseas', *AJHSJ* 13(3), 1996, pp. 434–5, 436.
- 14 Goldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 285, 304, 313–4, 315; *Jewish Herald*, 28 January & 23 September 1881, 13 September & 3 November 1882.
- 15 *Jewish Herald*, 22 September & 15 December 1882.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 25 April 1889.
- 17 *Bendigo Advertiser*, 23 & 24 April 1885.
- 18 *ibid.*, 24 April 1885; G. MacKay, *History of Bendigo*, Melbourne 1891, p. 170.
- 19 Goldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 304–5; East Melbourne Correspondence Books, *op. cit.*, 5 May 1881; *Jewish Herald*, 25 April 1890.
- 20 *Jewish Herald*, 13 June 1884, 23 January, 6 February & 4 September 1885; Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 330.
- 21 *ibid.*, 4 September 1885 & 25 April 1890; Isidore Myers, Letter to the East Melbourne Congregation Committee, 25 Aug 1888. (East Melbourne Correspondence Books, *op. cit.*).
- 22 Goldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 329–30; East Melbourne Correspondence Books, *op. cit.*, 21 March 1886, 22 May 1886, 5 May 1887; *Jewish Herald*, 13 April 1888, 5 July 1889, 28 February 1890.
- 23 *Jewish Herald*, 16 August 1889, 10 April 1890.
- 24 *Australasian Hebrew*, 22 November 1895; Carmel Myers, 'Film Industry Recollections', *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly*, January 1976, p. 128; *B'nai Brith Messenger*, 28 April 1922.
- 25 Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 322.
- 26 *Jewish Herald*, 28 February 1890.
- 27 *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 March 1913.
- 28 Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 288.
- 29 *Jewish Herald*, 13 June 1884 & 28 April 1890.
- 30 *ibid.*, 25 Oct 1889.
- 31 See East Melbourne Congregation Correspondence Books, *op. cit.*, 3 September & 6 September 1886, 3 November 1886.
- 32 *Australasian Hebrew*, 22 November & 29 November 1895. See also Myers' criticisms of the workings of the Melbourne Jewish Philanthropic Society (and editor Elias Blaubaum's response), *Jewish Herald*, 23 November 1888.
- 33 *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 March 1913. See also tributes to Myers' charitable work by Maurice Salom and E.L. Zox, *Jewish Herald*, 14 March & 28 March 1890.
- 34 *Australasian Hebrew*, 29 November 1895.
- 35 *Jewish Herald*, 19 July 1889.
- 36 'The educated young man now in life regarded the synagogue as he did purgatory, because to him the service was unintelligible', Myers elaborated; *Jewish Herald*, 26 October 1888 & 19 July 1889.
- 37 *ibid.*, 26 October 1888.
- 38 *ibid.*, 19 July & 16 August 1889.
- 39 Goldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 329–30.
- 40 *ibid.*, p. 330; East Melbourne Congregation Correspondence Books, *op. cit.*, 13 September & 21 September 1886; Morris C. Davis, *History of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation 'Mickva Yisrael', 1857–1977*, Melbourne, 1978, p. 46.
- 41 East Melbourne Congregation Correspondence Books, *op. cit.*, 25 August 1888; *Jewish Herald*, 25 Sept 1889.
- 42 *Jewish Herald*, 25 April 1890.
- 43 *ibid.*, 25 Oct 1889, 25 April 1890; East Melbourne Congregation Correspondence Books, *op. cit.*, 27 October & 11 November 1889, 28 January 1890.

- 44 East Melbourne Congregation Correspondence Books, op.cit., 19 July, 3 September, 6 September & 3 November 1886, 5 May & 10 July 1887; *Jewish Herald*, 25 April 1890.
- 45 *Jewish Herald*, 25 April 1890.
- 46 *Australasian Hebrew*, 29 November 1895.
- 47 *Jewish Herald*, 25 April 1890.
- 48 *Australasian Hebrew*, 29 November 1895.
- 49 *Jewish Herald*, 25 April 1890; East Melbourne Congregation Correspondence Books, op.cit., 28 April 1890.
- 50 *Jewish Herald*, 9 May 1890.
- 51 *ibid.*, 4 July 1890.
- 52 *American Jewish Yearbook* 1903–4; Goldman, op.cit., p. 356.
- 53 *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 December 1890.
- 54 Myers, 'Film Industry Recollections', op.cit., p. 126; *Jewish Herald*, 23 August 1895; *American Jewish Yearbook* 1903–4.
- For detail on the pre-Herzlian Chovevei Zion Association of England, established in London in May 1890, see W.D. Rubinstein, *The History of the Jews in the English-speaking World: Great Britain*, London, 1996, p. 163; Stuart A. Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews: the Communal Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1895–1920*, Princeton 1982, pp. 7–12.
- 55 Many of Myers' Talmudic & Midrashic couplets had appeared earlier in the *Jewish Herald* (e.g. 10 April 1890). The following (random) examples are typical:

- '196. Through the virtues of their women,  
Which upon that age had beamed,  
Were the Israelites from Egypt,  
And from slavery redeemed. — *Sotah* 11'.
- '207. If to hang yourself you choose,  
Then a big tree you should use. — *Pesach* 112'.
- '217. Who praiseth not the name of Heaven  
For any gift which God hath given,  
An act of sacrelige commits  
If by its use he benefits. — *Ber* 35'.
- '220. Though Heaven's gates be closed to prayer,  
To tears they stand wide open e'er. — *Ber* 32'.

Another poetic effort by Myers, probably dating from this period in his life, was a Hebrew translation of Longfellow's 'A Psalm of Life', subsequently reprinted in the Jewish Historical Society of England's *Miscellanies* X, 1977, pp. 239–42.

- 56 Letter to the author from Kathy Diamond, Congregation Shaar Hashomayim Library, 1991; David Rome, *The Early Jewish Presence in Canada: a Booklover's Ramble through Jewish Cadiana*, Montreal 1971, p. 81; Arthur D. Hart (ed.), *The Jew in Canada: a Complete Record of Canadian Jewry from the Days of the French Regime to the Present Time*, Toronto [n.d.], p. 94; *American Jewish Yearbook* 1903–4.
- 57 *Jewish Herald*, 27 November 1896.
- 58 *Hebrew Standard*, 20 August 1897.
- 59 *ibid.* The poem, which betrayed the author as a most ardent royalist, contained the following sentiments:

From North to South, from East to West,  
All British sons rejoice this day;  
Unto our Queen of Heaven blest  
Do loyal hearts their homage pay,  
And unto God our thanks expressed,  
For sixty years of righteous sway, ...  
Her godly life's her diadem;  
Her every grace a precious stone;

Her gentleness - its brightest gem -  
 Shines with a lustre all its own;  
 Her sons love her as she loves them,  
 And hearts of millions hold her throne.

- 60 *Hebrew Standard*, 17 September 1897, 15 October 1897, 20 January 1899; Myers, 'Film Industry Recollections', op.cit., p. 128; *B'nai Brith Messenger*, 16 September 1910.
- 61 *Hebrew Standard*, 15 October 1897, 4 March 1898.
- 62 *ibid.*, 15 Oct 1897. Myers' antipathy towards Reform was doubtless reinforced by the American Reform movement's violent rejection of Political Zionism. Dr Isaac Mayer Wise, for instance, once publicly described Zionism as 'a *fata morgana*, a momentary inclination of morbid minds, and a prostitution of Israel's holy cause'. Rabbi David Philipson declared: 'We are unalterably opposed to political Zionism. The Jews are not a nation but a religious community'. Quoted in Max Raisin, *A History of the Jews in Modern Times*, New York 1939, pp. 331-2.
- 63 Quoted in *Jewish Herald*, 20 May 1904.
- 64 *B'nai Brith Messenger*, 25 April 1902.
- 65 *Jewish Herald*, 7 October 1904, 27 January 1905; *B'nai Brith Messenger*, 31 March 1905.
- 66 Max Vorspan & Lloyd P. Gartner, *The History of the Jews of Los Angeles*, San Marino, 1970, pp. 155-6; Max Vorspan, 'Los Angeles', in *Jewish-American History and Culture: an Encyclopaedia*, eds. Jack Fischel & Sanford Pinsker, New York 1992, pp. 372-3; G.W. Bitzer, *Billy Bitzer: His Story*, New York, 1973, pp. 104-5; Miriam Cooper & Bonnie Herndon, *Dark Lady of the Silents: My Life in Early Hollywood*, New York, 1973, pp. 44-5; *B'nai Brith Messenger*, 23 July 1909.
- 67 Vorspan & Gartner, op.cit., pp. 156, 162-3, 168; *B'nai Brith Messenger*, 27 July, 30 November & 14 December 1906, 10 September 1909; Myers, 'Film Industry Recollections', op.cit., pp. 126-8.
- 68 Vorspan & Gartner, op.cit., p. 144, 156; Myers, 'Film Industry Recollections', op.cit., pp. 126-8; *B'nai Brith Messenger*, 30 August & 27 September 1912, 26 October 1917; 'Isidore Myers', in *Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, New York, 1942.
- 69 Myers, 'Film Industry Recollections', op.cit., pp. 126-30; Carmel Myers, Interview for *Films in Review*, March 1980, pp. 135-6.
- 70 Kevin Brownlow, Letter to the author, 18 January 1996. Promoted and encouraged 'by her formidable and ambitious Viennese-born mother', Carmel Myers had, in fact, been acting intermittently in silent movie shorts since 1909. Her screen-test for Griffith (which was requested by Isidore Myers at his wife's urging) represented the young actor's 'big break'; *Los Angeles Times*, 11 November & 16 November 1980.
- 71 D.W. Griffith, *The Man Who Invented Hollywood: the Autobiography of D.W. Griffith*, ed. James Hart, Louisville, Kentucky 1972, pp. 30-1.
- 72 Bitzer, op.cit., p.131; Karl Brown, *Adventures with D.W. Griffith*, New York, 1973, pp. 136-7.
- 73 *B'nai Brith Messenger*, 28 April 1922.
- 74 Myers, 'Film Industry Recollections', op.cit., pp. 130-2; Kevin Brownlow, Letter to the author.
- 75 Bessie Love, *From Hollywood with Love*, London, 1977, p. 35.
- 76 *ibid.*; *Los Angeles Times*, 26 April & 28 April 1922; *B'nai Brith Messenger*, 28 April 1922.
- 77 *Los Angeles Times*, 10 August & 11 August 1927. Obituaries for Mrs Myers noted that she had been prominent in Jewish charity work (including the National Jewish Hospital in Denver) and had served twice as President of the Council of Jewish Women, Los Angeles chapter. Carmel Myers subsequently wrote: 'My mother was a brilliant woman ... [with] a great sense of humour. A *meshumad* once came up to her and asked: 'Madame, have you made your peace with Jesus?' She answered: 'I never quarrelled with him'. He took to his heels and ran.' Myers, 'Film Industry Recollections', op.cit., p. 134.

## ALIEN REGISTRATIONS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA DURING WORLD WAR ONE

*Beverley Davis OAM*

Under the provisions of the War Precautions (Alien Registration) Regulations, 1916, which were later replaced by the Aliens Registration Act 1920, all aliens (that is, citizens of other countries) over 15 years of age who already resided in, or who subsequently entered, Australia had to be registered.

This requirement was in force until June 1926, but was re-introduced during World War Two through the Aliens Registration Act 1939 and the National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations of the same year, and continued until replaced by the passage of the Aliens Act 1947.

Alien registration regulations should not be confused with the internment of those aliens who were considered to be a threat to Australia's security, and who, during World War One (under the provisions of the War Precautions Act 1914) and World War Two (under National Security Regulations) were required to be kept in special internment camps around the country, most notably at Liverpool and Hay in New South Wales, Loveday in South Australia, and Tatura in Victoria. The highest number of internees recorded was 6,780 in September 1942.

Registration forms had to be submitted by the alien, in triplicate, to the member of the Police Force in charge of the Police Station nearest to his usual place of abode, signed, and if required allow an impression of his thumb-print to be taken.

The information recorded varies according to which form was used. Common to all was full name, nationality, birthplace, date of birth, occupation, usual place of abode, place of business (if any), and date of entry into Commonwealth; also personal description, and signature of the alien [occasionally in Hebrew]. Many cards also have a left thumbprint.

Form A1 (for Aliens resident in Commonwealth), contains details as above; see *Table One*.

Form A2 (for Aliens entering Commonwealth in Oversea Vessel), also includes name of vessel, port of embarkation, place of abode abroad, and particulars of passport (if any); see *Table Two*.

Places of registration concerned in this article include Perth, Fremantle, Highgate Hill, Albany, Geraldton, York, Kalgoorlie, and Westonia (all in Western Australia), as well as Brisbane, Queensland, and Carlton, Melbourne.

Names of identified Jews have been extracted from these records and may prove to be of assistance to those searching for their elusive immigrant ancestor! Further details may be obtained from the Honorary Archivist, Australian Jewish Historical Society — Victoria Inc.

**TABLE ONE**  
**Form A1 (resident before 1916)**

<i>Family name</i>	<i>First name</i>	<i>Place of birth</i>	<i>Nationality</i>
AISENBERG	Isaac	Saffed, Palestine	Jewish
ASBILL	Harry	Cluegoff	Russian Jew
BARCESH	Hyman	Palestine	Turkish Jew
BERINSHAN	Israel	Saffed, Palestine	Palestine Jew
BERINSHAN	Mary	Saffed, Palestine	Jewess
BERINSON	Morris	Palestine	Jew
BERINSON	Sarah	Paris	French
BERINSON	Saul	Palestine	Turkish Jew
BLOOM	Morris	Minsk, Russia	Russian Jew
BLOOM	Rebecca	Minsk	Russian Jewess
BROWN	Davis	Warsaw	Russian Jew
BROWN	Esther	Warsaw	Russian Jewess
COHEN	Dora	Russia	Russian Jewess
COHEN	Israel	Palestine	Turkish Jew
COHEN	Sara	Palestine	Palestine Jewess
COOPERMAN	Alias	Saffed, Palestine	Hebrew
CRYSTAL	Florence	England	(Russian by marriage)
CRYSTAL	Maurice Wolfe	Lomza, Russia	Russian Jew
EDELMAN	William	Wickna near Riga	Russian Jew
EPSTEIN	Sam	Poland, Russia	Hebrew
EPSTEIN	Samuel	Belostock, Russia	(Russian subject)
EPSTEIN	Sim	Bielostock, Russia	Russian Jew
FELDMUN	Abraham Eliezer	Palestine	Turkish Jew
FELDMUN	Leah	Melbourne	Australian Jewess
FINKELSTEIN	Borough	Kovalsk, Kamenitz	Podolsk Russian Jew
FINKELSTEIN	Eta	Odessa, Russia	Russian Jewess
FYVISH	Abraham	Kovna, Russia	Russian Jew
GITSEIN	Jacob	Crimea	Russian Jew
GOLDBERG	Philip	Nikopol	Russian Jew
GOLLINGER	Harry	Saffed, Palestine	Hebrew (Turkish)
GORODINSKY	Malee	Astrakhan, Russia	Russian Jewess
GORODNANSKI	Dora	Russia	Russian Jewess
GORODNASKI	Azani	Astrakhan, Russia	Russian
GREENBERG	Celia	Jerusalem	Turkish Jewess
GREENBERG	Harry	Saffett, Palestine	Turkish Jew
HANKIN	Israel	Chernegov	Russian Jew
HANKIN	Zile	Kovna, Russia	Russian Jewess
HERMAN	Joe	Tiberias, Palestine	Palestine Jew
HERMER	Joseph	Libau, Kurland	Russian Jewish
HERTZ	Nathan	Suffat, Palestine	Turkish Jew
HOFFMAN	Harry	Balta, Russia	Russian Jew
HOFFMAN	Rachel	Kiev	Russian Jewess
HYMAN	Abraham	Minsk, Russia	Russian Jew
HYMAN	Ellen	Minsk	Russian Jewess
ISAACMAN	Fanny	Crimea	Russian Jewess

ISAACMAN	Mark	Jerusalem	Turkish Jew
JOSEPH	Hillel	Saffad	Palastina
KODKIN	Arthur	Copisht, Russia	Russian Jew
KONIGSBERG	Rachel	Russia	Russian Jewess
KOSER	Benjamin	near Kiev, Russia	Russian Jew
KOSER	Mary	Ecaterinoslav, Russia	Russian Jew
KRASNOSTEIN	Jack	Zemerninka, Russia	Russian Jew
KRASNOSTEIN	Paul	Zemerninka, Russia	Russian Jew
LAW	Moses	Safet, Palestine	Turkish Jew
LEACHOVSKY	Esekel	Ekaterinoslav	Russian Jew
LEVY	Moris	Palestine	Jew, Turkish
MADORSKY	Edward Nissan	Russia	Russian Jew
MENDELAWITZ	Seon Solomon	Hebron, Palestine	Jew
MENDELOWITZ	Pearl	Bukerasht, Roumania	Jewess
MILLMAN	Joseph	Mirgorod, Russia	Russian Jew
MILLMAN	Rebbeka	Nikolaiev, Russia	Russian Jewess
MORRIS	Charles	Saffed, Palestine	Turkish Jew
MORRIS	Hannah	Saffed, Palestine	Turkish Jewess
MYERS	Joseph	Saffed, Palestine	Hebrew (Turkish)
NISSENSON	Diana	Palestine	Turkish Jew
NISSENSON	Joseph	Palestine	Turkish Jew
NISSENZHON	Gertie	Palestine	Jewess
RAVENSKY	Betty	Oddessa, Russia	Russian Jewess
RAVENSKY	Morriss	Oddessa, Russia	Russian
ROSENTHAL	Sarah	Warsaw	Russian Jewess
ROSS	Max	Palestine	Palestine Jew
SADAGOERSKY	Harry	Rhodezia, Russia	Russian Jew
SASSON	Morris	Jaffa, Palestine	Jewish
SCHAPIRA	Mark	Saffed, Palestine	Hebrew (Turkish)
SHARP (SHAPIRO)	Benjamin	Jerusalem	Turkish Jew
SEGAL	Leon	Saffed, Palastine	Turkish Jew
SEGAL	Natehn [sic]	Saffet, Palestine	Turkish Jew
SEGAL	Rosy	Milhamia, Palestine	Turkish Jewess
SEGALL	Debora	Port Said, Egypt	Jewess
SEGALL	Moise	Palestine	Turkish
SEGALL	Samuel	Jerusalem	Jewish
SHAPIRAH	Aba	Safett, Palestine	Turkish Jew
SHILKIN	Rachel	Olla	Russian Jewess
SHILKIN	Solomon Morris	Olla, Russia	Russian Jew
SILBERT	Jacob	Bialystock, Russia	Hebrew (Russian)
SILVERMAN	Katie	Suolk	Russian Jewess
SILVERSTEIN	Abraham	Saffed, Arabia	Turkish (Hebrew)
STEINHART	Samuel	Kovno	Russian Jew
STINBERG	Ethel	Odessa, Russia	Russian Jewess
STINBERG	Jack	Brest-Litovsk, Russia	Russian Jew
SWARTZ	Samuel	Odessa	Russian Jew
TATELBOUM (TATE)	Alec	Nicapoli, Russia	Russian Jew
TATELBOUM (TATE)	Miriam	Nicapoli, Russia	Russian Jewess
ZEITLIN	Joseph	Mirgorod, Russia	Russian Jew
ZINES	Abraham	Palastine	Palastine Jew
ZINES	Samuel	Jerusalem, Palestine	Palestine Jew
ZINES	Samuel	Palestine	Jew, Turkish

**TABLE TWO**  
**Form A2 (entering after 1916)**

<i>Family name</i>	<i>First name</i>	<i>Place of birth</i>	<i>Nationality</i>
BENKLER	Haya Lea	Palestine	Jewish
BIGER	Malka	Palestine	Turkish Jew
BIGER	Abraham	Palestine	Ottoman Jew
GRUN	Frede	Palestine	Jewish
ROSS	Meilea	Haifa	Palestinian
ROSS	Mariacha	Safed	Ottoman Jew
SOLOMONS	Rachel	Malava, Poland	Russian Jewess
SOLOMONS	Mark	Plinsk, Poland	Russian Jew
SCHNEIDER	Leah	Palestine	Palestine Jew
SEGALL	Malka	Safed	Jewish
SEGALL	Samuel	Port Said	Egypt (Jew)

## SOURCES

Records kept by Intelligence Section, Department of Army, and transferred to Australian Archives (Western Australia) in 1957. Australian Archives series number PP14/3.

*Collections in Melbourne, a Concise Guide*, Celia Blake (comp.), February 1998.

*Relations in Records. a Guide to Family History Sources in the Australian Archives*, AGPS Canberra, 1988.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### REVIEW ESSAY

*Philip N. Mendes*

Bono Wiener Remembered (*Chava Rosenfarb (ed.). Montreal: privately published, 1997; 70 pp. English, 174 pp. Yiddish, 16 pp.; illustrations.*)

Bono Wiener, the former leader of the Melbourne Jewish Labour Bund, was one of the most colorful and controversial characters of post-war Melbourne Jewry. Wiener survived the Lodz Ghetto and Auschwitz concentration camp before migrating to Australia in 1950. Here, he became active in the Australian Labor Party, the New Australia Council, the Kadimah Cultural Centre, and above all the Bund. Wiener also co-founded the Melbourne Holocaust Centre, the Sholom Aleichem School, and the Jewish Secular Humanistic Society. He died in 1995 whilst visiting his long-time romantic partner, the prominent Yiddish writer Chava Rosenfarb, in Canada.

The book under review was published on the second anniversary of Wiener's death to commemorate his life and achievements. Contributors include Chava Rosenfarb, long-time friends Labor Party President Barry Jones MHR and his wife Rosemary Hanbury, World Jewish Congress Vice-President Isi Leibler, former Lodz ghetto colleague Avram Goldberg, Co-President of the Holocaust Centre Shmuel Rosenkranz, writer Stan Marks, and prominent author and Bundist Arnold Zable. In reviewing the book, I have taken the liberty of utilizing other documents which I feel shed further light on the history and politics of Bono and the Melbourne Bund.

Bono Wiener was born into a close and loving middle-class Jewish family in the Polish city of Lodz in 1920. His older brother Pinche was to remain his closest companion throughout his life. At an early age, Bono was inducted into the activities and ideology of the Bund. He attended the Medem secular Jewish School, and became a leader of the Skif youth group. There he was taught to believe in peace and justice for all, the elimination of poverty and hunger, love of the Yiddish language, and friendship between peoples. He was also influenced in an anti-communist direction by his father Moishe Wiener who followed the teachings of the famous right-wing Bund leader, Vladimir Medem.<sup>1</sup> Following the German invasion of Poland, Bono and his family (except for Pinche who had been conscripted into the Polish army) were incarcerated in the Lodz ghetto. Bono soon became a leader of the Bundist underground movement, listening to illegal radio broadcasts, and attempting unsuccessfully to acquire arms. Both his parents died in the ghetto. Later, he would survive beatings and other traumas in Auschwitz. Remarkably, these experiences never broke Bono's spirit.

At the conclusion of the war, Bono was reunited with Pinche who had spent the war in the Russian Gulag. Bono and Pinche attempted to re-establish Jewish and Bundist life in post-war Poland. However, the communist authorities arrested Bono, and demanded that the Bund be dissolved into the Communist Party. Bono and his brother subsequently migrated to Australia where he worked as a contract labourer for 12 months in Perth before moving to Melbourne. There, he worked as a labourer and knitter before eventually forming the Jetset Tours travel agency with Isi Leibler and Lionel Landman.

In Melbourne, Bono and the Bund became involved in vigorous struggles with pro-Soviet groups such as the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism and the Kadimah Youth Organisation for control of Jewish communal organisations such as the Kadimah and the Jewish Board of Deputies. Historians have differed sharply on the extent to which the Bund and other leading anti-Communists such as Maurie Ashkanasy were motivated primarily by a genuine opposition to communism and its local apologists, or rather by a concern to accommodate the powerful McCarthyism of the Cold War.<sup>2</sup> Whilst it is not my intention to address the complexity of this debate here, I do believe that the fierce anti-communism of the Bund (which historically had been a radical and even revolutionary socialist group) requires some further explanation.

Firstly, there was the intense hatred which existed between the Communists and the Bund in Poland between the wars. According to the historian Bernard Johnpoll, the Communists launched unprovoked campaigns of terror including violence and murder against the Bund.<sup>3</sup> In addition, there was the infamous murder by Stalin of the much-loved Bund leaders, Erlich and Alter, during the war.<sup>4</sup> Another factor as already noted was the suppression of the Bund by the Communist authorities in post-war Poland.

The conflict between the Bund and pro-Soviet groups in Melbourne was also arguably influenced by cultural and economic/class factors. The Bundists were almost exclusively Yiddish-speaking Polish Jews, new to Australia, and strongly influenced by recent events in Europe. In contrast, most of the leaders of the Jewish Council were either Anglo-Australian Jews, or long-established Eastern Europeans.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Bundists appear (rightly or wrongly) to have viewed the Council leaders as wealthy manufacturers, merchants and professionals, detached from the feelings and experiences of the Jewish masses.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, most of the recently arrived Bundists were probably struggling in blue collar employment, or small business. There is almost certainly a number of fallacious generalisations and stereotypes present in this assessment. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to ignore the impact that it may have exerted on Bundist attitudes and/or resentment towards their political opponents.

Bono and his Bundist colleagues also became involved in broader politics, joining the ALP and the affiliated New Australia Council in significant numbers. Wiener became Secretary of the NAC, and his friend Joseph Winkler the Treasurer. Here also, the Bund came into conflict with the Jewish Council and other pro-Soviet groups. Following the intervention of the Left-dominated

Central Executive of the Victorian ALP, the NAC was dissolved. It was replaced by a New Australia Committee under the control of Ernest Platz, the Secretary of the Jewish Council.

Bono also played a central part in what became known as the Sam Goldbloom Affair. Wiener and his friend Rosemary Hanbury alleged that Sam Goldbloom, a prominent member of the Jewish Council and the peace movement and a preselected ALP candidate, had been an active member of the Communist Party whilst a member of the ALP. Wiener and Hanbury called four witnesses, Barry Jones, and three ex-communists — Stephen Murray Smith, Bernard Rechter, and L.J. Waters — to verify their allegations. However, only Jones agreed to provide evidence, and the allegations were rejected by the Victorian ALP Central Executive.<sup>7</sup> Wiener was subsequently expelled from the ALP as a result of this incident, and other disagreements relating to the dissolution of the New Australia Council. In retrospect, Wiener displayed surprising naivety in believing that the Central Executive would endorse his allegations. Goldbloom was closely associated with the Victorian ALP leadership which supported ALP cooperation with communist and pro-Soviet organisations in the trade unions and peace movement.<sup>8</sup> In my opinion, Goldbloom almost certainly never was an actual member of the Communist Party, although there is little doubt that he adhered closely to the Party line on most occasions.

In explaining Bono Wiener's political tribulations, Barry Jones suggests that he was caught in the political crossfire between extremes of Left and Right. As an anti-communist, Bono despised fellow-travellers who outspokenly defended civil liberties in Australia, but defended the abuse of human rights in the Soviet Union and other Communist states. However, as a humanistic Marxist, Bono also strongly opposed the Democratic Labor Party and other right-wing groups.

During the Cold War, however, political positions and perceptions were highly polarised. Not all those who opposed the Cold War and the associated McCarthyism in the West were defenders of Soviet totalitarianism. Equally, not all those who condemned the Soviet Gulag were supporters of capitalism and the free market. In their ferocious and sometimes ill-informed campaigns against the Jewish Council and Senator Sam Cohen, Bono and the Bund tended to miss this subtle distinction. Equally, their critics in the Victorian ALP and the Jewish Council also blurred the boundaries, suggesting wrongly that the Bund was collaborating with the DLP.<sup>9</sup> For example, the Bund was accused of orchestrating the personal and political campaigns against ALP parliamentary candidates Norman Rothfield and Sam Goldbloom in 1958,<sup>10</sup> the crusade against preselected ALP Senator Sam Cohen in 1961,<sup>11</sup> and the subsequent attacks on Cohen's stance on Soviet Jewry.<sup>12</sup>

I believe on balance that most of these attacks on the Jewish Council were initiated by Oscar Rozenbess, a former Bundist who published a roneoed news sheet called *Social Democratic News and Views* which was critical of the Victorian ALP leadership and the Jewish Council. Rozenbess was vice-president of the Motor Transport Workers Union, a DLP affiliate, and was in

regular contact with (and probably received funding) from the US Consulate Labor Attache in South Yarra. He was also a close associate of Frank Knopfelmacher, the hardline anti-communist academic.

Knopfelmacher, in turn, was close to Bono Wiener, and represented the Bund at the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies. It is easy to see how and why the Left suspected Bund involvement in such matters. Nevertheless, I believe on the balance of evidence that the Bund was not directly involved.<sup>13</sup> Further despite his unjust expulsion, Bono remained loyal to the ALP, and was readmitted following Federal intervention in the Victorian Branch in 1970.

Two other political issues are of considerable interest here. One was Bono's strong support for the Vietnam War which brought him into strong conflict with younger members of the Bund who became actively involved in the Moratorium Movement.<sup>14</sup> Despite these differences of opinion sometimes expressed in ferocious quarrels, Arnold Zable recalls that the Bund youth retained their respect and affection for Bono. In addition, Bono and the Bund retained their traditionally critical approach to Israel and Zionism. Prior to World War Two, the Polish Bund and the Zionists had been sworn enemies. The Bund sought to maintain a viable Jewish cultural and ethnic existence in Poland, whereas the Zionists negated the role of the diaspora, and insisted that the Jewish future lay in the national homeland of Palestine.<sup>15</sup>

Following the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel, the differences between the Bund and Zionism became increasingly abstract. As both Chava Rosenfarb and Isi Leibler note, Bono Wiener was strongly committed to Israel, visiting the country on numerous occasions, and attempting unsuccessfully to volunteer for the Six Day War. The Melbourne Bund also provided financial support to Israel in times of need.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the Bund arguably retained a more realistic appreciation of Israel's situation than much of Melbourne Jewry, and Bono was one of the first local Jewish leaders to call for dialogue with the PLO and the creation of a Palestinian State alongside Israel.<sup>17</sup>

Amongst other achievements, Bono was a strong supporter of campaigns for Soviet Jewry, and the Nazi War Crimes Bill. He was also a generous benefactor of the Jewish Welfare Society, and a life-long supporter of the Yiddish language and Yiddish culture. His friends remember him as a dynamic orator and a man of passion and conviction who sometimes let his emotions overrule his judgement.

This beautifully presented English and Yiddish-language publication is a welcome addition to the limited existing literature on the Melbourne Bund, and will hopefully inspire further historical research on this important and still flourishing movement. Particularly valuable would be some international research comparing the political positions and ideology adopted by the Melbourne Bund with those of Bundist groups overseas.

## NOTES

- 1 For Medem's views on Bolshevism, see Samuel Portnoy, *Vladimir Medem: The Life and Soul of a Legendary Jewish Socialist*, New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1979, pp. 336–337 & 508.



**'A SERIOUS INFLUX OF JEWS':  
A HISTORY OF JEWISH WELFARE IN VICTORIA**

*Rodney Benjamin (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1998, xvii+461pp; \$35)*

An account of the Jewish Welfare Society in Melbourne has long constituted the most important single unwritten book about Australian Jewish history. Since its beginnings in the 1930s the Melbourne Society has been the most important institutional facilitator in producing today's Australian Jewish community, more important than any other secular or religious body. For several decades the primary role of the Society was to assist persecuted Jews overseas to migrate to Australia and successfully to settle here. For all practical purposes, it was thus, until the 1960s, Melbourne Jewry's immigrant aid society. Only during the past thirty years has it become what its title might lead one to expect it to be, an organisation dealing with social and economic 'problem' cases in the Melbourne Jewish community. The Melbourne Society was (and is) a separate body from the Sydney Welfare Society, whose story was skilfully told by Anne Andgel in *Fifty Years of Caring* (Sydney, 1988). The central importance of the Melbourne Society lies in large part in the virtual monopoly position it officially held in bringing non-British Jewish refugees to Melbourne. The post-Holocaust, largely Eastern European Jewish community of Melbourne is, in a real sense, the product of the Welfare Society's efforts. Successive waves of twentieth-century European Jewish refugees in Australia, above all the pre-1939 refugees from Nazi Germany and the post-war survivors, owe their presence in Melbourne largely to the Society's efforts, as do the more recent Soviet and ex-USSR Jewish migrants. (The Society, however, had no responsibility for assisting Jewish immigrants who were not refugees, a category which includes all migrants from the English-speaking world, such as the recent wave of South Africans.) To attempt to write a successful history of the Society is indeed a daunting task. The Society has retained records of almost all the 25,000 immigrants it has assisted and many other records. The evolution of the Society and the plethora of individual groups and bodies within its overall umbrella are confusing if not bewildering. Possibly only someone familiar with the Society from the inside could successfully have written this book, which raises questions of distance and objectivity.

By and large, Dr Rodney Benjamin has performed this difficult task with great skill and his history of Melbourne Welfare is an important and notable book entirely worthy of its subject. Dr Benjamin, who served on the Board of the Welfare Society for more than thirty years, and holds a doctorate in economic history from Melbourne University, is extremely well-qualified to have written this work. The book is very long — 461 pages — as it had to be, and is attractively produced and logically arranged. Its many photographs will inspire much nostalgia. It might be best to divide the remainder of this review into two parts: how Dr Benjamin has handled the much-debated question of restrictions on Jewish refugee immigration here during the period 1933–39, and his analysis of the evolution of the Society.

Anyone familiar with the historiography of Australian Jewish history as it has developed over the past quarter-century will be aware that one central debate concerns the liberality or illiberality of the Australian government in admitting Jewish refugees during the Nazi and post-war periods. I think it is fair to say that both the facts adduced by Dr Benjamin in his work and the interpretation he has placed on them fully bear out the position which I have repeatedly endorsed, that very few significant barriers actually existed to Jewish refugee migration to Australia, at least after 1938. Dr Benjamin consistently discounts the claims made by Dr Suzanne Rutland and other historians concerning the apparent antisemitic limitations on refugee migration. Concerning the well-known restriction on Jews comprising more than 25 per cent of any boatload of migrants to Australia which existed in the late 1940s, Dr Benjamin specifically states (p. 198) that 'it was not a rule that was used as a means of denying Jews entry to Australia. It was a limitation on the number allowed on a ship or a plane, not on the number of landing permits issued or visas granted ... [T]he rule was not used to restrict entry into this country.' Dr Benjamin notes (p. 237) that over 30 per cent of all permits issued to 'aliens' (i.e. non-British Commonwealth citizens) to enter Australia between November 1945 and the end of 1949 went to Jews. He clearly (pp. 238–241) discounts the evidence produced by Dr Rutland that the Immigration Department memorandum of 20 October 1949 placing an embargo on alien immigrants from Communist countries worked against Jewish migrants: 'The Immigration Department was aware of permits being issued, and yet no serious attempt had been made to use the Iron Curtain embargo to limit the numbers being granted ... Quite clearly if the Australian Government was attempting to restrict Jewish migration it was so poorly managed, or ignored, that it was having little if any effect'. He also notes that the embargo 'provoked no reaction' from the Welfare Society 'because it was realised that it would have little effect on the flow of migrants'. Much other evidence of the openness of Australia to Jewish migrants is offered by Dr Benjamin, whose conclusions parallel very similar findings in Anne Andgel's history of the Sydney Welfare Society. There are, however, aspects of this question on which Dr Benjamin has regrettably not commented. Obviously this is not the purpose of his study, but I regret some of these lost opportunities. For instance, he has said little or nothing of the pressures brought by the Zionist movement, after May 1948, to *limit* further refugee migration to Australia. They argued (perhaps with justice) that survivors with no clear ties to Australia ought to go to Israel, a state crying out for Jewish immigrants. More centrally, he has not attempted to review even a sample of the 25,000 files held by the Society to ascertain whether some would-be migrants were turned down by the Australian Government on grounds which could be construed as antisemitic. Some historian ought certainly to carry out research on this topic in a searching way; any such investigation would presumably decide the debate with some finality.

Dr Benjamin's work does not, of course, primarily concern the question of immigration restrictions but the evolution of the Welfare Society as an institution. He has carried out this task very well, explaining the many functions

of the Society in a clear and coherent way. He has used the Society's minute books very well, and explained with skill the evolution of an immigrants' aid body into a welfare society in the more conventional sense. There are useful appendices on the Society's office-bearers and biographies of the Presidents of the Society. Perhaps more might have been said about the internal debates surrounding the evolution of the Society and, especially, more memories given of how the Society actually functioned, and what it achieved, by interviews with both Society employees and those whom it helped. As well, the relationship of the Society to the Melbourne Jewish community and the government are somewhat neglected. Although the book is extremely well-produced, there are lapses: for instance, Dr Benjamin has misspelled my name every time he has cited it, even when copying it from the title page of a book. He has, however, produced what will long remain the standard history of the most influential of Melbourne Jewish organisations.

W.D. Rubinstein

### THE WAY WE LIVE NOW: THE CONTROVERSIES OF THE NINETIES

*Robert Manne (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1998; 281pp., \$22.95)*

Together with Professor Peter Singer, the 'animal rights' campaigner, Robert Manne is probably the best known Australian Jewish intellectual of the present time, and it is appropriate to consider the latest book of his collected essays in this *Journal*, especially as many of these essays concern Jewish issues. All of these essays first appeared in *Quadrant*, which Manne edited between 1988 and 1997. Let me begin by saying that Professor Manne is at all times an extraordinarily intelligent thinker and one of the best writers in contemporary Australia, whose essays are almost always a pleasure to read. There is, I think, no one quite like him in today's Australia: no one who consistently combines controlled passion with intelligence in quite the same way. It is also clear that Manne has something like a genius for making enemies. In part this is because he often (not always) challenges the Left's intellectual hegemony. In part this is because he argues against many sacred cows. In this is because of the hothouse environment in which public intellectuals operate, especially in a country like Australia where the publishing outlets for intellectual discourse are as meagre as the financial rewards they bring.

The most important reason for this fact, however, is because Manne is simply unclassifiable. His intellectual roots are genuinely puzzling. Worse than that, they are regularly unpredictable. Manne's social and economic world view seems to be somewhat akin to that found in two well-known traditions. Most centrally, his views, and those of his former like-minded colleagues at

*Quadrant*, might be described as B.A. Santamaria with the Catholicism left out, socially conservative, anti-Communist, elitist, but also anti-laissez faire and anti-economic rationalist. Secondly, his views are also somewhat akin to the British Tory (or perhaps Whig) tradition of paternalism, government by a socially-conscious elite which mistrusts the Left and its cultural destructiveness. Nevertheless these descriptions are only rough approximations, if that. Manne is obviously not a Catholic (and, indeed, appears to have no religious views whatever which he applies to his writings), and thus lacks the religious underpinnings of the social Catholic tradition which Santamaria represented. Manne would find it even harder to represent a paternalistic Tory viewpoint. In nineteenth-century Britain this viewpoint had behind it a centuries-old tradition of political and social rule by the landed aristocracy, and the intellectual and clerical domination of Oxbridge. It is obvious that there is simply no parallel to this in Australia. Nor is he a populist, categorically rejecting Pauline Hanson. Manne does, I think, believe in the inherent goodness and fairness of the 'fair dinkum Aussie battler' (if such persons actually exist outside of *Neighbours*), and, I suppose, would feel most akin to the pre-Whitlam ALP and its values, or perhaps to John Howard's strand in the Coalition — except that he is critical of both. It is genuinely difficult to see where Robert Manne is coming from, or what he is driving at, which is a major part of the problem.

While Manne writes sensitively of his Jewish background and of Jewish questions, it is also difficult to associate him with any well-known strand in contemporary Jewish thought. At first glance he seems somewhat akin to American Jewish neo-conservatism as presented in *Commentary*, but there are also here a great many differences. This school is passionately concerned with the future of Israel. It believes in free enterprise and in the virtues of upward social mobility. It strongly opposes 'reverse discrimination' measures and would, I strongly suspect, take a very jaundiced view of much post-Mabo Aboriginal advocacy. On all of these Manne either has no views or has argued for their opposite. Once more, the net result is confusion, a confusion which diminishes the impact of his work. Manne has described himself in radio interviews as a 'moralist', an old-fashioned term meaning, I suppose, one who looks at social and political questions from a moral viewpoint. When I hear someone describe himself as a 'moralist' my first instinct is to make sure that my credit cards are in a safe place.

Although, in my opinion, Manne is very frequently correct in his analysis, he is sometimes quite wrong and he is often confused. An example may be found in the longest essay in the book, 'The Stolen Generations', on the forcible removal of part-Aboriginals from their families. It is plainly inappropriate to discuss, in this venue, any aspect of the Aboriginal question, and I would not wish to do so. Nor do I dispute in any way the immorality of stealing children from their mothers. My quarrel is with the notion that this policy constitutes



genocide, a view officially stated in the 1997 Report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home*. The view that this policy constituted genocide is endorsed by Manne, albeit with reservations. In my opinion this is utter nonsense; I am sorry if this gives offence to some readers, but this must be said without equivocation. The policy in question was forcibly to remove the children of an Aboriginal mother and a European father and raise the child as a white Australian in a white Australian family. Suppose that the worst the Nazis did to European Jewry was precisely this: to forcibly remove the half-Jewish children of a Jewish mother and an 'Aryan' father and to raise them as 'Aryan' Germans. Would this constitute the most infamous crime in modern history? Would the State of Israel have 'arisen on the ashes' of this policy? Would this be the subject of memorial in countless books, depictions and museums? Would anyone, apart from specialist scholars, even know that this policy had existed, or cared? Since the answer to all these questions is obviously no, and the utter inappropriateness of using the term 'genocide' to describe both the Holocaust and the Aboriginal 'stolen children' must surely be self-evident to Robert Manne, one must wonder just what he is up to. Furthermore, no one actually does believe that the 'stolen children' constituted an actual example of genocide. Rather amazingly, this policy continued until the late 1960s, which means that a good many of the officials (including ordinary local policemen) who carried it out must still be alive. If this was indeed an example of genocide, does Robert Manne (or anyone else) believe that they should now be located and placed on trial for their 'crimes against humanity'? I would be surprised if the answer was yes. It is even more disturbing, perhaps, that the leadership of the Australian Jewish community, which is seldom slow to protest against any public distortion of the concept of genocide, should apparently have jumped on the bandwagon of political correctness to endorse such a blatant abuse of this term.

On other Jewish issues Manne's views are more mixed. He is generally good and sensible in 'The Road to Auschwitz', on Nazi policy towards the Jews prior to 1939, although he is less than fair to the leadership of the German Jewish community, who did not possess a crystal ball. He is good on David Irving and very good on Demidenko. Manne has also included an ephemeral, egregious essay on *Schindler's List* which was as good a candidate as any for the circular file. The rest of the essays range widely and show both Manne's intellectual ability and also why he is mistrusted, even by those who support and admire him. His essay 'Why I am no longer a Republican' must have come as a great shock to his natural constituency, and shows Manne taking contrariness beyond the limits of an art form.

In November 1997 Manne resigned as editor of *Quadrant* following what I gather was a mutiny by its editorial committee. Manne has been widely hailed as an outstanding editor. Permit me to disagree. No doubt he was satisfactory in getting the magazine out on time and he certainly gained it more publicity than it had ever received. Yet, in my view, *Quadrant* went into sharp decline during his reign. The best-known article which *Quadrant* published when Manne was editor (probably by a factor of twenty) was Peter

Ryan's attack on Manning Clark. One would have expected *Quadrant* to have followed this up, issue after issue, with similar highly visible attacks on other sacred cows of the Australian Left — the ABC, the universities, the 'new class' of ideological administrators in obscure federal agencies. But *Quadrant* did no such thing. Instead, every issue was filled with worthy but heroically tedious essays on the nature of the 'civic culture' which, in common I suspect with ninety-eight per cent of *Quadrant's* audience, I found simply unreadable. When Manne left, his group of like-minded intellectuals left with him, especially Raymond Gaita, Martin Krygier and John Carroll, each of whom enjoys an important reputation in his own right. One imagines they have discussed the possibility of founding a new journal which reflects their viewpoint. I doubt they have an audience of sufficient size and I would be surprised if they succeeded. If it is any consolation, the few issues of *Quadrant* under its new editor P.P. McGuinness which I have seen are little different than the old ones and no better. In Australia, politics may simply be too unimportant to be left to the intellectuals.

W.D. Rubinstein

## THE HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN ZIONIST MOVEMENT

*Bernard Hyams (South Caulfield, Vic: Zionist Federation of Australia, 1998;  
viii+183 pp., illus., notes, index)*

Dr Bernard Hyams' impressive monograph on the history of Zionism in Australia fills one of the major gaps in Australian Jewish historiography. While all general histories of the Australian Jewish community and a good many scholarly articles have touched upon aspects of the Zionist movement here, no one has ever written a detailed history of the movement before. Dr Hyams, formerly Reader in Education at the Flinders University of South Australia in Adelaide before a relatively recent move to Melbourne (and a former President of the State Zionist Council of South Australia), writes with great lucidity and intelligence. He is an obvious master of the subject, and his book is notable for its exemplary use of Zionist archival records, Jewish newspapers, interviews with living notables, and the work of other historians of Australian Jewry, which he integrates very well indeed. The book is always a pleasure to read. Much of his narrative will be new even to specialist historians of Australian Jewry: for instance, I certainly was unaware of much of what he revealed, much of which is not included in previous histories of Australian Jewry. The work is fully referenced, with hundreds of footnote citations.

Dr Hyams divides the history of Australian Zionism into six chronological periods, with a good deal of attention paid to the earlier phases

of the story. He naturally sees the 1940s as the most crucial turning point in Zionist affairs, and his judgements — on Dr Evatt or Sir Isaac Isaacs, for instance — appear sound and well-argued. Some very interesting points emerge: the very early comparative strength of Zionism in Victoria compared with New South Wales; the absence of Zionist internal political parties and factions in Australia (an endemic feature of Zionist politics in Europe) until surprisingly late, and the equally late appearance of Zionist youth groups; the hegemony of Zionism within the community as a rather late development, possibly not complete until the 1967 War. Some of his discussions are particularly impressive, for example his account of the development of the Zionist youth movements in the late 1930s and 1940s. Dr Hyams also confirms many of the views posited by earlier historians, for instance the crucial importance of the Second World War and knowledge of the Holocaust in reorienting the stance of the community's opinion-leaders towards Zionism. Above all, *A History of the Australian Zionist Movement* treats Australian Jewish history as a serious field of study in its own right, and not merely as a remote appendage to the larger centres of Jewish life. It will obviously remain the standard work on this subject for many years.

There are a number of points where in my view the book might have been improved. Most centrally, Dr Hyams never properly explains what "Zionism" meant for its pre-1948 protagonists and opponents. It cannot be taken for granted that Zionists, even "political" Zionists, desired a state in the sense we have known for the past fifty years and, indeed, the serious ambiguities surrounding the goals of the Zionist movement were one reason for its weakness. Only in May 1942, with the so-called Biltmore Declaration, did the mainstream Zionist movement unequivocally go on record as demanding an independent Jewish state in Palestine. Secondly (and in common with the works of many historians, including my own past writings) the range of popular Jewish ideologies of the period from 1890-1948 is unfairly minimized. It is both tempting and almost inevitable that a contemporary history of the Zionist movement will be hindsighted and teleological, viewing the emergence of the state of Israel as inevitable and its anti-Zionist opponents as incomprehensibly benighted. It was, however, certainly not inevitable that Zionism was to triumph, and, without the Holocaust, it is difficult to see how the State of Israel could realistically have been established. Prior to 1948, Zionism (itself divided into many separate, even hostile, factions) was only one of many ideologies which were championed by significant sections of world Jewry. The two largest Jewish parties in interwar Poland, for instance, the Bund and the Strictly Orthodox *Agudas Israel*, were ferociously and resolutely opposed to Zionism. Even the British Empire super-patriotism of Sir Isaac Isaacs and his ilk took on a very different complexion when (as was the case until the 1930s or 1940s) the British Empire was still an immensely powerful geo-political unit, arguably still the most powerful in the world. Much more remains to be written which places the evolution of the popularity of Zionism in a very much wider context, and which, in particular, views neither its past popularity nor unpopularity with today's eyes.

A third point is that Dr Hyams' *History* was officially commissioned by the Zionist Federation of Australia to appear in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the State. The relationship of the author to his sponsoring body is thus not unproblematical. In general, Dr Hyams has been notably objective. Writing about the very recent past — admittedly, always a difficult task — one might however note certain curious omissions, for example the very public quarrel between Isi and Mark Leibler five or six years ago over the role of the Zionist Federation *vis-a-vis* the ECAJ. Indeed, this continuously contentious issue appears certainly to have been glossed over. On another point, the Zionist youth movements have clearly declined in importance since their zenith in the 1940s and 1950s. The central reason for this is not mysterious, merely the growth of the Jewish day-schools as the most salient associational matrix for Jewish youth. These criticisms notwithstanding, Dr Hyams has written an important book which takes its place among the key narrative histories of the Australian Jewish community.

W.D. Rubinstein

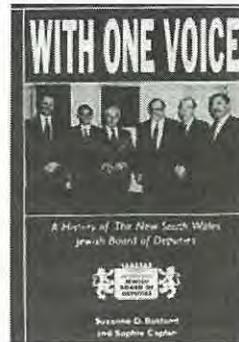
## WITH ONE VOICE: A HISTORY OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES

*Suzanne D. Rutland & Sophie Caplan (Sydney: Australian Jewish Historical Society, 1998; x+405pp.)*

A record of the first fifty years of any Australian Jewish institution, especially of a roof body such as the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, demands to be celebrated. Suzanne Rutland and Sophie Caplan's book *With One Voice* has done just that. The title, intentionally or not, is doubtlessly ironic. The post-Enlightenment history of Jewish governance in liberal democracies amply illustrates the struggle to attain this end. Indeed, in its own gentle way, the text amplifies this struggle.

There is scant doubt that the authors are true fiduciaries of the Board's official records, which commence with its inaugural meeting on 29 July 1945. The story is about those who played a significant role on the Board over the half-century and the Board's response — in terms of structure and outreach — to the existential and pragmatic problems it was required to confront. It is not a history of the NSW Jewish community. For that one has to look elsewhere to the writings of Suzanne Rutland, amongst others. Indeed, only against such a background can the content of *With One Voice* be fully appreciated. Given the origins of many of the documents used, it is hardly surprising that the interpretation of events is quintessentially Sydney-centric.

In format, the 404-paged narrative is an annual report writ large, opening as it does with those events of the Hitler era which intruded on a smug Anglo-Jewry and which ultimately led to the formation of the Board. While the text



evinces no overall thesis to drive and probe the historical experience, it shows how the Board has needed to become increasingly professional to meet the challenges facing it.

The text is divided into three historically contiguous sections, contributed individually by each of the authors. While there are matters that are time-specific, such as the question of the Board's democratic nature, or its opposition to German immigration in the early 1950s, there is a common set of issues examined across the triptych. These include Jewish immigration and the integration of immigrants, the running sore of finance, and the struggles on behalf of Soviet Jewry. There is the rise of the Jewish Day School, Jewish tuition in the non-Jewish school, and the need to be constantly on guard against anti-Jewish or anti-Israel tendencies in the school curriculum. The sensitivities of the Yiddishists, especially at communal Holocaust commemorations, the divisive Liberal-Orthodox dichotomy, and the difficulties in establishing a standard *Kashrut*, have been constant worries. There is the whole area of public relations that have ever concerned the Board. In recent years this activity has had to expand exponentially to address the ever increasing demands of Jewish-Gentile relations, defending Israel against its vociferous critics, and the seemingly endless and emboldened activities of the racist Right.

The authors point out rightly that the June war of 1967 had an intensely sobering effect on the NSW Jewish community, such that it was finally able to embrace the notion of a Joint Communal Appeal. They show that struggles on Australian university campuses during the 1970s drafted young Jewish activists into communal service. Certainly, in more recent times, the intrepid forays of representatives of the Jewish community into rural areas to speak directly to those with prejudicially antisemitic or racist views is particularly noteworthy.

Jewish governance in a liberal democracy prompts one to ask a number of important questions about the politics of selection and election. Because no fundamental thesis drives the narrative, these questions are missing. True, matters pertaining to the democratic nature of the Board are described early on in the text, but the crucial issue of the relationship between the Board and individual Jews of the community, is let go too easily. Also, the often tetchy matters between Sydney and Melbourne over the ECAJ and its kindred interests, are smoothed over. The assessment of the effectiveness of the various Boards' administrations and their officers, moreover, is left mainly to the personal opinion of the authors.

Refreshingly, the text is historically accurate when deflating some of the mythology surrounding the role of Arthur Calwell in the immediate post-World War Two Jewish migration saga. However, there are questions that need to be asked over the text's interpretation of who was the prime influence on Herbert Vere Evatt's decision to support a Jewish state in Palestine, and the one-dimensional presentation of the politically vexed 'Sam Cohen affair' over the extent of antisemitism in the Soviet Union.

*With One Voice* is clearly readable, though the somewhat excessive detail in numerous snap-shot biographies of important presidents, committee members and professional staff, tends to impede the natural flow of the narrative. Apart from its being an instrument of celebration, the text serves as an important

milestone on the road of a much needed historical evaluation of Jewish governance Australia-wide.

Rodney M. Goultman

## JUDAH WATEN — FICTION, MEMOIR, CRITICISM

David Carter (ed.) (University of Queensland Press, 1998; 340pp. \$24.95)



Judah Waten was born in Odessa, romantic city of music and thieves, in 1911. On the very eve of the First World War he migrated with his parents to Western Australia. They settled, not in Perth, but in Midland Junction, a small country town about a four to five hour horse and cart drive away. In every sense Midland Junction was a long, long way from Odessa.

His mother was a revolutionary. His father was a dreamer. A *Luftmensch* — a merchant who ‘traded in air’. Or, in more prosaic terms, a not too successful rag-and-bone man cum bottle-O who plied his trade around the back blocks of Midland Junction. Surprisingly, there were quite a number of Jewish hawkers in the area. Itinerant Jewish drapers, opticians, and tailors. Strange, odd-ball, Henry Lawson-type characters.

Waten was a bright, outgoing, gregarious child who easily made friends. He was also a vociferous reader: And by the age of nine had discovered the two great conflicting passions that were to dominate his life: writing and left-wing politics.

Waten’s semi-autobiographical accounts of his childhood in Midland Junction border on the brilliant. At his very best Waten is a sharp and precise writer with a biting sense of humour. ‘I recall the day when the news arrived of the death of our neighbour’s husband on the Western Front. Her two sons, Tommy and Jack, my closest friends, could not decide whether to stay indoors with their grieving young mother or parade around the street basking in the glory of having acquired a dead father.’

At 16 Waten joined the Communist Party. And only a young man truly smitten could have fallen in love with a book entitled *The Soviet Union Looks Ahead: The Five Year Plan for Economic Construction*. ‘Unlike most books of figures and tables,’ enthused the young socialist, ‘it is quite as exciting to read as it is important.’

In 1931, in the midst of the Great Depression and Hunger Marches, Waten travelled to London where he became co-editor of the *Unemployed Worker*. Six months later he was arrested for ‘inciting the police to refuse to carry out a lawful command’ and was jailed for three months in the depressingly named Wormwood Scrubs Prison. This part of his life may sound interesting, but unfortunately, it isn’t. For the minute Waten begins to write about politics, Communism, and the Glorious Revolution, an iron curtain descends over his senses. He becomes boring, earnest, heavy-handed, and dare I say it, politically correct.

And, apart from an interesting interview with Waten, the book is now downhill all the way, finally hitting rock bottom with 'The Knife', a turgid little tale of love, hate and xenophobia set in the streets of Melbourne.

*Judah Waten — Fiction, Memoir, Criticism* also comes complete with a long introduction by David Carter. But much of this introduction is incomprehensible. Take this sentence for example; 'Waten's later career can be traced through the same kind of institutional history and cultural politics as essayed above, charting his relationship to the changing scene of Australian literature and the wider cultural networks in which that literature had meaning.' There may be some who have the time and patience to nut out what this means, but I'm not one of them.

Visually, this is an attractive book with a terrific portrait of Judah Waten on the front cover, painted by his old comrade-in-arms, Noel Counihan.

Judith O'Donnell

## OUT OF TUNE:

### DAVID HELFGOTT AND THE MYTH OF *SHINE*

(Margaret Helfgott with Tom Gross; Warner Books Inc., New York, 1998; x+294pp; illustr.; \$29.95)

Last year, for this *Journal*, I reviewed three books on David Helfgott, the classical pianist and central character of the film *Shine*. These were the screenplay *Shine* by Jan Sardi with Scott Hicks, *The Book of David* by Beverly Eley, and *Love You to Bits and Pieces* by Gillian Helfgott. It occurred to me while writing these reviews that the material for all three books had come from the one source, Gillian Helfgott, David's wife. But apart from a small newspaper clipping I was unable to find any alternative material. This has now been rectified by the recent publication of *Out of Tune — the myth of Shine* by Margaret Helfgott. Margaret is David's sister.

As everyone knows, the film *Shine* has been spectacularly successful. Possibly this is because *Shine* has all the right ingredients. Good acting. A strong story line. A father/villain to boo at. A lover/heroine to cheer for. And a genius with all the qualities we so love in a screen genius — a little bit mad, a little bit sad, and a little bit schmaltzy. After all, who wants to see a film about a happy, well-adjusted genius?

If *Shine* had been sold as a work of fiction there would be no problem, but *Shine* has been marketed and heavily promoted as a true story, and as a consequence has caused considerable distress to the other members of the Helfgott family. The family is particularly upset by the film's portrayal of Peter Helfgott, David's father. For despite all the media hype David's life was not 'meticulously research(ed)'. There was no 'ten year odyssey'. According to Margaret, Scott Hicks (the writer and director of *Shine*) had little, if any, contact with David's family, or with his early teachers and supporters. *Shine* is, from beginning to end, a piece of fiction concocted by Gillian Helfgott and Scott Hicks.

Peter Helfgott was not, as the film infers, a Holocaust survivor. He did not speak with a German accent. Nor did he patrol the Helfgott home like a robotic camp commandant issuing such statements as: 'It's tough, life can be tough but you have to survive. Say it. "You have to survive."' He did not prevent David from going to America, there was no firm invitation. Nor did he burn David's letters and scrapbook, they still exist. David was never estranged from his father. He lived with him for many years after his return from London. Margaret describes her father as a kind and gentle man who did not beat or mistreat his children, and David, she insists, had a happy childhood.

David did suffer a 'break-down' while studying in London (though he did not dramatically fall from his piano stool while playing the Rach 3). And he did, after returning to Australia, spend time in various hospitals and half-way houses, but he was never locked away. Nor was he ever forbidden to play the piano. He continued to give concerts during the 1970s and early 1980s receiving far better reviews than he currently receives. Margaret claims that, prior to meeting Gillian, David was relatively independent. He had his own bank account and could use public transport. He also talked coherently.

Gillian met David in 1983. And instantly 'felt a strong karmic bond' with him. Gillian is a professional 'astrologist, numerologist and Tarot card reader'. They were married in 1984. And, according to her own book, she then immediately set about rearranging his life. Gillian refers to herself as David's 'domestic manager' though I suspect by now she is his legal guardian. She openly describes David as 'extremely malleable material'. In the four books that I have now read on the subject I can find no evidence anywhere that Gillian has, or has ever had, any interest or training in classical music. And this may explain why under her tutelage reviews of David's concerts have plummeted. Gillian did not know Peter Helfgott. He died before she met David. And the weird thing is, the very characteristics that are attributed to Peter in the film, manipulative, domineering, living vicariously through David, are the very characteristics that best seem to sum up Gillian. Rather than being a true story *Shine* has completely inverted the truth. What is good it has labelled bad, and what is bad it has labelled good. *Shine*, if Margaret Helfgott is to be believed, is David through the looking glass.

*Out of Tune ...* was recently published in America by Warner, and though 'well received' Warner's local distributor, Penguin, have declined to distribute it in Australia. Penguin is the publisher of Gillian Helfgott's best seller *Love You to Bits and Pieces*. I rang Penguin and was assured by a representative that these two facts are in no way connected!

However, *Out of Tune ...* is available on the Internet, and from Melbourne bookshops.

## OUT OF TUNE

DAVID HELFGOTT AND  
THE MYTH OF SHINE

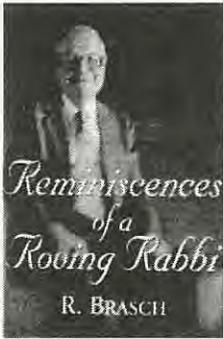


MARGARET  
HELFGOTT

WITH TOM GROSS

## REMINISCENCES OF A ROVING RABBI

Rudolph Brasch (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1998; 272pp., \$34.95)



When I reviewed *The Star of David* for the Australian Jewish press forty-three years ago, I concluded my review by stating that the rabbi was to be complimented on his initiative and achievement. Perhaps I should have congratulated him with more humility as, in the years since 1955, Rudolph Brasch has combined a distinguished pastoral career at Temple Emanuel with the life of a traveller and an intellectual career the like of which I have not previously noted. (He is author of 27 books.) The present volume covers aspects of his extraordinarily full life.

His life's work began in Berlin, where he enjoyed a close scholarly association with the noted Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck. Brasch preached his first sermons in the Fasanenstrasse Synagogue on *Tish'a B'Av* 1938 not long before departing for England, and he spent some years in South Africa before accepting the call to Temple Emanuel, Sydney, in June 1949. In February 1952 he married Liselotte Buchbinder. (It is a courageous man who questions his wife's cooking, but he warmly acknowledges Mrs Brasch's guidance, support and organising ability over the intervening forty-plus years.) In 1955 he published *The Star of David*, primarily a guide to Jewish customs and religious beliefs for *bar mitzvah* boys; the concluding chapters of the book provided readers with a short history of Australian Jewry. (Brasch's reference to Geelong drew on my own research undertaken a decade earlier.)

Brasch has travelled extensively throughout his career, seeing at first hand the disappearing Jewish communities in rural New South Wales, for instance, and sampling American Jewish life in Alaska, as temporary minister in Montgomery, Alabama or in Little Rock, Arkansas (birthplace of General MacArthur). Much time has been spent on service ships, delivering lectures on a range of subjects. (Especially moving is his account of an interdenominational service in 1982 commemorating the sea battles of World War Two.) In retirement, Rabbi Brasch views the role of 'celebrity speaker' as a way of extending his community service.

The rabbi refers only fleetingly to his outstanding contribution over 30 years to the leadership of Temple Emanuel; that contribution in itself would well merit a full autobiography however self-aggrandising it might be. Of course, his writing does reflect in places his Liberal interpretation of Judaism (including, as he observes, 'the need to adapt Jewish practices and ritual ... to contemporary life'.) Recalling his earliest years in Sydney, he records that he preached in both Woollahra and the North Shore on Yom Kippur. ('A hire car was waiting for me to rush me across the Harbour Bridge to and fro.') Back in 1955, the use of the organ in Temple services and attendance at crematorium funerals were contentious issues. Interestingly, the rabbi now believes that 'sermons in themselves ... mean little and in today's climate are largely outmoded'.

*Reminiscences of a Roving Rabbi* is an excellent book and well worth reading. It is hard to believe that one man's lifetime could encompass so many varied activities and facets (preaching, writing, travel and historic research chief among them). Rabbi Brasch is to be congratulated on his contribution.

Isidor Solomon

## SURVIVING: A HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS OF THE ADELAIDE JEWISH COMMUNITY

*Bernard Hyams (Adelaide: Jewish Community Council of South Australia, 1998;  
ix+227pp, \$39.95)*

The sturdy tradition of interest in documenting the Australian Jewish experience notwithstanding, surprisingly little has been published on the South Australian community. While South Australia has received due coverage in the general histories of Australian Jewry produced over the past couple of decades, and while occasional biographies of such notables as A.T. Boas, Maurice Salom and the Solomon family have appeared in this *Journal*, only the merest handful of writers have ever looked at the evolution of Adelaide Jewry (and the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation, specifically) in any detail. Reverend Boas contributed a still valuable Jubilee essay to the *Jewish Herald* in 1908; Rabbi Alfred Fabian recapitulated communal beginnings in the *AJHSJ* in the 1940s (as did David Benjamin), while Hirsch Munz's *The Jews in South Australia* (1936) remains noteworthy as one of the earliest published monographs on any aspect of Australian Jewish history.

Bernard Hyams' new work, therefore, fills a long-standing need and, in my view, does so with considerable skill. As the title suggests, the book charts constant efforts to ensure Jewish communal survival in the face of periodic population decline and not infrequent lay and spiritual leadership problems, within a broader environment conducive to assimilation. (The author emphasises at the outset that *Surviving* is not a comprehensive study of South Australian Jewry, but rather a more narrow — and more modest — recounting of 150 years of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation and of the communal institutions which it has spawned or which have evolved in its wake. Even so, he has been scrupulous in providing readers with detail, where relevant, of Jewish contributions to South Australian history outside the orbit of the AHC.) The book is organised logically into five distinct time-frames, one chapter each dealing with the foundations and establishment of congregation/community; AHC's consolidation under the long-serving Reverend Boas; stagnation and decline in the first quarter of the twentieth century; congregational/communal revitalisation through immigration (particularly after World War Two); and the development of today's culturally (and religiously) pluralist Jewish community from the 1960s. Within each time-frame, the author

takes a thematic approach; in Chapter 2, for instance, he looks in turn at locational and structural problems of the synagogue building, lay-clerical relations, style of service (and Reform initiatives) under Boas, Jewish education, early community organisations and Jewish life outside Adelaide. While this approach admittedly entails a degree of shuttling back and forth within the time-frame in question, it pays good dividends in readability and accessibility.

Dr Hyams has drawn to excellent effect on the Jewish press, genealogical materials collated by the late Sadie Pritchard and (in particular) unpublished communal and congregational records. It is thanks to the last that new light is shed on such diverse topics as the infant congregation's correspondence with the Reverend Herman Hoelzel, the Chief Rabbi's delegate to the Australian colonies; the contours of the relationship of Boas and his family with successive Boards of management; or Adelaide's early 'dalliance' with the Reform movement. At times the book might have benefited from more emphasis on biographical detail: it might be noted, for example, that Moss J. Solomon, who served on the Board for more than 50 years (including 35 as President), was also an important lobbyist for Ritual Reform. (His campaign for liturgical modifications almost matched that of Reform pioneer Isaac Jaobs — in longevity if not in intensity.) Similarly, information on the post-Adelaide careers of some of the clergy might have been of interest — particularly that of the extraordinary and ubiquitous Rev Isaac Amber Bernstein. (Bernstein's unauthorised conversionist activity in Melbourne continues to be a subject of controversy to this day.) I was disappointed also at the lack of an index. In the main, however, these are minor points. Overall, *Surviving* stands out as an important and long-awaited contribution to Australian Jewish congregational history.

Malcolm J. Turnbull

### THEODORE FINK: A TALENT FOR UBIQUITY

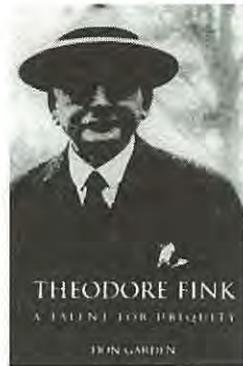
*Don Garden (Melbourne University Press, 1998, xii + 308pp.,  
illustr., \$39.95)*

Don Garden's well-researched and skilfully-crafted biography of press baron, lawyer and entrepreneur Theodore Fink (one of the best known figures of his day) draws to good effect on a substantial collection of family papers, as well as on more general sources. Born in the Channel Islands in 1855, Fink emigrated to Australia in 1860, grew up at Geelong, was educated at Melbourne Grammar (where he became a lifelong friend of Alfred Deakin), trained as a solicitor, and joined P.D. Phillips and R.W. Best in a major legal partnership at the Rialto. Fink amassed a fortune in the Land Boom of the 1880s, surmounted insolvency shrewdly (albeit dubiously) in the 1890s, and managed to reinvent himself as a respectable (and respected) politician and Royal commissioner. For half a century he was the leading power behind the *Herald and Weekly Times* newspaper network.

Fink was an extraordinarily talented and complex individual whose life and career encompassed extremes. On one hand, he was wholehearted in his commitment to civic duty and a most enthusiastic patron of the arts; on the other, he is probably best remembered today for the crafty manner in which he extricated himself and other land-boomers (including brother Benjamin Josman Fink who reportedly left a trail of financial devastation and ruin behind him when he escaped to Britain) from the full impact of the land bust. Garden's fair and sober analysis of this episode (specifically, of Theodore Fink's use of the secret composition by arrangement provision of the Insolvency act) is, in my view, the most interesting aspect of the book.

Also absorbing is Garden's excellent summary of mainstream press history in the early twentieth century; he charts the declining relationship between the elderly Fink and the ambitious, up-and-coming Keith Murdoch within this context. Garden mentions Fink's Jewish background in passing, noting his involvement with the MUJEB and the Jewish Literary and Debating Society, and his social contacts with the Isaacs, Pirani, Phillips and Monash families. Otherwise though, the man's Jewishness seems to have been incidental, even peripheral, to his main life pursuits. Essentially, he was a secularist. (Fink's funeral, conducted by Rabbi Danglow, was followed by a cremation service. Similarly, Garden informs us that Kate Fink was one of a number of prominent Anglo-Jews who adopted Christian Science.)

All in all, *Theodore Fink: a Talent for Ubiquity* is a skilled and readable contribution to our knowledge of Victorian history during a particularly colourful era.



Malcolm J. Turnbull

## SHORT NOTICES

In addition to the major new works described above, recent publications likely to be of interest to readers of this Journal include:

Inga Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust* (Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1998.)

In this expertly argued and beautifully written collection of (eight) essays, historian Clendinnen seeks to dispel what she calls the 'gorgon' effect which often afflicts writers attempting to come to terms with the Holocaust. Drawing on films, photographs, published analyses and survivor memoirs, she explores such issues as the uniqueness of the Final Solution, resistance, perspectives of the perpetrators, and the value of witness testimony. Clendinnen writes as a perplexed outsider, who believes such perplexity to be dangerous; in her quest for enlightenment, she draws to maximum effect on eyewitness accounts by Primo Levi and Charlotte Delbo. (She acknowledges the assistance of volunteer staff at the Jewish Holocaust Museum & Research Centre in Melbourne).

Barbara Falk, *Caught in a snare: Hitler's refugee academics 1933-1949* (History Department, University of Melbourne, 1998.)

Dr Falk's new book examines the experiences of German Jewish academics, refugees from Nazism, who were assisted by the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning in Britain. Employing fiction, autobiography and contemporary records, the author analyses the strategies employed by the refugees in dealing with exile and acclimatising to British academic culture and the British way-of-life. A highlight of the book is the comparison of English and German academic mores in the 1930s.

*Genocide: history and fictions. historians respond to Helen Demidenko/Darville's 'The Hand that Signed the Paper'* (History Department, University of Melbourne, 1997; \$23.)

This collection of essays grew out of a panel discussion held at the University of Melbourne in 1995. It brings together a group of historians, all specialists in the areas of German, Soviet and Jewish history of the 1930s-40s, in analysis of issues raised by the Demidenko debate (e.g. Darville's historical credibility, the Social responsibility of historians). Contributors include Jacques Adler, S.G. Wheatcroft, Joy Damousi, Anne Waldron Neumann, Steven Welch, David Philips and Charles Sowerwine.



Doba-Necha Cukierman, *A guardian angel: memories of Lublin* (the Author, Melbourne, 1997; \$15.)

This is a captivating autobiography (edited by the author's daughter) which recounts childhood, youth and wartime experiences in the Lublin suburb of Kalinowsczyna. The sole survivor of a middle-class Jewish family, Cukierman narrowly escaped death herself on a number of

occasions, emigrated to Israel after the war and (as her final paragraph informs us) settled in Melbourne in the 1950s.

Bryan Cheyette & Laura Marcus (eds), *Modernity, culture and 'the Jew'* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1998; xx+297pp.)

Although there is no specific Australian content in the essays collected here, a number of the papers will be of broad interest to readers of Jewish history. As the editors note, they examine 'the work of past and present cultural theorists who have placed the figure of 'the Jew' at the heart of their version of modernity and post-modernity'. Originally presented at a University of London conference, the papers include a discussion on Racism in post-war Britain by Tony Kushner, David Feldman's 'Was Modernity good for the Jews?', a speculation on Jewish memory in a post-modern age (by James Young), William Outhwaite on Habermas, Zygmunt Bauman on 'Allosemitism', and Jean Radford's 'The Woman and the Jew: Sex and Modernity'.

Aubrey Newman & Stephen W. Massil (eds), *Patterns of migration, 1850-1914: Proceedings of the International Conference of the Jewish Historical Society of England and the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College, London* (JHSE & Institute of Jewish Studies, London, 1996; \$50.)

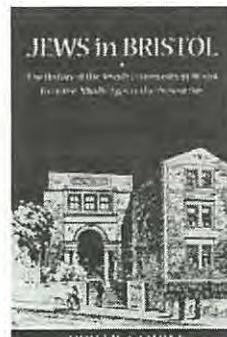
This collection of papers focuses on Anglo-Jewish dispersion in the English-speaking world, and includes two articles on Australia: Anthony P. Joseph's 'Patterns of Migration 1850-1914' and Edgar Samuel's 'Jewish settlement in Victoria'. Also of interest are Cecil Bloom's study of Jewish dispersion within Britain, Leo S. Weissbach's essay on small Jewish communities in America, and Marcia Leveson's study of Jewish images in popular South African literature.

Livia Käthe Wittmann, *Interactive identities: Jewish women in New Zealand* (Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 1998; NZ\$24.95.)

Drawing on interviews with 48 Jewish women, Wittmann explores the 'changing historical meaning of Jewish collective identity, the bicultural challenge and the tensions of gender identities internal and external to Judaism'.

Judith Samuel, *Jews in Bristol: the history of the Jewish community in Bristol from the Middle Ages to the present day* (Redcliffe/Sansom, Bristol, 1997; \$35.)

Samuel traces the history of this small Anglo-Jewish community (never more than 2000 souls) from mediæval times through the evolution of the Bristol Hebrew Congregation and its establishment in Park Row. The author provides valuable biographical detail on the community's leading families (the Jessels, Alexanders and Sacoffs) and on such legendary clergy as David Meyer Isaacs, Abraham Barnett and Aaron Levy Green.



Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, *Patterns and images of Jewish immigration in Scotland* (10th anniversary magazine), (Glasgow, 1997; \$10.)

Celebrating a decade of collecting, recording and promoting the Scottish Jewish experience, the Archives Centre offers readers a short miscellany (26pp) of papers, including David Daiches' brief overview of Scottish Jewish history, a paper on wartime child migration by Rosa Sucharin, and reminiscences by Ida Schuster, Harvey Kaplan and the late Chaim Bermant.

*The Australian Jewish experience: a Colloquium. Papers Presented on 26 August 1997 to honour Rabbi Dr John S. Levi* (AJHS Victoria, Melbourne, 1998.)

The colloquium was one of a series of functions held to mark the retirement of Australia's senior Progressive rabbi. The booklet contains essays delivered at the function by five historians (Dr Paul Bartrop, Prof Geoffrey Blainey, Dr Richard Broome, Dr Lionel Fredman & Dr Malcolm Turnbull) as well as an Introduction by AJHS Victoria President Dr Howard Freeman and a Foreword by the honoree.

*Journal of Judaism and Civilisation: Essays on the relationship of Judaism with the arts, sciences and values of general civilisation, Vol 1 (5758)* (Melbourne, 1998; \$10.)

This first issue of a new Australian journal from the Institute for Judaism and Civilisation in East St Kilda, edited by Rabbi Dr Shimon Cowen, contains papers from two conferences (on Psychotherapy and Judaism, and on Interfaces of Jewish and Secular Law). Contents include 'Getting a *Get* in Australian courts' by Andrew Strum and an analysis of 'Eternal Law and human legislation'.

Corille Fraser, *Come to dazzle: Sarah Bernhardt's Australian tour* (Currency Press, Sydney, 1998.)

This is a delightful, eminently readable account of the great French Jewish actor's 1891 tour of 'this barbaric and mediæval country' (her words). Drawing skilfully on contemporary press reactions to the event, Fraser gives readers a fascinating (and admirably detailed) insight into the frontier theatrical world of the 1890s and muses, in passing, on deeper issues of Australian class relations and anti-Semitism. A fuller review of this title will appear in a future issue of the *Journal*.

[Joseph Aron], *History of the Jewish National Fund of Australia* (JNF, Melbourne, 1997.)

Published to mark the Centenary of the Zionist movement, this booklet provides readers with a useful summary of early Zionist activity in Australia, and 'fills a gap' by tracing the local history of the JNF—*Keren Kayemeth L'Israel* from the 1930s to the present. In my opinion, a more precise and detailed listing of sources might have rendered the text of greater value to future scholars, particularly as author Joseph Aron has researched his subject



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Dr Turnbull:

In response to my sending a copy of my article "Felix Adalbert Behrend and mathematics in Camp 7, Hay, 1940–41" which was published in the *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* volume 14, part 1, pp. 110–119, I have received a letter from Professor B.H. Neumann of the Australian National University in Canberra. He pointed out to me that I had incorrectly described Max Pinl, who provided the important source "*Kollegen in einer dunklen Zeit*", as a refugee mathematician. Indeed, my description was incorrect.

In *Jahresbericht der Deutschen Mathematiker-Vereinigung*, volume 75 (1975), pp. 166–208, Pinl listed himself as one colleague whose loss the members of the mathematics department at the German University of Prague and of the mathematics sections at the German University of Technology had to be deeply concerned about ("*zu beklagen*"). Pinl's list refers to fifteen Prague mathematicians whose fate, as is narrated in the course of his article, was:

- seven of them became refugees;
- three were transported to concentration camps, where two of them died and the third died soon after being liberated;
- two were deported to Theresienstadt, where one of them died;
- one was sentenced to death for listening to foreign broadcasts but survived thanks to the intervention of a colleague;
- one died in a Czech labour camp immediately after the war.

Pinl, the fifteenth, wrote in the article cited above:

I had understood sufficiently much of the theory of relativity that, when intellectual night ("*geistige Nacht*") fell upon Prague in 1939, it was impossible for me to abjure the new physics and even less possible to turn my back on those colleagues who were under threat. Therefore I was placed under arrest for half a year. After my release I was not allowed to be academically active at any German university. In this enforced situation the only possibility for me to work was in theoretical gas dynamics at the Messerschmitt airplane factory in Augsburg and later again in bibliographical activities at the aeronautic research institute in Brunswick.

Pinl's statement sounds somewhat strangely apologetic. However, Bernhard Neumann remembers Pinl as follows:

Max Pinl had no reason to leave Greater Germany during the Hitler *Reich* ... He was, however, very far removed from being a Nazi; on the contrary, he had, at least up to 1933, many Jewish friends, and remained true to them. After the war he seems to have felt that he should make amends, and researched and wrote those articles ... It was Max Pinl, who soon after the war put me in touch with a former school friend in Berlin ...

Errors are sometimes fruitful. When, after Bernhard Neumann's comments, I had a thorough look at Pinl's article, I discovered among the seven refugee mathematicians one who left Prague before the outbreak of the war — for Tasmania! So there is more to be done.

Yours sincerely,  
Dr Hans Lausch

Dear Dr. Turnbull:

In my article ' "A Noble Sight to See": Philo-Semitic responses in late 19th and early 20th century Australia to Jewish crises overseas' (*AJHS Journal*, vol. XIII, part 3, 1996) I mentioned (pp. 441 and 458) a Professor Harper, who addressed a meeting in Sydney in 1903 to protest the Kishinev massacre. I suggested that he was Andrew Harper, Professor of Biblical Studies at Ormond College, University of Melbourne: the Archivist at the University of Sydney could find no reference to a man of that name having held a chair in Sydney. For the historical record, I can now confirm that the man in question was indeed Andrew Harper, who was once Principal of St. Andrew's College, University of Sydney. He was the father of the prominent businessman Robert Rainy Harper, manager of Holdens (Melbourne).

Yours sincerely,  
Dr Hilary Rubinstein



Dear Dr. Turnbull,

The *AJHS Journal* (Vol. XIV Part 2) for June 1998, contains two attacks on me to which I would like to reply. The first is Sol Encel's 'Reflections on Professor W.D. Rubinstein's Views as Editor'. I am not sure what prompted Professor Encel to write this rather curious piece. He had no connection with the leadership of the Historical Society in the late 1980s when the Victorian Committee decided to found its own *Journal* and cannot possibly be privy to the facts of the matter as they unfolded, much less to Victoria's perspective on these events. Let me just say that, by definition, it was impossible for me to have been editor of the Victorian Society's *Journal* before it existed, and the decision to found our own *Journal* was a collective one by the Victorian Committee at the time, whose mood I have accurately described. I should also point out that I was never an office bearer in the Victorian Society, and I could do nothing without the approval and consent of the whole Victorian Committee.

Professor Encel also states that I display a 'patronising' attitude about 'the efforts of enthusiastic amateurs ... at full strength'. I categorically deny this. I have always fully appreciated, and have always supported, the efforts of 'enthusiastic amateurs' and, as editor, published every such contribution I received which was even remotely usable. As a matter of course, I have always treated each such contributor with complete courtesy and respect. Commonly, they were the first published works by these authors, who regularly purchased extra copies of that issue to send to their relatives and friends.

I am in complete agreement with Professor Encel about the very considerable value and importance of the contributions to the *Journal* when it was published exclusively from Sydney. I am sure that a fuller discussion of this topic would be welcomed by either of the *Journal's* editors. An essay by Professor Encel on this topic would add to the long list of illustrious writers for the *Journal*, especially as, before putting pen to paper to attack me, Professor Encel had never contributed a single article to the *Journal* in its history.

I reply with little pleasure to Benseon H. Apple's intemperate and regrettable 'Letter to the Editor' concerning my remarks on Strict Orthodoxy in Australia. It is based upon a complete misinterpretation of what I have actually said. The crux of Mr. Apple's letter is that (in his words) 'it is ludicrous ... to suggest that prior to [World War Two] the average congregant in any Australian synagogue was generally as halachically observant as their counterpart in Vilna, Cracow, or Jerusalem' (p. 352). I have never said any such thing. Indeed, I agree with Mr. Apple's statement, which is obviously true, although one must be careful not to exaggerate the number of Jews in pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe who were fully observant. I have said nothing whatever about the lifestyles or halachic practices of pre-1939 Australian Jews, and the whole of Mr. Apple's letter concerning these points — leaving entirely aside its intemperance — is deeply confused. My point is entirely different — that Jews who belonged to Orthodox synagogues in pre-1939 Australia belonged to synagogues which were regarded internationally as Orthodox, and whose rabbis were regarded as Orthodox.

Mr. Apple's statement about the non-recognition of 'Zionist' rabbis today by the Satmarers is a total irrelevance and non-sequitur. So, too, is his claim that Lubavitchers or Satmarers would not 'condone' the 'behaviour' of Rabbi Francis Lyon Cohen at the Great Synagogue. Rabbi Cohen's *behaviour* in no way negates the fact that he was an Orthodox rabbi who headed an Orthodox synagogue. Does Mr. Apple deny the *halachic* validity of conversions, marriages, and divorces carried out by Rabbi Cohen or by Jacob Dangler? If he responds to this, I hope he will reply without equivocation.

Mr. Apple goes on (p. 354) to claim that 'adherence to halacha' is the '*a priori* definition' of Ultra-Orthodoxy, which excludes (according to him) the Mizrahi, and, presumably, all 'mainstream' Orthodox rabbis and groups. In the first place, this is precisely what I do say (p. 187): that 'self evidently, the lifestyles of Strictly Orthodox Jews will at all times reflect the closest adherence to Halacha ...'. Secondly, however, one must conclude from this that Mr. Apple believes that Mizrahi and 'mainstream' Orthodox rabbis and congregations do *not* 'adhere to Halacha'. Might I ask him to state frankly which Mizrahi and 'mainstream' Orthodox rabbis in today's Australia do not adhere to *Halacha*? Which of these do not practice 'Kashrut, Shabbat, and Taharat HaMishpachah'? If, on the contrary, he agrees (as he presumably does) that all Mizrahi and 'mainstream' Orthodox rabbis adhere to *Halacha* and its practices, he will surely see the point of my definition—that Strictly Orthodox congregations must be defined by other characteristics *besides* 'adherence to Halacha', such as claimed affinity to the Chassidic dynasties or a closed

community. There is much else I could say to highlight Mr. Apple's deep confusions and misinterpretations, but enough is enough.

To turn now to Mr. Apple's querying of the term 'Strictly Orthodox', I should point out that it is now in common usage, for precisely the same reasons that I prefer it, that it is a neutral and not a pejorative term. For instance, in the same post with the *Journal* in which Mr. Apple's letter appeared I received the latest (Summer 1998) issue of *J.P.R. News*, the newsletter of the internationally known Institute for Jewish Policy Research (formerly the Institute of Jewish Affairs) in London, explaining the results of a survey (with which I had no involvement of any kind) on charitable giving by British Jews, dividing 'Donations by Religious Outlook' into the following categories: 'secular', 'just Jewish', 'Progressive', 'Traditional' and 'Strictly Orthodox'. (Mr. Apple may be pleased to learn that Strictly Orthodox Jews donate three times more to charity than any other group.) This Institute clearly feels that the term 'Ultra-Orthodox' is insulting to these Jews. I agree.

Mr. Apple also claims that Strictly Orthodox Jews were more numerous and important in the English-speaking world prior to the Second World War than I state. He is clearly wrong in this, and once again demonstrates a very regrettable tone of expression. In 1939 the United States had a Jewish population of approximately 4.5 million. I would be surprised to learn that at the time more than two per cent of American Jewry belonged to a Strictly Orthodox congregation. The Chassidic sects noted by Mr. Apple were regarded as exotic curiosities until the 1960s when (chiefly as a result of Chabad) they became highly visible in, even central to, American Jewish life. They simply did not have that position before then. As to the Jews of England, before Mr. Apple makes any more grossly ignorant statements about me, he might care to read the book I wrote on this subject, *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain* (Macmillan, London, 1996, viii + 539pp.). He will find there the growth of Strict Orthodoxy in Britain discussed in some detail (pp. 240, 408–16, etc.), in a work described by the *American Historical Review* as 'the best synthesis in existence' on Anglo-Jewish history. Mr. Apple's sorry performance does him very little credit.

Although this is a lengthy reply, I would also like to take this opportunity to comment about another article which appeared in the same issue of the *Journal*, Leanne Piggott's 'Lord Casey and the 1939 White Paper'. This is a deeply researched essay on a leading Australian who briefly made a major role in the Middle East. Nevertheless, in my view its value is greatly diminished by two fallacies which underpin its arguments — fallacies found all too frequently in discussions of this subject. The first is Ms Piggott's assumption that the 1939 White Paper prevented the Jews of Nazi-occupied Europe from emigrating to safety. On the contrary, it cannot be reiterated too often that it was the Nazis who deliberately prevented Jews from leaving any country they occupied — a process set out in my recent work *The Myth of Rescue* (Routledge, London, 1997), pp. 79–84 — imprisoning them prior to genocide. The White Paper was irrelevant to this process. Secondly, Ms Piggott conflates emigration to any country of safety with emigration to Palestine. In fact, no Jew who

managed to flee Nazi-occupied Europe during the Second World War was ever returned by the British to Nazi-occupied Europe. (How could they, even if they had wanted to, as they were at war with Germany?) It is perfectly true that many Jews who fled Nazi-occupied Germany were prevented from going to Palestine (although this became progressively easier after about 1943), but they were sent by the British to Mauritius, Cyprus, or Britain itself, thus saving their lives. There was simply no question, at any time, of returning them to occupied Europe. Indeed, the insistence by the Zionist movement in effect on Palestine or nothing for fleeing refugees may be seen as having muddied the waters of rescue, although here, as always, it was the Nazis who were solely to blame, not the British. Ms Piggott also fails even to state the ostensible reason for the 1939 White Paper restrictions: to deter a pro-Nazi revolt by nationalist-inflamed Arabs. With hindsight these restrictions seem tragic, but in 1939–41 Britain was fighting Nazi Germany alone, and did not need a general Arab revolt on its hands to add to its other burdens.

Yours sincerely,  
(Professor) W.D. Rubinstein



## OBITUARY: LILA STONE

Lila Stone was born in Adelaide in 1913, and died in Ballarat in 1997. In 1948 Lila married Marcus Stone, a descendant of the pioneer Ballarat family and owners of Stone's Stores (*circa* 1860s), a landmark in the town. Living opposite the Ballarat *shul*, they kept it alive when the last rabbi left in 1941. Lila and Marcus were involved with setting up the Gold Museum in Ballarat and, as a patron, Lila attended many ceremonies at Sovereign Hill.

A staunch Jewess and a very popular and generous person, Lila was a wonderful organiser with an extremely cheerful disposition. After Marcus died in 1983, she devoted herself to the Synagogue as Honorary Secretary and was instrumental in the recovery of historic documents and archives which had been moved from the *shul* to Sydney in the 1920s.

This powerful lady's passing leaves a huge gap in the Jewish community and also the wider community in Ballarat. She is survived by her brother Meyer and her only son, Bernard.



## REPORT TO MEMBERS

Our 48th Annual General Meeting was held at Temple Beth Israel on Wednesday 25 February 1998. Unfortunately, Dr Paul Bartrop did not stand for re-election to the committee this year. We wish to thank him for his valued input into our work over the past years. Elections resulted as follows: President, Dr Howard Freeman; Honorary Secretary, Mrs Beverley Davis OAM; Honorary Treasurer, Mrs Judith O'Donnell; Committee: Dr Harvey Cohen, Mr Trevor Cohen, Mr Clive Fredman, Dr Bernard Hyams, Rabbi Dr John Levi, Dr Philip Mendes, Mr Isidor Solomon and Dr Malcolm Turnbull, who also continues the great work he has done in the position of Victorian *Journal* editor.

At the conclusion of the formalities, members were favoured with a fascinating and extensive talk on 'The Extraordinary Rabbi Gurewicz *et amicorum*: a Judaic miscellany' by Rabbi Emeritus Ronald Lubofsky AM.

In May 1998, Beverley Davis, after 21 years of dedication as honorary secretary to the Society, resigned from that position as a result of her increasing involvement in other activities. However, she kindly offered to continue her work as honorary archivist. I was delighted when Howard Freeman approached me to take over this vacant position following Mrs Davis' resignation, and I felt honoured to accept this most important position.

I am pleased to report that our membership has remained constant since last year and remains at well over 500. We are happy to see a wide cross-section of people becoming members and helping us to continue our work of researching, recording, preserving and publishing the history of the Jews in Australia.

On Thursday 18 June 1998 at the Jewish Museum of Australia Associate Professor Don Garden gave a most amusing and informative address on the topic 'Theodore Fink: Remembered for the Wrong Reasons'. Dr Garden was well-qualified to speak on this subject as his biography of Theodore Fink was published by Melbourne University Press this year. Although our meetings have not been as frequent as we would have liked, members have been kept well informed of events, receiving copies of our *newsletter*, published in February, May and again in November.

Members were delighted to receive a copy of *The Australian Jewish Experience — a Colloquium: papers presented on 26 August 1997 to honour Rabbi Dr John S. Levi*, which was sent together with the *Index* to Volume XIII of the *Journal*, competently compiled by Beverley Davis.

Thanks go to all those members who performed the enormous task of the preliminary sorting and boxing of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation collection for archiving under the direction of Beverley Davis. We were given ten weeks to complete this stage of the work, prior to the transfer of the material to a compactus shelving unit at the Jewish Museum of Australia. The MHC archive will reach its new home at the Museum by the end of the year.

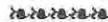
Thanks also go to Dr Bernard Hyams for his help with computer indexing of gravestone inscriptions.

It is with gratitude that we acknowledge a number of most generous donations, including the Gandel Charitable Trust and the Myra and Godfrey Cohen Charitable Trust (towards publication of the Colloquium and Index), Kenn Brodziak OBE and Marjorie Josephs-Wilks. A special appreciation goes to John and Beverley Davis, together with all those who made contributions to our Reference Library Fund, in honour of their 40th wedding anniversary.

Sincere sympathy and condolences were extended to the families of members who have passed away during the last 12 months, including Lila Stone, Arnold Blashki MBE, George Lowin and Julia Simmons.

A hearty mazel tov was sent all our members who have had cause to celebrate birthdays, bar- and bat-mitzvahs, weddings, wedding anniversaries, the birth of children and grand-children, and other good things.

Ronald B. Aarons  
Honorary Secretary, AJHS Victoria Inc.



## MEMBERS JOINED AJHS VICTORIA INC

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**Beverley Davis OAM** is honorary archivist of the Australian Jewish Historical Society Victoria.

**Dr Howard Freeman** is president of the AJHS Victoria and president of Temple Beth Israel in Melbourne.

**Dr Rodney Gouzman** is senior lecturer in education at the University of South Australia and a research associate of Monash University's Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation. He is editor of the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* and author of *Bondi in the Sinai*.

**Dr Serge Liberman**, a prominent Melbourne writer, retired recently after many years as literary editor of the *Australian Jewish News*.

**Dr Philip N. Mendes** lectures in social work at Monash University. His publications include *The New Left*, *The Jews and the Vietnam War*.

**Malcolm Morris**, a Melbourne solicitor, has been a board member of the Brighton Hebrew Congregation for more than a decade.

**Morris S. Ochert OAM**, a retired engineer, is honorary life member of the Institution of Engineers, and Queensland correspondent to the AJHS. *[NB: we wish to point out that Mr Ochert's middle name is in fact Stephen, and not Samuel which was his late father's name.]*

**Judith O'Donnell**, a committee member of the AJHS Victoria, is currently writing a biography of Ikey Solomon.

**Dr Hilary L. Rubinstein**, author of *The Jews in Victoria 1835-1985*, *Chosen: the Jews in Australia* and *The Jews in Australia: a Thematic History* (Vol 1), lives in Wales. She recently completed an international history of philosemitism, and is currently co-writing a general textbook history of world Jewry.

**Professor W.D. Rubinstein**, editor of this *Journal* from 1988-95, is professor of modern history at the University of Wales-Aberystwyth. His publications include *The Left, The Right and the Jews*, *The Jews in Australia: a Thematic History* (Vol 2), *A History of the Jews in the English-speaking World: Great Britain* and *The Myth of Rescue*.

**Isidor Solomon**, a foundation member and current committee member of the AJHS Victoria, has published on aspects of Australian Jewish history since the 1940s.

**Robert C. Sheezel** is a Melbourne businessman, and a descendant of Mendel Cohen.

**Dr Malcolm J. Turnbull** is Victorian editor of the *AJHS Journal*. His publications include *Victims or Villains: Jewish Images in Classic English Detective Fiction*.



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