

the Communist Party. Another appendix traces his mother's family and a third his father's. The end pages contain lovely family snapshots before you reach the very informative and detailed endnotes. Mendel thanks his daughter, Brenda, for her help in some research and also Sarah Naphali who is acknowledged on the title page verso for interviews, transcription and manuscript preparation, although the story is his alone. He also thanks Gerry Factor for the use of the family tree, but alas, it does not appear in the book.

One of the interesting facts for me in reading this story was how news travelled in the remote areas where Mendel lived and how he was able to hear news of his brother and sister-in-law, his sisters back in Poland and communicate with his brothers in Australia as well as Davis Factor in America. Was it a Jewish network in the Soviet Union or the efficiency of socialism?

I have known Mendel and his family for many years since he married my father's cousin, but did not know his story. It is fascinating to discover the details of his life that have made him the man he is today.

Helen Bersten

A TIME TO KEEP, THE STORY OF TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL:1930 to 2005

*by Werner Graff, Malcolm J. Turnbull and Eliot J. Baskin,
Melbourne: The Australian Jewish Historical Society -Victoria
Inc. and The Progressive Jewish Cultural Fund, 2005, pp.294.*

As well as having three authors, this history of Temple Beth Israel in Melbourne had two editors, Hilary L. Rubinstein, the well-known historian of Jews in Victoria and Australia until 1945, and Howard A. Freeman, for ten years so far the president of the Australian Jewish Historical Society in Victoria. It also has a foreword by Rabbi Fred Morgan, the current chief rabbi of Temple Beth Israel and it was published on the seventy-fifth anniversary of Temple Beth Israel. As well the history is preceded by messages from the daughter of the late first author Werner Graff, the current president, the editors, as well as various acknowledgements.

One could have feared that too many cooks might have spoilt the broth, but this is not the case. The book starts with a concise his-

tory of early Reform Judaism in Germany and in the United States, a very brief coverage of Jews in Melbourne with emphasis on those who wanted changes in rituals and in liturgy and it recalls Ada Phillips, nee Crawcour (from Krakower), who actually started the congregation. She was greatly influenced and helped by Lily Montagu of London who even arranged the first short-lived rabbinical engagement.

The early years, with several short-lived rabbinical appointments, are well covered. This culminated in the long and successful appointment of a gifted English-speaking good-looking German-born rabbi, Dr Herman Max Saenger, later Sanger, who arrived in August 1936 and spent the rest of his career until 1974 at the Temple. His exceptional oratorical skills, deep learning and human qualities contributed greatly to the growth of Temple Beth Israel, and its suburban offshoots.

Melbourne was the first city in Australia to have a Reform congregation. Its immediate success inspired the growth of liberal congregations, first in Sydney, and then in all the major cities in Australia and in New Zealand, as well as in Canberra and on the Gold Coast.

As with other congregations, financial considerations hindered growth in the appointment of extra rabbinical personnel and in the building of sufficiently large temples. However, Melbourne, unlike Sydney, had the advantage of nurturing its own young Reform ministers, from Rabbi John Simon Levi to Rabbi Daniel Schiff and to give his first permanent job to the young New Zealander, Rabbi Brian Fox, who later served as chief senior rabbi of Temple Emanuel, Sydney, and now of Manchester, United Kingdom.

As in Sydney, a number of outstanding cantors and musical directors played a part in the attractions of the Temple services: Claude Schwarz, Hermann Schildberger, Frank Durra, Stanley Berkoff, ...and many others. There were also faithful *shamashim* and others who nurtured the spirit of the congregation. Temple Beth Israel also appointed the first women rabbi in Australia, first Rabbi Karen Soria, then Rabbi Betsy Trop, and others.

Perhaps the outstanding achievement of Temple Beth Israel congregation was the establishment of the first Australian Reform Jewish day school and probably one of the first such schools anywhere in the world. Its founding was probably due in some part to the ubiquity of private schools in Victoria, but also to the popularity and dominance of Mount Scopus College and the presence of the other Orthodox Jewish day-schools in the Melbourne Jewish community spectrum, worrying liberal Jews about the loss of their young people to Orthodoxy. Interestingly Dr Sanger feared the school would ruin the Temple's

finances and was therefore against it, but Rabbi John Levi was all for it. Norman Rothfield was the first headmaster. It has been a success.

As well as its rabbis and cantors, the book describes some of its many congregants, such as Walter Jona, Pamela and Alfred Ruskin, the Wittner family of Lady Zelman Cowen, Marlis Cohen, Isidore Magid and many others.

The book also discusses the, at times, fraught relations with the Orthodox community and rabbinate. This tension is not helped by referring to various Orthodox rituals as 'oriental' and by claiming to be more contemporary than the Orthodox community.

Two curious quasi omissions are the lack of openness about Rabbi Sanger's marriage and the very brief mention of Rabbi Harold Vallins, former rabbi of a suburban temple and his departure from Judaism when readers are referred to old issues of Jewish weeklies.

There are adequate notes, a good index, several pages of photographs of rabbis and their spouses and of leading congregants and buildings, as well as appendices listing inaugural members, presidents of the Temple, chairpersons of the Victorian Union for Progressive Judaism, rabbis and ministers, musical leaders, leaders of the Women's Guild, benefactors and supporters.

In conclusion, I believe that this is a solid, well researched and soberly written history of a key institution in Melbourne Jewry, which will endure.

Sophie Caplan.

DEAR DR JANZOW: AUSTRALIA'S LUTHERAN CHURCHES AND REFUGEES FROM HITLER'S GERMANY

*by Peter Monteath, Australian Humanities Press, Adelaide,
2005, pp116.*

This monograph deserves a place among the growing number of books on pre-World War II refugees and would-be refugees to Australia, although it concerns an unusual group of supporters of Jewish refugees — the Lutherans. They migrated to Australia in the mid-nineteenth century to seek religious tolerance for their particular kind of Lutheranism and were proud of the 'renaissance of Germany' under the Nazi regime, because they were proud of their German heritage. However, they were not Nazis. They had themselves escaped religious persecution under the