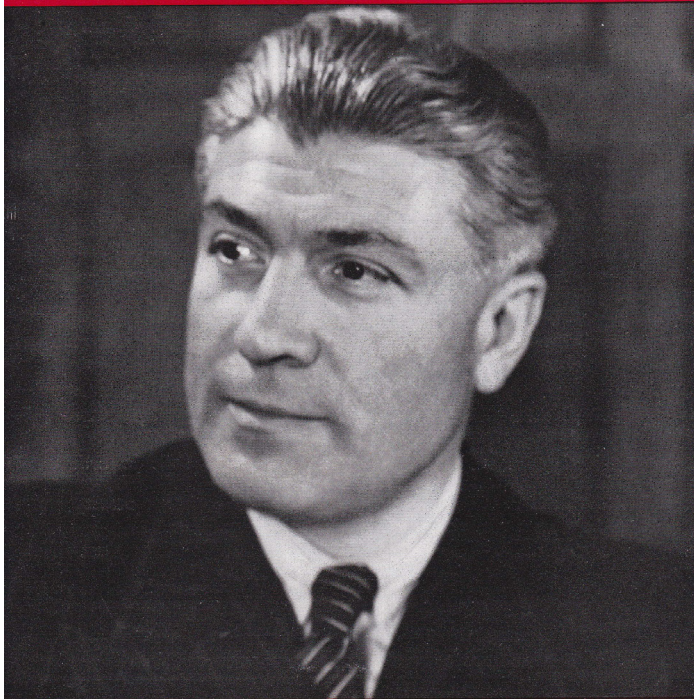


AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

JASCHA
SPIVAKOVSKY
PIANIST



*Carnegie
Hall* **JANUARY 24, 1948**
SATURDAY AFTERNOON AT 2:30
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VOL. XXIII 2016



PART 1

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 (June edition).

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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 by email as a Microsoft Word attachment. 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.

The editors have formulated a Writers Guide and a Style Guide for authors – please check the Journal page of the Society's website for details: **www.journal.ajhs.info**

Communications regarding publication should be sent to the Editors of the respective Journals: Victoria – Dr Howard A. Freeman, Apartment 815, 250 St Kilda Road, Southbank 3006 (email: **howfree40@gmail.com**);

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Front cover

Poster for Jascha Spivakovsky concert at Carnegie Hall (1948). *Collection Michael Spivakovsky*

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This issue comprises a number of anecdotal or personal articles, which we hope will be of great interest to our readers. The cover article relates the story of one of Australia's most distinguished musicians, the pianist Jascha Spivakovsky, as told by his musician son Michael. 'The Spark in the Ash' depicts the remarkable life of the scholarly Aaron Patkin, who dedicated himself to the intellectual life of the Jewish community, written with affection by his granddaughter Vivien Altman. The delightful essay by Louis Waller, 'A Book for Five Shekels', pays homage to the Bentwich family and echoes the outstanding research of our own Dr Ann Mitchell. Also in anecdotal vein is the account of 'The Return of Reverend Jacob Lenzer's Piano', the entertaining saga of what happened when Rabbi Dovid Gutnick received an email from a total stranger.

A different scene is evoked by Daniel Tabor, who tells the story of his scientist father who came to Melbourne to assist with top-secret investigations for the war effort, and of his mother who came to Australia as a refugee from Berlin. They came as committed Zionists, and their stories on arrival depict the ways in which Australian society reacted to the war and responded to Jewish refugees.

In his just-published book *Journeys Through The Twentieth Century*, Daniel Tabor has written more widely of the stories of his remarkable family, and the book is reviewed for us by Professor Bill Rubinstein. The story is international in its scope but has important observations on Australia by Tabor senior, a Cambridge physicist and Fellow of the Royal Society.

Mark Dapin, the well-known journalist, author and noted war historian, has meticulously researched the previously untold story of the Australian Jewish National Service men who fought in the Vietnam War, and separates the folklore from the facts of the Jewish experience. This year marks 50 years since the battle of Long Tan.

Amongst the exceptional people who came to Australia as refugees from Nazi Germany in the 1930s was the young Walter Lippmann, whose focus on public service and community affairs led to him becoming a leading advocate of community needs, social justice, and particularly multiculturalism. Lippmann and his work has been brought to life by the careful researches of Professor Andrew Markus and Dr Margaret Taft in their essay on this transformative leader. This coincides with the publication

by Markus and Taft, as editors, of the more detailed and definitive *Walter Lippmann, Ethnic Communities Leader: Creative Thinker, Dogged Worker, and The Kindest of Men*. Their book on Lippmann is reviewed by Rabbi Dr John Levi, who knew Lippmann well and whose insightful review is illustrated with personal anecdotes.

In another reflection on arrival and survival John Goldlust has written ‘The Russians Are Coming: migration and settlement of Soviet Jews in Australia’. The theme of the saga is encapsulated by the late Soviet-era joke with which the essay begins. A quarter of a million Soviet Jews (12 per cent of the total Jewish population) departed following the change in Soviet policy after 1970, of whom possibly 12,000 reached Australia. If we add children and grandchildren, it is estimated that there are now some 20,000 family members within the Jewish community of Australia.

The Australian Jewish Democratic Society is Australia’s Jewish Left organisation. In the latest chapter in the history of the highly controversial AJDS, Dr Philip Mendes updates its activities from 2000 to the present day. This follows his previous history, also published in this *Journal* that covered AJDS from its formation in 1984 to 1999. This essay covers the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the BDS movement, relations with the local Jewish community, the internal divisions within the AJDS and the political Left generally. Mendes also covers AJDS relations with the local Palestinian community, indigenous rights, and the admission of refugees.

In a remarkable memoir, to be published in October this year, Manny Waks – the second oldest of seventeen children in an ultra-Orthodox Melbourne Jewish family – discloses his personal experiences of child sexual abuse with his community. This led him to become a victim advocate, culminating in a Royal Commission into Australian Jewish institutions. The book, co-written with Michael Visontay, is reviewed for us by Rachel Averbukh, a lecturer in social work at Monash University.

We sadly note with regret the passing of Dr David Cohen AM, the pre-eminent educator, in a warm tribute by his wife Margot.

The regular essay feature on what featured in the local Jewish press, ‘100 Years Ago’, has again been compiled by Lorraine Freeman to outline the events as seen by contemporary eyes in 1916. This year marks 100 years since Verdun and the Somme.

As ever, I am indebted to Hybrid Publishers, Anna Rosner Blay and Louis de Vries, for their ever-cheerful, highly professional care and attention.

Howard A. Freeman (Editor)

MEMORIES OF MY FATHER: THE CONCERT PIANIST JASCHA SPIVAKOVSKY

Michael Spivakovsky

Some of the earliest memories I have of my father were when I was aged about two, crawling around on hands and knees under a grand piano (one of three) in the enormous music room of our house, watching his feet moving the pedals, while peering out from behind the silk latticework of the piano covering, all to the fantastic accompaniment of a great pianist at work. I grew up imbued with music. If it wasn't my father or his students playing, it might be one of his colleagues, many of whom, when they were touring Australia, visited my father to discuss music, practise on the pianos or have lunch with the family. Amongst it all my father tried to teach me to play the piano. Considering that he was away concertising, mostly overseas for three to five months nearly every year, this was somewhat difficult. Especially since I was more interested in playing outside with my



neighbourhood friends, and of course when he was home, he was practising for ten hours a day, while teaching for several hours more. This left practically no time for me to get to the piano, even if I had wanted to.

I actually started playing the piano when I was three years old, a little Russian ditty which in English sounds like '*Cheezhik Peezhik*', a simple melody apparently taught to nearly all Russian beginners. I was soon forcibly advanced to more 'serious' pieces. On my starting school for the first time, the class teacher decided that since I was the 'maestro's' son, it might be nice if I could give a small concert to the whole primary school in the big hall, and of course I couldn't refuse since it was my first week at school, and at that stage I didn't know how to talk to teachers, let alone explain that I couldn't play the piano. Really, I could still only play '*Cheezhik Peezhik*', with one finger! As you can imagine, my father nearly had apoplexy when I returned from school that afternoon to tell him. To make matters worse, the concert had been arranged for the following day!

Out went his practice schedule for the rest of the afternoon, and in its place I was given a crash course in how to play the piano, by 'copy me'. It later became known, slightly differently, as the Suzuki method. Firstly he selected a small beginner's piece which he thought I might be able to play, but after playing it through himself, decided that I might disgrace him as it was for right hand only. So he settled on *Oranges and Lemons*, an anonymous old English folk tune. What's more, it was for both hands, so it would look a little more difficult. With repeats, it would run for about a minute, but that was all I could manage. I spent hours practising it, until the piano could practically play it without me. I was also taught performance etiquette, how to walk on stage, bow and sit at the piano without turning my back to the audience. This I also practised until my head was spinning.

On arriving at school the next day I informed the teacher that my father would only allow me to play one piece, *Oranges and Lemons*. I was surprised to see that this did not cause much consternation at all. Other students were drafted into reciting poetry, or doing calisthenics etc., and everything went off without a hitch. Fortunately my father had drummed everything into me so well that I received a big ovation before and after my performance. My father and several other parents were in the audience, but strangely I was not nervous and finished the piece with a little flourish. Afterwards my father told me in no uncertain terms that on no account was I to accept any further commitments without his prior approval! I was only too happy to oblige.

This sudden entry into the world of music performance, gave me an insight into, and an interest in my father's profession. I started to listen more seriously to his practising, sitting next to him whilst he played Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, etc., rather than wandering around the room or playing outside. He was somewhat amused by my new-found interest, and fortunately allowed me to enter the music room and listen to him practising. He actually hated anyone listening to his practice, and would often stop playing if he knew that someone was coming to visit or worse, listening outside, so I was privileged to be able to listen to and learn from a master, how to approach learning a piece, 'polishing' it, refining the expression, overcoming technical difficulties, and especially how to produce a glorious liquid tone from the percussive instrument which filled the enormous ball room which had become his music room.

Such was his paranoia about being overheard while practising that he shrieked at anyone who dared to enter a hall where he was rehearsing for a concert. Many years later several people confided in me that they had suffered such a fate, and been evicted unceremoniously from the concert hall. On the other hand, he was always most encouraging to young children who may have wandered into the hall. On one occasion a seven-year-old boy was playing at the back of the dress circle when my father started rehearsing. After a short while the boy sat down on one of the seats, obviously interested in the music, at which point my father noticed him. On this occasion however, instead of ordering the boy to leave, he invited him to come and sit next to him on the stage while he played through the program. The boy was so overwhelmed by the playing and the music that he grew up to be a concert pianist himself.

At the commencement of World War One, my father was seventeen years of age and, as a Russian living and studying in Berlin, was considered to be an enemy alien. Consequently he was interned at Ruhleben detention camp, until his teacher, Professor Moritz Mayer-Mahr of the Klindworth Scharvenka Conservatorium, rescued him. No doubt the palace remembered his performance for the Kaiser as a prodigy, several years earlier. One of his fellow inmates was the world wrestling champion, George 'The Russian Lion' Hackenschmidt, and they became firm friends. George taught my father several manoeuvres which came in handy years later, and my father, who was already immensely strong, worked on his physique until he became known as 'the pocket Hackenschmidt'. My brother and I used to tease him into showing his upper-arm muscles, which infuriated

my mother, as every time he clenched his fist, he split his shirt.

His strength was needed on one occasion to solve a self-inflicted problem. He used to drive an old Buick, at a time when separate bumper bars were in vogue. Although my father was a reasonably good driver, on this occasion he locked bumper bars, one over the other, when trying to park. My mother was mortified when he calmly took the rigid metal in both hands, and lifted the Buick off the other car and set it down. 'Jascha, your hands, your hands!' my mother cried in anguish. Fortunately no damage was done to the cars either.

On my father's first tour of Australia in 1922, he visited the Krantz family in Adelaide, autographed their Steinway concert grand piano, and gave piano lessons to their fourteen-year-old daughter, Leonore. Five years later the Krantz family, on a world trip, were diverted from going to England due to a coal strike, and went instead to Berlin. There they met up with Jascha, who invited Leonore to go on a picnic to Bodenbach in what was then Czechoslovakia. In fact, they eloped and were married there. This caused a number of sequential problems. Firstly it was illegal. Since it took at least two weeks to obtain a marriage licence in Germany, but not in Czechoslovakia, many couples crossed the border for that purpose. This was outlawed by the Czech authorities, presumably because the couples rarely paid the border fees, and any couples caught returning to Germany were arrested.

This did not deter my intrepid parents. However, when they returned to the railway station, two suspicious border guards detained my father. I believe my mother was still wearing her wedding ring. Since the train was already at the station and ready to depart, the situation was serious, and my mother was quite distraught, contemplating losing a husband so soon after getting married. However, Jascha told her quietly in English (the only language she understood at that time, and the guards apparently did not) to board the train and that he would join her shortly. This she did reluctantly, fearing that she may not see her newly acquired husband for some considerable time.

The moment the train began to move, Jascha, who was being held with a guard on each arm, used his great strength to carry out a manoeuvre George Hackenschmidt had taught him. He elbowed the guards in the stomach, simultaneously, winding them. Thus freed, he leapt onto the moving train while the guards were trying to catch their breath, and escaped. I understand that he received a gratifying ovation from the interested spectators when he successfully boarded the moving train.

However, my father's newly acquired parents-in-law were not so amused. Not only had they missed out on the wedding of their only daughter; they now had to continue their journey without her. My grandmother was mortified that her only daughter had married a mere musician, supposedly very unreliable husband material, despite the fact that he was already considered one of the finest pianists in the world. Therefore, in order to placate my grandmother especially, the couple had a formal wedding 'ceremony' at the famous Hotel Adlon in Berlin. Still, it was not quite the real thing and my grandmother never did quite forgive him.

My father, who was eleven years older than my mother, decided that, after his parents-in-law had resumed their journey, the couple should have a honeymoon in the south of France, and made plans accordingly. However, as soon as they arrived at their destination, Jascha received a telegram from his agent explaining that the great composer and conductor Richard Strauss had personally asked for him to be soloist with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, playing the *Burlesque for Piano and Orchestra* by Richard Strauss, and with Strauss himself conducting! Despite the fact that my father had never played the piece, and that the concert was only three weeks away, this was an opportunity not to be missed. He went into solitary confinement and slaved over the work day and night until he was confident that he knew the work.

At the first of two rehearsals, after playing a few bars, he was astonished when Strauss leaned down from the podium and exclaimed, '*Nein, Nein*, Herr Spivakovsky, too Russian, too Russian! It must be lighter, like a Viennese burlesque.' My poor father went home and re-worked the piece the whole night, and was most gratified and relieved at the rehearsal the next day, when Strauss was very pleased with the outcome. The concert itself was a resounding success and the *Neues Wiener Journal* reported that:

Jascha Spivakovsky played the piano part in the *Burlesque* full of life and beautifully. Until now the piano part has been played rather robustly, in a fortissimo frenzy. Spivakovsky however let the elegance, transparent beauty, and clever wit of the solo part emerge. With economy of fortissimo, fineness in the run-playing, and working out of the figurework, the architectural beauty of this piece was discovered for the first time.

My father's youngest brother, Tossy, had been a violin prodigy, and

became the youngest ever concertmaster of the famed Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra at nineteen years of age. They formed a duo which became famous across Europe, and made several recordings for Parlophone. An amateur violinist greatly appreciated Tossy's playing and regularly came to the concerts to listen to him and afterwards discuss the finer points of violin playing with him. His name was Albert Einstein!

At one such concert, my mother Leonore, wearing the customary hat which covered most of her very blonde hair, was sitting next to Albert and his wife, who was a trifle short-sighted. At interval, Albert's wife leaned across Albert and patted Leonore on the arm. 'What talented sons you have,' she exclaimed to the very surprised nineteen-year-old Leonore. On seeing my mother's confusion, Albert's wife asked, 'You are Mrs Spivakovsky, aren't you?' My mother could only nod in reply.

After a phenomenally successful first tour of Australia in which my father gave 75 concerts in three months, (and lost fifteen kilos in weight!), and which netted about \$20,000 (which he promptly lost in the hyper-inflation in post-war Germany), and an equally successful tour in 1929, he finally settled in Australia in 1933 with his brother Tossy and a cellist Edmund Kurtz, as part of the Spivakovsky-Kurtz Trio. They chose to live in Melbourne and teach at the Conservatorium there. Many of my father's students would come to our home to receive tuition in the enormous music room.

Although I was not allowed into the room while he was teaching, I could hear from outside what was going on. My father was mostly encouraging to his students in a fairly noisy way. In fact he could sometimes be heard in the next suburb, counting and clapping in time with the playing. When the music room was quiet it boded no good for the hapless student, who had obviously not practised sufficiently. I always wondered why the downstairs toilet was used so frequently by students before lessons. Many years later they told me that they were sometimes physically ill, prior to entering the lion's den. Or actually the bear's den, as he was known among the students as Jascha Bear! In fact, one enterprising student wrote a poem, with a drawing of a furry bear with Jascha's face, which she pinned to his door at the Conservatorium. It said:

All who pass this door beware
it is the den of Jascha Bear
a cuddlesome chap you will agree
he eats fried pupils for lunch and tea.

A few days later another poem appeared:

Jascha Bear was cross today
 I'm not sure why, but people say
 He ate a pupil raw, not fried
 And has a nasty pain inside.

Although he could be quite severe if he thought it was warranted, he was mostly kind. His greatest admonishment was 'you wicked girl, you', said with a twinkle in the eye. I received it on many occasions before he corrected himself about my gender.

The music room itself has a five-metre ceiling height, and was (and is) very difficult to heat. This in no way upset my father, and he made his students suffer the indignity of having to flail themselves as a group, before lessons. This, he claimed was the way they did it in Russia, where the snow drifts were higher than the windows! He would stand like a gym instructor, in front of the group of five or six students assembled for the masterclass, and flail himself audibly, to the rhythmic count of 'one two three four'. The poor students, mainly girls, had to follow suit, with much protesting and yelping. In later years he made me undergo the same treatment when I complained that my fingers were cold, by scolding me, 'Oh, you're just a summer pianist!'

Because my father was away touring for many months of each year, it fell to a couple of his advanced students to teach me. However, this was unsatisfactory. Not because they were poor teachers, quite the contrary, but because I was the Master's son, no stone was to be left unturned to correct my mistakes, of which there were many. Frequently I left the lesson in tears, and by the time I was eight years old, I told my mother that I wanted to quit piano. At first she tried to dissuade me, but seeing I was determined, she said I would regret it. I assured her that I would not, but of course she was correct.

Prior to quitting, when my father was home, and in between his practising and teaching, I would try to learn some small pieces. This amused him and I would often hear the floorboards outside the music room squeak as he stood outside the huge oak door. I always knew I was in for it if I made a mistake. He would burst the door open and come striding in, yelling 'B flat, not B natural!' or some such thing. Then he would calm down and enquire kindly if I would like a lesson. How could I refuse? Usually I would start playing and very soon he would stop me and show me how it could be phrased better. On one occasion I protested that my

phrasing was almost the same, whereupon he looked at me quizzically with his head to one side and said, 'Imagine if your nose was in the middle of your cheek, it's almost in the same place, but how would you look?' I never asked that question again! On another occasion, when I wanted to interpret a piece my way, he explained to me the story of 'The Fly and the Elephant'. He said, 'You are like a fly, even a big fly. But you are down there on the floor. Imagine how much higher you could be if you learned from the elephant of knowledge, from the greats who have gone before you, and you stood on their shoulders. You could be higher than the elephant!' Russians always like to talk in metaphors.

My father's house was a destination for many great artists and other important people. Often during my school years, I would arrive home after school to find someone like Benno Moiseivitch, Claudio Arrau or William Kapell having afternoon tea with my parents. Benno stayed with us for several days; he was an old friend of theirs, and always endeared himself by suggesting that my mother should divorce my father and marry him! One day I heard the piano being played in the music room and as usual went in to sit with my father while he practised. I was greatly surprised to find Benno practising instead, and more surprising still, he was reading the daily racing form at the same time! This was something my father would never do, even if he knew the front of a horse from its rear.

On another occasion, we were having lunch on the large verandah overlooking the Yarra River which formed the northern border of the property, with the famous cricket and music critic Sir Neville Cardus and his wife as our guests. I was about seven years old at the time. At one point I was left alone with Sir Neville, who asked me kindly who I thought would win the cricket test match which was being played at the famous Melbourne Cricket Ground. Patriotic fervour gripped me and I said proudly, 'Australia will.' Sir Neville looked at me intently, 'Why is that?' he asked. 'Because we have Bradman,' I said triumphantly. He peered at me over his glasses and said quietly, 'I think you may be right.'

Another visitor to our home at that time was the great young American pianist William (Willy) Kapell. 'Villy' as my father called him, was often at our place, practising on the pianos, smoking incessantly, and drawing or painting in the garden. As a young teenager, I was fascinated by his ability to draw and paint, as well as play the piano so well, and I padded around after him a lot. What he thought of my presence I do not know, but he tolerated my interest in his activities.

My father mentored him and they often discussed music and the negative effect of music critics, one of whom had taken an irrational dislike to Willy's playing. My father was so outraged by the Sydney critic's shocking critique of Willy's recent performance that, with Willy present and the family looking on, he telephoned the newspaper and after stating who he was, asked to speak to the critic. By some extraordinary chance, he was put through immediately. Then ensued a great argument for nearly half an hour, which ended with my father hanging up in disgust. 'We'll fix him,' he said with a gleam in his eye. 'Villy, at your next concert in Sydney, I want you to make a last minute change to your after-interval program. This music critic leaves at interval, because he is lazy, and we will catch him out'. 'But Jascha I can't do that,' protested Willy. 'Yes you can,' insisted my father, 'All you have to do is lean down from the piano and announce a small change to the program.' And so it came about that Willy changed his program and, sure enough, the critic criticised the wrong piece! This caused a huge controversy in the press, while the critic went to ground. Finally he surfaced, explaining that he knew Willy's playing so well that if Willy had played the piece as programmed, then he would have played it the way the critic described it. This was a disgraceful attempt at justification, but nobody was fooled!

One day Willy asked my father why he and my mother travelled on separate planes. 'For the children, in case of accidents,' explained my father, at a time when plane travel was not as safe as it is now. Willy thought this was a good idea and he would do the same, and put his wife on a separate plane. It was at about this time that Willy showed me the 'lifeline' on his hand, which stopped half-way. 'I should not be here,' he said to me, as we stood under a copy of *The Seated Madonna* hanging above the fireplace in the music room. I could not believe that a crease in the hand could stop so suddenly, and examined it with interest. The tragedy was that Willy was killed in an air crash on his returning to the USA shortly after.

When I was in my early teens, my father bought a small portable tape recorder, but had no idea how to use it. Fortunately my elder brother David was interested in such devices and taught me how to operate it. Subsequently I was able to record my father practising, sometimes without his knowledge, although he was interested to hear himself when I played the tapes back to him. Since he was away touring for several months each year, this meant that I could not sit next to him, nor listen to him while doing my homework at the round table near the window. So I was pleased

to have an alternative of listening to the tapes I had recorded. But tapes were expensive and I managed to record only a very small portion of his output.

When I was nineteen years old, and my father was away on one of his tours abroad, I suddenly felt the need to play the piano again. Having not played for eleven years meant that my fingers were terribly out of practice. So I decided to start with the slow first movement of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*. My mother, hearing the piano being played, was delighted to find that it was me. She agreed that it would be our secret – not to tell my father, and I would surprise him when he returned. All would have been well, except that shortly after, I noticed a letter from my father to my mother, which had been opened and left on a table. Normally I would not have given it a passing thought as it was private, but I happened to see my name in it. My father was pleased to hear that I wanted to play again, 'The first movement of the *Moonlight Sonata*, yes, all the beginners do that,' he wrote. I was mortified, and determined there and then to learn the fast and enormously difficult third movement! There were about seven weeks till his return, and I practised day and night to overcome the fiendish technical difficulties with out-of-shape fingers, which sometimes bled from split tips.

Finally the day arrived and I sat down to play to my father. After the first bar, he jumped up and shouted 'What are you doing? You're supposed to play the first movement.' 'Not on your life!' I shouted back, and tore into the music. It must have been a dreadful performance, full of wrong notes, but when I finished, with his amazing strength he picked me up by the scruff of the neck with one hand, placed me on his shoulders, pranced around the central chandelier, and off to the kitchen where my mother was preparing dinner!

From then on my father took pains to explain to me how he prepared the music for performance, including how he produced the 'Russian Tone', and how and why he shaped the music a certain way. By this stage I was studying architecture at university, but still working at the round table in the music room as he practised. This was somewhat disconcerting because I found that in exams I could remember the exact piece of music he played as I was studying the specific details required to answer that exam question.

He sometimes embarrassed me by enquiring, 'Would you like a lesson?' when I knew that my progress was insufficient to warrant a lesson. Although he had a firm self-belief, he never disparaged other pianists, and

exhorted me to ‘Listen to the Greats and learn from them. Don’t copy, but seek what they sought!’ It was wonderful advice.

Not only my musical education was important to my parents, but they also had several unusual friends who they considered might help me understand the world. One of the more bizarre was the artist William Ricketts, who, among other things, had sculpted amazing figures in trees in the Fitzroy Gardens, near the city. One day my father told me that he would take my mother and me to visit William Ricketts in his home in the Dandenong Ranges, about 30 or 40 kilometres from Melbourne. However when we were approaching the place, my mother warned me that there were two things that had to be observed on pain of death! Firstly, I was not to get out of the car until my father called me, otherwise I may be shot. Apparently William Ricketts did not take kindly to visitors (even if invited, as we were), and if he was not in a good mood, would send bullets whistling near the hapless visitor, even if a friend! So my father was to get out of the car at the entrance to the driveway, from which the house could not be seen, and stand in the middle of the driveway and wait to see if there was a welcome, or bullets flying. The second thing was never to criticise his coffee! Whatever happened I was to drink it with pleasure. The fact that I hated coffee and never drank it was of no concern. My life depended on drinking his coffee with a smile!

Duly warned, I waited in the car with my mother as my father went and stood in the centre of the driveway, listening for any shots. Instead we heard a booming voice call out ‘Jascha!’ and my father signalled for us to join him in walking to the house. William Ricketts seemed genuinely happy to see us and greeted me warmly, telling me that he and my father were old friends. Naturally we had to sit down in the living room to enjoy his coffee. I had no idea that his coffee was of such a thick Turkish blend that the spoon would stand up on its own, and that it had a slightly greenish tinge! I was petrified when he poured a large mug for me, helping the thick brew with a spoon to fill the vessel, asking kindly if I would like it black or with cream. I chose the cream, but could not bring myself to drink it, while I watched my parents, who adored coffee, gradually drink theirs. Finally I summoned up enough courage to do it. Taking a deep breath, I downed the thick, greenish semi-liquid in one gulp, and with a slight flourish, set the mug down on the table. To my horror, no sooner had I done this than Mr Ricketts, who had been watching me closely, grabbed the coffee pot and said, ‘Oh, you like my coffee! How about another one?’ I had some

difficulty explaining that, much as I liked his coffee, one was certainly enough for me!

The unfortunate sequel for me was that I was unable to sleep that night until 4 am the next day, and I came out in a measles-like rash which lasted for days. I never drank coffee again!

My father had a musical cat named Darkie. He was so named because he had brother from the same litter with a blacker coat, aptly named Blackie. But Darkie was musical. He would sit happily for hours, curled up on the chair next to the piano while my father practised. However I noticed that Darkie had good musical taste. Bach, Beethoven and Chopin were fine, but Kabalevsky and Bloch were not! Twentieth-century pieces drove him disdainfully out of the room. My father hadn't noticed this



until one day I pointed it out to him. He was very sceptical, saying that the cat merely wanted some dinner from the kitchen. So I asked him to refrain from practising Chopin and play some Benjamin Britten instead. He wasn't happy to have his routine interfered with, but condescended to try it. Darkie immediately left the chair and headed for the door. Quickly I suggested that he play some Beethoven, which he reluctantly did. By this time the cat was at the door, but looked around and then slowly made his way back to the chair. My father was amazed and subjected the poor animal to several more tests before he was satisfied that Darkie really could tell the difference. This had an interesting sequel when my father and I went to a concert in the Town Hall. One of the musical offerings was a twentieth-century piece for orchestral strings only. The strings were going up and down the scales in a wavering motion, sounding like the neighing of horses. At the conclusion, there was a smattering of applause, but my father glared and kept his arms folded. 'My cat could do better!' he exclaimed.

After a serious illness requiring major surgery in 1960, which curtailed my father's international career, my mother and I persuaded him to have a holiday, his first for many years, if ever. We decided to drive to North Queensland in easy stages, stopping overnight in towns along the way. Somehow word must have preceded us, because at Port Macquarie in New South Wales, the local radio station arrived at the motel where we were staying and interviewed him. He was most surprised. Further on, when we arrived at a motel in Mackay, even then a very large town in North Queensland, and had just settled down to a cup of tea, there was a knock at the door. It turned out to be the motel owner, who said to my father, 'I hear you can tickle the ivories a bit. I have just bought a Steinway grand piano. Would you like to come and play on it?' My father looked at us disbelievingly. To find a brand new Steinway grand here, he thought unlikely, but I convinced him to have a look. Sure enough, there was a new walnut timbered B model Steinway in his living room. The owner looked at my father who sat down at the piano and immediately launched into the finale of Schumann's *Carnaval*, a fast, powerful and immensely difficult piece, full of running passages, skips and crashing chords. As the last sounds died away, the owner jumped to his feet, shouting, 'You bloody beaut!' and presented my father with a bottle of his finest Spanish wine.

On we went, travelling north and came to a tiny hamlet called Mission Beach, where we were booked into the only motel. At dinner I heard

the tinkling sounds of a piano at the back of the motel. My father and I investigated and found a young girl about five or six years old, sight-reading from a book of small pieces. Her name was Marita; she was the daughter of the owner and was obviously quite talented. My father looked down at her and enquired kindly, 'Would you like a lesson?' Quite surprised, she asked him, 'Can you play?' He smiled, sat down at the little upright piano and played the piece that Marita had been sight-reading. My father had this unique ability to ennoble even a beginner's piece, and make it sound wonderful. As he was playing, I looked at Marita, who was standing quite still next to him. To my consternation she was crying. Big tears were rolling down her cheeks. 'Why are you crying?' I asked. 'It's SO beautiful,' she whispered.

My father died on 23 March 1970, when I was 30 years old, married, and living fairly close by. On the first anniversary of his death, I felt it would be a good idea to visit my mother, who was living alone in the big house, and to stay with her for a while. After dinner I went to the music room with my father's dog, a golden Labrador named Benny, and began working on the *Tempest Sonata* of Beethoven. The dog was curled up next to the piano. The night was clear, the weather fine and no wind.

After a couple of hours, I began to get an uneasy feeling that someone was listening outside the massive oak door to the music room, which I had carefully shut so as not to disturb my mother. The floorboards creaked just as they had done when my father had stood there listening. Perhaps my mother wanted to listen, but she usually came into the room. Suddenly the great oak door burst open, and three giant footsteps came towards me. I knew my father's footsteps and I'm sure they were his. I jumped up! Benny the dog jumped up! But we could see nothing!

Feeling a little unnerved, I went back to the music and found that I had been playing a wrong note! My father had always burst in when I played a wrong note. Quite unnerved by this time, I decided to say goodnight to my mother, who had retired to her bedroom upstairs. When I entered the bedroom I saw that my mother had fallen asleep while reading a book. She still had her glasses on. I did not wish to wake her, but as I tiptoed back to the door, she woke up, looked at me with a startled expression, and whipped off her glasses. I apologised for waking her, and left. The next day my mother telephoned my wife and told her that when she awoke, she saw my father standing in front of me. She said he looked about 35 years of age and was wearing a brown suit. She stated that she could see me

through my father! This was the only time that it happened.

Strange as it may seem, although I felt my father's presence at that time, I was not in any way frightened. Quite the opposite, in fact. I was disappointed that I could not see him or talk to him, as there were many musical questions I would have liked to ask. However I came to realise over time that he had left me with a great legacy of musical understanding with which I was able to carry on his teaching work.

THE RETURN OF REVEREND JACOB LENZER'S PIANO

Rabbi Dovid Gutnick



He is an impressive sight, sitting in front of the solid upright piano, broad-shouldered, with a full brown beard and long hair curled at the shoulders. His baritone singing resonates and fills the room while his fingers dance along the keys.

It could be a winter's *Motzei Shabbos*, the smell of the *Havdalah* fragrance still lingering in the air. Congregants and friends are gathered around, joining in with the traditional Jewish songs interspersed with the occasional Russian operatic tune.

His wife Bertha (Tzipporah Brocha) is joined by other women and girls of the congregation in animated and jovial discussion.

The piano man is Rev. Jacob Lenzer, East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation's third rabbi and arguably the most popular and celebrated in its storied history.

The scene, admittedly influenced by Billy Joel's famous song, is a play of my imagination (based largely on factual descriptions), as I rest my hands on the yellowed, worn keys of the newly arrived piano some 120 years later.

Close inspection of the small oxidised metal plaque on the piano's front panel reveals the following words:

Presented to the
REV. J. LENZER
by a few of his admiring friends
Melbourne, November 1892

It was a random email from a total stranger, a bloke named Ting, which alerted me to the existence of this piano. It was for sale on Gumtree for \$100, and it seems that people who search for second-hand pianos are also the type who will research miniature plaques on such pianos. Ting discovered that Rev. J. Lenzer was indeed the rabbi of the same synagogue of which I am now the rabbi, and so he very generously contacted me via email, offering me first dibs on this piano.

When I spoke to the owner of the piano and offered \$80 (I don't care how sentimentally significant this thing is, a little *hundling* is always in order), she was quick to accept. That sum was dwarfed by the moving costs but, encouraged by Dr Howard Freeman, Dr Alan Davis and various other *mayvinim*, I arranged for the transportation. And here it is, sitting in the old East Melbourne school room, now the Kiddush room named in honour of Victor Smorgan. All we are awaiting is a good tuning and a rabbi with a bit of musical talent.

Rev. Jacob Lenzer had that musical talent and more. He has been described as the most popular and accomplished rabbi in the long history of Melbourne's oldest *shul*.

His versatile skill set ranged from brilliant vocalist and musician to accomplished anatomist and *mohel* – a compelling combination. Born in Mohilev, Russia, in 1859, Rev. Lenzer studied in the great Yeshivah of Volozhyn, becoming a Talmudic scholar by the age of sixteen.

In the subsequent years, Lenzer studied music from *chazans* Spivack (Kishinoff), Davidoff and Rubenstein (St Petersburg). It is recorded that he acted as an assistant minister in Count Poliakoff's synagogue in Moscow in his early years.

So how did he come to travel from a pulpit in the shadow of the Kremlin to a pulpit in the shadow of the Victorian Parliament House? By

reading the classifieds in the Russian newspaper! In Rev. Lenzer's own words: 'Queer how I came to apply for this. One morning during breakfast, looking down at the Hebrew missing-persons column of a Russian paper, I noticed that the East Melbourne Synagogue wanted a reader and singer, so I applied.'

After his arrival in 1888, it didn't take long for Rev. Lenzer to become the primary clergyman at the synagogue in 1890. Indeed, shortly thereafter Rev. Jacob Lenzer was signed on as minister for life with a minimum stipend of 350 pounds per annum.

A rather colourful description of *Simchas Torah* by a visitor to the synagogue in the early 1900s includes lavish praise for the service and the minister: 'Would any one of the 500 or more persons who attended the service at the Albert St Synagogue at *Simchas Torah* that evening say that he or she, as the case may be, did not enjoy the service? We hardly think so ... At length Rev. J. Lenzer's sonorous voice was heard intoning *Borchu* and immediately all was attention and the response was hearty ... The Rev. Lenzer's rendering of the prayers is beautiful.'

In celebration of his 25th anniversary at the synagogue, the *Jewish Herald* wrote:

There are many yet left among us who will recall how, on the first Friday evening of Mr. Lenzer's installation, the Albert Street Synagogue was packed to its utmost capacity, and how his magnificent voice and beautiful rendering of the service fairly conquered the whole body of worshippers. Although a quarter of a century of uninterrupted work has since elapsed, no diminution has taken place in the charm of his 'Chazonuth', which still delights his congregation as much as ever.

He remained the Chief Minister until his passing on 14 April 1922.

No doubt Rev. Jacob Lenzer was an impressive man. But I'm still left scratching my head a little. How good was he to elicit admiration that culminated in the gifting of a piano? Perhaps I am a little jealous. How come I have never been gifted a piano by my admiring friends? To be sure, this question would carry more weight if I could play the thing.

Despite the pangs of rabbinic envy, for the present I am content to bask in the warmth of kinship with my formidable predecessor, content in the knowledge that through an unlikely Divine Agent, Rev. Lenzer's piano has come home. I am also confident that somewhere up in heaven *Yaakov ben Meir's* soul is having some spiritual satisfaction, knowing that now, after



almost a century in exile, his piano is once again resting in his synagogue and that the congregation into which he invested so much energy still gathers for prayers and Jewish activities on almost a daily basis. Long may it be so.

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This piece was written by Rabbi Dovid Gutnick who is the sixteenth Chief Minister of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, after an unlikely reunification with a piano gifted to Rev. Jacob Lenzer. Rev. Lenzer was the fourth Chief Minister of the Congregation. The piano now rests in the Victor Smorgon Community Hall at the rear of the synagogue for all to see and, subsequent to funds being raised, will be restored and tuned to be played at future synagogue events.

AUSTRALIA AT TIME OF WAR: TWO CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES

Daniel C. Tabor

Great Britain faced its greatest peril in 1940, with the Fall of France and the likelihood of a German invasion. Stretched on all fronts, it was unable to provide much support to Australia, which felt under threat from the successes of the Japanese army and air force in 1941 and 1942. It is against this backdrop of global conflict, and the dangers facing Australia, that I want to tell two stories – very human, and very different. One story is that of my mother, Hannalene Stillschweig (1923–2010) [referred to in this article as Hanna], who was born in Berlin. She came to Australia as a refugee with her parents Martin and Melita Stillschweig and younger sister Ruth in early 1939. The other story is that of my father, David Tabor (1913–2005), a Cambridge-educated physicist, who was employed in a laboratory in Melbourne to conduct applied research with a group of brilliant scientists, to help the war effort. Both were committed Zionists, but their experiences of living in Australia in the early 1940s were very different, and their stories throw light on some of the ways Australian society was changing due to the effect of war, and how it responded to the arrival of Jewish refugees from Europe.

*

Hanna and her younger sister, with their parents, had a near-miraculous escape from Berlin in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht* (the state-organised pogrom of 9/10 November 1938). Their ‘landing money’ or cash ‘bond’, which was required before they would be allowed to enter Australia, had been paid for in advance by a relative in Palestine, but at this distance in time I do not know who they found to sponsor them (sponsorship was usually required as a precondition of entry). After a two-month journey, which took them across the Atlantic, Canada and the Pacific, they arrived in Sydney on 14 January 1939, a day that became known in Australia as ‘Black Saturday’, due to its extreme heat. Hanna retained vivid memories of their arrival in Sydney:

We arrived in Sydney on the 14th of January 1939 and as we

got off the ship I thought I was walking into a furnace. That is the only way I can describe it ... we were met by a couple that my father used to know in Berlin [through business]. They weren't friends of ours, but it so happened they were the only people my father knew who had also gone to Australia ... and they had been asked by my parents to find us an apartment. So these people met us at the wharf and took us to an apartment they had rented for us in Kings Cross. As we crossed Sydney Harbour Bridge, my father took his Iron Cross [awarded in World War One] out of his jacket pocket, and flicked it into the waters below.¹

Hanna and her family arrived in Sydney knowing little English and with none of the networks and contacts they had had in Berlin, except for the couple that Martin used to know in Berlin. The apartment they had found for Martin and his family was not a particularly salubrious home for the new arrivals, as it was in the heart of the red-light district. They told Martin that he and his family must report to the Australian Jewish Welfare Society in Darlinghurst, which was a short walk away.

Hanna: We saw at the entrance this big notice which said that we must speak English, which we couldn't, we only had a few words. I don't think we got any welcome. They wrote down our particulars but after that we never heard from them again.²

Hanna's father Martin, who had always worked in the clothes industry as a designer and salesman, started looking for a job rather than starting his own business. Though he soon found a job at one of the large department stores in Sydney, it only lasted a week and he decided to set up in business on his own. At the same time, to increase the family's income, Hanna's mother Melita provided cooked lunches for the young men Martin had befriended on the ship, and she charged 9d each for two or sometimes three courses.

Hanna: Then Mrs Hillier [a neighbour] said she could do it for less because the Hilliers weren't kosher and kosher meat was more expensive so then those chaps left us and went and ate at Mrs Hillier's who was able to do it for less. But it just gives you the sort of life we started in Sydney ... To tell the truth, it was no joke.

On arrival in Australia in January 1939, Hanna was fifteen and her

younger sister, Ruth, was fourteen. They were young teenagers who had had to grow up very fast and adjust to traumatic changes, though at one level they just accepted what happened. After a while their parents started to look around for a new apartment, and eventually found a more spacious one in a building with a garden in Double Bay. They were there when war broke out later that year, in September 1939.

Most of their friends were also refugees; the majority were people they had got to know on the voyage from Vancouver to Sydney. For a long time Hanna's parents held an 'open house' once a week for all the other refugees who were together with them on the ship, and many of them had children of the same ages as Hanna and Ruth.

Hanna: Most of the children who had come from Germany and Austria were sent to school, but my father firmly believed that you needed a trade, something you could carry on with your own hands, because he had seen all the professionals who could not find jobs. One started a sweet shop, another made belts ...³

The struggle Hanna's family had in getting established has to be seen in the context of the prevalent attitudes to refugees in Australian society at the time, and the way these predominantly negative attitudes were mirrored by the Australian-Jewish community. In the late 1930s the Australian-Jewish community, based mainly in Sydney and Melbourne, was keen to establish its loyalty to Britain and the Empire, and its leaders at the time failed to support European Jewry. They wanted refugees to be 'inconspicuous' and not to put the 'security of the Jewish community at risk' by, for example, putting pressure on the Australian government to increase the quotas of refugees from central Europe.⁴ These attitudes reflected the xenophobia and anti-German sentiments of the rest of the Australian population.⁵

The Australian Jewish Welfare Board advised refugees to be inconspicuous, to change the way they dressed and to avoid speaking German in public.⁶ Many refugees found it difficult to get jobs and were often treated with hostility as 'enemies'.⁷ This was in spite of the fact that they were, on the whole, educated people who regarded Australia as something of a cultural desert and still felt attachment to their German cultural heritage.⁸

Soon after war had been declared, stricter regulations were introduced for the registration and internment of those classified as 'subversive' or 'enemy aliens', even though the registration of refugees had already been introduced in 1938.⁹ Several thousand Jewish male refugees were interned,

and the remainder were subject to humiliating restrictions, such as having to report to a police station once a week, not being allowed to move from a 'police district' without permission from the military authorities, as well as restrictions on owning property, cameras, motor vehicles, and so on.¹⁰ As 'enemy aliens', the Stillschweigs had to register every week at the local police station and carry identity papers. For Hanna this process was traumatic; to start with, she dissolved into tears when lining up outside the police station because it reminded her of going to Gestapo Headquarters in Berlin, a truly terrifying experience.

The hostility to the refugees and the difficulties they experienced in getting jobs started to ease in late 1941, when 'the cessation of imports created a demand for the goods and services offered by refugee businesses'.¹¹ Though the refugees were relatively small in numbers, they made a significant contribution to the war effort, and to the social and economic development of Australia, by starting new industries. They moved into the cottage production of cosmetics, leatherwear and other luxury items, meeting a demand created by wartime shortages.¹²

Martin (Hanna's father) was determined to start his own business, and initially he set up together with a partner, a Mr P., who Hanna remembered as 'awful ... the most dreadful man', though his wife (who had been the head designer of a firm in Berlin) 'was actually quite a nice woman and ... a very good dress designer.' Martin and Mr P. decided on the range of dresses using continental designs, which they planned to show to the buyers of the fashion departments of various department stores in Sydney and later on, it was hoped, in other cities in Australia. Mr P.'s role was to handle the money and office work, while Mrs P. was the cutter and in charge of the workroom. Martin's main role was that of salesman.

Hanna went with her father to inspect premises, and they found a suitable place in the Strand Arcade, near George Street, in the centre of Sydney's business district. At that time it was a very dilapidated area, though it is now part of a protected Victorian heritage site. The premises consisted of two rooms on the second floor; one was the office where clients would be received and the other was the workroom. The building consisted of three or four storeys with an old-fashioned lift. The lavatories were one or two floors up from the workshop, and the conditions were very primitive.

Hanna: Once we found premises, my father went round with me to wholesalers of cloth, looking for materials. Finally we moved into these premises and Mrs P. was the cutter, some

machinists and hem finishers were engaged and I was there to do everything, picking up the pins from the floor, running all the messages ...

Though Hanna was desperate to continue her education, she was told that she had to work in her father's business. Out of the six shillings a week that Hanna was paid, her father insisted that she gave her mother two shillings and sixpence towards the housekeeping expenses. Acting as a model, she needed to wear stockings, and she and Ruth were allowed to wear lipstick, but they had to pay for these items out of their wages as well. As a result she could save very little: 'It would have been in pennies.' Her younger sister, Ruth, earned four shillings a week to start with and she too had to give her mother some money for housekeeping. Hanna remembered vividly her younger sister's first day at work:

I remember looking out the window one afternoon or early evening when Ruth came home from the first day of her working at Sachs, probably named after Sachs Fifth Avenue [in New York]. She got a fantastic grounding there and she really learned the basics of the dressmaking trade, which stood her in good stead later in life when she had to make a living. Whereas I, being the elder daughter of the boss, was used as maid of all work. We were living in the flat at Double Bay and I remember that I was already home. I looked out of the window and there was little Ruth coming up the street. She looked up at the window with me looking out and all she called out was, 'Shit!'

There was a tense and difficult atmosphere at work with incessant quarrels and shouting between Martin and Mr P. Some Australian girls were hired and there was one Austrian woman who spoke German, who worked as a machinist. When Hanna wasn't running errands she was allowed to do some hand sewing.

The differences between Martin and Mr P. were irreconcilable and were mainly due to a clash of personalities, no doubt exacerbated by the insecurity of being refugees, and different ideas about how they could make the business a success under wartime conditions. After a while the partnership was dissolved and Mr and Mrs P. left, while Martin stayed on in the premises and looked for other staff.

He heard of a couple called Mr and Mrs Goldstein who had their own business, and he wanted to engage them. Mrs Goldstein was the cutter; she

wasn't Jewish but her husband was, and they were in Australia because he had to leave Germany. She (in Hanna's words), 'being a good wife', came with him. She was the main wage earner because she could cut, sew and run the workroom, while he did odd jobs and looked after the stock of materials. They came to work for Martin for a salary, but Mrs Goldstein was more than just an employee. She was a partner in the design of the dresses and she organised the workroom.

Martin acted as the salesman and met buyers from the main department stores, as well as designing the dresses. The firm was called 'Continental Modes' and its clothes were aimed at the top end of the range, representing the best of European women's fashions, which became unobtainable once war had been declared. Martin wasn't primarily a designer but he worked in conjunction with Mrs Goldstein, using his own sketches of women's fashions from Berlin. He tended to bring the disagreements at work home with him and go over them again, and Melita had to listen, while Hanna was inevitably drawn in.

'Continental Modes' was a luxury clothes firm, and it was difficult to justify the firm's existence, and its use of materials and labour, once the government took strategic control of the economy in February 1942, after the bombing of Darwin by the Japanese. From Martin's point of view, a flexible approach was required to enable him to stay in business, so he arranged to get a contract from the American army to sell overalls for them and that counted as 'war effort'. At about this time, he got to know a Lady Anderson, a widowed Englishwoman, and he had 'a very clever idea', which he worked out with her.

Hanna: She was a very posh, pukka ... between them they worked out that Lady Anderson was going to set up a workshop, making clothes for bombed-out children in England from old army uniforms. My father supplied the machines, and some of his 'girls', including me, to sew them, and this, in addition to selling overalls for the American army, was his war effort, and so he was allowed to keep going in spite of being classified as an enemy alien.

During the war it became difficult to get permits for interstate travel, and so Martin arranged for Hanna to travel with the fashion range to Melbourne and contact the buyers. As a teenager, she was her own model and saleswoman; she had to do everything on her own.

Soon after their arrival in Sydney, Hanna's family had made contact with the local Jewish community, and her mother joined the Sydney branch of WIZO (Women's International Zionist Organisation). Melita's desire to contribute was not reciprocated with much enthusiasm by the established members when they organised a fundraising lunch.

Hanna: The WIZO ladies ... baked the cakes and provided the food and did all the catering, and some of them [were] out front serving ... the funny thing was that my mother made one of her lovely cheesecakes, which she donated. But when she got there, she was told she could do the washing up in the kitchen, [as] she wasn't allowed out front. She was put to wash up at the back, out of sight, though I seem to remember I did a little waitressing spell that morning. We have laughed over this many times ...

One can imagine how hurt Melita must have been: an educated, cultured woman who had studied chemistry at an old European university, discovering that she was regarded as being only good enough to do the washing up. Humour was perhaps the only way of dealing with that sort of humiliation, though Melita's experience was typical of the way the Australian-Jewish establishment shunned or restricted social contact with the new arrivals.¹³

Hanna's commitment to Zionist youth work and Habonim did not stop on her arrival in Australia. The ladies who ran WIZO in Sydney thought they ought to do something for young Jews by providing them with social activities. They decided to arrange an evening meeting and to ask the young people who came along what they wanted.

The meeting had been publicised in advance in the Sydney Jewish press, and the inaugural meeting of what became the *Shomrim* (Hebrew: 'The Guardians') youth organisation was held in late October 1939 in central Sydney. *Shomrim* had its origins in the Zionist youth movements of Europe and appealed mainly to young refugees, as well attracting some Australian and British-born Jews. The initial meeting was a success, and the report in *The Sydney Jewish Herald* (3 November 1939) emphasised the role of adult Zionists in forming a provisional committee. There was no indication of the number of people attending, nor (at this stage) of the role of young people in the leadership of *Shomrim*.¹⁴ Hanna's recollections of this meeting are somewhat different from the official account:

Ruth and I went along, and the funny thing was that [the response of the organisers] was so typical of their attitude towards us ‘newcomers’. We arrived early, and the room was still fairly empty. They had rows of chairs round the room, and as Ruth and I walked in we saw the main *macher*, I think her name was a Mrs Goldberg, and we said, ‘Oh, hello.’ I think she said, ‘The ones who come early, had better sit at the back, so that the ones who come late won’t have trouble finding chairs’, so she put Ruth and me right at the back out of sight, so to speak ... Normally, the ones who come early sit at the front, so that the ones that come late wouldn’t disturb the proceedings, and slip in the back. So she put us in the back. It was terribly funny – in retrospect.

It was because we were ‘reffos’, and also a lot prettier and nicer dressed than a whole lot of others. When Miriam S. came in, Mrs Goldberg said, ‘Ah, Miriam, how delightful to see you,’ and she put her in the front. I don’t know why, but I suppose Miriam’s parents were rich, and maybe they made donations to WIZO, I really don’t know. It was so typical.

It was the beginning of Shomrim ... they asked [the young] people what they wanted, whether they wanted educational and cultural activities, or social activities, and 90 per cent (and they were the children of the Australian Jews) replied, ‘Oh, social! We want dances’, and so on ... that really was the beginning of some sort of organised activity among young Jewish people in Sydney.

Eventually it became the Shomrim movement, because a lot of us had come from the Zionist Youth movements on the Continent ... I think Betty Kezelman [one of Hanna’s closest friends] must have come to that meeting, she was the daughter of the Reverend, the *chazan* [cantor] of the Great Synagogue ... Although it was always called Shomrim, it became similar to Habonim, and that’s when I started meeting like-minded people ... Anyway, there was a nucleus of active people, and [soon] we rented a flat, which became our home and where we had meetings.

Shomrim started in Sydney in 1939 with a handful of like-minded people, but it grew to an active youth organisation with over 100 members

until it merged with Habonim in 1944. It quickly became a dynamic Zionist youth organisation, with Hanna's friends, Betty Kezelman and George (Yehuda) Feher focusing on the younger age group (ten-sixteen year olds). Men and women participated equally in the running of Shomrim, and they were Zionist activists.¹⁵ Nevertheless, they attracted a wide spectrum of support from the Australian Jewish community.¹⁶ Most of the members were young refugees like Hanna, and they were critical of the 'perceived preoccupation of Sydney's Jewish youth with social events, just as they were critical of the Zionist leadership's emphasis on philanthropy at the expense of Zionist education and political activities.'¹⁷

Hanna's voice was heard in other forums. She was the youth representative on the Executive of State Zionist Council of New South Wales (NSW). On 25 March 1942 the illegal immigrant ship, the *Struma*, was sunk in the Black Sea after being refused entry to Palestine and over 700 refugees drowned. There were widespread protests from Jewish groups from around the world. In Australia, Sir Isaac Isaacs, a former Governor-General and a staunch supporter of Britain and the Commonwealth, opposed those planning to hold protest meetings on the grounds that this would show their disloyalty to the British Empire. His stance provoked a heated debate on the issue in the Australian Jewish community. The Zionist leadership and the leadership of the wider Jewish community were very conservative, torn as they were between their loyalty to Britain and their difficulty in expressing active support for the plight of Jews in occupied Europe and Palestine.¹⁸

Hanna had no such inhibitions. At a meeting of the Executive of the NSW State Zionist Council, she advocated an active response from the Council in the form of 'an official reply ... to Sir Isaac Isaacs' letters denouncing the holding of the *Struma* protest meeting.' Her efforts to encourage an 'official response' were to prove ineffectual for, 'while a discussion took place ... on being put to the vote, the motion failed.' This pitiful response did not deter the Shomrim leadership, or Hanna, for they had already taken action. As the Committee minutes attest, 'Miss Stillschweig reported that the Youth Council had already taken it upon themselves to reply and were about to issue 500 circulars among Sydney [Jewish] youth, dealing with this question.'¹⁹

The independent and critical line of Shomrim over this and other issues caused some conflict with the Zionist Council and its leadership. Hanna was not impressed with the Executive of the NSW State Zionist

Council, and the attitude of senior Zionists to the youth groups:

I remember how the President of this Executive completely and utterly boycotted my presence at these meetings [so] that when he passed around the agenda for the meeting he would not give me one. He didn't want me to speak ... I certainly did not want to vote at these meetings ... When I was allowed to talk, I spoke in terms of *chalutzit* [being a pioneer in Palestine] and learning Hebrew. Most of the things they talked about were very trivial and irrelevant to the situation of Jews in the world at that time. The Chairman [President?] usually shut me up, and I was also at loggerheads with his son. He, being of my generation, was also a member of Shomrim. He never approved of me being the [Shomrim] representative on this Council and also made life very difficult for me ...²⁰

In general, Shomrim provided a powerful youth voice in Jewish and Zionist affairs in NSW at this time. It brought together alienated young refugees like Hanna, from different backgrounds, who shared a commitment to Zionism but who felt rejected by the Australian-Jewish establishment. Hanna's role as an activist has been documented in studies of Jewish youth movements in Australia.²¹ Shomrim enabled Hanna to develop her independence and sense of self-worth, in an environment where refugees felt they were often treated with suspicion or outright hostility.

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My father, David Tabor, was the sixth of seven children born to immigrants from Tsarist Russia, and he grew up in Notting Hill, in London. He was educated at the London Polytechnic in Regent Street, where the Headmaster dissuaded him from studying medicine (David's first preference), and steered him towards physics as a more 'academic' subject. David won a scholarship to Imperial College, where he came top of his year in physics. He started a PhD there but transferred to Cambridge University, where Philip Bowden, with whom he subsequently collaborated for 30 years, supervised him. David was a brilliant experimental physicist, a devout Jew with an excellent knowledge of Hebrew, a socialist and a deeply committed Zionist.

Philip Bowden had been in Australia at the outbreak of war and decided to stay. He started a laboratory in Melbourne in 1939 to support the Allied war effort, and he invited David to join his team. David left London in March 1940, embarking on what was to be the most momentous journey of

his life. It was the period of the Phoney War, soon to come to an abrupt end in April when Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway. The capitulation of France and the Battle of Britain were only months away, yet when David sailed for Australia there was still a feeling of unreality about the war, as he records in his diary. After a six-week journey he arrived in Melbourne, where his former supervisor and boss, Philip Bowden, met him. It could not have been a more different welcome to Australia from that experienced by Hanna and her family.

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Philip Bowden had succeeded in persuading the Australian authorities of the value of setting up a laboratory, which would contribute to the Australian war effort. He was appointed to the staff of CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research) in November 1939 as Officer-in-Charge of a section that was given the unglamorous title of 'Lubricants and Bearings'. By the time David arrived in Australia, the group was housed in the new Chemistry Building then just completed, and though Bowden's group was not part of the University of Melbourne, contacts with different university departments, such as Metallurgy, Engineering and Physics, were friendly, and there was some interaction of people and ideas. The group was highly productive and attracted a very talented group of scientists, many of whom achieved distinction after the war. Work of specific value to the war effort included the evaluation of special lubricants for machine tools and for aircraft, the development of satisfactory casting techniques for the production of aircraft bearings, and the successful formulation of flame-throwing fuels. David was also to develop (with Bowden) fundamental lines of research on the mechanisms of metallic friction.²²

In his first few months in Melbourne, David recorded the long hours he spent in the lab, the practical difficulties of both getting the right equipment and getting his experiments to work. In spite of some temporary setbacks, his research projects seemed to go well. He quickly developed a routine of work in the lab, social interactions with the crowd of young (non-Jewish) singles who had rooms in Greycourt (his boarding house in Parkville, near the university), and increasing contact with the vibrant Jewish community in Melbourne, which in the 1940s was centred in the Carlton district.

David: Everything there was on the boil. We had in Melbourne at that time, a microcosm of Jewish life in Europe ... We had Jews who came to Australia between say 1925 and 1938 from all parts of Russian, Polish and Lithuanian Jewry, as well as

some Jews who had come from Palestine, who had found conditions there too difficult. So the *Yiddisher gasse* ['Jewish street'] was really a hive of activity with every possible type of Jewish movement and activity represented by one or two or more keen, enthusiastic apostles of that particular line.

For the first time I heard people lecturing on *Hashomer Ha-tzair* [a left-wing Zionist movement from the Continent], on the *Bund* [a secular, Jewish socialist movement], on Jewish communism, on all sorts of movements, which in England hardly existed at all, or if they did they were only by report and not by the direct participation of people. Jewish life in Melbourne was extremely active.²³

However, I made a decision that during my first year in Melbourne I would not get involved with any sort of Jewish life. I had been so busy in Britain as a young Zionist in Jewish student work that I decided to have a break and for my first year all that I did was ... go to the synagogue and I would meet one or two people ...²⁴

There was widespread antipathy to Jewish refugees, and this was brought home to David during his first month in Melbourne, when he was walking back to his digs from the lab with one of his colleagues. He wrote in his diary:

Intended to do a good deal of work this evening but on the way home with K. he said, 'We'd have to start learning German if Hitler came and you are better off than me because you can at least read it.' I then told him I was non-Aryan. He then produced some of the H. G. Wells stuff and said that the loss of Polish Jewry, except for its occasional musicians, would not be much of a loss to anybody. He expressed his views with such complete assurance that left me furious inside. 'They're not much good here anyhow,' he said, 'there's nothing worse than them unless it's a Russian Jew.' He then admitted that what he meant was that they didn't fit in very well, and I pushed the point home. I wish he weren't so damned confident about his views – he just doesn't know a damned thing about it ...²⁵

One disaster followed another in Europe, with the news on 28 May 1940 that Belgium had surrendered. Though most of the British Expeditionary

Force was evacuated from Dunkirk at the beginning of June, within a couple of weeks France had collapsed and Petain had accepted German terms for an armistice. By the end of 1940 the Axis had expanded to include Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, and the outlook for Britain was bleak. The war also affected people around David, and a week later he records that Mrs G. (another resident at Greycourt) was 'very depressed' because she had received news that a Major and a Lieutenant in her husband's regiment had been killed in North Africa, where many Australian troops were serving.²⁶

On 22 June 1941, German forces invaded the Soviet Union and David heard this news, which was to transform the course of the war, at lunch the same day. His comments in the diary: 'Almost incredible', followed by a comment after hearing the evening news, 'Even more incredible'.²⁷ The effect of this news on his communist colleagues was striking, as David remembered many years later:

One of my colleagues ... was very much taken up with Marxism as a philosophy of life as a whole, not only economics but everything else, and he used to walk around with the handbook of Marxism issued by the Left Book Club. It was for him virtually a Bible and when the weather was nice I would sometimes see him at lunchtime sitting on a park bench on the campus studying the book as though he was a Bible scholar studying the divine writ. He came to me one morning and said, 'David, have you heard the radio report about the German invasion of the Soviet Union?' and I said no I hadn't heard it. And he said, 'Well, it has just come through and I believe it is an absolute lie which has been perpetrated in order to persuade the proletariat that they ought to support the war. It can't be true because there is this agreement between Stalin and Hitler and such an invasion is absolutely impossible.'

The next day everything had been changed, everybody now understood that there was war between Germany and the Soviet Union and overnight the war became a People's War and everybody had to support it. That was the way in which the left-wing supporters of the Soviet Union changed their tune overnight.

Japanese military successes in 1941 brought the war closer to Australia's

doorstep. In a letter home, written on 14 December 1941, David describes the shock that the attack on Pearl Harbour had caused in Australia, as well as the sinking of the *Repulse* and *The Prince of Wales*, because the invincibility of the British navy had always been unquestioned. This defeat gave the Japanese almost total command of the seas, and changed Australian perceptions of the war. David wrote:

This latest Japanese move has brought the war to the Australian public as nothing else. They have even cancelled certain horse races, and some sports fixtures as well as future public holidays. For free and easy Australians that is indeed something.

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During his first year in Australia, David had joined the University Labour Club, which provided the main forum in which he could discuss political issues. The Communist Party of Australia had been banned soon after the declaration of war, though Marxists or communist sympathisers attended the Labour Party meetings that David went to. In a letter home, describing a weekend in June 1941 that he had spent with the University Labour Club, David commented on how strange it was that:

... there was more real freedom of opinion in England than here. A large number of the left-wing publications still being produced in England would not be permitted here ... If they [the authorities] think you have been an active left-winger they are liable to search your library and confiscate whatever they don't like. And conscientious objectors are not dealt with anything like the same liberalism as in England ... One interesting difference in background between England and Australia is that in England there seems to be a strong widespread genuine liberal sentiment in all the political parties and this is almost non-existent here. This no doubt explains the much freer treatment of criticism in England (in spite of its extremely dangerous position), than in Australia.²⁸

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Soon after arriving in Melbourne, and bearing an introduction from mutual Zionist friends in London, David got to know Dr Leon Jona, a medical man who was the president of the Zionist Federation. David described him as '... a grand fellow with a rich sentimental affection for Jewish things: and

intensely interested in all J [ewish] affairs.²⁹ They quickly became friends, and in his diary David records their many discussions about Zionism and communal matters.

The main divide in the Jewish community in the early 1940s was not primarily between Orthodox and Reform congregations, but between those rabbis and community leaders who supported Zionism and were sympathetic to the plight of refugees who had escaped to Australia, and those who put loyalty to King and the Empire first, and opposed Zionism as being in some sense unpatriotic. David became friends with Rabbi Dr Harry Freedman, the Minister of the Toorak synagogue in South Yarra. It is the oldest Jewish congregation in Melbourne. Founded in 1841, it moved in 1931 to the ornate synagogue that David would have attended. The congregation was still very 'Anglo-Australian', and many of its members were descendants of British Jews. Rabbi Freedman was born in Russia, though educated and brought up in England, and he served as the rabbi of the community from 1938 to 1947. He was a renowned Hebrew scholar and an active Zionist when Zionism was a fringe movement in the Anglo-Jewish world.³⁰ Through Freedman, David met Reverend and Mrs I. J. Super, originally from Latvia, with whom he also became friends.³¹ His contacts within the Jewish community developed: he attended the Carlton Synagogue, presided over by the remarkable Rabbi Joseph Lippman Gurewicz, originally from Vilna, and a warm relationship developed. These three ministers, all from Yiddish-speaking backgrounds, offered David a traditional home-from-home which he found very congenial, and his diary contains many references to their generous hospitality, particularly during the Jewish festivals.

Through Jewish communal events, David had contact with other rabbis such as the Anglo-Orthodox Rabbi Jacob Danglow, Minister of the St Kilda Congregation.³² He also got to know the Liberal, Breslau-born charismatic Rabbi Dr Herman Sanger who had been appointed in 1936 to be the rabbi of the Temple Beth Israel, the main Reform congregation in Australia at this time; he was a convinced Zionist, unlike Rabbi Danglow. Temple Beth Israel was also situated in St Kilda, and attracted its congregants from among German and Austrian refugees, as well as disaffected members of other congregations.

There were a number of remarkable (non-clerical) personalities in the Melbourne Jewish community at this time. The most unusual was Dr Isaac Steinberg, a Russian Jew who was a founder and leader of the Freeland

League; he advocated the settling of Jews in the Kimberley region of North West Australia, rather than the Zionist ideal of reclaiming the Land of Israel. He was supported by those British and Australian Jews who felt the Zionist agenda brought them into conflict with Britain, and David remembered him as a great orator who captivated his audiences, even if they did not agree with his opinions. Other personalities who made an impression on David were Dr Aaron Patkin, a Russian Jew who had been private secretary to Maxim Litvinov (the Russian ambassador to Britain) as well as Shlomo Lowy and his wife, and Michael Traub, an emissary of the *Keren Ha-Yesod* [Foundation Fund] in Palestine, as David remembered many years later:

Patkin was a typical Russian Jewish intellectual; he was a Menshevik, not a Bolshevik, and after a few years in the Soviet 'kitchen' he gave up being a Marxist and emigrated to Australia, where he was a leading intellectual figure in Jewish life and a keen and consistent critic of communism and Marxism, and so on. He was very interesting [and] like most of those Russian Jewish intellectuals, a very fiery man, and the sort of person you would hate to disagree with in an argument. I remember that he lived not very far from Bowden [David's former supervisor and boss in Melbourne], and Bowden once told me that the neighbours brought the police round because they thought a fight was going on in his apartment, and they found that it was simply a discussion between him and his son on some political issue. For years he was editor of *The Zionist* [magazine].

At a lesser level were two groups of Zionist emissaries: one was Shlomo Lowy and his wife, Rivka; they were representatives of the Jerusalem office of the Jewish National Fund, and they were mainly involved in fundraising for re-afforestation in Palestine. They were very nice, homely people and we enjoyed their company and enjoyed their friendship ... they had a positive influence on Jewish communal life wherever they happened to be working in Australia. They were mainly settled in Melbourne but also visited the other big cities.

The other emissary was Michael Traub from the *Keren Ha-Yesod* [Foundation Fund] in Palestine. Traub was a big man in size and physique, in temperament and in emotion. He

used to give the most emotional speeches demanding support for Israel, and for the period that he was in Australia, I was in some ways his mouthpiece to the Australian Jewish press. I used to help him with some of his [press] release notices and so on. I found him a fascinating man, but ... I realised that like those great figures who are professional orators and know how to use audiences, he had become a very self-centred man, and I wasn't sorry at the end that he decided that he had to leave Australia and go to America on another fundraising mission ...

References to the plight of refugees in Australia occur frequently in David's diary and letters. For example, in February 1941, David visited the home of Dr R., a non-Jewish refugee from Germany living at Brighton Beach (a suburb of Melbourne) with his wife and family. He described the visit in a letter home:

The husband is remarkably Jewish-looking, and yet he has not a drop of Jewish blood in his veins. He comes from an old Huguenot family which fled from France and settled in Germany; but he looks much more Jewish than many German refugees that are completely Jewish ... they [husband and wife] are both rather intellectual in the Continental sense. It was amusing them hear them discussing English literature and the English stage with such assurance ... I had to be very careful bluffing my way along. But I enjoyed the evening, and what is more they are keen vegetarians and have the most amazing dishes that are at once tasty, attractive to look at, and good food.³³

David's account indicates the cultural sophistication that such refugees brought with them. Suzanne Rutland has commented on the legacy of the refugees, particularly those from Germany and Austria, in creating some of the conditions for the more open, multicultural society that developed in Australia after World War Two.³⁴

A discussion with friends in March 1941 led to the suggestion that David should start a study group with Jewish students at the university. The Jewish Students' Study Group (JSSG) met a real need and was a success. Some of its members went on to achieve distinction as leaders of the Jewish community, and in the professions. One member was Zelman Cowan, who later became Governor-General of Australia.³⁵ After the war,

the Study Group flourished for about ten years, with regular (residential) study camps which appealed to Jewish students of all religious and political affiliations, and which drew in some of the best scholars as voluntary teachers or lecturers.³⁶

David's diary for 1941 contains several entries about the first meetings of the JSSG. For example, in August, Joseph Solvey gave a talk which David attended:

In evening missed Dr Heymann's talk on Surface Chemistry to go to Solvey's talk on Jewish position in Europe before present War. Only about 15 students present. Talk good but too long on first part, and so had to have last part in brief outline ...³⁷

A meeting in September was also addressed by Solvey, and held at Rabbi Gurewicz's house:

... Solvey spoke on Christianity in 1st century BC. & AD. Not bad. He doesn't give his own ideas sufficiently. He certainly has a remarkable background. Poor discussion – too much on details – and in my conclusion, I tried to be general, as usual ...

In spite of his critical comments about the talk, the friendship with Joseph Solvey developed, and there are many positive references to him in David's diary. In October he records that he was preparing a talk for the JSSG on the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment). David's account of the meeting is very brief:

Off to meeting at Claire Feiglin's. About 15 present. Not bad reception. Little discussion. At supper spoke to Claire about Hebrew – not too definite.³⁸

The Feiglins were a large Orthodox family who had come from Palestine, and spoke Hebrew. The importance of learning Hebrew, especially in the context of Zionism, and the need to start a Jewish school in Melbourne that would teach Hebrew, were much discussed at the time, and David was involved in these discussions.

The last meeting of 1941 was held at the young Sol Encel's room in Queen's College, and the talk was given by Norman Landau on 'Assimilation':

His paper was well worked out. He dealt with the 3 main periods of Ass[imilation]: Alexandria, Spain & Germany.

Concluded that it was no solution but that in different circumstances in the future it might solve say 2 out of the 5 factors involving Antisemitism. Discussion not bad ... Walter Schnoek was very good. Good supper. In bed 12:30. Dead tired.³⁹

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The state of the Zionist youth organisation in Melbourne led David to observe that this was ‘where we were in England 10 years ago.’⁴⁰ In early July 1941 he agreed to take over the running of the local Habonim group, and soon he was spending part of every weekend with his group, and at least one evening a week writing articles and liaising with Young Zionist organisations in Sydney. One of his first innovations was to run the group on the lines of English Habonim (with its mixture of Jewish education, Hebrew songs and disciplined activities), and this soon became popular. David received most support in the early days from Dr Jona and Rabbi Freedman, who knew about the success of Habonim in England and recognised its value.

In September, David took a holiday in Queensland, and the last part of his trip was spent in Sydney, where he attended the Yom Kippur service in the Great Synagogue, breaking the fast at the home of the Minister, Rabbi Falk. During his stay in Sydney, David also gave a talk on ‘Jewish youth & [the] Jewish future’, though he did not realise at the time what impact his talk had on one member of Shomrim, Hanna Stillschweig. She remembered the occasion vividly:

We went along to this meeting, and we were just sitting in the audience, and listening to this chap from Melbourne, called Dr David Tabor addressing us ... He may have talked about Habonim in England, or Habonim in Melbourne, I haven’t the faintest idea, but as [soon as] I saw him up there on the podium, it was love at first sight, as far as I was concerned. Afterwards, I think [a friend] introduced me to him. I must have exchanged a few words with him ... I came home, talked about it to my parents, and ... my father obviously realised that I was rather interested, [because] the next day at work he said, ‘Why don’t you phone him up? Phone him up at his hotel.’⁴¹

They arranged to meet the next day to discuss Zionist youth work, while visiting the Sydney Zoo (which David had never been to, and was

keen to see). He suggested that Hanna could write to him if she had further issues she wanted to discuss, and this was the start of their correspondence, from which their relationship developed.

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1942 was a year that saw major setbacks in the war for the Allies in North Africa, South-East Asia and the Pacific. The most traumatic reverse was the news on 16 February that Singapore had fallen, and 60,000 soldiers had surrendered. With the bombing of Darwin, the war was on Australia's doorstep, and by early 1942, the whole productive system of the nation was placed under central control and direction. The government prohibited the manufacture of unnecessary commodities, introduced identity cards and brought in a range of restrictions on consumption, employment and travel.⁴² Australians were expected to work on Saturday mornings as part of their contribution to the war effort, and David records that it felt 'strange' to be working on *Shabbat*.⁴³

David's diary for 1942 contains scattered references to the Jewish community in Melbourne, especially the figures whom he had met in 1940–41. He went to lunch on occasional Saturdays at the home of Rabbi Gurewicz, even if he was working on Saturday mornings; and he also maintained some contact with Rabbi Freedman. On one visit for dinner at Rabbi Gurewicz's in February, he had become involved in a discussion about the regulations affecting refugees:

I was astonished at the bitterness of Müller against the Regs [regulations]. I was offended not by his arguments but by his bitterness. They all suffer from these terrible phobias: if only they had equivalent phobias ...⁴⁴

What this and other the diary entries show is the distress that many refugees experienced on arrival in Australia because of the restrictions and hostility they were subject to. He met many refugees socially, including Rabbi Ehrentreu, whom David had known in Cambridge, and who had been shipped to Australia as an internee (on the *Dunera*). He was released in May 1942, and was able to serve as an Orthodox Rabbi of a local community.⁴⁵ The Jewish community in Melbourne contained refugees from different parts of Europe, and David records their heated discussions about Zionism, Revisionism, socialism, and anything else someone had a strong opinion about.

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Much of David's spare time in 1942 was spent on Zionist youth work. He was appointed the first chairman of the Youth Department of the Zionist Federation, and working with the support of Dr Shlomo Lowy (the emissary from the Jewish National Fund), he was able to promote dialogue between Sydney and Melbourne Jewish youth,⁴⁶ and to mediate in the often fractious ideological disagreements between different Zionist youth groups. He edited *The Young Zionist* (the main journal of the youth movement), often writing the editorials, and when the *Shomrim News* could not be produced in Sydney due to printing restrictions, he printed some of their articles in *The Young Zionist*. The last week of December 1942 saw the first successful Habonim Camp at Ferntree Gully, 24–28 December, under canvas. David was pleased with the 'excellent' atmosphere and the range of activities which engaged the children most of the time. For David, it was a positive end to the year.

At a personal level, David and Hanna became much closer during 1942, and they corresponded regularly about youth work. They met several times when Hanna made business trips to Melbourne and Adelaide on behalf of her father's business; she was just nineteen years old.

Restrictions on interstate travel due to wartime conditions made it more difficult for them to spend time together, though travel was easier for David if he was making an official visit linked to his war work. For example, when he visited a laboratory at Rutherford, NSW towards the end of July, he combined this with a visit to Hanna in Sydney, and it provided him with an opportunity to meet her family.

January 1943 started for David with an interstate conference in Melbourne about the Zionist Youth Movement in Australia, though it was primarily a meeting of the Sydney and Melbourne groups. The Shomrim delegation from Sydney consisted of six activists (including Hanna). Over a period of five days there were meetings about the future direction of Zionist youth work in Australia, and by the end of the conference David and Hanna had got engaged. David's telegram to his parents announcing his engagement was typically to the point: 'Mum Dad I have fallen in love getting married soon am writing via America love = Dod Tabor'.

On 14 March 1943, David and Hanna got married at the Great Synagogue in Sydney.

Hanna: It was wartime and we didn't have a reception. We just invited a few people to the synagogue, and afterwards we had lunch at our house in Pymble to which Rabbi and

Mrs Porush came, and Rabbi Falk was invited ... They both officiated at the wedding and they both gave me a kiss. Then we had a lunch, [with] the two rabbis, and my mother had a very strong feeling of family, so Willy Rosenbaum and his wife came too. He was a distant cousin of my mother's; and of course my mother and father and Ruth [were there] ... Then in the afternoon my friends from Shomrim came for tea, and brought little presents ... It was 1943, 14 March. It was warm, and I got married in a short, white dress that Mrs Goldstein made for me.

The first difficulty of married life back in Melbourne was to find suitable accommodation. They had to move flats quite often, and it was difficult to find somewhere permanent to live, as many flats and houses had been requisitioned by the military. After a year of moving from one furnished flat to another, they found an unfurnished flat near the university, and they were able to enjoy a more settled existence. Hanna wanted to improve her English, and someone at the University of Melbourne suggested that she enrol as a student of English Literature:

Hanna: I was horrified at the idea because, after all, I had spent four years in the factory and it would be like walking from the factory floor into a university department ...

They said, 'Well, why not? She can attend tutorials with the other students at the women's college, and why not have a go?' So I said, 'OK, I'll have a go.' They knew I had never matriculated but they accepted me as a part-time student and allowed me to attend the tutorials, corrected my essays and allowed me to sit the exams, and I enjoyed it very much. I sat the exam for the first year and I passed it. For the next year I not only did English, I went on to English Part 2. I also took philosophy and psychology, which was taught as one combined course and I enjoyed that, and I took the exams, and I passed [them] as well.

... [When] we started the English course with Chaucer, it was like doing two foreign languages all at once, because on the one hand I had a dictionary to look up what the words meant, and then I had to translate the Chaucerian English into ordinary English. It was quite complicated but it was good fun.

Hanna helped David with his Habonim activities on weekends and

for a time was a *madricha* (Hebrew: female leader) of her own group. Hanna's role in the formation of Shomrim in Sydney has been well documented.⁴⁷ There are also a number of references in studies of the period to David's pivotal role in the development of the Zionist Youth Movement in Australia during the war.⁴⁸ The impact of his contribution and personality are acknowledged in this extract:

The young Dr David Tabor was to have a great influence upon the future of Zionism and Jewish youth in Australia ... Tabor is described as being an individual of outstanding general education, knowledgeable, kind and modest, yet with a conviction which enabled him to facilitate great changes in the Zionist Youth Movement in Australia ...⁴⁹

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David's father died on 28 December 1943 from a heart attack, and David was keen to return to England after the war ended to see his mother and family. In early 1945 Bowden returned to England, to the Physical Chemistry Department in Cambridge, to recreate his research group there.⁵⁰ David was appointed acting head of the laboratory in Melbourne, which already had a fine reputation for both its fundamental research and for its practical work.

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In 1946 the major decision was made to leave Australia, and to go back to England rather than Palestine. This was the result of an offer of a job from Philip Bowden for David to become the Assistant-Director of Research in Bowden's laboratory in Cambridge with a salary of £650 per annum. Hanna remembered this as a turning point in their lives:

We thought that was absolutely fantastic, and your father was very anxious to get back to England to see his family ... I would have preferred to have gone to Israel because England didn't mean anything to me [as] I had no relatives [there]. I had never lived there and it was just a sort of pink area on the map.

David and Hanna had to return to Britain on a converted troop ship, and the conditions were primitive. Men and women slept in separate dormitories, which they shared with the ship's rats. David remembered the tribulations of the journey, which was so different from his voyage to

Australia on the *Stratheden* six years before:

We slept in bunks. I had a mentally deranged man above me who every now and again would run around with a razor threatening people and he ended up locked away in a separate room. We used to say in fact he was the only wise man on the ship, because he was the only person who had private accommodation. The hygiene was stretched to its limit, in fact ended by being non-existent, and the bathrooms were awash with dirty water from anything after four a.m. Anyhow we survived that trip and got to London just in time for the first *Seder* [of Passover], and then went on to Cambridge. But that is now part of another story.⁵¹

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My parents did not emigrate to Israel, as they had initially planned. They stayed in Cambridge, where my father had a very successful career as a physicist, becoming a professor and a Fellow of the Royal Society. The Tabor Laboratory, part of the Cavendish Laboratory at the University of Cambridge, was named after him, and for many decades he and my mother were pillars of the Cambridge Jewish community. My mother developed into a very accomplished abstract artist, completed an Honours degree in Humanities through the Open University, and worked for many years as a volunteer at the Citizens' Advice Bureau. Hanna's parents remained in Sydney. Her father, Martin, died in 1959, but her mother, Melita, lived to be 105, spending her last years in the Montefiore Home. Hanna's younger sister, Ruth, married and raised a family in Sydney, but died of pneumonia in her sixties.

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My paternal grandmother used to say that it was *b'shert* (Yiddish: pre-ordained) that two people from such different backgrounds should travel halfway round the world to meet, to fall in love and to get married. Hanna, the traumatised teenage refugee, had arrived from Nazi Germany to an unwelcoming Australia in early 1939 with her family. They spoke little English and had none of the supportive networks of family, friends and business associates that they had been able to rely on in Berlin. In their early years in Australia they struggled to establish themselves in business and socially, often in the face of suspicion and hostility, especially from some members of the Sydney Jewish community. The Stillschweig family

inhabited a different world in the early 1940s from my father David, the Cambridge-educated physicist. He was from the ‘mother country’, an articulate, highly qualified British Jew, and he was welcomed with open arms by the leaders of the Melbourne Jewish community. Yet both David and Hanna were ardent Zionists, and this shared commitment amid the turbulent circumstances of war provided the spark that enabled their relationship to blossom and to develop into an enduring partnership.

Notes

- 1 Hanna’s narrative in this chapter has been taken (mainly) from an interview conducted by Daniel Tabor in Cambridge on 21 July 1987, unless otherwise stated.
- 2 From an interview with Hanna, conducted by E. Honig in Cambridge, 21 May 1986.
- 3 This paragraph is based on the interview conducted by E. Honig. See footnote 2.
- 4 M. Blakeney, (1985) *Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933–1948*, Sydney, Croom Helm, p. 161.
- 5 S. D. Rutland, (1985), ‘Australian responses to Jewish refugee migration before and after World War II’, *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, **31**, 1, p. 37.
- 6 See Rutland, 1985, op. cit., p. 38; S. D. Rutland, (1997) *Edge of the Diaspora* (Second revised edition), New York and London, Holmes and Meier, op. cit., p. 186; R. Benjamin, (1998) *A serious influx of Jews: a history of Jewish Welfare in Victoria*, St Leonards NSW, Allen and Unwin, pp. 80–1.
- 7 M. Blakeney, (1995) *Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933–1948*, Sydney, Croom Helm, p. 175.
- 8 For example, H. Liffman, (1985) ‘In search of my identity,’ *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, **31**, 1, pp. 10–28, where the issues of conflicting identities are discussed.
- 9 Rutland, 1997, op. cit., p. 192.
- 10 Blakeney, op. cit., p. 175; Rutland, 1997, op. cit., p. 195.
- 11 Blakeney, op. cit., p. 175.
- 12 *ibid.*, pp. 213, 217.
- 13 Rutland, 1985, op. cit., p. 36.
- 14 G. H. Gordon, (1995) *Guardians of Zion, The Shomrim in Australia 1939–1944*, Mandelbaum Trust, Studies in Judaica, No. 6, Sydney, University of Sydney, pp. 35–41.
- 15 *ibid.*, p. 111.
- 16 *ibid.*, p. 45.
- 17 *ibid.*, p. 122.

- 18 B. Hyams, (1988) *The History of the Australian Zionist Movement*, Victoria, Zionist Federation of Australia, p. 69; Rutland 1997, op. cit., pp. 296-300.
- 19 Quotations from the Minutes of Executive Meeting NSW State Zionist Council (NSWSZC), Thursday, 14 July 1942, in Gordon, op. cit., p. 158.
- 20 This paragraph is based on the interview with Hanna conducted by E. Honig in Cambridge. See footnote 2.
- 21 For example, see references to Hanna in Gordon, op. cit.
- 22 For a detailed account of the range of work undertaken by this group, see J. Field, (2008) 'David Tabor', in *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, **54**, London, The Royal Society, pp. 43-45; N. N. Greenwood, and J. A. Spinks, (2003) 'An antipodean laboratory of remarkable distinction', in *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, London, The Royal Society, pp. 85-105; D. Tabor, (1969) 'Frank Philip Bowden, 1903-1968', in *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, **15** (November), London, The Royal Society, pp. 12-17.
- 23 For an account of growing up in the Jewish community of Carlton in the 1930s and 1940s, see Esther Rafaeli (Shapiro), (2007) 'My Jewish Carlton – recollections' in *Jewish History Australia*, at www.ajhs.info/jha; accessed 21 January 2011.
- 24 All the transcriptions from David used in this article are taken from the interview conducted by Daniel Tabor in Cambridge, 21 October 1985.
- 25 Diary, 22 May 1940.
- 26 Diary, 19 January 1941.
- 27 Diary, 22 June 1941.
- 28 Letter, 10 June 1941.
- 29 Diary, 26 June 1940.
- 30 Rabbi Freedman (1901-82), See *Australian Dictionary of Biography – Online Edition* at <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A17040b.htm>, accessed 12 November 2012.
- 31 Rabbi Yitzhak Yaakov (Isaac Jacob) Super (1881-1961). A tribute and short biography of Rabbi Super can be found on the website of the St Kilda Hebrew Congregation at: <http://stkildashule.org.au/past-rabbis/rabbi-super>, accessed 25 April 2016.
- 32 Jacob Danglow (1880-1962). See *Australian Dictionary of Biography – Online Edition* at <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A080226b.htm>, accessed 10 October 2013. See Hyams, pp. 89-90, for details of Danglow's opposition to Zionism in the 1940s.
- 33 Letter, 3 February 1941; received by his family on 22 March.
- 34 Rutland, 1997, op. cit., p. 223.
- 35 Sir Zelman Cowan (1919-2011), Governor-General of Australia 1977-82. A representative obituary is at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jan/02/sir-zelman-cowan>; accessed 26 July 2012.

- 36 For a detailed account of the Jewish Students' Study Group, see D. C. Tabor, (2012) "'The general awakening of Jewish consciousness': The development of the Jewish Students' Study Group in Melbourne', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, XX1, Part 1, pp. 61-85.
- 37 Diary, 6 August 1941.
- 38 Diary, 26 October 1941.
- 39 Diary, 17 December 1941.
- 40 Diary, 23 June 1941.
- 41 From an interview with Hanna, conducted by Daniel Tabor in Cambridge, on 26 December 1987.
- 42 D. Lee, (1996) 'Politics and government', in Beaumont, J. (ed.), *Australia's War, 1939-45*, St Leonards NSW, Allen and Unwin, pp. 82-106, 94.
- 43 Diary, 21 February 1942.
- 44 Diary, 10 February 1942.
- 45 Letter, 26 May 1942.
- 46 Gordon, op. cit., p. 59.
- 47 Gordon, op. cit., pp. 57, 87, 98, 106, 130, 133, 138, 161.
- 48 For example, Hyams, op. cit., pp. 79-81, 84; Rutland (1997) op. cit., p. 320; E. Rafaeli (Shapiro), (2007) 'My Jewish Carlton – Recollections', p. 2, at www.ajhs.info/jha; accessed on 10 January 2012.
- 49 Gordon, op. cit., p. 59.
- 50 D. Tabor, (1969) op. cit., p. 17.
- 51 See footnote 24.

UNKNOWN SOLDIERS: AUSTRALIAN JEWISH NATIONAL SERVICEMEN IN THE VIETNAM WAR

Mark Dapin

In his history of the Scheyville Officer Training Unit (OTU), where conscripted junior army officers were mass-produced in haste during the 1964–72 National Service Scheme, author Roger Donnelly quotes a Scheyville graduate named ‘Tub Matheson’ (actually Hector Munro Matheson) who recalls his thoughts upon learning he was to be called up as, ‘The bastards! Why me? What about my Melbourne High School Jewish mates?’ Donnelly explains, ‘Between 15 and 20 per cent of the sixth form were Jewish, but not one of them was drafted. To Tub Matheson, this seemed like a system of selective National Service in action.’¹

It’s difficult to know what either Donnelly or Matheson actually meant by this. Conscription during the Vietnam War era was selective. Nobody in government, the military, the press or the public ever claimed otherwise. Both Donnelly and Matheson were fully aware of the mechanics of the process: at six-monthly intervals, beginning on 10 March 1965 and ending on 22 September 1972, the birthdates of every 20-year-old male who had become eligible for national service were encoded onto so-called ‘marbles’, which were spun in a superannuated TattsLotto barrel and drawn in numbers commensurate with the army’s manpower requirements.

Every eligible Australian male received a letter notifying him that he had been either called up or had his service indefinitely deferred. Matheson would have opened his letter of notification at the age of 20, when he was no longer at Melbourne High School or even in Victoria. According to an oral history interview he gave in 1994, he was in fact working as a pilot in Wyndham, WA, one of the furthest towns from Melbourne in Australia.² It is unclear how he could have known, upon discovering his own fate, that all his Jewish classmates had avoided the same. Almost paradoxically, Donnelly explains, ‘Some of the Jews in his class were and still are friends.’³

And no doubt some of his *best* friends are Jews. But, like so many stories about national service and the Vietnam War, Matheson’s ‘memory’ seems designed to illustrate a point – in this case, that Jews habitually

avoided national service – rather than describe any event that actually occurred.

In this paper I will try to separate the folklore from the facts of the Jewish experience of national service in the Vietnam War. I will first illustrate the workings of the National Service Scheme, particularly as they related to ethnic and religious minorities, then I will describe the results of my attempts to trace Jewish men who went to Vietnam as national servicemen. I will then give a brief overview of known sources relating to their individual service. Next, I will isolate the unique factors that may have coloured Jewish conscripts' service in the Australian Army in Vietnam – that is, the experience of antisemitism (or even philo-semitism); and the possibilities for Jewish religious observance. I will then return to Scheyville to further examine Matheson's ideas. In conclusion, I will canvass some theories as to why Jewish men were under-represented – as they undeniably were (although not to the extent previously believed) – among national servicemen in Vietnam. While this was partly due to opposition to the war and conscription among a certain segment of politicised Jewish youth (and their elders), I will argue that the significance of the so-called 'New Left' (and, indeed, the old Left) has perhaps been overplayed and, although men such as Albert Langer may have provided a radical public face for Jewish youth and students, other young Jewish people were as conservative, apolitical or, indeed, excited by the opportunity for military service, as were many others in Australian society in the overwhelmingly conformist Australia of the 1960s.

The mechanics of the National Service Scheme

During the national service years, more than 63,000 young men were called up and went into the army. Of these, about 15,200 served in Vietnam. This figure – once thought to be closer to 19,000 – has been downwardly revised over the years. While the majority of 'nashos' remained in Australia throughout their brief military careers, a small number were sent to Papua and New Guinea, and larger groups to Malaysia and Singapore. The scheme is often remembered as unpopular and socially divisive whereas, in fact, it was initially wildly popular and seen as a tool to build greater social cohesion. It was held by both the government and the Department of Labour and National Service (DLNS), which administered the scheme, that the ballot was the only fair and equitable means of selecting conscripts for military service. There were no protected occupations – farm workers

served alongside factory hands, police officers drilled with labourers, coalminers trained with scientists. Only ministers of religion, students of theology and diplomats (the latter category unlikely to include many 20-year-olds) were automatically exempted. And yet pretty much every minority in Australian society – racial, sexual and religious – was under-represented in the National Service Scheme. The call up of so-called ‘full-blood’ Aboriginal men was unlawful until 1967, and the administrative procedures necessary to facilitate their incorporation in the army were never subsequently implemented. This was due to practical considerations more than ideological concerns: aside from everything else, it was difficult to apply an equitable birthdate ballot to people whose birthdates often went unrecorded.⁴

Declared homosexuals were barred from service. Individual Jehovah’s Witnesses, Quakers and members of other esoteric or pacifist Christian sects regularly applied for, and were granted, exemption from service on religious grounds. While some possibly entered the army confined to non-combatant duties, it seems unlikely any were ever posted to Vietnam. But this exemption was not available to Jews, whose religion did not preach pacifism and whose nominal state, Israel, did not practise it.

Non-British migrants who had not been naturalised were also excluded from the ballot until 1967. While Jews of British origin might expect to be drafted in the same numbers as any other British citizens, only very small numbers from any migrant community were caught up in the scheme. There were an estimated 154,000 non-naturalised migrants from Italy, 99,000 Greeks and 51,000 non-naturalised Dutch in Australia in the mid-1960s.⁵ When the prime minister asked what effect the changes might have on these population groups, he was informed that ‘as the intake of alien national servicemen is unlikely to commence before 1968, it appears fairly certain that there will not be any aliens, as national servicemen, serving in Vietnam before 1969.’ In addition, the DLNS had found that the number of 20-year-olds registering for national service was ‘progressively increasing’. This was thought to be due to ‘the higher birthrate after the war, immigration since the war and other like factors’, but once again it seems to have come as a surprise to the authorities. It was now clear that ‘the percentage of those registering who will be called up, will drop in the next few years’, and it was thought that only about 93 Italians, 73 Greeks and 55 Dutch might be conscripted in 1968, of whom about fifteen Italians, twelve Greeks and nine Dutch would serve in Vietnam.

It is unknown how many non-naturalised young male Jewish migrants were living in Australia in the 1960s, but none of them would have been called up before 1968 or, if they were balloted in, sent to Vietnam before 1969. Parenthetically, it seems unlikely that more-recent migrants from any non-English-speaking background were ever proportionately represented in the army, as the DLNS recognised early on that a proportion of recently arrived ‘resident aliens’ from many communities would probably fail the army’s language and literacy tests (although this was unlikely to have had much of an effect on European Jewish migrants).⁶

Jewish numbers in Vietnam

Historically, both Jewish people and Vietnam veterans have sometimes been reluctant to declare themselves, but questions of Australian Jewish involvement in the National Service Scheme and the Vietnam War have coloured two of my recent projects. The first, a popular military history book, *The Nashos’ War*, was published in 2014, and it represented the fruit of more than 150 long, semi-structured oral-history interviews, predominantly conducted face-to-face with former national servicemen, most of whom were Vietnam veterans. I consciously sought out Jewish veterans to contribute to *The Nashos’ War*. My sampling process was desperately unscientific. I was simply looking for men with interesting – and, where possible, untold – stories, and I felt the narratives of Jewish veterans would probably meet both criteria. I spoke to three men: David and Loris Roubin, and David Wittner, whose sharply contrasting stories did indeed lend colour and depth to my narrative. I also interviewed Leon and Henry Nissen, twin Jewish boxers who were balloted in for national service, but, in common with the great majority of conscripts, did not serve in Vietnam.

The second of my works to deal with Jewish national servicemen is an as-yet-incomplete historical study of Jews in the Australian military, to be published by the Sydney Jewish Museum in 2016. For this volume, I hoped to track down every Jewish Vietnam veteran known to the community. I petitioned every extant Jewish ex-service-people’s organisation in every state, as well as independent researchers such as Ben Hirsch and Russell Stern, while advertisements and feature articles appeared in the *Australian Jewish News*, appealing to Jewish veterans of any conflict – or their family members – to come forward.

The only serious study of Jewish involvement in the Vietnam War is Philip Mendes’ admirable *The New Left, the Jews, and the Vietnam War*,

which concentrates on the role of individual Jewish activists in the various anti-war and anti-conscription movements. In an endnote to the book, Mendes writes, 'The only known Jewish Vietnam veterans are Andrew Varga, Captain Paul Cohen, Dr David Rothfield, Stratton Joel and Michael Cass. Henry and Leon Nissen, Alan Bloom and Alex Copperfield were apparently conscripted, but weren't posted to Vietnam.'⁷

Of these men, Cohen was a regular soldier, and Rothfield a member of the CMF, a reserve force. While there was a regular soldier named Michael Cass, from Victoria, who served in Vietnam in both 9RAR and the Civil Affairs Unit, and may or may not have been Jewish, it's possible Mendes confused him with Lance Corporal Geoffrey Cass, a 9RAR veteran from Perth who was certainly Jewish. 'Stratton Joel' is actually Stretton Joel, a Perth-born national serviceman whose father was Jewish, and the first cousin of Rabbi John Levi.⁸

Mendes was unaware of the Roubin brothers or Wittner, but – even with the addition of their three names to Mendes' total – it seemed unlikely to me that there would have only been five 'fully' Jewish national servicemen in Vietnam. In the 1960s, Jewish people made up about 0.6 per cent of the Australian population (an estimated 67,000 out of 10.4 million). If they had been proportionately represented among the 15,200 national servicemen in South Vietnam, there should have been a total of about 91 Jewish men in the cohort. This seemed unlikely too when, only 20 years after the end of the conflict, a researcher as careful as Mendes (whose primary concerns, admittedly, were elsewhere) only knew of two.

Unfortunately, there are certain difficulties involved in tracing Jewish Vietnam veterans, the first being that the Australian Army does not keep records of personnel categorised according to religion. Redacted versions of the service records of Vietnam veterans are publicly available, although each individual record requires a clearance period of several months before the National Archives will release it. The only way to be certain of the true number of men who declared themselves as Jewish and fought as national servicemen in Vietnam would be to examine the records of every one of the more than 16,000 national servicemen whose names appear on the Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans (some of whom appear to have been regular soldiers misclassified as conscripts). Even then, this would not capture those who did not wish to reveal their Jewishness in the military. For the Sydney Jewish Museum's book, I have made several attempts to isolate common Jewish names from the Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans,

and to call in the service records of Jewish-sounding men to identify their professed faith, but we live in a cruel world in which even men with names such as Jack Jewry are Christian, and a man named Jim Vyner Isaacs somehow contrives not to be Jewish, whereas a Vietnam veteran called Warren Garth Austin belongs to a longstanding Jewish family in WA. Some men with common Jewish surnames could be ruled out simply by their first name. I investigated, for instance, the Roths, but judged that a man by the name Adolf Roth (born 1949) demanded no further probing.

In all, I have been able to identify only an additional seven national service Vietnam veterans to those mentioned in *The Nashos' War* or Mendes. These are Warren Austin, David Buckwalter, Graham DeVries, Robert Edelman, Ian Hayat, Dr Ian Isaacs, John Selan and Amic Schneider. All turned out to be known to members of the community either through their connections with ex-servicepeople's organisations or the efforts of the independent researchers. Surprisingly, two other Vietnam veterans known within the community – Charles Matheson and Paul Kinney – are actually 'Jews by choice', men who had married Jewish women and converted some time after the Vietnam War.

It seems likely there should be more veterans. Austin, Cass, Edelman and Schneider (and Stretton Joel) are all from WA and the two Roubins were from Queensland. It seems improbable that Buckwalter and Isaacs were the only national servicemen from NSW to end up in Vietnam – but perhaps not as unlikely as the fact that there were three eligible Roubin brothers, all of them were called up (although the third, Gary, who was training to be a veterinary surgeon, was able to defer his service until conscription was abolished) and two went to Vietnam.

In the US, about 30,000 Jews are thought to have served in the Vietnam War.⁹ If this figure is correct, Jews accounted for about 1.2 per cent of the US military effort in Vietnam, whereas Jewish numbers in the population would suggest they should have made up 2.7 per cent. The US figure is not divided between draftees and regular soldiers, so it's not possible to make an exact comparison with the number of Australian national servicemen. My own researches suggest that, although regular soldiers made up about two-thirds of the Australian Army's strength in Vietnam, national servicemen would have comprised the majority of its Jewish component. Specifically, to date, I have only been able to find two verifiably Jewish regular soldiers – Paul Cohen and Zev Ben-Avi – in the regular army in Vietnam.

My hypothesis at this stage of the study is that, just as both Australia's

Vietnam War and the development of its anti-war movement largely mirrored the situation in the US, the percentage of Jewish Australian national servicemen was roughly similar too, and the final figure might be closer to 35 men. Unfortunately, it would be virtually impossible conclusively to either prove or disprove this proposition. However, in an unpublished memoir held by his family, Rabbi Dr Alfred Fabian, senior chaplain to the Australian Army 1962–75, estimates there were no more than a hundred Jews in the army at any time during his tenure, and no Australian Jewish army chaplain ever visited the troops in Vietnam. Rabbi Fabian wrote:

I was instrumental in obtaining, from time to time, lists of those serving in the Regular Army and passed them on to the local Chaplains, also dealing with them myself whenever necessary. During the Vietnam War, I was in contact with the very few Jewish Army people serving there [and] also enlisted the help of USA Jewish Chaplains on the spot for their assistance to our personnel. My fellow Chaplains-General all made visits to Vietnam and made contact with Jewish members of the Forces at my request, but in my case it would have been completely unwarranted to apply for this expensive trip, just to see perhaps 2 or 3 people ... I completely accepted this position and still think it wise not to have requested something which, I felt, was not justified and would have been rejected.¹⁰

(Rabbi Fabian uses the term ‘Regular Army’ to separate full-time soldiers, whether national servicemen or otherwise, from CMF men.)

The literature

Aside from Rabbi Fabian’s memoir – which says nothing about individual cases in Vietnam – primary sources are scarce, although the late Captain Ian Isaacs wrote home to his family from Vietnam almost every second day of his 1970–71 tour, and his wife has kept the letters. Conversely, there is a slightly higher number of secondary sources than might be imagined. David Buckwalter was interviewed for – and quoted fairly extensively within – Charles Mollison’s *Long Tan and Beyond: Alpha Company 6RAR in Vietnam 1966-67*. Robert Edelman’s memories of Tim Fischer at the Battle of Coral appear in Fischer’s authorised biography, *The Boy from Boree Creek*. An unfortunate incident involving Stretton Joel and an armoured vehicle is recorded in Paul Anderson’s *When the Scorpion Stings*:

The History of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, South Vietnam 1965–72. The late Andrew Varga's life both before and during Vietnam often intersects with his friend Frank Benko's narrative in Benko's self-published but sometimes cited memoir *730 and a Wakey*. None of these books make any mention of the men's Jewishness.

Philip Mendes interviewed Andrew Varga for *The New Left, the Jews, and the Vietnam War*, speaking to him both individually and in the company of Melbourne Jewish anti-war activist Dave Nadel. Mendes kindly gave me copies of the transcripts of both sessions. Shannon Maguire at the Sydney Jewish Museum had interviewed David Roubin for the museum's permanent exhibition 'Serving Australia: the Jewish Involvement in Australian Military History', and the museum made the transcript available to me.

Varga and Isaacs had passed away before my research began. However, I have interviewed Austin, Buckwalter, DeVries, Edelman, Joel, both Roubins (although the elder, David, has since died), and Wittner in person, and Selan, Bass and Hayat by telephone.

There appears to be only one published book that deals as a group with US Jewish Vietnam veterans – Eric Lee's self-explanatory *Saigon to Jerusalem: Conversations with US Veterans of the Vietnam War who Emigrated to Israel*. In a piece for *Vietnam* magazine, Lee wrote:

One of the subjects which came up repeatedly in the interviews was the question: was there a uniquely Jewish experience in the Vietnam war?

Most of the nineteen men I spoke to said that there was not ... Nevertheless, a number of the Jewish veterans I spoke with did recall some of the Jewish holidays and even the June 1967 Six-Day War in which Israel swiftly defeated Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

'We were in Vietnam when the Six-Day War broke out,' recounted journalist William Northrop, a Special Forces officer who was wounded at Lang Vei in 1968. 'We didn't hear anything. All we knew was what the Arabs were saying. The Israelis were quiet; they weren't bragging about anything. I remember listening to Armed Forces radio. There was nothing coming out of Israel.

Hell, all of a sudden, three, four days later, the Jews were sitting on the [Suez] Canal. I mean, it was over. I thought it sure would be nice to win a war in six days.¹¹

Unfortunately, Lee's hard work in tracking down nineteen subjects for his study was undermined when it transpired that he'd apparently been taken in by an example of that curiously ubiquitous figure, the fake Vietnam veteran. 'Special Forces officer' Northrop, who claimed to have served in both the US Army in Vietnam and the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), was revealed in a later work (B. G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley's *Stolen Valor: How the Vietnam Generation Was Robbed of its Heroes and its History*) to have been a member of neither, and is highly unlikely to have been in Vietnam at the start of the Six-Day War. (Despite this, after *Saigon to Jerusalem* was published but before his deception was revealed, Northrop felt able to stand up at the first ever meeting of Vietnam veterans in Israel and proclaim, 'Because of this book, we're all feeling a little prouder, and standing a little taller.'¹²)

Interestingly, Lee tried to find any Australian Vietnam veterans who might have settled in Israel but said later that 'despite the great help of the Australian embassy in Tel Aviv – and they were much more helpful than the American embassy – the closest I came was an Israeli who had claimed to serve for a couple of weeks with Australian forces. I decided not to interview him.'¹³

How the National Service Scheme worked

The National Service Scheme of 1965–72 was a product of the Menzies' government's apprehension that the Australian Army, which had languished neglected for many years under Menzies' watch, and been stretched to near breaking point by an earlier 'universal' national service scheme, might be called upon to fight simultaneously on three fronts. The worst projections had Australia at war with Indonesia in Malaya, battling Indonesian-inspired subversion in New Guinea, and fulfilling its SEATO commitments to defend South Vietnam, all at the same time. In order to quickly expand the army to a size able to cope with these potential commitments, the government deemed it necessary to introduce a selective national service scheme, with candidates selected by the birthday ballot described earlier in this paper. National service applied to the army alone. Men served for a two-year period, which was eventually reduced to eighteen months. At three-monthly intervals, an average of about 2,100 fresh national servicemen was marched into Recruit Training Battalions at Puckapunyal, Kapooka and, later, Singleton, for ten weeks of basic training.

The most able and educated candidates were given the chance to apply

for the gruelling six-month programme at Scheyville; the rest were posted for further training among every corps in the army, from the service corps to the engineers, the medical corps to infantry. A man could defer until he had completed his apprenticeship, his university degree, his school teaching practice, or his medical or law degree and associated probationary period before he obtained his professional qualification. A 20-year-old man called up in 1965, in the earliest stages of a medical degree, might have five more years of study to go, and therefore not join the army until 1970, as was the case with Dr Ian Isaacs.

As no Australian soldier was sent directly to Vietnam without having had some experience within his own corps in Australia, a doctor – or lawyer or dentist – who was drafted in early 1970 might not be posted to Vietnam until late 1970, by which time the drawdown of Australian troops had already begun. As the majority of national servicemen had been withdrawn by the end of 1971, there was little more than a one-year window in which medical or legal professionals would have been most likely to go to Vietnam as conscripts, and those born after 1947 would probably never be posted overseas. Similar, less extreme calculations apply to men undertaking apprenticeships, undergraduate degrees, certain post-graduate courses, and teacher training.

The sample

As stated above, I have interviewed eleven of the thirteen identified Jewish national servicemen, and this might comprise anywhere up to 100 per cent of living Jewish national service Vietnam veterans. Whatever the case, although the number is small, the proportion of the sample in relation to the known cohort is huge. Of the two men I was not able to interview, I have been able to gather a small amount of information from public sources, including service records.

Of the full sample of veterans, six (46 per cent) were born in 1945 and a further four (31 per cent) in 1946. None was born in 1947, two (15 per cent) were born in 1948, two (15 per cent) in 1949, and none in 1950.

The first Jewish national serviceman to enter the army and subsequently go to Vietnam was David Roubin, who was also the only Jewish officer cadet in the first intake at Scheyville. David Roubin was born in May 1945, entered the army in June 1965, and had to extend his national service to get to Vietnam in October 1967. David Roubin was working as a trainee manager in a retail store and was therefore not eligible for any

deferment. This makes him a rare case among the sample.

Graham DeVries was born on the same day as Roubin, but was studying for a law degree and was not posted overseas until October 1969. Dr Ian Isaacs, mentioned above, was born in February 1945, but did not arrive in Vietnam until October 1970. David Buckwalter, also born in February 1945, was the first of the sample to reach Vietnam, as a private soldier with 6RAR in August 1966. Warren Austin, born in October 1945, was more typical, having deferred until he completed his nursing training and reached Vietnam in June 1968. Bob Edelman, a cabinetmaker, was born in September 1945, but also deferred and did not reach Vietnam with 1RAR until March 1968.

This data demonstrates both the range of possible march-in and deployment dates for national servicemen born in 1945, whose eventual period of service might span almost all of Australia's Vietnam War. Dr Isaacs, who was called up in the first ballot, which had been held in 1965, before Australia had even sent its first battalion of regular soldiers to Vietnam, did not leave Vietnam until October 1971, when Australia's part in the war was all but over.

Of the full sample, four (31 per cent) were born overseas, in a spread of locations that demonstrate the range of origins of post-war Australia's Jewish community. Edelman was born in Russia, Schneider in Palestine, Varga in Hungary, and Selan in Germany. Only two (15 per cent) were officers – Roubin was a second lieutenant, Dr Isaacs a captain.

Three men (22.5 per cent) served in infantry battalions, including Buckwalter, who was mentioned in dispatches. Other troops in combat units included Schneider who, although a medic, was one of the few national servicemen ever posted to the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) and who spent much of his time in villages outside the Australian bases; and Varga who, both by his own account and the more reliable testimony of his friend Frank Benko, while posted to 17 Construction Squadron in Vung Tau, chose to go out on patrol at times with the field engineers. Dr Isaacs, while posted to two different artillery regiments, actually served as a doctor in those units. The other six Jewish soldiers (45 per cent) were with support units. DeVries served in the Royal Australian Army Service Corps (RAASC); David Roubin and Hayat in the Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps (RAAOC); Loris Roubin, David Wittner and Warren Austin in the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps (RAAMC) (although Austin was posted to Nui Dat); and John Selan in the

Royal Australian Army Dental Corps (RAADC).

Aside from the over-representation of the RAAMC, these figures are not too far off what might be expected from any sample of thirteen national servicemen. According to the most complete source, which relates to the years 1969–70,¹⁴ 25 per cent of trained national servicemen – by far the largest proportion – belonged to infantry battalions, and infantry numbers were more or less two-thirds larger than engineers and artillery. The RAASC employed by far the largest number of support troops. But the RAAMC used only about 3 per cent of all conscripts, as opposed to 22.5 per cent of the known Jewish conscript cohort.

The army sometimes made use of national servicemen's civilian training when allocating their postings. For example, a police officer in civilian life might become a military policeman, and a civilian engineer was likely to serve as an engineer. However, the army's manpower requirements did not reflect the occupational spread of civil society. The army had little idea how to usefully employ, for example, the large number of freshly trained schoolteachers who flooded the first annual national service intake once every year from 1967. But there was a reliable demand for trained medical staff in Vietnam. Dr Isaacs was employed as a doctor; Schneider at the AATTV was a civilian-trained nurse; Wittner was a radiographer who worked as radiographer in Vietnam; and Selan was a dental technician both in civilian life and the army. Only Loris Roubin, a former business student, and Austin, a time-served printer, received as their only medical training the army's own three-month medics course. Therefore, the over-representation of Jewish national servicemen in medical postings probably reflected an over-representation of Jews in medical employment in civilian life.

It is worth noting these medical positions generally carried a rank of at least lance corporal, as did most RAASC jobs. DeVries, Austin, Schneider, Wittner, Selan and Hayat were all NCOs by virtue of their role; and Cass, a sometime forward scout, was promoted to lance corporal while serving in the infantry. Therefore, a full 52.5 per cent of known Jewish national servicemen were NCOs, in addition to the 15 per cent who were officers noted above. This does not reflect the spread of ranks among national servicemen in the army more broadly, where only 10.1 per cent of conscripts gained non-commissioned rank.¹⁵

If there was a distinct experience for national servicemen in the Australian Army – that is, if they endured or enjoyed conditions that might

differ from those of non-Jewish conscripts – it could probably only be divided into two categories: (1) the experience or otherwise of antisemitism (or, for that matter, philo-Semitism) in training or on active service, in Australia or in Vietnam; (2) the provision or otherwise of facilities and opportunities for religious observance, particularly on the High Holidays.

Antisemitism

Of the ten men I interviewed, David Roubin spoke of a kind of benevolent curiosity in officer training, and Ami Schneider described a largely pro-Zionist atmosphere in the Australian Army. Three men (30 per cent) reported antisemitism in recruit training.

Roubin recalled at Scheyville:

I was the only Jewish boy ... I can remember being visited by so many different chaplains – they'd come and knock on my door and most of them had never seen a Jew before, particularly not in the army. They'd want to know how I was, was I having any difficulties, did I need any special food, all that type of thing. They all came to have a look at me. They were amazed I didn't have horns growing out of my head or a long beard.¹⁶

Schneider said:

I never advertised my religion, but I was very proud to be known as an Israeli. People don't walked around saying, 'I'm a Catholic, I'm an Anglican, I'm a Muslim,' but they'll say, 'I'm an Iraqi, I'm English, I'm Australian.' But, then again, as soon as I said I was Israeli, everybody assumed straight away that I'm Jewish. [Their reaction was] good, good, very good. It was just after one of the wars, and all the guys in the platoons hated the Arabs. Wow. You've got no idea how much the Australian population hated the Arabs – not so much the Muslims but the Arabs – in 1970. God, I was so happy. I was at home. I've never had any problems whatsoever. I was Jewish, but I never told anyone I was Jewish.¹⁷

John Selan said he had problems with an NCO at Puckapunyal in 1970:

On the first day that they lined us up in the barracks, they called the roll and he called out, 'Selan! Where's that from?' Defensively, I said, 'Poland.' And he said, 'What is it?

Where're you from?' I said, 'I was born in Germany.' He said, 'Oh, you're German.' I said, 'Not exactly.' This questioning went on and, of course, he had on the registry, written next to me, 'Jew'. I said, 'What do you want to know? I'm Jewish, is that what you want?' He said, 'Yeah, I just wanted you to say it.' So already there was a hundred guys standing to attention [and] he wanted to know I was a Jew. He said, 'You're Jewish, are you? I've got a job for you.'

The huts are about a foot or two off the ground, and you can see underneath them. They're on stumps. They used to drink and throw the beer bottles underneath the hut. He said, 'I want you to crawl under the hut and get all the empty beer bottles and take them to the canteen.' In those days, you used to get money back for the empty beer bottles. 'You can go and do that, and you can keep the money.' I said, 'I don't want to do that.' He said, 'Oh, you're one of those rich Jews, are you?'

Through basic training, he rode me the whole time about the fact I was Jewish. This guy'd probably never met a Jew, but he was an antisemite. When we went to weapons training, he'd pull me up and, if you were running behind someone with your weapon: 'You would've killed him. Ah, you wouldn't have cared because you're a Jew, aren't you?'

I was lucky because at Puckapunyal there was a dental unit, and they found out I was a qualified dental technician, and they pulled me out of basic training and said, 'You'd better come to the laboratory. We've got a lot of work to do. Can you help out?' He wasn't too happy about that, because he perceived that as a Jew I had some sort of contact to get me out of some of the basic training.¹⁸

David Wittner faced mild name-calling by an NCO at Puckapunyal:

There was hundreds of us, all lined up in one line, and they made an announcement for any Muslims or Jews to take a couple of steps forward, so I did that, and one other guy took a couple of steps forward. They came up to us and said, 'Do you want to see a rabbi?' I said, 'No.' 'Do you want any dietary considerations?' I said, 'No.' They said, 'Okay, step back in the line.' And then, for the ten weeks I was at Puckapunyal one of the NCOs called me 'Pork Chop' but I just regarded

him as an ignorant sort of dickhead anyhow. That didn't worry me. He was a lance corporal and when I was in Vietnam he actually came in as a patient, and he noticed I had the two stripes. He acknowledged that and said, 'Well done.' He was harmless enough.

Loris Roubin said he was 'singled out' for being Jewish both in recruit training and Vietnam. He is the only national serviceman to have mentioned antisemitism among Australian troops in Vietnam.

Religious observance

Loris Roubin's experience of antisemitism relates to the most moving episode of religious observance related by any of the sample. Roubin said an army chaplain came to visit him in Vung Tau in April 1971:

He said, 'I believe your Passover is coming up in two days, and I was wondering if you'd like some special food.' I hadn't asked for kosher. I was eating whatever they served. I said, 'No, look, it's all right.' He asked, 'Is there anything else I could do for you?' The next thing I knew, he had told me to go to the airport at Vung Tau and find my way to Nui Dat. From Nui Dat I could hitch a lift to Saigon, and in Saigon there was a Passover service happening with some Americans in the Free World Building. I hadn't been to Saigon, I hadn't been to Nui Dat. I thought the Free World Building would be a hut somewhere, an American PX. But it was one of the biggest buildings I'd ever seen in my 21 years of life – I hadn't been very worldly anyway.

I found the door and it was just on dark. I'd been running late, and I was wearing my Australian uniform with my slouch hat. I opened the door and all I could see were lots of people sitting at tables. I felt really shy and intimidated, and I wasn't quite sure if I was even in the right place, and I could hear some Hebrew being sung. They were just about to do the Kiddush. And as I walked in, a couple of Americans closest to the door stood up and patted me on my back. And then some more stood up, and a couple started clapping, a slow clap, and then I realised I was the only Australian there. An Australian Jew at a Passover service in Vietnam! This was, like, mind-boggling. They were pushing me along and I was

looking for a spare table to sit down on a seat and hide, and there wasn't one. They were pushing me further and further forward, and eventually everyone in this building was standing up and clapping me. The tears started rolling down my face, because Passover is a festival of freedom ... All of a sudden, I was feeling Jewish for the first time in my life. I was feeling a unity with other people which I'd never felt. I grew up in the country, in Brisbane, and my Jewishness was really non-existent. There was this table of rabbis and all my life, I'd only ever seen one rabbi, and that was when I was being bar mitzvahed. People had come from the Philippines, Korea, all of Vietnam and Thailand. It was like I wasn't alone. It was the most amazing thing.

I sat at the table with all the rabbis. I had really nice food, a great *Seder* service, and a lift back to the hotel where I stayed the night. Some of the Jewish officers I'd met showed me around. They came down to Vung Tau later on and they visited me. I went off to different places with them, and life was sort of different, but then the bastardisation increased, because I had alienated myself in the group dynamics of the unit by being Jewish and going to the Passover service and having a couple of days off when the others didn't.

Another Jewish Australian national serviceman, Dr Isaacs, attended the same *Seder*, and described it – and the following night's Passover dinner – in a letter to his family.¹⁹ Private Bob Edelman also had a surprise Pesach. He arrived in Vietnam as a signaller with 1RAR on 27 March 1968, at the tail end of the first Tet Offensive:

We did a search and destroy in a village, and then I relieved one of my mates who was a Sig for B Company. He got R&R. I had to go out on a patrol with B Company. We'd been out for two days – I think it was a four-day manoeuvre – and I'm on the radio, of course, and I get an instruction to get all my gear together; they've cleared a helipad, a helicopter came in to take me out and take me to a US Army base called Bearcat for a Passover service. It wasn't a Passover really. All they held was a little service amongst the boys in the American army. It was Passover eve. And that was it. Then I got flown back into Nui Dat.²⁰

John Selan rejected a similar chance in 1971:

When I was at Nui Dat, I was called back to Vung Tau. I was told, 'There's an American officer flying in, wants to talk to you.' It was a Jewish chaplain. He must have looked it up and saw that I was Jewish, and he said that I could go to some American air force base for Yom Kippur. I said, 'No, I'd rather not.' He said, 'I can fix it up with your commanding officer.' I said, 'No, don't worry about it, I'm not that religious.' That was the only contact I had with anyone Jewish.²¹

Keeping *kashrut*

If, as William D. Rubinstein demonstrates,²² contemporary Jewish religious Orthodoxy is a predictor for conservatism – and if, historically, conservatism was a predictor for enthusiasm for one's own Vietnam-era conscription, rather than that of others (a dubious proposition at any time in history) – it might be thought that Orthodox Jews would be more likely to serve in the military and, subsequently, Vietnam, than their less observant brethren. In fact, it seems religious life for a fully observant Jew may have been impossible in the Australian Army in Vietnam, as the military system did not provide kosher rations in the field.

The late Anthony Varga, who proves a less than reliable witness on several counts, was probably correct when he told Mendes:

Two years of national service did not mean you are going to Vietnam. And if you went in the army, you were given the option of eating kosher food. They would supply it. They would not ever have sent you to Vietnam because they couldn't supply it there.²³

Once again, it would be close to impossible to determine how many Jewish men performed national service but did not go to Vietnam, but, as only one in four national servicemen went to Vietnam, there are likely to have been at least 42, and perhaps closer to 120, Jewish national servicemen who remained in Australia or were posted to overseas locations other than Vietnam. It is unclear if men in more exotic postings in Australia would have been able to obtain kosher food, but provisions were certainly made for observant Jews in the recruit training battalions.

According to Rabbi Fabian, national service:

... brought quite a few Orthodox young men into the Army

[and] after very long and extended negotiations with the relevant authorities which showed great understanding and a remarkable degree of cooperation, a new system was evolved and finally embodied in army regulations which provided, for the first time, special kosher rations for those who would request such food (on a bona fide basis). These rations were based on the type of pre-packed meal provided for air travellers by kosher caterers. In addition, other permissible foodstuffs were listed and could be obtained for Camps etc. through Army channels by application. These arrangements worked quite well, both on an individual and particularly on a collective basis for National Service trainees in Camp ... We visited Camp from time to time and found that where a proper request had been made – these were, of course, necessary – the Army had always done the right thing, in spite of high expense and considerable technical difficulties.²⁴

Perth-born Warren Austin did not eat pig meat or shellfish in the army but, he said, 'To actually eat completely kosher was fairly hard. They would give you one kosher meal a day in Australia, that came sealed, in the evening.' Austin took the kosher rations at Puckapunyal but then abandoned the practice, as he felt he was putting the army to too much trouble. In Vietnam, he was posted to Nui Dat where, he said:

I never suffered from any discrimination at all. In fact, some of the things that people did for me were quite nice. An example: I walked over to the mess one day. We used to have two cooks. I said what's for dinner? 'Egg and bacon pie.' I said to him, 'Oh, that's not much good for me,' and I walked off. I thought I'd just go and get some bread and have a tomato sandwich or whatever. When I went in to get bread, he called out, 'Warren!' and he'd made me two vegetarian pasties.²⁵

Scheyville revisited

Jewish men would appear to be have been substantially under-represented at Scheyville OTU, where this paper began. The Officer Training Unit graduated 1803 national service officers, of whom about 328 served in Vietnam. If Jews had been represented in every intake according their proportion in the general population, there should have been about eleven Jewish officers, of whom two served in Vietnam. In my researches, I have

only been able to find two Jewish Scheyville graduates, of whom one, David Roubin, went to Vietnam.

It is unknown how many Jews began but failed the officer training course. The general failure rate hovered at about 30 per cent, so proportionately there should be three or four Jews among failed candidates.

Former SAFL star, Scheyville cadet and 7RAR veteran Graham Cornes wrote in the *Adelaide Advertiser* in 2012: 'I was in an army unit once with a brilliant young national serviceman, an Orthodox Jew, who religiously practised his faith. Unfortunately, the army wasn't equipped to handle his dietary disciplines and his observance of the Sabbath and he was virtually run out of the unit.'²⁶

In a later interview, Cornes told me he was talking about the OTU in 1969:

Did I say he was hounded out? Well, maybe – because you were dealing with hard-nosed regular soldiers, who were your officers, and the routine; plus his peers didn't really understand him, because he was so different. We were in those early stages of training, where you've got to adapt and comply, and he didn't. He was smart enough to do the academic things, and he did the drill training and the physical stuff pretty easily.

He couldn't really settle into the routine of mateship that most of us were able to do. There were always guys who were different in there, and you don't get on with everyone, but he was so different, he couldn't really establish friendships, and he couldn't always comply with the routine. He had to have the little hat on. He had to have different food. And on the Sabbath, he can't even turn a light on. He was one of the first to go.²⁷

I have not been able to establish the identity of the officer cadet and, interestingly, Graham DeVries, a (definitely not Orthodox) Jewish contemporary of Cornes at Scheyville, does not recall the man. The anonymous Orthodox cadet and DeVries are the only Jews I have located who partially completed the Scheyville course. The other officer among the Jewish cohort, Dr Isaacs, went into the army as a direct-entry captain.

However, the potential plasticity of Jewish identity is illustrated by the experience of Scheyville graduate (and Vietnam veteran) Noel Turnbull, whose father was Jewish 'when it suited him', as his mother (Turnbull's

grandmother) had married out. At Puckapunyal, said Turnbull:

We all had to go and see a chaplain, and I said I wasn't religious, which was a terrible mistake in the army. I said, 'Well, my grandmother was Jewish,' so they sent me to the Rabbi. The Rabbi said, 'My son, you'll get yourself into a lot of trouble into the army if you don't have religion. It's a bit hard for you to become a Jew at this stage. What I'd suggest is you become an Anglican.' And I was very thankful for him: missing church parades was not fun, because they always found some shit job for you to do.²⁸

It may have been a little more difficult for Jewish cadets to get through the course, as they lacked the networks instantly available to men from other denominations. Henry Neesham, a contemporary of David Roubin in the first Scheyville intake, told me he struck up friendships with fellow cadets John O'Halloran and Gordon Sharp, 'because we were all Micks, Catholics, and so when you go into a group like that, of 110 people, it's the normal one-third Catholics, so we'd all go to Mass together – and, in our case, O'Halloran, Sharp and myself had all been taught by the Christian Brothers'.²⁹ In Australia, a random group of 110 would, statistically, include only a fraction of a Jew, and the odds were against any two Jews training simultaneously at the OTU.

Aside from David Roubin, the only Jew I have found to have graduated from Scheyville was Congo-born Nissim 'Nick' Israel, who completed the OTU course in 1970, requested a posting to infantry or armour and hoped to fight in Vietnam. However, as a former trainee hotel manager, he was allocated to the catering corps and ended up among the small number of Australian national servicemen in New Guinea. It is not known how many conscripts served in New Guinea, but the great majority appear to have been teachers (or 'chalkies'), at least two of whom – Graham Lindsay and Norm Isenberg – were Jewish. This is at least 100 per cent over-representation of Jews, a figure that speaks more of the tiny numbers involved than any other factor.

As a footnote to the Scheyville experience, it's worth recording that one of the tiny number of Jewish regular soldiers I have found in the Australian Army during the 1960s was Paul Cohen, an engineer who eventually went to Vietnam, where he served as Andrew Varga's commanding officer at 17 Construction Squadron. Prior to this, in 1966–67, Cohen served on staff at the OTU.

Why were the Jewish numbers so low?

Andrew Varga is not a reliable narrator. In his interview with Mendes and Nadel in 1990, he makes a claim, which became common among Vietnam veterans in the 1980s but was unheard of in the war years or their immediate aftermath, that he was spat upon when he came home from Vietnam. He says he was in Vietnam for sixteen months, when his service record shows he actually served 366 days. He claims to have been wounded in action, although there is no mention of this in his service record. He believes there was a mail strike inspired by the anti-war movement which prevented the delivery of mail to Australian troops in Vietnam for three months. Although large numbers of veterans apparently believe otherwise, there were never anything more than sporadic industrial disputes about pay and conditions in the postal service during the Vietnam era. Varga says, 'At the Anzac Day March in 1969, there was a group of anti-war protestors waiting for the Vietnam veterans at Princes Bridge to throw us in the river. We got warned and they got thrown in the river.'³⁰ This is an urban myth and Varga, who left Australia for Vietnam on 14 May 1968 and returned on 14 May 1969, would have been in Vietnam on Anzac Day 1969 anyway.

Varga was born on 26 July 1946. His birthdate was never drawn out of the barrel. He was among a large number of Australian youths who chose to enter the army as national servicemen for two years, even though they were not balloted in. These volunteer national servicemen have been largely forgotten, their action eclipsed by the more public stance taken by draft resisters. However, Varga offers theories as to how Jewish men might privately have avoided national service and stayed out of Vietnam. He says, 'There were quite a lot of Jewish people who used bribes, false medical records and histories, getting married, going to Israel, et cetera to get out.'³¹

Other Jewish people nurse similar stories, but so do many of the non-Jewish veterans with whom I spoke during my research for *The Nashos' War*. It is not at all unusual for a man to believe he was the only youth in his community to have lacked the resourcefulness or motivation to avoid national service. This is probably a reflection of both the level of actual draft evasion and the small numbers of national servicemen required of any community. Of the 804,286 men who registered for national service when they were about to turn 20 years old in the years in 1965–72, only 63,735 ever went into the army, and only 15,381 of these served in Vietnam.

However, the only sure way for a Jewish man to avoid conscription—aside

from studying for the rabbinate – was to join the part-time reserve Citizen Military Force (CMF), Citizen Naval Force or Citizen Air Force prior to the ballot. Any man who enlisted in the reserves before he knew whether his birthdate had been drawn from the barrel, and performed six years effective service on evenings and weekends in Australia, was exempt from national service and could not be compelled to serve overseas. Anecdotally, it seems many Jewish university students, in particular, might have taken up the CMF option. Mendes quotes Harry Reicher, who says he signed up for the Melbourne University Regiment before his nineteenth birthday: ‘Suddenly for the Jewish community, the citizen military forces became a very attractive option and you got these hilarious scenes of Jewish kids signing up in droves who spent months at the beach at Surfers and came along with doctors’ certificates saying they weren’t allowed to be exposed to the sun.’³²

Once again, this seems to be a story told to illustrate a point, in the extravagant language of coffee-shop conversation, rather than a remembrance of an actual thronging of suntanned young Jews – whose numbers can barely have constituted ‘droves’ – armed with quasi-mythological certificates whose unlikely provisions fitted them only for service in Australia, a nation hardly noted for its paucity of sunshine.

Nonetheless, my studies suggest that Jews were substantially under-represented among national servicemen in Vietnam, and did not serve even in proportion to the very small figures that might be expected. One possibility is that there are a further 78 veterans whom I have been unable to discover, but Australian Jewish communities are small, and large parts are tightly knit, and this seems like a great number to go missing.

One explanation would be large-scale draft evasion, made possible in a small community with a high proportion of medical professionals, who might be willing to declare young Jews unfit for military service (rather than unsuited to exposure to the sun). During the course of the war, the proportion of the general population that failed the national service medical examination rose from 37.7 per cent in 1965 to 51.2 per cent in 1970. *The Official History* proposes three possible factors that might explain the increase:

First, it has been suggested that the increase was due to exploitation of the system. Several doctors in Victoria believed that a growing number of young men sought outside medical advice, such as that given by groups opposed to national

service, and took 'various tablets and potions' to become unfit. Secondly, it is also possible that a growing number of civilian doctors on medical boards sympathised with men who were unwilling to undertake national service. Thirdly, the examination became more rigorous as a consequence of the rising number of national servicemen killed in Vietnam.³³

There is a colourful canon of folklore and oral tradition dealing with draft evasion in Australia, both within and outside the Jewish community, and it seems unlikely that the facts will ever be fully established.

The preponderance of young Jews among the leadership of the anti-war movement might point to the conclusion that the Jewish community as a whole was opposed to the commitment and/or the draft, and therefore less willing to participate against the enemy than a more ideologically committed population might be. There were important Jewish intellectuals – among them Frank Knopfelmacher, *Quadrant* publisher Richard Krygier, and the Jewish shock-jock Eric Baume – who aggressively prosecuted the case for Australian involvement in Vietnam. But, as Isi Leibler, a former president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, told Mendes, 'The conservatives who went along with the American policies did so on a low profile. If there was any passion or idealism about these things, it was on the Left.'³⁴

However, the organised Jewish community never made any kind of stand against the Vietnam War, and Liberal rabbis did not speak out with the frequency or ferocity of their leftist counterparts in sections of the Catholic priesthood. Even as late as June 1972, when the bases at both Nui Dat and Vung Tau had been abandoned, and Australia's commitment to South Vietnam was all but over, the anti-conscription campaign faced a particular disdain from the Jewish religious establishment. When, in June 1972, Melbourne Presbyterian church leaders gave a dinner for the prominent draft resister Michael Hamel-Green, Rabbi Rapaport of the Toorak Road Synagogue protested:

The government is entitled to the support of the people. For a community to support draft resisters is completely wrong. The Jews feel that defence of the country is national priority number one. Personally I feel that the Vietnam war would come into the program of Australian self-defence ... under no circumstances would most Jews support the campaign to raise money for draft resisters.³⁵

It may not be how the community is remembered, or remembers itself, but Australian Jewry as a whole actually moved to the right during the Vietnam War. While public opinion in Australia was shifting to the left by 1969, the Jews of NSW, as Encel records, expressed majority support for the Liberal Party for the first time. Subsequent surveys of Jewish voting behaviour have seen this conservative swing repeatedly consolidated across the eastern states.³⁶

It could be, of course, that this rightward shift was most pronounced among older Jewish people, and the majority of the youth opposed conscription and war; or that Jewish conservatism was not delivered as a package, and a commitment to economic liberalism was accompanied by a distance from militarism and foreign adventures. But I would argue that the roots of Jewish under-representation in the National Service Scheme may be buried less deeply in ideological considerations, and more in the social composition of an overwhelmingly middle-class community.

As we have seen, insofar as participation in education or training can be taken as indicators of social class, the national service ballot actually drafted youth by class. Broadly speaking – and allowing for numerous exceptions – the unskilled were taken in the first year of the scheme; skilled tradesmen from the second year; university graduates from the second or third year; and professionals such as doctors and lawyers from the third or fourth year. As a man had to serve a certain amount of time in the army before he could be posted overseas, a medical professional such as Dr Isaacs, balloted in in 1965, might not find himself in Vietnam until late in 1970, the year before the majority of Australian troops were withdrawn. Men in a similar position born later than 1945, Jewish or otherwise, would have only the smallest chance of serving in Vietnam.

The question then is: how many Jews were in such positions? A survey of Melbourne Jewry in 1967 showed a full 22.2 per cent of the working community were engaged in ‘professional and high managerial’ occupations, as opposed to 4.4 per cent of the Victorian population. While 29 per cent of Jews (among only 3.7 per cent of Victorians) were involved in small business (a protean economic category which might involve years of professional training or none at all), 33.9 per cent were white-collar workers (as against 24.1 per cent in the general population). Only 8.9 per cent of Jews were skilled workers (as opposed to 32.3 per cent of the general population), and unskilled and semi-skilled Jewish workers numbered a meagre 4 per cent (although the national average was 24.2

per cent). There were no Jewish farmers and farm labourers recorded at all (and their numbers in the general population were, in any case, small), and unemployment was negligible in the Australian population.³⁷

Conclusions

The default preference of the earliest drafts for unskilled and semi-skilled workers effectively excluded all but a very small percentage of the Jewish population from immediately undertaking national service. The effect of academic deferments meant the entrance into the army of those graduates and professionals whose birthdates were drawn in earlier ballots could be delayed for up to four years. The National Service Scheme was operational in bringing men into the army from June 1965 to December 1972, a total of six-and-a-half years, but only a tiny number of men were newly posted to Vietnam during the early months of 1972, before the great majority of Australian troops pulled out. The workings of the draft, and the length of the war and the scheme could hardly have been better designed for the convenience of an overwhelmingly middle-class community which, in 1967, had more than 50 per cent of its university-aged youth engaged in full-time study.³⁸ Draft evasion would not have been an issue for many Jewish youth: even if they were balloted in after 1969, and eventually entered the army, the odds against them ever having to serve in Vietnam were high. Rather than thronging with certificates for fraudulent dermatological conditions, they could simply have completed their education as planned.

There is a great deal that we can never know about the National Service Scheme until such time as every man's service record can be accessed and analysed, and the true social-class breakdown of the national service cohort be ascertained. Even if this should happen, we will never know for certain how many Jewish men served. All that can be said with confidence is that there were several more than first thought and several dozen fewer than might be expected if Jews were distributed evenly along class lines in the Australian population. Since they were not, the only meaningful comparison to make would be the rate of Jewish non-participation set against the rate of non-participation of the professional and upper-middle classes as whole.

Among those Jews who served in Vietnam, a disproportionate number had medical roles but a roughly proportionate number were in the infantry. A minority experienced antisemitism, but most were given some chance to observe their religion, if only on High Holidays.

The Vietnam War is often remembered as a turbulent event for Australians, sparking a political crisis which supposedly split the nation. In the Jewish community, it affected those who were drafted and their families, those who protested, and those who might have found themselves, rather haplessly, in the CMF. But among the increasingly conservative, comfortable, educated adult majority, its effects were barely visible.

The national servicemen with whom I spoke varied widely in their attitudes to conscription and the war. Loris Roubin and David Wittner were particularly vociferous in their objections, and Wittner campaigned energetically not to be sent to Vietnam but, as documentary evidence clearly shows, he was forced by the army to go.³⁹ Nonetheless, those searching for exclusively political reasons for Jewish under-participation will be disappointed by the facts. Even those convinced of widespread Jewish 'shirking' have to explain how it could be that, as the number of national servicemen failing their medicals went up, the number of known Jewish soldiers in Vietnam actually rose – to reach its peak in August 1971, when Wittner, Loris Roubin, Dr Isaacs, Selan, Hayat and Schneider (45 per cent of known Jewish national servicemen) were in Vietnam at the same time, even though the Australian military commitment was already drawing down, and the majority of the Australian population no longer supported the war. Lower Jewish numbers up until then were no doubt due to a combination of political and social factors. But the fact that a broadly educated, middle-class community only came to be drafted in anything like significant figures at the point when every deferment had been exhausted, points squarely to what 'Tub' Matheson, accurate by default, described as 'a system of selective National Service in action'.

Notes

- 1 Roger Donnelly, *The Scheyville Experience: The Officer Training Unit Scheyville 1965–1973*, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001), p. 85.
- 2 Rob Willis, sound recording of Tub Matheson interviewed by Rob Willis in the Rob Willis folklore collection, National Library of Australia, (Caloundra, 14 February 1994).
- 3 Roger Donnelly, op. cit., p. 85.
- 4 Ann-Mari Jordens, 'An Administrative Nightmare: Aboriginal Conscription 1965–72', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 13, nos 1–2 (1989), pp. 124–34.
- 5 NAA, A1209 1975/2165, 'National Service Training Scheme policy 1969', pp. 53–4.

- 6 NAA, A4940 C162, Part 2, 'National Service – Policy, 1964–1967', from Department of Labour and National Service, 'An Account of the Administrative Processes involved in the National Service Scheme up to the Stage of Call-up', 15 April 1966.
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‘THE SPARK IN THE ASH’

Vivien Altman

I regret that I never met my grandfather, Dr Aaron Patkin. He was born in 1883 in Tartarsk, a Russian *shtetl* located in the Pale of Settlement near the large provincial city of Smolensk in western Russia, and died a premature death in Melbourne from myasthenia gravis in 1950.

He came from a deeply traditional and religious background. Imbued with a unique curiosity, he made his way onto the world stage, inspired by social democratic humanist ideals, grounded in a utopian vision of justice. He became a constitutional lawyer, barrister, a charismatic orator, and one of Australia’s most significant Jewish intellectuals. Israel Kipen wrote:

His family moulded Jewish life in Australia. Aaron was the doyen, unchallenged, unquestioned – he commanded that respect. No one questioned his bona fides.¹

He was a major player in the history of the twentieth century. From the Tsarist regime in Russia he lived through the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 and was jailed for his underground revolutionary activities against the Tsars. Then, disillusioned with the Bolsheviks, he sought exile in Germany, faced the Great Depression, lost family and close friends in the Holocaust.

He moved from Moscow to Warsaw, then back to Moscow, to Berlin and then to Melbourne, Australia in 1927. He spoke and wrote Russian, German, Polish, Hebrew, Yiddish and English.

Some of the critical issues in his life bear a striking resemblance to today’s big questions such as the plight of Jewish refugees (Muslim/Syrian refugees and asylum seekers), democracy, and the future of Israel and Palestine.

A founder of the *Australian Jewish News* with Pinchas Goldhar and Hirsch Munz in 1935, Dr Patkin edited *The Zionist*, Australia’s first ever monthly Zionist journal (1943–50) and wrote the Constitution for the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies. He chaired the State Zionist Council of Victoria in 1946–47.

Forced by circumstances to work as a businessman in Australia, he

also dedicated himself to the intellectual and communal life of the Jewish community. After initially being indifferent to the creation of the state of Israel, he became one of its fiercest warriors.

When he was commissioned by the prominent Myer family shortly after the death of Sidney (born Simcha Myer Baevski) in September 1934 to write about Myer's life in Russia, Patkin could have been writing about his own life experiences. The Patkins and the Myers were cousins and came from shtetls just 60 kilometres apart: Patkin from Tartarsk and Myer from Krichev in western Russia. He wrote:

It was a painful process. Wandering from one country to another is always accompanied by innumerable hardships, and the Russian-Polish-Jew, living for centuries in cultural and economic seclusion, far away from the historical tracts of modern progress, presented a tragic figure in the strange and crowded cities of London and New York, Rio de Janeiro and Sydney ... not everybody could find this inner adjustment, and countless newcomers have been wrecked both physically and spiritually.²

Patkin was one of four children. He grew up in a traditional Jewish Orthodox home, with his father studying the Talmud and the Bible. His mother ran the small family business, while his father dedicated himself to religious and intellectual activities.³

Patkin attended a local religious school known as a *cheder* (a Jewish primary school) which opened up his mind to look outside the confines of his small world for education, 'as education in the Jewish community was the very essence and meaning of life' ... referring to Myer's early years, parallel to his own.⁴

Krichev, like all the other Jewish towns and



townlets in Russia and Poland, had dozens of such primary schools where old-fashioned pious teachers gathered together eight or ten children in a room of some private dwelling, teaching them the rudiments of the Hebrew language, the translation of the Bible and its major commentaries, dating from the early Middle Ages, into the spoken vernacular.⁵

At thirteen years old, inspired by relatives living in Russian cities, Patkin went to live in Smolensk, located on the main route from Moscow to Warsaw, where two older boys prepared him for a Russian high school. With tight restrictions imposed by the Tsarist regime on the number of places for Jews in high school and university, he was overjoyed when a place came up in Łomża, Poland, then a Polish province of Russia. Attending secondary from the age of fourteen until nineteen, he was reportedly one of the brightest students ever at the school. He tutored younger pupils from wealthy parents to put himself through his studies, as his father refused to support his son who was breaking away from Jewish religious and traditional life.⁶

Patkin studied law at the University of Warsaw, and entered the underground Social Democratic Movement, illegal under the Russian Tsarist regime. His underground activities against the Tsars as a member of the Social Democratic (Menshevik) Party led to him being arrested and sentenced to eighteen months in the dreaded Warsaw Citadel, where he was put into solitary confinement.⁷

Once released, he married Leonora (Lottie) Kokoszko in 1905. He had boarded with the Kokoszkos as a high school student and reportedly his future mother-in-law Rozalia taught him table manners. From one of the wealthiest and most respected families in the district, Lottie's father was a banker and her great-grandfather a financier to Napoleon I during his political and military intervention on behalf of Poland against Russia.⁸

In 1910, Patkin returned to Moscow and finished his legal studies. He was admitted to the Moscow Bar and developed a flourishing practice in civil and criminal law, defending many cases at the Russian Revolutionary Tribunal. At the Moscow Bar he worked as a private secretary to Maxim Litvinov, a revolutionary and widely acknowledged as Russia's most successful diplomat as the first Soviet ambassador to the United Kingdom. Patkin was then seconded as a legal advisor to Kerensky's short-lived Russian Provisional Social Democrat government.

The Bolsheviks made Patkin stateless after he chose voluntary exile to

Berlin, Germany in 1920. His documents were marked by the League of Nations of which he was a great enthusiast. His family had left Moscow twelve months earlier, and had travelled in a cattle truck to the Russian-Polish frontier. He completed a Doctorate of Law in Berlin during the years that Germany was heading towards the Great Depression.⁹

His brother, Maurice Patkin, organised papers for Aaron to come to Melbourne in 1927. The rest of the family – wife Lottie with two children, Mischa and my mother Assia – arrived two years later with their governess Margarete (Fraulein) Boenke. They settled in seaside Brighton, and in what seems like an odd decision, they sent my mother to Firbank, a private Anglican school.

Patkin's journey by sea took seven weeks. Never to waste a moment, he studied English during the voyage.¹⁰ In an interview he gave the *Hobart Mercury* when he reached Australian shores, Patkin spoke of how he felt betrayed by the Bolsheviks, he'd witnessed widespread poverty and hunger, corruption and thug-like behaviour, and was deeply disappointed by the Bolshevik political class for which he had such high hopes behaving, in his opinion, 'worse than the Tsars'. He said:

Russia under the Bolshevik Regime is in much worse condition than under the Tsarist rule. There is no individual freedom and men who offend against the rulers are sent to Siberia, or exiled. They are given no trial, but are dealt with on the command of anyone in power.

He was horrified that 'the education given in the schools is only propaganda training'.¹¹

By all accounts, he was also a very temperamental man. As Daniel Tabor recounts in a recently published memoir of his British Cambridge-educated physicist father, David Tabor, Patkins' colleague Tabor lived in Australia during World War Two and was on the editorial board of *The Zionist*. Tabor wrote:

Another personality who made an impression on David was Dr Aaron Patkin, a Russian Jew who had been private secretary to Litvinov when he had become the first Soviet ambassador to Britain. Patkin was a typical Russian Jewish intellectual: he was a Menshevik not a Bolshevik, and after a few years in the Soviet 'kitchen' he gave up being a Marxist and emigrated to Australia, where he was a leading intellectual figure in Jewish life and a keen and consistent critic of communism and

Marxism, and so on. He was very interesting [and] like most of those Russian Jewish intellectuals, a very fiery man, the sort of person you would hate to disagree with in an argument ...¹²

Patkin was a 'person of interest' to the Australian Intelligence Services. Letters from his file reveal he was a supporter of 'Russia' and publicly critical of the British government for their support of the Arabs at the time.

Of the four speakers, Mr A. L. Patkin was distinctly anti-British Government in his address. He violently attacked the British Foreign Minister, Mr Bevin, and several other Ministers. He was most fanatic in his outburst.¹³

It wasn't just his political beliefs that got him into trouble; writer Jean Campbell described Aaron Patkin as 'an imp, a spirit, a volcano, a tornado, a raging lion – an *enfant terrible*.'¹⁴ Fictionalised as Aaron Asch in her novel *The Babe is Wise*, Patkin was a close friend for more than a decade, and she affectionately called him 'Dooshinka', meaning 'little friend'. Her affection for him can be seen in a piece she wrote soon after he died:

Did he not say to me in the early stages of our friendship, with regretful tolerance in his voice, 'But my dear, you are so ignorant.'

Aaron had been horrified, or was it his 'whimsical pity', that she hadn't read *War and Peace* or *The Brothers Karamazov*.¹⁵

Campbell had also experienced his rage first-hand as his family had.

I shall never forget the first time I witnessed the spectacle of Patkin in a rage: it was superb but terrifying, like a frightful thunderstorm. I think – in fact I'm sure – it was something to do with the Spanish Civil War ... someone was standing up for the communists ... He flayed the air and beat his breast. His eyes, though small but tremendously alive, behind their glasses, blazed. Words poured from him like molten lava.¹⁶

As a visionary force in Australian Jewish life, Patkin fought for a more democratic structure within the Jewish community and for fewer self-appointed leaders. He wrote on the *Australian Jewish Forum*, June 1941 (a forum for world discussion on Jewish questions) titled 'A Democratic Jewish Community':

There was a need for a radical change in Australian Jewry's leadership which had simply usurped power [...] The

problems facing Jews in Australia have now transcended the limits of local or parochial outlook. They are of 'grand design' woven into a pattern of a new coming world, of a new order of things.¹⁷

Despite the pressures, he enjoyed social life, straddling both Anglo and Jewish worlds. He and Lottie loved to entertain visiting European artists, among them concert pianist Arthur Rubinstein, dancer Anna Pavlova and violinist Isaac Stern.

Patkin would never forget the pivotal role that H. V. 'Doc' Evatt, Attorney General and Minister for External Affairs in successive Labor governments,¹⁸ had played in the founding of the United Nations and his critical role in negotiations for the creation of Israel.

How isolated and frustrated he must have felt in the provincial city of Melbourne. An avid letter writer, he stayed in contact with a wide circle of colleagues and friends and was a member of 'Pen International'. He wrote frequently to close friend Isaac Steinberg, a contemporary from Russia. A leading lawyer and social revolutionary before the 1917 Revolution, he had served in Lenin's first government. Later Steinberg also fell out of favour with the Bolshevik government and managed to escape to Germany and then to the United Kingdom.

In one of Patkins' letters to Isaac Steinberg, he confided:

I plead guilty for my delay in answering your letter about the *Australian Jewish Forum* – the main reason is my extremely low and depressed mood caused not only by general events but also by a good deal of over-work which makes me at times very tired ...¹⁹

Writing to Steinberg about the *Australian Jewish Forum*, Patkin showed his cosmopolitan view of the world:

[T]here must be some unity of ideas on the fundamental problems of Jewish politics and culture. It is further understood that the *Forum* will be the first Australian Jewish magazine with wide world Jewish outlook. We are called upon now to take an active or even dynamic part in our world to come – and therefore we have to cease to be as before, provincial and parochial.²⁰

Patkin's views about the need for the creation of a Jewish state were starting to have an even greater urgency.

The minds of the Australian Jews and non-Jews are still confused about the possibility of a Jewish conception of nationality within the frame of an Australian state nationhood – no wonder – nationalism as a political doctrine has been so discredited, not more, not less than Judaism, Christianity and socialism. Nevertheless, all of them are the basic ideas by which humanity lives – and it is our task to detect the spark in the ash.²¹

He showed his sense of humour when he recounted his speech to Steinberg to a crowded hall in 1940:

The Kadimah Hall was packed with a majority of sworn Marxists of the Moscow make-up. They honoured me with some hisses when I mentioned without excessive reverence the Georgian ... [Joseph Stalin] in the Kremlin, and I was told that some of them left the hall – but on the whole I was satisfied having addressed such a large audience on such provocative subject matter.²²

Pre World War Two, the Australian government's attitude to Jewish refugees and asylum seekers had been tormenting Patkin. The attitudes of Prime Minister Lyons' (1932–39) centre right government have been well documented by Paul R. Bartrop, renowned Australian-born historian of the Holocaust and genocide. Bartrop cites National Archives records and contemporary press reports as proof of his contention that the Lyons' Australian government was kept informed of the situation in Europe as the Holocaust was in progress, yet the knowledge failed to impact significantly on refugee policy (which he maintains was predicated on motives of 'indifference' and 'inconvenience').²³

Patkin despaired at the Australian government's immigration policy which maintained 97 per cent of British stock. It was clear that no special treatment or extra numbers would be given to Jewish migrants as the clouds gathered over Europe.

As the situation for Jews in Europe was deteriorating, 'Political Zionism' became more urgent for Patkin. It was a view that believed that being Jewish is not just a religion, but also a nationality. It supported the creation of the state of Israel as a Jewish homeland. 'Political Zionism' embraced by Eastern European Jews became a life and death struggle for Patkin. The Anglo-Australian Jewish establishment disagreed.

It was a time of great rancour and conflict between the Anglo Jews

and the more recently arrived Eastern European Jews. It was even framed as a conflict of 'dual loyalty' between loyalty to Australia versus feelings as a Jew about a Jewish homeland. Patkin was angry that Anglo Jews in Australia wanted Jews to assimilate.

The most prominent Australian who weighed heavily into the debate against 'political Zionists' was then Governor-General, Sir Isaac Isaacs. As historian Hilary Rubinstein explains, Isaac Isaacs' opposition to demands for an independent Jewish state in Palestine:

was first, his rigid concept of what nationality was and what it was not, and secondly his passionate devotion to the British Empire. Isaacs regarded himself and other British Jews as English men and women of the Jewish persuasion, whose nationality and religion constituted two entirely different things. But rather more emphatically than most of his contemporaries, he denied the existence of a Jewish nationality in any sense.²⁴

In 1942, Patkin gave a rousing speech on World Jewry and Zionist policy to the Victorian Zionist Organisation. Later published as a pamphlet, 'ZIONISM: Sober or Extreme' it was regarded as a masterly exposition of the Zionist cause.²⁵ Patkin sent a copy to the Governor-General, Sir Isaac Isaacs. In response, Isaac Isaacs wrote a series of articles in 1943 in *The Jewish Standard* and the *Melbourne Age*. 'Political Zionism is undemocratic, unjust and dangerous.' His words were provocative.

He [Isaac Isaacs] counsels every Jewish immigrant to remember that nationality is entirely distinct from religion and race. No such nonsense as 'Jewish nationalist' to bolster up political Zionism must be uttered or taught in Australia.²⁶

Aaron Patkin was seething. He wrote that the Governor-General 'had lent his name to a campaign of slander against Jewish aspiration in Palestine with such an argumentation which in recent times remained the sole privilege of our sworn enemies inside and outside Palestine,'²⁷ and later he went further:

Isaacs never said one word in our favour, he never offered one word of consolation in our troubles. Now he is capitalising on our great name.²⁸

The gloves were off. In January 1944, the hugely respected professor of International Law and Jurisprudence at Sydney University, Julius Stone,

wrote *Stand Up and Be Counted: An Open Letter to the Right Honourable Isaac Isaacs*. Stone argued for the importance of the creation of Israel. He asked:

Do you believe that they will all be able or be permitted to start life again in Europe, in this generation? If you do, you are deceiving yourself as to the state of Europe.²⁹

Governor-General Isaac Isaacs believed above everything else in British loyalty to the Empire, legalism and a strictly religious definition of Jewishness. To give you some sense of the flavour of the day, Victorian MP Harold Cohen told the Zionist leaders Aaron Patkin and Samuel Wynn that 'British citizenship here carries with it an obligation to observe British standards of good manners.'³⁰

In December 1942, a resolution was passed at the Kadimah Cultural Centre in Melbourne to condemn 'the massacres and atrocities committed by the Nazis in their plan of total extermination of European Jewry.'³¹

In early 1944, Dr Patkin received terrible news that shook him to the core. He wrote in response in the Yiddish section of the *Jewish News*, describing the atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jewish residents of Tatarsk, his *shtetl*.³²

A report was received in Moscow – the Nazis have massacred the whole Jewish population of Tatarsk. 600 dead bodies were spread out in the streets when the Russian soldiers arrived. Only one Jew hid and was saved.

This is my little town; its disastrous destruction must bring tears to your eyes. You, its daughters and sons who destiny has spread all over the world. I was born in Tatarsk and breathed in its air from the time I was a small *cheder* boy, in my childhood and barmitzvah year. In these summers I bathed in the sun and bathed in the river. Over there down the hill during the cold snowy winter days I played with children and analysed secrets from God's world, from soil and water which was covered with a white blanket of snow and ice ...

600 in total were cut to pieces by these bloodthirsty German animals. My little town Tatarsk, I cry for you, I cry as this is my mother land, this has always nurtured what I keep in my heart despite my long journey from my wanderings to Moscow, Warsaw, Berlin, Melbourne ...

My little town has been transformed into ashes and smoke.

She is wrapped in grey shrouds from sadness and pain. During her life she was isolated. Her tragic and heroic death has reached even the furthest verge of Australia. I and my relatives live here in Melbourne, we are the orphan children from the dead mother town. Deep is our pain, endless is our grief. 600 Jewish souls have perished *al kiddush hashem* – in the name of God – *Yiskadal*.

There was more bad news when Patkin's much loved nephew Leo Patkin, born and raised in Melbourne, was shot down on his last Australian Airforce mission flight over Europe. The Patkin family was devastated.

Another personality that was to make his mark on Melbourne's Jewish community was Israel Kipen, who stepped off the boat in Melbourne in 1946. He came from Shanghai, originally from Bialystok, Poland. An academic, writer and educationalist, I talked to him about my grandfather more than a decade ago. Despite the age difference, they had hit it off. 'We got on like a house on fire; he was a Russian Jew, and I knew the mentality, we talked the same language.' He described Aaron 'as a typical Russian Jewish intellectual, absent-minded, flamboyant and excitable ... that was emblematic and quintessential of his nature'. He recounted an incident:

Sitting in the car with Aaron Patkin driving into central Melbourne, he started talking. He was getting excited, and suddenly I noticed he was gesticulating madly with both hands. I yelled, 'Aaron, hold onto the wheel. Put both hands on the steering wheel!'³³

The day after Kipen arrived in Melbourne, he was spirited away to Aaron Patkin's great-nephew Michael's barmitzvah. Within 24 hours, he was in the room with Melbourne's who's who of the Jewish community. 'Everyone was speaking Hebrew.' Kipen was welcomed like a long-lost friend; all the Patkins were there, including Benzion and Hemda, the proud parents and Nehama, the barmitzvah boy's sister, who was playing the piano.³⁴

Benzion Patkin, Aaron's nephew, was also a very prominent Zionist and fearless community activist. He founded Mt Scopus College, the first Jewish day school in Australia, and organised for 150 internees from the Tatura internment camp to migrate to Israel. Nehama Patkin, an extraordinarily talented musician and children's television presenter, died unexpectedly in 2010, and Dr Michael Patkin is a world specialist on

medical ergonomics. Aaron's other grandchild, Professor Dennis Altman, is a leading academic, writer and gay activist.

By all accounts, including Kipen's, 'Aaron Patkin never looked back. He threw himself into Melbourne Jewish life, and never let himself brood over his past glories at the Moscow Bar.'³⁵

However a few years later, Patkin had returned from a four-month visit to Israel and was thinking of settling there. He spoke to a regional newspaper about what he had seen a year after the State of Israel had been established:

There was peace in Palestine until during the years of World War Two, the Arab League was formed, then friction arose between the Arab and Jewish population that had intermixed for two decades. During the fight, 300,000 of the Arab population had fled Palestine leaving behind deserted villages, shops, houses and other property, most of which was destroyed. Big sections of the country formerly occupied by the Arabs were left in shambles.³⁶

Such comments reflect Patkin's views on Jews and Arabs at the time. He had adopted the Jewish narrative without question.

Aaron Patkin died on 16 November 1950 at East St Kilda and was buried in Melbourne General Cemetery. Cousin Dr Michael Patkin spoke at his funeral. 'The heavens were weeping for him' he said, as the rain lashed the mourners and wife Lotte Patkin was trying to throw herself into the grave. Patkin was not just a man of great passion, he stirred strong emotions in others.³⁷

*

What I remember most is the apartment in the borscht belt in Westbury Street, East St Kilda, long after my grandfather Aaron Patkin had died. He and Lotte Patkin had lived there surrounded by books, oil paintings, heavy blue drapes, delicate crockery, glasses for vodka and a beautiful samovar for visitors to drink tea, sipping through a teaspoon of dark red jam.

The most tantalising smells of *gelfilte* fish, herring, chopped liver and cheese blinzles wafted from the kitchen, and were served onto an enormous dark heavy oval table that had been dressed with a white embroidered tablecloth, cups, saucers and plates made from delicate porcelain, a silver sugar bowl, and cake forks to eat the luscious cakes from Paterson's Cake Shop in Chapel Street. The living room was packed with Russians, Poles

and Germans ... there was Mrs Dubsky from Vienna who had befriended Maree Patkin and had found her way to Australia via her husband Maurice Patkin, Aaron's brother, and worked in the frock department at the Myer Emporium. There was Mrs Gold who had an ominous stamp on her inner wrist, and Rosa Ribush from Riga, who helped found the St Martin's



Portrait of Aaron Patkin painted by Colin Colahan

Theatre. There was elegant Bea Ribush, my beloved surrogate aunt close to the Patkin family, and the Sparbers who had come from Russia via Shanghai, sponsored by Aaron Patkin. I was mesmerised not only by the sophistication of their conversation, but by the way they dressed; they were stylish and talked politics, art, literature and religion in a way that was unthinkable for a girl from Hobart.

Was this an attempt to recreate the lost world of Moscow, Riga, Warsaw and Berlin and to pretend for a Saturday afternoon that you weren't living in the provincial suburbs of Melbourne, and it was all just a bad dream, or was it a peaceful oasis away from the blackness of events in Europe? In a country with funny accents, wide open spaces and a future for your children?

My grandfather had long passed away, when I relished the afternoon teas at my grandmother's home in East St Kilda. What I do recall is the bust of the Aaron Patkin's head and the heavy frame of his oil portrait hanging over us in the living room. I wonder what he thought of their conversation? And I wonder where his portrait is that hung over my grandmother's afternoon teas?

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WALTER LIPPMANN, TRANSFORMATIVE LEADER

Andrew Markus and Margaret Taft

Extraordinary circumstances in the 1930s were to influence an unprecedented wave of Jewish migration from countries that had been centres of Jewish enlightenment and emancipation.

In January 1933 there were 523,000 Jews in Germany, less than 1 per cent of the total German population, with approximately one third residing in Berlin. When the Nazi regime came to power many German Jews felt pressured to emigrate, particularly those who were politically active or had been dismissed from the public service, or whose livelihood had been adversely affected by the boycott of Jewish businesses. There was an initial exodus of some 38,000 Jews in 1933 to neighbouring Western European countries: France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Czechoslovakia and Switzerland. Following this initial wave of immigration, the flow of German Jews to other countries decreased, notwithstanding the imposition of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. The events of 1938 which saw the annexation of Austria and the notorious *Kristallnacht* pogrom of 9-10 November saw a massive increase in attempts to emigrate from Germany and Austria. Some 36,000 Jews managed to leave Germany and Austria in 1938 and another 77,000 in 1939. In a program known as the *Kindertransport* Britain admitted 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children on temporary visas throughout 1938 and 1939. From 1933 until the outbreak of war in September 1939, 282,000 Jews had left Germany and 117,000 from annexed Austria. 95,000 immigrated to the USA, 60,000 to Palestine, 40,000 to Great Britain and approximately 75,000 to Latin America. Some 18,000 found refuge in the free port of Shanghai.¹

In contrast, the number who gained entry to Australia was small. From 1930 to '35 economic conditions in Australia, severely impacted by the Great Depression, resulted in the limitation of immigration and very few Jews arrived, with an estimate of less than 100 Jews in 1934. In the context of heightened persecution in Germany and Austria there was a jump in the number of those submitting applications. In August 1938 Australia House in London was receiving 500 applications a week, an annual rate of over 25,000 persons.² This did not, however, translate into the granting

of large numbers of landing permits. In 1938 only 1,556 Jewish refugees were admitted and in 1939, 5,080. The total for 1935–9 was approximately 7,300.³ Immigration came to a virtual standstill with the outbreak of war, with the one notable exception of the arrival of the *Dunera* in 1940, carrying over 2000 former refugees who had fled Germany and Austria to Great Britain, only to be interned and deported to Australia.⁴

While the overall number of Jewish immigrants who came to Australia was small, their impact on the social, cultural and scientific establishment was substantial. Those who arrived in the late 1930s included the painter Yosl Bergner in 1937,⁵ renowned immunologist of Jewish descent, Sir Gustav Nossal in 1939,⁶ Erwin Rado in 1939 who became the founding director of the Melbourne Film Festival,⁷ composer and musician George Dreyfus in 1939,⁸ and fashion and theatre photographer Helmut Newton (born Neustädter in Berlin) who arrived from Singapore in 1940 after being interned by the British.⁹ The ‘Dunera Boys’, as they became known, also had many talented and educated young Jewish men among their entourage, including political scientists Henry Mayer and Hugo Wolfsohn,¹⁰ athletics coach Franz Stampfl,¹¹ the tenor Erich Liffmann,¹² the composer Felix Werder,¹³ the artist, art educator and graduate of the Bauhaus (of part Jewish descent) Dr Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack,¹⁴ fellow artist Erwin Fabian, the fashion photographer Henry Talbot¹⁵ and furniture designer Fred Lowen.¹⁶ Also on board were theoretical physicist Hans Buchdahl¹⁷ and his engineer (later philosopher) brother Gerd, as well as philosophers Peter Herbst and Kurt Baier, both of Jewish descent.¹⁸

This wave of immigration that brought such exceptional people to Australia’s shores included Walter Lippmann.¹⁹ Born in 1919 into a prosperous Jewish middle-class family in Hamburg, Walter Max Lippmann was the eldest of three children born to Olga (nee Hahlo) and Franz Lippmann. His brother Kurt was born in 1920 and his sister Elsbeth in 1923. Educated at the prestigious sectarian *Gelehrtenschule des Johanneum*, Walter was forced to leave school at the age of sixteen due to the Nazi regime’s requirement for the expulsion of Jewish students. Walter later recalled the shock at being told to leave behind his sports equipment and of being taunted in the street for being a Jew.

The rise of Nazism in the 1930s severely impacted on the Lippmann family, as it did on all German Jews.²⁰ In 1938 the Lippmann family business was compulsorily ‘Aryanised’ and sold for a token sum to successors nominated by the regime. The firm of Max Hahlo, Walter’s late

maternal grandfather's firm, was also 'Aryanised' and put into the hands of Max Hahlo's two assistants.²¹

When the family decided that they had no future in Nazi Germany, Franz Lippmann contacted three business associates in Australia, Robert Bain, William McPherson and Walter Berry, men of influence and stature, to act as sponsors for their landing permits. Prestigious 'connections' were rightly thought to be advantageous at a time of great urgency and imminent danger. It was McPherson who not only attested that 'all members of the family would be most suitable immigrants to Australia' but also assured the authorities that 'Lippmann had the capital to commence and carry on his proposed trade'. Walter Berry also used personal contacts with the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to expedite the applications, advising that 'as I addressed the Secretary of the Department of the Interior through a personal friend, your application will be received very much sooner than those who were not so fortunate in being able to take this unofficial action.'²² Walter's landing permit arrived in time for him to leave in September 1938, aged nineteen, aboard the *Niagara*, arriving in Australia via America, landing in Sydney on 20 November that year.²³ The events of *Kristallnacht* during which Franz Lippmann was incarcerated hastened the departure of the remaining family who managed to arrive in Australia in January 1939.²⁴

Walter stood apart from many others who immigrated in this period. While some were primarily concerned with furthering their professional or business careers, Walter's focus was on the community. He had a strong motivation for public service, a desire he believed had been 'inherited from father, grandfather and great-grandfather'.²⁵ Soon after his arrival he became involved in Jewish communal affairs. In 1942 he helped to establish the Melbourne Jewish Youth Council and became its president, a position he held until 1945. He became an executive member of the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism in 1943 and was elected to the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board in the same year. Over the next 25 years he was active in a number of key Jewish organisations and roof bodies, as both committee member and leader. He succeeded Zelman Cowen as honorary secretary of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry in 1948, serving in this capacity until 1960, and was elected to the Executive of the Australian Jewish Welfare and Relief Society in 1957, the only member of the AJWRS Executive at that time who was not of Polish, Yiddish-speaking background.²⁶

In 1959 he organised the first Jewish Social Services Convention and was the first chairman of the Victorian Jewish Social Services Council which was formed following the Convention. In 1960 he was elected president of the Australian Jewish Welfare and Relief Society, a position he held for seventeen years, and also held the office of president of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies for three years, 1969–72. From the mid-1960s, Walter broadened his communal involvement, emerging as a leading advocate for the needs of all migrant communities, a champion of social justice and a significant figure in the development of policies of multiculturalism.

This article focuses on a seminal period in Walter's communal life, from the time he became president of Jewish Welfare in 1960 until the mid-1970s. It will examine key developments in his career and his impact on the communities he served.

Walter's early years had been characterised by an activism of inclusivity. He eschewed a narrow, factional focus, and throughout his life he remained pragmatically bipartisan, a proponent of united action. For him, unity empowered, division weakened. Walter brought this broad sense of inclusion and unity to all his work, both within the Jewish community and across all communities. This focus became a recurring motif for his life's work.

By the time Walter took on the role of president of Jewish Welfare in 1960 he had already formed strong views on the role of 'charity', the way in which welfare should be organised and dispensed. In early correspondence with the incumbent Jewish Welfare president and leading community figure, Leo Fink, he outlined his ideas for professionalising welfare operations, improving efficiency and centralising fundraising.²⁷ In 1959, in his capacity as Charities Representative on the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies (VJBD) he delivered an address 'Charity is not enough' to the VJBD in which he outlined his ideas about modernising Jewish welfare, replacing charity based on *ad hoc* volunteerism with professionally planned, coordinated welfare initiatives. 'Charity', he espoused, 'perpetuated class distinctions and social injustices' which 'divide the world into the "rich" and "poor"'. Conceptions of "patronage", "giving charity", "sustenance" have no place in the modern approach to social service problems.' He advocated for the implementation of a Central Social Service Council that would unify 'all the many voluntary social workers of our community'. Walter wanted not only to change the way in which welfare was perceived

but the way in which it operated, by preventing ‘poverty by enabling the unfortunate to help himself’. Change, however, had to be driven by professionals and not just by well-meaning part-time, volunteers.²⁸

Walter brought to the role of president of Jewish Welfare a conviction to transform the organisation. He relished what he saw as the ‘challenge’ to modernise and drive an organisation into the future: ‘In welfare work our community stands at an important crossroad, between the somewhat old-fashioned methods of charitable giving of relief to the poor, and a more modern approach which recognises that welfare work is a social obligation, a social insurance, fully in keeping with the teachings of our Jewish prophets, and much more attuned to the spirit of our modern society.’²⁹ He acknowledged the great work undertaken by his predecessors in resettling Holocaust survivors in Melbourne, and recognised that their needs would carry into the future, because ‘the needs of those days still persist’. However, plans for ‘future requirements are urgently called for’.³⁰ In particular, ‘care for the aged, provision for the underprivileged and assistance for the helpless must be provided on a truly communal basis’. This could not ‘solely depend upon the goodwill and devotion of voluntary workers, but which is based on a core of trained social workers operating alongside willing volunteers’.³¹

In a Drawing Room Address for the Montefiore Homes Appeal on 21 March 1963, Walter restated his vision for aged care – better facilities together with improved methods for caring for the aged. There was an urgent need for a multifaceted approach, he argued; aged care was not a linear process – some needed residential care, some needed in-home care, some needed a day care centre for interaction and activities. Walter argued that there was a growing need for specialists in the field with an interest in the problems confronting the aged. Many Jewish organisations dealt with the aged but needed better coordination. Walter concluded his address with a plea for additional funds to expand the facilities and the services needed for a growing ageing population.³²

With the substantial growth in the size of the Jewish community in the post-war period, the funds required to service its needs were increasing. To meet this need, Walter advocated for communal fundraising, one in which diverse interests did not compete for funds but were centrally coordinated and funds were allocated according to needs. The consolidation and expansion of social services were dependent upon it. He believed that it could be achieved through an ‘all-embracing communal spirit’.³³ Walter’s

vision for one communal appeal has, however, not been realised in Melbourne to the present day, although it continues to be discussed.

Overall, Walter saw the problems confronting welfare as being indicative of the way in which the community functioned. In Walter's opinion the Jewish community was successful and vibrant, its achievements evident in its institutional development: 'Outwardly we have achieved remarkable successes', especially when compared with 'the crowded migrant hostels, boarding houses, [and] run-down dwellings' of just a few years earlier. In his view, however, the community had failed to provide well for the future and was plagued with poor decision-making. The need was for:

intelligently planned and expertly directed communal development ... Such vital areas as public relations, education, social welfare, youth work and fundraising must be planned centrally on a community-wide basis ... [but] we are trying to get by with part-time amateur leadership ... No business would long survive on such methods.³⁴

The failure of the community, Walter explained, was in part due to divided, fragmented duplication of organisations embroiled in sectarian arguments 'which appear irrelevant to Australian Jews'.³⁵

In his view, the community needed to develop a more businesslike approach, one that was removed from 'sentimentality and emotion'. Walter saw the urgent need for future planning to be evidence-based, employing empirical research on which to base plans and projects: 'We must know the trends, follow them and – at times – be leaders in influencing and changing them.' It was cheaper in the long run to spend money on 'determining facts, attitudes and trends' than to 'invest in projects and buildings which might meet an immediate need, but soon outlive their usefulness.'³⁶

Walter was at the centre of a spate of research activity in the Melbourne Jewish community in the 1960s. This period saw the involvement of major figures in Jewish research, Ronald Taft and Peter Medding, both of whom undertook exploratory surveys in Melbourne and were to go on to professorial positions at leading universities.³⁷ In 1964 Walter sought advice from the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at Monash University to conduct a comprehensive social survey in Melbourne.³⁸ He understood that demographic statistics provided a certain degree of information, but there were gaps in knowledge regarding social attitudes and values. Such research needed to be undertaken by professionals. In 1965 Walter used his position as chairman of the Jewish Social Service

Council of Victoria to initiate the first comprehensive social survey in Melbourne, which was undertaken in 1966–7. Ronald Taft recalls that Walter ‘obtained the funds, set up the guiding committee and participated in the analysis and reporting of the results.’³⁹

Walter’s paper ‘The Jewish Family in Melbourne’ was an analysis based on the findings of the survey. ‘It examined the demographic characteristics of Victorian Jewry as disclosed by the sociological survey carried out during the years 1966 and 1967.’ He concluded that Victorian Jewry was:

a predominately immigrant community with a high degree of social and economic mobility. At the same time, it revealed a changing character of the community with an emerging Australian-born generation of a high educational level facing the dangers of decimation and possible gradual extinction through low birth rates and rising rates of intermarriage.⁴⁰

These conclusions were based on his reading of statistical and social evidence.

By the mid-1960s Walter had emerged as an accomplished, self-taught author of demographic studies, publishing detailed analyses of the 1961 and 1966 censuses and a 1969 paper on ‘Marriage patterns in the Melbourne Jewish Community’, later published in the *Jewish Population Studies of the Avraham Hartman Institute of Contemporary Jewry in Jerusalem*.⁴¹ Walter read widely and became conversant with the sociological literature of the time. His papers and talks were well grounded in research and he drew on the expertise of leading international scholars to substantiate his claims. In his 1967 address to B’nai B’rith, ‘Whither Australian Jewry’, Walter cites a number of international scholars in the field of contemporary Judaism, including Dr Judah Schapiro, A. J. Heschel, Maurice Freedman, Moshe Davis, Philip Bernstein and Marshall Sklare. His 1969 paper ‘Jewish Youth in Australia’ also drew on the work of his Australian contemporaries, including Lionel Sharpe, John Goldlust and Rabbi John Levi. He developed enduring connections with a number of important academic researchers, building an extensive local and global network.

Walter’s personal archive of letters and documents bears testament to the respect in which he was held by leading figures of the time. Thus he corresponded with Professor Charles Price and Professor George Zubrzycki, both of the Australian National University; answered questions on Australian Jewish demography for the Institute of Jewish Affairs in

New York;⁴² was invited to become a member of the Association for Jewish Demography and Statistics⁴³ and the Sociological Association of Australia and New Zealand; and had his work published in the London-based *Jewish Journal of Sociology*.⁴⁴ Walter became a sought-after author and speaker. He gave public addresses and wrote a number of papers for conferences, both locally and internationally. In 1968 he was invited to submit an entry for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* on 'Australia, Contemporary Jewry (from 1945)'; in 1970 to write an article for *The Bulletin* on 'What Jews Believe'; and in 1973 to contribute an article to *Bridge: The Australian Jewish Quarterly* on the prospects for Jewish communal survival.

In Walter's view, the Jewish community of his day was weakened by its highly factionalised politics, which often saw him and others in the leadership group in conflict on an individual and organisational basis. He saw sectional interests prioritised over communal needs. His disagreements with local Zionist leaders provide a case in point.

While support of Israel was not prominent in his activism, Walter viewed the security of Israel as non-negotiable. 'I am not an anti-Zionist. I am not even a non-Zionist' he wrote in response to an article in the B'nai B'rith Bulletin in 1962. But he was concerned that the Zionist movement did not support local Jewish causes either financially or ideologically.⁴⁵ 'I am not criticising the leaders as individuals ... what concerns me is that every year when the time comes for Welfare appeals or for the building of an old age home or a children's home in Melbourne, Zionist organisations including WIZO answer, "We cannot help – our constitution prevents us" or similar.' The issue was that they needed to assist not as Zionists, but as members of the community.

Walter passionately believed that fundraising for Israel should not be at the expense of local community needs. 'I am all for the contributions to Israel to be doubled if this can be done concurrently with the maintaining of our essential local communal obligations.' Walter believed that every effort should be made to build up the State but that 'we must never forget our local obligations'.⁴⁶ In 1962 of a total £325,000 contributed to official appeals, £220,000 went to Israel and £105,000 to local causes, or 32 per cent of the total. In 1963, of the total £447,000, £287,000 went to Israel and £160,000 to local causes, or 36 per cent.⁴⁷ In a letter to the editor of the *Australian Jewish Herald*, Walter reiterated: 'I am not opposed to increasing our contributions to Israel. All I am pleading for is that our communal financial support for Israel must be related to a responsible and

realistic assessment of local communal needs, obligations and potentials ... I would hate to see a rivalry develop in this community between those who work for Israel and those who work for local causes. The complete Jew is committed to both.⁴⁸

The 'complete Jew' is therefore one who is able to support a number of causes without diminishing any one of them. Writing a letter to the editor of the *Australian Jewish Herald* on 3 October 1963 in defence of claims regarding a conflict of interest by Syd Einfeld's dual roles in the Jewish community and as a Member of Parliament, Walter argued that 'every one of us as a human being has a great variety of interests, responsibilities and loyalties which are normally easily reconcilable, but sometimes come into conflict. When they do, we face them each according to his own personality and judgment.'⁴⁹ Walter's defence of the benefits incurred in serving multiple interests reveals a broadening out of the role that he charted for himself.

By the mid-1960s Walter had become disenchanted with the Melbourne Jewish leadership and its failure to heed what he saw as the evidence of major problems ahead. His articles and speeches in 1967–68 lament 'the cultural and intellectual desert of our current Australian Jewish communities'.⁵⁰

In Walter's assessment the Australian Jewish community was vulnerable. In 1970 he wrote that 'we are standing at an important crossroad'. Without further immigration its future rested on those currently between the ages of ten and twenty: 'Only if this relatively small group of people (5,811 males and 5,488 females) marry Jewish partners will Australian Jewry have a prospect of surviving in some strength'.⁵¹ A low birth rate and little to no immigration would see the Jewish population decrease, with an increasing proportion comprising the elderly.⁵²

The Jewish immigrant community of the post-war generation was characterised by its close ties and an intensity of communal life which in his view was unlikely to be maintained by their children. The immigrant generation had brought with them a value system that was appropriate to the communities of Europe, communities that were required to be self-supporting as they faced discrimination and antisemitism, and were denied integration in the wider society. But the next generation would be preponderantly Australian-born, 'better educated, better established economically, yet less related to the wellsprings of Jewish tradition and less committed to the established forms of our multiple communal organisations'.⁵³ They would be living in an open society, with opportunities 'which neither we

nor our fathers or grandfathers had'.⁵⁴ This analysis of the emerging threat confronting the Australian-born generation proved, however, to be unduly pessimistic. The widespread disengagement of youth that Walter feared would characterise the next generation did not eventuate, possibly because he underestimated the strength and influence of the Jewish day school system and the significance of ties to Israel.

In Walter's view, Jewish communal structures had failed to adapt to the Australian environment; they remained static rather than developing 'new bases for being Jewish'.⁵⁵ There was now 'a paucity of meaning to our Jewish lives'.

Walter's answer was to embrace the changes sweeping Australia. This change of direction was not a function of his disenchantment but rather his development of an all-embracing vision for Australia. He wrote in 1970:

Cultural pluralism is becoming more accepted in official circles. We have so far failed to recognise that the future of the Jewish communal life in Australia is intimately bound up with the future of every other culture, racial or ethnic minority group in Australia. We cannot afford to turn our backs upon this challenge. We must play our role in furthering the development of a multicultural society in Australia.⁵⁶

Walter was increasingly drawn to the common concerns of all immigrant communities, to be pursued on a common front. This was indicative of his sense of inclusion, his vision of the whole, and his sense of social justice.

Based on his recognition that the ideal of assimilation – to produce a homogeneous population – was based on unrealistic expectations, Walter became one of the early influential critics of assimilation policy. He saw the pursuit of assimilation and Anglo-conformity as policy that worked against Australia's best interest, hindering immigrant integration. In the 1960s the government was failing to recognise the extent of problems within immigrant communities. In a similar way Walter also believed that Aborigines faced comparable problems to immigrants in acculturation, education and acceptance. In a letter to the Honourable V. P. Wilcox MLA on 14 March 1965, he asked the federal government not to close the Lake Tyers Aboriginal settlement. 'I would urge you and your government to apply the same human and sociological considerations to the problem of our Aborigines as led the federal government to change its policy from assimilation to integration in the case of our migrant population.'⁵⁷ In his

view the planned closure of Lake Tyers denied Aborigines the freedom to pursue their own natural culture.

In 1967 Walter's use of the term 'multiculturalism', more than five years before it became accepted idiom and government policy,⁵⁸ was a consequence of his understanding that Australian citizenship could coexist with minority group loyalty; distinctiveness did not endanger unity; indeed, both were desirable.⁵⁹ Distinctiveness did not present a threat in the context of a democratic society in which unifying national principles were widely shared:

Whilst we value our own heritage, we recognise that for all of our differences in faith, colour, creed and tradition, we are bound together by our common humanity ...⁶⁰

In Walter's view Australia had always been a multicultural nation, contrary to the 'myth of a homogeneous society'.⁶¹ In a number of speeches he argued that from the beginning of British settlement in 1788, from the arrival of Captain Arthur Phillip and his 'motley crew of men of many nationalities and backgrounds', Australian society was characterised by 'cultural pluralism'. Hence in the post-war years the increasing pluralism was not a new point of departure.

In Walter's understanding, integration of diverse ethnic communities was most likely to occur when individuals felt that their sense of identity was not under challenge. Speaking of the immigrant in the gendered language of the time, 'Only when he enjoys the sense of belonging to a group and thus feels secure in his own identity will he feel secure to venture into a wider society.' Hence immigrants needed to be able to build their own communities before they could successfully integrate into the wider community. It was also a fundamental human right of individuals to have the freedom to find their 'own level of acculturation or assimilation'.⁶² Walter understood that for immigrants, retention of language and customs are a basic need, one that is heightened by the difficulties of settlement in an alien environment. Immigrant groups form their own communities, contrary to the ideal of the 'melting pot'.⁶³ This was the reality for Jewish and other settlers:

We Jews, as a distinctive ethnic group, like every other ethnic group living in Australia, have values which to us represent lifelines to our past, which we desire to preserve and pass on to our children. The upholding of these values sets us aside as a group, just as wearing a kilt or the playing of bagpipes

distinguishes the Scots from the German-speaking citizens of Australia.⁶⁴

In an effort to transform the way that government and community agencies dealt with immigrant communities, Walter took on a greater number of public roles, becoming increasingly involved in the machinery of government. In order to undertake a broader range of responsibilities and gain membership to important government committees, Walter became a member of the Australian Labor Party in 1965.⁶⁵ In 1966–67 he chaired the Joint Committee on Private Health Insurance of the Victorian Council of Social Services and the Association of Social Workers, and became a leading advocate for the introduction of universal health care.⁶⁶

Although he maintained left of centre political sympathies throughout his life, he was always able to cross the political divide, working successfully with both Liberal and Labor governments. At the invitation of the Liberal Minister for Immigration Billy Snedden, Walter became a member of the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council in 1967, a position he retained until 1974.⁶⁷ In the same year Walter was invited by the Department of Immigration to join the Immigration Advisory Council's Committee on Social Patterns. In 1973 he took on the important role of chairman of the Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Community Relations.⁶⁸

Many of Walter's views concerning migrant welfare which developed in the 1960s were crystallised in the view that the maintenance and sustainability of ethnic diversity was integral to a socially cohesive society.⁶⁹ His August 1974 interim report as chairman of the Committee on Community Relations and its subsequent final report in September 1975 was based on an inquiry into the effective integration of migrants into the wider community and the use and effectiveness of migrant services. This landmark report was recognised by Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki as 'the first attempt to put together a philosophical basis for the management of ethnic diversity'.⁷⁰ The report restated Walter's position that:

all people have a need and a right to the security of belonging to a group whilst still retaining the right to individuality and to access to the world about them. For migrants to feel secure in their adopted country they first need to feel secure in their emotional attachment to the cultural values that influence their behaviour. These values, invariably and obviously, are those of their former homelands.⁷¹

The Committee's primary role was threefold: to inquire into

discrimination against migrants, exploitation of migrants and the use of community services. It heard much evidence of widespread insensitivity to immigrant needs. The interim report's findings were wide-ranging and 44 recommendations were made, covering Civic and Community Issues, Interpretation/Information, Employment, Health and Welfare, Education, Media, and Housing. These recommendations aimed at the recognition of individual and communal worth of immigrants, to ensure that they were equal beneficiaries of community services. Importantly, services were to be appropriate to the needs and experiences of specific groups. 'Ethnic groups, therefore, should be seen by all the community to be a vital, integral part of the total community structure. They have a duty to preserve their own cultural heritages; they have an important role to play in the integration of their members into the total community ...'⁷²

In April 1976, in a letter to Walter Jona, the Victorian Minister of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Walter reiterated the findings of the Community Relations report that appropriate government services required the recognition of the needs of different communities. 'We have made the mistake of thinking that we could wipe out or ignore the ethnic factor – that we could 'universalise'. We have ignored that such a policy would undermine the rights of minorities, weaken individuals in their identification and thus threaten rather than promote national unity.' Community services within schools, hospitals and within the legal system were 'geared to meet the needs of a society of Anglo-Saxons of middle-class origin. The migrant ... is expected to assimilate to that system'. Rather, community services should be 'equipped to serve adequately the total community ... these services need to be supplemented by ethnic-based services.'⁷³

The integrity of ethnic communities and the right of migrants to retain their distinctiveness within a pluralist society became a recurring theme for Walter's public addresses and published papers in the 1970s. He used every opportunity to garner support for a pluralistic society. In his capacity as chairman of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria – Community Relations, an organisation he was instrumental in establishing, Walter was invited to deliver the second Annual Lalor Address on Community Relations on 3 December 1976 in Canberra. Titled 'The Role of Good Neighbours in Community Relations at Home and Abroad', he stressed that the 'ethnic group offers to a large number of migrants something that is not special, but a very basic human necessity: a sense of belonging to a group of people with whom they have something in common, an opportunity

of relating to people with whom they have congenial relationships and, arising from this, a sense of security'.⁷⁴ Walter emphasised that 'ethnically based organisations must therefore be accepted as part of the structure of Australian society.'⁷⁵ 'The individual must have a right of choice between the services provided by his own ethnic group and the services provided generally for the community, so that he can use whichever service may best suit his particular needs at a given time.'⁷⁶ Australia's development depended on 'social structures [which] need to be focused on the preservation of the character of our minority groups as far as each group wishes and a reasonable integration of the minorities in the society as a whole as much as possible without losing their identity and under conditions which the groups themselves regard as right.'⁷⁷ In his 1977 publication 'The Importance of Ethnically-Based Agencies to Immigrant Families', written for the Good Neighbour Council of Victoria, Walter continued to argue that:

ethnically-based agencies have already proven their value as specialised supplementary agencies ... [however] they should not be seen as substitutes for community services suitably equipped to serve our multicultural population ... [rather] they form an essential part of the structures of Australian society and as such must be encouraged to relate to and participate with organisations and services operating in the various fields of their activities.⁷⁸

Throughout the 1970s and beyond, Walter continued to advocate for the recognition of ethnic diversity and the provision of services to meet individual needs.⁷⁹ Policies needed to be based on the recognition that 'each individual has the right to preserve his own value system ... each individual has the inalienable right to be himself'.⁸⁰

While Walter's priorities shifted to the national stage, he nevertheless maintained his loyalty to and involvement with the Jewish community. He continued to advocate for the Jewish community and its leaders to participate in the wider community, to lend their voice to ethnic community advocacy, to work towards an inclusive society that avoided the discord that had destroyed the life of his family and Jewish life in Germany. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Walter had experienced first-hand the disintegration of civil society; he never forgot that he had been given a second chance and his goal was to work to enhance conditions of life in the country that had provided shelter and the opportunity to prosper. He died in 1993.

Notes

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AN UPDATED HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY, 2000–16

Philip Mendes

The Australian Jewish Democratic Society (AJDS) is Australia's pre-eminent Jewish Left organisation. In an earlier publication, I examined the history of AJDS from its formation in 1984 till 1999.¹ This updated article traces the history of the organisation from 2000 until the current day.

Section One examines AJDS's views and actions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Section Two specifically analyses their approach to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Section Three considers their relations with the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) and other mainstream Jewish bodies. Section Four explores internal AJDS divisions. Sections Five and Six discuss their relations with other Jewish Left groups, and the political Left more generally. Section Seven assesses their relations with the local Palestinian community. Section Eight overviews AJDS perspectives on other issues such as Indigenous rights and refugees. Section Nine dissects the impact of generational change on the society.

AJDS and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

All Jewish Left groups experience an ongoing tension or conflict between their specific Jewish loyalties and their commitment to broader universalistic causes. The key question is whether these dual loyalties are balanced to produce both a representative Jewish view within the Left, and a discrete left-wing view among Jews. There is no doubt that AJDS actively promotes a left-wing perspective within the Jewish community, but there is less consensus about the extent to which they champion Jewish concerns and sensitivities within the communities of the political Left. An implicit aim of this study is to inquire whether AJDS presents a verifiable left-wing Jewish perspective, or alternatively whether it merely forms a Jewish fraction of the pro-Palestinian Left.

Much of AJDS's energy and resources historically have been devoted to activities concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and this is also the issue which most often provokes conflict between AJDS and other Jewish

groups and viewpoints. Similar to many Jewish Left groups internationally, AJDS was profoundly affected by the chronological turning point of the Second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000 and the associated breakdown of the Oslo peace process.

There was no uniform Jewish Left response to the Second Palestinian Intifada. Some groups and individuals responded to the violence and terror perpetrated by Palestinians during the 2000–04 period by constructing a more critical analysis of Palestinian views and actions politically and historically.² But others shifted in the opposite direction towards embracing the pro-Palestinian Left, and became enthusiastic advocates of the so-called Right of Return, and later the BDS movement. Some Jewish organisations even switched from a two-state to a one-state position.³ AJDS also moved in the pro-Palestinian direction, but still remained supportive of two states, albeit they were far more critical of Israel than were other left-wing organisations such as J Street and Americans for a Progressive Israel. Consequently, some AJDS members and supporters left the organisation in the period under study, but equally, other more radical Jews were attracted to AJDS by their change of direction.

AJDS members explicitly reject the dominant link that exists in most Jewish communities between Jewish identity and solidarity with the State of Israel. Instead, they base their judgements of Israel on a commitment to broader universalistic concerns and ideas, and demand that Jews recognise the suffering and rights of the Palestinians as well as Israel. Utilising a broad left-wing ideology, they offer a critical and relatively non-partisan analysis of Israeli policies and actions. While describing themselves as supporters of Israel and eschewing any overt criticism of Zionism, they appear in practice to blame Israel for the breakdown of the peace process, and to make far greater political demands on Israel than on the Palestinians. However, they still defend Israel's right to exist, and reject far-Left proposals for a one state or bi-national solution.

AJDS has traditionally positioned itself as a non-Zionist (but not anti-Zionist) organisation⁴ which is supportive of Israel's existence per se, but highly critical of Israeli policies that deny national self-determination to the Palestinian people. In short, its political alignment within Israeli politics has traditionally been with Left Zionist groups such as the Meretz Alliance and Peace Now rather than with anti-Zionist groups further to their Left. One of its current executive committee members, Robin Rothfield, describes himself as a longstanding supporter of the State of Israel.⁵ Even

Larry Stillman, who is regarded by many within the Jewish community as the leading anti-Israel voice within AJDS, has described AJDS as a 'left Zionist' organisation aligned with the 'anti-occupation Israeli Left'.⁶ Similarly, Sol Salbe, a longstanding anti-Zionist who has albeit moderated his views since the 1970s, described the AJDS as 'unashamedly pro-Israeli'.⁷ But noticeably some AJDS members questioned whether this description adequately represented their concern for Palestinian rights.⁸

Throughout the period from 2000 to 2016, AJDS continued to pledge its commitment to a two-state solution, and on one occasion publicly claimed that not one AJDS member supported a one-state solution.⁹ But with some exceptions which we note, AJDS promoted a one-sided version of two states, based almost solely on Israeli rather than Palestinian compromise and concessions. Their criticisms of Palestinian violence and extremism were not connected to any broader attack on the zero-sum nature of Palestinian political culture. They rarely censured the Palestinians for their rejection of Israeli offers of statehood at Camp David and Taba in 2000 and 2001, the 2006 election victory of the extremist Hamas, or their near-universal demand for a coerced return of 1948 refugees to Green Line Israel. AJDS never acknowledged that even if Israel offers a full withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders, there is a fair chance that the Palestinians will reject the offer because they cannot reconcile themselves with the continued existence of Israel.

AJDS questioned mainstream Jewish and Israeli arguments regarding the causes of the failure of the Camp David peace negotiations in July 2000, and the factors contributing to the outbreak of the Second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000. AJDS blamed opposition leader Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount for provoking the initial Palestinian violence, and condemned ongoing violence from both the Israeli and Palestinian sides while emphasising the disproportionate loss of life on the Palestinian side.¹⁰ They denied that the Israeli government headed by Ehud Barak had made the Palestinians a 'generous offer', arguing that the continuing presence of Jewish settlements would have frustrated geographic contiguity. Instead, they argued that the creation of a genuinely viable, contiguous and independent Palestinian State was necessary for peace.¹¹

Yet these statements ignored the fact that the Israeli offers at Camp David in July 2000 and (in an improved form) at Taba in January 2001 unequivocally recognised Palestinian rights to an independent state, and effectively separated legitimate Israeli security concerns from the

contentious religious and ideological claims of the Jewish settler movement. In contrast, the Palestinians arguably made little progress in separating their justifiable demand for a viable and contiguous state from their ideological demand for a coerced return of 1948 refugees to Green Line Israel.¹² Yet AJDS selectively targeted its criticism at Israel, and rarely identified the major Palestinian barriers to peace.

Later AJDS statements placed much of the blame for the continuing violence on the policies of the new Israeli government headed by Ariel Sharon. AJDS condemned the visit of hardline former Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to Australia in August 2001, claiming that he was inciting violent and politically extreme responses to the Palestinian Intifada.¹³ To be sure, AJDS unequivocally condemned Palestinian suicide bombings and acts of terror, and defended Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.¹⁴ But they also suggested that the root cause of the conflict was the ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the consequent oppression and suffering of the Palestinian people.¹⁵ AJDS statements suggested that Palestinian violence would end if only the Israelis treated them more fairly,¹⁶ while ignoring evidence that Palestinian violence had significant national-cultural as well as structural causes.

AJDS condemned the Israeli invasion of the Palestinian West Bank cities in April 2002 as 'totally out of proportion to the violence that provoked the Israeli action', and effectively 'holding each and every Palestinian responsible for the actions of the terrorists'.¹⁷ But AJDS failed to recommend any alternative strategy for stopping the slaughter of Israeli civilians by Palestinian terrorists, which had killed 63 Israelis and injured many hundreds in March 2002 alone. AJDS also condemned the Israeli actions in the Jenin refugee camp as 'morally repugnant' while rejecting Palestinian accusations of a massacre.¹⁸

AJDS criticised Israel's construction of the security fence or wall in the Territories, arguing that 'the only way to escape the cycle of violence is to recognise the Palestinians as partners instead of seeing them as enemies'. Additionally, AJDS urged greater Jewish acknowledgment of the pain and suffering of Palestinians as well as that of Israel.¹⁹ Yet there is no doubt that the security barrier played a major role in stopping Palestinian terror attacks against Israeli civilians.

AJDS rejected allegations by critics that it was no longer supportive of a two-state solution, and argued that it had always supported Israel's existence and a viable Palestinian state. AJDS strongly endorsed the

unofficial Geneva Peace Accord, negotiated by a team of prominent Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in 2003, which proposed the establishment of a demilitarised Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza Strip alongside Israel accompanied by minor land swaps.²⁰

AJDS criticised the Israeli government's unilateral disengagement from Gaza in 2005, arguing that Israel intended to use the withdrawal as an excuse to retain large sections of the West Bank.²¹ A further statement was less equivocal, claiming that the disengagement would not advance the peace process as it was not based on any partnership with the Palestinians, but nevertheless supporting any withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territory.²²

AJDS criticised Israel's military action against Hezbollah in July 2006, arguing that even if Hezbollah was responsible for provoking the conflict, Israel's reaction had produced a disproportionate number of civilian casualties.²³ Describing its members as 'concerned supporters of Israel', AJDS argued that Israel had engaged in 'self-destructive policies' towards both the Palestinians and Lebanese. Instead of reliance on military action, an alternative path of face-to-face negotiations was recommended to Israel in order to resolve the hostilities in both Gaza and Lebanon.²⁴

AJDS continued to argue that the West Bank occupation and the associated suffering of the Palestinians was the root cause of the Middle East conflict.²⁵ The Society distinguished between genuine support for two states, which they claimed to support, and other Jewish organisations which they alleged only supported a pseudo two-state solution based on retaining Jewish settlements in Palestinian territory. AJDS emphasised that Palestinian leaders could never 'accept anything less than the Green Line as a basis for negotiations'.²⁶ They insisted that criticism of Israel's West Bank settlements was not the same as being anti-Israel, and that settlement building needed to stop to facilitate progress towards a two-state solution.²⁷

AJDS defended Israel's right to defend itself against rocket attacks from Gaza, but argued that Israeli military responses were disproportionate, and that Israel's blockade imposed unfair punishment on the civilian population. AJDS urged Israel to engage in negotiations with Hamas in order to establish a long-term ceasefire.²⁸ A December 2008 statement expressed similar sentiments, referring to the 'horrific death toll of innocent Palestinian civilians' and equating Israel's actions with those of the Russian army in Chechnya.²⁹

A further statement by AJDS condemned Israel's alleged 'collective

punishment' of Palestinians in Gaza, arguing that this 'cruel repression' would 'provoke violence, extremism and retaliation'. This statement did not include even one word critical of Hamas attacks on Israel, but nevertheless still endorsed two states.³⁰

AJDS condemned the Israeli attack on the Gaza Flotilla in May 2010 and the resulting deaths and injuries, arguing that the evidence suggested that the protesters were engaged in civil disobedience rather than violent action.³¹ Another statement suggested that the intransigence of the hardline Israeli government led by Binyamin Netanyahu was the sole reason for the failure of peace negotiations, but made no mention of the continuing extremism and violence perpetrated by Hamas.³²

AJDS supported a proposed UN resolution to recognise the State of Palestine, arguing that it would have a positive impact on both Israelis and Palestinians. AJDS noted that the resolution was supported by many leading Israelis, and suggested that it would help facilitate negotiations towards a two-state solution, which would require 'painful compromises' on both sides.³³ A letter sent to Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr in March 2012 called for support for Palestinian human and national rights, and a two-state solution that included 'resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem'.³⁴ But no mention was made of legitimate Israeli concerns regarding Palestinian violence and extremism, including the ongoing threat of rocket attacks by the Hamas regime in Gaza.

A number of AJDS members participated in a protest against the Jewish National Fund (JNF) in February 2013. The protesters accused the JNF of expelling Bedouin tribes from their homes in the Negev, and causing environmental harm through the planting of non-native plants such as pine trees.³⁵ A later statement by AJDS in November 2014 accused the JNF of engaging in theft of Palestinian land and 'ethnic cleansing'.³⁶ AJDS also criticised the JNF's choice of Jerusalem mayor Nir Barkat and the activist for Syrian Jews, Judy Feld Carr, as speakers for their October 2015 annual dinner, arguing that their politics were anti-Palestinian. AJDS alleged the JNF was responsible for 'the dispossession of Palestinian land and erasing of Palestinian history'.³⁷

An AJDS letter to new Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop in January 2014 accused Israel of 'cruel and illegal' acts including 'the deaths of thousands of Palestinians, the expulsion of hundreds of thousands, and the theft of land, water and other resources'. The letter recommended that Israel 'end the settlements, eliminate settler violence and set in place an

internationally-supported process that results in withdrawal from the territories'.³⁸ No reference was made to Palestinian views or actions that had also perpetuated the 65-year-old conflict.

AJDS blamed Israel for the renewed violence in Gaza in July 2014, arguing that Palestinian civilians had been the principal victims of the violence. AJDS argued that Israeli military attacks would not advance Israel's security, but rather would provoke further long-term conflict and hatred. It made no specific criticism of Hamas, but urged Israel to consider the proposal by Hamas for a ten-year ceasefire.³⁹

AJDS issued further criticisms of Israeli leaders and actions. For example, a proposed visit to Australia by the hawkish then Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs, Avigdor Lieberman, was condemned by AJDS as reflecting 'the worst racist, extremist and exclusivist aspects of Israeli society', as opposed to what they called 'people who work for justice and peace'.⁴⁰ But AJDS did not clarify what type of policies would ensure justice and peace for both peoples, rather than just for the Palestinians. A January 2016 statement by AJDS denounced alleged attempts by Israeli authorities to censor human rights organisations in Israel. The statement also criticised the silence of Australian Jewish community groups on this matter.⁴¹ A further statement in April 2016 emotively attacked the Israeli government and local Jewish organisations for allegedly failing to condemn extrajudicial killings of Palestinian terrorists.⁴² But AJDS expressed little concern about the ongoing knife attacks by Palestinians on Israel's civilian population that caused 34 deaths from September 2015 to April 2016.

In May 2016, AJDS critiqued the commemoration by Australian Zionist organisations of Yom Hazikaron (Remembrance Day). Referring specifically to the 1956 Sinai Campaign and the 2006 Lebanon War, AJDS claimed that these were not examples of self-defence, but rather acts of overt military aggression. Utilising highly universalist values, AJDS seemed to be implying that Jews should be more concerned with Palestinian and Arab lives and wellbeing than with the security of Israelis.⁴³

Most contentiously, AJDS proposed 'in-principle support for the right of return of 1948 Palestinian refugees to their original homes'. AJDS qualified this statement by adding that 'our support for the right of return is not an unconditional support and any agreement on this issue would need to maintain Israel as a Jewish state'.⁴⁴ A further clarification indicated that 'Israel cannot settle an unlimited number of returning refugees.

Compensation and resettlement of refugees in the emerging Palestinian state will be the key to resolution of the refugee tragedy'.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, this qualified endorsement of Palestinian demands for a right of return appeared to place AJDS totally outside the mainstream Jewish and Israeli Left. Most leading Israeli peace activists, including David Grossman, Amos Oz and the Peace Now group, have denounced the right of return as code for the destruction of Israel.⁴⁶ To be sure, leading AJDS figure Harold Zwier rejected Palestinian demands for a right of return in both 2002 and 2004,⁴⁷ and a formal AJDS statement even denied (wrongly) that the organisation had ever supported a Palestinian right of return.⁴⁸ A further statement ambiguously suggested that 'any implementation must take into consideration Israel's demographic concerns',⁴⁹ while a later statement appeared to reject Palestinian demands for a right of return rather than compensation. AJDS argued that 'it diminishes the credibility of a Palestinian government to insist that Palestinians should be able to live in the state next door in preference to their own state'.⁵⁰

The equivocal stance taken on the right of return seems to typify the challenges faced by AJDS in attempting to reconcile both its specifically Jewish and broader universalistic loyalties. This ambiguous and arguably naïve employment of Palestinian nationalist discourse would also feature later in AJDS's partial endorsement of the BDS movement.

More balanced commentary came from Harold Zwier who argued in a talk to the far Left International Socialists in July 2001 that the killing had to stop in both Israel and Palestine. While critical of Prime Minister Barak's peace offer at Camp David, he added that many Israelis feared that Palestinians wanted Green Line Israel as well as the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He also criticised Yasser Arafat for failing to discourage Palestinian terrorism.⁵¹

In a further statement, Zwier attacked the support of many Palestinians for terrorist attacks, and accurately noted that both sides needed to make concessions to facilitate a two-state solution.⁵² Equally, AJDS issued a statement of respect for Yasser Arafat at the time of his death, which recognised the need for Israeli security as well as Palestinian independence.⁵³ Another statement by AJDS urging Australian recognition of a Palestinian State at the United Nations General Assembly urged the Palestinians to end rocket attacks on Israel, to pressure Hamas to recognise Israel, and to accept that the rights of refugees should be addressed by compensation and/or resettlement in a State of Palestine rather than 'solely through the

right of return'.⁵⁴ But these even-handed statements by AJDS were arguably an exception to the rule.

AJDS has also rejected mainstream Jewish concerns over alleged political and media bias against Israel. For example, AJDS has denied that the public broadcaster SBS is biased against Israel, and argues on the contrary that SBS promotes a diversity of views on the Middle East.⁵⁵ And AJDS opposed the campaign by some Jewish organisations against the awarding of the Sydney Peace Prize to Palestinian academic, Dr Hanan Ashrawi. While not formally endorsing Ashrawi's selection, AJDS argued that Ashrawi was a worthy candidate for the prize, given her support for two states and her joint activities with members of the Israeli peace movement. AJDS argued that the anti-Ashrawi campaign had used unfair and unbalanced arguments in an attempt to demonise and discredit her.⁵⁶

AJDS invited numerous progressive Israelis to address their forums. Some speakers such as journalist Tom Segev and the former Meretz Knesset member Naomi Chazan were mainstream figures who attacked extremists on both sides of the conflict.⁵⁷ Others included the chairperson of Rabbis for Human Rights Yehiel Grenimann, Nura Resh from women's peace group Machsom Watch, peace activists Zvi Solow, Sahar Vardi and Micha Kurz, refusenik Rotem Dan Mor, radical academic Oren Yiftachel, and Ha'aretz journalist Akiva Eldar.⁵⁸ In March 2015, AJDS hosted Amira Hass, a journalist based in Gaza who has long aligned her reporting with the Palestinian narrative of the conflict.⁵⁹

AJDS and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement

AJDS's increasingly ambiguous views regarding Israel were reflected in their inconsistent approach to the extremist BDS movement. Although the BDS movement formally claims not to prescribe a specific solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is no doubt that its key leaders internationally favour the elimination of the existing State of Israel, and its replacement by an Arab-dominated state of Greater Palestine.⁶⁰

Given AJDS's longstanding support for a two-state solution, the organisation was initially critical of Australian manifestations of the BDS campaign. Following the circulation of an academic boycott petition in May 2002,⁶¹ AJDS issued a firm statement in favour of the academic freedom of Israelis. The statement noted that many Israeli academics were active in supporting peace and human rights, and that the Israeli peace movement opposed academic boycott proposals. An associated commentary by

Sol Salbe strongly rejected calls for the boycotting of individual Israeli academics by refusing to publish their papers or collaborate with their research.⁶²

Similarly, AJDS condemned the April 2005 motion passed by the Association of University Teachers in Britain to boycott two Israeli universities, the University of Haifa and Bar-Ilan University. AJDS noted that the academic boycott proposal was strongly opposed by most left-wing academics inside Israel, and specifically praised the formation of the left-wing Engage group (consisting of left-wing Jewish and non-Jewish British academics) to fight the proposal.⁶³

A further statement by AJDS in June 2006 condemned the proposal by the Canadian Union of Public Employees for an academic boycott of Israel, noting that it used highly one-sided language that unfairly demonised the state of Israel.⁶⁴ And a March 2008 statement noted correctly that the BDS movement was led by anti-Israel hardliners who oppose two states and the 'very existence of Israel'.⁶⁵ In August 2009, AJDS again opposed the BDS movement, arguing that their tactics were 'counterproductive'.⁶⁶ However, AJDS decided in December 2009 to reconsider their policy. A draft statement suggested that while AJDS remained opposed to a blanket boycott of Israel, the organisation should consider endorsing specific boycotts of settlement products and Israeli academics publicly supportive of settlements.⁶⁷

In August 2010, AJDS convened a special general meeting which voted in favour of a limited boycott of Israel. The AJDS statement announced that they had become 'the first community-affiliated Jewish organisation to adopt the view that some boycotts of Israel may be justified',⁶⁸ which seemed to be a particular reference to their affiliation with the JCCV.

AJDS rejected in their motion any blanket BDS campaign against Israel, including the core BDS demand for a Palestinian right of return, but nevertheless still used the language of the BDS movement to endorse selective campaigns aimed at ending Israel's occupation of the West Bank. The motion was passed following an invited address to AJDS members by Samah Sabawi, a representative of the hardline pro-BDS Australians for Palestine group. Most members of AJDS agreed with the fundamentals of her argument, but expressed strong disagreement with her use of the term 'apartheid state' to describe Israel.⁶⁹

The boycott proposal was condemned by mainstream communal bodies including the JCCV, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry

(ECAJ) and the Zionist Federation of Australia.⁷⁰ In further statements, AJDS attempted to clarify that the proposed boycott was directed solely at West Bank settlements, and that the organisation did not support a boycott of Green Line Israel, given this would be contrary to a two-state position.⁷¹ But this subtle distinction between support for limited and full boycotts of Israel was not understood by many persons outside or even inside AJDS. Indeed, the former AJDS president, Harold Zwier, later resigned from the AJDS Executive due to his concern that the motion (which he had opposed) aligned the ADJS with the global BDS movement's agenda for eliminating Israel.⁷²

AJDS maintained a capricious approach to the BDS. In June 2011, they published a long statement from visiting Israeli peace activist Naomi Chazan attacking the BDS movement.⁷³ Additionally, Harold Zwier informed a JCCV meeting in June 2011 that AJDS opposed the BDS campaign.⁷⁴

In September 2011, the organisation denounced local BDS protests held against the Israeli-linked Max Brenner chocolate company on the grounds that they were unduly confrontational, and directed by groups favouring the elimination of the state of Israel. AJDS's criticism was strongly rejected by the Australians for Palestine group, which defended the protests and accused AJDS of unfairly associating the protesters with antisemitic or even Nazi viewpoints.⁷⁵ A further AJDS statement issued in September 2011 reiterated that the organisation did not support the BDS movement, that the Max Brenner protests were unduly confrontational, and that they were unreasonably directed at an organisation which did not produce goods in the West Bank settlements, and was merely a provider of care packages and chocolates to Israeli soldiers.⁷⁶

But in March 2013, AJDS once again advocated a limited boycott campaign aimed at settlement products. The campaign, launched during Pesach, used the festival's theme of freedom of slavery as a basis for urging an end to the settlement project. They denied that the campaign was in any way linked to the aims or objectives of the global BDS movement, or hostile to Israel per se.⁷⁷ However, a leading member of the AJDS Executive, Jordy Silverstein, clarified that she personally supported the three core aims of the BDS agenda⁷⁸ which are intended to delegitimise and ultimately eliminate Israel. AJDS's support of targeted BDS activities was strongly rejected by Jewish communal roof bodies such as the JCCV (which includes AJDS as an affiliate) and the ECAJ.⁷⁹ The *Australian*

Jewish News denounced AJDS's use of the Pesach story to justify the boycott proposal, arguing that they should be regarded as the 'bad child' of the community.⁸⁰ In November 2015, AJDS presented the views of the Australian BDS group in their newsletter, but emphasised that the Society 'does not have a policy of support for BDS'. They added that 'we do encourage discussion and debate of non-violent action to bring justice to Israel/Palestine. And we do urge people not to buy products from the Settlements'.⁸¹ A further statement in April 2016 reiterated the importance of the Don't Buy Settlements Products campaign, and linked the campaign to the global BDS movement.⁸²

In summary, AJDS members oppose the one-state perspective of the global BDS movement. But they don't regard BDS advocates as ideological enemies, rather as misguided. They are reluctant to explicitly reject the core aims of the BDS movement, and are not willing to state their solidarity with Jewish community groups campaigning against the BDS agenda of eliminating Israel. As longstanding AJDS moderate Harold Zwier has noted, the AJDS could have balanced its call for a boycott of settlement goods by recommending that Jews buy other Israeli products produced within the Green Line. They also could have denounced the global BDS campaign for a blanket boycott of Israel. But they did neither.⁸³

Inclusion or exclusion: AJDS relations with the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) and other mainstream Jewish bodies

AJDS attempted from 1987 onwards to join the Jewish roof body, the JCCV, but was blocked by conservative opposition. However, they finally gained affiliation in 1993 following the signing of the Israel/PLO Oslo Peace Accord which narrowed the gap between AJDS views and mainstream Jewish opinion, and suggested a revision of traditional Jewish approaches towards supporting Israel. In the ensuing years, AJDS established positive relationships with a number of Jewish organisations on issues of common concern such as support for Aboriginal rights and opposition to racism.⁸⁴ AJDS expressed pride in the fact of its affiliation with the communal roof body, and consequently suggested that it was easier in Australia than in the USA or UK for alternative Jewish voices to be heard.⁸⁵

AJDS regularly promoted the value of 'pluralism in the Jewish community', and argued that 'on specific issues, no single Jewish organisation has the right to speak on behalf of all Jews'. This was a reference to the passions associated with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a call

for the community to respect dissenting views that were critical of Israeli government policies.⁸⁶ However, the outbreak of the Second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000 provoked renewed tension between AJDS and the JCCV, and other mainstream groups and individuals. These tensions reflected communal perceptions that AJDS gave greater priority to endearing itself to its allies on the Left, rather than addressing specifically Jewish concerns and sensitivities about Palestinian violence directed at the Israeli civilian population.

In April 2001, the JCCV president Grahame Leonard expressed concern that some Jews were promoting pro-Palestinian views that provided ‘ammunition for Israel’s enemies to use’. Mark Leibler, the national chairman of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC), specifically criticised AJDS for misrepresenting events in the Middle East, and making ‘damaging remarks’ about Israel.⁸⁷ A further statement by Colin Rubenstein of AIJAC accused AJDS of adopting ‘ill-considered anti-Israel positions’ due to an ‘ideological fixation which no evidence or analysis can alter’.⁸⁸ A number of other letter writers and opinion writers in the weekly *Australian Jewish News* simply accused AJDS of ‘aiding the enemy’.⁸⁹

At the May 2001 JCCV forum, a number of delegates including Grahame Leonard, State Zionist Council representative Bill Borowski and JCCV Education chairman Michael Lipshutz attacked AJDS for sending a supportive statement to a pro-Palestinian rally. Borowski accused AJDS of breaking a longstanding communal position of solidarity with Israel when under attack.⁹⁰ David Zyngier of AJDS argued in response that Jewish supporters of Palestinian rights were not self-hating Jews or anti-Israel, but rather proud Jews and Zionists who were committed to Israel’s long-term wellbeing. He urged the Jewish community to respect the democratic right of Jews to express dissenting views.⁹¹

Leonard subsequently agreed to address an AJDS forum at which he described AJDS as ‘the social conscience of the Jewish community’. He also defended the right of AJDS to criticise Israeli government policies, but argued that AJDS had crossed a red line in sending a statement to a Palestinian rally that implied support for a Right of Return. He accused AJDS of being ‘naïve’ in accepting an invitation from people whose only motive was to ‘use what you say as ammunition against Israel’.⁹²

The presence of AJDS at a protest rally outside a function addressed by the hardline former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in August 2001, provoked further controversy. Alleged threats of violence

were made by right-wing Jewish groups against AJDS members attending the rally, although no actual violence ensued.⁹³ A number of leading Jewish Labor Party members including Melbourne Ports MP Michael Danby denounced AJDS for supporting the rally so soon after a wave of suicide bombings inside Israel.⁹⁴

The JCCV president Grahame Leonard had unsuccessfully urged AJDS not to attend the rally, and subsequently censured AJDS for providing ‘ammunition to those whose focus is the destruction of Israel’. He warned that AJDS was jeopardising their inclusion within the Jewish community, and risked ‘becoming a completely marginalised and insignificant minority’.⁹⁵ The former ECAJ president, Isi Leibler, now living in Israel, similarly rebuked AJDS as ‘morally disgusting’ for criticising Israel at a time of war.⁹⁶

At a later Israel Solidarity Rally held at Caulfield Park in September 2001, AJDS members handing out peace leaflets were verbally and physically attacked, and had leaflets and banners removed or damaged by a group of young religious activists.⁹⁷ AJDS later complained that they had attempted to introduce ‘a note of moderation’ to Jewish communal politics, but the ‘emotional climate prevents us from being heard or understood’. Instead, they were labelled by ‘parts of Melbourne’s Jewish community as being anti-Israel and self-hating Jews’.⁹⁸ A further statement in August 2003 defended AJDS as arguably representing ‘independence of thinking’ within the Jewish community.⁹⁹

In February 2005, AJDS representative Harold Zwier urged the JCCV to endorse a diversity of views in the Jewish community, to promote tolerant and civil debate, and to discourage personal abuse.¹⁰⁰ These issues were of concern to AJDS because the Society had ‘occasionally been the target of abusive e-mails, phone calls and other threatening behaviour’. Yet communal leaders had allegedly refused to censure these attacks.¹⁰¹

AJDS expressed further concern about attacks on alternative Jewish views in February 2007. While noting positively that AJDS and other progressive groups such as the Jewish Labor Bund and Meretz were affiliated with the JCCV, AJDS spokesperson Sol Salbe complained that politically progressive Jews were accused of being ‘self-haters’ or ‘disloyal’. Salbe argued that abuse and vilification was often used as a ‘substitute for rational debate’, but the communal leadership refused to take action.¹⁰² In a statement to the JCCV, Harold Zwier similarly identified numerous attempts to demonise Jews who expressed dissenting views on Israel. He

asked the communal leadership to condemn manifestations of hatred and vilification.¹⁰³

In November 2009, AJDS submitted a resolution to the JCCV (which was seconded by the Jewish Labor Bund) urging the roof body to recognise the ‘diversity and pluralism’ of the Jewish community, endorse ‘the importance of public debate’, and ‘reject abuse, vilification and threatening behaviour as having any part to play in the conduct of our debates and discussions’.¹⁰⁴ However, the May 2010 meeting of the JCCV rejected the addition of a paragraph to the JCCV policy platform condemning hatred or vilification of a person or group. Concern was expressed by affiliates such as the Zionist Council of Victoria and the Council of Orthodox Synagogues that this wording might inhibit arguments against a Jewish messianic group or an anti-Israel group.¹⁰⁵

The JCCV slammed AJDS’s August 2010 motion in favour of a limited boycott of Israel. The JCCV president John Searle specifically criticised AJDS for using the term ‘community-affiliated Jewish organisation’, arguing that ‘whilst the AJDS is an affiliate of the JCCV, this is a tribute to the latter’s inclusive nature, rather than an acceptance of the AJDS’ views’.¹⁰⁶ AJDS argued in response that they were entitled to voice their opinions regarding opposition to the West Bank settlements and occupation.¹⁰⁷ A subsequent motion passed by the JCCV condemned AJDS for endorsing the BDS movement, but rejected calls from some members of the Jewish community to expel the Society.¹⁰⁸ The JCCV annual report also attacked the AJDS BDS motion, arguing that it provided indirect support to anti-semitism. However, AJDS argued that this allegation was unfair, and that the JCCV should apologise.¹⁰⁹

In March 2012, AJDS sent a letter to the Foreign Minister Bob Carr which questioned the right of mainstream Jewish organisations such as the ECAJ, the Zionist Federation of Australia and AIJAC to represent a Jewish consensus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. AJDS argued that such bodies present a position which ‘downplays the complexities of the conflict and avoids casting a critical eye on Israeli policies that prolong the conflict, while readily highlighting Palestinian policies that do likewise. This does not in fact reflect the diversity of opinion in the Jewish community here, or indeed in Israel, particularly amongst younger people’.¹¹⁰

In February 2013, the JCCV president John Searle questioned whether AJDS should continue to be accepted as a member of the JCCV. He accused AJDS of making one-sided attacks on Israel while ignoring human

rights abuses elsewhere, and described such attacks as ‘antisemitism’. In response, AJDS accused Searle of unfairly defaming the reputation of the Society.¹¹¹

The March 2013 AJDS motion in favour of a limited boycott of Israeli settlements attracted vigorous criticism from the JCCV. An initial statement by the JCCV president Nina Bassat suggested that AJDS’s affiliation was under threat. Bassat argued that the AJDS campaign was ‘repugnant’ and contrary to the philosophical beliefs of the JCCV.¹¹² In response, AJDS denied that their limited boycott campaign was associated with the global BDS movement, and expressed concern that the JCCV would ‘consider disaffiliating a Jewish community organisation because of a difference of opinion on how to engage with Israeli politics’.¹¹³ A further AJDS statement argued that ‘it is not the role of the JCCV, or the different affiliates, to police what is an acceptable expression of Jewishness or Zionism. The JCCV should be focused on fostering an open, inclusive and dynamic Jewish community’.¹¹⁴

The JCCV passed a motion moved by the Zionist Council of Victoria at its June 2013 plenum condemning the AJDS campaign to boycott settlement products. The motion, which was supported by a large majority of affiliates, was nevertheless opposed by delegates from AJDS, the Jewish Labor Bund, the Jewish Ecological Coalition and also Rabbi Keren-Black from the Leo Baeck Centre. Additionally, AJDS agreed to sign an undertaking that they would no longer use their JCCV affiliation to promote controversial campaigns and policies.¹¹⁵

An AJDS statement in July 2014 condemning Israel’s military attacks on Hamas in the Gaza Strip also provoked the JCCV’s ire. The JCCV and the B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Commission jointly accused AJDS of lacking balance, and ‘engaging in a relentless campaign of propaganda in their continuous bashing of Israel’.¹¹⁶ To the surprise of some in the community, these controversies did not result in AJDS being disaffiliated or expelled from the communal roof body. But the regularity of such debates suggests a lack of communal trust about where AJDS’ loyalties lie when it comes to contested debates about Jewish concerns.

Internal AJDS divisions

AJDS’s harsh criticisms of the State of Israel at the height of the Second Palestinian Intifada (and the associated terrorism against Israeli civilians) created tensions not only with mainstream Jewish organisations, but also

within its own membership. For example, one AJDS member questioned in June 2001 why the Society had adopted more radical positions at this particular time, pertaining to support for a Palestinian right of return and general sympathy for Palestinian aspirations, when the Palestinians were actually moving to more rejectionist positions on conflict resolution.¹¹⁷ That member would later resign from AJDS as did others who held similar concerns.

The AJDS participation in the anti-Netanyahu peace vigil held in August 2011 caused serious internal conflict. This was because AJDS had formally agreed at the last moment to withdraw from the vigil in response to a horrific Palestinian suicide bombing in Jerusalem, and an associated concern that their participation could be seen by other Jews as support for terror and violence.¹¹⁸ However, more than 50 AJDS members still participated in the vigil, including AJDS publicity officer David Zyngier. Zyngier conducted a number of interviews with media outlets, which left the impression that he was presenting an official AJDS view. Consequently, the AJDS president Harold Zwier resigned from his post due to the contentious nature of the statements made to the media.¹¹⁹

A number of AJDS members questioned what they considered to be the Society's one-sided criticisms of Israel. For example, long-time member Rachel Merhav attacked what she called AJDS's failure to criticise Palestinian as well as Israeli violence and terror. She also criticised the demonstration against Netanyahu.¹²⁰ Another long-time AJDS member Itiel Bereson attacked AJDS's December 2008 statement on the Gaza War as one-sided, in terms of blaming Israel more than Hamas, and reflecting a 'policy of appeasement that lacks responsibility for the future of the Jewish State'.¹²¹ There were also some internal tensions over the pro-BDS motion adopted by AJDS in 2010 as noted above.

Relationships with other Jewish Left groups

AJDS formed a range of cooperative, and not so cooperative, relationships with other local Jewish Left groups. There was some overlap in membership and support between AJDS and the short-lived Jews for a Just Peace (J4JP) group formed in May 2002 to oppose Israel's West Bank occupation, and promote the establishment of a Palestinian State alongside Israel.¹²² However, while AJDS welcomed the establishment of J4JP,¹²³ a number of the leading figures in J4JP such as Barry Carr, Rebecca Adams, Leon Orbach, Miriam Solomon and Les Rosenblatt had not previously

been involved in AJDS or the politics of the Melbourne Jewish community more generally.

Critics of both organisations, such as Labor MP Michael Danby, alleged that J4JP was little more than a front group for AJDS.¹²⁴ But AJDS spokespersons denied that any close association existed between the two groups.¹²⁵ In my opinion, J4JP was a slightly more radical organisation than AJDS, acting as a ginger group within AJDS, and encouraged the Society to move further to the Left in its criticisms of Israel. However, J4JP ceased to exist in late 2003. One of its former leaders, Les Rosenblatt, later became the media officer of AJDS.

AJDS had less in common with the small Independent Australian Jewish Voices (IAJV) group formed by anti-Zionist author Antony Loewenstein in March 2007.¹²⁶ To be sure, a number of AJDS supporters signed the original IAJV petition calling for a just peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and a more pluralistic Jewish debate about Israel.¹²⁷ And AJDS defended the IAJV's argument that the Jewish communal leadership's 'uncritical support for Israel did not reflect the diversity of views within the community'.¹²⁸

But AJDS later condemned the IAJV's support for an extreme advertisement attacking Israel's 60th anniversary. AJDS criticised both the inflammatory and one-sided language used in the advertisement, including terms such as 'racism' and 'ethnic cleansing', and an associated statement by IAJV wrongly implying that the advertisement had the support of signatories to their earlier petition.¹²⁹ AJDS were also critical of a statement issued by the IAJV in 2010 condemning Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, suggesting that the statement was unbalanced.¹³⁰

In response, IAJV activists accused AJDS of being too moderate in their policies and political strategies. For example, Antony Loewenstein labelled AJDS a 'liberal Zionist organisation' which he suggested was at times critical of Israeli policies, but generally not effective in forming partnerships with Palestinian groups or promoting alternative Jewish perspectives in the mainstream media.¹³¹ Similarly, Michael Brull branded AJDS a 'respectable organisation' which was insufficiently critical of Israel's war crimes in Gaza. He also praised AJDS for allegedly refusing to criticise antisemitism on the radical Left.¹³²

Relationships with Left groups more generally

AJDS often claims to use its influence to oppose expressions of antisemitism or extreme anti-Zionism within the broader Left. For example, AJDS has criticised the views of far Left anti-Zionist fundamentalist groups such as the International Socialist Organisation which regards Israel as a racist and colonialist state that has no right to exist.¹³³ Similarly, AJDS took credit for a number of Palestinian groups joining a Jewish-organised protest against the airing of a film by Holocaust denier, David Irving.¹³⁴ AJDS also claimed that their presence had ensured the removal of an antisemitic protestor and placard from an anti-Iraq War march.¹³⁵

But on other occasions, AJDS loudly supported left-wing organisations or individuals who had gone well beyond reasonable criticisms of Israeli policies to defame Israel or Jews per se. For example, AJDS defended a parliamentary motion by Labor MP Julia Irwin calling for an unconditional Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders, which most Jews regarded as one-sided and unbalanced.¹³⁶ AJDS never criticised Julia Irwin despite the fact that her attacks on Israel included equating Israeli actions with those of the Nazis. She also bizarrely accused Jewish lobby groups of controlling Australian Labor Party policy.¹³⁷

AJDS's apologia for the far Left *Overland* Magazine was even worse. *Overland* has been captured in recent years by the pro-Palestinian lobby, and regularly published fanatical attacks on the State of Israel and local supporters of Israel. This included an article by Independent Australian Jewish Voices blogger Michael Brull containing ad-hominem hysterical abuse of Philip Mendes and others. In response to this one-sided discourse, a group of six Australian academics consisting of Douglas Kirsner, Andrew Markus, Bill Anderson, Bernard Rechter, Nick Dyrenfurth and Philip Mendes sent a polite, but firm private letter to the *Overland* editor Jeff Sparrow, Editorial Board and patron, Barry Jones. The letter questioned why *Overland* chose to highlight the most extreme voices who 'contribute only fanatical polemics and represent nobody in either the Jewish community or the Left, and chose to ignore or actively censor the large group of Jewish (and broader Left) voices who support two states, strongly oppose Israeli settlements and expansionism, and seek to promote Israeli-Palestinian peace and reconciliation rather than continued violence and enmity. Their views represent the majority of the Left, but seem to have been deliberately excluded from the pages of *Overland* magazine'.

In response, Sparrow simply defended his highlighting of anti-Zionist

fundamentalist views by arguing that the critical two-state views held by the majority of the Australian Left gained regular access to the Murdoch-owned newspapers such as *The Australian*. The AJDS' new media officer Les Rosenblatt issued in response a statement of unequivocal support for *Overland's* pro-Palestinian orthodoxy. He bizarrely claimed that *Overland* were actually seeking to broaden rather than limit the range of views in the debate, and even more strangely cited with approval Michael Brull's article in favour of their (AJDS) concern to promote 'civility and respect in debate on political differences over the issue and strongly oppose the vilification and abuse that often follows expression of radical or minority opinions'. The AJDS clearly did not even bother to read the content of Brull's article for otherwise they would have realised that they were endorsing personal abuse instead of a diversity of opinions.¹³⁸

Relationships with local Palestinian and Arab groups

AJDS has always been keen to cooperate with local Palestinian or Arab groups which share their views on mutual compromise. For a long time such partnerships were minimal, given that few if any local Arabs accepted Israel's right to exist.¹³⁹ But since the outbreak of the Second Palestinian Intifada, AJDS has actively sought to build bridges to Palestinian and Arab groups.¹⁴⁰ AJDS argue that Jews as the stronger side in the conflict have a greater responsibility to initiate 'dialogue as a path to negotiation and conflict resolution' while recognising 'that the two sides are not equal'.¹⁴¹

But such a perspective arguably understates the extent to which there are Palestinian/Arab as well as Israeli barriers to peace, regardless of differences in military strength. Equally, many Australian Jews worry that local dialogue may end up as a lop-sided process whereby Palestinians and Arabs present a united hardline position against Israel, and then demand that Jews capitulate to their demands rather than engaging in a process of mutual compromise.

Regardless, AJDS have maintained substantial contact with local Palestinians, even if there is little evidence that such dialogue has moderated Palestinian views or produced any Palestinian criticisms of Hamas terror. In late 2000, the Australian Palestinian Coordinating Committee of Victoria invited AJDS to address a Palestinian solidarity rally. AJDS accepted the invitation and prepared a statement for delivery at the rally which highlighted that 'we understand the struggle of the Palestinian people for a resolution of the conflict based on a just peace between Israel

and Palestine'. Reference was made to mutual recognition of national rights, the dismantling of Jewish settlements, negotiation for a right of return or compensation, and the rejection of terrorism and violence. AJDS emphasised 'the need to understand the hopes, aspirations and demands of the other side to appreciate the complexity of the conflict. The situation has never been black and white'.¹⁴² However, after some public contention, AJDS elected not to proceed with their participation, and equally the rally organisers decided after viewing the proposed AJDS statement to withdraw the invitation.¹⁴³

But AJDS sent a supportive statement to a Palestinian Right of Return rally in April 2001, which was read out by rally coordinator Taimor Hazou.¹⁴⁴ The statement urged Jews during the festival of Pesach to remember not only how they fought for freedom, but also to recognise 'the Palestinians who yearn for their freedom, their land and their right to return. It has never been the position of the Australian Jewish Democratic Society that right and justice are purely on one side of the conflict'. The statement recommended the establishment of an independent Palestinian state living in peace alongside the state of Israel.¹⁴⁵

AJDS has frequently invited Australian Palestinians to participate in public forums. For example, local Palestinian activist Taimor Hazou, who has regularly demanded a Palestinian right of return to Green Line Israel¹⁴⁶ which is viewed by most Israelis as a code phrase for the destruction of Israel, participated in an AJDS panel discussion in early 2001. Hazou argued that asking the Palestinians to make a counter-offer to Ehud Barak's peace plan would be the equivalent of asking the Aborigines to make a counter-offer on the then Australian Prime Minister John Howard's refusal to say 'Sorry' for the Stolen Generation of Aboriginal children. Hazou also claimed provocatively that Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount was the equivalent of Nazi war criminal Konrads Kalejs visiting a Jewish synagogue.¹⁴⁷

Hazou publicly thanked AJDS for their support at the anti-Netanyahu rally in August 2001. He noted: 'I would like to thank all progressive Jews who were present on our side of the rally. It is unfortunate that the AJDS pulled out officially, but a lot of their members were there in person. They deserve a big thanks, because like our organisers they received death threats and intimidating phone calls, and some serious pressure from the JCCV not to be there. They are in a difficult position and we acknowledge that. Thanks.'¹⁴⁸

Hazou was also an invited speaker at an AJDS meeting in April 2008.¹⁴⁹ Elsewhere, he has publicly accused the Australian Jewish communal leadership of undermining local initiatives for Jewish-Palestinian peace and dialogue.¹⁵⁰ In August 2005, AJDS hosted Palestinian-Australian author Randa Abdel-Fattah,¹⁵¹ who is an outspoken supporter of the BDS movement. And *Age* journalist Maher Mughrabi, a relative moderate in the Palestinian community, addressed AJDS forums in November 2005, February 2006 and July 2007.¹⁵²

In 2009, AJDS identity Harold Zwier partnered with Arab community activist Joe Wakim to publish a joint article which criticised both Israeli and Palestinian leaders for failing to advance the peace process. That article was published in both the *Australian Jewish News* and the Arabic language *An Nahar*.¹⁵³ Another AJDS initiative was a long-running group of Jewish and Arab women called Salaam/Shalom who met regularly to discuss issues of common interest. The convenor of this group, Renate Kamener, received a Victorian government award for Community Service to Multiculturalism.¹⁵⁴

In recent years, AJDS has formed a partnership with the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN), a pro-Palestinian advocacy group consisting of Palestinians, Jews, churches and trade unions. In November 2014, AJDS members participated in an APAN lobbying exercise in Canberra aimed at convincing Members of Parliament to support the recognition of a Palestinian State.¹⁵⁵ And in July 2015, AJDS and APAN held a joint session at the Australian Labor Party's national conference urging the ALP to recognise Palestinian statehood, and condemn Israel's West Bank occupation and settlements.¹⁵⁶

Other issues: Indigenous rights, refugees

AJDS has been supportive of Indigenous rights throughout its history, and utilised a number of advocacy strategies including public forums and statements, publishing regular articles in its magazine and newsletter, and providing resources to Indigenous groups. Much of this history was detailed in an earlier article by the author.¹⁵⁷

One of the highlights of this support was the establishment of a bursary in honour of the late AJDS activist Renata Kamener to assist Indigenous students completing degrees at the University of Melbourne.¹⁵⁸ Peter Singer, Glyn Davis and Gareth Evans have been among the speakers at the annual orations to support this bursary.¹⁵⁹ AJDS also supported calls

for the Coalition government to apologise for the Stolen Generation of Aboriginal children, noting that ‘it was only two generations ago during World War Two that thousands of Jewish children had their ethnic, cultural and religious identity forcibly erased while they were raised by foster parents in Europe.’¹⁶⁰ AJDS later sent a representation of four members to Canberra to witness the Labor Party government’s apology to Indigenous Australians.¹⁶¹ Additionally, AJDS was active in campaigns for reconciliation, and for compensation to be paid for the past stolen wages of Aboriginal workers.¹⁶² AJDS also hosted a number of prominent Indigenous speakers, including Wayne Atkinson on Native Title and Land Rights.¹⁶³

In November 2015, AJDS issued a formal statement in support of Indigenous struggles for justice and land rights. The statement documented a number of activities undertaken by AJDS, including acknowledgement, solidarity with Indigenous-led campaigns, supporting Indigenous organisations and media, collaboration with Indigenous organisations, public forums and community education.¹⁶⁴ A later statement in January 2016 argued that Australia Day should be retitled ‘Invasion Day’ to symbolise Indigenous experiences of colonisation and dispossession, or alternatively ‘Survival Day’ to recognise Indigenous resistance to colonisation. Citing numerous example of Indigenous disadvantage, AJDS urged supporters to support Indigenous sovereignty and rights plus projects of decolonisation.¹⁶⁵

Another key AJDS objective has been opposition to racism, and support for tolerance and harmony between ethnic communities. AJDS has persistently supported the rights of asylum seekers to fair and humane treatment, and an end to mandatory detention. A February 2001 statement urged the government to close remote detention centres, impose only short-term detention to examine health and other personal information, provide access to legal advice and independent reviews, and cease any detention of children.¹⁶⁶ A further statement in August 2001 condemned the treatment of refugees in detention, and urged the government instead to be guided by ‘calls for justice and human rights’.¹⁶⁷

AJDS was subsequently active along with a number of other Jewish organisations and refugee advocates such as Arnold Zable in forming a group called Jews for Refugees which presented a specifically Jewish perspective in favour of refugee rights.¹⁶⁸ The new organisation held a Vigil for Refugees during Pesach at the Maribyrnong Detention Centre in March 2002 which was attended by over 600 Jews. A number of speakers including two rabbis argued that past experiences of persecution and

exile underpinned Jewish empathy for refugees.¹⁶⁹ A further gathering in September 2002 built a 'Sukkah of refuge and welcome' to extend the hand of friendship and support to asylum seekers imprisoned within the Detention Centre.¹⁷⁰

Similarly, a 2004 election statement condemned the incarceration of innocent children and asylum seekers,¹⁷¹ and refugee advocate Linda Briskman was the guest speaker at the 2007 Annual General Meeting.¹⁷² A later AJDS statement criticised as inhumane the government decision to stop the processing of refugees from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, citing the Jewish experience of 'denial of refuge and asylum'.¹⁷³ AJDS also urged the government to release all children and unaccompanied minors from immigration detention facilities.¹⁷⁴

AJDS members Max Kaiser and Linda Briskman re-formed Jews for Refugees in May 2012 in order to provide a specifically Jewish opposition to mandatory detention, arguing that 'many people in our community are aware, from their own family histories, of what it means to have been strangers; what it means to have a well-founded fear of persecution; what it means to seek a safe haven; to seek asylum'.¹⁷⁵ The September 2013 AJDS newsletter was devoted to advancing the rights of refugees with the editorial opining: 'We look forward to the day when the lives of people in need are no longer treated as political footballs. When Australia's immigration policies are based on care and directed at protecting as well as helping people that come to us seeking asylum'.¹⁷⁶ Ironically, refugee advocates threatened to blockade a proposed AJDS forum featuring former Foreign Minister Bob Carr on the grounds that his views were unsympathetic to Tamil refugees.¹⁷⁷

AJDS was particularly supportive of the rights of Sudanese and other African refugees. The Society held a forum regarding their refugee and resettlement issues in May 2005 addressed by Matthew Albert, a young Jewish campaigner involved in providing educational support programs to the African community.¹⁷⁸ An April 2006 forum critically examined the genocide being perpetrated against the people of the Darfur region in Sudan,¹⁷⁹ and AJDS also participated in a further Jewish community rally in support of the people of Darfur.¹⁸⁰

AJDS condemned an October 2007 statement by the Coalition government Immigration Minister, Kevin Andrews, which appeared to promote prejudice against refugees from Africa. AJDS argued that greater support services were required to assist refugees to overcome past traumatic

experiences, and access education and employment.¹⁸¹ AJDS also signed a statement advocating support for African communities in Australia, and endorsing multiculturalism as ‘vital to the health and wellbeing of our communities’.¹⁸²

AJDS sharply defended the rights of refugees following an article by *Australian Jewish News* publisher Robert Magid, which labelled asylum seekers as ‘queue jumpers’ seeking economic opportunities rather than sanctuary, and potential terrorists who did not deserve Jewish sympathy. In response, AJDS denounced Magid’s comments as involving ‘group vilification’ of Muslims, and demanded that Magid apologise to ‘all the victims of persecution who arrived by boat’.¹⁸³ The AJDS was also active in facilitating an online petition critical of Magid’s statement.¹⁸⁴

AJDS activists June Factor, Steve Brook and Harold Zwier (aligned with others such as Robert Richter, Ron Merkel and Jewish Aid Australia) played a key role in initiating a pro-refugee statement signed by hundreds of Australian Jews. The statement, published in March 2014, urged the government to amend laws that undermine human rights and dignity. The statement proclaimed:

For centuries, Jews have sought refuge from persecution. We cannot deny to others the asylum we have found in Australia. It is long past time to end the unjust and brutal imprisonment of men, women and children – more than 1,000 children – seeking refuge here. This inhumane policy can only continue if good people are silent.¹⁸⁵

AJDS welcomed the Coalition government’s decision to accept 12,000 Syrian refugees into Australia, but called for consideration to be given to accepting a much greater number. AJDS also recommended that refugees be chosen without any reference to religious background.¹⁸⁶ Surprisingly, this statement made no reference to the possibility that Muslim refugees from the Middle East may be more likely than those from other religious backgrounds to display fundamentalist prejudices towards Israel and indeed Jews per se. AJDS continues to support the Jews for Refugees group, and its key aim to promote alliances between Jews and asylum seekers.¹⁸⁷ In May 2016, AJDS urged both major political parties to close the off-shore and mainland detention centres, and instead introduce humane policy responses.¹⁸⁸

AJDS were active in opposing prejudice against Muslims, and played an active role in combatting a campaign to prevent a group of Muslims in

St Kilda from using a community house for prayers.¹⁸⁹ AJDS have also supported the Voices Against Bigotry network formed to oppose anti-Muslim views.¹⁹⁰ AJDS were supportive of gay rights within and beyond the Jewish community, and highlighted the importance of providing an inclusive space for all regardless of sexuality.¹⁹¹ Other issues addressed in AJDS forums included the challenge posed by climate change,¹⁹² and the alleged threat to civil liberties posed by anti-terror laws.¹⁹³ An AJDS environmental statement urged action to promote 'ecological sustainability', and 'the stability of the climate system',¹⁹⁴ and a dozen AJDS members attended the November 2015 People's Climate March under a 'Jews for Climate Action' banner.¹⁹⁵

AJDS were a founding member of the Victorian Peace Network, and strongly opposed the American invasion of Iraq and associated Australian involvement. AJDS argued that there was no evidence that Iraq retained weapons of mass destruction, and that a military conflict would harm the lives of millions of people in Iraq and neighbouring countries.¹⁹⁶ AJDS members were active participants in the major anti-war rally attended by 40,000 people in October 2002.¹⁹⁷ AJDS later cautioned that a small number of American neo-conservatives who happened to be Jewish such as Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith should not be blamed for the war. Rather, the American corporations who strongly influenced the actions of President George Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney should be held to account.¹⁹⁸

AJDS has had relatively little to say on antisemitism with some minor exceptions. AJDS criticised Lebanon's NBN-TV station for broadcasting a program endorsing the notorious Protocols of the Elders of Zion.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, concern was expressed at the failure of left-wing anti-Israel protestors in Europe to condemn open manifestations of antisemitism.²⁰⁰ AJDS also condemned the statement of Iranian President Ahmadinejad urging the elimination of the State of Israel. AJDS argued that his views were not only racist towards Israel, but injurious to Palestinian concerns for progress towards a two-state solution.²⁰¹ However, AJDS attacked the JCCV for opposing dialogue with the former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami during his visit to Melbourne who had also expressed extreme hostility towards Israel.²⁰²

AJDS has rarely spoken out on debates concerning inequality, poverty, homelessness, disability, child abuse or social welfare generally within the Jewish community, other than hosting Tzedek CEO and victims of child

sexual abuse advocate Manny Waks as their annual dinner speaker in 2013.

Generational change and the passing of leadership

AJDS was formed and sustained throughout its first decade or more by a number of veteran left-wing activists. These activists had significant strengths such as their vast political experience and networks, but also limitations in their sometimes ambivalent associations with the Jewish community and Jewish identity. A number had been involved in highly assimilationist organisations such as the Communist Party which were hostile to any forms of Jewish national expression, or alternatively in organisations such as the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism which had conflictual relations with mainstream Jewish leaders and organisations. But equally, most had come to terms with the legitimacy of Israel and Zionism. They were generally united in supporting Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, and opposing dogmatic left-wing criticisms of Zionism.²⁰³

A number of these AJDS stalwarts passed away during this period. AJDS founder and long-time peace movement and Labor Party activist Norman Rothfield died at the age of 98 in 2010.²⁰⁴ AJDS founding member and former Communist Party activist Henry Zimmerman died at the age of 83 in 2006.²⁰⁵ Former Communist Party leader Bernie Taft died at the age of 95 in 2013.²⁰⁶ Former Communist Party activist and 3CR radio broadcaster Steve Brook died at the age of 80 in 2014,²⁰⁷ and long-time social activist Renate Kamener died at the age of 76 in 2009.²⁰⁸

In addition to the above figures, other key leaders of AJDS during this period included Harold Zwier (who was also involved pre-2000), Larry Stillman, Sol Salbe, David Zyngier and Tom Wolkenberg. All of these persons are over 50 years of age, which raised questions about the sustainability of the society. AJDS commissioned Executive member Helen Rosenbaum in early 2012 to develop some ideas around engaging and attracting younger people to the organisation. Rosenbaum conducted a small research project, including interviews with thirteen politically progressive Jews under 45 years of age and seven representatives of Jewish and non-Jewish organisations. The study identified that younger Jews were particularly interested in issues such as refugees and asylum seekers, Indigenous Australians, other marginalised peoples, climate change, and environmental sustainability. The conclusion was that the interviewees valued AJDS as an alternative to the conservatism of the Jewish mainstream, but that for many Jews AJDS was not visible, and for others there

was a lack of clarity about the Society's beliefs and agendas.²⁰⁹

As a result of these endeavours, AJDS reconstructed its leadership so that over half of the nine-person AJDS Executive, and both of their staff members, are under 40 years of age even though their membership overwhelmingly remains more than 50 years old.²¹⁰ At the time of writing, the AJDS Executive consists of Jordy Silverstein, Nicole Erlich, Sivan Barak, Danya Jacobs, Dennis Martin, Rachel Leibhaber, Keren Rubinstein, Yael Winikoff and Robin Rothfield. Most of these persons are new to AJDS activity, and this generational change did not proceed without its challenges. For example, veteran AJDS activist Robin Rothfield applauded the 'young and vigorous executive for doing some great work in advancing the agenda of AJDS', but added that 'decisions have been made which have been rash and caused potential embarrassment to the organisation'.²¹¹

Additionally, a number of these younger people seem influenced by anti-Zionist perspectives, which question the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state as opposed to an Arab-Jewish bi-national state. For example, a recent AJDS statement suggests renouncing Jewish nationalism while at the same time acting 'in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle'.²¹² I have argued elsewhere that anti-Zionists who value Jewish history and culture should not be excluded from our community.²¹³ But to be taken seriously, they need to move beyond a broad Western liberal universalism, which rejects any specific concern with Jewish rights and interests. In particular, they need to address the specific challenges facing Israeli Jews located in the non-western political culture of the Middle East. Current proposals by Jewish anti-Zionists for Jews and Arabs to share Israel/Palestine as equal citizens seem to be based on overtly Western values of ethnic and religious equality and freedom, rather than the actual political, national and religious values and culture of the Arab world. It seems very unlikely that they would protect the political and human rights of Israeli Jews.

Conclusion

The challenge for AJDS has always been whether it can effectively achieve its dual aim of being 'A progressive voice among Jews' and 'A Jewish voice among progressives'. There is no doubt that AJDS has advanced left-wing ideas within the Jewish community on a range of issues including Israel-Palestine, Indigenous rights, refugees, and opposition to war and racism. The former JCCV Chairman Grahame Leonard's description of AJDS as the 'social conscience of the community'²¹⁴ suggests this role is widely recognised.

But AJDS's willingness to advocate for Jewish concerns within the Left, particularly on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is highly debatable. It seems that AJDS is strongly influenced by the general Left hostility to Israel, and consequently is reluctant to offer any critical analysis of contemporary and historical Palestinian actions and strategies which have acted as serious barriers to peace. On issues such as the Palestinian right of return and the BDS movement, AJDS has adopted a moderate version of the Palestinian narrative with scant regard for Jewish viewpoints. Additionally, the *Overland* Affair discussed above suggested that when it comes to a conflict between left-wing pro-Palestinian groups (however extreme) and any Jews (even those on the Left) who are supportive of Israel, AJDS will always side with the former.

In summary, AJDS don't seem to understand that being part of the Jewish community involves responsibilities as well as rights, and that being a specifically Jewish Left organisation (as opposed to just a Jewish faction of a progressive movement akin to Jewish factions of Communist Parties in the Stalinist era) sometimes means prioritising particular Jewish interests over universalistic concerns.

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‘THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING’: MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT OF SOVIET JEWS IN AUSTRALIA

John Goldlust

A political instructor asks Rabinovich:

‘Who is your father?’

‘The Soviet Union.’

‘Good. And who is your mother?’

‘The Communist Party.’

‘Excellent. And what is your fondest wish?’

‘To become an orphan.’

(Late Soviet-era Jewish joke¹)

When researchers coming from the Anglo-Jewish world and raised in the ‘cultural Judaism’ of the contemporary Diaspora first tackle the issue of Russian-Jewish identity, they are shocked by the apparent absence of the recognised pillars of Jewish identity – knowledge of Jewish history and holidays, keeping some household and cooking traditions, the imperative to marry other Jews, religious rites of passage and Jewish education for the children, knowledge of the Jewish languages, and identification with Israel. These components of the international Jewish canon were obscure or foreign for most Soviet Jews, and are even less relevant for those who remain in the FSU today.

(Larissa Remennick, *Russian Jews on Three Continents*²)

We begin with a ‘late Soviet-era’ joke, the underlying theme of which reflects sentiments widely known to be prevalent among 19th-century Jewish subjects of the Russian Tsar. By the latter decades of that century, almost all of the several million, mostly impoverished, Jews were still residually confined to the demarcated western areas of the Russian Empire known as the ‘Pale of Settlement’. Increasingly subjected to ‘anti-Jewish’ measures from Tsarist authorities, reinforced by periodic outbreaks of

state-sanctioned mob violence directed at local communities, many were becoming increasingly drawn to the 'liberating possibilities' associated with what Yuri Slezkine has usefully identified as available avenues of escape to one of three, still formative, 'promised lands'.³ Should they depart Russia and join the growing number of migrants from all over Europe seeking entry to the United States of America, attracted by the widely shared belief that this 'new' nation, founded on principles of political equality and liberal democracy would both allow and encourage their personal economic and social mobility; or, should they leave Russia in order to take up a 'pioneering' role in the emerging endeavours setting out to revive and re-establish a Jewish national homeland in Palestine; or, should they remain where they are, but attach themselves to the political struggle championed by the various factions seeking to overthrow the reactionary and increasingly antisemitic Tsarist rule under which they were living, and replace it with some form of more egalitarian, and preferably socialist form of society?

A century later, only two of these 'promised lands' were still standing. As captured in Slezkine's succinct 'obituary' for the demise of the Soviet Union: 'Communism lost out to both liberalism and nationalism and then died of exhaustion.'⁴

However, as he also points out in his magisterial, historical and sociological overview that focuses on the significant involvement of 'Russian Jews' throughout the 20th century in all three of these modernist 'liberating projects', the complex and often contradictory symbiosis between Soviet communism and the substantial Jewish population living under its authority throughout the 70 years of the USSR's existence left an indelible mark on both. It is those various residues of the particular (and peculiar) historical encounter that are of special relevance if we wish to understand the persistence of 'ambivalence' and 'separation' as psychological and social characteristics that predominate relationships between post-Soviet Jewish immigrants and the Jewish residents of local and national diaspora communities where they now live. Such findings have been reported monotonously and continuously in research studies undertaken in virtually every major location (Israel, US, Canada, Germany, Australia) where former Soviet Jews have chosen to settle since the 1970s.⁵

As Larissa Remennick sets out, in the second epigraph with which I introduced this article, at the heart of what she describes elsewhere as a 'crisis of mutual failed expectations',⁶ lies a profound misalignment

between what former Soviet Jews and what most Jews living in western diaspora communities consider ‘valid’ cognitive and behavioural characteristics ‘qualifying’ a person to lay ‘legitimate claim’ to being ‘Jewish’.

But before we explore this further, with particular focus on the way these tensions have played out in the Australian context over the last 40 years, we need to first set out the broader historical formative influences, ideas and events that have contributed to the construction of various contested versions of what is too often loosely assumed to be a singular and uniform contemporary ‘Jewish identity’.

The Soviet Jewish experience

In 1880, there were more than six million Jews living mostly within the Eastern European portion of the Russian Tsar’s Empire. In response to the combination of difficult economic times and the state-approved persecution referred to above, over the next 50 years more than two million Jews chose to emigrate, most settling in the United States – one of the three ‘promised lands’ identified by Slezkine.

For the several million more who did not leave, the initial response of most Jews to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was not overly favourable, even though there were a number of Jews prominent within the ranks of the new government. However, the vehemently antisemitic character of the factions who opposed the Bolsheviks, as evidenced in the more than 2,000 pogroms that took place between 1918 and 1921 during the period of civil war and counter-revolutionary activity, led to growing Jewish support for the communists, with an increasing number of Jews choosing to join the Red Army and the Party. More pragmatically, many Jews very quickly perceived the possibilities for ‘personal advancement’ that opened for them with both the overthrow of autocracy and their greater freedom of movement within the newly formed USSR.

By the mid-1920s, Communist Party policy was directed towards eliminating all manifestations of religious belief and practice, a goal that drew considerable support from leading ‘Jewish elements’ within the Party. With respect to the Jews, the campaign sought to close down all religious institutions of worship and learning as well as to eliminate the use of Hebrew (‘the language of the bourgeoisie’) while expressing support for Yiddish, ‘the language of the Jewish proletariat’.⁷

So while, in the Party’s view, ‘Yiddish culture’ was the acceptable and ‘authentic’ voice of Jewish group identity, it also sought to reconstitute

Jewish ethnicity in line with its own ideological considerations. By 1925, given the considerable range of 'non-Russian' ethno-linguistic groupings now within the Soviet orbit, and following considerable debate within the Party, a compromise on the 'nationality question' was reached that recognised the special rights of 'territorially based' national minorities, languages and cultures, which would also be similarly applied to a few 'extra-territorial minorities' (of which Jews were one example). For each of these minorities official recognition meant the establishment of a special administrative unit to cater to their 'special needs and interests'. There was a further attempt to 'normalise' the national situation for Jews in the USSR in the ill-fated project in the late 1920s that sought to establish a special 'Jewish autonomous region' in the far-eastern territory of Birobidzhan. One of the primary motives for supporting such a scheme was the Party's belief that such a strategy would effectively undermine Jewish support for the 'Zionist solution of Palestine'.⁸ The area of the Soviet Union chosen was remote from the European centres of Jewish population, the climate was harsh and there was little support for the scheme by the non-Party Jewish leadership. While a trickle of Jews moved there throughout the 1930s, by 1936 the number of Jewish inhabitants totalled 18,000, which was still only 23 per cent of the region's sparse population.⁹

However, it was also during this period that a pragmatic decision taken by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, primarily aimed at gaining support and allegiance from the numerous non-Russian regional and ethnic minorities, also assured the future continuity of a distinctive Jewish identity within the Soviet Union. As stated in this 1932 decree, every citizen's internal passport – a vital document necessary for obtaining employment, housing and for many other official transactions with governmental authorities – must register the 'nationality' of the bearer. 'The citizen could not choose his own nationality (except when the parents were of different nationalities, in which case either nationality could be chosen).'¹⁰ Henceforth, anyone with a predominantly Jewish heritage would be formally ascribed lifelong membership to what was now designated as the 'Jewish nationality' within the Soviet system. So, throughout the Soviet Union, several million 'passport' Jews, now ideologically unacceptable as a religious group, and with the unconvincing Birobidzhan 'national homeland' experiment also of marginal relevance, would be considered to belong to a non-territory-based 'national' minority.

Yet, notwithstanding the Soviet regime's double-pronged attack – on

Jewish religious institutions, practice, scholarship and on any expressions of ethnic support for ‘Zionism’ – for more Jews than we often care to acknowledge, Slezkine argues, Soviet communism, particularly in its first few decades, represented an exciting and innovative modernist social experiment – a truly alternative ‘promised land’:

Most of the Jews who stayed in revolutionary Russia did not stay at home: they moved to Kiev, Kharkov, Leningrad, and Moscow, and they moved up the Soviet social ladder once they got there. Jews by birth and perhaps by upbringing, they were Russian by cultural affiliation and – many of them – Soviet by ideological commitment.¹¹

Opportunities for Jewish mobility expanded considerably in the Stalinist decades between the 1930s and the 1950s, when the USSR embarked upon an ambitious, centrally organised program aimed at modernising the economy through rapid industrialisation and the development of science and technology. With increasing rates of entry into institutes of higher education, Jews now represented a disproportionate number of the newly emerging professional and skilled workforce.¹²

Along with their upward social mobility, many Jews’ recent exposure to higher education, in particular the ‘humanities’ portion of the tertiary curriculum, greatly facilitated their developing ‘high culture’ tastes, and a particularly close and strong attachment to both the Russian language and to the works by its more celebrated literary exponents. As Slezkine again informs us: ‘In the 1930s, all college-educated Soviets ... lived with Pushkin, Herzen, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and an assortment of Western classics as much as they lived with industrialisation, collectivisation, and cultural revolution.’¹³ Indeed, in his memoirs, one former high-level Party functionary of Jewish origin recalled that he and his generation were formed by ‘two currents of intellectual life: the socialist revolutionary ideology and the humane Russian literature.’¹⁴

One important outcome of World War Two (known as the ‘Great Patriotic War’ in the Soviet Union) was to attach many Soviet Jews more profoundly to the fate of their ‘motherland’ as it came under serious threat of being overrun in the months following the attack by Nazi Germany in June 1941. More than half a million Jews took a direct role in the Soviet military defence that eventually both halted the German advance early in 1943 and pursued the retreating Nazi forces back through Eastern Europe, joining the Western Allies in ensuring Nazi Germany’s total defeat and

surrender in May of 1945. Also, as part of the coordinated defensive strategy to move vital administrative and industrial resources away from the initial German advance, around a million and a half Soviet Jews were 'evacuated' from the western regions of the USSR and most spent a greater part of the war in locales in various parts of Soviet Central Asia to which much of the Soviet organisational and economic infrastructure had been relocated.¹⁵

But it was also during these years that the religious and cultural base of traditional Judaism was weakened even further. The Soviet territories temporarily occupied by German forces in the western part of the USSR (including recently annexed Eastern Poland and the Baltic States) included the highest concentration of 'traditional' religious and ethnically oriented Jewish communities. The Nazi policies ruthlessly applied throughout these occupied areas resulted in the wholesale destruction of remaining Jewish institutions, along with the systematic murder in these areas of almost the entire Jewish population, totalling more than two million.

The shock of the Nazi invasion, in response to which many Jews had rallied to the Soviet cause, was followed by four years of brutal conflict. At the end of the war most Jews felt an understandable appreciation for the military achievements and overall Soviet contributions to the ultimate Allied victory over Germany that undoubtedly sheltered them from Nazi plans directed at exterminating the entire Jewish population of Europe.¹⁶ Yet, it was only a few years later that the surviving Jewish population of the USSR became the target of vicious antisemitic campaigns led by Stalin himself that began with the post-war drive against 'rootless cosmopolitans' and continued for several years, culminating in the alleged conspiracy of the Jewish 'Doctors' Plot' of the early 1950s.

It was also during this period that the enthusiasm openly expressed by some Soviet Jews towards the newly created State of Israel influenced the way they were now perceived by the Party elite. Even though the Soviets voted in favour of the UN partition plan in 1947, as Sheila Fitzpatrick points out, the official position soon reflected the view that Israel had, 'contrary to Stalin's hopes, quickly became a client of the United States and thus a Cold War enemy.'¹⁷ And, while previously Jews had not been classified as a 'diaspora nationality':

... with the creation of the state of Israel, they became one. The significance of that change was already evident in the autumn of 1948, when Golda Meir arrived in Moscow as the

first Israeli ambassador, to be greeted with huge enthusiasm by Jewish crowds ... and corresponding suspicion from the security police and Stalin.¹⁸

But also concurrently, within the USSR it was perhaps more their widespread social mobility throughout the Stalinist era, allegations of their ‘prominence’ as a ‘favoured group’ among the huge population of Soviet citizens evacuated eastwards during the war, and their level of cultural integration into both mainstream and ‘elite’ segments of Soviet society, that together stirred broader popular support for the hostility now being directed from the top, towards Jews as a group.¹⁹

And even though the Stalin-inspired antisemitic campaign fizzled out very quickly after his death in 1953, throughout the post-war decades resentment was growing, often publicly expressed, that Jews were ‘over represented’ in higher education, technical and scientific fields and higher status administrative positions. Ostensibly to redress this imbalance, but also fuelled by what many Jews considered residual antisemitic prejudices, the government began to institute a systematic, but publicly unacknowledged, policy designed to block access and opportunity to Jews in attaining any further economic and career mobility:

Some elite institutions were closed to ethnic Jews; others employed *numerus clausus*; yet others limited professional advancement, publication opportunities, or access to benefits ... There were no clear discriminatory procedures – just makeshift arrangements formulated in secret and applied selectively and unevenly across economic branches, academic disciplines, and administrative units ... (the enormous achievement gap between the Jews and everyone else was narrowing very slowly), but its secrecy, inconsistency, and concentration on elite positions made it all the more frustrating.²⁰

As a consequence, by the early 1960s more and more of the younger, well-educated and professionalised cohort of Soviet Jews were retreating into the pursuit of individualistic career goals. A widespread ‘siege mentality’ prevailed, both mitigating against positive expressions of Jewish identity by most individuals and pragmatically constraining many Jews to socialise primarily with other Jews. By now only a skeletal remnant of public Jewish religious or cultural life remained in the Soviet Union, and the absence of distinctive historical, intellectual and cultural Jewish content in their lives was increasingly apparent.

It was at this point that there developed a growing feeling, even among Jews who held a strong commitment to the universalistic and egalitarian

ideals that supposedly lay at the heart of the Soviet political system, that life for them and their children in the Soviet Union was becoming untenable. And also increasingly apparent was that, 'Jews were among the most consistent opponents of the Soviet regime, reflecting both their own predicament and general intellectual contempt towards the stagnating System, inefficient, immoral, and ridiculous at every level.'²¹

The kernel of 'dissidents' who began to openly challenge the regime was given a huge boost by the Six-Day War of 1967 between Israel and the Arab states, that appears to have had a 'particularly strong impact on the middle and younger generations who had been born and raised under Soviet rule and had never experienced Jewish traditions in practice.'²² These events directly influenced previously uncommitted and even ambivalent Soviet Jews, many of whom began to develop a more positive emotional attachment to what had previously been merely a nominal and, in most cases, dormant Jewish identity. While there was no organised Zionist movement as such, and indeed the Soviet government's most vehement hostility was now increasingly directed against the Zionist cause, ironically it was this nationalist dimension of Jewish identity that was most salient and available, given the authorities' longstanding official designation of Jews as a constituent 'national group' within the Soviet Union. 'The regime retaliated by stepping up its "anti-Zionist" campaign and multiplying Jewish disabilities in education and employment. The Jews responded by applying to emigrate in even greater numbers.'²³

Settlement of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union in the West since 1970

Between 1970 and 1980, around a quarter of a million Soviet Jews – about 12 per cent of the total Jewish population of the USSR – responded to the dramatic shift in official policy by departing the Soviet Union with the intention of settling permanently elsewhere.²⁴ While for the Soviet regime the only officially recognised reason for granting an exit visa was 'family reunion', and for Jewish applicants the only acceptable destination was the State of Israel, once in transit (usually in Vienna or Rome) the émigrés were free to change their plans and seek permanent residence in some other country. Almost all Jews who departed the Soviet Union in the first few years of the 1970s did complete their journey to Israel, but by mid-decade an increasing proportion each year were nominating other destinations, and by 1980 a significant majority of the Jewish emigrants were no longer

choosing Israel.²⁵ Among Soviet Jews who did not proceed to Israel, most sought entry to the US, with other possible destinations such as Canada and Australia attracting substantially fewer numbers.²⁶

And while emigration of Jews out of the former Soviet Union has been continuous over the past four decades, in terms of numbers, this has been punctuated by ‘waves’ that have ebbed and flowed. The earliest, outlined above, began in the early 1970s and picked up velocity in the latter part of the decade. However, a spike in Cold War tensions during the Reagan administration in the United States led to a sudden reversal in Soviet emigration policy in the years 1982–87, when almost no Jews were permitted to leave.

But it was in the following decade (1988–97) beginning with the Gorbachev-initiated *glasnost* period, that mass emigration from the former USSR took off in earnest. This emigration wave peaked in 1990–91, in the years immediately preceding the final dissolution of the Soviet Union, when about 400,000 Soviet Jews and their relatives emigrated.²⁷ Since the late 1990s, emigration out of the former USSR has eased somewhat, but overall, since 1970, a total of around two million former Soviet and post-Soviet Jews and their families have chosen to settle elsewhere. The largest number by far – more than one million – went to Israel, with other large concentrations now in the USA (more than 300,000) and Germany (over 225,000).²⁸ This has currently left, across the fifteen former Soviet Union republics, probably fewer than 300,000 ‘core Jews’ still remaining, most of these in Russia and the Ukraine.²⁹ As Mark Tolts has noted, overall the rate of this last ‘great exodus’ has been considerably higher than the earlier mass Jewish emigration out of the Russian Empire at the turn of the 20th century.³⁰

Former Soviet Jews in Australia

Despite Australian Jewish community leaders playing a prominent part in both initiating, in the early 1960s, and later lending strong leadership and support for the ultimately successful global campaign to persuade the Soviet government to allow Jews to exit from the USSR,³¹ only a tiny fraction of these emigrants ended up in Australia. In total, precisely how many have come here since the early 1970s ‘still remains unclear’, as noted by Suzanne Rutland who, in the early 2000s, undertook extensive research on recent Jewish immigration.³² Numbers cited by local Jewish welfare agencies, and by leading figures involved with religious and community

organisations catering to the needs and interests of former Soviet Jews (including former Soviet Jews themselves), suggest more than 20,000 (some even as many as 30,000), and these sorts of numbers are often repeated in newspaper articles, community reports and have found their way into academic research studies.³³

However, an examination of Australian Census data collected since the 1970s, cross-tabulating birthplaces by the optional religion question, suggests the number may be considerably lower. According to census data, the total number of persons resident in Australia and born in the former USSR or in one of its successor countries who reported their religion as Jewish (in round figures) was just over 1,500 in 1971; had increased to a little under 4,000 in 1986 (reflecting the 1970s cohort); grew significantly to around 7,850 in 1996 (taking account of the larger post-1988 immigration); and, fifteen years later had decreased slightly to just under 7,300, as reported in the most recent Australian Census of 2011.³⁴

Some attempts to account for the considerable discrepancy between the 'anecdotal' and census-derived numbers cited above include: first, in Australia it is not compulsory to answer this census question; and second, one of the response categories provided in the census questionnaire is 'no religion'. It is suggested that both of these available options might attract responses from some of the immigrants raised in the former Soviet Union who, given the prevailing ideology while they were growing up, felt little connection to 'Jewishness' as a religion. Also, some Jewish immigrants from the former USSR were accompanied by non-Jewish spouses (and therefore also children of these 'mixed' marriages); in the Australian Census some might have chosen to identify with another religion, not answer at all or select the 'no religion' response.

But the analysis undertaken by Emmanuel Guzman who is currently researching former Soviet Jews in Australia draws on a combination of census figures and available immigration data, and also takes into consideration how many former Soviet immigrants in Australia identify with other religions. He argues persuasively that even with the above provisos, it is unlikely that the total number of former Jews (including non-Jewish spouses and children) who have settled in Australia since the 1970s could have reached much above 12,000.³⁵ However, if we add their children and, by now, even grandchildren, who were not born in the former USSR, but who could reasonably be considered to constitute part of this Jewish subgroup in Australia, the total might be approaching the figure of 20,000 often cited.³⁶

But setting aside the unresolvable problem of exactly how many former Soviet Jews now live in Australia, they represent, if not the largest then, numerically, certainly one of three significant recent Jewish immigrant groups to have settled in Australia since the 1970s (the other two being Jews from South Africa and Israel). And it is reasonable to assume that the broader ‘community’ of predominantly Russian-speaking Jews from the former Soviet Union together with their descendants now constitute, at the very least, 10 per cent of Australia’s Jewish population; and probably an even higher proportion in Melbourne, where they are most heavily concentrated.³⁷

The immigrants who settled in Australia came from many areas of the former Soviet Union. While the majority previously resided in the Ukraine and Russia itself (now officially known as ‘the Russian Federation’), there were also smaller numbers from the Baltic States, Belarus, Moldova and Uzbekistan.

Particularly for the earliest cohort who departed in the 1970s and early 1980s, the local Jewish institution with which almost all immigrants from the Soviet Union more than likely had some contact soon after their arrival was the principal Jewish welfare organisation in either Melbourne or Sydney, the two cities in which most of these immigrants chose to settle. Both organisations (currently operating under the name of ‘Jewish Care’ within their respective states) were centrally involved in the processes of organising and supporting applications of Soviet Jews seeking immigrant visas to Australia, most of whom entered as refugees, or under the family reunion or the special assistance categories available within Australia’s tightly controlled immigration program. These Jewish welfare organisations also offered small monetary loans and provided a range of initial support programs for new arrivals from the former Soviet states, including English language courses. Equally importantly, they provided liaison services to assist immigrants in connecting and communicating with relevant government departments (such as immigration and social services), educational institutions for their children (in particular, helping to facilitate entry into one of the local fee-paying Jewish day schools) as well as mainstream employment and accommodation agencies, medical and health services, etc.³⁸

For some, the assistance available, although sincerely offered, was also limited and relatively short-term, as one immigrant from Odessa recalls of his early days in Melbourne:

We registered with Jewish Welfare ... who greeted us at the airport and took us to a hotel in St Kilda West, where we could live for a week before having to find a place of our own to rent.³⁹

As the 'first wave' of former Soviet immigrants in the 1970s and early 1980s were able to bring only clothing and a few personal belongings with them when they departed the USSR, most began looking for rental accommodation in flats and apartments. The suburbs of St Kilda and Elwood in Melbourne, and Bondi in Sydney quickly became areas of high residential concentration, as they offered a range of relatively low-rental public and private accommodation suited to these immigrants, a considerable number with severely limited financial resources. They were also areas popular with previous generations of Jews, in particular post-World War Two immigrants from Europe, and in which subsidised accommodation administered by Jewish welfare agencies or other types of public housing were often located. With the establishment of local businesses, restaurants and services catering to their particular needs, a number of streets and small sections in shopping centres soon began to reflect a visible 'Russian' presence, and these suburbs have continued to remain attractive as initial settlement areas for many recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

From an academic perspective, only one significant research study of former Soviet Jews in Australia looking at settlement patterns, integration issues and relationships to their local Jewish communities was undertaken prior to the early 1990s.⁴⁰ However, over the past 20 years there have been more studies that together provide a broader range of information about many of these immigrants. Apart from their inclusion as respondents in Jewish community surveys undertaken in Melbourne in 1991 and the more ambitious nation-wide Jewish survey in 2008, immigrants from the FSU (former Soviet Union) were also one of the groups targeted in a research study devoted to recent Jewish immigration undertaken in 2003/04.⁴¹ Supplementing these, other more focused studies of Jews from the FSU in Australia have emerged through the independent thesis research undertaken by tertiary students across a number of academic disciplines.⁴² From the findings reported in these research studies, and also from data extrapolated from each five-yearly Australian Census, it is possible to sketch out a broad overview of the significant characteristics associated with this group both historically and in the present.

As already noted, many arrived here with high levels of educational

and professional qualifications. Indeed, from her very early Melbourne study, carried out in the late 1970s, Elka Steinkalk reported that 56 per cent of her Soviet-born, 'parent' group had completed post-secondary education.⁴³ This characteristic changed very little over time. According to the 2011 Australian Census, among all Jewish persons born in the former USSR, well over half had attained a Bachelor's Degree or higher (this would include some who came as children or adolescents and completed their education in Australia). This figure is approaching, but according to the most recent census data still slightly below, that for all Australian Jews.⁴⁴ Interestingly, in this regard, through the course of the 20th century the trajectory of upward mobility of Jews as a group during their decades in the Soviet Union ran roughly parallel with that broadly achieved by Jewish emigrants who made their homes in the other 'promised lands' since the beginning of the 20th century (these include not only the USA, but also other countries of substantial Jewish immigration such as the UK, France, Argentina, South Africa, Israel and also Australia).⁴⁵ In most of these countries the Jewish population's relatively high socio-economic status is, to a large extent, the result of both current and earlier generations taking full advantage of opportunities to successfully complete the necessary educational qualifications and certification, and gaining entry into more highly remunerated skilled occupations and professions.

By the time former Soviet Jews began to arrive in Australia a majority of Jewish children, particularly in Melbourne and Sydney, were completing most, if not all, of their primary and secondary schooling within the Jewish day school system. In recent decades, many Jewish communities have invested considerable resources aimed at securing the benefits of a 'top quality' education for their children, which in pragmatic terms tends to focus on high-ranking final year secondary school examination results and therefore a broader range of tertiary and professional opportunities. The comparative evidence, in terms of 'mean scores' achieved each year, suggests considerable success in this regard for a significant proportion of the students enrolled in Australia's Jewish private schools.

One characteristic universally remarked upon in both Australian and overseas research on Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union is the importance placed on education, both for themselves and for future generations. And it also often noted that in the USSR 'education' referred not only to the content of formal schooling (important though that was) but also the associated 'cultural capital' required to take one's place in the

intelligentsia, the strata of Soviet society where Jews were prominent, felt they ‘belonged’, and from which they took considerable satisfaction and pride.⁴⁶

However, the worldview that predominated among the Soviet *intelligentsia* was avowedly ‘secularist’, and most shared an intellectual detachment from and a general distaste for all religious institutions, beliefs and rituals. By the 1970s it was estimated that only 20 per cent of all Soviet Jews were ‘religious’ and only 60 operating synagogues remained to serve a nominal Jewish population of more than three million. As one informant in an Australian research study commented, Soviet ideology ‘managed to take all religion out of our life, hence religion was not a consideration when we were choosing a school for our children, I thought, why should my children study this rubbish.’⁴⁷ So, while the existence of a comprehensive network of private Jewish schools, some offering fee-subsidies to ‘needy’ Jewish parents, was attractive, the sometimes mandatory ‘religious studies’ component of the curriculum was often met with at best an ambivalent, if not a hostile, response from some of the FSU Jewish parents.⁴⁸ Not surprisingly, when children from Soviet immigrant families began attending these schools in significant numbers, tensions around such views evoked clearly mixed responses from teachers, parents and the students themselves. A recent study reported the comments of more than one staff member in an Orthodox Jewish day school who stated explicitly that they felt Russian parents had chosen the schools because they could get free or ‘reduced-cost’ education for their children. Two examples were cited: ‘I asked a Russian parent, “How do you find [this school]?” They replied, “It is good, cheap independent private school, for my girl”; while another staff member commented that “it certainly shouldn’t be our *raison d’être* to give cheap secular studies to Russian kids [but this is] absolutely, 100 per cent, the dominant factor why they come here ...”’⁴⁹

In an article generally highly critical of the local Jewish community’s response to immigrants from the FSU, Inna Zaitseva provides a number of anecdotal examples of children experiencing ‘bullying’ at Jewish schools in which there were established ‘cliques and hierarchies’. She also articulates what was probably a common response to being reminded of their supposed ‘status and class inferiority’: that such ‘feelings of rejection were intensified because we Russians were, in truth, and we knew it, more cultured than these kids who were merely rich.’⁵⁰

This comment signals another barrier to any ‘easy’ or ‘smooth’

integration encountered by many of these Jewish immigrants upon arrival in Australia. Despite their high level of educational and occupational qualifications, and, for some, the considerable experience and expertise they brought with them, many former Soviet immigrants remained without employment for a considerable period after their arrival in Australia. Even when they did find work, for some this also provoked resentment, frustration and a challenge to their self-esteem, responses familiar to many recent immigrants who feel it necessary to take employment they consider ‘below’ their capacities and qualifications. The impact of these experiences are described with considerable empathy by a staff member of a Jewish day school who was interviewed for a recent study:

The parents were professionals in Russia and here they had to do menial jobs and that made them feel inferior. Doctors by profession were working as cleaning ladies. [The students’] Australian friends had beautiful homes while they had little flats, or government-provided flats. So, there were these vast differences between them, vast social difference, and parents doing menial tasks and depending on the kindness of others, and this must have made [Russian families] feel quite humiliated.⁵¹

Many of the experiences emphasised above are not unrelated to another, perhaps still unresolved and more generalised source of friction: the mutually uneasy and ambivalent relationship between the Soviet immigrants as a whole and the pre-existing Jewish communities. This is exemplified in Australia by the ongoing paucity of personal connections that have been forged between the former and the larger population of ‘core’ local Jews in the principal urban centres in which FSU Jews have settled.

As a number of sociological explorations of Jews in Australia have noted, in the decades following the post-war arrival of around 20,000 predominantly European Jewish migrants, more than doubling the country’s Jewish population, both Melbourne and Sydney quickly developed a substantial network of Jewish religious, cultural, sporting, social and community organisations. However there was, and continues to be, a noticeably low level of involvement and participation in any of these areas by immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Many local Jews are also aware that this trend is in stark contrast with the high level of integration into religious and communal activities by an almost equally large group of South African Jews, who settled in Australia during the same period.

A conclusion expressed privately, and also sporadically in public by local Jewish community activists and leaders, has been that as the immigrants from the Soviet Union exhibited so little interest in embracing religious ritual, community involvement and other aspects of local Jewish culture, this suggested that, in the end, they were not 'really Jews'. Understandably, such an interpretation struck a particularly sensitive chord among many of the immigrants who were acutely conscious that they and their families had been selectively discriminated against within the Soviet system precisely because they were Jews. Now in the west they are 'Russians', which, as a number of researchers point out, is a label they strongly reject, particularly as for Jews in the Soviet Union, the term 'Russians' was synonymous with 'non-Jews'.⁵² So, for many of the recent arrivals, what this widely evoked was a form of double cultural alienation and social marginalisation. This theme recurs frequently in interviews and first-person accounts in which they note that while they felt 'outcasts' as Jews in the former USSR, they now find themselves equally isolated as 'Russians' by both Jews and non-Jews in the West.

Perhaps then, it should also not be too surprising that many Soviet Jews have remained outside of Jewish community organisations – particularly considering that most arrived in Australia as adults. Apart from the adaptation and integration difficulties already outlined, the limited English language abilities of some of the immigrants make social relations and participation in organisations awkward or intimidating. As the Jewish community in Australia has a predominantly middle- to upper-middle class character, financial pressures also act as a constraint on integration, as many of the new immigrants lack the financial resources required to participate in and support voluntary community organisations.

But, more importantly, they did not bring with them from the Soviet Union any familiarity with or much empathy for institutions such as Jewish religious congregations, welfare organisations, community centres, Jewish day schools, etc. On the contrary, their reactions to calls for involvement in the 'public sphere' were largely shaped norms that had developed in the USSR where, over recent decades:

Jews ... shunned any form of political participation and concentrated on their private and professional lives. They seldom joined the Party and other Soviet organisations, and even after the fall of communism had low participation in organised parties and groups, including the Jewish ones. As

any self-organising initiatives growing from below [had been] sanctioned by the Soviet state, and most forms of activism sponsored from above were distasteful and/or forced, most Soviet Jews were suspicious of any social activism as such. The very concept of voluntary or self-help organisations lying at the core of civil society was unfamiliar to most of them.⁵³

Not surprisingly, attempts to exert social pressure on the FSU Jewish immigrants towards greater organisational involvement has, in the main, tended to arouse negative responses. Indeed, one relatively recent research study in Australia concluded that a relatively small ‘portion of the Jews from the FSU have affiliated’ while most have ‘lost touch with the organised Jewish community’.⁵⁴

Instead, and similar to most other non-English-speaking immigrant groups in Australia, Jews from the former Soviet Union prefer to socialise with people who have similar backgrounds and experiences to themselves. As it was for them in the USSR, maintaining personal friendship networks remains of considerable importance and much of their socialising tends to take place in private homes, or at any of the number of ‘Russian’ restaurants that have been established to cater to their needs for conviviality, communication in a common language, familiar food, music and other shared cultural interests.

And despite an initial reticence to participate in any form of voluntary organisations, this reluctance would seem to have diminished somewhat in recent decades, with a number of groups emerging directed specifically by former Soviet Jews towards the perceived needs and interests of immigrant Jews from the FSU, and in which Russian is the principal language of communication. This is a continuation of the trend identified more than 30 years ago: the preference by immigrant Soviet Jews for ‘developing parallel institutions’ rather than being drawn into existing community organisations and networks dominated by ‘local’ Jews.⁵⁵ An Australian research study in the early 2000s reported 89 per cent of respondents associated with other people from the FSU, reinforcing both Russian language use (in the study, of the FSU respondents 88 per cent were speaking and 77 per cent reading in Russian) as well as selected cultural aspects associated with their former Soviet-era Jewish milieu to which they carry considerable attachment. The study also noted that, at the time, even members of the younger generation were still mixing ‘largely with other young Russian Jews.’⁵⁶ So it is still probably fair to say that many FSU Jews ‘continue to

live in their own relatively closed social world.’⁵⁷ However, this applies more to those who arrived in Australia as adults, which would probably now also include parents who immigrated more recently to join children already settled here.⁵⁸

Notwithstanding the previous observations around the various sources for ongoing tensions, it would be inaccurate to depict the situation of immigrants in Australia from the former USSR as one in which all remain isolated and disconnected from local Jewish life.

Despite the already noted tendency among the immigrants from the former Soviet Union towards a secular, rather than a religious, orientation, a small but significant number have, since their arrival in Australia, embraced religious Judaism, and many of these have been drawn to the beliefs and rituals associated with the ultra-Orthodox segment of the Australian Jewish community. This latter group, itself a small but vigorous minority within contemporary Judaism (whose adherents number around 5 per cent of the Australian Jewish population) are strongly committed to a rigorous acceptance of the precepts and rituals of Jewish religious orthodoxy. Much of their religious authority is drawn from the historical traditions, practices and teachings associated with various strands of the charismatically inspired Chasidic movement that spread from Eastern Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, although currently their adherents are now numerically most heavily concentrated in the United States and Israel. In particular, the New York based Chabad group has been extremely active for several decades in ‘outreach’ work that has successfully drawn a considerable number of contemporary Jews back to the Orthodox beliefs and practices of religious Judaism.

The Chabad movement is also well represented in the major centres of Jewish population in Australia and associated with a number of synagogues, schools and community organisations.⁵⁹ Chabad has been a section of the religious community that has probably been most prominent in seeking to offer both practical and spiritual support to the new arrivals from the former Soviet Union.⁶⁰ Their schools in Sydney and Melbourne have provided generous fee-subsidies to parents of students from ‘Russian’ backgrounds; a specifically ‘Russian’ Chabad synagogue has been established in the Sydney suburb of Bondi, and in Melbourne there is Chabad on Carlisle – Jewish Russian Centre. Thus, some of the former Soviet immigrants in Australia have responded positively, not only to Chabad, but also to other opportunities to participate in a range of public

and private religious rituals and practices, many genuinely seeking to fulfil a desire for reconnecting with ‘traditional’ Jewish communality, a form of public identification as ‘religious’ Jews that the Soviet regime systematically sought to deny to them.⁶¹

But if we look beyond social and ethnic group considerations, in terms of their general quality of life in Australia, more recently available data suggests that FSU Jewish immigrants in Australia are doing fairly well on a number of socio-economic indicators. Their earlier settlement difficulties were associated with problems of communication and securing immediate employment.⁶² With regard to the latter, three major factors contributed to this: a relatively small number who came with good English language skills; widespread difficulty in having their previous qualifications recognised by accrediting bodies or, having the value of their ‘paper’ accreditation and previous experience in the USSR discounted by potential employers in Australia; and, particularly for the post-1988 arrivals, settling in Australia at a time when the combination of economic recession and workplace restructuring were influencing the local labour market and severely inhibiting the level of intake into the skilled workforce. Thus, in a Jewish community survey undertaken in Melbourne in 1991, the unemployment rate among a sub-sample of Soviet-born, post-1974 immigrants still hovered above 40 per cent.⁶³

However, from the high levels recorded in the early 1990s, over the last two decades the problem of unemployment has steadily faded in significance for most of this group. In the intervening years, earlier arrivals from the former Soviet Union have improved their English skills; some have undertaken retraining or accepted work in occupations and industries different from those for which they were qualified or in which they worked in their former country. Also, arrivals since the mid-1990s include more who now come with excellent English skills, and some who have accumulated financial capital that they are able to bring with them to Australia. Furthermore, they have been settling here during a period when the Australian economy has been experiencing fairly continuous and consistent growth.

From the evidence available, the occupational profile of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union suggests that they are already well represented in higher status occupations and professions. At the time of the 2011 Census, among those in the workforce, almost half of the former USSR-born Jews were working in relatively high-status occupations –14

per cent as ‘managers’ and 34 per cent as ‘professionals’.⁶⁴ These include a strong contingent in the fields of arts and culture, including a number with outstanding skills and creative talents who have already made their mark internationally, as well as on the Australian scene.

While their familiarity with, and facility in, English – a language vital to communication in most areas of work and public life – continues to improve, most of the former Soviet immigrants in Australia tend to use Russian as the primary language of social intercourse within the family and within their mainly Russian-speaking social circles. Thus, in the 2011 Census, just under two-thirds of all Jewish respondents who were born in the USSR reported that they spoke English ‘very well’ or ‘well’; while at the same time 85 per cent also indicated that they spoke Russian in the home. Although most share a strong antipathy to the former communist regime, they also generally maintain a strong attachment and appreciation of Russian culture, language and literature. Many are regular readers of Russian newspapers and magazines (both overseas and local), enjoy listening to Russian language radio programs and watching Russian films and television programs.

As most former Soviet Jews arrived in Australia as adults more than two decades ago, in comparison to the general population they now exhibit a somewhat unusual age distribution. In 2011 just under half were aged 60 years or older.⁶⁵ With the arrival of some of the parents of the original FSU immigrants, the older cohort has been enlarged further, and this group often face more significant adaptation difficulties. The older immigrants are less likely to speak English, and when transferred into the very different Australian context, family tensions and difficulties inevitably emerge. Unlike the former Soviet Union, where severe limitations on the availability of housing invariably required extended families to live together, in Australia, there is both less of the financial pressure and the normative impetus to maintain such arrangements. However, living alone can be isolating and confusing for aging parents, who often find it generally more difficult to negotiate the differences in culture, language and social mores they encounter in a new country. One observable outcome has been that, for example, in Melbourne since the early 2000s they have constituted a quarter of all Jewish Care clients,⁶⁶ with an increasing number in aged care facilities.

From the evidence available, very few of the former Soviet immigrants who settled in Australia have since departed the country permanently.⁶⁷

Indeed, most seem to be relatively satisfied with, although not totally uncritical of, most aspects of Australian life. They are most appreciative of the level of individual freedom available and for the relatively open opportunity structure, both for themselves and for the future of their children. In comparison to their experience in the former USSR, some find the arts and the public culture in Australia relatively impoverished, and they are often critical of what they perceive to be the more relaxed and liberal atmosphere in Australian schools.⁶⁸ As they had hoped, many of their children have been very successful in their academic studies at school, and some have already proceeded to higher education.⁶⁹ In the main, the children who completed all or a substantial proportion of their education in Australia have had a significantly easier time in adapting to Australian culture than their parents. However, as a group the immigrants from the former USSR have not been totally immune from the range of social problems present in the wider society, such as the rising incidence of family breakdowns, domestic violence, and alcohol and drug abuse.

Community, identity and the ‘crisis of mutual failed expectations’

The recent very large-scale emigration of former Soviet Jews to Israel and other diaspora countries has thrown up a number of important challenges for how we should view and understand two important elements central to contemporary Jewish life – the concepts of ‘community’ and ‘identity’. In light of the broader social and political changes since the early 19th century, as they relate to the experiences of Jews, the aspect of ‘community’ most relevant here conjures up an image of a relatively small population – usually geographically localised – whose ‘members’ are considered to share a strong sense of voluntary, intra-group connectedness. For ‘ethnic’ or other kinds of ‘minority’ communities (immigrant, religious, ‘life-style’) the basis for this connectedness is assumed to reside in some ‘core’ attribute that remains central to the psychological and social ‘identity’ of those who consider themselves part of the group.

Within modern, liberal-democratic nation states, as many observers have pointed out, while most still initially derive their ‘potential Jewishness’ directly from their family and ancestral heritage, sustaining this identity as a Jew throughout one’s life is more and more considered to be a question of ‘personal choice’ and therefore no longer something permanently ‘ascribed at birth’. And therefore, as research studies undertaken for the better part of the past century across numerous diaspora

communities have concluded, contemporary Jewish identity depends upon the voluntary behavioural and psychological affirmation by individuals of one or more social and psychological 'facets' that together come to represent the principal constituents of contemporary 'Jewishness'. These can and do change over time, but those that have been most constant in recent decades include: observance of and involvement in Jewish religion and religious practices; maintaining social relationships with other Jews; involvement with formal Jewish organisations and communal activities; identification with and emotional attachment to Israel and its future; positive feelings about one's own 'Jewishness'; and a concern with maintaining Jewish continuity in future generations. Research findings suggests that while some Jews may connect to their 'Jewishness' through many or in some cases even all of these 'facets', for others it may be through only one or two.⁷⁰ In effect this means that: 'the responsibility is placed on the individual to prove one's Jewishness – to join Jewish organisations, to go to synagogue ... to donate money to Jewish causes.'⁷¹

From what we have learned from the steadily mounting body of research undertaken on the Jewish emigrants from the Soviet Union, most continue to remain strongly attached to their identity as Jews. However, as in the USSR the authorities first literally 'ascribed' them to 'membership' of the 'Jewish nation' through birth and family heritage and then, second, chose to discriminate against anyone defined as part of this group on the same basis, upon entering the western diaspora communities many see no necessity to further 'prove' their Jewishness. So, the 'voluntary' behavioural facets of diaspora Jewishness, especially those that require involvement with 'institutionalised' Jewishness – either religious or communal – have not been warmly embraced by most FSU Jews. On the other hand, as Rutland suggests, their Jewish identity was constructed in 'ethno-national' terms, so these FSU immigrants tend to 'identify more strongly with Jewish peoplehood (*Am Israel*) than with Judaism as a religion.'⁷² Consequently, the strongest 'facets' of identity as Jews they sustain in their new communities tend to be: maintaining social relations with other Jews (albeit primarily Jews from the former Soviet Union); some emotional attachment and support of Israel (both as the manifestation of Jewish 'nationhood' and because most have personal and family attachments to FSU emigrants who settled there); and, generally positive feelings towards their own 'Jewishness'. There is also some concern among this group for sustaining Jewish continuity. Based on cross-national research studies, the

way Remennick describes the expectations that many FSU Jews have for the next generation would be shared by a considerable number of others in contemporary diaspora communities who adhere to what she identifies as ‘cultural Judaism’:

Although they did not expect their children to join in full-fledged Jewish religious life, most wanted them to be aware of their ethnic background and to gain some knowledge about Jewish historic and cultural heritage. In that sense, they subscribed to a mild version of ‘cultural Judaism’.⁷³

We might need to explore more deeply the proposition that the so-called disconnect between the ‘two communities’ is another particular manifestation of the deeper, longstanding problem concerned with establishing an authoritative definition of ‘Jewishness’ – ‘who is a Jew’ – that remains unresolved both in Israel and in the diaspora. The underlying impasse that tends to predominate in many encounters between FSU Jews and ‘local Jews’ is well described by Markowitz as likely to occur:

when two people ascribe to themselves the same ethnic label but fail to agree on the cultural content, because of the different social contexts in which each developed the same [nominal] identity ... [Inevitably] identity confusion and intra-group conflict will develop.

Markowitz further proposes that over time, the possible outcomes may be the development of ‘two distinct identities’, or for the groups to move towards some ‘composite’ form of identity.⁷⁴

But if notions of Jewish identity are contentious and complex, similar problems arise with the related assumptions around ‘community’. When one speaks, as many do, of ‘the Jewish community’ in the context of contemporary Jewish life, there is also an implicit assumption that, over time, a uniformly accepted composite form of Jewish identity has been established in a particular locality (or sometimes even nationally) and that the onus is on ‘newcomers’ to embrace it so they can integrate into ‘the community’ as soon as possible.

However, as the author of a recent article in this *Journal* strongly argued, between 1920 and 1950, Jewish Melbourne ‘lacked a single united community’ and in reality:

consisted of three disparate communities: an established Anglo-Jewish community, pre-war Jewish immigrants ... and

Holocaust survivors. Each of these communities was marked by different heritage, ethnicity and experience.⁷⁵

The article also notes the status hierarchy that existed with the more 'assimilated' Anglo-Australian Jewish ascendancy feeling both challenged for control of community institutions by the later groups and alienated from some of their priorities and concerns (for example, Eastern European Jews support of Zionism and maintenance of Yiddish language and culture, German Jews introduction of Reform Judaism). Furthermore, the significant number of post-war Jewish immigrants who arrived, many from Eastern Europe and often, in comparison to most Anglo-Australian Jews, more 'ethnically' identified, soon came to dominate, revitalise and in many ways redirect 'the community' in ways more consistent with the social and cultural context of their pre-war European past. Indeed, within a couple of decades many took up the leadership roles in local religious, educational and community organisations, congealing to form a 'new' Jewish ascendancy.

Also, throughout this period social and friendship groups were still often based on shared characteristics, particularly along the lines of language use, religiosity, political orientations and even locality or national origin (examples are the emergence of new synagogues and schools, social separation by Sephardim from the overwhelmingly European Ashkenazi Jews in Australia, the various Zionist factions and their associated youth movements, and *Landsmanshaften* bringing together surviving Jews from a particular town or *shtetl*). The relative absence of social relations and avenues for 'integration' between Anglo-Jews and most of the later European settlers was also very apparent. This point is expressed with some feeling in a letter to the *Australian Jewish News* in 2006 from a post-war immigrant, ironically in response to one of the periodically erupting 'public debates' around who was 'to blame' for the continued alienation of FSU Jews from the Melbourne community:

Let me tell you also, that through the 54 years that I have been in this country I have never ever been invited for Shabbat or any other occasion to the homes of the local Australian Jews. We were met here by a very indifferent Jewry who were indifferent to our horrific experiences.⁷⁶

Such feelings of rejection and exclusion, it could be argued, a generation or more earlier than the post-1970s tensions between Jews from the former Soviet Union and the more recently constituted local 'Jewish

ascendancy’, also reflect a parallel version of ‘ambivalence’ and ‘separation’ as they were experienced by previous Jewish immigrant groups.⁷⁷

However, after carefully describing and discussing the ‘three disparate communities’ in Melbourne up to 1950, Rafael Ungar concludes: ‘Despite the divisions in the past, Melbourne’s Jewish population eventually formed a cohesive single community.’⁷⁸ But is this really the case? While by the 1970s there may have been a ‘core’ of ‘affiliated Jews’, attached to a now large and diverse range of congregations, schools, community organisations and social and cultural groups; and while there were crosscutting, inter-personal networks, extending across two or more generations, inevitably expanding opportunities for contact, interaction and social bonding, there were also still notable sources of fracture and division. In particular, this was evident in the ongoing serious tensions between Orthodox and Reform congregations around issues of identity and legitimacy. Jews with more extreme left-wing political views also found themselves outside the community ‘umbrella’, as did some Yiddish-speaking Bundists who were not supporters of Zionism and Israel.

Even if, overall, the existence of a central population of ‘core’ Jews who were actively involved in reconstructing, and now felt very much a part of ‘the Jewish community’ was becoming more apparent, there was also a distinct and not insignificant ‘periphery’ that included, among others, some of the increasing numbers of religiously unaffiliated (who in surveys chose to identify themselves as ‘Jewish but not religious’).⁷⁹ The slowly increasing rate of out-marriage was another indirect indicator of a shift away from any ‘single cohesive community’.

Through the following decades to the end of the 20th century and beyond, the former Soviet Jews were only one of three substantial immigrant groups who settled in Australia.⁸⁰ And in a number of ways, both in their relationships to their Jewish identity and to the local communities in which they settled, Jews from South Africa and those born in Israel share some quite similar responses to those reported of Jews from the FSU. This suggests that perhaps it is still fair to question the assumption of a ‘single cohesive’ Jewish community. For example, in the report of a comparative study of the three immigrant communities, all sustain a large proportion of their primary social relations with Jews born in the same country as themselves – 89 per cent among FSU respondents, 78 per cent among Israel-born Jews and 58 per cent among those born in South Africa. Connections to Judaism as a religion vary considerably, with over 90 per

cent of Jews from South Africa affiliated to a religious denomination, and overwhelmingly identifying as Orthodox. This is in stark contrast to the FSU immigrants in the study of whom only 14 per cent reported some religious affiliation. In the middle are the Jews from Israel – 46 per cent religiously affiliated – whose group religious profile is slightly closer to the FSU Jews than to the South Africans. On involvement with the local Jewish community, the Israel-born are again in the middle – on a scale of ten, they score five, only one point higher than the FSU Jews and below the Jews from South Africa. While FSU immigrants identify primarily as Jews by nationality (but not as Russian), many immigrants from Israel identify primarily with their Israeli nationality and often prefer to differentiate themselves from ‘Jews’, a term many associate more with adherents of the Jewish religion and with diaspora communities. Yet, although many left Israel because they were not comfortable living there, 42 per cent still consider Israel rather than Australia to be their ‘home’ (in contrast, only 5 per cent of the South Africa-born and 7 per cent of FSU-born Jews thought of their country of birth as their ‘home’, almost all settlers from these backgrounds choosing Australia as home).⁸¹

Most South African immigrants who were and continue to be connected to Orthodox Judaism come from a country in which participation in the local Jewish community was also considered an important facet of their identity as Jews, and are collectively socio-economically more similar to the local Jews than the other two groups. But perhaps surprisingly, when asked about their ‘feelings of belonging to their local Jewish community’, only 34 per cent reported they felt ‘more part of the Jewish community’ here than in South Africa; in contrast, despite their supposed lack of connection and integration in Australia, 90 per cent of the FSU Jews reported they felt ‘more part of the Jewish community here’.⁸² Furthermore, while former South Africans have founded their own synagogues, retain connections with South Africa and after immigration still mostly maintain close personal ties with others from the same background, they are not generally depicted, with a negative inflection, as a ‘community within a community’, as are the FSU immigrants. Nor does there seem to be any public unease expressed from the Jewish leadership or media asking ‘what should be done’ about the obvious ‘ambivalence’ and ‘separation’ between a considerable portion of the Israeli immigrants in Australia who are not generally religious, mix mostly with other Israelis and show little interest in, and certainly privately, often express considerable disdain for, issues

of concern to local Jews and to the 'mainstream' community.⁸³ Even on a survey measure relating to the identity facet of 'concern about Jewish continuity', that is, the 'acceptance of intermarriage' for their children, the Israeli group came out the highest of the three (64 per cent), well above the FSU respondents (42 per cent).⁸⁴

So, in the Australian context as explored above, we are able to identify the particular combination of constituents that both here and in other places has lead inevitably to what Remennick identified as the 'crisis of failed expectations'. It would certainly appear to be indisputable that diaspora Jews were anxious to assist 'fellow Jews' who sought to depart the Soviet Union where, particularly in recent decades, they no longer felt 'at home'. But in most of the places in which they settled (including Israel), 'local Jews expected these refugees to be oppressed Jews, grateful for the opportunity to come to [their country] and thankful for every piece of advice and every dollar.'⁸⁵ Particularly in relatively affluent western diaspora communities where they were often offered financial assistance and 'moral support' to help their integration, both into their new 'Jewish' and 'mainstream' lives, an important 'expectation' was very quickly dashed. Locals perceived that, in general, the 'saved Russian Jews' exhibited little 'appreciation and eagerness ... to live as "real Jews" after decades disguised as Soviet citizens.'⁸⁶

And what of the expectations of the former Soviet citizens? In the main, Larissa Remenick suggests:

To be accepted on their own terms for who they are – hard-working, educated ambitious people ... They left the FSU in search of self-actualisation, higher living standards, and better futures for their children rather than [to] return to the Jewish religion and lifestyle, which their forefathers had left behind in the *shtetls* of Russia and Ukraine many decades ago. They assert that no one has the right to teach them how to be Jews ...⁸⁷

While FSU settlers appear, at least several decades after emigration, to be reasonably successful in their desire for socio-economic mobility (and available data in Australia on the 'second generation' suggests that), as a group, their children are exceeding their parents' already high levels of education and professional qualifications, the 'failed expectations' lie in the disappointments and resistances around the pressures from members of local communities to recast their Jewishness in ways quite alien to them.

And at a more familiar level, many FSU immigrants felt the local Jewish community lacked 'sympathy, compassion, empathy and a personal touch and attitude'.⁸⁸ How much both sets of clashing expectations have contributed to the widely observed 'separateness' in personal and social relations between the two groups and how much it is part of the cause is difficult to unravel.

In the era of globalisation with its exponentially expanding communication technologies, the expatriate Jews from the Soviet Union, ironically, have found it easier to become the 'rootless cosmopolitans' that Stalin accused them of being. Across many destination countries FSU immigrants 'manifest multiple signs of transnational identity and lifestyle, feeling as part of a global Russian-speaking community stretching between the FSU, Israel and the West.' The main 'glue' connecting them 'is their affinity with the Russian language and culture, their common Soviet past, and recent emigration and readjustment in their host countries.'⁸⁹ How long this will continue is an open question. A leading researcher who has been studying the Soviet Jewish diaspora for several decades considers that it will 'surely persist during the lifespan of the current adult generation of former Soviets, and will perhaps linger for several decades among their children.'⁹⁰

Certainly, some FSU immigrants and their children engage with the 'voluntary' aspect of diaspora Jewish identity by choosing to 'discard' their Jewishness, either adopting other religious faiths or simply ceasing to be Jews. Inna Zaitseva observes that many prefer to be 'Russian Australians and not Jewish Australians.'⁹¹ Suzanne Rutland causally connects the observed drift from the Jewish community to 'lack of reinforcement of their Jewish identity' that in turn leads to 'a high level of integration within the younger generation, with assimilation and out-marriage being ongoing issues'.⁹² How prevalent these trends are or even if they occur more frequently among those with a FSU background than among the general Jewish population still awaits systematic research.

Perhaps it might help to cease problematising the former Soviet Jews by recognising their responses to resettlement and adaptation as closer to 'normal', and as, in fact, not that dissimilar to those of some other sub-groups in the context of more than a century of Jewish immigration and the total reconstitution of the Jewish world. Perhaps it is time to take a break from debating whether the 'end result' of FSU Jewish settlement in diaspora communities has been, and will continue to be, the hardening of each of 'two distinct identities'.

Ultimately, perhaps the most measured observations on the Australian situation came from the prominent community leader, Graeme Leonard, in 2006, then president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. Asked to comment during the public furour over Inna Zaitseva’s article critical of the Jewish community’s indifference to immigrants from the former Soviet Union, his response, as reported in the *Australian Jewish News*, was:

‘So, as is often the case with new immigrant groups, it takes at least a generation to gain effective integration into the society in which they are now living and understanding of the values of that society. It takes time but it will happen, there’s no doubt about it,’ [Graeme] Leonard said, adding that other Jewish migrants to Australia had a similar experience upon arrival ...⁹³

Notes

- 1 As reproduced in Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 341.
- 2 Larissa Remennick, *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Identity, integration, and conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publications, 2007), p. 24.
- 3 Slezkine, op. cit. See, in particular, chapter 4: ‘Hodl’s Choice: The Jews and Three Promised Lands’, pp. 204–371.
- 4 *ibid.*, p. 359.
- 5 The number of published reports, articles and books on this topic now run into the hundreds. Useful historical and comparative overviews of research findings may be found in: John Goldlust and Ron Taft, *The Jewishness of Soviet Emigrants of the 1970s: A review of Studies in USA, Canada and Australia*, Research Report No. 5 (Melbourne: Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1993); Noah Lewin-Epstein, Yaacov Ro’i and Paul Ritterband (eds), *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Migration and settlement* (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1997); and, Remennick, op. cit.
- 6 Remennick, op. cit., p. 371. An early 1980s academic overview of recent Jewish immigrants to the US succinctly encapsulates these ‘failed expectations’, and expresses the still predominantly held views by diaspora Jews of the former Soviet Jews who have settled in the west since the 1970s:
‘Russians are the least Jewish – generally irreligious, with little knowledge of Yiddish or of other aspects of Jewish secular culture. Coming from a country in which any form of religious affiliation is considered backward and deviant, and in which Jewish cultural activities have been virtually non-existent, only a small minority who come to the United States have Jewish interests or strong Jewish identification. On the whole, they do not relate to institutions except to seek

- help, or sometimes to participate in community programs run by Soviet Jews and tailored to their needs and interests.' Drora Kass and Seymour Martin Lipset, 'Jewish Immigration to the United States from 1967 to the Present: Israelis and others,' in Marshall Sklare (ed.) *Understanding American Jewry*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1982) p. 276.
- 7 Zvi Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the present* (New York: Schocken, 1985), p. 114-5.
 - 8 Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union* (New York: Cambridge, 1988), p. 73.
 - 9 *ibid.*, p. 75.
 - 10 *ibid.*, p. 57.
 - 11 Slezkine, *op. cit.*, p. 206. And as he notes later (*ibid.*, p. 360): 'Most Jewish nationalist accounts of Soviet history have preserved the memory of Jewish victimisation at the hands of the Whites, Nazis, Ukrainian nationalists, and the postwar Soviet state, but not the memory of the Jewish Revolution against Judaism, Jewish identification with Bolshevism, and the unparalleled Jewish success within the Soviet establishment of the 1920s and 1930s.'
 - 12 Already by 1939: 'The share of college graduates among Jews (6 per cent) was ten times the the rate for the general population (0.6 percent) and three times the rate for the general population (0.6 per cent) and three times the rate for the urban population (2 per cent). Jews constituted 15.5 per cent of all Soviet citizens with higher education ... One-third of all Soviet Jews of college age (19 to 24 years old) were college students. The corresponding figure for the Soviet Union as a whole was between 4 and 5 per cent.' Furthermore, in the same year an enormous proportion of Jews in the two major cities had jobs as 'white-collar state employees' – of those employed, 82.5 per cent in Moscow and 63.2 per cent in Leningrad. (*ibid.*, pp. 223-4.)
 - 13 *ibid.*, p. 239.
 - 14 From the memoir of Evgeny Gnedin (born in 1898) cited by Slezkine (*ibid.*, p. 241.)
 - 15 There is a lack of agreement on the overall number of the Soviet population evacuated, with estimates ranging from a low of 6 million to a high of 25 million. The figure of around 16 million seems to have established considerable support in recent academic sources. See, Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and survival in the Soviet Union at war* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 1. For a recent extended discussion on the number of Soviet Jews evacuated in 1941 and 1942 see, Vadim Dubson, 'Toward a Central Database of Evacuated Soviet Jews' Names, for the Study of the Holocaust in the Occupied Soviet Territories,' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Volume 26, Number 1, Spring 2012, pp. 95-119.
 - 16 See for example, the number of former Soviet Jews in Australia who reflect positively on their involvement in the Soviet military effort during 'the Great Patriotic War', among the 59 short memoirs included in two volumes published

- by Melbourne’s Makor Jewish Community Library: Julie Meadows and Elaine Davidoff (eds), *Memory Guide My Hand*, Volume 4, parts 1 and 2 (Caulfield, Vic: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2007); and Julie Meadows and Elaine Davidoff (eds) *Memory Guide My Hand*, Volume 5, (Caulfield, Vic: 2008).
- 17 Sheila Fitzpatrick, ‘Annexation, Evacuation and Antisemitism in the Soviet Union, 1939–1946,’ in Mark Edele, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Atina Grossmann (eds), *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish survival in the Soviet Union* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, forthcoming), Chapter 3.
- 18 *ibid.* As Slezkine writes (*op. cit.*, p. 297), from the point of view of the Stalin and the Party, the Jews ‘had become analogous to the Germans, Greeks, Finns, Poles, and other “nonnative” nationalities presumed to be beholden to an external homeland and thus congenitally and irredeemably alien.’
- 19 *ibid.*, p. 339.
- 20 *ibid.*, p. 337.
- 21 Remennick, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
- 22 Roberta L. Markus, and Donald V. Schwartz, ‘Soviet Jewish Emigres in Toronto: Ethnic Self-Identity and Issues of Integration,’ *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1984), pp. 75-6.
- 23 Slezkine, *op. cit.*, p. 354-5.
- 24 Zvi Gitelman, ‘Soviet-Jewish Immigrants to the United States: Profile, Problems Prospects,’ in Robert O. Freedman (ed.), *Soviet Jewry in the Decisive Decade, 1971–80* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1984), p. 89. According to the 1970 Soviet census, at that time there were about 2.15 million Jews in the Soviet Union. See, Mark Tolts, ‘Demography of the Contemporary Russian-Speaking Jewish Diaspora’, Paper presented to conference on the contemporary Russian-speaking Jewish Diaspora (Harvard University, November 13–15, 2011), p. 24.
- 25 According to Gitelman (1984, *op. cit.*, p. 90), between 1971 and 1980, in total ‘some 156,000 Soviet Jews emigrated to Israel, 79,806 went to the United States, and about 16,200 emigrated to other countries.’
- 26 Markus and Schwartz, *op. cit.*, p. 72, reported that an estimated 8,000 Soviet Jews had settled in Canada by 1983. And in Australia the figure given in an early research study is ‘around 5,000 by the middle of 1982’. See, Elka Steinkalk, ‘The Adaptation of Soviet Jews in Victoria: A Study of Adolescent Immigrants and their Parents.’ Unpublished PhD thesis, Monash University, 1982, p. 32.
- 27 Tolts, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
- 28 Sergio DellaPergola, ‘World Jewish Population, 2015,’ Current Jewish Population Reports, No. 14, 2016 (New York: Berman Jewish Data Bank), p. 28. Reprinted from Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin. (eds), *The American Jewish Year Book*, 2015, Volume 115 (Dordrecht: Springer).
- 29 *ibid.*, p. 57. In his extensive demographic studies of contemporary Jewry, DellaPergola makes a distinction between ‘core Jews’ (‘all persons who, when asked in a socio-demographic survey, identify themselves as Jews, or who are

- identified as Jews by a respondent in the same household, and do not have another monotheistic religion'), and broader, more inclusive categories such as the 'enlarged Jewish population' (the 'core' plus: persons who report they are partly Jewish; all others of Jewish parentage; and non-Jewish household members – spouses, children, etc.). *ibid.*, pp. 11–12.
- 30 Tolts, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–4.
- 31 For a detailed exposition of these events see, Sam Lipski and Suzanne D. Rutland, *Let My People Go: The untold story of Australia and the Soviet Jews 1959–89*, (Melbourne: Hybrid Publishers, 2015). See also, Suzanne D. Rutland, 'Australia and the Struggle for Soviet Jewry: 1961–1972,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (2014), pp. 194–213.
- 32 Suzanne D. Rutland, 'Jews from the Former Soviet Union in Australia: Assimilating or Maintaining Jewish Identities?' *Journal of Jewish Identities*, Issue 4, No. 1 (2011), p. 68.
- 33 So, for example, Rutland ('Jews from the Former Soviet Union,' *op. cit.*, p. 68), reports that according to the president of the Shalom Association, Melbourne's largest community organisation for former Soviet Jews, combining data from Jewish Care (welfare agency), Jewish community mailing lists and 'Victorian government' sources suggests that 'between 12,000 and 14,000 Russians resided in Melbourne in 2004,' but that he believed 'the numbers are even higher.' Similarly, Rabbi Yoram Ulman of 'Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe' (a Chabad-sponsored organisation in Sydney directed towards former Soviet Jews), gave the figure of 'around 12,000 FSU Jews in Sydney, making a total of 26,000 or 27,000 Jews from the FSU in Australia.' Similar numbers appeared in an official 2001 report on Jews from the FSU by Dr Nikolay Borshevsky, Israel's Jewish Agency representative, who 'estimated that about 30,000 Jews had arrived in Australia since 1971.'
- 34 Sources for census data information: for the earlier dates see, W. D. Rubinstein, *The Jews In Australia, Volume II: 1945 to the present* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1991), p. 87; for 1996 see, John Goldlust, 'Soviet Jews In Australia,' in James Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People: An encyclopaedia of the nation, its people and their origins*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001). p. 543; for 2011, Emmanuel Gruzman provided me with the appropriate figure from the Australian Census. Also, where they are not attributed to other sources, all statistics and tables on Jews who were born in the FSU (and their children) derived from Australian Census data since 2001 and cited in this article were extracted by Emmanuel. I thank him for providing me access to this material and granting me permission to cite from the census data he has collected and analysed especially at my request.
- 35 Personal communication from Emmanuel Guzman, currently researching his doctoral thesis at Monash University who kindly provided me with the data on which his arguments and conclusions are based.
- 36 While, as already noted, not all Jews from the former USSR are 'Russian', this is invariably what they were (and still are) known as by local Jewish communities,

- even though, as discussed, some strongly resented being tagged with this ‘label’.
- 37 According to 2011 Australian Census data, 63 per cent of Jews (by religion) born in the FSU live in Victoria (mostly Melbourne); a further 34 per cent in NSW; leaving very few who settled in other Australian States and Territories. See, Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
 - 38 As reported by Rutland (‘Jews from the Former Soviet Union,’ *op. cit.*, p. 72), in Melbourne, Jewish Care remained ‘actively involved in the integration of Jews from the FSU’. But by the time of the second ‘wave’ of immigrants that began in the late 1980s, clients were mainly ‘elderly pensioners facing financial hardship who do not speak English and experience difficulties negotiating government services.’
 - 39 From one of the autobiographical sketches included in the volume by Vladimir Kievski (ed. Russian text) and Becky Voskoboinik et al., *For the Benefit of Australia: The journey and contributions of Soviet immigrants to Australia* (Balaclava, Victoria: Shalom Association, 2011), p. 211.
 - 40 Undoubtedly the pioneering study was undertaken by the late Elka Steinkalk as research for her doctoral dissertation: Elka Steinkalk, *The Adaptation of Soviet Jews in Victoria: A study of adolescent immigrants and their parents*, unpublished PhD, Monash University, 1982. She used sociological questionnaires, interviews and psychological inventories and her sample included 101 adolescents along with their 154 Soviet-born parents. Published reports based on her research include: Ronald Taft and Elka Steinkalk, ‘The Adaptation of Recent Soviet Immigrants in Australia,’ in R. Lagunes and Y. H. Poortinga (eds) *From a Different Perspective: Studies of behaviour across culture*, (Lisse: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1985); and, Goldlust and Taft, *op. cit.* Another early doctoral thesis investigation drew on interviews carried out in Sydney, see, Anna Frankel, *Soviet Jewish Emigrants in Australia: Problems of multidimensional integration*, Unpublished PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1986. Some aspects of this study were reported in an article published a few years later in this journal: Anna Frenkel, ‘Problems of Integration of Soviet Jewish Emigrants in Australia’, *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, X (8), 1990, pp. 709-29.
 - 41 A detailed report on the latter study, which compared numerous aspects of settlement, adaptation and Jewish identity of members of the three largest recent Jewish immigrant groups to Australia (from Israel, the FSU and South Africa), see: Suzanne D. Rutland and Antonio Carlos Gariano, *Survey of Jews in the Diaspora: An Australian perspective*, Final Report, The Jewish Agency of Israel in conjunction with The Zionist Federation of Australia, 2005. Other research findings from this study are reported in the more recently published article by Rutland, ‘Jews from the Former Soviet Union,’ *op. cit.*
 - 42 These include: Elena Boyarovsky, *In The Grip of the System: A study of the adaptation of Soviet-Jewish migrants to Australia*, Honours Thesis, School of Politics, La Trobe University, 1997; Inna Zaitseva, *Jewish Identity of the Recent Immigrants from the Former USSR to Melbourne: A preliminary analysis*, Honours Thesis, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of

- Melbourne, 1997; Fruma Rosenfeld, *A Needs Assessment Regarding Programs for Russian Adolescents in Orthodox Jewish Day Schools: A comparative case study*, Doctoral Thesis, Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, 2014.
- 43 Steinkalk, op cit., p. 84.
 - 44 From the 2011 Australian Census analysis of educational qualifications of Jews by religion who were born in the FSU, 53 per cent had a Bachelor's degree or higher. The equivalent figure for all other Jews by religion in Australia was just above 64 per cent.
 - 45 Although access to tertiary and professional education came several decades earlier for Soviet Jews, in the 1920s and 1930s (see footnote 12 above), than it did for Jews in the US where the real 'mass movement' of Jews into the professions did not take place until after World War II. See: Karen Brodtkin Sacks, 'How Did Jews Become White Folks?' in Stephen Gregory and Roger Sanjek (eds), *Race* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), pp. 89-90. In Australia the equivalent trend among Jews really got going in the 1960s and early 1970s.
 - 46 Drawing from her extensive cross-national studies of emigrants from the FSU, Remennick (op. cit., p. 25) observes: 'Perhaps the pinnacle of the perceived Russian-Jewish identity was (and still is) the ambition for excellence and achievement, in any given sphere of activity, with the corollary high valuation of education, hard effort, and intellectualism.' And she also notes: 'This sense of belonging to the cultural elite, regardless of their personal achievements, often made a disservice to Russian Jews after emigration, when they suddenly found themselves at the bottom of the new social pyramid.' (ibid., p. 32).
 - 47 ibid., p. 11.
 - 48 The well established and extensive Jewish day school system in Australia was also seen by many in the local community as an effective avenue through which former Soviet immigrants may be drawn more closely into the local Jewish community, given that their children, once enrolled in such schools, would participate in the entire curriculum that includes the study of Jewish history, religion, culture and Hebrew language and therefore more likely to interact and form friendships with other Jewish children from a wider range of social backgrounds.
 - 49 Rosenfeld, op. cit., p. 123. This is supported by responses, in the same study, from both the former Soviet-Union immigrant parents and their children who identified, in order, the 'top three disadvantages of a Jewish education' as: 'Too expensive'; 'Limited subject choices'; and 'Too religious' (ibid., p. 136). Furthermore, as Suzanne Rutland ('Jews from the Former Soviet Union,' op. cit., p. 80) notes: 'In the early years, Jews from the FSU sent their children to Jewish schools because they received subsidies, but could no longer do so when these subsidies decreased.' Earlier research studies both in Australia and other diaspora communities often found Soviet parents' choice of Jewish schools heavily influenced by academic reputation rather than their Judaic curriculum content (Goldlust & Taft, op. cit., p. 31-2). In a Toronto study, Markus & Schwartz (op.

- cit., p. 83) reported that when parents became aware ‘that the Judaic component would not help, and might even hinder, students’ chances of access to higher education (and hence socio-economic mobility), the children were transferred to public schools.’
- 50 Inna Zaitseva, ‘Neither Jewish Australians nor Russian Australians: The Badlands of the Community,’ in Michael Fagenblat et al. (eds), *New Under The Sun: Jewish Australians on religion, politics & culture* (Melbourne: Black Ink, 2006), p. 69.
 - 51 Rosenfeld, op. cit., p. 112.
 - 52 In a Melbourne-based research study (Rosenfeld, op. cit., p. 107), one young student reported telling his mother that at school ‘people call me Russian’, to which she responded: ‘You are not Russian, but I am not Russian either.’ As he clarified to the interviewer: ‘In Russia, to be Russian means Russian Orthodox, Christian, and we are Jewish, not Russian.’ For an extended exploration and discussion of the tensions around post-immigration ‘identities’, see: Fran Markowitz, ‘Jewish in the USSR, Russian in the USA: Social Context and Ethnic Identity,’ in Walter P. Zenner (ed.), *Persistence and Flexibility: Anthropological perspectives on the American Jewish experience* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 79-95.
 - 53 Remennick, op. cit., p. 50.
 - 54 Rutland ‘Jews from the Former Soviet Union,’ op. cit., p. 83.
 - 55 Markowitz, op. cit., p. 88. The publication produced in 2011 by the Melbourne-based ‘Shalom Association,’ the major community organisation established in 1980 by immigrants from the ‘first wave’ cohort, celebrates the gradual expansion of social and cultural groups set up by of FSU Jews in Australia and includes a brief history covering various locally produced Russian language radio and TV programs, literary magazines, websites as well as groups catering to particular and specialist interests. These include: ‘older immigrants’, ‘Victims of Nazism’, ‘Second World War Veterans’, ‘physical activities’, ‘literature’, and a ‘Song Club’. (See, Kievski and Voskoboinik et al., op. cit.)
 - 56 Rutland and Gariano, op. cit., p. 39.
 - 57 Zaitseva, op. cit., p. 69.
 - 58 It should also be noted that many of the FSU Jews who settled here obtained visas to Australia under the ‘Special Assistance Category for minorities’ that operated during the years 1991–96 as part of government’s ‘humanitarian migration program’. Much smaller numbers have come since 1997, mainly those who qualified for permanent resident visas as ‘skilled migrants’, or others who became eligible through the ‘Family Reunion’ stream of Australia’s closely controlled immigration program.
 - 59 As a global organisation, the Chabad movement expressed a special interest in the changing situation in the Soviet Union and, following the collapse of communism there, very quickly became the ‘most visible and active’ Jewish organisation in ‘the open competition for the hearts and minds of the remaining Russian Jews.’ [Remennick, op. cit., p. 35.]

- 60 Indeed, based on her recent research study, Suzanne Rutland concluded that of the relatively small portion of Jews from the FSU who did develop some affiliation with their local Jewish community, 'most [have been] affected in some way by the outreach activities supported by Chabad rabbis in Melbourne and Sydney.' See, Rutland 'Jews from the Former Soviet Union,' p. 83. And alongside her critical comments on the general 'coldness' shown by local Jews toward FSU immigrants, Zaitseva (op. cit., p. 70) singles out Chabad as 'the noble exception' who were at least welcoming even though they might have had 'a missionary agenda'.
- 61 And, as Rutland ('Jews from the Former Soviet Union,' op. cit., p. 77) has noted, among FSU immigrants who settled in Australia, 'those who affiliated as Jews have increased their Jewish observance.'
- 62 These seem to have been problems shared by many of the recent global Soviet diaspora. In her comparative cross-national studies Remennick (op. cit., p. 50) observed that: 'Although this wave of migrants was endowed with impressive human capital in terms of their formal education and professional background, many of them turned out to be poorly equipped for economic and social readjustment in the West.'
- 63 John Goldlust, 'Soviet Jews In Australia,' in James Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People: An encyclopaedia of the nation, its people and their origins* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 546.
- 64 Similar trends have been observed elsewhere that FSU Jews have settled. In the US, according to Slezkine (op. cit., p. 368), 'the new immigrant households from the former Soviet Union begin to earn more than the national average within a few years of arrival.'
- 65 By comparison, in 2011, a little over a quarter of non-FSU Jews in Australia were over 60 years of age.
- 66 Personal communication from Emmanuel Guzman.
- 67 Since the collapse of the communist regime in the Soviet Union, a small number have taken the opportunity to return to what is now a very different society from the one they left, but many subsequently came back to Australia.
- 68 On FSU immigrant parents views on the Australian education system: see, Boyarovsky, op. cit. pp. 28-9.
- 69 According to data from the 2011 Australian census, of 418 children of Jewish immigrants from the FSU old enough to have completed their education, two-thirds have qualifications at the level of Bachelor's degree or higher.
- 70 So, drawing on the work of Professor Ron Taft, the analysis of data from the social survey of the Melbourne Jewish community in the late 1960s was anchored by a series of scales that sought to operationalise seven distinctive components of Jewish identification. See Ronald Taft, 'Jewish Identification of Melbourne Jewry,' in Peter Medding (ed.) *Jews in Australian Society* (South Melbourne, Macmillan, 1973), p. 67. While no universal agreement has emerged as to the definitive number and nature of the facets (for example Taft's list

included Yiddish language and ‘Jewish folk culture’, a facet of identity that no longer appears to hold as much centrality in diaspora Jewish life), a broad commonality around the more important components does continue to have relevance to contemporary research. See also, Harold S. Himmelfarb, ‘Research on American Jewish Identity and Identification: Progress, Pitfalls, and Prospects,’ in Marshall Sklare (ed.) *Understanding American Jewry* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1982) p. 71; from a factor analysis of the data relevant to Jewish identity and identification collected in the Australia-wide Gen08 Jewish survey, four central ‘facets’ emerged, see Andrew Markus, et al., *Jewish Continuity: Report series on Gen08 survey* (Melbourne, ACJC Monash University, June 2011) pp. 55-7.

- 71 Markowitz, op. cit., p. 83.
- 72 Rutland, ‘Jews from the Former Soviet Union,’ op. cit., p. 77.
- 73 Remennick, op. cit., p. 295.
- 74 Markowitz, op. cit., p. 80.
- 75 Rafael Ungar, ‘Melbourne’s Three Jewish Communities, 1920–1950,’ *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, Vol. XXII, Part 4, 2014, p. 30.
- 76 ‘Letters’, *Australian Jewish News*, 23 June, 2006, p. 19.
- 77 Indeed the letter was in response to extracts in the *Australian Jewish News* of an article by Inna Zaitseva in which she wrote that in the previous 25 years, hundreds of FSU immigrants were consistently given ‘the cold shoulder by the very Jewish community that fought so hard for their immigration on humanitarian grounds.’ (‘Badlands: the marginalisation of Russian Jews in Australia,’ *Australian Jewish News*, 16 June, 2006, p. 20). And, after directly quoting a similar comment from a prominent FSU informant in her study, Rutland (‘Jews from the Former Soviet Union,’ op. cit., p. 72) notes that: ‘This sense of alienation from the established community is not a new phenomenon and is well documented for previous waves of immigrants to Australia.’
- 78 Ungar, op. cit., p. 33.
- 79 In the 1991 Jewish Community Survey conducted with a sample of 640 Melbourne Jews, asked to ‘describe their feelings in relation to the Jewish religion’ within a set of nominated responses, 6 per cent chose ‘strictly orthodox’, 33 per cent ‘traditional religious’, 15 per cent ‘liberal or reform Judaism’ and 43 per cent ‘Jewish but not religious’. See, John Goldlust, *The Jews of Melbourne: A community profile*, (Melbourne, Jewish Welfare Society Inc., 1993), pp. 116-32.
- 80 According to the community report based on 2011 Census data, Jews born in South Africa represented 13.5 per cent, FSU Jews 7.6 per cent and Jews born in Israel 6.5 per cent of the total Australian Jewish population. See, Graham, op. cit., p. 23.
- 81 Most of the data cited in this paragraph is drawn from the 2005 report by Rutland and Gariano, op. cit., pp. 33-41.
- 82 Perhaps the explanation for this is that most consider that there was no ‘public’ Jewish community in the Soviet Union of which they could have felt part.

- 83 Based on their research findings, Rutland and Gariano (op. cit., p. 65) conclude: 'Recent secular ... Israelis, on the whole, do not affiliate and risk being lost to the community. Their main affiliation is Israel as their country of birth, but many recent Israeli migrants are very bitter to Israel because of the situation there and do not wish to maintain any connection with either Israel or Judaism.'
- 84 Rutland and Gariano, op. cit., p. 40.
- 85 Markowitz, op. cit., p. 85.
- 86 Remennick, op. cit., p. 371.
- 87 *ibid.*, p. 371.
- 88 See, Mark Franklin, "'Unfriendly" Jewish community blasted', *Australian Jewish News*, 16 June, 2006, p. 1. This is a quote from the journalist's interview with Inna Zaitseva, whose article critical of the Melbourne Jewish community was featured in the same edition. Franklin also notes that: 'Every Russian Jewish immigrant whom the *AJN* contacted this week supported her opinion.' Reporting on her Toronto research study of FSU immigrants, Remennick (op. cit., p. 293) pointedly notes that 'none of the informants mentioned ever having informal relationships with native Canadians outside workplace, school, or any other institutional context.'
- 89 Remennick, op. cit., p. 305.
- 90 *ibid.*, p. 379.
- 91 Zaitseva, 'Neither Jewish Australians,' op. cit., p. 71.
- 92 Rutland, 'Jews From The Former Soviet Union,' op. cit., p. 83.
- 93 Franklin, op. cit., p. 11.

A BOOK FOR FIVE SHEKELS

Louis Waller

On a clear sunlit afternoon in June 1994, I stood in Rehov Melech Georg, *anglice* King George V Street in the centre of Jerusalem, looking at books. The books stood or lay in small piles on the shelves of two roughly-carpen-tered bookshelves on the footpath in front of Steins secondhand bookshop, a long-established and well-known haunt for a variegated readership. All the books on the top shelves were marked 'Five Shekels' – say, about \$1.50. There were books in English, in Hebrew, in German. There were a few in French. On top of one pile there was a little red book, its covers and spine barely joined. On the front cover was pasted a once-white label on which was printed:

Fifteen Decisive Battles of the Law

By

Ernest A. Jelf

I had never heard of the book, or of Ernest Jelf, but it was a law book so I picked it up. When I opened it I saw an inscription inside the front cover. I read it, shut the book, entered the shop, and gave it and five shekels to the grumpy proprietor. He put the book in a crumpled paper bag and I left.

The title page of the little red book bore a subtitle:

Being a Study of Some Leading Cases in the Law of England

Of the fifteen Jelf had selected, fourteen were civil cases, four or five of which I recognised because – 50 years after Jelf's book was published – I heard them cited in my lectures in Principles of Contract or Tort in the Melbourne law school. The only criminal case was *The Queen v Tolson*, decided by the Court for Crown Cases Reserved in 1889. All fourteen common law judges sat to hear it. Nine of them decided that the deserted and misinformed Mrs Tolson was not guilty of bigamy. She honestly and reasonably believed that she was a widow when she went through a second ceremony of marriage.

Nearly 50 years later the High Court of Australia decided, by a narrow majority, that a Constable Thomas was not guilty of bigamy when he

married a Miss Deed, deviously misled and mistaken in his belief that he was free to take her to be his lawfully wedded wife.

Ernest Jelf, I discovered, was a prolific author and successful barrister. He was appointed a Master of the Supreme Court, and attained the office of Senior Master and King's Remembrancer. Upon its publication in 1903, *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the Law* scored a very brief notice in 19LQR351:

A pleasantly written little book which may be of use to students as an introduction to the reports at large ...

It was successful, and there were subsequent editions.

I did not buy the book for its contents. I bought it because of what had been written, in clear black ink, inside the front cover:

*To Norman Bentwich
His First Book of the Law
From H. B. July 1903*

I decided the initials I had deciphered as H. B. stood for Herbert Bentwich. I knew both names. Herbert was Norman's father. I knew a lot about Norman and a little about Herbert, and there was a third Bentwich whom I remembered as I stood in King George Street.

Dr Ann Mitchell, who was the Monash University archivist, has undertaken extensive research into the Bentwich family. Some of it has resulted in several fascinating articles she has published in the *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*. I am indebted to Dr Mitchell for adding to my knowledge and understanding of both Norman and Herbert, and of the third family member.

Herbert was a Londoner born in Shoreditch, an Englishman and a Jew. He became a successful solicitor and an active member of the growing London Jewish community. When Theodor Herzl raised the banner of what came to be called Zionism, Herbert was one of the first English Jews to flock to it. In 1897 he led a group, which included the renowned writer Israel Zangwill, on a tour of Palestine. He finally settled in Jerusalem in 1929, and died there in 1932.

Herbert and his wife Susannah had eleven children, of whom ten outlived their parents. Norman was their second child and the first son.

Norman Bentwich was born in 1883. He was, from his early schooling, an outstanding student. From St Paul's School in London he went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, and received high academic distinctions in Classics. He proceeded to the law and, not surprisingly, also became a

Zionist, first visiting Palestine in 1908. Norman enlisted in the army when World War One began, and earned the MC in the Jerusalem campaign. He was appointed an OBE when the war ended, and joined the civil administration in Palestine in 1920. He became its first Attorney General when the League of Nations conferred the mandate on Great Britain. For the next ten years he took valuable initiatives in the development of civil law of Palestine, inherited by the State of Israel when it was founded in May 1948.

Norman Bentwich the Zionist was, again not surprisingly, unpopular with some Palestinian Arabs. In 1929, the year in which scores of Jews were savagely murdered in Hebron, Norman was shot in the thigh by a seventeen-year-old Arab employee of the Palestine police. Norman strongly sought clemency for his attacker, but he was convicted and sentenced to fifteen years hard labour.

A timorous Mandatory government and its pusillanimous Colonial Office master removed Norman from office in 1931. From 1932 to 1951 he was the foundation Professor of International Relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which had been inaugurated a few years earlier. His first lecture, on 'Jerusalem, City of Peace', was disrupted by some Jewish students who considered Norman was too pro-Arab. *Plus ça change*.

Since his academic duties at Hebrew University allowed Norman an enviable amount of non-teaching time, he spent some seven years working for the League of Nations High Commission for Refugees from Germany and in directing Jewish efforts, particularly in the UK, to save Jews in Germany, and after the *Anschluss*, in Austria. No doubt these activities are part of the reasons for Norman's appearance in the *Sonderfahndungsliste GB*, the special list prepared by the Germans in 1940 as part of Operation Sea Lion, the invasion and occupation of the British Isles. It came to be called the Black Book, and among the several thousand names in it were those of Noel Coward and Rebecca West. When West learned this, she sent Coward a telegram:

My Dear – the people we should have been seen dead with.

Norman wrote many books, including several autobiographies, and with his sister Margery he wrote *Herbert Bentwich, The Pilgrim Father*, published in 1940. He died in London in 1940, and left no children.

The third Bentwich, Elizabeth (Lizzie, Liz or Lizette) was born in Melbourne in 1874, and died in Melbourne in 1954. Her father Morris was a brother to Herbert's father Marks, making Lizzie and Herbert first

cousins. Cousins can be as close as they wish to be, or as distant – these cousins were very close. Dr Mitchell's research has revealed that Lizzie was close to, and proud of, Norman. It was to Norman that Lizzie turned for advice when formulating instructions to her solicitor to draw up her will in 1952. Lizzie's family had returned to London in the early years of the 20th century. In Melbourne, Lizzie had made friends with Vic Monash, wife of John. John Monash, now a general officer commanding the AIF in France, met Lizzie again when he was on leave in London in 1917. They became lovers. Lady Monash died in Melbourne in February 1920, and Lizzie returned to Melbourne in September 1920.

Until Sir John died in October 1931, they were an item in the society of our city. Monash's biographer, Geoffrey Searle, does not definitively answer the question of why Lizzie and John did not become husband and wife, but the public acme of their relationship occurred a few months before Monash died. He was the official representative of the Commonwealth of Australia at the Durbar, which marked the launch of New Delhi as the capital of the Empire of India. Lizzie came as his companion, with a female friend as fig leaf, and they had calm weeks of sea travel and unique tours of India together.

Lizzie lived for 23 years after Monash's death, mainly in Melbourne. In each of those years she inserted an *In Memoriam* notice in *The Argus*. Monash left her an annuity of £200 in his will. When Lizzie died she left an estate of 31,000 pounds. As Dr Mitchell writes:

A little over two-thirds ... was left for ongoing prizes and scholarships at the three institutions with which her menfolk had been identified: Trinity College Cambridge (for her cousins Norman and Joseph Bentwich), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (especially for Norman again) and the University of Melbourne where the love of her life, Sir John Monash, had been Vice-Chancellor (then an honorary office) at the time of his death.

In a recent article Dr Mitchell writes:

The many post-graduate Lizzie Bentwich Scholarship holders include two 'national treasures' – our own Peter Sculthorpe (first holder from the University of Melbourne) and Yehuda Bauer of Israel, who went on to become one of the world's most distinguished Holocaust scholars.

A legacy of learning ... people travel, so do their books. In my father's luggage he packed books I treasure today. If this little red book had, by some anachronistic *tour de main*, an embedded microchip, we could learn all its travels and every one of its passages. We know it was penned, published and purchased in London. We know it was taken to Jerusalem, as it was sold to me in that city. And now it sits on a shelf in my study in Melbourne, telling a tale of three cities, of the old world and the new.

What we know, we know. And then ... there is imagination.

Note

This is the text of a speech made by Professor Waller in a panel titled 'Legal Luminaries and their Books', presented by the Law Library of Victoria, in the Supreme Court Library, in July 2015, as part of Rare Book Week.

OBITUARY – DR DAVID COHEN AM, DOYEN OF AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

Dr C. Margot Cohen

The AJHS lost a good friend in November 2014 with the passing of Dr David Cohen AM at the age of 83. He was for many years a valued member of the committees of both the AJHS Vic Inc and the AJGS.

David was a person with passions. Whether it was his commitment to education and schools, sport, religion or family, his passions ran deep, were apolitical and always concerned with the human element.

David attended Caulfield North Central School and Melbourne Boys' High School, gaining a senior government teaching scholarship that took him to the University of Melbourne to earn degrees of Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Education. David began his career as a science teacher, beginning in 1952 with his first placement at Lloyd St Central School in East Malvern, where he had a transformative effect on students. He was the first recipient of an Australian travelling scholarship in science education to study for a PhD overseas.

David was an active participant in the development of the Science Teachers Association of Victoria (STAV) for which he edited their state newsletter *LabTalk* and promoted their 'Science Talent Quest'. Concurrently, David was national editor of the *Australian Science Teachers Journal*. He was recognised by the STAV with the award of the AIDA (Australian Industries Development Association) Science Education Award as the 'Outstanding Science Teacher in the State of Victoria for 1965'.

He taught science in technical schools and then in technical teachers colleges and was subsequently promoted to officer-in-charge of Curriculum Research in the Victorian Education Department. He later held a similar position with the NSW Department of Education. These new positions spread his research influence across Australia.

David became senior lecturer in Education at Macquarie University, where he was responsible for the development of new courses and their teaching staffs, setting in motion the publication of introductory, innovative

science experience booklets. The booklets presented challenges to both teachers and students.

David's experience and reputation stimulated the birth of new schools. Parents attending the fledgling Masada College in Lindfield, NSW, approached him to ensure that the school was developing along progressive educational lines. David became honorary consultant in the development of a number of other schools, the best known of which is Currumbena in Lane Cove, NSW.

David was recruited by Rabbi Israel Porush to assist in promoting the improvement of teaching in Hebrew Schools in NSW. UNESCO, based in Paris, and the International Council of Associations of Science Education, based in the USA, joined the list of those seeking David's services.

David was very committed to his family. His first marriage produced two children – Bernard and Tamara, and his second marriage, to Dr Margot Sims, produced Benjamin. An older brother Philip and younger sister Beverley also survive him.

In 1990, David moved with Margot from Sydney to Melbourne. There he established the Stonnington Psychological Practice and an educational consultancy. In 1992, he and Margot saw the need for a national monthly newsletter, *Education Alternatives*, that disseminated in-depth articles about current educational practices around Australia and overseas.

In 1992, he was engaged as Project Director to establish Melbourne Girls' College in Richmond. David was further enlisted to organise the first international conference for gifted and talented students. This highly successful event attracted hundreds of applicants from all over the world.

Sport was an integral part of David's life; he actively pursued tennis (where he was president of JYPA – Jewish Young People's Association) and lacrosse. David barracked fanatically for the AFL Richmond Tigers his whole life, and was a very proud 50-year-member of the Melbourne Cricket Club.

David had great pride in being a fifth-generation Melburnian Jew, with a deep knowledge of the history of the Melbourne Jewish community together with a strong interest in his own genealogy. His paternal great-great-grandfather Michael Cashmore and his bride had arrived in Melbourne in 1838 after being shipwrecked in the *Clonmel* off the coast of Port Albert, Victoria. David launched the book about the shipwreck, and wrote about the Crawcour family tree. He gave a presentation on the family to a meeting of AJGS and the family chart he produced covered

three walls of the room, as well as drawing together a number of Crawcour descendants for the first time.

In 2003, David was diagnosed with early stage, slow-acting multiple myeloma, choosing to have one of the early stem cell transplants that eventually enabled him to travel to New Zealand to accept Life Membership of the Australasian Association for Research in Education, and give an acceptance speech. He was well enough to enjoy the announcement of his Life Membership in the Australasian Association of Progressive and Alternative Education, and to be present at the Queen's Jubilee Birthday awards ceremony.

David became a Member of the Order of Australia for services to progressive alternative education, curriculum development and science education, as a researcher and editor, and to the community.



100 YEARS AGO: VICTORIA 1916

Compiled by Lorraine Freeman

*From the pages of **The Australian Jewish Herald***

War news dominated the pages of all newspapers in 1916. The *Jewish Herald* for 14 January 1916 was no different and the headline for that date belatedly declared 'Three Jewish V.C.s – Distinctions on the Field of Battle'. The distinctions, accompanied by photographs, belonged to Lieutenant Frank De Pass, an English recipient killed in action in November 1914 in France (the first Jew upon whom the VC was bestowed), Private Leonard Keysor of the Australian Imperial Force, who was personally presented with the VC in January 1916 by King George V at Buckingham Palace for his heroism at Gallipoli, and Sergeant Issy Smith who had enlisted in Australia and fought at Ypres in 1915 where he recovered wounded soldiers in the face of sustained enemy fire; he subsequently returned to Melbourne. The paper was not to know that by the war's end there would be five Jewish recipients of the VC in the Allied armies.

During 1916 Jewish patriotism was given voice by the lay leaders of the Jewish community as well as by the rabbis and the Jewish press. The same edition included a patriotic poem written by twelve-year-old Cora Sloman, aiming to stir up young men into enlisting. The last line of her poem read: 'Australians! Australians! Disgrace not our race!'

By 1916 there were a substantial number of young Australian Jewish men fighting with the armed forces on the Western Front, with a consequent tragically high casualty rate. Three sons of Rev. Elias Blaubaum, the much loved early minister of the St Kilda Hebrew Congregation and former editor of the *Jewish Herald*, all served at the front. Eric, his third son, was killed on the battlefield in France in 1916, and Rev. Jacob Danglow delivered the memorial address.

The Rev. David Isaac Freedman from Perth had volunteered, and was appointed Chaplain. As such, he saw active service in Gallipoli, was briefly evacuated to Egypt, and from January 1916 served another two years in France. Freedman was later to be mentioned in dispatches. His first religious service was reported from a letter written by Angel Perlstein

to his father, published in the *Jewish Herald*, 10 March. He wrote: 'The rev gentleman proved to be very interesting indeed; he gave us a very fine address.' The service took place under canvas on Friday evening, 21 January.

In Notes and News, page 151, it was stated that the New Year honours list contained the name of an English Jewish philanthropist, Mr John Howard of Brighton, who had been created a Knight. His best known philanthropic acts were the Howard Charity in Brighton for the relief of the sick and aged, and the endowment of the Howard Convalescent Home on the Downs, east of Brighton, which was being used as a military hospital.

An interesting letter on the evacuation from Gallipoli by Chaplain Freedman was included on page 146. He wrote from personal witness that 'the evacuation was a splendid achievement in the way in which it was carried out ... I am charmed with General Monash who has a very high reputation here among all ranks. The men of his own brigade just adore him.'

In the same issue Chaplain Freedman also wrote, 'I have met a number of men of the Zion Mule Corps, and have had them at my services.' The 14 July edition has a full page headed 'With the Zion Mule Corps' and it states that the Zion Mule Corps was the first Jewish military unit for two thousand years.

In the 7 April issue Rev. Jacob Danglow, Senior Hebrew Chaplain, 3rd Military District, C.M.F. listed 'Our Roll of Honour', forwarding the names of 227 Jews who have enlisted in Victoria. The 5 May issue describes how Victorian Jews at home showed their patriotism by donating generously to funds for the welfare and repatriation of returned soldiers. Of note were substantial donations to the war effort from the firm of Michaelis-Hallenstein and from the Barnet Glass Rubber Company.

The same issue contained an obituary for Mr Isaac Altson who was praised for his role in the management of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, where he was president for a time, and for his active role in the charitable work of the community. Two of his sons, Aby and Myer Altson, 'have gained considerable distinction as painters, having won the travelling scholarship of the Melbourne National Gallery.'

A report from Chaplain Freedman showed why he was called 'Our Chaplain'. He described his regular practice of sending home lists of Jewish soldiers in hospitals and of Jewish casualties. He commented:

These lists were long ones ... and they speak eloquently of

the part the Jews are playing in the great struggle our Empire is making for the principles of right and civilisation ... I have contrived to write home to the parents of every soldier I have met, whether in hospital, at a service, or in camp ... I have sent out between two and three hundred letters every week. But it is quite worthwhile.

By year's end an article was published headed 'A Monument for our Brave', and praised the Chevra Kadisha for initiating a scheme that would erect a memorial to the Jewish soldiers who had fallen in the service of King and Country in the Great War.

BOOK REVIEWS

JOURNEYS THROUGH THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: STORIES FROM ONE FAMILY

Daniel C. Tabor

*Fast Print Publishing, Peterborough, England, 2016, 412 pp., illus.,
maps, genealogical tables*

ISBN 978-178456-221-2 (paperback)

This is an excellent, intelligent, and well-written family history by Daniel C. Tabor, who headed the English department at William Parker School in Northamptonshire. His previous works include *Living Judaism*, a selection of his late father's talks and articles, co-edited with Daniel's brother Michael Tabor. Like many Jewish families, theirs has been an international one, encompassing Eastern Europe and the Pale of Settlement, Germany, England, Israel, and – of greatest interest to this *Journal* – Australia. In few other family histories of this kind do we find the international component of their author's background explained so intelligently or graphically.

Concerning Australia, where the author's parents lived for some years, the memoirs are based largely on his father David's diaries and letters. His parents Hanna (d. 2010) and David (d. 2005), who became an eminent Cambridge University physicist and a Fellow of the Royal Society, were deeply involved in Zionist activities in Melbourne in the early 1940s, and many interesting and important observations about Australian Jewry at the time are recorded in this book. Indeed, it might be worth republishing the whole of the diary and correspondence dealing with the Melbourne Jewish community.

Journeys through the Twentieth Century is very long – over 400 pages – and, given the plethora of names and relatives, somewhat confusing to readers who know nothing of the author's family. An index or list of personalities might have proved helpful in this respect: the lack of either seems to be a case of 'spoiling the ship for a halfpenny worth of tar', as the saying goes. There are, however, very useful maps and genealogical tables. The book is well illustrated with family photographs.

It is, incidentally, intriguing to note (pp. 100-1) that one of the

author's relatives was Elise Nussbaum (1834–1920), who married Moses Geis (1829–90), a merchant in Cassel. Elise had enjoyed a good education in Fulda. In view of the fact that the mother of the St Kilda Hebrew Congregation's Cassel-educated Reverend Elias Blaubaum (1847–1904), from Rotenburg in the Fulda valley, was Marianne (Miriam) Nussbaum, it would be interesting to discover a family connection.

William D. Rubinstein

WHO GAVE YOU PERMISSION? THE MEMOIR OF A CHILD
SEXUAL-ABUSE SURVIVOR WHO FOUGHT BACK

Manny Waks with Michael Visontay

Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2016, 348 pp.

Manny Waks is well known both within the Melbourne Jewish community and around the world as an activist for the protection of children against child sexual abuse, particularly within the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community. The oldest son of seventeen children within an Ultra Orthodox family, he shocked the Jewish community when he publicly disclosed his personal experiences of child sexual abuse. At the time of his disclosure Waks was working as a senior public servant in Canberra. He had previously held senior roles in both the B'nai Brith Anti-Defamation Commission and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. In 2012, while presenting evidence at the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations, Manny formed Tzedek, an Australian-based support and advocacy group for Jewish victims/survivors of child sexual abuse and their families.¹ Currently Manny is the CEO of Kol v'Oz, an organisation he founded to address child sexual abuse within the global Jewish community.

With the support of Michael Visontay, an accomplished journalist, writer and lecturer, Waks shares his story in this tell-all autobiography. Although many may believe that they already know Waks' story, this book reveals the story behind the story. Leaving no stone unturned, Waks shares his perspective across all aspects of his life, highlighting his childhood and relationships with his immediate family, the impact that his experiences of abuse have had on his life and the realities of 'going public' to a non-Jewish publication no less, with his allegations of abuse. Waks' story is topical in light of the recent Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and he discusses the experience of appearing before the

Royal Commission in the first public hearing of the Jewish community and the aftermath.

While many may not agree with Waks' approach, it is high time for this conversation to be discussed within the Jewish community. All too often the Jewish community encompasses an 'us' and 'them' approach, and perhaps some may actually still believe that child sexual abuse does not occur within our community. The fact remains, however, that child sexual abuse has and continues to occur, and the longer that we as a community fail to see the forest for the trees the more we are placing our children at greater risk.

Recently a Hollywood blockbuster highlighted the 2002 'Spotlight investigation', whereby the *Boston Globe* investigated one of the most extreme cases of child sexual abuse at the hands of a single priest, John J. Geoghan within the United States. This investigation led the Catholic Church to commission the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to complete two studies to establish the extent of the crisis and to elucidate possible causes.² The first study titled 'The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States, 1950–2002', is one of the most comprehensive international studies of child sexual abuse to date.³ The study identified a stable abuse rate across all regions of the United States of between 3 and 6 per cent, accounting for 4,392 allegations of abuse between 1950 and 2002.

Of most interest however, was the identification of the lack of empirical studies specifically devoted to understanding and ascertaining the prevalence of child sexual abuse within religions other than the Catholic Church. The John Jay study highlighted specifically the need to research the prevalence of child sexual abuse within the Jewish faith. Despite the significant media attention that the Catholic Church has received in recent years, 'It is not the only Christian denomination or religious group to encounter this problem.'⁴ There is growing evidence to suggest that sexual offenders can be found across all denominations. During the Victorian Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations, Graham Ashton, the Deputy Commissioner of Victoria Police at the time, provided statistics on the prevalence of child sexual abuse for a selection of faith-based communities.⁵ Victoria Police had identified at that time 150 offences in relation to the Anglican Church, 135 offences that involved the Salvation Army, and a total of 69 offences were discussed in relation to Judaism.

The establishment of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in November 2012 by Prime Minister Julia Gillard highlighted the need for a national response. Ms Gillard emphasised that too many children had suffered child abuse and had their trust betrayed, not only at the hands of their abusers, but also by other adults who failed to act appropriately. The Royal Commission is currently investigating how various institutions, including schools, religious organisations, sporting clubs and various government organisations, have responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse. The purpose of the Royal Commission is to create a 'safer future for all children', by investigating any public, private or non-governmental organisation that is, or has been in the past, involved with caring for children.⁶ The Commission stipulates that this includes organisations both responsible for the abuse, and for not responding appropriately 'regardless of where or when the abuse took place.'⁷

All forms of child sexual abuse are recognised as a gross violation of children's rights under Australian law, and the unlawful or improper treatment of children has long-term negative effects on individuals, the Australian economy and society. The Royal Commission identifies the important role that various public and private institutions provide for the development of children, but further stipulates that any and all claims of systematic failures by such institutions, specifically in relation to allegations of sexual abuse, must be explored fully in order to identify best practice to protect against further occurrences, to ensure appropriate responses occur in relation to such claims, to hold perpetrators accountable, and to provide justice to victims.

As a member of the Melbourne Jewish community and an academic, I am particularly outraged by the ongoing silence surrounding this issue in our community. It is for this reason that I have commenced analysing the global Jewish experience of child sexual abuse, in an attempt to gain insight into a range of organisational responses to this ever-growing epidemic, and to be guided by global and local empirical literature to develop a list of key recommendations for Australian Jewish organisations. I did not, however, expect to find a substantial lack of research in this field, cloaked under a veil of silence. If Manny Waks' book ruffles a few feathers then so be it, after all 'the time for silence is over – now is a time to speak.'⁸

Rachel Averbukh

Notes

- 1 <http://www.tzedek.org.au/about-us.html#Our%20Work>
- 2 KJ. Terry, 'Stained glass: the nature and scope of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church', *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, vol. 35, no. 5 (2008), pp. 549-569.
- 3 John Jay College of Criminal Justice, '*The nature and scope of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests and deacons in the United States, 1950-2002*', (2004), <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/The-Nature-and-Scope-of-Sexual-Abuse-of-Minors-by-Catholic-Priests-and-Deacons-in-the-United-States-1950-2002.pdf>
- 4 J. M. Fogler, J. C. Shipherd, E. Rowe, J. Jensen & S. Clarke, 'A theoretical foundation for understanding clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse', *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, vol. 17, no. 3-4, (2008), p. 302.
- 5 Victoria Police 2012, Transcript of evidence to Family and Community Development Committee, Parliament of Victoria, *Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations*, 19 October 2012, http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/fcdc/inquiries/57th/Child_Abuse_Inquiry/Transcripts/Victoria_Police_19-Oct-12.pdf
- 6 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, para. 3, <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/about-us>
- 7 *ibid.*
- 8 D. Mandel & D. Pelcovitz (eds), *Breaking the Silence: Sexual Abuse in the Jewish Community*, (Jersey City: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 2011), p. xi.

WALTER LIPPMANN, ETHNIC COMMUNITIES LEADER:

‘CREATIVE THINKER, DOGGED WORKER, THE KINDEST OF MEN’

Andrew Markus and Margaret Taft (editors)

*Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University 2016,
190 pp.*

ISBN:978-0-9945960-0-0

Are community consciousness and leadership inborn qualities or do they arise spontaneously? Is there a gene to be passed on to certain individuals or are concern for others and a passion for social justice simply matters of pure chance?

Aware as I am of the achievements of four generations of the Lippmann family, I would discount the element of chance.

The life experiences of Walter Lippmann (1919-93) are outlined in

clear scholarly fashion by the editors Professor Andrew Markus and Dr Margaret Taft in the course of a 27-page biographical sketch and in their astute selection of speeches, lectures and letters in the following 160 pages of the book.

Walter's Jewish roots ran deep and stretched back to the founders of the Reform movement in Germany who served as presidents of the extraordinary Hamburg Temple. Walter's father Franz, a noted art patron, brought the family out of Germany in the late 1930s and later founded B'nai Brith in Australia. Walter's brother Kurt was a highly respected partner in the formation of post-war Melbourne Jewry. Kurt's daughter Helen Light became the pioneering director of Melbourne's Jewish Museum. And her son, Walter's great-nephew, is the dynamic principal of the King David School. My initial question about nature and nurture seems to have been answered, but it took a visit to Yad VaShem in Jerusalem to confirm my suspicions.

Shortly after Walter's death in Melbourne, my wife and I paid a visit to the Holocaust Memorial which had a wide-ranging survey of Hamburg Jewry. As we walked into the exhibition hall, we were confronted by a large portrait of Walter! Except, it wasn't Walter. It was his highly respected uncle, Dr Leo Lippmann, who had been the president of the Hamburg Jewish community and stayed at his post until the departure of the final deportation train when on 10 June 1943 he, together with his wife Anna, committed suicide.

Having been expelled from high school at the age of sixteen for the sin of being Jewish, Walter began his business career in Germany in his father's soon to be confiscated business. Within four years of his arrival in Australia in 1942, Walter was instrumental in establishing the Melbourne Jewish Youth Council which brought together young people from Orthodox and Liberal congregations, young Zionists and the secular Yiddish youth groups. In 1948 he succeeded Zelman Cowen as honorary secretary of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, a position he would hold for the following sixteen years. In 1960 he was elected president of the Australian Jewish Welfare and Relief Society and held that position for a mere seventeen years. As chairman of the Jewish Social Service Council he successfully worked for the Jewish community's first comprehensive survey of Melbourne Jewry. He served as president of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies from 1969 to 1972. Put mildly, none of these positions were sinecures. It is a matter of mystification to me how he managed to

be husband, father, businessman, Jewish communal leader and to become deeply involved in the general political life of the Australian community. Caroline Hogg, the former Labor Party Member for Melbourne North Province, described Water as a ‘creative thinker, dogged worker and the kindest of men’, words astutely chosen by the authors as the subtitle of their book.

We meet Walter Lippmann in the collection of 37 letters and articles included in the second half of the book. With the gift of hindsight we meet a thoughtful, embattled and far-sighted man who was sometimes wrong but never illogical or irrational, even though he loyally stayed with the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism for far longer than made sense. He courageously opposed the general wisdom that the migration of Germans was to be welcomed. He produced alarming statistics about the future of Australian Jewry that happily failed to eventuate as the community grew and consolidated itself. He underestimated the growth of the Jewish day school movement and of the impact of the Zionist youth groups. He could not have guessed how deeply the continued struggle for Israel would preoccupy the Australian Jewish community.

Nor could anyone imagine the ease with which Australians can now travel to Israel. Thousands of Australian-born Jews now live in Israel (and vice versa) and family ties are multiple. His pessimism about the inroads of intermarriage may have been attenuated by the number of non-Jews who become Jewish. He pioneered inter-religious dialogue during World War Two. He defied the Australian Zionist movement and insisted that former Soviet Jews had the right to choose to come here. Walter advocated the professionalism of the social workers within the community rather than relying on the grace and favour of well-meaning fundraisers. He was attuned to the development of American Jewry while others were still attempting to recreate past European communal structures in Australia. He conducted a futile battle to create within the Melbourne Jewish community a Jewish community fundraising appeal. It should have been simple but, for a number of reasons, it is yet to be!

Once again, the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University has contributed a valuable addition to our knowledge of the Australian Jewish community.

John Levi

REPORT TO MEMBERS 2016

This has been another successful year for the Society, with record acquisitions, additions to the library and stimulating meeting topics that have engaged our audience.

The theme for our meeting in October 2015 revolved around the Jewish combatants of all sides who fought in World War One and the terrible after-effects their service had on their families. As a tribute to the memory of the Jewish combatants of all sides in World War One, 'The One Hundred Year Silence', a panel comprising Carmel Benjamin AM, Keira Lockyer, Kate Rotman, Rabbi Dr John Levi AM and Dr Michael Pryles AO, spoke for those who were themselves largely silent. The survivors suffered hidden wounds, psychological and physical, either as combatants or their families, and for them, the war in many cases lasted for decades after cessation of hostilities.

In November, accomplished historian Roland Johnson spoke about Norwood, a mansion on the Brighton Esplanade. Norwood, home to some remarkable occupants, was demolished in 1955 and Roland was the last occupant. Wealthy philanthropist and sportsman, Mark Moss, built Norwood in 1891. Moss became fabulously wealthy during the land-boomer years as a banker and moneylender, and can be remembered for his benevolence in 1870 for funding one of three alms-houses for needy Jews in St Kilda Road (which later became the Montefiore Homes). Sadly, by 1894 Mark Moss had lost everything in the Crash and was evicted with twenty pounds to his name in a true rags-to-riches-to-rags story. The talk included photos of the mansion, including the magnificent stained-glass windows, fourteen bedrooms and expansive gardens.

At our AGM in February 2016, Professor Andrew Markus and Dr Margaret Taft spoke to us about Walter Lippmann MBE AM, a leader of both the Jewish and ethnic communities, and advocate of multiculturalism. In 1943 Walter was elected to the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board, one of its youngest members, and in 1948 he succeeded Zelman Cowen as honorary secretary of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. In 1960 he was elected president of the Jewish Welfare and Relief Society, a position he held for seventeen years. From 1969 to 1972 Lippmann was president of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies, and for almost three decades held

positions in mainstream organisations and federal government advisory bodies.

In July, Dr John Goldlust spoke to us about the migration and settlement of Soviet Jews in Australia. The Jewish Exodus from the former Soviet Union began in the 1970s. It led to the subsequent worldwide resettlement of well over a million Soviet Jews. It included, it is suggested, as many as 20,000 coming to Australia, reaching a peak in the 1990s. Soviet Jewry represented one of the three major sources (alongside South Africa and Israel) of new Jewish immigration to Australia. However, for many of these former Soviet citizens, the resettlement process, particularly their reception and integration into their new 'communities', did not always go as envisaged by the Jewish leaders and activists who had helped facilitate their exit from the USSR. Dr Goldlust presented an overview of the broader historical context, and suggested some of the factors that still identify them as 'Russians', separate and distinct from Australian-born and other immigrant Jews, who together constitute 'mainstream' urban Jewish community life in contemporary Australia.

Our Jewish marriage database continues to grow with the dedicated work performed by Rodney Eisfelder, Ian Samuel and Max Wald. The most recent additions have come from Sydney and Perth synagogues as well as some marriages from the newer synagogues that have been established in the last ten years or so. To date, 26,400 marriages have been added from Australia and New Zealand. We are also looking at the possibility of obtaining *mohel* and barmitzvah records to add to the database which will give us an excellent cross-section of Australian Jewish life events.

A large part of our work is in assisting with information to family historians and researchers. The Lamm Library houses our book and microfilm collection and our section is open on the first and third Sundays of each month. Our thanks also to Michael Adler for his donation to the society so that members of the AJHS and AJGS can use the library edition of an 'Ancestry' subscription.

Our meetings, held now at Temple Beth Israel, are open to members, families, students and researchers.

Liz James
Honorary Secretary, AJHS Vic. Inc.

NEW MEMBERS JOINED AJHS VICTORIA INC

since November 2015

Allan and Jenny HARVEY

Lynne SCHIFTAN (Deceased)

Al SPILMAN

Margaret TAFT

CONTRIBUTORS

Vivien Altman is a senior journalist, having been based around the world for many years as a radio reporter and TV producer at the ABC for *Foreign Correspondent*, and at SBS TV for the national current affairs program *Insight* and *Dateline*, the international current affairs program. Most recently she set up a new program at SBS TV called *Stories From Home*. These are half-hour stories without narration of immigrant and refugee Australians.

Rachel Averbukh is an assistant lecturer within the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Medicine at Monash University. Rachel is a member of the Social Inclusion and Social Policy Research Unit. She has a particular interest in the field of child protection. She is currently working with Associate Professor Dr Philip Mendes on a research project analysing Jewish responses to child sexual abuse, including a case study of the recent Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Dr Margot Cohen was the wife of Dr David Cohen AM. They met at a curriculum conference in New York and shared a loving, happy family life together for 30 years. They supported each other's professional and social activities initially in Sydney and then Melbourne. Their union produced a son – Benjamin Cohen.

Mark Dapin is an author, journalist and historian. His recent military history book, *The Nashos' War*, won the national NIB/Waverly Library People's Choice Award and an Alex Buzo Shortlist Prize. It was also shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Award for Best Non-Fiction Book and highly commended in Fellowship of Australian Writers Excellence in Non-Fiction Award. Dapin is a PhD candidate at UNSW@ADFA and editor of two anthologies for Penguin Books, *The Penguin Book of Australian War Writing* and *From the Trenches: The best ANZAC writing of World War One*.

Dr Howard Freeman OAM is the editor of this *Victorian Journal* and a long-standing member of the Victorian AJHS committee, having served for

many years as the president and now also as co-president of the Victorian branch.

Lorraine Freeman BA is the author and compiler of *100 Years Ago*, a series of abstracts from the Melbourne Jewish press.

Dr John Goldlust was born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and immigrated to Australia with his parents in 1949. He was educated in Melbourne, undertook postgraduate study in Jerusalem and Toronto, and later taught in the Sociology Program at La Trobe University until his retirement in 2007. He has published widely, mostly in the areas of migration, multiculturalism, media and sport. John has been researching and writing on the sociology and demography of Jews in Australia since the late 1960s, but has recently turned his attention to the history of Polish Jews inside the Soviet Union during World War Two and, in 2012, contributed a lengthy article on this topic to the *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*. He is currently an Honorary Research Associate at the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University.

Rabbi Dovid Gutnick, a born and bred Aussie, studied at Yeshivah College in Melbourne before attending the Rabbinical College of Australia and New Zealand, Rabbinical College of Canada and Yeshivah Ohr Elchonon in Los Angeles. He received his *s'micha* (rabbinic ordination) at the Rabbinical College of America in New Jersey. In 2007 Dovid became the rabbi of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation and remains in that position alongside various hospital chaplaincies and ethics committee roles.

Professor Andrew Markus is the Pratt Foundation Research Professor of Jewish Civilisation at Monash University and is a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. He has published extensively on Australian immigration and race relations. Andrew heads the Scanlon Foundation social cohesion research program, which issued its eighth annual report in 2015. He is also the principal researcher on the Australian Jewish population and Yiddish Melbourne research projects.

Rabbi Dr John Levi AM served his home congregation of Temple Beth Israel for 37 years. He is the first Australian-born rabbi, having been ordained in 1960. He studied in Melbourne, Jerusalem and Cincinnati. He has a PhD from Monash University, a Doctorate of Divinity from the

Hebrew Union College, an honorary doctorate from the Australian Catholic University and an honorary Doctorate of Law from Monash University. His most recent book is *These Are the Names* (2013) from Miegunyah Press at Melbourne University Publishing. He is a Life Member of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

Associate Professor Philip Mendes teaches social policy and community development, and is the Director of the Social Inclusion and Social Policy Research Unit (SISPRU) in the Department of Social Work at Monash University in Victoria, Australia. He is the author or co-author of eleven books, including *Jews and the Left: The rise and fall of a political alliance* (2014), jointly with Nick Dyrenfurth, *Boycotting Israel is Wrong* (2015), and *Australia's Welfare Wars*, 3rd edition (late 2016).

Emeritus Professor W. D. (Bill) Rubinstein taught at Deakin University and the University of Wales, and is now an adjunct professor at Monash University. He was the editor of this *Journal* from 1988 until 1995.

Michael Spivakovsky is an architect and musician who began piano studies with his father Jascha at the age of three and continued until his father's death. Michael was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in Architecture for the design of a new type of high school for the Victorian government, together with many primary, secondary, technical and special schools, but he retired from the Public Works Department in 1991 to teach piano. Michael's piano students have won many competition awards, achieving the top AMEB and international examination results.

Dr Daniel Tabor was born in Cambridge, and was educated at the Universities of Sussex and Oxford. For many years he was Head of English at William Parker School in Daventry, Northamptonshire, during which time he completed a PhD in Education at Warwick University. Daniel has written two books and 20 articles on different aspects of education, and in 2015 he co-edited *Living Judaism*, a collection of his late father's religious talks and articles. *Journeys Through the Twentieth Century: Stories from one family* is his third book, published earlier this year. Daniel is currently involved with interfaith dialogue and conservation work in the county.

Dr Margaret Taft is a Research Associate at the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University and author of *From Victim to*

Survivor: The emergence and development of the Holocaust witness 1941–1949, (Vallentine Mitchell, 2013). Margaret has been assisting Professor Markus in researching a social history of Yiddish Melbourne and its impact on Jewish immigration and settlement. They are working towards a book on the subject. Together they recently published an article in the prestigious *Australian Historical Studies Journal* titled ‘Post war immigration and assimilation: A reconceptualisation’.

Emeritus Professor Louis Waller AO held the Sir Leo Cussen Chair of Law in Monash University for 35 years. He served as Victorian Law Reform Commissioner and foundation chairman of the Law Reform Commission of Victoria. He presided over the pioneering Victorian enquiries into IVF, and over the statutory authorities established to regulate new birth technologies. He is an Honorary Fellow and a Governor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC. – NSW

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