

THE SOUTH AFRICAN
JEWISH BOARD OF
DEPUTIES AND POLITICS,
1930 - 1978

by
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ABSTRACT

The pivot around which the controversy over the Board's political policy revolved was the question whether a collective Jewish attitude towards the government's racial policies should be formulated, or whether this was the province of individual Jewish protest. Stemming from this was the question of the extent of communal responsibility towards the individual who had fallen afoul with the law in expressing his protest. The complexity of formulating policy was exacerbated by the trauma of the 1930's and 1940's where the National Party and its leadership espoused a radical anti-Semitic ideology and a pro-Nazism policy. Added to this was the very real sympathy felt for the aspirations of survival of the Afrikaner People, conflated by a revulsion and antipathy towards the measures the nationalist Government took to attain this end. The solution hit upon by the Board was a policy of 'neutrality' in the political arena. This dissertation is an attempt to highlight the problems with which the Board grappled and its central concerns in formulating policy vis-a-vis the political issues that were at the centre of the political life of South Africa. The study follows the evolvement of the policy of *collective non-involvement* from the 1950s and the gradual evolution it underwent in the 1970s and 1980s towards a commitment and a responsibility to openly and publicly speak out on the moral aspects of Apartheid.

In view of the above, the thesis begins in 1930 with the promulgation of the Quota Act, which initiated the new anti-Semitic policies of the National Party, until 1978. The epilogue ends 1985 when the Board of Deputies abandoned its policy of neutrality towards the political arena, when the 33rd National Congress of the Jewish Board of Deputies, passed a resolution condemning the policy of Apartheid, thus adopting a collective stance towards the government's racial policies. Although this stance was in line with the views prevalent in the white community, it signalled a giant step in the Board of Deputies' drive to abandon its policy of accommodation towards the NP government and Nationalist forces.

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INTRODUCTION

THE SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY¹

Immigration was a major factor in the growth of the Jewish community in SA, as is reflected in the census figures. In 1904 the Jewish population in SA was 38,101². In 1911 it had grown to 46,926, in 1918 to 58,741, in 1921 to 62,103, in 1926 to 71,816 and in 1936 to 90,640³. Until the Quota Act was introduced in 1930⁴ no legal barriers to the entry of Jews existed, other than the normal provisions of the 1913 Immigration Act which, as a result of the endeavours of the Jewish Board of Deputies, recognised Yiddish as a European language. Until 1880 Jewish immigrants had been predominantly British and German, but the composition of South African Jewry was considerably altered by the arrival of Yiddish speaking immigrants from Eastern Europe between 1880-1930. In 1911 the Jews constituted 3.7% of the white population, and in 1926 4.3%. This figure reached 4.5%, its peak, in 1936, but declined to 4.4% by 1946. By 1951, it had fallen to 4.2%.

¹ For a more comprehensive description of the Jewish community see "South African Jewry in 1965", edited by Leon Feldberg, Johannesburg, 1965; Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1980; Saron and Hotz, *The Jews of South Africa: a History*, Oxford University Press, 1955; Stephen Cohen, "Historical Background", in *South African Jewry: A Contemporary Survey*, edited by Marcus Arkin, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1984, pp 1-22, Milton Shain, *The Foundations of Anti-Semitism in South Africa: Images of the Jews C 1870-1930*, Phd thesis, University of Cape Town, 1990, and Milton Shain, *Jewry and Cape Society: The Origins and Activities of the Jewish Board of Deputies for the Cape Colony*, Cape Town, 1983, Historical Publication Society, 1983; Gideon Shimoni, "South African Jews and Apartheid", *American Jewish Year Book*, 1988, pp 1-57. Marcus Arkin, "The Jewish Impact on South African Economic Development", *The Jewish Publication Society of America*, Philadelphia, 1974

² Saron & Hotz, 1955, p 89

³ Allie Dubb, "Demographic Picture", pp 23-44, in Arkin, 1984, 25 and Saron & Hotz, 1955, p 371

⁴ See below chapter 2.

The Dutch East India Company prohibited the immigration of practising Jews settling in the Cape, thus preventing an influx of Jews until 1803 when the Batavians altered this rule. As a result the majority of the Jewish immigrants assimilated into the Gentile community. The earliest expression of organized Jewish life was a service for the Day of Atonement held in Cape Town in 1841.

Early Jewish immigrants came mainly from England and from Germany⁵. Because of their background, these immigrants easily assimilated into the population. The influx of Eastern European Jews, mainly from Lithuania⁶, adversely affected the attitude of the English and the Afrikaners towards the Jews. In contrast to the Anglo-Jew, Eastern European Jews were markedly different in their mode of dress, their language, their habits and their occupations. The first waves of immigrants lived in the smaller centres in the countryside, in flourishing Jewish communities. Many of these East European Jews settled in the platteland where they fulfilled an important economical function as 'smouse'⁷ (hawkers) and 'tochers'⁸ (traders). Initially, cordial relations were established between the early Jewish immigrants and the Boers on the Platteland, reinforced by the common bond of the Bible⁹. In the rural areas the smous filled an indispensable

⁵ Stephen Cohen, 1984, pp 1-3

⁶ See Bernard Sachs, "*Multitude of Dreams*", Kayor publishing House, Johannesburg, 1949, for a nostalgic description of the life of Jews in a small town in Lithuania.

⁷ For the source of this name, see Shain, 1992, footnote 4. For more information on the smous, see "Oudtshoorn in the Early Days" in *The Jews in South Africa*, edited by Saron and Hotz, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1955, pp 121-137 and "Boers, Uitlanders, Jews" in Saron and Hotz, pp 179-212.

⁸ a distortion of the Afrikaans word 'toggander', meaning trader

⁹ "The Character of South African Jewry: Rapport Interviews Mr Mendel Kaplan", *Jewish Affairs*, May 1973. See also Saron and Hotz, 1955, Israel Abrahams, *The Birth of a Community: Cape Town Hebrew Community*, Cape Town, 1955; L Hermann, *History of the Jews of South Africa*, London, 1930. By 1973, only 1.4% of the Jews lived on the Platteland and their language and culture

economic function by supplying farmers with all the items they could not produce or manufacture. He was also, quite often, the only contact the farmer on his isolated farm had with the outside world¹⁰. However, with time the tendency to migrate to the bigger towns intensified¹¹, This contributed to the deterioration of the relationship, together with the growing animosity between the SA Republican government and Jewish 'uitlanders, who were perceived as having been inimical to Afrikaner nationalist aspirations during the Boer war.

Post-war industrialisation further estranged relations between Jews and Afrikaners. As soon as the 'smouse' and 'tochers' earned sufficient capital they left the rural areas, where the bulk of the Afrikaners lived, and settled in the urban centres, which were predominantly English, rapidly adopting their language and cultural norms. Furthermore, Britain was perceived as a bastion of democratic ideals and a protector of Jewish civic rights. Thus, despite being maligned and rejected by many English, most of the Jews took them as their acculturation models. By 1912 South African 'Jewish identity' had been set in

reflected this change. G Saron, in "Boers, Uitlanders, Jews", (*The Jews of South Africa*) quotes N D Hoffman, the local correspondent of *Hatzifirah*, a Hebrew paper published in Poland, who wrote in his 1891 report that "*The farmers in South Africa in general respect the Jews very much and exalt them above all the nations under the sun. The Jew is, in their eyes, a hallowed being, 'a people chosen from all the nations'...When a Jew comes to these farmers they receive him with great hospitality.*", Saron & Hotz, 1955 p 182. See also the Martyn Adelberg's unpublished manuscript written in 1983 pp 1-2.

¹⁰ I Abrahams, 1955, Saron and Hotz, 1955, Hermann. Saron, after touring the country in 1942, reported to the Board that people who lived in the Platteland, and were in contact with the Afrikaners, had found no deep-rooted anti-Semitism among the Afrikaners (report back to Board, 11.11.42).

¹¹ The peak period of Jewish settlement in the platteland was probably in the 1920's. In comparison, by 1955 nine-tenths of the Jews lived in eighteen large urban centres, and of the remainder, probably no more than 4,000 lived in a strictly rural community.

the model of white, urban, English-speaking and middle class¹². Over the years, Jews integrated into the life of SA in all its aspects, economic, civic, cultural, artistic, political and recreational.

At the time of Union manufacturing accounted for only 3.8% of the gross domestic product. By the end of World War II manufacturing accounted for 15.3% of SA's gross domestic product. The Jewish immigrant was ideally placed to provide the essential entrepreneurship for this industrialization. The Afrikaners were attached to the land, the British preferred to import goods from Britain and the Indian community was restricted by legislation¹³. In contrast, the Jews' itinerant experience well equipped them for the task of exploiting the potential of the country. As economic life developed, Jews expanded into a wide variety of interests and pursuits, many advancing from petty trading to large commercial enterprises and to new branches of industry. They also played a considerable part in the rapid development of other branches of the economy, such as finance and mining. The changing pattern was reflected in the growing numbers entering the professions, although comparatively few entered the civil service or teaching¹⁴. Consumer goods such as blankets, textiles and furniture were produced from small workshops. German-Jewish refugees, who arrived after 1933 and before the introduction of the Aliens Act

¹² described by Shimoni as quoted by Riva Krut in *"The Making of a South African Jewish Community in Johannesburg, 1886-1914"*, in *Class, Community and Conflict*, edited by Belinda Bozzoli, Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1987, pp 135-159, 153

¹³ Antony Arkin, "Economic Activities", in Arkin, Oxford 1984, pp 57-77. Jones and Muller remark that most entrepreneurs in industry were English-speaking whites and Indians. In 1930 there was not one single large factory under Afrikaner ownership. Even by 1960 Afrikaners still owned by a few major industrial undertakings. The success of Rembrandt, established by Anton Rupert in 1948, was the only striking contrast. (Stuart Jones and Andre Muller, *"The South African Economy, 1910-1990"*, Macmillan, London, 1992, p 179)

¹⁴ On the one hand the Jews had the skills to enter the professions, and, on the other hand, the civil service, and the teaching professions had limited opportunities for Jews.

in 1937, extended the range of industrial activities through their specialised knowledge of ceramics, diamond cutting and fashionware. In commerce the Jewish role was especially significant. A specific Jewish innovation was the chain store where mass-produced cheap items were sold. In the service sector they provided a major proportion of the legal, medical and accounting professions. Hotel, advertising and entertaining businesses were also largely Jewish-owned. They were also prominent in the introduction of large-scale scientific production¹⁵, innovation¹⁶, and especially instrumental in the development of secondary industries¹⁷.

In 1921 60 percent of the Jewish male population was engaged in commerce compared with the corresponding proportion of 16 percent in the white population as a whole. 15 percent were engaged in industry (the corresponding percentage for the general population was 9 percent). About 3 percent were in the professions, practically the same proportion as for the general population, though the predominant professions practised were probably different¹⁸. Despite their concentration in only a few economic sectors, and the inevitable economic rivalry that arose as a result, this never spilled over into internal enmity or hostility within the community, which, in general, remained united.

The process of acculturation was marked by increased participation in the cultural and artistic life of SA. Jews were among the leading patrons of art, music and literature, creative

¹⁵ Arkin, 1984, pp 60-61

¹⁶ Louis Hotz, "Contributions to Economic Development" in Saron and Hotz, 1955, pp 348-369, 366-367

¹⁷ *ibid*, pp 365-366. Jones and Muller note that the expansion of industry in the 1930s and 1940s was handicapped by a shortage of skilled workers and professional and managerial personnel. This shortage was relieved by immigrants who also introduced many new technologies. (Stuart Jones and Andre Muller, *The South African Economy, 1910-1990*, Macmillan, London, 1992, p 180)

¹⁸ *ibid*, p 368

in many fields, with a number of outstanding artists, sculptors, writers and journalists emerging from the Jewish community¹⁹. They also took an active interest in civic affairs and politics. Although all the main political parties had Jewish supporters, only a minority supported the NP or the small left groups. The majority inclined towards the centrist South African Party led by the former Boer generals, Louis Botha and Jan Christiaan Smuts, which followed a policy of conciliation between the Afrikaners and the English, envisaging a united, bilingual (white) South Africanism²⁰.

Urbanisation transformed the Afrikaners into a proletariat in the employ of a 'foreign capitalist' class. They were clustered in the least skilled section of the industrial labour market, where mechanisation and cheap African labour constantly threatened their jobs and blocked their occupational mobility. Indicative of their economical marginalisation is the fact that in 1946 only 3% of the Afrikaners were directors or owners and only 4.3% professionals or teachers²¹. Their resentment at this unequal distribution of status, wealth and political control²² was exploited by the anti-Semitic parties. "The fact that English speakers monopolised finance, commerce and mining persuaded Afrikaners that their national and class enemy was one and the same²³. Jews became a convenient scapegoat for the dislocation, and the economic and social upheaval consequent to the accelerated process of urbanisation and industrialisation that SA underwent in the last decades of the 19th and the first

¹⁹ Saron, "Epilogue, 1910-1955", in Saron & Hotz, 1955 pp 373-375

²⁰ Saron & Hotz, 1955, p 374; Shimoni, 1988, p 6

²¹ Philip Bonner, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel, "The Shaping of Apartheid: Contradiction, Continuity and Popular Struggle" in Bonner P Delius P and Posel D (eds) *Apartheid Genesis, 1935-1962*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press and Witwatersrand University Press, 1993, 1-41, pp 20-21.

²² Charles Bloomberg, *Christian-Nationalism and the Rise of the Afrikaner Broederbond in South Africa, 1918-1948*, (p xxi)

²³ ibid

half of the 20th century²⁴. As early as 1915, the Afrikaans cartoonist, D C Boonzaier, depicted the Jewish South African as "Hoggenheimer", a rotund business man with a long nose²⁵.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES²⁶

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies was established primarily to coordinate efforts to prevent legislation aimed at restricting Jewish immigration to SA. With the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1902, which contained the "European language" clause, it was imperative to persuade the Government to recognise Yiddish as a European language. To this effect, it was necessary to create a representative body to speak on behalf of the community and thus the Board of Deputies for the Jews of the Transvaal and Natal was formed in 1903. In 1904 a parallel body for the Jews of the Cape Colony was founded, whose primary functions were maintaining vigilance against anti-Jewish manifestations and lobbying on behalf of Jewish interests. It was also a response to a plea from the authorities for a Jewish body which could speak "with one voice" in place of a variety of advisers, each claiming to represent the Jewish community²⁷. The two bodies united in 1912. In its report to its constituent bodies in June 6, 1947²⁸, the Executive Council categorically stated that

²⁴ Mendel Kaplan, *Jewish Roots in the South African Economy*, C Struik Publishers, Cape Town, 1986

²⁵ Shain, 1990

²⁶ For a more comprehensive description of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, see "The Communal Organisation of South African Jewry", by Steven Aschheim, The Jewish Journal of Sociology, Vol 12, No \2, 1970, pp 201-213

²⁷ Saron Gustav, "The South African Jewish Board of Deputies": Its Role and Development", a pamphlet published by the Board on its 70th anniversary. A detailed account of the history of the Board from 1903 to 1912 will be found in "The Long Road to Unity" Saron & Hotz, 1955, pp 226-270.

²⁸ Paragraph 3

...the only body authorised to speak on behalf of South African Jewry in matters affecting the Jewish community as a whole, is the ...Jewish Board of Deputies, and that no individual Jew is entitled to express opinions or to make representations on behalf of the community as a whole²⁹.

The SA Jewish Board of Deputies was founded on the model of Anglo-British Jewry³⁰. The Board of Deputies for British Jews was founded in 1760. The preamble of its constitution, which was only drafted in 1836, explicitly states that the function of the Board was to watch over the interests of the Jews in the British Empire³¹. By 1936 it was recognized by both the Crown and the British Government as the official voice of the community³². Although it scrutinised legislation that could possibly affect the rights of Jewish citizens, it adhered to the axiom that it did not take part in politics³³. Neville Laski, KC, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews in 1939, wrote: "The Jews of England have always recognized the need for concerted and organised action, first, to obtain civil and political rights,

²⁹ This remained, and remains, the constant stand of the Board, despite occasional challenges to its arrogating to itself monolithic authority. The Jewish Board of Deputies and the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) delineated their spheres of activity to the effect that the activities of SAZF are confined to Zionist activities and to Israel.

"Each organisation claims, I believe rightly, to speak on behalf of the whole Jewish community in its specific sphere of competence: the Board in respect of the internal affairs of the community and its relation with external authorities; the Zionist Federation in respect of the community's efforts on behalf of Israel and the promotion of Zionism generally...the separate objectives of the two organisations are regarded as complementary, and there are many matters on which they consult with each other and cooperate." (Saron, 1973, p 13)

The borders between the spheres of authority between these two bodies were blurred, with the imperative to 'consult each other and cooperate' especially evident, during the 1960's in the wake of Israel's anti-apartheid stance in the UNO (See Part 3).

³⁰ Krut, 1990; See Milton Shain, 1983.

³¹ *ibid*

³² Sidney Salomon, *The Jews of Britain*, Jarrolds, London, 1938, p 187-189

³³ *ibid*, p 189

and secondly to defend and maintain them when won³⁴." Their prime purposes, therefore, were to lobby for the elimination of Jewish disabilities and to combat anti-Semitism³⁵.

Not only were the reasons for coming into existence and their central goals strikingly similar, so was their course of action in counter-acting anti-Semitism. Both the South African and the British Boards of Deputies concentrated on bringing about greater understanding between Jew and non-Jew, stressing what Jew and non-Jew had in common.

"We have to educate the public as to the facts about Jews and to show that they have been worthy of their citizenship and in peace and war have rendered service to their country with the sole view of enhancing its progress..³⁶."

In the course of the 1940's and 1950's there were calls to reform the Board's constitution. In 1943 a Constitution Investigation Committee was established with the aim of making it more democratic. Its report made the following observation:

At the moment the constitution provides for representation on an organisational basis and as such is in no way representative of the Jewish community as a whole. This leads not only to an undemocratically elected executive but

³⁴ Neville Laski, *Jewish Rights and Jewish Wrongs*, Soncino Press, 1939, p 129. It is striking how similar the chapter "Anti-defamation Work" (129-142) is to the Reports to South African Jewry during the 1930's and 1940's and to Gus Saron's addresses to Congress. For example Laski deals with complaints that the Board does not take a stronger stance against anti-Semitism, justifying the Board's policies by explaining that it must avoid 'the policy of aggressivism' (p 133). He describes the Blackshirt Movement as being alien to the English spirit (p 134) and recommends that Jews eschew Fascist meetings or any incident that could lead to 'any form of disorder' (p 135).

³⁵ The Press Committee was established in 1919 for this express purpose. When the spate of Nazi propaganda increased in 1933, its name was changed to the Press and Information Committee. Subsequently, in 1933, with the rise and establishment of the British Union of Fascists and National Socialists Party, which resorted to a ruthless anti-Semitic campaign in England, the Co-ordinating committee was established to co-ordinate all the Board's activities in combatting anti-Semitic propaganda. (Salomon, 1938, p 193)

³⁶ ibid

deprives the Board of the real authority to speak in the name of the whole community...To avoid this situation the constitution must be framed so as to provide a more direct representation for all adult South African Jews accepting the Board's authority³⁷.

The Fifteenth Congress, in 1945, directed the Executive Council to draft an amended constitution with the aim that the Board should be as representative as possible. A committee, which investigated the possible revision of the Constitution, recommended the retention of the system of organisational representation³⁸.

Steven Aschheim characterised the communal structure in SA as "*structured 'centralised power'*"³⁹. The division of authority between the provinces and the central body was, and is, functional where the local communal bodies focus on 'communal-involving' activities, while the national institutions, and the Executive Council pre-eminently, are concerned with community questions of power and decision. The members of the Board, according to the constitution, are not individuals but the organisations which have applied for membership and have been accepted⁴⁰. These affiliated organisations are entitled to be represented by delegates at the national congress which is the supreme policy-making and governing body of the Board. In the period between congresses, plenary authority is exercised by an Executive Council, whose members are elected by ballot at the congress and who have power to co-opt a limited number of additional members.

In any case, protests regarding the democratic procedures of Congress, allegations of undemocratic elections and doubts as to

³⁷ "Report on Amendment of Constitution of South African Jewish Board of Deputies", by L A Pincus, 12.2.45

³⁸ recommendations were finally made in 1955, Saron, 1973, p 12

³⁹ Aschheim, 1970, p 207.

⁴⁰ Affiliation is conditional on the organisation existing for an authentic Jewish object. In 1970 there were 330 organisations. (Aschheim, 1970, p 208)

the representativeness of the Board continued to reappear in the period covered by this study.

The crucial issues which pre-occupied the SA Board of Deputies from 1903 to 1948 were keeping the doors of SA open to Jewish immigration and combatting anti-Semitism⁴¹. Only after these problems were laid to rest, was the Board free to deal with internal concerns. This was achieved by the development of a fairly broad communal and cultural programme, which encompassed all facets of Jewish life in SA. While maintaining its role as the 'communal watch-dog', the Board gradually entered new fields such as adult educational programmes, its own monthly journal Jewish Affairs, undertook cultural projects like Book Exhibitions and Art Festivals, resuscitated the Jewish Historical and Sociology Society, established a Country Communities Committee, a Welfare Department, a Youth Department, a Joint Chaplaincy Committee, as well as maintaining links with world Jewry. In 1949 the United Communal Fund for SA Jewry (UCF) was established to provide for the Board's own budget, as well as subventing other organisations in the fields of education, religion, culture and youth work. In 1979 Gerald Leissner, Chairman of the Public Relations Committee, defined the goals of the Board as follows: to act as the official spokesman of the community; to protect its civil rights; and to act as a co-ordinator⁴². The Board, thus, became the representative body of the Jewish community⁴³, its main purpose being to safeguard the religious and civic rights of the Jewish population and to contribute to the strengthening and enrichment of Jewish

⁴¹ Nevertheless, it was during this period, in 1928, that the Board, together with the Zionist Federation, was instrumental in founding the SA Board of Jewish Education.

⁴² Memorandum "Public Relations and the Jewish Board of Deputies", drafted by Gerald Leissner, 22.1.79

⁴³ See Shain, 1983 for the process by which the Board of Deputies for the Cape Colony succeeded in establishing itself and consolidating itself as the official institution representing all the Jews of the Colony and the obstacles it encountered in this endeavour.

communal life⁴⁴. Although its centrality to the community had eroded by 1970, in evaluating the communal organisation of South African Jewry, Aschheim observed that "In the minds of both the general and the Jewish polities, the Board is accepted as the legitimate Jewish public spokesman⁴⁵."

The leadership of the Board of Deputies was accepted by the vast majority of the Jews in the community, if only because of the stature of the leaders in the wider community, which was primarily recruited from the professional ranks, with a high proportion of lawyers. The Presidents, Vice-Presidents and Chairmen were, inevitably, men who had risen to the top of their professions - KCs, directors of companies, professors at the universities, politicians. All of them had proven their mettle within the economic, legal and professional spheres and were admired by their peers and well respected in the non-Jewish communities. Thus, there was a strong tendency for the leadership of the Board of Deputies to be recruited by virtue of their general standing within South African society⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ ibid

⁴⁵ Aschheim, 1970, pp 225-227

⁴⁶ Aschheim, 1970, p 220

Chapter 1. THE FRAMEWORK OF THE THESIS

Gideon Shimoni points out that "a retrospective survey of the official statements issued by the Board since 1948 reveals an inverse relation between the harshness of the apartheid system and the daring of the Board in criticising it⁴⁷." This study analyses the constellation of forces and constraints which induced the leaders of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies to adhere to this policy, incongruous as it was with Jewish values and history. It examines the pressures exerted on the leadership of the Jewish Board of Deputies at critical points in South African history and the many different considerations which led to the formulation of policies. Because of its wide scope it touches on the status of Jewish minorities in the Diaspora in general and on their relationship to the non-Jewish majority. One of its conclusions is that the 'inverse relation' existed only in relation to Government policies, whereas, a 'direct relation' existed between the Board's policies and white political opinion in SA.

1.1 A Survey of the Literature

The Jewish community in SA is not virgin territory for historians, as several studies have already been conducted; some of these cover the period which pre-dates this study, and those that do overlap have a different focus.

Histories of the Jewish community written before the 1960's, such as that of Herrman⁴⁸, Abrahams⁴⁹ and Saron and Hotz⁵⁰,

⁴⁷ Shimoni Gideon, "South African Jews and Apartheid" In D Singer and R Seldin (eds) American Jewish Year Book, 1988, Vol 88, Philadelphia, 1989, pp 1-56

⁴⁸ Herrman Louis, *History of the Jews of South Africa*, Gollancz, London, 1930, Republished by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 1935

⁴⁹ Abrahams Israel, *The Birth of a Community: Cape Town Hebrew Community*, Cape Town, 1955; Abrahams served as the Rabbi of the Cape Town Hebrew congregation, and he relies on the records of the congregation and thus is mainly a history of the

were not written by trained historians. While they are pioneer studies of the SA Jewish community, they share the general faults and limitations which characterise Afrikaner historiography. Firstly, they concentrate exclusively on the Jewish population group⁵¹ and do not contextualise its history with contemporary historical events. Secondly, they were written with the objective of achieving reconciliation with the Afrikaners⁵². They also exhibit a marked tendency towards "justificationism" and "contributionism"⁵³, striving to stress the contribution of individual Jews, and of the community, to the well-being of SA. At the same time, in keeping with liberal historiography, the writers tended to obfuscate conflicts between the Afrikaner and Jewish communities, highlighting the co-operation and mutual benefit which both communities derived from the relationship. As Shain pointed out⁵⁴, these writings were distinguished by their tendency towards conservatism and accommodation. There is no criticism of Afrikaners or of Afrikaner Nationalism. In fact, the thrust of these Jewish histories is defensive⁵⁵. J Simon quotes Rabbi Dr J J Hertz⁵⁶,

congregation.

⁵⁰ Oxford University Press, London, 1955, pp 179-212

⁵¹ Their historic consciousness expressed itself in a strong sense of belonging together and of sharing a common past, and its aim was to forge an Afrikaner identity. (Ken Smith, *The Changing Past: Trends in South African Historical Writing*, Southern Book Publishers, 1988, p 60)

⁵² Afrikaner historiography was written with a 'practical aim' in mind. Smith, 1988, p 60

⁵³ John Simon, "Towards an Appraisal of South African Jewish Historiography", in *Festschrift*, compiled by P E Westra and B Warner, Friends of the South African Library, Cape Town, 1993, pp 19-30, p 22

⁵⁴ "Anti-Semitism and South African Society: Reappraising the 1930s and 1940s", South African Historical Journal, Vol 27, 1992, pp 186-197

⁵⁵ John Simon, "Towards an appraisal of South African Jewish Historiography", in Westra PE and Warner B (eds), *Festschrift in Honour of Frank R Bradlow*, Cape Town, Friends of the South African Library, 1993, pp 19-30, pp 21-24

as stating in 1929 that an authoritative presentation of Jewish life was "vital for the Jew's self-defense⁵⁷." This orientation towards defense is especially evident in the publications of the Board. During the Second World War the Board found it necessary to counteract allegations that Jews were evading military service and for this reason the Board published two pamphlets "*They Answered the Call*" and "*They fought for South Africa*⁵⁸", which gave details of the war service performed by Jews. In 1950, the book *South African Jews in World War Two* was published for the same reason. In the 1950's, as part of the Board's "Goodwill" activities, it published *The Jews and Their Festivals*, both in English and Afrikaans. The underlying assumption was that if non-Jews understood the Jewish religion, their prejudices against Jews would dissipate.

The Jews of South Africa, edited by Saron and Hotz and published under the auspicious of the Board of Deputies in 1955, was written with similar ends in mind. The contributors to the book recorded both the contributions made to the general welfare of the country by outstanding individuals, as well as describing the building up of the group life and institutions of the Jewish communities. The volume recounted the marked changes that had occurred within the Jewish community as it grew from a small nucleus of 4,000 individuals in 1880 to about 45,000 in 1910. Essays also dealt with the differences in outlook and tradition between the Lithuanian immigrants and the older Jewish settlers and showed how these had initially led to tension and dispute. They highlighted the fact that, in due course, the newcomers had adapted to the new conditions and had gradually evolved a distinctive SA Jewish way of life. There are no allusions to class and economic clashes or to the racial conflicts, (either

⁵⁶ It is generally considered that Rabbi Hertz' address to the first SAZF Conference, and which was subsequently published in 1905 under the title *The Jew in South Africa*, as the beginning of South African Jewish historiography. (Simon, 1993, p 21)

⁵⁷ ibid

⁵⁸ in 1943

between the major white groups or between whites and blacks) which characterised South African society and politics at that time.

The chapter by Gus Saron "Boers, Uitlanders, Jews" was an exception in that it focused on conflicts between the Jews and the Government of Kruger at the end of the 19th century. Although the events described by Saron occurred prior to the establishment of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, they describe a relationship with the Kruger government which was very similar to that of the Board of Deputies with the South African Government. The major events of that period, the Jameson Raid, the Uitlander agitation and the Boer War, had special implications for the Jewish community because of the high profile of certain Jewish mining magnates and financiers. Furthermore, the negotiations which took place with Kruger for the removal of the religious disabilities which had been imposed on Jews exposed their vulnerability and the tendency on the part of Jewish leaders to compromise Jewish interests in favour of conciliation. The protracted negotiations for the franchise for uitlanders demonstrated that anti-Jewish sentiment was rife in the English speaking community and was not confined to Afrikaans-speakers⁵⁹. As a consequence, Jewish leaders attempted to make a concerted effort to avoid the impression that the Jewish community as a *group* was involved in politics. In the course of the negotiations with Kruger, a number of prominent Jews united to form a deputation to intercede with the Government on Jewish issues⁶⁰. This practice was to become

⁵⁹ This comes out also in Krut Rivka, "The Making of a South African Jewish Community in Johannesburg, 1886-1914", in *Class, Community and Conflict*, edited by Belinda Bozzoli, Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1987, p 145 and in Milton Shain, *Roots of Antisemitism*, University of Virginia Press, 1994 and Shain, *Jews and Cape Society*, Historical Publication Society, 1983 (especially articles and columns in the Owl and the Cape Times).

⁶⁰ It is also interesting that the President Kruger's opposition to the franchise prior to the Jameson Raid and during the Uitlander agitation foreshadowed the debate on Jewish immigration in the 1930's and immigration in general in the 1940's. Afrikaners feared that the uitlanders will usurp them, reflecting their apprehension as to the consequences of sharing

institutionalised in the organisation of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in 1904.

As in Afrikaner historiography, where Africans figure in history books only in relation to the unfolding of events in Afrikaner history, so in these Jewish histories black communities are not mentioned. In the case of the Jews it can be argued that, unlike the situation of the Afrikaners, there was very little contact with these communities⁶¹. Early Jewish historical writing, in contrast to Afrikaner, British and Settler histories, did not display racial bias against Blacks⁶² - they ignored the existence of Blacks altogether.

By the 1970's the Board of Deputies could no longer ignore the racial conflicts which divided South African society. The intellectual climate "influenced by British Marxism and European structuralism"⁶³, raised questions in regard to the role of the Jewish community and the Board of Deputies vis-a-vis Apartheid. Radical historiography began to explore the economic function of Apartheid, the basic argument being that Capitalism was dependent on a cheap supply of labour and racial oppression and segregation were the means to fuel Capitalism in SA. Rejecting the liberal interpretation that economic growth took place *despite* Apartheid, they insisted that, on the contrary, the economy flourished *because* of racial oppression⁶⁴. This put the spotlight on the wealth and the privilege of the Jewish

power and of 'being swamped'.

⁶¹ "Afrikaans works on South African history gave very little attention to blacks. When blacks came into these histories, they did so only when their activities impinged on white consciousness, when they thwarted white aspirations...or hampered the progress of 'civilisation'. (Ken Smith, *The Changing Past: Trends in South African Historical Writing*, Southern Book Publishers, 1988, p 87)

⁶² Smith, 1988, p 103

⁶³ Sally Frankenthal and Milton Shain, "Accommodation, Apathy and Activism: Jewish Political Behaviour in South Africa", *Jewish Quarterly* (London), Spring 1993, pp 5-12, p 6

⁶⁴ Ken Smith, 1988, pp 172-173

community. Echoes of these arguments can be found especially on the pages of the publications of the Jewish Students' organisations, especially Strike. Under such pressure, the Board could not overlook any opportunity to defend itself. In a booklet published to commemorate its seventieth birthday in 1973⁶⁵, Gus Saron, the General Secretary, addressed the major problems facing the Board, one of which was its attitude towards the racial policies of SA. In doing so, he set out what had become the Board's official policy: the SA Jewish Board of Deputies was a non-political body with no specific approach to the racial problems. Inasmuch as a communal Jewish attitude was not feasible, individual Jews were, therefore, urged to play their part in promoting justice and tolerance. As an official publication of the Board, Saron uncritically presented the rationalisation and justification for this policy.

In contrast to the apologetic ambience of the previous books, the research conducted by Shain⁶⁶ and Shimoni⁶⁷ represents a major shift into academic historical writing. Both of these scholars describe and analyze historical events without obscuring the active anti-Jewish attitudes of the government and the local population as well as dispassionately analysing the controversies within the Jewish community and its organisations. In describing the schisms and the compromises that preceded the establishment of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, Shain strips away the myths surrounding its formation. He describes the controversy in the community which arose following the initiative to establish a representative body for the Jewish

⁶⁵ "The South African Jewish Board of Deputies: Its Role and Development", published by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, (also Jewish Affairs, March, April, August 1973). Gus Saron had by then been the General Secretary of the Board of Deputies for nearly 20 years.

⁶⁶ *Jewry and Cape Society; The Origins and Activities of the Jewish Board of Deputies for the Cape Colony*, Historical Publication Society, 1983, pp 57-73 and *Roots of Anti-Semitism in South Africa*: The University of Virginia Press, 1994

⁶⁷ *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience: 1910-1967*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1980

community, as well as the anti-Semitism which prompted it⁶⁸. He shows that much of this disagreement originated in personality clashes rather than in differences on matters of principle or questions of political strategy. His research reveals the extent to which, from its inception, the Board has comprised a select group of men, remarkably homogenous and drawn from the middle class⁶⁹.

Shimoni⁷⁰ covers the period from the first years of the Jewish Board of Deputies until 1967, tying together all the factors and forces which impacted on the Jewish community during this period, with a special emphasis on the Zionist Movement. He lucidly depicts the dilemmas facing a Jewish community in an Apartheid society, avoiding the tendency, so prominent in previous works, to emphasise the contributions which Jews had made to various aspects of SA history⁷¹. In contrast to previous publications, Shimoni does not obscure the hostility and prejudice towards Jews which were rife within the SA populace and especially within the ranks of the NP and its leadership. He also highlights the dilemmas and the controversies with which the community wrestled in the face of the Government's Apartheid legislation and the suppression of the non-European population after 1948. In his article "South African Jews and Apartheid"⁷², he breaks new ground by describing the involvement of individual Jews in social action and in the struggle against Apartheid, as well as the consistent support given to the Progressive Party by affiliated Jews in the 1970's and 1980's.

⁶⁸ See Rivka Krut, "The Making of a South African Jewish Community in Johannesburg, 1886-1914", in *Class, Community and Conflict*, edited by Belinda Bozzoli, Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1987, pp 144-148

⁶⁹ Krut, 1987, 146. See picture of deputation to the Attorney General, Shain, 1983, p 61.

⁷⁰ *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience: 1910-1967*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1980

⁷¹ usually prompted by the need, as in other Jewish Diasporas, to justify Jewish existence in the country.

⁷² American Jewish Year Book, 1988, pp 1-58

In recent years, sundry academic articles dealing with different aspects of Jewish life in SA have been published. Professor Marcus Arkin has brought together a collection of studies in his book *South African Jewry: A Contemporary Survey*⁷³. Its main importance lies in the analyses of various aspects of Jewish life in SA⁷⁴. These studies do not, however, shed light on the activities of the Jewish Board of Deputies. Alec Goldberg describes the "Community Infrastructure"⁷⁵, enumerating the main institutions and organisations which are affiliated to the SA Jewish Board of Deputies. Ronald Mink describes the Jewish Day School movement, its curricula and presents a breakdown of pupil enrolment⁷⁶. He also describes the supplementary Jewish education provided to Jewish pupils in government schools and the extra-curricular activities initiated by the Jewish Board of Education. In her article "Religious Expression"⁷⁷, Jocelyn Hellig describes the different religious movements in South African Jewry and the differences in religious observance. Anthony Arkin⁷⁸, analyses the occupational structure and employment status of SA Jewry. He comes to the conclusion that Jews are a wholly urbanized, highly educated labour force with a significant proportion employed in commerce and employed almost exclusively in the private sector. Marcus Arkin describes the impact of Zionism on Jewry, the scope of the South African Zionist Federation's activities and the relations between the SA Government and Israel⁷⁹. Harry Schwarz, in giving his

⁷³ Oxford University Press, Capetown, 1984

⁷⁴ also Stephen Cohen, "Historical Background" pp 1-22 which is a brief overview of the history of the Jews in SA.

⁷⁵ pp 45-55

⁷⁶ "Jewish Education" in *South African Jewry*, edited by Marcus Arkin, pp 117-129

⁷⁷ in *South African Jewry: A Survey*, edited by M Arkin, Oxford, 1984, pp 95-116

⁷⁸ "Economic Activities" in Marcus Arkin, *South African Jewry: A Survey*, Oxford, 1984, pp 57-77

⁷⁹ "The Zionist Dimension" pp 79-93

perspective of the Jewish view of the political arena⁸⁰, justifies the core components of the Board's neutral policy towards politics. Allie Dubb surveys the demography of the community in his article "Demographic Picture"⁸¹ as well as providing a more updated picture in *The Jewish Population of South Africa: the 1991 Sociodemographic Survey*⁸². In addition, Dubb's study *Jewish South Africans*⁸³, provides a comprehensive picture of the sociological structure of the Jewish community.

Recently, two other significant books have appeared, *Jewish Roots in the South African Economy*⁸⁴ and *Founders and Followers: Johannesburg Jewry, 1887-1915*⁸⁵, both written by Mendel Kaplan and Marion Robertson. These books deal largely with Jewish contributions to the economic development of SA and tend to romanticise and glorify the Jewish entrepreneurs. Finally, Martyn Adelberg gives a critical, albeit limited, analysis of the political dilemmas facing the community in his article "The Future of the Jewish Community in South Africa"⁸⁶.

This thesis is the only work which deals specifically with the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and its struggles to frame policy towards politics under the pressures of changing circumstances.

1.2 The Existential Problems of a Jewish Minority

The SA Board of Deputies shares with other Jewish organisations representing Jewish minorities in the Diaspora a sense of insecurity and a determination to remain non-political. At times of crises the vulnerability of Jewish minorities becomes

⁸⁰ "Political Attitudes and Inter-Action" pp 131-146

⁸¹ pp 23-44

⁸² Kaplan Centre, Jewish Studies and Research, University of Cape Town, 1994

⁸³ Rhodes University: Grahamstown, 1977;

⁸⁴ C Struik Publishers: Capetown, 1986

⁸⁵ Vlaeberg Publishers: Cape Town, 1991

⁸⁶ South African International, 31.1.82, pp 445-455

apparent, as does the tendency to subordinate 'Jewish' interests to what is perceived as the interests of the country in which they reside. This was succinctly put by Neville Laski, President of the Board of Deputies for British Jews in 1939 at the height of anti-Semitic agitation in England. He wrote that in the battle against anti-Semitism,

...we have to be careful...not to put purely Jewish interests before those of the State of which we are citizens...We have to remember that in every community in which we live our best chance of survival, or equality of treatment and participation in the activities of the State, lies in the subordination of our specific interests to the larger interests of the whole community. Our duty as citizens must override our sentiments as Jews⁸⁷.

The anomalous position of Jewish minorities in the Diaspora is anchored in two diametrically opposing trends: assimilation versus isolation and maintaining a separate identity. This duality created immense pressure both on the individual Jew and on the community, intensifying their sensitivity to criticism. In their drive for acceptance into the host society, Jewish immigrants accept the racist characterisation of themselves by the non-Jewish Western world and seek to re-make themselves accordingly. "Thus, acculturation was one of their primary goals, even if this meant a degree of assimilation beyond that to which they consciously aspired⁸⁸." Their intense sensitivity was quite evident during the Dreyfus trial⁸⁹ in France when non-Jews, such as Emile Zola and Clemenceau, stood at the forefront of the struggle to prove Dreyfus' innocence, while the Jewish leadership assiduously maintained a low profile for fear of exacerbating the anti-Semitic agitation. The resistance to

⁸⁷ Laski, 1939, pp 131-132

⁸⁸ Daniel J Elazar, with Peter Medding, Jewish Communities in Frontier Societies: Argentina, Australia and South Africa, Homles & Meier, New York, 1983, p 19

⁸⁹ Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish major in the French army, was accused of treason in 1895. During his trial the prosecution forged documentary evidence proving his guilt. Upon being found guilty he was sent to Devil's island. The case was not closed as France was divided between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards. Dreyfus was ultimately re-tried and pardoned by the President of France.

Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe on the part of Australian Jewry exemplifies, in D Elazar's assessment, "one of the sorrier manifestations of Jewish hypersensitivity⁹⁰." When the government refused to liberalize entry conditions, the Anglo-Jewish leadership supported, encouraged and praised its restrictive policies as it was afraid that such an influx would undermine "the present amicable relations between Jew and gentile⁹¹". Similarly, when Chaim Weizman, the Zionist leader, was negotiating in 1917 with the British Government for a charter for the Jewish People in Palestine, the strongest opposition arose from the Conjoint Committee, the official spokesman of British Jewry, as the leadership was afraid that their status as British citizens would be compromised⁹². This vulnerability has not substantially changed. The hostile reaction of the Jewish leadership in the USA to the arrest in 1985 of Jonathan Pollard for spying for Israel recently exposed the vulnerability of this community. The official Jewish response was an overreactive attempt to disassociate "loyal" American Jews from this one "disloyal traitor". Many feared that the accusation of 'dual loyalty' would be raised. Pollard's lawyer, Alan Dershowitz, in expressing his shock at the deafening silence of the community, which had been so swift in condemning injustices perpetrated on others, said: "It was as if they could prove their own loyalty - and the loyalty of their constituents - by leading the lynch mob against the traitor⁹³." This vulnerability was unmistakable in the ineffectual efforts of the Board of Deputies to prevent restrictions on Jewish immigration to SA between 1930 and 1948.

⁹⁰ Elazar, 1983, p 280

⁹¹ Elazar, 1983, p 281. The Jews' sense of insecurity was so great that they warned immigrants, the minute they disembarked, not to be conspicuous as "the welfare of the old-established Jewish communities in Australia... depend[s] on your personal behaviour. Jews collectively are judged by individuals...". (*ibid*, pp 282-283)

⁹² Walter Lacquer, *A History of Zionism*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1972, pp 184-198

⁹³ Alan M Dershowitz, *Chutzpah*, Brown Little and Company, Boston, 1991, p 284-289.

1.2.1 Anti-Semitism as a Decisive Factor in the Policies of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies

Liberal historiography stressed that it was on the borders of the Cape Colony that Afrikaners developed their racial attitudes, which they took with them when they left the Cape on the Great Trek⁹⁴. The basic issues on the frontier were land, labour and security⁹⁵. Afrikaners felt threatened by the prospect of an influx of foreigners who would outnumber them in their own land, expropriate the available jobs and jeopardize Afrikaner survival. All these fears converged in the face of Jewish immigration to SA.

Cutherbertson⁹⁶, Bradlow⁹⁷ and Furlong⁹⁸ focused on the political polemics which surrounded Jewish immigration, Shimoni⁹⁹ addressed the economic and psychological issues which were the backdrop to these polemics and Schlemmer¹⁰⁰ shed light on the economic consequences of the enactment of the Aliens Act.

⁹⁴ Ken Smith writes that an important element in what came to be known as 'conventional wisdom' of the liberal school of history, and which is clearly evident in W H Macmillan's work, was that the Afrikaners, as a result of their Calvinism and the nature of their racial contacts, developed their racial attitudes on the borders of the Cape. Smith, 1988, p 135

⁹⁵ In an address in Oxford in 1930, the historian Eric Walker said that politicians were trying to solve the problems of 1930 with the frontier values of an era which had passed out of existence. (Smith, 1988, p 135)

⁹⁶ Cutherbertson Greg C, "Jewish Immigration As an Issue in South African Politics, 1937-39", Historia, May 1981, pp 119-133

⁹⁷ *Immigration into the Union, 1910-1948: Policies and Attitudes*, PHD thesis, UCT, 1978

⁹⁸ Patrick Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era*, Witwatersrand University Press, 1991

⁹⁹ Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967*, Oxford University Press: Capetown, 1980

¹⁰⁰ Then a professor at the University of Natal, Durban. Schlemmer Lawrence, "Economic and Social Integration of Refugees", in *From Refugee to Citizen*, edited by Frieda Sichel, Cape Town, 1966, pp 120-166

None of these studies dealt with the debates in the House of Assembly on the Quota and the Alien Acts or with the critical lessons which emerged from these debates and their decisive influence on the Jewish Board of Deputies and its policy-framing processes.

In examining the history of the Jewish Board of Deputies, I have endeavoured to highlight the fact that the debates, on both the Quota and the Aliens Acts, exposed the vulnerability and powerlessness of the Jewish community because of its reliance on a Government which was non-supportive in the best of circumstances and outright hostile in the worst. The debate on the Quota Act demonstrated that such was the prejudice of Members of Parliament (and for that matter the country) against Jews, that rational argument was useless. Efforts to highlight how SA had benefited from Jewish endeavour were in vain during the debate on the Quota Act, and proved counter-productive during the debate on the Aliens Act, as they merely reinforced the fears of the NP that Jews were expanding their control over the resources of the country. The debates also exposed the inconsistencies of the Smuts Government and its willingness to sacrifice the interests of a section of the population, in this case the Jewish community, in the interests of political expediency.

The controversy surrounding Jewish immigration can only be understood in the context of the pervasive anti-Semitic sentiment and agitation which characterised South African society during this period. *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa*¹⁰¹ by Milton Shain is a major study that demonstrates how the groundwork was laid for the widespread support of legislation curtailing Jewish immigration to the country. In his book¹⁰², and articles¹⁰³ Milton Shain shows how insidiously the

¹⁰¹ The University of Virginia Press, 1994

¹⁰² and doctorate

¹⁰³ Shain Milton, "Hoggenheimer - the Making of a Myth", *Jewish Affairs*, Vol 36, September 1981; *Jewry and Cape Society*, Historical Publication Society, 1983; "From Pariah to Parvenu:

minds of South Africans were conditioned so that they perceived Jews as opponents, as aliens and as a threat, making anti-Semitism a powerful political weapon. Incitement against Jews in the 1930's and 1940's was possible because of a well-entrenched Jewish stereotype, without which the Quota and Aliens Acts would not have gained popular support. By the same token, anti-Semitic agitation would not have become a viable political tool to be exploited in the struggle for political power, as described by Patrick Furlong¹⁰⁴, if it had not been for this groundwork. The Board of Deputies struggled to function in the shadow of this anti-Semitism, resulting in the 'inverse relation' observed by Shimoni. Furlong, in his analyses of anti-Semitism as part of the consolidation of the right-wing in SA, shows how radical anti-Semitism became integrated into NP policies. However, he overlooked Shain's findings¹⁰⁵ and ignored the impact of anti-Semitic propaganda which had been pervasive in press, literature and political speeches for decades. The Board's efforts to combat anti-Semitism was beyond the scope of his topic, while Shain and Shimoni only passingly dealt with it.

A thorough analysis of the anti-Semitism which preceded the NP victory in 1948 is, therefore, essential from at least four aspects. First of all, it had a decisive effect on the Board's policy towards Apartheid and is thus, the key to understanding the vacillations of the Board of Deputies and its unremitting efforts to avoid any confrontations with the Government after 1948. Secondly, it provides the opportunity to compare the activism of the community in the political field and its support

The Anti-Jewish Stereotype in South Africa, 1880-1910, Jewish Journal of Sociology, Vol 26 (2), 1984; "Anti-Semitism and South African Society: Reappraising the 1930s and 1940s", South African Historical Journal, Vol 27, 1992, pp 186-197

¹⁰⁴ Patrick Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era*, Witwatersrand University Press, 1991

¹⁰⁵ Patrick Furlong, "National Socialism, the National Party and the Radical Right in South Africa, 1934-1948", PHD dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1987, p 128

of anti-NP parties under the blanket term of "democratic forces" before 1948, with its total eschewing of political involvement after the NP victory. Thirdly, inasmuch as it shows how the Board of Deputies waffled in its efforts to secure Jewish rights, it raises the question as to how one could expect the Board to risk the survival of the community by fighting for the rights of other communities, when it did not have the strength of will to protect those of the Jewish community in its confrontations with the Government over Jewish interests?

Because all the efforts expended by the Board to combat anti-Semitism were futile, the fourth thing to be learnt from a study of anti-Semitism before 1948 is that the decline in anti-Semitic groupings in the 1940's was due not to any change in the attitudes or perception of Jews among the anti-Semites, but to a re-constellation of forces. Ultimately, the only reason that anti-Semitism disappeared from the political arena was that the ruling Party wanted it removed. Therefore, inasmuch as it was the Government which had repudiated anti-Semitism on its own volition, the threat that it could re-instate it had a decisive effect on the Board's policies towards the political arena. Furthermore, if the Jewish Board of Deputies was helpless in the face of political forces which threatened the well-being, and perhaps even the existence of the Jewish community, how effective a force could it be in combatting Apartheid? This question is relevant when discussing the pressures on the Board to formalise a policy opposing the Government's Apartheid legislation. Even in the 1980's the Board of Deputies could not shake off the fear that the Government would once more wield the threat of anti-Semitism to coerce the community¹⁰⁶.

The primary aim of this study is, therefore, to examine the Board's deliberations and statements in regard to 'political' issues, in order to identify its procedures, ascertain the dominant considerations and constraints, and gauge its success in dealing with each crisis, utilising the Board's archives as the primary source. It scrutinises the changes the Board's

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Aleck Goldberg, 16.11.95

policy underwent from 1930 to 1978 and the forces which influenced it in formulating its policies towards the political arena, describing the intricate processes which led to the support for the policy of 'neutrality' despite its implicit support of the status quo. It also exposes the politicisation of the issue of Jewish immigration by the NP and the UP in the 1930's when the Jewish community became a kickball in the power struggle between these Parties. The wide scope was deliberately chosen in order to pinpoint the catalysts for change. Special consideration is given to the trepidations of the Executive in the first two decades, especially during the Verwoerd administration.

1.3 The Tradition of Jewish Thought

A basic assumption underlying this study was that Apartheid became a Jewish issue because of the teachings of Judaism and because of the lessons of Jewish history. Jews have suffered persecution and oppression since Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. The Holocaust was the culmination of nearly two thousand years of Christian doctrine which demonized the Jews and sanctioned their marginalisation. The Church itself was culpable of the murder of Jews from the Middle Ages. It was, therefore, expected that Jews, who had suffered themselves, would be the champions of the oppressed and the victimised. *Jewish morals and ethics* reinforced this inherent tendency.

What were these "Jewish morals" which were often invoked to persuade the Jewish community actively to oppose Apartheid? The Mitzvoth, the religious observances incumbent on the Jew, are, by their very nature, all-encompassing, exhortative and pragmatic. They become the pattern for moral conduct and the working rules of moral action in the everyday life of the Jew. Every ethical concept of the Torah has its concrete expression in Halachah. Ethics are, therefore, integrated into Jewish law.

According to Jewish teachings, God is interested in the well-being of His creatures, especially man. Of prime concern is the

cultivation of a proper relationship with mankind. The paramount principle of a Jew's life is *Tikun Olam* - the repair/perfection of the world - to do good on earth and thus be instrumental in fulfilling God's design in the world, which is to bestow good on all beings. Man achieves this goal by 'imitating God' through active deeds of *Mishpat*¹⁰⁷, *tzedaka*¹⁰⁸, *Hesed*¹⁰⁹ and *Emet*¹¹⁰. These are the norms of ethical behaviour. The welfare of the individual and of the community requires maintaining peaceful relations among all men. This is attained by means of establishing a judicial system which metes justice on an equal basis and which is administered in accordance with the Law¹¹¹. In life, sickness and in death the non-Jew must be afforded equal treatment with Jews, racial bigotry being regarded as reprehensible¹¹². Many of the community's leaders would often quote Isaiah's call: "*Justice, justice, you shall pursue*".

Leviticus 19:14 exhorts: "*Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but fear thy Lord.*" The rabbis have traditionally interpreted this verse to mean not only that individuals are prohibited from betraying their fellow men by misleading them, but it also means that, if they were aware that evil and inequity pervade society, they are duty bound to expose, resist and actively oppose them.

This prophetic tradition encouraged the emergence of the Jewish

¹⁰⁷ justice

¹⁰⁸ which is translated as 'charity' but really means righteousness, to do what is just and good and right.

¹⁰⁹ loving-kindness

¹¹⁰ truth

¹¹¹ The Mishnah delineates the 7 Noachide Laws which are incumbent upon all men, regardless of their religion, race, creed or nationality, in order to win God's favour and to have a place in the World to Come. Six of these laws are prohibitions, the seventh is an imperative: to establish a just judicial system.

¹¹² This implied in Amos' immortal admonition: "*Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel, saith the Lord.*" (9:7)

socialists and revolutionaries of 19th and 20th century Europe. There were two kinds of Jewish activist: the activist who affiliated with the Jewish people and Judaism and the activist who was alienated from them, and even hostile to their existence. A similar bifurcation can be found within SA Jewry: some anti-Apartheid activists remained affiliated with the community and some became estranged from it and opposed its interests as they were communally defined. The early Jewish Socialists in the Yiddish-Speaking Branch of the International Socialist, for example, described themselves as part of the international socialist revolutionary movement, as internationalists and as members of anarchist, socialist and syndicalist groups, and thus, by definition as anti-Zionists, alienated from the particularism of the Jewish community and its interests¹¹³. However, these socialists were the minority within SA Jewry.

The 'Progressive Jews' of the 1980's and 1990's argued forcefully for Jewish involvement in the political process, justifying this strategy on the grounds of Jewish persecution and Jewish religious teachings. However, in contrast to the Jewish anti-Apartheid activists of the 1950's and 1960's, these activists were affiliated Jews who continued to participate in mainstream Jewish life¹¹⁴. "On the one hand, they picked up on a tradition of activist humanism...and, on the other, they maintained a particularist, that is , Jewish, focus¹¹⁵."

Jewish morals and ethics were only one side of the coin. Shmuel, the head of the Yeshiva at Pumbedita and a major figure in the development of the Talmud, set out the ground- rules for the relationship between the Jewish community in the Diaspora and those in authority as "*Dina DeMalchuta Dina*" - the Law of the

¹¹³ Mantzaris E A, "*Radical Community: The Yiddish-Speaking Branch of the International Socialist League, 1918-1920*", in *Class, Community and Conflict*, edited by Belinda Bozzoli, Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1987, pp 160-176

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, p 71

¹¹⁵ Sally Frankenthal and Milton Shain, 1993, p 8

Jewish morals and ethics were only one side of the coin. Shmuel, the head of the Yeshiva at Pumbedita and a major figure in the development of the Talmud, set out the ground-rules for the relationship between the Jewish community in the Diaspora and those in authority as "*Dina DeMalchuta Dina*" - the Law of the land is the Law. In practical terms this means that if the law of the land conflicts with Jewish Law, the law of the land takes precedence. From experience the Sages had taught:

"Pray for the welfare of your government, were it not for the fear of the rulers, every man would devour his fellow alive"¹¹⁶. As large fish devour small fish, so would man do, were he not restrained by the government¹¹⁷."

It was according to this counsel that the Board acted.

1.4 The Jewish Board of Deputies and "Public Relations"

In contrast to the class divisions and conflict on economic grounds which had characterised the SA Jewish community in the first decades of the 20th century¹¹⁸, by the end of the second decade the community could be characterised as White, urban, middle-class and English-speaking¹¹⁹, with an overwhelming motivation to perpetuate this situation. The pre-eminent function of the Jewish Board of Deputies was, therefore, to protect the interests and the civil rights of the Jews of SA. The metamorphosis of the Board's political policy was completely consistent with this stance.

In its relationship with the Government it adopted a two-pronged diplomatic thrust, which so eloquently expressed its anxiety. On

¹¹⁶ Sayings of our Fathers, Chapter 3, Mishnah 2

¹¹⁷ Mishnah, Pirkei Avot, Avodah Zarah, 4a and Rashi: Betsa, 23b

¹¹⁸ Krut Riva, "The Making of a South African Jewish Community in Johannesburg, 1886-1914", in *Class, Community and Conflict*, edited by Belinda Bozzoli, Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1987, pp 135-159

¹¹⁹ and ultimately middle-class. See also Harry Schwarz, "Political Attitudes and Interactions", in *South African Jewry: A Contemporary Survey*, edited by M Arkin, Oxford University Press, Capetown, 1984, pp 131-145.

the one hand, it was anxious not to displease by pushing for Jewish interests too hard and on the other hand, it emphasised the inestimable qualities of the Jews and their unqualified loyalty to SA. Although this was denied by the Board, its actions were aimed at appeasement and conciliation. This attitude is not unique to the SA Jewish Board of Deputies. The *delagacion de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas*, for example, the corresponding body of the Jewish Board of Deputies in Argentina, also strove to maintain a "stance of nonidentification with any particular party or movement on the Argentinean political scene". Since Jews are frequently accused of being outsiders, they maintain neutrality for fear of being accused of dual loyalties¹²⁰.

The greater assertiveness of the Board from the latter part of the 1970's did not contradict this tendency. The Government by then was not anti-Jewish, SA and Israel were allies and opposition to Apartheid was growing in the wider white community, as well as in NP and Government quarters. By this time, condemning the moral aspects of Apartheid, but not Apartheid itself, did not entail any great risk.

Another important determinant of Jewish communal behaviour was the relationship between the Afrikaans-speaking community and the Jewish community. This can be characterised as mutual affinity marred by mutual suspicion. Shimoni merely touched on the subject in his article "Afrikaner and Jewish Nationalism - Are they Comparable?"¹²¹. The Board's political policy cannot be understood if it is divorced from its complex relations with Afrikaners, and especially its 'goodwill' orientation which was aimed at the Afrikaner community and Afrikaner Nationalism.

In looking towards the future, Sally Frankenthal and Milton

¹²⁰ Daniel J Elazar, with Peter Medding, *Jewish Communities in Frontier Societies: Argentina, Australia and South Africa*, Holmes & Meier, New York, 1983, p 105

¹²¹ Shimoni, Gideon, "Afrikaner and Jewish Nationalism - Are they Comparable?", *Jewish Affairs*, August 1971, pp 8-12

Sally Frankenthal and Milton Shain examine the issues which will pre-occupy the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the Jewish community under the new multi-racial ANC Government¹²². They argue that the Board will continue to adapt to the new political circumstances. It has already launched a more 'pro-active' strategy, especially by initiating on-going discussions across the political and communal spectrum¹²³. Notwithstanding the unprecedented changes which have occurred in SA, it is notable that there has not been a substantial change in the concerns of the SA Jewish community. They remain the freedom to practice the Jewish religion and to support Zionist activities, Jewish participation in the political process, the maintenance of good relations between SA and Israel, the maintenance of law and order in SA and the containment of right-wing anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

Shain and Frankenthal point out, as Jewish leaders have in the past, that the well-being of the Jews is tied up with the fate of the white population as a whole, and they stress, as leaders of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies had envisaged for many decades, that in order that the communal organisation be safeguarded, "it would be in the Jewish interest that a future South African constitution be underpinned by a Bill of Rights¹²⁴."

¹²² in their articles "South African Jewry, Apartheid and Political Change Patterns of Prejudice, vol 25, no. 1, 1991, pp 62-74 and "Accommodation, Apathy and Activism: Jewish Political Behaviour in South Africa", The Jewish Quarterly (London), Spring 1993, pp 5-12,

¹²³ Frankenthal and Shain, 1993, p 10

¹²⁴ Shain and Frankenthal, 1991, pp 70-72

PART 1: THE 'JEWISH QUESTION'
AS A POLITICAL ISSUE,
1930-1948

Chapter 2. JEWISH IMMIGRATION TO THE UNION, 1930:

THE QUOTA ACT

During the 1930's the Board of Deputies found itself embroiled in the controversy over Jewish immigration to SA. The debate transformed 'Jewishness' into a political issue and the Jewish community was plunged into a prolonged period where anti-Semitism and the "Jewish Question" were thrust into the political arena.

2.1 Historical Background

The focus of Jewish life during the period covered was the anti-Semitic agitation inspired by the NP. During the post-union period, Jews, by and large, tended to believe that their future was best secured by supporting General J C Smuts, the leader of the United Party, who not only opposed secession from the British Empire, but was also a friend of Zionism. The general support for Smuts continued despite discriminatory aspects of the 1923 Immigration Act. In 1923 James Barry Hertzog, leader of the Nationalist Party (NP), concluded an electoral pact with the Labour Party, and in the ensuing election of 1924 victory went to the Hertzog-Cresswell alliance. The 1929 general election was fought mainly between the South African Party and the Nationalists, with Hertzog, the leader of the NP, ultimately forming the government. In September 1931 the Pact between the Nationalists and Labour collapsed after Labour support had failed miserably in the elections¹, preparing the way for a realignment of the political forces. Although there is evidence that in the 1924 and 1929 general elections, support for Smuts and the centrist SAP, had dwindled among Jews, there did not appear to have been a decisive swing towards the Pact Government².

¹ T R H Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*, Southern Book Publishers, 1977, pp 283-285, 297-298. It was at this stage that Morris Kentridge joined the SAP

² Stephen Cohen, 1984, pp 6-7

The 1929 Wall Street crash impacted on all the world markets, including SA; by 1930 SA, like the rest of the world, was experiencing a severe economic depression. South African exports plummeted. SA's diamond exports fell in value from 16.5 million English pounds in 1928 to 1.4 million in 1934³. Australia, the major wool-producing country in the Commonwealth, followed Britain in devaluing its currency, leaving the South African pound worth twice as much as the Australian, making it almost impossible to market South African wool. The Hertzog administration, instead of devaluing SA's currency, adhered doggedly to the gold standard, causing distress to the economy, and to farmers in particular. By the time the SA Pound was finally devalued in December 1932, the economy had been greatly damaged⁴.

The mainspring behind the Quota Act was the desire to preserve the 'racial homogeneity' of SA and the fear of change in its racial character. Another more subtle motive, never articulated by the politicians but alluded to in the press, was political: the Jews, in the main, did not support the NP. The belief that SA had enough racial problems without adding another one was articulated time and again in the course of the debate⁵. The Jews were regarded as alien, as not cohering to the racial stock of SA and, therefore, impairing the cohesiveness of the South African population. The bulk of white South Africans were

³ T R H Davenport, 1977, p 302

⁴ Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, Yale University Press, London, New Haven, 1990, p 161. Davenport, 1977, p 302

⁵For a detailed history of the debate surrounding the Quota Bill, before its introduction and in the House of Assembly and motivation see Edna Bradlow, *Immigration into the Union 1910 - 1948: Policies and Attitudes*, Phd thesis, University of Cape Town, 1978, pp 215 - 250 and Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910 - 1967*, Oxford University Press, 1980, 97 - 108 ; Milton Shain, *The Foundations of Anti-Semitism in South Africa: Images of the Jew C 1870-1930*, Phd thesis, UCT, 1990.

Christian and Western European⁶, specifically Dutch and English, whereas Jews were neither Christian nor western European and therefore foreign.

As Eastern European Jews failed to assimilate into the dominant white population, hopes of regeneration and wholesale acculturation faded. This led to the Jewish image now being cast in an essentially 'racial' mould⁷. Hostility, however, was primarily a product of exclusivist of "Volkish' ideas, central to Afrikaner nationalism at this time. Nationalist sentiment, in other words, sharpened perceptions of the Jew as a quintessential alien. For the Afrikaner, he symbolised all that was foreign and oppressive⁸.

In Parliament, J S Marwick (SAP) spearheaded the attack on unrestricted immigration of peoples who 'could not' assimilate with the 'existing stock', pinpointing two major 'liabilities' that characterised these immigrants: they did not have the proper skills⁹, and did not have the proper knowledge of the type of relations that should exist between Europeans and non-Whites¹⁰. The tightening of immigration laws in the US¹¹ raised the spectre of SA being flooded with immigrants. Demands for a quota on the intake of immigration became more widespread in the press and Parliament.

The general election of 1929 reinforced the ruling Party's strength, giving the NP free reign to go ahead and fix a quota

⁶ The Jews were regarded as alien by the NP despite the fact that the pre-twentieth century Jewish immigrants WERE from western Europe.

⁷ Shain, 1990, pp 333-334

⁸ Shain, 1990, pp 340-341

⁹ It is not really clear to what he is referring to in the term 'proper skills' , but if anything can be learned from the debates on the Quota and Aliens Bill it is the irrelevancy the actual skills and capabilities the Jews had on immigration policy. This was true for both sides of the House of Assembly.

¹⁰ HoA debates, 9.5.28

¹¹ In fact, the United States of America also used the term 'assimilable' immigrants in defining who would be permitted to enter the country and who would be prohibited.

on immigration on the lines of the US¹². Initially the NP assiduously wooed the Jewish vote even though, in reality, they could not materially affect any election outcome. In January 1930 a by-election was held at Bethal which had a considerable Jewish farming community. On 17 January 1930, Oswald Pirow, the Minister of Justice, assured Bethal's Jews that they need not fear any anti-Jewish legislation and that the NP would oppose any law which would place limits on Jewish immigration. He praised them as being the only immigrant group which had not become a burden upon the state. Despite this ingratiating speech, the Jews of Bethal did not support the NP in the elections. Edna Bradlow speculates that perhaps "the loss of Bethal to the SAP may have precipitated the introduction of the quota legislation¹³." Supporting the hypothesis of a political motive behind the Bill was Ons Vaderland's admission that Jewish voters apparently did not support the Government. In its view it was, therefore, not necessary to consider their sensibilities¹⁴. Contrary to expectations, the Jews had not severed their allegiance to Smuts' South African Party and swung to the NP¹⁵.

2.2 The Debate in Parliament

The Bill was introduced with no previous warning on the 29 January 1930, and came as a bombshell to the Jewish community. In fact D F Malan, the Minister of Interior, admitted in 1936 that the Bill had been hastily introduced to avoid a last minute influx of immigrants¹⁶. General Smuts's absence from the country was, perhaps, a consideration in the timing of its introduction as this obviated his participation in the debate.

¹² Bradlow, 1978, p 223. The US had already placed quotas on 'unassimilated people' in the 1920s.

¹³ Bradlow, p 224, Shimoni Gideon, 1980, p 105

¹⁴ Bradlow, 1978, p 225

¹⁵ Shimoni, 1980, pp 104 - 105

¹⁶ Bradlow, 1978, p 225

In introducing the Bill, Malan, the Minister of Interior, argued that immigration and emigration patterns were altering the characteristics of the SA population. While many descendants of the original stocks from which the South African nation was drawn were emigrating to South West Africa and Rhodesia¹⁷, immigration from alien countries was increasing. The new arrivals, he contended, were of the poorest classes. They did not belong to "*the producing class*"¹⁸ and so lived off what others produced¹⁹.

Malan went on to appeal to the Opposition not to adopt a partisan approach, contending that the Bill, perhaps more than any other introduced in the House for a long time, lent itself to an approach on non-party lines. The Government would gain little from the measure but stood to lose a lot; the Opposition would gain nothing from opposition but stood to gain from supporting the measure. Newspapers, with few exceptions, had greeted the Bill as being overdue. In fact, Malan emphasised, there was widespread support for the Bill in the country. Since no political advantage was to be gained by either of the big political parties from supporting the Bill, their support could only derive from patriotic reasons. He repeatedly stressed that it was in the best interest of SA.

I therefore sincerely hope that on both sides of the House members will approach this measure not in a Party spirit, not in a spirit of calculation of Party risks and Party advantages, but in the spirit of a broad and true South African patriotism²⁰.

Malan proclaimed that one of the primary goals of the Bill was the maintenance of Western civilisation²¹. Flowing from this was SA's right to maintain its own identity by determining its

¹⁷ HoA debates, 10.2.30 col 558

¹⁸ A probable allusion to the paucity of Jews in farming. In contrast the bulk of the Jews were to be found in commerce or the professions.

¹⁹ This type of thinking goes back to the Physiocrats

²⁰ HoA debates, 10.2.30, col 557

²¹ *ibid*, col 567-568

racial composition through the control of immigration. The guiding principle of policy should be "homogeneity", with the "assimilability" the predominant criteria. SA could not add any more racial problems to those she already had²².

Malan went to great pains to emphasise that there was no intention to cast a slur on those countries whose immigrants would not be admitted, protesting that the Bill was not aimed at Jews; the ultimate goal was to create a homogenous population in SA by maintaining its development on the basis of its 'original composition²³'. Although he eloquently praised the Jewish contribution to SA²⁴, he stressed that their continued, uncontrolled, immigration could not be allowed as it precipitated hostility towards the Jews.

There is in South Africa, I am glad to say, very little anti-Semitism...and I am glad that we are still in the position today, in South Africa to appreciate very highly what the Jews have done for South Africa²⁵.

The Bill, therefore, was in the interest of the local Jewish community²⁶. Implicit in his words was the not-so-subtle threat that, if the Jewish community opposed the Bill and it was not passed, there would be an aggravation of anti-Semitism. In this fashion, Malan sought to secure Jewish support by persuading the local community that it would be to its economic and social advantage to support restrictions on their Eastern Europe co-religionists.

The underlying principle of the Bill was **selection** - SA would be selective regarding the countries from which immigrants would be permitted to enter, rather than depending upon the merits and qualities of the individual. It is clear, therefore, that it

²² ibid, col 568

²³ ibid, col 568

²⁴ HoA debates, 10.1.30, col 592-3; Duncan col 600; 12.2.30, Beyers col 677; Humphreys col 695;

²⁵ HoA debates, 10.2.30, col 571

²⁶ HoA debates, 10.2.30, col 571

patently was not economic considerations, such as the economic absorptive capacity of the country or the ability of the immigrant to contribute to the development of the country, that motivated the Bill. The Bill divided the countries of the world into two groups: immigration was to be restricted from the one, while emigrants were to be allowed unrestricted access from the other. The first group encompassed countries from Eastern Europe, Greece, and Palestine²⁷. The second group referred to were the Western Europe, the British Commonwealth without its mandates and the USA. Each restricted country was allotted an annual quota of 50 immigrants. In operative terms, the individuals filtered out by the Bill were predominantly prospective Jewish immigrants.

In the House there was an ongoing debate on the precise definition of the term "assimilability", the NP endeavouring to refute any suggestion that the term referred to Jews or that there was any intention to cast a slur on them. The formulation of the law had the effect of assuaging the conscience of its supporters: since the Act did not mention Jews by name, it, therefore, could not be labelled 'racist'. This stratagem made it easy for Malan to assert that his Quota Act did not rest on racial discrimination, but on discrimination between countries.

In the course of the debate in the House of Assembly, the Jewish community was placed in an intolerable situation. On the one hand, they were impelled to assist their Lithuanian kinsmen, whose circumstances were deteriorating rapidly²⁸, while on the

²⁷ The only mandated country mentioned by name.

²⁸ The movement of Jews from the Tsarist Empire after 1880 was part of a general trend of emigration, but the proportion of Jewish emigrants was much higher than that of any other group in Europe. First of all congestion in the Jewish areas of settlement was higher as they were confined to the Pale of Settlement. The areas were economically backwards, their population impoverished. Periodic catastrophes, especially fires, aggravated their economic plight; expulsions and deportations of all the Jewish inhabitants of a village were not a rare sight. The climax came in the spring of 1881 when a wave of pogroms spread throughout the south of Russia. Although Lithuania was relatively free of pogroms, the governor of the

other, it was impressed upon them that by doing so they would compromise their own status and provide ammunition to anti-Semitic groups. Morris Alexander put the issue in perspective when he noted that "it would be tragic if immigration to South Africa would be directly encouraged"²⁹, reflecting the foreboding lest the Board be accused of encouraging Jewish immigration³⁰. Consequently, the Board of Deputies took steps to restrict the flow of Jewish immigrants to SA until every employable Jew was working³¹.

The Opposition, in the main, gave its nearly unqualified support for the Bill³². It is in the realm of speculation as to whether had Smuts been present he would have provided leadership to those who opposed the Bill. Certainly, Hofmeyr did not. Bradlow³³ underscores the equivocation which characterised Jan Hofmeyr's contribution to the debate in his maiden speech in Parliament. He simultaneously pleaded for restriction and non-restriction, and, in essence, expressed the same sentiments that he deplored, notably his reference to the "**lack of balance**" in the composition of the immigrant population. He conceded that an 'element had been pouring in too fast in proportion to the other

Province was a party to the so-called 'legislative pogroms' which came into force in 1882 which restricted further settlement of Jews in villages and granted wide administrative powers to provincial authorities, thus exposing the Jewish communities to the mercy of cruel and corrupt officials. These local conditions, as well as the exodus of Russian Jews, stimulated the Lithuanian Jewish migration to South Africa. (C. Gershater, *"From Lithuania to South Africa"*, in Saron & Hotz, 1955, pp 59-84)

²⁹ Bradlow, 1978, pp 219-220

³⁰ Louw often repeated the accusation that the Board was encouraging Jews to immigrate to South Africa, a charge most emphatically denied by the Board. See the debate in the House on Smuts large-scale immigration plan in April 1944.

³¹ Board of Deputies undated memo, possibly +/- January 1928, Bradlow, 1978, p 220.

³² Star, 13.2.30 RDM, 18.2.30

³³ Bradlow, 1978, p 233

element from Eastern Europe' and for that reason he did not oppose the restrictions³⁴. He too eloquently praised the Jews and their contributions³⁵, but this did not deter him from supporting the Bill, qualifying his support by stating that it should not place a stigma or slur on the Jewish community³⁶. Despite the weakness in his argument that Jews were not unassimilable³⁷, Hofmeyr associated himself with Malan's assumptions and conclusion, that in the prevailing circumstances, it was vital to support the Bill³⁸. He further associated himself with Malan's implicit threat that hostility would be engendered between 'those who were living in SA in friendship'³⁹.

There is therefore in South Africa today the possibility of disharmony and strife between Jews and non-Jews and if the present tendencies of immigration prevail unchecked then I am very much afraid of the possibility becoming a fact. It is on this basis that I support the principle of this measure and it is on that basis I would make an appeal to our Jewish citizens, not as Jews but as South Africans...⁴⁰.

As Hofmeyr's speech was replete with ambiguities, it is not surprising that Malan later remarked "he comes to the same result as leads us to introduce the Bill"⁴¹. Hofmeyr, like Malan, placed the community between Scylla and Charybdis: as

³⁴ HoA debates, 29.1.30 col 590

³⁵ It has played a great part in the building of our industries, both secondary and primary...It has brought into this country enterprise, energy and enthusiasm and we are richer for these gifts. In fact the country owes a great debt to its Jewish immigrants. If there had been no Jewish immigration...we would have been very much the poorer, vastly poorer today. (HoA debates, 29.1.30 col 590 col 588)

³⁶ ibid, col 590

³⁷ ibid, col 590

³⁸ ibid, col 590

³⁹ HoA debates, 29.1.30, col 587

⁴⁰ ibid, col 592

⁴¹ HoA Debates, 1930, V 14, 12.2.30, Col 706, quoted by Bradlow, 1978, p 235

South African patriots they should support the Bill which restricted Jewish immigration. They must choose where their loyalties lay: with the Jewish people or with SA.

Kentridge (SAP) elaborated on the contribution of the Jews to the economic life of SA in establishing industries in which Afrikaners worked, and in developing agriculture. Members of the Government had always praised Jews for being industrious and for not becoming a burden on welfare services. He repudiated Malan's accusation regarding the unassimilability of the Jews, condemning the Bill as being, indisputably, aimed at Jews from Eastern Europe⁴², citing Hertzog's speech of the previous July, where the Prime Minister himself had praised them as fellow Afrikaners, and the most faithful and trusted soldiers during the Anglo-Boer war⁴³. Robinson (SAP) took exception to Hofmeyr's appeal that it was in the interest of the Jews to support the Bill⁴⁴, while Emile Nathan (SAP) protested against Malan's threat as to what would ensue if there was opposition to the Bill⁴⁵, refuting the allegation that Jewish immigration had grown by 300%⁴⁶.

The Second Reading of the Bill was resumed on 12 February. On this occasion Malan succeeded in portraying opposition to the Bill as tantamount to anti-South Africanism. He justified his plea for the restriction of immigration on the grounds of

⁴² ibid, col 585

⁴³ Kentridge quoting Hertzog's words at a Jewish banquet, 4.7.29. HoA debates, col 585-6

⁴⁴ ibid, col 595

⁴⁵ ibid, col 618

⁴⁶ ibid, col 617 as it was based on inflated figures. The factual figures were as follows (total immigration in brackets): 1,353 in 1925; 1,479 in 1926; 1,752 (6593) in 1927; 2,293 (7,050) 1928; 2,788 (7,895) in 1929; 1,881 (5904) in 1930 (Saron & Hotz, 1955, p 378).

national welfare⁴⁷. The sole opposition to the Bill, other than that of the Jewish MPs⁴⁸, came from the Labour Party. W B Madeley (LP) protested that it cast a slur on the Jews. He quoted the Minister of Justice T J Roos as saying that no section of the population had displayed the national ideals as much as the Jews, while the Minister of Lands had concurred that the Jews had identified themselves with the national life and had proven themselves useful and valuable citizens⁴⁹. Supporters of the Bill praised the Jews, remarking that they had Jewish friends and supporters who were Jews⁵⁰. This prompted Kentridge to comment at the end of the debate: "It is noticeable that every anti-Semite talks of the number of his Jewish friends"⁵¹. MacCallum (SAP) was the only MP who injected a blatant anti-Semitic note to the proceedings contending that many Jews had been involved in fraudulent insolvencies⁵²".

At the end of the second reading, the Bill was passed by an overwhelming majority⁵³. The presuppositions of Malan were accepted without question by members of the Government Party and the Opposition: that anti-Semitism was the inevitable and unavoidable result of the number of Jews in SA; that there was a cause and effect relationship between the influx of Jews and

⁴⁷ Star, 21.2.30

⁴⁸ M Kentridge, C P Robinson, E Buirski and E Nathan

⁴⁹ HoA debates, 12.2.30, col 676

⁵⁰ Duncan col 601; Beyers col 677; Brown col 682; Blackwell col 691; Van der Merwe col 694

⁵¹ HoA debates, 27.2.30 col 1269

⁵² "Do you think that the proportion of the Jewish insolvencies amongst the white population of the Union is limited to 4%? Is it not more like 40 percent? HoA debates, 12.2.30, col 697-699. There was no substance to this assertion as is evident from the abundance of praise heaped on the Jews, for their 'sterling qualities', from other speakers.

⁵³ Star 13.2.30 "The bulk of the Opposition crossed the floor and so crowded the Government side that three members had to crush into the benches made to hold only two. Only 11 members voted for sending the Bill to a select committee.

the emigration of people from the original stock; that Jews were alien and therefore unassimilable; and that, as the Bill embodied the interests of SA, opposition was tantamount to disloyalty.

Smuts arrived on 17 February from overseas, returning to the House when the debate had reached the committee stage. He condemned the Bill, declaring that were its principles applied there could be very little future for the white population of SA. At the same time, he denounced the methods envisaged by the Bill⁵⁴. He agreed with the principle of limiting immigration, but he opposed the principle upon which the quotas had been laid down in the Bill, describing them as illiberal and dangerous⁵⁵. But, as Malan interjected in the middle of Smuts's speech, it was too late⁵⁶.

Arthur Barlow⁵⁷ described Smuts's opposition to the Bill 'one of the greatest Parliamentary blunders of his life.' When he damned the Bill as a "*dangerous measure*", and "*a mistake for which the country will pay*", he had taken no notice of the great support, both moral and practical, which his Party had given the Bill and that it had the blessings of the country's newspapers. During the debate, the Nationalists poured ridicule on the SAP and Hertzog sneered at Smuts⁵⁸.

To cap it all, Hertzog said that SA could not afford to add a fifth racial element to the racial composition of the country⁵⁹, thus insinuating that Jews were unassimilable and therefore a separate, racial element. Kentridge complained that the Prime Minister had aggravated the insult to the Jewish

⁵⁴ Star, 18.2.30

⁵⁵ Star, 18.2.30

⁵⁶ ibid

⁵⁷ Rand Daily Mail, 18.2.30

⁵⁸ Star, 18.2.30

⁵⁹ HoA debates, 12.2.30, col 842

people by intimating that the Jewish race, the same race he had lauded a few months previously, was not a part of the European race⁶⁰. He highlighted the absurdity of the third principle underlying the Quota Bill. Western civilisation, he pointed out, was based on the culture of the Greeks and the ethics of the Jews, whereas Malan's Bill sought to exclude precisely the two peoples responsible for western civilisation⁶¹. Madeley fought the Bill tooth and nail as it was an insult to a whole race. Under this Bill, he pointed out, Christ would have been prohibited entry into SA⁶².

During the Committee stage, Malan accepted an amendment proposed by C R Swart⁶³ that the new law should come into force on 1 May 1930, instead of July, in view of the danger of an influx of immigrants before the Bill became operative. This stirred the opponents of the measure to greater resistance, inducing Kentridge, Blackwell⁶⁴ and Smuts⁶⁵ to plead for various amendments to soften its provisions. Their protestations were to no avail. Malan maintained an impenetrable silence and at last left the House. When Madeley complained that this was discourteous, Hertzog also rose and left⁶⁶. The last word was uttered by Nathan, who succinctly summarised the essence of the debate: "When people in general are prejudiced against an issue, the soundest arguments fail to induce them to reconsider their attitude⁶⁷".

The press was unanimously in support of the Quota Act,

⁶⁰ Star, 18.2.30

⁶¹ HoA debates, 3.3.30 col 1355

⁶² Rand Daily Mail, 18.2.30, A Barlow's byline

⁶³ who would later be the President of the Republic

⁶⁴ ibid, 1256-1257

⁶⁵ ibid, 1264

⁶⁶ Star, 18.2.30

⁶⁷ HoA debates, 3.3.30, col 1357

corroborating Malan's assertion in Parliament that the public clamoured for restrictions on Jewish immigration. Despite the denials and the contortions of the supporters of the Bill that it was not intended to exclude Jews, the press had no illusions that they were the target of the Act. The Star condemned attempts to impute anti-Semitic motives to the Government⁶⁸. The Bill's purpose was to prevent a possible undue influx of foreign immigrants "of a certain type" who were "...a different stock from that which the chief white races of the Union are drawn, with very different ideas, customs, habits and traditions⁶⁹." In a similar vein the Rand Daily Mail⁷⁰, which contended that the Bill sought to restrict the inflow of immigrants who could not adapt to the rapid economic development of a country that was still in the pioneer stage", while praising the contributions of members of the Jewish race to the economic development of SA⁷¹. Senator F Ginsburg was probably right when he admitted that the overwhelming majority of the people favoured the Bill⁷².

The Quota Act irreversibly changed the trend of Jewish immigration to SA. Its prompt effect is discernible in the 1930 statistics. Of the 1 987 immigrants born in restricted countries, 1 910 arrived between January 1 and April 30, whereas only 77 were admitted in the following eight months⁷³. After 1930 the bulk of Jews permitted to enter were either relatives

⁶⁸ 4.2.30

⁶⁹30.1.30

⁷⁰ 12.2.30

⁷¹ The editorial by the Rand Daily Mail exemplifies the ease in which contradictory notions about the Jew could be held simultaneously: the Jews had contributed greatly to the economic development of SA but at the same time they were held to be backward and could not adapt to the advanced economic level of the country.

⁷² Bradlow, 1978, p 223

⁷³ Bradlow, 1978, p 245

of Jews already domiciled in SA or religious teachers⁷⁴.

Inevitably the Act soured the relationship between the Jewish Community and the NP, its impact already being evident in the Transvaal Provincial Council elections in March 1930, where a 'Jewish vote' was recorded against the Government⁷⁵. The antagonism hardened to such an extent that in the following year Malan accused the community of "*wishing to take revenge on the Nationalists for the Quota Act*" and threatened to hit back if opposition persisted⁷⁶. Final proof that the Bill was directed at Jews was provided by Malan himself in 1937 when he admitted that the word "assimilability" had a precise meaning, designed to exclude Jews. "We definitely had the tremendous influx of Jews in mind at that time⁷⁷."

2.3 The Response of the Jewish Board of Deputies

The reaction of the Jewish community was immediate. Protest meetings, organised by the Jewish Board of Deputies, were held

⁷⁴ Bradlow, 1978 246. The absolute numbers of Jewish immigrants native to quota countries can be ascertained from the following tables:

	quota countries
1930 -	1 698 (1 881)
1931 -	780 (885)
1932 -	608 (676)
1933 -	445 (745)
1934 -	579
1935 -	498
1936 -	538

⁷⁵ Bradlow, 1978 p 247

⁷⁶ Shimoni, 1980, p 107.

⁷⁷ HoA debates, 13.2.37, col 115, quoted in Shimoni, pp 99-100; Bradlow, p 229. The importance that Malan attached to the Quota Act can be seen in his letter to Louw, where he wrote that although party had gained no advantage from the Quota Bill, and he himself would be regarded for the rest of his days like the Canaanite and Philistine by the 'Children of Israel', but "something was done for the volk on which its life depends". (Furlong, 1987, pp 162-163)

across the country where the Bill was denounced as unjust, illiberal and discriminatory. At a mass meeting in Johannesburg on 6 February⁷⁸, it was resolved to send a deputation to the Prime Minister demanding that action on the Bill be suspended for a fortnight. Copies of the meeting's resolution, that the admission of immigrants be governed by economic and moral criteria, by "...individual qualifications, character and conduct, and not upon their country of origin"⁷⁹, were telegraphed to the Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Members of Parliament⁸⁰.

At the meeting, Kentridge stated that the Bill indisputably discriminated against Jews. He condemned it as being pernicious in its principles, reactionary in its effect and unfair in its discrimination. It came exactly at a time when SA was clamouring for a larger white population because of the growing disparity between the white and native populations⁸¹. The Bill reflected the 'Nationalist mind' which was striving for a country where only pure Afrikaners could live.⁸² Whatever the Minister of Interior might say, the proposed legislation was intended to discriminate against the Jewish People. Hitherto Jews had not thrown their support behind any particular Party. The time was approaching, he warned, when it would have to be considered whether a 'Jewish Party' should be established⁸³. A Davis KC stated that the Bill was another phase in South African legislation whose main purpose was to eliminate anything

⁷⁸ The President of the Board, Siegfried Raphaely, was in the chair

⁷⁹ Star, 1.2.30

⁸⁰ ibid

⁸¹ Kentridge, in a speech on 10 February, presented statistics which demonstrated that the English constituted only 34% of the population, whereas they had been a majority in 1902. This was also a period of world economic depression.

⁸² Star, 7.2.30

⁸³ Kentridge's threat was a paper tiger to a large extent as, except for the Labour Party, all the other parties wholeheartedly supported the Bill.

'foreign' from the country. If Jews were being troubled now, he asked, how long would it be before other "aliens" will have cause for worry⁸⁴? At the protest meeting at Port Elizabeth on 6 February. Councillor A Schauder and Reverend Levy focused on the political implications of the Bill and the potential danger for South African Jews, warning that it could very well be a prelude to coercive measures against the local Jewish population⁸⁵.

The Quota Bill shattered the illusion that the Jewish community had cherished of their successful integration into the South African community, especially as it highlighted a wide cross-section of anti-Jewish public sentiment, cutting across Party and linguistic lines⁸⁶. The Jews had simply not been aware that feelings against them were running so high⁸⁷. In the words of a modern commentator:

It demonstrated the almost universal assumption, held by the majority of White society, that the Jews were in the final analysis not fully acceptable to the White core-groups, Afrikaner and English; that whatever their talents and contributions to South Africa might be...it still remained the host's prerogative to draw the limits of Jewish growth in its midst⁸⁸.

The conception inherent in the thinking of many of the anti-Semitic correspondents reflected the obsolete economic theory of Mercantilist thought of 16th and 17th centuries in Western Europe⁸⁹. In their view, the economy consisted of a fixed amount

⁸⁴ Star, 6.2.30

⁸⁵ A Schauder, Eastern Province Herald, 7.2.30

⁸⁶ W Hirsch, Pretoria News, 19.2.30

⁸⁷ Shimoni, 1980, p 102

⁸⁸ ibid, 107

⁸⁹ Representative of this perception was Vere Stent, the editor of the Pretoria News, who accused Jewish immigrants of belonging to the great 'parasitic middle classes' which rarely 'created' wealth, and only amassed it (Star, 16.2.30) See A H Rand Daily Mail, 7.2.30, and in the Star 'Gadfly', 13.2.30; H J, and 'South African' 15.2.30; Piet, 17.2.30; 'SAP', 19.2.30; Mavis R, 21.2.30; Backvelder, Londoner and Veritas, 25.2.30 and

of resources and therefore any undertaking within the economy was a zero sum game with a fixed amount of 'economic opportunity' in circulation. The gain of one - the Jew - was irrevocably the loss of another - the native born South African. The Afrikaner economic movement and proponents of quotas on Jewish economic activity were convinced that the economic niches occupied by Jews had been arrogated from Afrikaners, and that the only way they could repossess them was by ejecting them. They completely ignored the fact that it was the Jewish entrepreneurs who had created these economic niches. Another fallacy reflected in the letters was that the wealth of the country derived only from farming and mining. In contrast, the Jewish forte, in addition to pioneering new agricultural ventures, had been the introduction of new concepts and products in commerce and marketing previously unknown in SA. The momentum of these arguments against Jewish entrepreneurship accelerate in the following years and culminate in the legislation of the Aliens Act in 1937.

In analysing the political motives behind the Bill, W Hirsch wrote that, although there was no 'Jewish vote', Malan regarded them as "an ungrateful lot" for continuing to vote for the SAP⁹⁰. Jews were placed in an intolerable position.

Thus the Jews fall between the two political stools of South Africa. Each Party is looking at them with suspicion and blames them for its reverses. The Jews try to please everybody, and at the sacrifice of their interests abstain from creating a Jewish issue at the polls, but in the end they please nobody⁹¹.

The Quota Act opened up a new chapter in the history of South African Jewry. Private anti-Semitism, which had hitherto manifested itself in literature, cartoon caricatures, in anti-

28.2.30. It is significant that not one of the correspondents was prepared to sign his/her own name.

⁹⁰ In fact because of their loyalty to SAP they had voted for Macallum who had bitterly attacked the Jews in the parliament debate on the Bill - in preference to Morris Alexander.

⁹¹ Pretoria News, 19.2.30

Semitic stereotypes⁹², and social and professional impediments, was transformed into public anti-Semitism, manipulated by the NP for its own political ends⁹³.

The Bill itself placed the Jews in a difficult predicament. Its supporters, in essence, were insidiously intimating that the basic issue facing the Jews was dual loyalty: by opposing the Bill they would be demonstrating their loyalty to the Jewish People while betraying South Africa. Another, terrible, dilemma which confronted the Jews of SA was resolving whose interests were paramount, theirs or those of the persecuted Jews of Eastern Europe. It was absolutely clear that should they support the Bill, and protect their own status, they would be acquiescing to discrimination against their Jewish brethren. Nevertheless, it was also made absolutely clear to them that opposition would be interpreted as a display of disloyalty towards SA. The decision was especially hard as support for the Bill was broad-based, enjoying the nearly unanimous support of the press⁹⁴ and, apparently, of the public. Despite emphatic denials, the Act was clearly aimed at restricting Jewish immigration. The SAP accepted without question the assumptions formulated by Malan and the NP. At the end of the day the SAP, too, perceived the Jew as unassimilable. Precisely the criteria

⁹² See Shain, 1990 for a comprehensive picture of the formation of anti-Jewish attitudes from 1870 to 1930 as well as Marcia Levenson, "The Jewish Stereotype in Some South African Fiction: A Preliminary Investigation", in Waters out of the Well: Essays In Jewish Studies, edited by Reuben Musiker and Joseph Sherman, Johannesburg, 1988, pp 278-82

⁹³ as pointed out by Shain, 1992, p 195. Todd Endleman defined public anti-Semitism as the injection of anti-Semitism into matters of policy and the manipulation of anti-Semitism for partisan political ends. ("Comparative Perspectives on Modern Anti-Semitism in the West", in D Berger (ed), *History and Hate: the Dimensions of Anti-Semitism*, Philadelphia, 1986)

⁹⁴ During the debate Kentridge made an allusion to this fact: "Now the Hon. Minister said that this bill was receiving the support of everyone. He said it had been hailed throughout the newspapers of this country, and I am free to admit that the English-speaking press in South Africa, with hardly any exceptions, has hailed this Bill...Is he going to accept that as an indication that the Bill is right?" (HoA debates col 578)

which should have been compelling to the issue - the economic absorptive capacity of the country, moral character and qualifications - were irrelevant and had no meaningful impact on the foregone conclusion. The debate focused on the Jews' racial assimilability not their economic assimilability. Although not articulated, the acute problem of 'poor whiteness' cast its shadow on the debate; Jews, with their extensive involvement in commerce, and predominantly urban location, became a natural scapegoat for the ills of the 'poor Whites'⁹⁵.

Ultimately, the Board was helpless in the face of all the rhetoric surrounding the Bill, and, other than organising protest meetings all over the country, did not try to thwart Government legislation. Thus, it demonstrated, by default, that the interests of the local Jewish community indeed superseded those of European Jewry.

⁹⁵ Cohen, 1984, p 7. The crucial impact of the problem of the 'Poor Whites' on Malan's nationalist ideology is reflected in his basic message "Save the poor whites and assure the future of the Afrikaner nation and White civilisation." (H B Thom, *D F Malan*, Cape Town, Tafelberg, 1980 p 12. Quoted by Giliomee, 1983, p 88)

Chapter 3. THE GROWTH OF ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE ALIENS ACT,
1933-1937

3.1 Historical background

In March 1933 the two major parties formed a coalition Government with Hertzog as Prime Minister and Smuts deputy Prime Minister. At the Transvaal congress of the NP in August 1934 Hertzog spoke in favour of fusion with the SAP, and a motion in its favour was carried. On 5 October D F Malan announced that negotiations with Smuts were out of the question for his section of the Party. In the course of the summer of 1934 the opponents of Fusion broke away to form the *Gesuiwerde* (Purified) Nasionale Party. In December 1934 "Fusion" became a reality when the SAP and the NP merged to form the United Party, whose principles drove out Colonel Stallard and his supporters, who formed the Dominion Party¹. Malan's refusal to join the Fusion Government in 1934 was rooted in his conviction that the Afrikaners had nothing to gain from 'fusion'; not until SA severed her ties with Britain, and an independent republic established, would the Afrikaners come into their own as a group. Only then would national (white) unity be possible².

Organised anti-Jewish agitation had first arisen in 1933 after the accession to power of the Nazi Party in Germany³. The Report to Congress of the Jewish Board of Deputies in 1940 claimed that "Disclosures by the Government and other responsible agencies have revealed the extent to which Nazi intrigue and Nazi

¹ Thompson, 1990 p 161; Davenport, 1977, pp 306-308. Stallard refused to join fusion because of its flexibility on the topic of constitutional change, and organised the Dominion Party on the basis of the continued preservation of the Union's ties with Britain.

² Hermann Giliomee, "The Development of Afrikaner's Self-concept", in *Looking at the Afrikaner Today*, compiled by Hendrik W. Van der Merwe, Tafelberg, 1975, pp 1-39, pp 22-23

³ The Anti-Jewish Movements in South Africa, a brochure published by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in July 1936.

propaganda had permeated South Africa before the war⁴." A vast and intricate network of pro-Nazi and anti-Jewish propaganda had been spread by the Nazi regime throughout the world, operating both directly from Germany and from within SA, orchestrating the constant output of anti-Jewish defamatory and scurrilous propaganda. This steady stream of propaganda, in the form of public meetings, private canvassing, newspapers or leaflets, as well as direct short-wave broadcasting from Berlin, was aimed at SA. The Patria, which styled itself as "an organ for racial fascism in South Africa", reproduced the libels which were the stock-in-trade of the professional Nazi propagandist, particularly espousing the wholly unfounded identification of Jews with bolshevism⁵. The publication was widely distributed free, indicating considerable financial backing. Nazi propaganda poured from the German short-wave station at Zeesen⁶ into the ears of all South Africans, including African listeners⁷. Articles from Der Stuermer, the notorious Nazi newspaper, edited by the fanatical Jew-hater Julius Streicher, were frequently published in local publications. These phenomena induced Die Vaderland⁸ to decry the 'nazification' of the NP and the threat to personal freedom and Democracy, accusing it of importing German fascism

The Nazi Party in South West Africa was exhaustively investigated by the South-West Africa Judicial Commission

⁴ Report to Congress, 1937 to 1940, p 24

⁵ Report to Congress, 1935 to 1937, p 17

⁶ For more details on Radio Zeesen, see Christopher Marx, "Dear Listeners in South Africa: German Propaganda Broadcasts to South Africa, 1940-1941", South African Historical Journal, Vol 27, 1992, pp 148-172

⁷ The Zeesen Broadcasting station concentrated a regular barrage of propaganda into SA, especially in Afrikaans, calculated to inflame Afrikaans nationalism and to excite racial antipathies towards the Jews in particular. Sunday Tribune, 9.10.38 reported that there were even broadcasts directed to the natives.

⁸ 19.1.39

appointed by the Union Government in 1935⁹. The commission exposed the unscrupulous way in which the Party disseminated its propaganda, bringing evidence to light of the links - ideological and possibly financial - between the Greyshirts and the Nazis of the mandated territory. The association of Louis Weichardt, the leader of the Greyshirts, with the Nazi Party in South West Africa, was also amply demonstrated by some of the correspondence which was seized by the Attorney-General at the Nazi headquarters in Windhoek¹⁰. The Greyshirt movement was referred to by the Nazis as a "sister movement", with "similar world views" and Louis Weichardt was described as "*leader of the South African Nazis*"¹¹.

Several themes characterised the propaganda: the Jews were the cause of the ills and troubles of SA, including the Anglo-Boer War, poor whiteism and the depression. The blood libel was revived¹² and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion - despite having been exposed as a libelous forgery - were often cited, as proof that there was a 'World Plot' to secure Jewish domination and the ruin of Christian civilisation.

The outbreak of the Second World War precipitated a re-alignment of the political forces. On 4 September 1939 Hertzog proposed a motion to reaffirm his policy of neutrality in a European war

⁹ *Nazi Activities in South West Africa (as stated in the Report of South-West Africa Commission, March 1936)*, London Friends of Europe, 1936

¹⁰ For more information on the influence of Nazi Germany on anti-Semitic propaganda in South Africa and South West Africa, see Patrick J Furlong, *National Socialism, the National Party and the Radical Right in South Africa, 1934-1948*, Phd thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1987, Chapter 4, pp 115-152.

¹¹ "The Anti-Jewish Movements: the Need to Action", a pamphlet published by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 1936, pp 12-13

¹² Die Waarheid, "Was the Lindbergh baby a victim of the Jews", 10.7.36; My Ontwaking, published illustrations purporting to show an actual incident of Jews drawing the blood of Christian children for ritual murder. (*Anti-Jewish Movements in South Africa*, 1936)

whereas Smuts carried an amendment in favour of breaking off relations with Germany and declaring war, thus splitting the Cabinet down the middle. Smuts' motion to enter the war was passed by Parliament, albeit with a narrow margin. The governor-general, Patrick Duncan, refused to dissolve Parliament and hold a general election, forcing Hertzog to resign as Prime Minister and rejoin the Nationalist opposition in Parliament. The Party, renamed *Die Herenigde Nasionale of Volksparty*¹³, with Hertzog as its head and D F Malan as his deputy, insisted on neutrality in World War II.

The most prominent extra-Parliamentary opposition to the war was the *Ossewa-Brandwag* movement¹⁴, which clung to the belief that a German victory would be conducive to the establishment of an Afrikaner republic. It was, therefore, not surprising that the movement was receptive to its anti-Semitic propaganda. Its leader was Dr Hans Van Rensburg, who had returned from his studies in Nazi Germany where he embraced National-Socialist ideals such as exclusivist nationalism, divine election and the rejection of parliamentary democracy, and was determined to introduce this ideology into SA¹⁵.

In contrast to the *Ossewa-Brandwag*, which operated outside Parliament, the *Nuwe Order*, established by Oswald Pirow in 1940, was a pro-Nationalist-socialist elite study group within the

¹³ For the sake of clarity the Herenigde Nasionale Party (HNP) will be referred to as the NP as it was this party which gained ascendance in 1948.

¹⁴ Emerged in the euphoria of the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938. The anti-Semitic views of the *Ossewa-brandwag* are discussed in Shimoni, 1980, pp 128-130.

¹⁵ Albrecht Hagemann, "Very Special Relations: the 'Third Reich' and the Union of South Africa", South African Historical Journal, Vol 27, 1992, pp 127-147 and Werner Shellack, "The Afrikaners' Nazi Links Revisited", South African Historical Journal, Vol 27, 1991, pp 173-185 and Furlong, Patrick J, *National Socialism, the National Party and the radical Right in South Africa, 1934-1948*, Phd thesis, University of California Press, 1987

NP¹⁶. The *Nuwe Order* regarded liberal Democracy as outmoded and, therefore, should be replaced by the superior "new order" of society and government as propounded by National Socialism, modified so as to be consonant with the Afrikaner national character. Ultimate control had to be the prerogative of the Afrikaner nation to the exclusion of any element which was not Christian or was "unassimilable". This ideology inherently rendered most Jews illegal immigrants¹⁷. Pirow visited Nazi Germany in 1933 as Minister of Transport and met Hitler again on 24 November 1938 in an attempt to mediate between him and Chamberlain in finding, if possible, common ground between them to solve the 'Jewish Question'¹⁸.

In an attempt to mobilize the Afrikaner, Malan and his followers emphasised the Afrikaner's separate ethnic identity. While adamant that white unity could be achieved only if the English-speaking inhabitants accepted true South African nationhood, he, nevertheless, felt that their language and political rights had to be guaranteed. On this point he had to engage in a struggle with the *Ossewa-Brandwag* which propounded that only one nation could be recognized in a state, and that nation was the Afrikaner. The English could not expect to be treated on an equal footing if they did not relinquish their separate existence as a national group and assimilate into the Afrikaner nation¹⁹. In such circumstances, it was evident that for the *Ossewa-Brandwag*, the continued existence of Jewry, as a separate, 'unassimilated' national and religious group, was intolerable.

Developments within SA made it fertile soil for the reception of foreign ideologies, fascist theories and anti-Jewish hatred. Fusion had precipitated economic changes which had impacted on

¹⁶ For more of Pirow's anti-Semitic ideology see Shimoni, 1980, pp 130-133.

¹⁷ Shimoni, 1980, p 131

¹⁸ Schellack, 1992, pp 173-185.

¹⁹ Giliomme, 1975, p 25

the relations between Jew and Afrikaner. The upsurge of anti-Semitism can be attributed to the grave socio-economic problem of the 'poor Whites'. As small-scale farming gradually moved on to improved technological methods, Afrikaners found their position in the rural area less and less viable. Even the acceleration in urbanisation did not substantially improve their economic situation, because Blacks had pre-empted unskilled labour. Consequently, 'poor Whites' were not only economically impoverished, they also underwent a psychological trauma. Only their white Afrikaner self-esteem remained as a bulwark against their humiliating conditions²⁰.

Since there was an almost complete overlap between the 'poor White' phenomenon and the Afrikaner national group, the problem became a major issue in the growth of Afrikaner nationalism. The over-representation of Jews in commerce and the professions exposed them to constant attack by the Nationalists who felt that Afrikaners had been ejected by the Jews from these sectors. "In these circumstances the occupational contours of the Jewish population rendered it highly vulnerable as a scapegoat for the ills of the poor White problem²¹". Malan was one of the foremost Afrikaner nationalist leaders to link the "poor White" problem to the Afrikaners' nationalist struggle.

The first exhaustive investigation into the "Poor White" problem, conducted by the Carnegie Commission from 1929 to 1932, revealed that about a fifth of the Afrikaner population could be classified as poor Whites in 1930²². The Commission dealt with rural impoverishment, and the educational, health and social aspects of the problem. Among its recommendations was the proposal to offer privileged employment to white workers²³. Since there was nearly a complete overlap between the poor White

²⁰ Shimoni, 1980, pp 103-104

²¹ Shimoni, 1980, pp 103-104

²² Shimoni, 1980, p 103. It should be noted that the 5 volume report of the Commission took no stand on the 'Jewish Problem'.

²³ Davenport, 1977, p 319

phenomenon and the Afrikaner nation, it became a major issue in the consciousness of Afrikaner nationalism.

The spearhead of the movement for Afrikaner economic and political hegemony through ethnic mobilisation was the Afrikaner Broederbond. The Broederbond was established in 1918 to promote the interests of Afrikaners, gradually becoming a secret elite organisation, determined to rule SA²⁴. The Bond convened, in 1939, the first Afrikaner People's Economic Congress which established a militant Afrikaner economic movement aimed at securing for Afrikaners their rightful and legitimate place in the professions, commerce and industry, a place alleged to be denied them by 'foreigners', that is the English and the Jews. The *Reddingsdaadbond*, was set up as a response to the accelerating process of urbanisation and industrialisation, encouraging the belief that the solution to the Afrikaners' problems lay in ousting those who had 'occupied' the spheres which they wished to 'conquer'²⁵. Its aim was to make the Afrikaner more economically conscious, and to attain economic supremacy for him.

Under these circumstances, the occupational structure of the Jewish population rendered them especially vulnerable as a scapegoat for the ills of the 'poor White' problem. In 1930 about 66% of the Jews were engaged in commercial occupations, compared with under 20% for the general white population. They provided just over 14% of the people engaged in commerce, whereas they constituted only 4.28% of the population²⁶. The agitation against Jewish immigration focused on the so-called

²⁴ The Broederbond supplied the political leaders who made the 1948 victory possible (Ivor Wilkens and Hans Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners: Inside the Afrikaner Broederbond*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1978, p 106), and brethren have occupied virtually all the NP's leading posts from the late 1930s, including the Presidency and the post of Prime Minister

²⁵ Saron, G, "70 Years: Some Historic Highlights", Jewish Affairs, March - April 1973, p 71

²⁶ Shimoni, 1980, pp 103-104

Jewish economic dominance. It was asserted that they constituted an economic power which was inherently inimical to the welfare and progress of the Afrikaner nation; they were a "State within a State", controlled commerce, the professions, influenced the Government, and 'never laboured with a spade'.

The anxiety of the community was aggravated by the central role the Broederbond played in entrenching Christian Nationalism in SA. In analysing the Broederbond, Bloomberg defined its role as fighting "for the Afrikanerisation of South Africa's state on Christian-Nationalist lines²⁷". It was the agent *par excellence* for propagating this creed, standing not for only white rule based on race, but also "for a society modelled in Christian terms"²⁸.

3.2 Anti-Semitic Agitation and the Political Arena

3.2.1 The "Shirt" Movements

The most prominent anti-Semitic movements operating in SA during the 1930s and 1940s were: Louis T Weichardt's SA National Party, the Greyshirts²⁹; Manie Wessels' Blackshirts, S.A. National Democratic Movement; Dr A J Bruwer's Brownshirts; H S Terreblanche's SA Gentile Movement³⁰; J H de Waal Jnr's Gentile Protection League; Manie Maritz's The People's Movement³¹; J von Strauss von Moltke's SA Fascists³². At the forefront of the

²⁷ Charles Bloomberg, *Christian Nationalism and the Rise of the Afrikaner Broederbond, 1918-1948*, edited by Saul Dubow, Macmillan, 1990, p xxii.

²⁸ Bloomberg, 1990, p xxiii.

²⁹ For a more comprehensive description of the Greyshirt and other "shirt" movements see Shimoni, 1980, pp 110-116.

³⁰ later - National Peoples' (Patriotic) Movement

³¹ also called South African Democratic Movement

³² The Anti-Jewish Movements in South Africa: The Need for Action, 1936, p 5

unabated, deleterious agitation were the "Shirt" Movements³³. Their ideology advocated the reversal of Jewish emancipation, their Constitution providing for the revocation of South African nationality from all Jews³⁴. Under the heading "**The Jewish Menace**", it advocated discontinuing the granting of South African nationality to Jews and revoking it from those to whom it had already been granted, and ousting them from any trade or profession³⁵". The movement propounded the thesis that the Jews were anti-Christian, unassimilable, inherently anti-social and parasitic. They were organised internationally in a world conspiracy using Communism, as well as capitalism, as their instruments. There was a secret plot by Jews to destroy the Christian religion and overthrow civilisation. Weichardt denounced Communism as an invention of the Jews, all Jews being communists³⁶.

Between 1935 and 1937 the Greyshirt movement emerged as a political force when several of its members contested the elections. They were resoundingly defeated, the Board attributing this to the inherent abhorrence by the South African electorate towards their anti-democratic doctrines³⁷. Nonetheless, the success of the **Greyshirt** movement among Afrikaners encouraged Malan's NP to openly adopt an anti-Semitic stand as an effective weapon to counter the inroads of the Greyshirts had made among the Afrikaners³⁸. This strategy

³³ The Anti-Jewish Movements in South Africa: the Need for Action, July 1936. See Furlong, 1987 for more information on the activities of the Greyshirts.

³⁴ ibid, p 5

³⁵ See Shimoni, 1980, p 113

³⁶ at a lecture at city Hall in Durban on 9.10.36, confidential letter to the Council of Natal Jewry

³⁷ Report to Congress, 1935 to 1940, p 18

³⁸ See the chapter on the Greyshirt Movement in Patrick Furlong, "National Socialism, the National Party and the Radical Right in South Africa, 1934-1948, PHD Thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1987.

achieved its goal, as by 1940 the Greyshirts had largely disappeared from the picture, evidently as a consequence of the decision taken at their Congress in March 1939 that individuals should become members of the NP³⁹.

The Blackshirts, led by Chris Havemann, lacked the sophistication of the Greyshirts, and engaged in street violence⁴⁰ and the dissemination of anti-Semitic propaganda. The intensity of their agitation culminated in the Johannesburg Riots of 27 November 1938, the most serious since the 1922 strikes⁴¹. For the most part the English press described the riots as a clash between fascists and anti-fascists, although stress was laid on the unrestrained and brutal Jew-baiting which characterised the fascist assaults⁴². In contrast Die Transvaler⁴³ wrote of the breaking-up of a meeting of "anti-communists", all well-known Blackshirts, by "communists". The Sunday Express⁴⁴ advocated extending the scope of the Riotous

³⁹ Following their electoral defeat in November 1937, Weichardt cautiously began to seek a rapprochement with the Nationalists. During the election of 1938 supporters were instructed not so much to vote against the NP, as against the government. The defection of many prominent Greyshirt supporters to the ranks of the Nationalists finally persuaded Weichardt to dissolve his movement, and in January 1939 the Greyshirts formally joined the NP (although only in 1950 was it officially dissolved). (Report 1937 to 1940; Adelberg, 1983, p 16; Shelia Patterson, The Last Trek, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, London, 1957, p 313)

⁴⁰ They convened a public meeting on January 31, 1934, which, despite warnings and precautionary measures, ended up in violence in which several policemen were injured. On May 14, 1938 there was a bloody battle in Benoni when 200 hundred individuals stormed a Blackshirt meeting (Die Transvaler, Rand Daily Mail, and Daily News, 14.5.38). The Blackshirts retaliated by bombing the Benoni Synagogue (Sunday Express, 27.11.38 and Die Transvaler, 30.11.38). (Adelberg, 1983, pp 17-18).

⁴¹ Daily News, 25.11.38

⁴² The attempt to blow up the Benoni Synagogue November 1938. Sunday Times, 27.11.38 reported that the names of all ringleaders had been filed at police headquarters.

⁴³ 25.11.38

⁴⁴ 27.11.38

Assemblies Act to include the stirring-up of feelings of hostility between European inhabitants in the Union. Die Suiderstem⁴⁵ stated that the greatest danger that threatened Christian Democracy was the rapid spread among all sections of the population of the German Nazi doctrine. It urged the Government to take more vigorous steps against the spread of the doctrine⁴⁶. In the course of a speech delivered at a meeting of the UP caucus on 29 November 1936 the Minister of Justice, Smuts, ascribed the outbreak to foreign propaganda. He announced the intention of the Government to apply all the force of the law in maintaining law and order, such as a prohibition on the formation of political movements which were in direct conflict with the "*democratic basis of the Union's constitution*"⁴⁷. In the interim, the Cabinet decided to ban fascist and anti-fascist meetings throughout the Transvaal and the Cape⁴⁸.

The banning of such meetings, under the Riotous Assembly Act, contributed to the weakening of these anti-Semitic movements. Another very salient reason for their decline was the adoption of anti-Semitic rhetoric by the *Purified National Party* under the leadership of D F Malan, a policy which precipitated mass defection from the Greyshirts and Blackshirts to the Nationalists⁴⁹. Support for the Blackshirts eventually declined to the extent that by the middle of 1939 there was only a handful of supporters and by 1941 it had become non-existent. By this time the NP had incorporated, represented and was the mouthpiece for these anti-Semitic splinter groupings⁵⁰, signifying a confluence with the radical right.

⁴⁵ 29.11.38

⁴⁶ See also Natal Mercury, 28.11.38.

⁴⁷ ibid

⁴⁸ Daily News, 30.11.38; Daily Express, 29.11.38

⁴⁹ For more information on the negotiations between the NP and the Greyshirts, see Furlong, 1987, pp 139-144

⁵⁰ Furlong, 1991, related that Malan himself secretly negotiated with Hitler's agent in Africa (Hans Denk and his wife. (Schellack, 1992, p 178)

3.3 THE ALIENS ACT, 1937

3.3.1 Background to the Aliens Act⁵¹

With the Nazi accession to power in 1933, legislation was introduced intended to exclude Jews from the economic, social, cultural and political life of Germany. The precarious position of the Jews became evident when April 1 1933 was proclaimed a day in which all Jewish shops and offices would be boycotted⁵². Their fate worsened with the promulgation of the Nuremberg Race Laws in September 1935, which deprived them of their German citizenship⁵³. Panic set in amongst the Jews who sought a place where they could escape to. The countries of the world, however, refused to open their doors to Jewish refugees from Germany.

Until 1933 the number of Jewish immigrants to SA from Germany had been insignificant - only 31 in the four years 1929 to 1933. From 1933 the numbers rose: 204 in 1933, 452 in 1934 and 410 in 1935⁵⁴. In line with the general feeling of sympathy for the innocent sufferers of Nazi persecution in the early days of Hitler's Government, there were initially few overt signs of public hostility towards these newcomers. No legal barriers to their entry existed as they were not affected by the 1930 Quota

⁵¹ a detailed history of the background and the debate around the Aliens Act can be found in Edna Bradlow's thesis, pp 250-307; Shimoni, 1980, pp 141-144; Cuthbertson G C, "Jewish Immigration as an Issue in South African Politics", 1937-39, pp 119-133

⁵² See Avraham Barkai, *From Boycott to Annihilation: The Economic Struggle of German Jews, 1933-1943*, Hanover, New Hampshire, University Press of New England, 1990 for an in-depth investigation and analysis of the process of ousting the Jews from Germany's economy and their ultimate despoliation. (Reviewed by Marcus Arkin, in Studies in Contemporary Jewry, Vol 9, 1994, pp 214-215)

⁵³ as well as dismissed all Jewish officials, forbade marriage and extra-marital relationships between Jews and Germans, and prohibited Jews from employing German female employees.

⁵⁴ Saron and Hotz, 1955, p 379

Act. A total of 1,066 German Jews thus found refuge during the first three years of the Nazi regime. In this context it must be stressed that on the eve of the enactment of the Aliens Act only a minority of German immigrants were Jewish, 1044 out of 2664 arrivals⁵⁵, representing a little over 7 percent of the entire immigration to SA⁵⁶. This was hardly the 'great deal' claimed by Malan⁵⁷. After 1936 these figures began to rise, by which time Jews constituted 4.75% of the European population⁵⁸.

Notwithstanding Malan's statement in the House of Assembly that there should be no discrimination against the Jewish race as all Europeans ought to stand on the same footing⁵⁹, the NP began a concerted campaign to force the Government to take strict measures against "**undesirable immigrants such as Jews**"⁶⁰. "From about April 1936...a campaign was launched against Jewish immigration, during which the semantic subterfuges of 1930 were abandoned"⁶¹. This mounting pressure on the part of the Opposition was compounded by pressure from the Government's own officials, who sent memoranda to the Prime Minister during February-March 1936 warning of the potential of a much greater flow of German Jewish refugees. The memos recommended that immigrants, who did not strengthen the national structure but 'tended to weaken it', should be totally prohibited⁶².

On 22 May 1936 Jan Hofmeyr introduced the Immigration Amendment

⁵⁵ Furlong, 1987, p 173

⁵⁶ Frieda Sichel, *From Refugee to Citizen*, A Ballkema, Cape Town, 1966, p 15

⁵⁷ Bradlow, 1978, p 251

⁵⁸ HoA debates, 27.1.37, col 732. Alexander disclosed this in order to refute Malan's contention that the Jews constituted between six to seven percent of the population in South Africa.

⁵⁹HoA debates, 16.6.36

⁶⁰Die Burger, 15.8.36

⁶¹ Bradlow, 1978, p 254

⁶² Bradlow, 1978, pp 256-7; Shimoni, 1980. pp 118-119

Bill⁶³, the main objective of which was to close 'loopholes' in immigration procedures. The issue had first been raised in the House of Assembly on June 1936 by Malan, who called for early and adequate measures to prevent the further influx of Jewish immigrants and, in addition, to impose certain restrictions on aliens⁶⁴. On 23 September 1936 interim regulations were introduced, with effect from November 1. In a last minute rush to arrive in SA before the new regulations came into force, the Stuttgart was chartered on behalf of a group of 570 German Jewish immigrants. They were educated Europeans, the majority being young artisans who had employment waiting for them while others intended establishing industries which would employ South Africans.

The leaders of the SA Jewish community were unaware of the frantic preparations to send the refugees before further restrictive legislation came into force⁶⁵. They were therefore, unexpectedly confronted with the dilemma of having to choose between two intolerable alternatives: on the one hand there was the threat of public incitement against this "*flooding the country*", which could precipitate legislature which would endanger future immigration, and on the other hand, destitute refugees from Germany urgently needing generous assistance. The community rose to the challenge by absorbing the influx in a relatively short time⁶⁶, but this left the political dimension of the problem unresolved.

⁶³ which was eventually dropped

⁶⁴ HoA debates, 17.6.36, Col 6286

⁶⁵ It can be deduced from the Board's statement (see below) that the transport of these German Jews from Germany, to England and from there to SA, was organised entirely in London, with no co-ordination with the Board of Deputies in SA.

⁶⁶ Sichel, 1966, p 21. The book also relates the absorption process the German immigrants underwent and their outstanding contributions to the national and economic life of SA. There is also an article by F E Auerbach "*Contributions to National Life*", pp 54-66, which relates their contribution to industry, agriculture, the professions, welfare and to the arts.

The impending arrival of the Stuttgart precipitated a wave of agitation, organised by Professors H F Verwoerd and C G W Schumann of Stellenbosch University. On October 27 the boat docked and landed her passengers. Protest meetings were held throughout the country, all demanding legislative action against Jewish immigration, and against the 'pernicious influence' of the Jews in professions and trades "where the Afrikaners should have their own people⁶⁷". Educated Afrikaners were thus in the vanguard of the movement which developed the theme that Jewish business and professional men posed a threat to the Afrikaner's economic development. "While purely racist undertones persisted, fear of economic competition predominated as the leitmotif of Afrikaner anti-Semitism⁶⁸. It is of interest to examine the contributions these German Jews who, ostensibly, posed a threat to the Afrikaner, were to make to SA. In 1963 Lawrence Schlemmer concluded, after conducting a study of these German-Jewish immigrants, that⁶⁹

...the Refugee group excelled itself, not only in the material and occupational sphere; but also in the field of community service, art and literature, and, in a sense, most important of all, in the everyday skills of good citizenship⁷⁰.

They pioneered new fields of economic activity and provided employment to approximately 15,000 non-Europeans and 8,000 Europeans. Rough calculations showed that well over R2 million was paid by the group in salaries and wages every month. "By any standards, this is a very considerable impact to be made on the economy by a single Refugee group"⁷¹.

At the Nationalist Congress held in Bloemfontein in November 1936, Malan disclosed his intention to introduce a Bill which

⁶⁷ Die Burger, 28.10.36

⁶⁸ Bradlow, 1978, p 268

⁶⁹ Lawrence Schlemmer "*Economic and Social Integration of Refugees*", in From Refugee to Citizen, 1966, pp 120-166.

⁷⁰ ibid, p 139

⁷¹ ibid, p 138

would propose that only people who could be 'assimilated by the nation' should be allowed to enter the country and that citizenship not be granted to any person who belonged to a class described by the law as "*a class which cannot be assimilated*"⁷². Furthermore, anyone who was not a Union citizen would not be allowed to follow a profession or occupation without special permission from the Government⁷³.

At the beginning of December 1936 Richard Stuttaford replaced Hofmeyr as Minister of Interior. As immigration legislation had already been drafted during Hofmyer's occupancy of the Interior portfolio, Malan attempted to pre-empt any political advantage the Government might gain from their legislation by publishing his private Bill on December 28, 1936 in the Government Gazette. The Bill embodied the restrictive programme which he had previously outlined: "The intention was to have all Jews declared unassimilable as a race"⁷⁴.

To counteract nationalist agitation, the Board of Deputies issued a statement which was given considerable publicity in the country's leading newspapers⁷⁵. The statement reaffirmed the community's acceptance of immigration legislation which prescribed qualifications relating to personal character, economic position and occupation, but stressed its opposition to legislation based on racial or religious discrimination. The Board categorically denied the "unassimilability" accusation and

⁷² Cohen, "Anti-Jewish Manifestations", pp. 115-116, cited in Cuthbertson, 1981 p 121

⁷³ Shimoni, 1980, pp 119-120. Malan's Bill appeared in the Government Gazette on 29 December 1936 and was presented in the House on January 12 1937. He made great play of the refugee problem and of the organised efforts which were being made overseas by Jewish and non-Jewish bodies in order to find asylum for the refugees (see Hansard, HoA debates Jan 12, 1937, pages 37,38,43,46-48). Morris Alexander replied, giving assurances that South African Jewry did not foster immigration (ibid, col 62-88).

⁷⁴ Bradlow, 1978, p 273

⁷⁵ S.A. Jewish Times, 16.12.36

refuted the charge that there was any special organisation in SA which promoted or subsidised German-Jewish immigration. In fact, it had taken active steps to discourage indiscriminate immigration. Torn between its desire to save as many German Jews as possible and trepidation lest public reaction lead to new legislation slamming the doors on all immigration, it had warned the London Council⁷⁶ that the climate in SA was dangerously hostile to Jewish arrivals, begging the organisers to abandon the Stuttgart project.

The South African Jewish Times⁷⁷ welcomed the Board's statement as it marked the end of a period of passivity on the part of the community's representatives. The editorial revealed that it had been the Cape Town branch of the Board which had been responsible for issuing the statement, whereas the Johannesburg branch had been overcome with 'inertia and fear'. The statement was a dignified assertion that the Jewish community would use legitimate means to resist the contention that "Jews qua Jews" should be prohibited from entering SA.

3.3.2 The Debate in the House on the Aliens Act

Heavy pressure from the Opposition compelled the Government to introduce its own restrictive measures on immigration. The measure was an attempt by the Government to retain the large anti-Jewish vote and at the same time avoid antagonizing liberal and Jewish supporters by insisting that the Bill would restrict all alien immigration and not Jewish immigration in particular⁷⁸. The equivocation of the Government was ridiculed by Duncan Burnside (LP):

...the Government comes forward and says 'We will ourselves introduce a Bill which we will be able to say on the one side is not aimed against the Jews when we speak in the towns, and which we can say, when we speak in the

⁷⁶ The British Council for German Jewry - which was one of the relief organisations assisting German Jews to find refuge

⁷⁷ 24.12.36

⁷⁸ Bradlow, 1978, p 275

country, is aimed against the Jews.⁷⁹

The Aliens Act abandoned the concept of selection by countries and reverted to individual selection. It affirmed the "selective principle", by which SA had the right to select people who would 'strengthen the nation' and 'be assimilated' within a reasonable time. As in the Quota Act, applicants would be admitted on the grounds of "assimilability". An Immigration Selection Board (ISB) would be created that would be guided in its choice by certain stipulated principles: the good character of the applicant, the ability to become a good citizen, and an assurance that he or she would not to pursue a vocation which already had a sufficient number of employees.

Fore stalled in his intention to introduce his own private Bill, Malan moved a motion of no-confidence on 12 January 1937. He criticised the Government for not dealing with the German-Jewish 'threat', and by not drastically circumscribing the number of trades, occupations, professions or callings in which an alien could be employed or be engaged⁸⁰. He argued that anti-Semitism was endemic; the longer the doors were kept open the more Jews would come in, and the more Jews were to come in, the more intensive anti-Semitism would become⁸¹. He strove to convey the impression that there was an international Jewish conspiracy organising emigration from Germany to other countries, including SA⁸², thus casting aspersions on the validity of statements made by the Board in general and, in the case of the Stuttgart, in

⁷⁹ HoA debates, 27.1.37, col 722

⁸⁰HoA debates, 12.1.37, col 32-37

⁸¹ HoA 12.1.37, col 39. Malan evoked the Zionist Movement as proof positive to his basic assumption that if the Jewish population exceeded a percent of the general population there followed a reaction. "It is generally and practically acknowledged on the part of all the nations of the world that the Jews are unassimilable, but there is also an admission of that kind on the part of the Jews themselves. What else is Zionism..." It was an admission on the part of the Jews that they were unassimilable.

⁸² HoA 12.1.37, col 42-50

particular⁸³.

I have been reproached ...that I am now discriminating against Jews as Jews. Now let me say frankly that I admit that it is so, but let me add that if you want to effectively protect South Africa against the special influx from outside, it must inevitably be done⁸⁴.

In contrast to the debate in 1930 when the speakers eschewed anti-Semitic rhetoric, the debate in 1937 was marked by unabashed anti-Semitism. Speech after speech reiterated the adverse affects Jewish settlement would have on the country in general and on the Afrikaner in particular.⁸⁵ The crux of Malan's argument was that the Afrikaner had suffered as the result of the influx of the Jews.

...if we want to solve the poor white question, then the door must be left open for them to take their share in that most important urban industry which plays such a great role in economic life, commerce...one of the main reasons of the door being closed to the Afrikaners is the fact that the Jews have occupied that field... commerce is fast slipping out of the hands of the English-speaking...into the hands of the Jews...[who] are getting all the commerce into their hands.⁸⁶

Malan invidiously compared the Jews to the Afrikaners. The former, he said, were well-educated, organised and strong, in contrast to the "boys and girls of our country"⁸⁷. 40% of the Afrikaners who had left school in 1935 were still without work a year later, because they were not sufficiently trained to be

⁸³ HoA 12.1.37, col 48

⁸⁴ HoA 12.1.37, col 39

⁸⁵ Attacks on the Jews were made by Dr Bremer, col 78-82; Sauer col 136-141; De Waal col 147-150; Dr N J Van Der Merwe col 165-171; Rev C W M Du Toit col 185-189, 257-262; Badenhurst - who interjected that the Jews had 100% of the Government in their hands, col 331; Many of the National Party speakers linked the depressed conditions of Afrikanerdom to the presence and activities of the Jews; therefore, the only solution they proposed was to prohibit further Jewish immigration. For example Van Bekker Col 332 -334; Geldenhuys col 327-332; Dr De Waal col 727-728

⁸⁶ HoA 12.1.37, col 40

⁸⁷ HoA 12.1.37, col 50

easily absorbed in the available jobs⁸⁸. "Now I ask you, what chance is there for the children of our own country to compete against those who come from overseas who are so well equipped⁸⁹...", He then continued his offensive:"...it is not in my opinion proper to take the bread from the children of your people and to give it to strangers⁹⁰."

De Villiers (NP) complained that Afrikaners had become hewers of wood and drawers of water. The Carnegie Commission⁹¹ had reported that about 300,000 were living below the bread line. The problem, as he saw it, was that the Afrikaners had been given no chance. There were few Afrikaners who could start factories because they had no capital. Van der Merwe (NP) accused them of exploiting the nations, Everyone knew that

...international capital which controls the world is today in Jewish hands...Even in SA the Jews rule the Government of the country, and prescribe what laws and what policy the Government must carry out⁹².

The Minister of Interior⁹³ and Education⁹⁴, as well as Madeley⁹⁵ underscored the fact that the Jews' virtues of enterprise, persistence, industriousness and achievements were the real reasons for the accusation that they constituted a

⁸⁸ at a teacher's conference in 1936

⁸⁹ HoA 12.1.37, col 50. The question whether the unskilled, poorly educated, rural Afrikaner was capable of filling the functions in commerce and industry that were left vacant as a result of the immigration restrictions was answered during the debates on General Smuts proposals, in 1944 and in 1946, for large-scale immigration, mainly from Britain. The NP categorically opposed these plans using these very same arguments.

⁹⁰ HoA 12.1.37, col 51

⁹¹ The commission that investigated the 'poor white' problem 1929-1932.

⁹² HoA debates, col 321-322

⁹³ R Stuttford, *ibid*, col 52

⁹⁴ Jan Hofmyer, *ibid*, col 59-60, 63

⁹⁵ Labour MP; *ibid*, col 59-60

danger or were inimical to SA⁹⁶. M Van den Berg⁹⁷, Madeley⁹⁸ and Burnside⁹⁹ of the Labour Party, and Kentridge¹⁰⁰, and Alexander¹⁰¹ of the South African Party, specifically addressed the economic issue raised by Malan. Madeley suggested that Malan should bestow as much attention to elevating his own race as he had done to vilifying the Jews¹⁰². Robinson highlighted the fact that the vast majority of people employed by Jewish employers were not Jewish.

The vast majority of these people whose votes the hon member is trying to catch are employed by these so-called unassimilable people, whom the hon member so strongly condemns¹⁰³.

Van den Berg¹⁰⁴ demonstrated the pivotal role they had played in establishing factories and developing secondary industries. "But, no, the only race which applies itself to start such factories must be kept out of the country and be persecuted..."¹⁰⁵. The whole issue was put into perspective by Duncan Burnside¹⁰⁶:

If the NP stopped the immigration of all Jews to-morrow, this country would not be any more prosperous. If they saw to it that not a single extra Jew were allowed in, it would not give them more brains or ability, it would not

⁹⁶ Ostensibly the Government had gained a tactical advantage by introducing its own Bill, enabling it to defend against anti-Semitic extremists, but in practical terms, as will be seen, the Bill effectively closed the doors to all Jewish immigration to SA in the critical war years, 1939 to 1945 and even beyond.

⁹⁷ ibid, col 128 -134

⁹⁸ HoA debates, col 60

⁹⁹ HoA debates, 14.1.30 col 182-3

¹⁰⁰ ibid, col 122-125; He also emphasising the Jews' assimilability (HoA debates, 13.1.37, col 119-125)

¹⁰¹ ibid, col 91

¹⁰² ibid, col 60

¹⁰³ ibid, col 87

¹⁰⁴ ibid, col 132-4

¹⁰⁵ ibid, col 132

¹⁰⁶ Labour MP

raise the standard of the poor Whites...It would not get us one bit further¹⁰⁷.

There was, he concluded, no Jewish problem in SA but that which had been conjured up in Malan's mind. There was unanimity among the opponents of the Bill, that an honest analysis of the 'poor White' situation would clearly demonstrate that the Afrikaner would not benefit from the exclusion of Jews, who were providing Afrikaners with work.

During the Third Reading of the Bill, on 27 January, Malan declared that Smuts was the father of a Bill which would lead to the greater oppression of the Afrikaners as well as 'the Englishmen' by the Jews. In the course of his speech, he even referred to Smuts as "Smutsovitz"¹⁰⁸. Burnside exposed the real motive behind the NP motion when he said "I am really trying to show that his amendment is Hitlerism." He charged that the Bill saw the birth of the SA Nazi Party, the leader of the Opposition, having demonstrated that he was an ardent disciple of 'Herr' Hitler¹⁰⁹, was now embarking on a policy of pure Nazism and allying the Party with the Greyshirts¹¹⁰.

The very fact that the debate very often got bogged down in the ostensibly extraneous issue of whether the Bill was aimed against Jews or not illustrates that this was indeed the central issue - not the desire to exclude undesirable immigrants. Despite the protestations of various Government speakers that the Bill was not aimed at the Jews, Prime Minister Hertzog effectively pulled the rug from under them. In his speech¹¹¹ in Parliament he directly contradicted the declarations made by members of his own Party. He opened by denying that the Bill was anti-Jewish, even though Jewish immigration would be most

¹⁰⁷ ibid, col 182

¹⁰⁸ ibid, col 710-716

¹⁰⁹ HoA debates, 14.1.30, col 177-180

¹¹⁰ ibid, 27.1.37, col 721

¹¹¹ ibid, 18.1.37, col 263-64

affected by it. He then contradicted himself by stating that the principal reason for the Bill was the influx of Jews which had generated increased bitterness. The rationale behind the Bill, he said, was to restrict the entry of Jewish refugees from Germany in order to avert an upsurge in anti-Semitism in SA¹¹².

There was a danger that South Africa would be flooded with all kinds of 'undesirable' immigrants...The Bill was calculated...to curtail Jewish immigration into South Africa according to the requirements and interests of South Africa and our South African population, both Jews and non-Jews...this threatening evil can only be averted by legislation which will protect South Africa...¹¹³.

Prime Minister Hertzog, thus, acquiesced to the NP argument that anti-Semitism was caused by the number of Jews and, therefore, curbing Jewish immigration would be in the interest of all South Africans, including its Jewish citizens. His speech was a clear negation of Smuts' assurance that the Bill was not primarily intended to keep out Jews.

Hertzog's statement¹¹⁴ prompted a spate of anti-Semitic addresses by the Nationalists¹¹⁵ inducing Alexander to say:

The way in which they have set themselves out to slander and insult the community to which I belong is something, sir, that you have come to this Parliament to witness..Never have I known such calculated insults directed against one section

¹¹² It is not clear if Hertzog's speech was a blunder or a deliberate articulation of policy. There is no doubt as to its impact on the community and its leaders and on anti-Semitic MPS.

¹¹³ ibid, 18.1.37, col 263-264

¹¹⁴ which may or may not have been a 'blunder'. On the one hand it contradicted the argument made by the other members of the government that it did not discriminate against Jews - but on the other, if indeed the general public feeling was anti-Jewish, it was not a political 'blunder' to say what he did.

¹¹⁵A L Badenhorst led the attack when he said that the Nationalists were not against Jews as Jews, but "the Jew does not assimilate himself with us. They do not have our religion; they do not believe in my Saviour and in my church, and on Sundays they take my children to go fishing along with them." (HoA debates col 273-44. Also F C Erasmus col 275-180; N J Van Der Merwe col 398-399; P Theron col 399-400; Swart col 419)

of the people as we have heard in the course of this debate¹¹⁶.

The Minister of Interior commented:

Unfortunately hon. members opposite seem to be suffering from an anti-Jewish complex. They have talked of nothing else but of the wickedness and dreadfulness of any Jew ever being allowed into the country...¹¹⁷.

3.4 The Response of the Jewish Board of Deputies: the Jewish Members of Parliament and the Aliens Bill

What was the position of Alexander, Kentridge and Robinson, the Jewish members of the UP? Although they disliked the Bill, they supported it, arguing that in principle it did not discriminate between Whites on the grounds of race or religion. Alexander stated that "This Bill is neither pro-Semitic or anti-Semitic and that is why I and my friends have voted for it."¹¹⁸ Kentridge declared that the

Aliens Bill is not aimed at any particular race and certainly not against the Jews. I support the Bill because there is no indication in it of racial discrimination¹¹⁹.

The aim was not, they argued, discrimination, but rather excluding undesirable aliens. The intended legislation referred to an individual on his merits and not his race. A possible reason, apart from Party discipline, for their support was that South African Jews themselves did not desire a large-scale German Jewish influx lest the Nationalists use it to intensify their propaganda against the existing community¹²⁰. Kentridge¹²¹ supported the Bill as being in the best interests of the Jewish community, because it would counteract the venomous propaganda spread by the Greyshirts.

¹¹⁶ HoA debates, 18.1.30 col 305

¹¹⁷ ibid, col 335

¹¹⁸ HoA debates, 27.1.37, col 733

¹¹⁹ Star, 18.1.37

¹²⁰ Bradlow, 1978, p 284, especially footnote 22

¹²¹ HoA debates, 27.1.37, col 726

It is possible to conjecture that Kentridge's arguments were self-serving, nevertheless the primary concern of the Board was the welfare of the local Jewish community. It is in this light that we should assess the statements and actions of the Jewish MPs (as well as those of the Board for that matter). In a letter to Dennis Diamond¹²², Gus Saron elaborated on the conflicts which had occurred in the Board and among the Jewish MPs in formulating their position towards the Aliens Act. At the Executive meeting of 18 January 1937, several members voiced their strongest agreement with the Jewish MP's who had given their blessing to the Bill¹²³. Their position was reassessed at meetings on 26 and 31 January, where opinions were divided on whether to approve or disapprove of what had been said by the Jewish MP's in Parliament. The position finally adopted by the Executive Council was set out clearly in a letter to the Minister for the Interior on 19 January, where they proposed amending some of the provisions of the Act¹²⁴. Saron delineated the cruel dilemma which faced the Board in the months preceding the Parliamentary debate¹²⁵:

...which on the one hand wanted to prevent the door being slammed closed, and on the other hand was urging Jewish organisations abroad to cut down and to regulate the immigration to the country...¹²⁶.

Within the Board itself there was a major crisis: the Cape Board

¹²² 11.7.77, in the archives of the Board

¹²³ Saron wrote that this attitude was based on a 'simplistic' analysis of what had happened in Parliament.

¹²⁴ The letter itself is missing from the archives of the Board. It was not for publication and Saron was convinced that it never "*saw the light of publication*". From allusions in the memo, it seems that the letter proposed alternative amendments to the Aliens Act which would not detrimentally affect German Jewish immigration.

¹²⁵ the debates over the Stuttgart; the ongoing agitation against further Jewish immigration on the part of professors from Afrikaner universities; the pressure from other quarters for the prohibition of all or further Jewish immigration; the introduction by Malan himself of a Bill calling for such prohibition and for other restrictions on unnaturalised Jews.

¹²⁶ Memo from Saron to Diamond, 11.7.77. Saron is here admitting that the Board had made efforts to persuade Jewish organisations abroad to 'cut down' immigration to SA.

cooperated with the Jewish MP's and was in sharp disagreement with the Council in connection with amendments proposed in the letter of the 19 January.

Our friends at the Cape felt that this was an unwise confrontation with the Government, but the Executive in Johannesburg insisted on the letter being delivered because it felt that the viewpoint of the Jewish community and the Board should be stated clearly and without any compromising irrespective of what the consequences might be¹²⁷.

The Jewish MPs' acceptance of the Bill raised the suspicions of the Opposition¹²⁸, which looked for a hidden explanation. Malan claimed that the Jews had been 'rewarded' by the granting of unrestricted immigration from Eastern Europe. Alexander immediately refuted this charge¹²⁹. The answer to the enigma of Jewish parliamentary support is much simpler. After consultation with the Cape leaders of the Board¹³⁰, it had been decided to support the Bill so that Malan's potentially more dangerous no-confidence motion would go no further. If a concession was made on the immigration issue, it could be hoped that gains could be made on that of naturalisation¹³¹. In retrospect, after taking everything into account, the Board felt that the Jewish MP's had acquitted themselves very creditably. The minutes of the Executive Council meeting of 31 January clearly reveal the reasons why criticism of the Jewish MP's was withdrawn. The meeting was addressed by Maurice Franks, who said:

...the Bill must always be judged against the background of the agitation which had preceded its introduction ...The Government had to introduce some measure in order to check the Malanite agitation. And that being so, the Jews (and the Board as their spokesman) had to accept legislation provided that it bore no sign of racial

¹²⁷ ibid

¹²⁸ for example De Waal, HoA debates, 27.1.37, col 727

¹²⁹ Bradlow, 285. Alexander's denial is supported by immigration figures for that period.

¹³⁰ minutes of the Cape Council of the Board, 11.1.37

¹³¹ Bradlow, 1978, pp 285-6; Minutes of Cape Executive of the Board, 11.1.37

discrimination¹³².

In order to prevent the misuse of the term 'assimiliability', and to obtain a precise definition, as well as some form of appeal against the Selection Board's decision, a deputation met Stuttaford on 18 January. The Minister, however, refused to make any concessions, arguing that any alteration would open the way for a more violent attack by the Malanites¹³³.

The Jewish community was faced with an unpleasant situation which had to be accepted: rejection of the government's Bill might ultimately result in a far more severe measure¹³⁴.

3.4.1 The Relations Between the Jewish MPs and the Board

Alexander and Kentridge, although both collaborating with the Board, held different views on their roles as Jewish MPs. Whereas Alexander was actively involved in the Board¹³⁵ from its inception, and had been elected as its first President in September 1904¹³⁶, Kentridge believed that his membership of the Board should not interfere with his role as an MP.

I took up the attitude, however, that once a Jew was in Parliament, it was desirable that he should not be an executive member of the Board. I felt that such association with the Board by a member of Parliament might lead to misunderstanding. On this point I differed from... Morris Alexander, who though he agreed that it was not right that the views of a individual Jewish member of Parliament should be attributed to the whole community, was himself for many years chairman of the Board of the Cape¹³⁷.

In contrast to Kentridge, Alexander, in Shain's assessment,

¹³² extract of the view of Maurice Franks, the chairman of the Public Relations committee, 31.1.37. In regard to a definition of the term 'assimilability' the government speakers eluded all efforts on the part of the Jewish Mps to pin them down to a definition.

¹³³ Bradlow, 1978, pp 286-7, Board of Deputies Minutes of Cape Committee 15.1.37, 18.1.37

¹³⁴ Bradlow, 1978, p 287

¹³⁵ Shain, 1983, chapters 4 and 5 especially

¹³⁶ Shain, 1983, p 72

¹³⁷ Quoted in Shain, 1983, p 110

acted on the assumption that he could express the views of the Jewish community¹³⁸, thus obscuring the differentiation between himself as a member of the Board and as a Member of Parliament. Despite these differences, both Alexander and Kentridge championed the cause of the Jewish community in Parliament whenever there was a serious threat to its status or rights.

They fought discriminatory legislation against Jewish immigration, and attacked those who engaged in anti-Semitic rhetoric. There was wide cooperation between them and the Board, through consultations and other concerted efforts, in order to safeguard Jewish rights and counteract anti-Jewish legislation. From the correspondence it is clear that the Board felt that it could turn to them in times of crisis.

Alexander, the unofficial voice of the Board in Parliament¹³⁹, adamantly insisted that Jewish MPs must express their opinions with no fear of their enemies; by neglecting their duty they would be playing into the hands of the anti-Semites¹⁴⁰. In 1938, when the Board was planning to send a deputation to Malan in the hope of persuading the NP to drop their anti-Jewish policy it was then pursuing, questions were raised as to the wisdom of Alexander being a member of the deputation. Alexander expressed resentment at the idea that his position as an MP and member of the UP should constitute a handicap. As Vice-President, he insisted, he was part of the Board, in a position devoid of political implications¹⁴¹. His viewpoint finally prevailed. Regarding the status of a Jew in politics he stated in Parliament:

We are here to do our duty as South Africans. As South African Jews the only time we speak as such before this House is when an attempt is made to besmirch our fair name, and it is the interest of South Africa that we speak even then...When you leave that out, we always speak

¹³⁸ ibid

¹³⁹ Shimoni, 1980, p 90

¹⁴⁰ Alexander, Memoirs, p 30

¹⁴¹ ibid, pp 30-31

merely as South Africans¹⁴².

In paying tribute to Kentridge in 1951¹⁴³, Maisels, President of the Board, declared that he had shown himself to be at one and the same time a true South African and a true Jew. His public career had been characterised by two principles: to ameliorate the lot of the underprivileged, whether black, white, Gentile or Jew and to help build a united SA, in which all sections would play a part.

3.5 Conclusion

The Aliens Act was a further step in the process of delegitimising the status of Jews in SA. The SAP, on the whole, did not reject the anti-Semitic rhetoric of the NP Members of Parliament as repugnant and unacceptable in a democratic country. It was members of the Labour Party, who were in the Opposition, who defended the Jews, and labelled the speeches of NP MPs as Nazism. The NP too was in the opposition, but it set the tone of the debate. As succinctly expressed by Burnside:

...the real rulers of the country to-day, because of political considerations, are the purified Nationalist Party. The purified Nationalist Party only need to say that there are too many Jews coming into this country, and the Government promptly bring in a Bill to prevent Jews from coming into the country...Whatever the purified Nationalists say to-day, the Government do to-morrow. They are afraid of the purified Nationalist Party¹⁴⁴.

Although Government speakers sought to reassure the electorate that the measure was not specifically anti-Jewish but a move to stop undesirable immigration in general¹⁴⁵, its overriding consideration at all stages, was defence. Here, as in the Quota Act debate, the UP accepted the rationale of the NP: there was a 'mass movement' of Jews threatening to swamp the country and legislative measures must be taken to protect the South African population. The UP too succumbed to anti-Semitism for political

¹⁴² HoA debates, 18.1.37: Col 307

¹⁴³ South African Jewish Times, 6.4.51

¹⁴⁴ HoA debates, 27.1.37, col 722

¹⁴⁵ Bradlow, 1978, p 297

reasons, adhering strictly to the letter of the Act when it applied to Jewish immigrants.

In its historical context, the Board's and the Jewish MPs 'complicity' in the Bill can be defended as making the best of a bad situation¹⁴⁶. Although it was, indubitably, a discriminatory measure, the Board felt that its first concern was the local Jewish community. Hertzog's speech served to confirm the suspicion of many Jews that the Opposition and the Government were in basic agreement on the question of Jewish immigration and shared the same prejudices¹⁴⁷. The arrival of the German Jews had been exploited by the nationalists as a political opportunity. SA, as Senator Boydell noted, was in danger not from the size of its alien population, but because of the agitation against them¹⁴⁸.

Concern for the economic progress of the Afrikaner, and his integration into the economic structure, seems to have been one of the decisive factors in shaping the anti-Semitic rhetoric. Similarly to the rhetoric surrounding the Quota Act, Jews were criticised for engaging in 'unfair' and 'unequal' competition with the Afrikaner. The presence of Jews was perceived as constituting an insurmountable obstacle to the well-being of the Afrikaner. Any economic advantage gained by Jews was interpreted as a loss for the Afrikaner. This argumentation was devoid of any understanding of basic economic principles, especially as there is no such phenomenon as 'unfair' or 'unequal' competition. Economic theory juxtaposes monopoly to competition, where the former presupposes that there is only one seller in the market; where entry into the industry is closed to potential sellers; where the seller has complete control over the quantity of goods sold and their price. However, pure monopoly exists only in theory because other sellers can lower their production

¹⁴⁶ Malan's private Bill published in the Government Gazette 28.12.36

¹⁴⁷ Bradlow, 1978, p 287

¹⁴⁸ Bradlow, 1978, p 287, debates 28.1.37, col 99

costs, offer new substitute products and thus take advantage of marketing opportunities¹⁴⁹. This was precisely what the Jewish entrepreneur did, whereas the Afrikaner entrepreneur either did not or could not. Jews were hated not because of 'unfair competition' but for utilizing the forces of competition for their economic advantage.

The ratification of the Aliens Act was the result of the convergence of both political and economic factors over which the Jewish community had no control. The solution of the problems of the 'economic backwardness' of the Afrikaner and of the erosion in the support for the ruling power was ostensibly found in the cessation of German-Jewish immigration. German-Jewish immigration was the victim of the rivalry over electoral support between the NP and the UP.

Lastly, and perhaps most important, Jews were not accepted as equals. Their status as a minority, was tenuous. Their acceptance was perpetually contingent on the tolerance and the benevolence of the majority. This accorded them a status which was degrading and humiliating, because it created an illusion of equality and dignity when these were in fact lacking¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁹ *The Social Science Encyclopedia*, edited by Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1985

¹⁵⁰ See Jospe Raphael, "*Christianity and Anti-Semitism: Some Reflections*", *Forum*, 1986, p 60

Chapter 4. ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE NATIONAL PARTY, 1933-1938

4.1 Anti-Semitism as National Party Political Policy

By the late 1930s anti-Semitism had become an integral part of *volkisch* Afrikaner Nationalism¹⁵¹, and had moved to the public sphere. This can be clearly seen in Malan's speech at Stellenbosch in April 1937, where he imputed Afrikanerdom's difficulties and failures to Jewish machinations, depicting Jews as the enemy of the Afrikaners.

Coalition and Fusion were to a great extent the result of Jewish organisation. The Jews did everything in their power to keep the Afrikaners from uniting, as they feared that South Africans would rise from their lowly and insignificant position... There is yet another aspect of Jewish Communism in South Africa. the Jews oppose discrimination because they fear discrimination against them. In South Africa this is miscegenation¹⁵².

The first issue of Die Transvaler¹⁵³, the first Nationalist daily to be published in the Transvaal, contained a lengthy article by Verwoerd entitled "The Jewish Problem from a Nationalist Point of view" which expounded a programme of planned economic discrimination against the Jews of SA¹⁵⁴. Legislation should be introduced to reduce "Jewish domination" to ensure so that Afrikaners could assume their rightful place in all spheres of national life.

¹⁵¹ Furlong, 1987, pp 191

¹⁵² Cape Argus, 12.4.37. See Furlong, 1987, pp 185-186. In a letter to Louw in 1936 Malan ascribed the fact that Jews 'were storming' SA as one of the reasons that the cause of the NP was progressing. (Furlong, 1987, p 145)

¹⁵³ 1.10.37

¹⁵⁴ When nationalist newspapers 'exposed' the 'Jewish menace' H Verwoerd, the editor of Die Transvaler, accused South African Jewry of retaliating by refusing to advertise in newspapers they considered to be pro-German. The Jews aimed at punishing the Afrikaans newspapers for their pro-German views. (Die Transvaler, 22.11.37; 30.11.37; 1.12.37; 3.3.38; 10.2.38) This must have been one of the most dangerously cynical arguments in the history of South African journalism - attacking the Jews for not continuing to financially subsidise newspapers which were supporting a country which was delegitimising, denationalising and impoverishing their brethren. See Furlong, 1987, pp 189-92.

The months preceding the 1938 election were marked by an intensification of anti-Semitic agitation and the revival of well-known slogans: that Jews were 'communists'; that they dominated trade and industry; that they were opposed to Afrikaner aspirations and hampering national solidarity. The pre-election manifesto¹⁵⁵ specifically targeted Jews, raising two principle demands: the prohibition of further Jewish immigration and the imposition of a quota system in commerce, industry and the professions, based upon racial percentages in the total population¹⁵⁶. At the by-election meetings at Graafwater and Picquetburg, Malan announced his plan of introducing anti-Jewish legislation which would deprive those Jews who had not yet been naturalised from even attaining citizenship, as well as making it mandatory for them to obtain a permit to follow any occupation¹⁵⁷. Malan declared that Jews would be permitted to become members of the NP if they were prepared to '*become Christians and lead a Christian life*¹⁵⁸', committing the NP to a policy of restricting Jewish immigration and economic endeavour and to creating an occupational permit system for 'unnaturalised foreigners', a euphemism for Jews¹⁵⁹.

Two recurring themes which invariably appeared in nationalist speeches were that anti-Semitic legislation could be found in other countries and that Jews were a threat because they were disseminating doctrines of equality which undermined the rule of the white man in SA. The insinuation that Jews were themselves to blame for anti-Semitism was repeatedly made. Nationalist speakers stressed that anti-Jewish legislation was for the benefit of Jews already living in the Union. If the 'Jewish

¹⁵⁵ adopted in March 1938,

¹⁵⁶ Report to Congress, 1937 to 1939; Report of the Executive Council to be presented to the monthly meeting of Deputies, 29.8.37

¹⁵⁷ Review of the Political Scene, Executive meeting 30.1.38

¹⁵⁸ in an election speech at Parys. Natal Advertiser, 30.7.37, quoted in report to Deputies 29.8.38.

¹⁵⁹ Report to Congress, 1937 to 1940, p 20. See also Cape Times, 15.10.47 and Furlong, 1987, p 188.

Question' was not dealt with, the Afrikaans press warned, tremendous popular agitation would ensue¹⁶⁰, and this would aggravate the enmity that already existed towards Jews: "the influx of Jewish refugees to South Africa could only lead to more scuffles with revolvers, bayonets and bottles¹⁶¹."

One of the main protagonists of anti-Semitic agitation was Eric Louw. Between 1929 and 1934 Eric Louw had represented the Union Government successively in London, Washington, Rome, Paris¹⁶², as well as at the League of Nations¹⁶³. He was South Africa's chief diplomatic representative in Europe. It was Louw who had urged the SA Government, in September 1936, to take immediate action to stop Jewish immigration. "I say in all earnestness that if it goes on at this rate the Union will become the destination of all German Jews¹⁶⁴". At the same time he inundated Hertzog with letters carrying exaggerated allegations of covert Jewish intentions to flood SA with 'so-called' German refugees¹⁶⁵. After his return Louw consistently and maliciously, sustained the 'Jewish Question' on the political platform, ascribing the failure of the NP in the 1938 elections to organised money power and the Jewish vote¹⁶⁶. When, in September 1938, Jews were accused by the NP of organising a boycott of German goods, Louw warned that

...the Jews of SA that they are playing with fire when they make use of their undoubted commercial ability by using it as a bludgeon. The public of SA will tolerate it for a little while but not for long¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶⁰ Die Transvaler, 26.11.36

¹⁶¹ Die Oosterlig, 28.11.38

¹⁶² Davenport, 1977, p 326

¹⁶³ Who's Who in South Africa

¹⁶⁴ Shimoni, 1980, p 118

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶⁶ Die Burger, 22.6.38

¹⁶⁷ 14.9.38. Morris Alexander denied that there was an organised boycott, while other speakers made the point that many Jews had spontaneously and understandably refused to buy German

In the course of a speech delivered at a "Nationalist Day" at Heidelberg¹⁶⁸ Malan declared that the same treatment meted out to the Jews in Germany and Austria would have to be carried out in SA but 'not in the same sharp form'¹⁶⁹. At the Cape conference of the NP in November 1938 a motion was tabled calling for a professional quota system, for a law prohibiting Jewish doctors from attending Afrikaner families and for the disenfranchisement of Jews¹⁷⁰.

The accusations of Communism and Liberalism often recurred during this period¹⁷¹. In November 1938, at the opening of the Union Congress of the NP¹⁷², Malan launched a violent attack on Liberalism, Communism and Jews¹⁷³, contending that their power, which had had an unmistakable effect on the last election, had grown tremendously since then. It was the power behind

goods.

¹⁶⁸ Daily Express 17.10.38

¹⁶⁹ Whereas in 1936 3,300 Jews had immigrated to SA, in 1937 954 Jews immigrated and in 1938 only 566. (G Saron, "Epilogue" in Saron & Hotz, 1955, pp 379-380)

¹⁷⁰ Star, 11.11.38

¹⁷¹ Apart from the prominence of Jews in the Socialist and Communist movements worldwide, there are many examples of Jews who were actively fighting for "native" rights both in the unions and in political parties. The Yiddish-speaking branch of the International Socialist league espoused and disseminated radical workers' ideologies. "While living in the slums of Johannesburg the Jewish apostles of socialism preached human equality and the coming Socialist Revolution..." (E A Mantzaris, "Radical Community: The Yiddish-Speaking Branch of the International Socialist League, 1918-1920, in Class, Community and Conflict, ed. by Belinda Bozzoli, Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1987, pp 160-176) Subsequent to the Fifth Annual Conference of the International Socialist League in January 1920, most of the members of the Yiddish-Speaking Branch joined, *en masse*, Andrew Dunbar's Communist Party of South Africa); H Kallenbach and H Polak were foremost among Gandhi's white associates;

¹⁷² Daily News, 8.11.38 and Natal Mercury 9.11.38

¹⁷³ Die Burger 15.8.38, Daily Tribune 18.8.38 and the Sunday Express 20.8.38 reported Eric Louw's warnings against liberals and Liberalism.

'Communism' and 'Liberalism'. Jews disseminated and propagated the doctrines of equality. Malan's message was clear: to keep SA white it was necessary to combat these doctrines, and the way to do so was to oppose the Jews¹⁷⁴.

Malan's lead in tying Jews with 'Liberalism' was soon followed by his Party's rank and file. J G van der Merwe¹⁷⁵ declared that the object of the NP was not to combat individual Jews but to fight organised Jewry in its attempts to undermine Christian tenets and institutions, to disseminate ultra-liberal and communist ideas and to combat Afrikaner business undertakings and industries. Louw¹⁷⁶, contended that a liberal could not be a full-blooded South African¹⁷⁷.

Even after the 1938 election there was no abatement in anti-Semitic agitation. Agitation against Jewish economic power continued. Van Nierop (NP) accused the Jews of creating a state within a state. They were also, he alleged, the cause of the Anglo-Boer war, declaring: "We will deport them from the country"¹⁷⁸. Support for anti-Jewish legislation continued to be widespread among the followers of the NP. The district committee of the NP of Vredendal submitted a number of resolutions to the NP Congress aimed at "terminating Jewish domination over the people of the Union¹⁷⁹", the Divisional Council of the NP at Moorreesburg¹⁸⁰ and at De Doorns¹⁸¹ passed resolutions urging Government to introduce more restrictive legislation against Jewish immigration.

¹⁷⁴ Speeches attacking liberalism and Communism were also made by Dr A J der Merwe MP and A J Werth MP.

¹⁷⁵ Star, 11.11.38

¹⁷⁶ Die Burger, 15.8.38 and Sunday Express, 20.8.38

¹⁷⁷ Daily Tribune, 18.8.38

¹⁷⁸ Daily News 1.5.39

¹⁷⁹ Die Burger, 17.7.39

¹⁸⁰ Die Burger 1.8.39

¹⁸¹ Die Burger 2.8.39

Malan's speech at Koringberg verged on anti-Jewish incitement¹⁸². The 'Jewish Question', he declared on that occasion, hung like a dark cloud over SA. Behind organised SA Jewry stood organised world Jewry. Jews had robbed the population of its heritage to the extent that the Afrikaner lived in the land of his father but no longer possessed it. Addressing a meeting at Krugersdorp, he asserted that Jews were still streaming into the country in even larger numbers. In the past 15 months 6,500 had entered SA, proportionally three times the number admitted to America. SA, he announced, was already third on the list of 'Jewish countries'.

I ask you, do you own your country". Your task is to take possession of it now and there fight your battle. South Africa must free itself of foreign domination and lead its own existence¹⁸³.

The speech was extremely irresponsible and an exercise in misinformation since Malan's figures were totally misleading, as was pointed out by numerous letters in the press: only 200 Jews had immigrated to SA during the past 15 months, not the 6,500 alleged by Malan¹⁸⁴. The demands for anti-Jewish legislation were taken up at the NP congress at Paarl in November 1939¹⁸⁵. In a more conciliatory tone, but keeping strictly within NP policy, N van der Merwe, the Party's deputy leader, speaking at Bloemfontein¹⁸⁶, stated that the NP had never declared itself in favour of 'racial persecution'. It wished to prevent the racial problem from becoming any worse. Restrictions were, therefore, in the interest of the Jewish population¹⁸⁷. J E van

¹⁸² Die Volksblad, 7.11.39

¹⁸³ Die Transvaler 22.8.39

¹⁸⁴ Star 22.8.39 - The figure 6,500 was erroneously quoted in the Vienna Weltblatt, 24.7.38. The correct figure of 200 Austrian Jews was published in SA newspapers on 27.7.38 - 6,500 had emigrated to South America. Malan took the opportunity to call Smuts 'a good Jew'. (Press Report 165, 1939)

¹⁸⁵ Die Burger, 4.8.39

¹⁸⁶ Volksblad 15.11.39

¹⁸⁷ The reference to 'one section of the nation by another' was confined to the white population of the nation. Throughout the course of the period covered in this dissertation, it is

der Heever, NP candidate in Pretoria, promised that the NP would break Jewish hegemony over SA once and for all and make the Afrikaners master of the country. "Communism is an instrument devised by international Jewry to keep working classes down¹⁸⁸". Van Nierop accused Jews of creating a state within a state. They were the cause of the Anglo-Boer war and their communist activity was responsible for the unrest overseas¹⁸⁹. Die Transvaler alleged that Jewish communist leaders, together with their religious compatriots, were overjoyed that the war had eventually broken out because of their desire for revenge against Germany¹⁹⁰.

Hofmeyr's observation, in 1939, was therefore not surprising:

It is unnecessary, therefore, to emphasise the first-class importance of anti-Semitism in South Africa as a political issue...Its adoption by the NP as part of its programme has removed it from the sphere of the demagogue of the 'shirt' type, and given it political respectability¹⁹¹.

4.2 The Response of the Jewish Board of Deputies

4.2.1 The Lobby for Anti-defamation legislation

In attempting to combat anti-Semitic propaganda, the Board was handicapped by the absence of lawful means to prevent libellous or injurious attacks upon sections of the population of the Union. There was no redress in Court for libels against races, creeds or other collective groups, or against a member of the group. Although it was recognised that the State had to protect the **individual** against written or oral attacks; it was powerless to protect these same rights when the attack was made not

evident that allusions to the 'democratic' spirit, tradition, and political structure of the country referred exclusively to the white population. The fact that this 'democracy' did not encompass the non-white population did not detract iota from the protestations of the NP that SA was a democratic country.

¹⁸⁸ Star, 1.2.39

¹⁸⁹ Daily News, 1.5.39

¹⁹⁰ 3.1.40

¹⁹¹ Article by Hofmeyr entitled "Anti-Semitism" in Forum, 24.6.39. Quoted in Cuthbertson, p 129

against the individual as such, but as a **member of a group**. The only law under which the importation of Nazi propaganda could be excluded was the Customs Management Act which prohibited the importation of goods which were indecent, obscene or objectionable. The process, however, was cumbersome, especially because material could not be declared obscene until after it had been introduced into the country. The Board made representations to the Government regarding this anomaly and the law was subsequently amended in 1939¹⁹². Thus the Board's main strategy in this regard was to call for legislation to outlaw libel against any population group¹⁹³:

The 10th and 11th Congresses¹⁹⁴ of the Jewish Board of Deputies¹⁹⁵ unanimously adopted a resolution calling Government to formulate legislation making it a criminal offence to publicly libel any nationality, race or creed. It was resolved to demand that Government and Parliament take action to prevent the dissemination of propaganda calculated to create racial strife between the white races. However, while deploring the incitement against the community, Government spokesmen intimated that they saw insuperable difficulties in formulating appropriate legislation, especially in view of the complex multi-racial character of SA's population¹⁹⁶.

An opportunity to test the effectiveness of legislation against the defamation of a group was provided at the Von-Moltke trial¹⁹⁷ in 1934. The case dealt with the authenticity of a document which Harry Victor Inch, the leader of the Greyshirt

¹⁹² See Report to Congress 1937 to 1940 for the precise wording of the Act and its amendment.

¹⁹³ Anti-Jewish Movements in South Africa, 1936

¹⁹⁴ as well as a special IPC in December 1935

¹⁹⁵ 1933 and 1935

¹⁹⁶ Report to Congress 1937 to 1939

¹⁹⁷ pamphlet published by the Jewish Board of Deputies in 1936; an unpublished manuscript in the archives of the Board; and Martin Adelberg's 1983 unpublished manuscript

movement in Port Elizabeth, claimed to have stolen from the Western Road Synagogue and of two other documents. The first was said to have carried the signature of the "Rabbi"¹⁹⁸. All the documents were of a highly blasphemous and libellous character, intended to show that there was a secret plot by Jews to destroy the Christian religion, and that they wished to overthrow the existing system of civilisation. After the document had been published in Die Rapport, the Reverend Levy had grounds to bring an action for damages for defamation against Inch, von Moltke, the leader of the SA Gentile National Socialist Movement, and David H Olivier, Jnr, the owner of Die Rapport. In this instance, the libel suit could be laid because an individual, not a group, had been defamed. Evidence was given by a host of people, including Professor Dingemans, Professor of Classics at Rhodes University and Nahum Sokolov, President of the World Zionist Organisation.

Judgment was given on the 2 August 1934. It found that the documents had been compiled by one person who was undoubtedly a member of the Greyshirt movement. Furthermore, the defendants had failed to produce a vestige of proof to establish the existence of a plot, but had relied on a long series of opinions of persons who were admittedly hostile to the Jewish religion, as well as basing their argument on the fallacy that, if there had been no Jewish plot the Jewish race would not have undergone persecution. The defendants had relied upon the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" as definitive proof of the existence of this great conspiracy, even though the pamphlet had been shown to be a forgery. In January 1935 all the defendants were indicted¹⁹⁹.

Another example of invoking the law was the attempt to have

¹⁹⁸ In order to give the documents an aura of authenticity, the forgers copied some words in Hebrew not knowing that they meant "*Kosher for Passover*".

¹⁹⁹ The defendants were fined 4,000 Pounds.

General Manie Maritz's²⁰⁰ book My Lewe en Strewe banned. Although a third of the book was one long diatribe against the Jews, the attempt to bring him to trial in SA had failed because there was no provision in the law to prohibit the circulation of a libellous book published in the country. The matter was then transferred to South West Africa where the Criminal Amendment Act 13 provided that any person who uttered a word or performed any act intended to promote hostility between races was guilty of committing an offence²⁰¹.

In August 1939 General Maritz was charged in the High Court of South West Africa with promoting feelings of hostility between the different races in the country²⁰². Jews, he said, were responsible for the Jameson Raid, owned the gold and diamond mines and ruled the country. Christians should be made aware of evil they had perpetrated throughout the centuries. He did not advocate their 'destruction by violence', but rather that they should be rendered powerless. Cross-examination exposed Maritz's deeply engrained anti-Jewish prejudices. He claimed that Jews probably practised ritual murder and were the '*arch enemy of our nation*'. When asked by the judge if he regarded the Jew as a fellow human-being, Maritz replied in the negative²⁰³. In its judgment, the Court found that My Lewe en Strewe was a striking example of vile venomous and detestable racial propoganda written with the deliberate intention of promoting strong

²⁰⁰ Salomon G Maritz (1876-1940) was a Boer general and a rebel leader. In 1914 he planned, with German aid, to overthrow the Botha government and to set up a Republic. After escaping abroad, he finally return to SA, tried for high treason and sentenced to 2 years imprisonment. In the wake of the "Pact" government he was released after serving only 3 months of his sentence. In the 1930s, as an admirer of Nazism, he joined the Greyshirt movement but resigned in 1934 and formed the SA National Democratic movement. With the outbreak of World War II he was associated with extra-parliamentary anti-government political organisations.

²⁰¹ Report to Congress, 1937 to 1940, pp 27-28

²⁰² Star, 23.8.39

²⁰³ Gus Saron testified that a considerable portion of the book had been plagiarised from an anti-Semitic pamphlet published in Canada entitled "*Key to the Mystery*".

feelings of hostility against the Jewish race. Maritz was charged with contravening the Criminal Law Amendment and was found guilty of promoting hostility²⁰⁴.

The situation was summarised in a memorandum submitted to Prime Minister Hertzog by the Board of Deputies on June 1938, which argued that no law-abiding community should be exposed to unjust attack and vilification without the opportunity of redress in court.

Given free rein for their malicious activities, it has been inevitable that the protagonists of racial hatred should have made progress. Confined at first to the disgruntled and ignorant few, the movements have made their way into other wider ranks of the people²⁰⁵.

Although sympathising, Hertzog, for political reasons, never presented an appropriate bill to Parliament. Only with the advent of the Second World War, and the special Emergency Regulations enacted by Smuts, did the Board drop its appeal for legislation, under the assumption that these Regulations were sufficient²⁰⁶.

4.2.2 The Board's Involvement in the Political Arena

The Report to the 1935 Congress of the Board of Deputies bewailed the change the National Party had undergone, enumerating some of its more flagrant manifestations: the boycott issue; the debate in Parliament on immigration on June 16 1936²⁰⁷; the mass protests against Jewish immigration; the recommendation of the Transvaal Congress of the Party that no Jew should be eligible for membership of the NP; and the bitter

²⁰⁴ He was fined 75 pds or 9 months imprisonment (Zionist Record, 25.8.39)

²⁰⁵ undated memorandum in the archives of the Board of Deputies

²⁰⁶ Report to Congress 1937 to 1940, 30. The Emergency Regulations obviated the need for additional special legislation as the powers conferred on government by these regulations were considered to be ample to deal with the evil of anti-Semitism.

²⁰⁷ During the debate Malan and some of his followers expressed strong opposition to further Jewish immigration.

attacks by the leader of the Party and prominent members during debates in Parliament.

On December 15 1937 the Jewish Board of Deputies issued a direct challenge to the NP to define its policies towards the Jewish community. In a letter to Malan²⁰⁸ the Board expressed deep regret and concern at the expressions of unfriendliness towards the community which had been voiced during the past months by the Party's leaders, by newspapers which were controlled by the NP, and in the resolutions which had been adopted at Party conferences²⁰⁹. The effect of this had been to create in the minds of both Jewish and non-Jewish citizens the impression that the NP was embarking upon a policy of fostering ill-will against the Jewish citizens of the Union, and was aiming at discriminating against them. The Board was most reluctant to believe that this was its intention.

...is now willing to perpetrate a great injustice against the Jewish community and is ready to cast aside the principles which are basic to any civilised society, without which liberty and Democracy are hollow shams²¹⁰.

The Jewish community, the letter went on to assure Malan, was anxious to live in amity and co-operation with all elements in the nation. It had never in the past sought, or had occasion to be antagonistic to any group or political Party, nor did it desire to do this in the future. Malan, in his reply to Gustav Saron, General-Secretary of the Board, on 1 February 1938, stated that he did not view the "Jewish Question" from the point of view of 'a particular race' but was concerned with framing a

²⁰⁸ found in the archives of the Council of Kwa-Zulu Natal Jewry (previously the Council of Natal Jewry - CNJ)

²⁰⁹ See next chapter. For example: Malan's speech in the House on 16.6.36 demanding that loopholes in the Quota Act be blocked; his speech at the NP congress in November 1936 where he demanded an immediate halt to Jewish immigration from Germany, as well as discriminatory measures against the local Jewish population; his private Bill introduced to the House in January 1937; and lastly, the agitation of Verwoerd and other Stellenbosch professors, in October 1936, against Jewish immigration and demands for quotas in commerce and the professions.

²¹⁰ ibid

policy with a view to the interests of SA as a whole²¹¹. He was always glad to place himself at the disposal of those who desired to make representations and to be of assistance, and would welcome a meeting with the Board.

In reply²¹², Saron expressed his total agreement with the proposition that the policy of the NP should be framed with a view to the interests of SA as a whole; however, the Board viewed with grave concern certain features in the policy of the NP towards the Jewish community. The Board was firmly convinced that a policy which involved injustice and discrimination towards Jewish citizens was contrary to the best interests of the nation as a whole, and that it was the duty of every patriotic South African to endeavour to uphold the principle of the equality of all Europeans, which Malan himself had so frequently stressed in the past.

At the ensuing meeting which took place between on 18 February²¹³, Malan was anything but conciliatory. He alleged that "a combination of Jews, in revenge for the passage of the Quota Act, had grouped together to disintegrate the NP²¹⁴". When asked whether his Party advocated discriminatory legislation against Jews, he replied that he was not yet convinced that legislation along the quota lines was the correct method of dealing with the situation, but, at the same time, the Board should not have any misapprehensions. If, he warned, the demands of the 'non-Jewish section' for larger participation in commerce

²¹¹ While publicly expressing an overt anti-Jewish stance, privately, Malan maintained cordial relations with members of the community. He reiterated his basic viewpoint at a private meeting with Morris Alexander in February 1938 where he explained that the Jewish Question was not a matter of a particular race but a "point of view to the interest of SA as a whole". (Furlong, 1987, p 187)

²¹² letter dated 8.2.38, found in the archives of the Council of Kwa-Zulu Natal Jewry

²¹³ Report of the meeting found in the archives of the Council of Kwa-Zulu Natal Jewry

²¹⁴ ibid

and the professions continued, the time might well arrive when no Government could fail to take such a demand into account.

During the course of the interview, Malan explained the basic assumptions that underpinned NP policy . Firstly, inasmuch as anti-Semitism was a function of the number of Jews in the country²¹⁵, in order to avoid anti-Semitism, restrictions should be imposed on Jewish immigration. In this context, restrictive legislation was justified because it ensured the well-being of all South African citizens. It was also compatible with the interests of the Jewish citizens, and for this reason it was incumbent upon them to support such measures. He condemned all efforts by the community to aid immigrants²¹⁶, alleging that the immigration of German Jewry to SA had been assisted by world Jewry and by local organised effort. Secondly, a basic cause of resentment, according to Malan, was that there was a 'disproportionate number' of Jews in the professions, commerce and industry, and this had blocked out Afrikaners and 'squeezed out' the 'Englishman'. As a result, their predominance in the economy had become a form of aggression. They had taken away from the local population 'that to which they were entitled'. The NP was, therefore, only demanding what belonged to them. If it should become necessary, it would resort to legislation to

²¹⁵ claiming that this theory had been evolved by Chaim Weizman. This 'axiom' was frequently propounded as absolute truth by NP speakers. In actual fact this statement was made by Leon Pinsker in his seminal pamphlet "*Auto-Emancipation*", written in 1882 in the aftermath of pogroms, initiated, orchestrated and sustained by the Russian government, in 1881 following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II. These pogroms had been initiated, orchestrated and sustained by the Russian government. The Jewish intellectuals were shocked and appalled at the patronising attitude of the Russian intellectuals who absolved the masses from the massacre of Jews, and even encouraged their actions. Under the impact of these events, Leon Pinsker wrote his pamphlet in which he said that anti-Semitism would never disappear in the diaspora, and that the only solution to the "Jewish Question" was a Jewish homeland.

²¹⁶ See Board's statement on the pending arrival of the Stuttgart, December 16, 1937 in the chapter on the Aliens Act which asserted that it had taken 'active steps' to discourage indiscriminate immigration". See also the report in the RDM (19.1.37) of General Hertzog's praise of the Jewish community for discouraging a further influx of Jewish immigrants.

ensure the greater participation of the non-Jewish section in the professions, commerce and industry. Furthermore, Jews, because of their extreme loyalty to their people, had failed to become assimilated with the local population. They were opponents of Parties with 'National aspirations', and supported those founded on 'so-called' liberal principles.

Prime Minister Hertzog's latent hostility was revealed in his reply to the appeal made to him by the Board of Deputies for assistance against anti-Semitic movements. Hertzog dismissed their fears, adding that the Jews themselves were 'in no small measure' responsible for anti-Jewish feeling, especially in pioneering an anti-German boycott²¹⁷ which hurt the national economy²¹⁸. When Siegfried Raphaely, President of the Board, angrily rejected this explanation²¹⁹, Hertzog responded that he failed to understand why Raphaely was so upset, as he was only referring to a 'few members' of the Jewish community²²⁰.

On 3 December 1937 the Board published a long statement in all the SA papers in which it refuted the main allegations which had become the stock-in-trade of anti-Semitic propaganda. It took care to explain that the Board was not a political body, nor did Jewry constitute a political unit, seeking revenge for the Quota Act of 1930²²¹. It declared that the "Jewish question" had been artificially created. In replying to the charge that the Jews were 'anti-Afrikaner', the Board affirmed that Jewish South Africans had never sought, or had occasion, to identify themselves with one group of the population to the exclusion of

²¹⁷ Smuts Archives, "Jewish Board of Deputies to General Hertzog on Anti-Semitism in South Africa", Vol 123, 1.7.36. Quoted in Adelberg, 1983, pp 24-25 and Furlong, 1987, p 181-182. He also complained that he could not understand why South Africans should be made to 'make sacrifices' for foreigners.

²¹⁸ Adelberg, 1983, pp 24-25; "Secretary of External Affairs to Jewish Board of Deputies", 19.8.36

²¹⁹ Adelberg, 1983, pp 24-25, 13.10.36

²²⁰ *ibid*, 15.10.36

²²¹ Report to Congress 1937 to 1940

another, and still less to be antagonistic to any group²²². History provided abundant evidence of the friendly co-operation between the Jewish community and the Afrikaans-speaking community. It was incumbent upon the community to adopt all legitimate means to fight anti-Semitism and to expose its policies and dangers and to frustrate any attempt which might be made to interfere with the full citizenship rights which South African Jews had always enjoyed.

Although the Board was proscribed from aligning itself with any political Party, it insisted that it had the duty to try and stiffen all democratic groups, irrespective of Party, in their resistance to anti-Semitism and other forms of racism.

Nevertheless, prior to the 1938 general election, rumours were rife that Jews were organising themselves against the NP in various constituencies. Replying to these allegations, Cecil Lyons, chairman of the Executive Council, revealed at the Deputies meeting on April 10 that the Executive had met with leaders of the Labour and Dominion Parties²²³ respectively and they had declared themselves satisfied that there had been no collusion with the UP. However, in view of the persistence of false rumours, Lyons found it imperative to re-affirm that the Board was a non-political body with no ties to any political Party. "The Board was concerned only to preserve Jewish rights and to fight anti-Semitism, in whatever quarter it might arise."²²⁴ This was reiterated by Maurice Franks, the President, who denied the rumours that the Board was linked to any political Party²²⁵.

Notwithstanding its protests, it increasingly became evident that in its collaboration with the forces at the forefront of

²²² ibid and Saron, March 1973, p 77

²²³ Rudman, leader of the Greyshirts in Natal, said that many Englishmen sympathised with nationalism, some had even joined the Greyshirts while none could join the Dominion Party as it was full of Jews.

²²⁴ Minutes of the meeting of Deputies, 10.4.38

²²⁵ Jewish Chronicle, 22.4.38

the struggle against anti-Semitism the Board found itself co-operating with the parties opposed to the NP, especially the Government Parties, as they publicly condemned anti-Semitism in general, and Malan and the NP in particular²²⁶. The Board Neither the Board or 'Jewish South Africans' could remain indifferent to the outcome of the election²²⁷, and despite the constraints on political involvement, the Board openly adopted a political stand against it, taking the unprecedented step of discreetly encouraging Jews to give financial and campaigning assistance to the UP's candidates in certain critical constituencies²²⁸. Saron admitted that the Board had to organise itself politically "...and that means to support those groups that are in opposition to the NP²²⁹. He wrote that the Board had set up committees to study the position in each constituency and to assess the probability of success of the various candidates. "...we encouraged the local Jews to support the candidates whom we thought had better chances - to support with help, to support financially²³⁰.

Dealing with the suggestion that Jews had been encouraged to vote for one political Party, Lyons responded that he hoped that the day would never come when they would vote en bloc and not

²²⁶ Jewish Chronicle, 22.4.38. See also Report of Executive Council to meeting of Deputies, 29.8.37

²²⁷ Shimoni, 1980, p 152 and Minutes of Executive Council meeting 10.4.38

²²⁸ Shimoni, 1980, pp 152-153 as well as Saron's papers in the archives of the Board of Deputies.

²²⁹ Transcript of taped interview of Gus Saron with Simon Herman, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, August 1961. Found in the archives of the Jewish Board of Deputies.

²³⁰ After the split in the Fusion Government on the issue of neutrality in the War, Hertzog and other members of the UP, who had accurate knowledge of the Board's support, left the Party and joined the neutralists. Inevitably, this became a bone of contention, most notably Dr J H Loock, who invoked the affair in 1952. See chapter 7.3 for further details.

according to their political convictions²³¹. Franks, while emphatically denying any links with a particular Party, made it clear that it was their duty and right to protect their citizenship rights²³². The Zionist Record, in analysing the issues on the eve of the election, emphasised that sympathy for the cause of the Afrikaners had been overshadowed by the anti-Jewish policies adopted by the NP²³³

We make no apology if we suggest to the Jewish voter that while he is entitled to vote according to his political lights, considerations both of principle and self-interest demand that he should cast his vote for those parties which will preserve democratic principles and safeguard South Africa against internal racial division²³⁴.

The UP victory was crowned 'a Jewish victory' by the nationalist press²³⁵. Some of these views were shared by the pro-Dominionist Natal Mercury, which was convinced that the Board had given voting instructions to the Jews. It attempted to prove this through analysing of the election results in predominantly Jewish constituencies²³⁶. The Jewish Chronicle²³⁷ of London, reported on the relief experienced by the SA Jewish community at the election result: for the time being the anti-Semitic peril had been averted. It was common to hear Jews make the remark "Well, we're safe for the next five years." After illustrating the anti-Semitic manifestations prevalent in the NP, the correspondent gave full credit to the Board for its invaluable efforts in combatting anti-Semitism²³⁸. He was, however critical

²³¹ Minutes of meeting of Deputies, 10.4.38

²³² Zionist Record, 15.4.38

²³³ The UP won the 1938 with a huge margin: 111 seats, compared with 27 for the *Gesuiwerdes* (the NP) and 8 for DP.

²³⁴ Zionist Record, editorial 13.5.38. I am obliged to Gus Saron's papers for this perspective on the 1938 General Election.

²³⁵ Die Transvaler, 20.5.38

²³⁶ Natal Mercury, 23.5.38

²³⁷ Jewish Chronicle, London, 21.4.39,

²³⁸ ibid

of its general strategy. In his opinion, the Board's short-range policies were futile in stemming anti-Semitism. The country was flooded with diabolic Nazi propaganda, which daily succeeded in alienating the Jewish people from Afrikaners, English, coloured and natives, while the Board concentrated on defensive tactics only, to the neglect of counter-propaganda. In conclusion, the correspondent warned that there should be no illusions as to the consequences of the Nationalists attaining power: the Union would become a land of oppression for the Jews, with the more fanatic followers of Malan introducing Nazi methods.

4.2.3 The Jewish Board of Deputy and its Efforts to Combat Anti-Semitism

Public Relations efforts of the Jewish Board of Deputies aimed at keeping a close watch on all manifestations of anti-Jewish activity, countering malicious propaganda, and promoting better relations with other sections of the population²³⁹. In the context of rising anti-Semitism, the Board's major efforts focused on monitoring and refuting anti-Semitic literature, together with enlightening and educating public opinion. This was achieved through the distribution of pamphlets and informative documents, lectures and the publication of facts and figures relating to the community, its festivals, and the contribution of the Jews to the wider community. The Board's primary strategy was to press Government for legislation which would make it a criminal offence to libel any nationality, race or creed, or to incite ill-will against a specific section of the population.

In the wake of the anti-war agitation, vicious rumours circulated that Jews were evading military service. In its efforts to counteract these charges, the Board published two pamphlets "*They Answered the Call*²⁴⁰" and "*They fought for South Africa*" which gave details of the war service performed by Jews. The Board was aided in this effort by public compliments paid to

²³⁹ Report to Congress 1937 to 1940, p 31

²⁴⁰ in 1943

the Jewish war effort by such personages as Mrs Smuts and Colin Steyn, the Minister of Justice²⁴¹, who affirmed that the proportion of Jews in the army was, in fact, double their proportion in the overall population²⁴². Smuts sent a message to the Board²⁴³ praising the contributions of the community to the war effort on both the war and the home fronts. In a message to the 19th SAZF Congress, he praised the role Jews had played in hastening the end of the war. "You have helped us towards victory in the war; help us towards victory in the peace that must follow...²⁴⁴."

Non-Jews combined with the leaders of the Jewish community in a joint effort to combat anti-Semitism. A number of concerned leaders spoke out in support of the Jewish community. Jan J Hofmeyr, in the inaugural speech of the Society of Jews and Christians in 1938²⁴⁵, said²⁴⁶ that anti-Semitism was a national menace in conflict with all that was of value in South African culture and civilisation. He praised the role Jews had played in building up SA, and the rapidity with which he had assimilated²⁴⁷. Morris Kentridge²⁴⁸ called for mutual co-

²⁴¹ quoted by Alexander, Cape Times, 3.12.40

²⁴² Star, 16.7.40; Rand Daily Mail, 5.9.40

²⁴³ August 1942

²⁴⁴ Star, 10.7.43

²⁴⁵ The Society organised lectures, given by Jews and non-Jews, aimed at discrediting anti-Semitic slurs as well as maintaining a dialogue with non-Jewish leaders. It probably had little impact on the masses for four reasons: a) they would not attend an intellectual forum b) those who attended were 'the converted', whereas very few anti-Semites would attend lectures under such an auspicious c) the 'dialogue' did not exist at grass-roots level in either community.

²⁴⁶ Cape Times, Daily News, Die Burger, 9.9.38

²⁴⁷ The evaluation of the 'assimilation of the Jew' as being 'good' or 'bad' is contentious. Undoubtedly Hofmeyr came to 'praise' the Jews, but Jewish history testifies to the danger of 'successful assimilation' as it often led to conversion and extinction.

²⁴⁸ 11.10.38

operation between the English and the Afrikaner and between the European and non-European races²⁴⁹. General H Pienaar, Administrator of the Transvaal, declared that Jewish fears were groundless because SA was 'too democratic'²⁵⁰. He urged the Jews to be proud to say "*I am a South African*"²⁵¹.

Allegations that Jews favoured Communism and were politically organised with a 'Jewish vote' were categorically refuted²⁵². Hofmeyr wrote that they had become the scapegoat of the Christian nations. He also endorsed Smuts' recent statement that Zionism was not incompatible with patriotism towards the country in which Jews resided²⁵³. H G Lawrence, the Minister of Interior, labelled anti-Semitism a foreign doctrine, which threatened to split up the 'South African race'. Senator Conroy advised Jews to fight for their rights²⁵⁴. In 1946, the Board

²⁴⁹ Star, 12.10.38

²⁵⁰ Again, notice the conception of SA being democratic despite the restrictive legislation which encumbered and suppressed the non-whites, and impeded their progress.

²⁵¹ 9.11.38

²⁵² At a meeting of the Society of Jews and Christians, Cape Argus, 5.5.39. Despite this assertion, it seems that there was evidence of a 'Jewish vote', especially when the issues under debate impinged on Jewish interests. Louis Karovsky, a member of the Labour Party, contended that Jewish votes were crucial in the 1924 Wakkerstroom by-election and in Fordsburg in 1929, where the Nationalist candidate, J S Pretorius defeated the Jewish SAP candidate, Sir Harry Graumann. In both elections the better record of the Nationalists on immigration, in contrast to the government's adverse handling of this issue effected the 'Jewish vote'. However, notwithstanding the government's record on immigration, the Jews continued to adhere to Smuts' SAP. (Shimoni, 1980, pp 92-96) Saying that, the Jews tended to vote for the SAP, even against a Jewish candidate. Of special significance was the success of the SAP candidate, Alexander MacCallum, in the predominantly Jewish Cape Town Castle, where he defeated Morris Alexander, who ran as an Independent. MacCallum was the only MP who made anti-Semitic aspersions against the Jews during the debate on the Quota Bill in 1930.

²⁵³ Forum, "Dual Loyalty and Patriotism", 2.9.39

²⁵⁴ at the annual meeting of Society of Jews and Christians, Cape Times, 13.3.40

requested Colin Eglinton to write a pamphlet on racialism which would appeal to South Africans. "Race antagonism is there, dormant in them and can be easily stirred up in times of stress and crisis by racial agitators²⁵⁵."

In attempting to gauge the incidence of anti-Semitism during the war years, the Board tended to downplay the increase in anti-Jewish sentiment, attributing it to the momentum of the bitter campaign against Communism conducted by the anti-war groups who capitalised on the slogan popularised by the Nazis: "*Jewish Bolshevism*"²⁵⁶. Anti-Semitic movements, in its assessment, were not a spontaneous and indigenous South African growth but derived their inspiration from the Nazi movement in Germany²⁵⁷. Psychological forces operating in wartime aggravated the situation: anxiety over the future, discontent at hardships and scarcities, resentment at the inequalities of income and declining economic opportunities. Under these conditions, scapegoats were sought²⁵⁸.

This attitude reflected the general trend of Jewish Board of Deputies to rationalise Afrikaner anti-Semitism during the 1930s and 1940s. In assessing Jewish historiography until the early 1960s, Milton Shain points out that the dominant thrust was to depict anti-Semitism as an alien phenomenon, foreign to Afrikaner outlook and contrary to South African traditions. It also sought to minimise conflict and maximize accommodation between Jew and Gentile²⁵⁹.

...the South African "Shirt" organisations are neither a spontaneous nor an indigenous South African growth...Their affinity with movements overseas is also frankly declared in

²⁵⁵ From the synopsis submitted by Eglinton to the Board 4.12.46. Apparently the pamphlet was never written.

²⁵⁶ Report to Congress, 1942 to 1945

²⁵⁷ Anti-Jewish Movements in South Africa, 1936

²⁵⁸ ibid

²⁵⁹ Shain, 1992, p 188

the anti-democratic programme which they propound²⁶⁰.

Shain rejects these assertions, arguing that the receptivity for Nazi propaganda at grassroots level had been created in the decades prior to the 1930s by the media²⁶¹. By 1930 anti-Semitic attitudes and stereotypes had been diffused throughout society and were deeply embedded in all classes. Jews were aliens, disloyal, bent on exploitation, communists and inclined towards conspiratorial behaviour²⁶². Support for Shain's argument can be found in Hagemann's observation²⁶³ that it was precisely Germany's brand of ruthless anti-Semitism, which made it more appealing than Italian Fascism to some prominent Afrikaner intellectuals. Van Rensburg's²⁶⁴ visit to Germany in 1936, where he discreetly requested assistance in the fight of Afrikaner Nationalists against Jewry, provides an example of this²⁶⁵.

Shain takes this issue one step, arguing that the 'alien' Jew helped to consolidate an all-embracing Afrikaner identity, understood in terms of cultural unity, national roots and opposition to 'foreigners'. By depicting the Jew as inferior, Afrikaners no longer felt that they occupied the inferior status in White society²⁶⁶.

4.3 Conclusions

In assessing the assertion that the "Jewish Question" was an economic issue, an objective analysis of the economic structure

²⁶⁰ Report to Congress, pp 16-17

²⁶¹ See Shain, 1990 and Levenson, 1988 for more information on the proliferation of a negative Jewish stereotype in newspapers and literature.

²⁶² Shain, 1992, p 191

²⁶³ Albrecht Hagemann "Very Special relations: The 'Third Reich' and the Union of South Africa", South African Historical Journal, Vol 27, 1992, pp 127-147, p 131

²⁶⁴ the leader of the *Ossewa-Brandwag*

²⁶⁵ Hagemann, 1992, p 131

²⁶⁶ Shain, 1992

of SA would confirm the validity of Malan's charge of 'over-representation' in commerce and the professions. However, the issue was not objective reality but the interpretation of this reality. Although it could not be denied that there was a disproportionate number of Jews in these spheres, but the conclusion, that they thus constituted an obstacle to Afrikaner economic progress, was not valid. Evidently Malan did not consider either his or the NP's perception of the Jews as anti-Semitic, but rather that the fault lay with the Jews: their existence in a country beyond a certain percentage and their economic distribution. Their very presence 'activated' anti-Semitism.

In addition to the perception of Jews as economic antagonists, another pragmatic reason for the NP's anti-Semitism and hysterical opposition to Jewish immigration, was the inclination of Jews towards 'Liberalism²⁶⁷', the espousal of ideologies which advocated the equality of man and "fraternisation" with non-Europeans. They represented ideas, diametrically opposed to their own, ideas which had the potential of thwarting the realisation of their ideology. From the Nationalists' perspective it was only natural that they would oppose Jewish immigration in an effort to prevent the dissemination of 'subversive' ideologies. As long as Jews held on to liberal belief systems they were unassimilable.

Undoubtedly there is a qualitative difference between the public anti-Semitism espoused by the NP, which translated into discriminatory legislation and the private anti-Semitism prevalent among the English-speaking population. The NP's obsession and preoccupation with the 'Jewish Question' completely diverted it from its real problems: the numerical

²⁶⁷ The prominence of Jews in the Communist Party (both abroad and in SA) and in the trade unions was unmistakable. The concept of 'liberalism' in SA diverged, in significant aspects' from the concept in the rest of the world, focusing, as it did, on race relations.

disparity between Africans and Europeans²⁶⁸ and the integration of the Afrikaner into an industrialised society. Seen in perspective, the periodic occurrence of anti-Semitic agitation by the NP was more than the expression of ingrained racialistic bias: it was also a political weapon against Smuts' Government and a ploy to gain votes:

This agitation is frankly used as a device to arouse discomfort and dissatisfaction among the supporters of the Government, and undermine the unity of democratic forces in this country. Anti-Semitism is being openly dangled before the English-speaking section as a bait...²⁶⁹

This may, therefore, contribute to our understanding of the metamorphosis that Malan and the NP underwent in 1948. With changing circumstances, where the Afrikaner no longer felt threatened politically or economically, it was possible to conceive the Jew as an ally rather than a enemy.

From its vantage point, the Board cleaved to a fundamentally

²⁶⁸ "We are faced in South Africa with the peculiar position of a very large disparity between the white and native races." (Kentrige, during the debate on the Quota Act (Kentrige, HoA debates, 10.2.30, col 577) In view of the fact that the English had dwindled to a minority after being the majority in 1902, Kentridge offered an alternative: rather than limiting Jewish immigration the state should promote a vigorous immigration policy to attract immigrants from English-speaking countries (*ibid*, col 580). The modern South African state, which sought to safeguard white domination, was constructed by Lord Alfred Milner in the aftermath of the Boer war. To provide a common native policy for the four colonies he appointed the South African Native Commission whose 1905 report entrenched the segregation of whites and blacks. The commission proposed the division of land between whites and blacks, the establishment of African town locations near major labour centres and endorsed political segregation. One of the main props of segregation was the Natives Land Act of 1913, which prohibited Africans from buying or renting any land except in a limited area. The Stallard Commission (1922) set down the principle that the African was only required in the urban industrial areas to minister to needs of the whites, thus ensuring segregation through urban control. (H Giliomee and L Schlemmer, *From Apartheid to Nation-Building*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1989). After 1948 there was an accelerated process of discriminatory legislation and a proliferation of laws all striving to perpetuate white supremacy in South Africa, while the disparity in numbers between whites and blacks escalated.

²⁶⁹ Report to Congress, 1942-1945

optimistic worldview: anti-Semitism was not intrinsic to South African society and could be extirpated by a well-thought-out Public Relations cum goodwill programme. It, therefore, formulated a two-prong public relations policy: combatting anti-Semitism in the political arena and enhancing the image of the Jew in the eyes of the Afrikaner community. The policy took pains to differentiate between the anti-Semitic agitation emanating from the NP and other nationalist circles and Afrikaner nationalism, anxious to demonstrate that the Jews had only sympathy and affinity with Afrikaners and their aspirations.

The goal of goodwill activities was to persuade non-Jews how 'nice', 'innocuous' and 'beneficial' Jews were. However, these activities presupposed that Jews could be judged by their non-Jewish fellow countrymen, thus thrusting them into an inferior position. They also presumed that the Jew did not live in SA by right, but under sufferance, whereby he had to constantly 'prove' that he was not a threat or a danger in order to be permitted to continue to live, unharassed, in SA.

The Quota Act of 1930 and the Aliens Act of 1937, illustrate the lack of effectiveness of these goodwill activities. At the crunch, legislation to curtail Jewish immigration enjoyed wide support in all sectors of the population, all of whom were induced to believe that Jews **were** a danger and a risk to the country. These developments tend to support Shain's contention that anti-Semitism was embedded in South African society and served an important function in Afrikanerdom in general and in consolidating Afrikaner nationalism in particular. These factors militated against all the 'goodwill' activities undertaken by the Board, rendering them effete.

Chapter 5. POST-ALIENS ACT IMMIGRATION AND ANTI-SEMITIC
POLICIES, 1939 - 1948

5.1 Immigration During the War Years, 1939-1945

While there was a desire in Jewish quarters to see the immigration issue die down, the NP and its press continued to claim that the Aliens Act would not effectively reduce¹ the number of Jewish immigrants, that the Act represented a "bargain" and was, in fact, a great victory for the Jews². This pressure was strategically effective, for it could force the Government into more rigorous use of its powers³, while the NP gained considerable political advantage in view of the anti-Semitic feelings of the electorate⁴.

The Act effected a substantial decrease in the number of applications of prospective Jewish immigrants which were approved. Only two classes of Jewish immigrants were admitted:

¹ the NP propaganda against the Aliens Act induced Die Suiderstem (10.10.38) to refute the Nationalist allegations that the influx of undesirable immigrants continued uninterrupted in spite of legislation to stop it. For example: HoA debates 21.9.39 Eric Louw inquired of the Minister of Interior if he was satisfied with the functioning of the Immigration Selection Board. He contended that 980 Jewish immigrants had entered the country in less than 12 months and wanted to know whether the Minister was convinced that these people were assimilable. Alexander replied that 999 out of a thousand applicants were turned down by the Board, and the majority approved were relatives of Jews domiciled in the Union. Daily News, Star 23.9.38. also, for example Sylvia Moerdyk Die Transvaler 27.9.38, Die Burger 20.10.38 - repeated its stock charges against the efficacy of the Aliens Act Die Oosterlig 28.11.38

² for example De Waal's speech in the House on the 27th of January, 1937, col 727. The Parties want to make the bill even more pro-Jewish because Jewry is already a power and they are afraid to lose its support.

³ Bradlow, 1978, p 301. The composition of the Board, its functioning and the process each application has to undergo is given in detail in Bradlow pp 301-307

⁴ The Report to Congress May 21 1935 to May 31 1937 reports that "The most noteworthy development in the anti-Jewish movements is the increased emergence of anti-Semitism as a political issue.", p 18. The Report especially deplored the anti-Jewish agitation of the NP.

those with capital and those who already had relatives in the country. Most of the latter were elderly German refugees who were prohibited from taking employment once they had entered the country. Immigration statistics show that, as far as Jewish immigration was concerned, the Immigrants Selection Board did its work effectively. The Act, compounded by the war which had broken out, drastically reduced Jewish immigration, without any parallel easing in Greyshirt and NP propaganda. Jewish immigration continued to furnish the Nationalist-Greyshirt combination with one of its most effective vote-catching devices for the next few years - even though it had dwindled to negligible proportions⁵, as substantiated by the statistics on Jewish immigration published by Die Burger⁶: 1933-745; 1934-1123; 1935-1123; 1936-3,300. In contrast, in 1938 only 954 Jewish immigrants entered the country.

5.1.2 Aliens (Amendment) and Immigration Bill, 1939

Anti-Semitism was a recurrent theme of the 1939 session, commencing with Eric Louw's Aliens (Amendment) and Immigration Bill, introduced in January 1939. Indicative of the attitude of the nationalist press on the eve of the introduction of Louw's Bill was Die Burger's assessment of events in Germany⁷. The paper expressed doubts whether the latest reports of the persecution of Jews in Germany were accurate. All it was prepared to accept as definite was that Germany was firmly determined to rid itself of all its remaining Jewish population. It was irrelevant whether the measures taken by Germany were less justifiable or more cruel than measures adopted by other nations. As an outsider he could not pronounce judgement on the

⁵ For example they inflated out of all proportion the arrival of a party of 180 German Jewish refugees on the SS Windhuk in early April. Die Vaderland, 6.4.39, pointed out that 167 of the refugees were aged parents, 8 children, one wife joining her husband and 2 visitors.

⁶ 13.12.38. (contradicting its own propaganda). Die Burger, as well as Die Volksblad belonged to the Nasionale Pers which was strongly influenced by Malan. These newspapers were considered more moderate than Die Transvaler.

⁷ Die Burger, 25.11.38

manner that Germany chose to treat some of her citizens.

Louw's Bill abandoned the facade of impartiality, stating unequivocally that it was aimed solely at the Jews. There appear to be several reasons, in addition to blind prejudice, that the NP took this step at this time: revenge against the Jews who had totally ceased supporting the NP since the Quota Act; the immigration issue as a vote-catcher among Afrikaans and English speakers; the fear of economic domination. Louw was convinced that Afrikaner businessmen would benefit from restrictions placed on Jewish businessmen. Finally, striking to the heart of radical nationalism, Jews were the bearers of doctrines of Liberalism and Communism which were antithetic to nationalism.

The objects of the Bill were as follows⁸: a) to prevent people of Jewish parentage being given permits to reside permanently in the Union; b) to cancel the permits of aliens found to be without visible means of subsistence or to have been engaged in communistic or other subversive activities; c) to compel aliens to obtain registration cards to be shown on demand to the police; d) to compel business firms to fully reveal the names of their owners, partners and directors; e) to forbid aliens to change their names; f) to compel employers to obtain permits to employ aliens.

Louw's Bill included a clause which stipulated that "*...no applicant for permission to enter the Union of Jewish parentage shall be deemed to be readily 'assimilable'*". Jewish parentage was defined on the Nazi model: parents could be partly or wholly Jewish, and need not be professing the religion. Louw intended, furthermore, to make the provisions retroactive so as to require immigrants who had landed in the Union subsequent to 1930, to re-apply for permission to reside in the Union, as well as to seek employment. He asserted that he was motivated not by fascism or racialism, but by patriotism, and out of at the

⁸ Die Burger, Volksblad 7.1.39 and RDM 11.1.39 and as presented by the compiler of the Jewish Board of Deputies' Press Digest. See also Bradlow, 1978 and Cuthbertson, 1981.

emergence of a 'new race problem'. An unassimilable race, he declared, was taking control of business, industry and the professions. His Bill, which faced up to the existence of this problem instead of wishing it away, was in the interest of the Jews themselves. They themselves were responsible for anti-Semitism through their failure to recognise the existence of a Jewish problem. Louw claimed that his Bill had received the full approval of Malan⁹. The Jewish problem was not a question of religion, but of race¹⁰.

The debate on the Second Reading of the Aliens Amendment Bill was resumed in the House on 1 April 1939, revolving around the same issues as previous debates on Jewish immigration¹¹. The NP harped on the unassimilability of the Jews and their intrusiveness, while the Government, the Jewish MPs and the LP defended them, highlighting their assimilability and the contributions that they had made. Van Nierop¹² cited the Bill as necessary for the self-preservation of the poor Afrikaner people, who were "*regressing economically*", and had to work on the roads just because so many Jews had come into the country. He read the Kol Nidre prayer¹³ to demonstrate the Jews' untrustworthiness, challenging the Jewish MPs to deny this

⁹ Cape Argus 10.1.39 - at a meeting at the Strand and at a meeting at Heilbron, Die Transvaler 27.1.39

¹⁰ HoA debates, col 2906

¹¹ It is notable that incipient anti-British feelings also began to materialise at this period. Examples may be found in Cuthbertson, 128-9

¹² HoA debates, 1.4.39 col 2902

¹³ HoA debates, 1.4.39, col 2901. The Kol Nidre prayer abolishes all vows, promises, obligations and oaths made by the Jews in the past year. Anyone reading into the prayer 'untrustworthiness' would be demonstrating abject ignorance of the prayer. In the prayer man is absolved of his oaths, promises, vows and obligations to God, and not business commitments and obligations. The entire prayer refers to the relationship between man and God and does not release the Jew from obligations between man and man.

'obvious' truth¹⁴. Die Transvaler gave it unreserved support, observing that in SA there was a special need to ensure that the professions did not fall into the hands of foreigners¹⁵.

The UP MPs labelled the Bill 'Nazism', while Afrikaner MPs of the UP, such as Harm Oost, General E A Conroy and Dr Willem P Steenkamp praised the contributions of Jewish immigrants and the benefit they had brought to the country¹⁶. Steenkamp attacked Malan for placing the law of self-preservation (the law of Hitler) above the law of Christ who preached mercy and compassion¹⁷. In contrast to its stance during the debate on the Quota Act, the non-nationalist press universally condemned the Bill. While the debate was taking place in Parliament there was an effort to highlight the benefit the country had derived from Jewish immigrants. The Sunday Times¹⁸ showed that nearly 20 new industries had been introduced by Jews to SA and they had created 2,950 jobs. The Rand Daily Mail¹⁹ reported that evidence had accumulated eminently demonstrating that Jewish immigrants were amply repaying the country for its hospitality and had opened new avenues of employment²⁰. The press throughout the country reported the striking speech made at the Cape UP

¹⁴ In the House (7.6.39) Dr Van Nierop declared that the Jews themselves welcomed the stoppage of Jewish immigration. Natal Mercury 8.6.39

¹⁵ Die Transvaler, 10.1.39

¹⁶ Karl Bremer, speaking at a gathering of the NP expressed regret at the conduct of these Afrikaners. Die Burger 1.4.39

¹⁷ HoA debates 1.4.39, col 2911-2918

¹⁸ 9.4.39

¹⁹ 10.4.39

²⁰ The Cape Argus (9 and 10 January 1939) pronounced it "contemptible" and designed to Nazify the sub-continent. The measure was especially deplorable because it was opposed to the 'democratic' spirit of the people. One of the themes that run through the argumentation of all parties, including the Board of Deputies, is that a democratic country like South Africa cannot tolerate anti-Semitic agitation and the incitement to hatred. The Star (10.1.39) commented that the Bill could have been drafted by Herr Streicher himself.

Congress by General Smuts, in the course of which he attacked the NP as drifting towards Nazism, a course which would only result in the abolition of Christianity. Editorials dealt with the Nazification of the NP, and the threat to personal freedom and Democracy²¹, accusing the Malanites of turning towards fascism, contrary to the "*democratic traditions of SA*"²².

On April 4 the Bill was put to the vote and defeated. The NP, however, remained confident that pressure could be exerted on the UP to introduce legislature which would virtually end Jewish immigration. This was confirmed when, rather than taking positive steps to ameliorate the endemic anti-Semitism and put a stop to propaganda, the Government capitulated to NP exhortations by introducing the "Aliens Registration Bill". This Bill, introduced by Stuttaford on 22 March 1939, stipulated that all aliens over the age of 18 had to register with the Interior Ministry within 60 days after arriving in the country. All those deemed to be a security risk could be deported. On 31 May 1939 the Bill was passed through the House with no difficulty²³. Although Stuttaford denied that the measure was an answer to Louw's Bill or a response to the unsettled conditions that prevailed in Europe, the provisions of the Bill, taken in conjunction with the Minister's refusal to accept amendments proposed by the Board of Deputies, as well as the Opposition's satisfaction at its introduction, indicate that these were contributory reasons. Once again, the UP was 'dancing to the tune' played by the Nationalists²⁴. Kentridge charged that the Bill was a concession to Malanism²⁵ and Louw taunted Stuttaford that "A large part of it was largely a repetition of the speech

²¹ Sunday Tribune, 5.2.39 - in an article by Hofmeyr; Die Vaderland, 19.1.39

²² Sunday Express, 29.1.39; See also Daily News, 25.2.39

²³ Adelberg, 1983, pp 74-75

²⁴ more on the Aliens Registration Bill and the status of legal and illegal aliens see Bradlow, 1978, pp 323-333,

²⁵ Rand Daily Mail 4.5.39

which I had made during the last session, when I touched upon the same points which the Minister referred to today²⁶."

During the war years, Europe was virtually sealed off so that only a handful of Jews arriving in SA. Efforts made by the Board to alleviate the situation met with little success. The Board's sub-committee on Aliens and Refugees encountered adverse tactics on the part of Government bodies. The Cape Committee communicated some of its concerns to the Board on 20 January 1943, drawing attention to the fact that the present immigration policy was unduly rigid in that only applicants who were aged parents, wives and minor children of residents in the Union were being considered.

Indeed, one may say that not a single Jewish refugee from anywhere has been admitted into South Africa in recent years either temporarily or permanently, except the above categories and a few skilled workers required for the national war effort.

On 8 September 1943, at a special meeting, B A Ettliger, the president of the Board, reported on his interview with the Prime Minister, J C Smuts, who had given assurances that SA would do its bit in dealing with the refugee problem, but it was out of the question to establish sanctuaries in the country. He confirmed that anti-Semitism had become a political matter and the situation had gravely deteriorated in the past ten years. If an appreciable number of refugees were to be admitted, he warned, this was certain to aggravate an already difficult position. Smuts had made it absolutely clear that Jewish refugees would not be admitted to sanctuary for the duration of the war. When it was pointed out that only 46 Jews had been admitted in 1941-42 for permanent residence²⁷, he showed surprise, but evaded the question, indicating that this lay within the portfolio of Clarkson, the Minister of Interior²⁸. Smuts' underlying contention was that this rigid policy

²⁶ Quoted in Cuthbertson, "Jewish Immigration as an Issue in South African Politics, 1937-39", Historia, 1981, p 131

²⁷ From Lawrence's reply to a question in the House, 11.2.43

²⁸ who was the Minister of Interior 16.8.43-15.1.48

benefited the local Jewish community. Lazarus, a member of the Executive, remarked that he had, in fact, said "I want to protect my Jewish friends"²⁹. The impression that Ettlenger received was that SA might accept non-Jews but not take Jews. At a meeting of the Executive, a memorandum to Clarkson³⁰ was drafted, stressing that while the Board did not seek special privilege, it was greatly perturbed by the stringency of the Act³¹. When presenting the memorandum, the deputation requested that he consider a more liberal policy within the framework of the existing law³².

5.2 The National Party Pursues an Overt Anti-Semitic Policy

By the 1947 election, Malan had successfully initiated an offensive against Pirow, the leader of the *Nuwe Order* and Van Rensburg, leader of the *Ossewa-Brandwag*, so that the NP had clearly emerged as the dominant political mouthpiece of Afrikanerdom³³. In the process of outmanoeuvring the radical right, however, in the course of the 1930s and 1940s he and his Party moved closer to its ideology, with the result that anti-Semitism was incorporated into the mainstream Afrikaner nationalist movement³⁴. With the breakout of the Second World War, great prominence was given in the Nationalist press to meetings held in various parts of the country as part of the anti-war campaign of the NP. While all meetings were concentrated on attacking Smuts, some were marked by anti-

²⁹ From the report of the meeting with Smuts, 8.9.43

³⁰ 8.9.43

³¹ The memorandum pointed out that practically no Jews had been admitted into the country for permanent residence in the past four years.

³² 12.11.43

³³ Davenport, 1977, p 337

³⁴ Schellack, 1991, in his review of *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact on the Afrikaner Movement in the Fascist Era*, by Patrick Furlong, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, p 178. Hitler's success in Europe, the growing support for the *Ossewa-brandwag*, and the pressure on the part of Malan's own henchmen (Verwoerd, Louw and Strijdom) also contributed to push Malan's Party closer to the radical right.

Semitic propaganda³⁵, notably a resolution passed at a Boksburg meeting which demanded that Afrikaners "shall no longer be victimised, interned and persecuted by Jews and persons who are in reality the fifth column"³⁶.

At Reitz an ominous tone was sounded:

The Afrikaners of Reitz hereby express their deepest contempt for and warns...the Jews who are a party to the most criminal and cowardly economic persecution yet known in the history of South Africa³⁷.

Speakers at the meetings branded the war as British-Jewish imperialism: Smuts had become a tool of Jewry and was dragging the Afrikaner into a war against Germany, although he had no grievance against that country. In the House, the "peace debate" of 1940 was characterised by anti-Jewish references³⁸. N J Van der Merwe accused Jewish power of being the cause of the war³⁹. J H Strijdom, leader the NP in the Transvaal, warned Smuts that if he believed Afrikaners would go beyond the borders of the Union to fight for England and the Jews he was playing with fire⁴⁰. Die Transvaler threatened that internments would cause a wave of anti-Semitism. In the view of the editor, rightly or wrongly the conviction was gaining ground that Jews were bringing them about." If General Smuts is the friend of the Jews that he pretends to be, he will realise that he will not always be here to defend them...⁴¹". Under the heading "Immigration and the Jewish question" the Programme of Principles and Programme of Action, adopted by the Federal Council of the NP in 1941, recommended⁴² the repatriation of all illegal and undesirable immigrants; the

³⁵ Press Reports 196 and 197, 1940

³⁶ Die Transvaler, 29.6.40

³⁷ Die Vaderland, 15.7.40

³⁸ Die Burger, 31.8.40

³⁹ Die Suidersstem, 27.3.40

⁴⁰ Daily Mail, 16.2.40

⁴¹ 6.1.40

⁴² Report to Congress, 1940-1942, pp 7-8

immediate cessation of all further immigration of Jews⁴³, and the introduction of stronger controls over naturalisation.

In contrast to the 1938 Election, the 1943 general elections were marked with remarkably few anti-Semitic references and fewer open manifestations of anti-Semitism on the part of opposition groups than was the case in previous years, the Nationalists, for the most part, keeping clear of anti-Jewish references⁴⁴. Anti-Semitism had become part of fifth column activities which were directed at undermining the war effort.

Nevertheless, the Jewish press did not hide its political Party sympathies, urging Jews to support pro-war parties since no Jew could be expected to assist the anti-war Afrikaner nationalist parties. Anti-Semitic inclinations in the UP were no reason for withholding support for the Party⁴⁵.

5.3 The Board of Deputies Combats Anti-Semitism - 1939-1948

In compliance with the its mandate, the Board maintained its vigilance that Jewish rights would not be compromised. Nevertheless its overall impotence is especially exemplified by the Penz Report of July 1942. H F Penz, the Provincial Secretary of the Transvaal, submitted a report to General the Honourable J J Pienaar, Administrator of the Transvaal. A whole section was devoted to the position of the Jews in the medical profession and more particularly to the number of Jewish students in the medical schools. The report made a number of proposals aimed at reducing the number of such students and diverting them to other professions. A deputation of the Board met with General Pienaar on

⁴³ as well as other elements which could not be assimilated or were a hindrance or dangerous to society,

⁴⁴ (Minutes of the Public Relations meeting, 12.4.43; Report to Congress, 1942 to 1945). Possible reasons for this phenomenon are: the war and the effect it had on party alignments, and with Smuts assuming the premiership; the fusion of the Greyshirts with the NP and the decline of the Blackshirts, all of which effectively emasculated the anti-Semitic momentum; the outcome of the war was still hanging in the balance.

⁴⁵ South African Jewish Chronicle, 2.7.43

22 October, who agreed to publish a statement that there had been no intention to discriminate against any section of the community. The report itself was not scrapped⁴⁶.

The Public Relations resolutions ratified by Congress in 1943 affirmed that the fight against anti-Semitism was integral to the struggle for safeguarding democratic principles. Congress welcomed efforts to combat all forms of racial intolerance and to promote goodwill and better understanding, but cautioned against the danger of a crystallised Jewish viewpoint against Afrikaner reaction that was basically wrong.

In the course of the debate, Edgar Bernstein⁴⁷ expressed his opinion that the Board could do little to combat anti-Semitism because the country was in a period of dislocation. In introducing the debate on the role of Jew and Gentile in combatting anti-Semitism⁴⁸, Saron attributed the increase of anti-Semitism to Nazi propaganda, fanned by fifth columnists, and a war psychosis. It was, therefore, important to make the public realise that anyone repeating anti-Semitic slogans was playing Hitler's game and acting contrary to national interest. Since the battle was part of the larger ideological conflict, it was essential that non-Jewish individuals and organisations, including Government agencies, take part in the struggle against Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda.

A central point made by both Saron and the participants was the necessity of cultivating good relations with the Afrikaans-speaking community. Saron emphasised that there was no antagonism on the part of Jewry towards "Afrikanerdom". The Jewish community was, in fact, fully sympathetic towards Afrikaner cultural aspirations. Although they would, under no circumstances, appease the anti-Semites, the Jewish community desired to maintain neighbourly relations with all sections, on the basis of the

⁴⁶ annexed to the minutes of the Public Relations committee meeting of 16.11.42)

⁴⁷ One of the foremost journalists of the Jewish press and a deputy on the Board.

⁴⁸ Jewish Affairs, June 1943

recognition of its full rights of citizenship. The Board made it absolutely clear that it was not opposed to the Afrikaner people but rather to anti-Semitism.

Until the NP purges itself of the last trace of its Nazi tendencies...no self-respecting Jew can view it with anything but detestation. It is not a question of being anti-Afrikaner but of being anti-Nazi⁴⁹.

At the Public Relations meeting on 12 May 1943, Saron described the exceptional difficulties in securing collaboration in combatting anti-Semitism. Editors, for example, were reluctant to make a frontal attack as they thought that this would stir public controversy. Symptomatic of the difficulty of obtaining collaboration against anti-Semitic propaganda was the negligible support the Jewish MPs received in rebutting Louw's charges in the House⁵⁰ of Jewish collusion with Communism. "But this should always be qualified by remembering that liberals have naturally a reluctance to enter into acrimonious racialistic debates⁵¹."

In 1944 the Board formulated a "*Nine Point Programme*" setting out the principles upon which the battle against anti-Semitism was being conducted⁵². Its major premise was:

...the fight against anti-Semitism can be conducted only in the wider context of the struggle for Democracy, for the strengthening of goodwill, cooperation and mutual respect between all sections of the population...⁵³

Saron unequivocally stated that "Democracy is indivisible: if we wish to protect our own rights, we must be zealous of the rights of others". It was incumbent upon the Jewish community to take an active part in facilitating the transition from war to peace and help solve other urgent post-war issues. At that stage a new issue began to intrude into political debate: the growing demand

⁴⁹ SA Jewish Times, 17.12.43

⁵⁰ February 1943

⁵¹ Report 1942 to 1945

⁵² Saron presented the programme in its entirety in his address to the 15th Congress, 1945.

⁵³ Saron's address delivered at the 15th Congress in May 1945

for discriminatory legislation against Blacks. Although, argued Saron, there was no question whatsoever that a democrat must work strenuously for the progressive amelioration of the status of the non-European, it was not helpful to say that Jews must oppose the 'Colour Bar' because it may ultimately lead to discrimination against them.

Jewish citizens cannot and must not be indifferent to the rights of the non-European; but I believe that a purely emotional motivation, without reference to the hard realities of Colour differentiation in South Africa, will not help the cause of the Bantu or of the other non-European groups. Programmes which run far ahead of public opinion are unrealistic and may play into the hands of reaction...We are playing our part in wider efforts to bring about an understanding and consequent abatement of racial prejudices and antagonisms in general.

In the course of this same Congress, in 1945, both Morris Kentridge⁵⁴ and S Buirski⁵⁵ urged the Board to be more involved in plight of the native. "If we want justice for ourselves we must ask for justice for the Native too. We must ask for justice for all sections⁵⁶."

In his address to the 15th Congress in 1945 Saron did not foresee substantial changes in the intensity of anti-Semitism. The complicated political and ideological struggle which was taking place in the Union had not yet been noticeably affected by the defeat of Nazism: the HNP was unrepentant regarding its attitude to the war. It was now mobilising its followers for a crusade against Communism, labelling Communism 'Jewish'⁵⁷.

⁵⁴ present at the Congress by invitation

⁵⁵ Represented the Johannesburg Jewish Workers Club at the Congress

⁵⁶ M Kentridge at the Congress in 1945

⁵⁷ Gustav Saron, "Combatting Anti-Semitism in South Africa", . Saron's address to the 15th Congress of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, May 24-27, 1945 was published by the Board. Saron also said that the crusade took the form of playing up the "Black Peril" bogey and inciting popular fears and prejudices regarding the Natives and the other non-European sections.

The rationale for political involvement was the awareness that the struggle against anti-Semitism was part of a war against all anti-democratic and illiberal forces. This logic drove the Board into a broad political alignment with the democratic, liberal⁵⁸, non-racialistic forces of SA society⁵⁹.

...the Board's activities in this field flow from the realisation that anti-Semitism and racialism thrive in a society where democratic and liberal forces are weak, confused or disunited. The attack upon anti-Semitism can therefore only be made as part of a wider offensive against illiberal and undemocratic trends in the political, social and economic life of the country⁶⁰.

Thus, the Board remained a victim of a fundamental dilemma: although it was not a political body, nor did it align itself with any Party, it was incumbent upon it to continue to oppose any Party which espoused anti-Semitism as a plank in its platform. In the historical context of the 1940s, this meant political support for the UP and opposition to the NP.

Insofar as these groups have anti-Semitism, in one form or another, integral to their ideologies, the position of the Jew is directly bound up with the democratic forces in their struggle against these totalitarian and reactionary doctrines. We have to use our exertions towards the continuance in power of a government which recognises the equal democratic rights of all Europeans in this country⁶¹...If political anti-Semitism is to be avoided, the anti-democratic groups and parties have to be kept out of power⁶².

⁵⁸ a euphemism for anti-NP forces. These forces were considered liberal in South African terms, although the definition deviated substantially from the concept of 'liberalism' as accepted in the world.

⁵⁹ referring to the UP and Labour Party in contrast to the racialistic (i.e. anti-Semitic) policies of the NP. See also Saron's speech to the 15th Congress in May 1945.

⁶⁰ Report to Congress June 1947 to July 1949, p 17.

⁶¹ G Saron, in his address in opening the debate on Public Relations at Congress, June 1945. (Jewish Affairs, June 1945, p 9)

⁶² Gustav Saron, address to 15th Congress, 1945

5.4 Negotiations Between the Board of Deputies and the Government over Immigration and Naturalisation, 1939-1948

The most insurmountable obstacle to Jewish naturalisation was the educational test⁶³. In October 1939, Alexander and Saron called on De Wet, the Secretary for the Interior⁶⁴, where it emerged that the authorities were being more lenient in regard to the education test, ascribing greater importance to the general fitness and character of the applicant. A delegation from the Board met De Wet on 12 December. In the course of the meeting, De Wet maintained that any change in the procedure or educational test was out of the question as it involved a change in the existing law. While ostensibly conciliatory, he refused to make any concessions⁶⁵. In the following years there was no relaxation in the stringency in the Government's naturalisation policy.

The "Jewish question" was more or less laid to rest after the war, not least because so few Jews had survived the Holocaust. It was also supplanted by the controversy over General Smuts proposal, in October 1945, of a large-scale immigration policy, effectively emasculating it⁶⁶. Although 1945-1948 was the only time when political and economic conditions made a White immigration programme credible enough to tempt the government to act in defiance of Afrikaner suspicions⁶⁷, the incentives offered were too few to induce a substantial amount of immigrants to prefer SA as against other countries⁶⁸. Smuts

⁶³ An extended meeting between the Executive Council and the Aliens and Naturalisation sub-committee, 6.6.39

⁶⁴ 28.10.39. As he was not free the interview took place with the Under-Secretary; memorandum to the Minister of Interior, December 1941;

⁶⁵ Saron's report to Lazarus, Lyons, Franks and Rich, 21.12.41

⁶⁶ See Edna Bradlow, 1978

⁶⁷ only then was there a sufficient shortage of artisans

⁶⁸ Edna Bradlow, "Empire Settlement and South African Immigration Policy, 1910-1948" in *Emigration and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions Between the Wars*, S Constantine

equivocated over the British proposal to absorb a specified number of displaced persons, including Jews, contending that the number of Jews was already very great, voicing his concern that there were ominous signs of growing anti-Semitic feeling⁶⁹. He subsequently agreed to absorb 5,000 Displaced Persons, stipulating that no Jews be accepted.

Change seemed evident from a meeting between the Board and the ISB in January 1947. In December 1946⁷⁰ evidently four rabbis were refused entry to SA by the ISB. Following complaints from Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz, General de Villiers, chairman of the ISB, agreed to meet with him and a delegation from the Board on 8 January 1947. De Villiers suggested that applicants be given temporary permits in order to enable them to take up their appointments and if found satisfactory they should be given permits for permanent residence at a later stage.

On April 9 1947 the sub-committee on Aliens and Refugees discussed Hofmeyr's response to the Committee's⁷¹ inquiries as to the number of permits granted to Jews in 1946⁷². Hofmeyer⁷³ had contended that the figure was 303, "*which is very far from being the lowest on record*", and argued that the delays in the issuing of permits had been caused by severe staff shortages. In his opinion it was impossible to infer that there had been any discrimination towards Jews. Hofmeyr's answer did not assuage the community's fears. The Cape Council urged that fuller protests be made⁷⁴. Kentridge's response was to make a special

(ed), Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1990, pp 174-201

⁶⁹ Bradlow, 1978, p 336

⁷⁰ Rand Daily Mail, 30.10.46, at the occasion of a banquet held in honour of the French Minister in the Union.

⁷¹ A personal letter from D Hayden to Hofmeyr

⁷² Minutes of meeting of 9.4.47

⁷³ In response to a question posed to him by Hayden, a member of the Aliens Committee

⁷⁴ Letter from the Secretary of the Cape Council to the Secretary of the Johannesburg Council, 10.4.47

plea for Jews who had survived the Nazi horror⁷⁵. In turning down this plea, Smuts maintained that the solution to the Jewish problem lay in the founding of a Jewish home in Palestine. "...you must realise that we cannot overload our country with Jews"...If we overload this country with Jews, then we get an anti-Semitic movement⁷⁶".

Smuts' reply to Kentridge was "a bitter disappointment and a deep wound for the entire Jewish community⁷⁷", especially since the UP had always been regarded as a defender of the principle of Jewish equality of citizenship. "For the first time the sacred principle of non-discrimination on racial grounds with reference to the Jewish Community has been forsaken by the leader of the UP⁷⁸". Despite the tragedy of European Jewry, the community had never requested special privileges. The paper went on to observe that the Opposition was justified in being pleased at Smuts' response, because "the Prime Minister has de facto adopted the Nationalists' viewpoint that South Africa already has too many Jews and more should not be admitted"⁷⁹.

On April 30 1947 a deputation from the Board met with Lawrence, and were impressed by his sympathy and eagerness to be of help. He gave the delegation assurances, subsequently outlined in a letter from Kuper to Lawrence⁸⁰, that if the total number of applicants was not large, he was prepared, on humanitarian grounds, to issue temporary permits to both destitute relatives

⁷⁵ HoA debates, 10.4.47, col 2482-2483

⁷⁶ Bradlow, 1978, p 337, debates, vol 60, 14.4.47, col 2676; Rand Daily Mail, 15.4.47. Nevertheless, in a letter to David Hayden, a member of the Executive of the Jewish Board of Deputies, 27.3.47, Hofmeyr wrote that 303 Jewish applications had been approved for permanent residency in 1946, thus there was no reason for the Board's foreboding.

⁷⁷ African Jewish Newspaper, 18.4.47

⁷⁸ ibid

⁷⁹ ibid

⁸⁰ 7.5.47

and to "enemy aliens", which could be renewed until temporary residence had been granted. He warned the delegation that he was only the Acting Minister and should he be overruled there was nothing further that he could do. He cautioned the deputation of the "*inadvisability of any sudden influx of Jewish immigrants*"⁸¹. However the appointment of Clarkson as the new Minister of Interior was a big setback. At a meeting between him and a deputation of the Board on 11 September, it became clear that Lawrence's promises had been reversed. The Law required that every application for permanent residence be approved by the ISB⁸²; the issuing of temporary permits to people who did not qualify for permanent residency would not only be most irregular, but contrary to the spirit of the legislation⁸³

The suspicion that there was discrimination could not be escaped. Ettlinger, President of the Board, headed a deputation⁸⁴ to present its case to Smuts. In clarifying his statement in the House, where he had raised 'misgivings' concerning "*related stocks on a selective basis*", Smuts explained that his remarks in Parliament had been interpreted out of context. He agreed that it was necessary to rectify the impression made, because he had never intended to call into question the principle of non-discrimination against Jews. Nevertheless, Smuts accepted the basic premises of the Nationalists, informing the deputation that it would be impossible to permit any specifically Jewish immigration as this would provoke anti-Semitism.

When it was pointed out, as the discussion proceeded, that practical political implications might flow from Jewish dissatisfaction with the Government⁸⁵ or doubt about its policy,

⁸¹ Minutes of the meeting, 30.4.47

⁸² Report of the meeting 17.9.47

⁸³ Letter from C Clarkson to Maisels, 19.12.47

⁸⁴ 2.5.47

⁸⁵ although, realistically, there was no other feasible alternative party for whom the Jews could vote.

the Prime Minister conceded the truth of this. The next election, he pointed out, was going to be a crucial one, and he had to be careful not to do anything which might be construed as seeking Jewish votes and thus assist his opponents. The statement had to be '*appropriately timed and on the proper level of principle*'. Smuts intimated that a statement favouring Jewish immigration would mar his chances in the election, thus the Board could help by not pressuring him. As the time for the general election grew near, the NP also defined its policy on Jewish immigration: limitation but not total prohibition. Failure to achieve this would result in 'sanctions' against the existing community⁸⁶.

Doubts as to the good faith of the Government grew. The Cape Jewish community felt that the Board had adopted far too passive an attitude towards the Government's discrimination against Jewish applicants for permanent residence. It was necessary to protest, if only to preserve the Jews' self-respect⁸⁷. A 'source'⁸⁸ informed Saron that it was almost automatic that Jewish applications would, in the first instance, be rejected, forcing the applicant to try again.

...it seems that numerous Jewish applications...undergo very protracted delays before they come before the Board. Apparently the applications are gone through with a fine comb in order to find any technical defects. The result is that every possible defect is unearthed...

5.5 Conclusion

Although officially and formally the UP Government did not propound curtailing Jewish immigration, in reality it implemented a restrictive immigration policy towards Jews, not significantly different than the NP's professed policy, invariably capitulating to political pressures. The Board was

⁸⁶ Bradlow, 1978, p 338, interview in Die Burger with Dr Malan, 30.10.47

⁸⁷ 10.4.47 Secretary of Cape Town to Secretary of the Board in Johannesburg

⁸⁸ letter from Saron to Melamet, 21.11.47

always on the defensive, bent on ingratiating the Jewish community vis-a-vis the Afrikaner community. It was totally powerless in its endeavours to persuade the Government to withdraw or modify its Bills, its role reduced to containing the damage that might stem from them. It failed also to induce the ISB to be less stringent in assessing Jewish applicants. This is attested to by the official figures of Jewish immigration into the Union from 1941 to 1948, which showed that there were only 34 Jewish immigrants in 1941; 12 in 1942; 10 in 1943; 21 in 1944; 49 in 1945; in 1945, out of a total of 2,329 immigrants, only 49 were Jews; in 1946, 157 Jews out of a total of 11,256; in 1947 688 out of a total of 28,841; and 658 Jews out of total immigration of 35,631 in 1948⁸⁹. Although the NP was in opposition it dominated the political scene. As a columnist of the Round Table⁹⁰ commented: "There can be little doubt that the agitation in the country...forced the Government's hand".

Whether the South African population was against further Jewish immigrants or not was totally irrelevant. The NP succeeded in creating the perception that the electorate was opposed, and the UP formulated its policy under this assumption. Whereas steps were taken to virtually halt all Jewish immigration, none were taken to curb anti-Jewish agitation. Although immigration had effectively stopped, the perception of a "flood" continued. As a vote-catcher, this had nothing to do with actual concrete numbers. What is particularly striking throughout the period under discussion, is that the UP initially resisted demands for discriminatory legislation against the Jews but, ultimately capitulated to them. It opposed Malan's and Louw's Bills on immigration, but went on to introduce alternative Bills, which in all major aspects reflected the prejudices and goals of the NP. When a deputation came to Smuts in September 1943, he frankly admitted that it would be unwise to bring more Jews because this would intensify anti-Semitism. "*Unwise for the*

⁸⁹ Saron, 1955, p 381

⁹⁰ Press Digest no. 107, April 1937, p 671. Also see Cohen, "Anti-Jewish Manifestations", 1968, pp 115-116

Jews' sake and for all our sakes"⁹¹. In other words, although the NP was in opposition until 1948, it was they who determined policy. Smuts' attitude was pragmatic. He was not willing to define his policy in racial terms, but he too felt that it was 'unwise' to allow an increase in the Jewish population of SA. The Nationalist opposition overtly called for the cessation of Jewish immigration; the SAP covertly advocated the same thing.

In retrospect, we can see that the anti-Semitic agitation against the local Jewish community during the 1930's and 1940's was limited to rhetoric. The civil rights of South African Jews were not eroded, their status not compromised. No Jew with a resident permit was ever expelled from SA. But it would be anachronistic to condemn the policies and actions of the Jewish Board of Deputies as being over-cautious or timid. In the context of NP political rhetoric and UP capitulation, calamity seemed to be imminent, and the only way to avert it was to ingratiate the Jewish community with the Government so as not to be perceived as an adversary. The Board continued to adhere to this pattern of appeasement in the decades to come.

⁹¹ Shimoni, 1980, p.144

**PART 2: THE JEWISH COMMUNITY
AND THE NATIONAL PARTY,
1946-1958**

Chapter 6. THE 1948 ELECTION AND ITS AFTERMATH, 1946-1958

6.1 Pre-Election overtures to the National Party

This chapter will deal with the renunciation of anti-Semitism by the NP, Jewish efforts to bring about an understanding between the community and the NP and the laying of the foundations of the Board's policy of neutrality.

The first signs of moderation in Nationalist policy towards Jews can be discerned in 1946. The editorial of New Era¹, while admitting that there were many Nationalists who disliked Jews, denied that there was a "general anti-Jewish feeling", adding that the Party disapproved of such an attitude².

The Board was sceptical as to the sincerity of this 'moderation': "As yet, nothing has been said or done by the Nationalist Party which can be construed as a withdrawal from its policy of discrimination³".

Overt attempts to bring about a rapprochement between the NP and the Jewish community were made by a number of "*Nationally-minded Jews*". On 28 January 1947 Joseph Nossel⁴, a Cape Town Jew, an admirer of the NP who enjoyed no official status⁵, circumvented the Board and wrote directly to Malan, requesting clarification on his position on "*the Jewish Question*". In his reply⁶, Malan stated that he was not actuated by any anti-Semitic feeling, but

¹ The first English language journal published by the National Party

² quoted in Report of Executive Council June 1945 to July 1947, p 12

³ ibid, p 14

⁴ See chapter 12 for more details on Nossel's activities.

⁵ not strictly true as he was a member of the Cape Council. Nevertheless as an individual he was proscribed from expressing an opinion which could be construed as representing the entire Jewish community. This was true in general, and in particular critical in regard to expressing political opinions.

⁶ dated February 6, 1947. Nossel released the letter to the press and it was published in the SA Jewish Times on 21.2.47

SA had reached a 'saturation point' as far as Jewish immigration was concerned. Further immigration would precipitate an anti-Semitic reaction⁷; the 'Jewish Question' was international and could only be solved by international statesmanship⁸.

Nossel's action caused consternation⁹. His offence was, from the official viewpoint, that he had, as an individual member of the Jewish community, requested a statement of policy on a matter which affected the interests of South African Jewry as a whole. The Cape Committee issued a statement stating that Nossel was not a member of the Executive and had acted without reference to the Board¹⁰. Notwithstanding this, the Cape Committee discussed the letter at its meeting, concluding that Malan had definitely indicated that the NP would, if it attained power, introduce legislation discriminating against Jews. Speeches made by Nationalist Party members in the House merely confirmed this impression¹¹.

On April 30, 1947 advertisements, with the heading **Important Notice to ALL Jews** appeared in the press, signed by Joseph Nossel and Councillor Isaac Frank¹². It was a "Kol Koray", a Proclamation, to all Jews who believed in the possibility of greater understanding with the NP. It announced that Malan had consented to meet with a deputation, and all those who were

⁷ adapting the 'theory' raised by Leo Pinsker in his pamphlet "Auto-emancipation" in 1882, in referring to the persistence of anti-Semitism in Europe.

⁸ Once more relying on 'Herzl', although, as mentioned above, the 'theory' was proposed by Pinsker in 'Auto-Emancipation' after the trauma of the 1881 pogroms in Russia.

⁹ 8.2.47

¹⁰ Nossel had no official status. He was merely the Wynberg Hebrew Congregation's representative on the Cape Council. All affiliated organisations sent representatives to the meetings of the local council of the Board.

¹¹ South African Jewish Times, 14.3.47

¹² He was associated with Hertzog's old Nationalist Party and the mayor of the Afrikaans town of Van Rhynsdorp until 1942

interested in participating were requested to contact either Joseph Nossel or I Frank. Nossel told the press¹³ that, if a satisfactory understanding were reached with Malan, "*National-Minded*" Jews would be interested in Joining the NP.

The issue of the advertisement was raised in the House of Assembly on the following day by Frank Hopf (UP)¹⁴, Acting Minister of Interior. While, he said, the NP was attacking Jews in the House, behind the scenes it was soliciting their support¹⁵. During the ensuing debate in the House¹⁶, Louw pointed out that both the Jewish press and the Board had disowned and repudiated Nossel. In his view no purpose would be served by meeting with the delegation¹⁷ as NP policy had been clearly set out in its programme: when the Party came into power it would discriminate against Jews¹⁸. He had, he said, told Nossel this himself. Upon being informed that Malan did not see individuals but only deputations, Nossel had inserted the advertisement in order to organise a deputation. Notwithstanding Louw's protestations, Malan affirmed his consent to meet a Jewish deputation¹⁹. Kentridge dismissed Nossel's efforts saying that "no self-respecting member of the Jewish community would ever think of negotiating with Nationalists". Nossel replied in the Cape Times²⁰ that he had arranged a deputation on his

¹³ Natal Mercury and Daily Despatch, 2.5.47

¹⁴ HoA debates 3.5.47, col 3626

¹⁵ The advertisement was discussed in many English newspapers on the 2nd and 3rd of May, which also defined the venture as "toenadering", such as the Natal Mercury, Daily Despatch, Eastern Province Herald, Rand Daily Mail.

¹⁶ HoA debates, col 3685-3692

¹⁷ Rand Daily Mail, 1.5.47

¹⁸ Sunday Times, 4.5.47

¹⁹ Letter on 18.4.47. It seems that Louw was not in Malan's confidence in this matter, and was not aware of the proposed shift in NP policy towards the Jewish community. Nevertheless there is no evidence that a deputation, under the auspices of Nossel, ever met with Malan.

²⁰ Rand Daily Mail, 6.5.47

initiative, without consultation with the Board. While it was true that he did not represent the community, neither did Kentridge.

Despite their collaboration, there was a major ideological chasm between Frank and Nossel. Whereas Frank postulated that the onus of demonstrating sincerity lay on the NP, and that no self-respecting Jew ought to join the NP until the ban on Jewish membership had been eliminated in all provinces²¹, Nossel took the opposite tack, proclaiming that the Nats had shown friendship to the Jews and it was up to the Jews, not the NP, to reciprocate²²; the future mattered, not the past. Nossel wrote that his telegram of good wishes to the NP's Congress had been well received²³. He had been inundated with congratulations from prominent Nats and much appreciation and encouragement had been shown to him for his efforts in creating a better feeling between the NP and Jews.

On 26 September 1947 Malan once more wrote Nossel, cautioning that an influx of Jewish immigrants was not in the interest of SA nor of the "settled Jewish population". He added, however, that "*discrimination between the white races in the country, Jewish included, was impractical.*" The South African Jewish Times²⁴ highlighted the inconsistency of the NP policy, contrasting Malan's letter to the anti-Semitic outbursts in Parliament made by NP MPs Colonel W A Booysen and Louw²⁵. In its assessment, Malan was leading his Party from the rear, his letter clouding the issues rather than being enlightening.

What then is the country to believe: the luke-warm flatulence of Dr Malan's letter to Nossel or the angry Louw-Booyesen arrogance which Dr Malan has neither rebuked nor repudiated. Almost one is led to believe that they love Jewry - but hate the Jews.

²¹ Shimoni, 1980, p 163

²² Cape Times, 9.10.47

²³ Cape Times, 11.10.47

²⁴ 28.2.47

²⁵ 27.2.47

The threat of schism within the community forced the Chairman of the Board to issue several statements to the effect that it had exclusive authority to speak on behalf of SA Jewry²⁶. No individual Jew was entitled to express opinions or make representations on behalf of the community as a whole. This drew a response from Joseph Milne, who, in an open letter expressed resentment at the manner in which the Board was laying down the law in matters which were outside its competence²⁷. In doing so, he aroused indignation among the deputies for challenging the exclusive authority of the Board to speak on behalf of the community²⁸.

6.2 NP Policy as enunciated by Eric Louw

Prior to the NP victory in 1948, Eric Louw described as "wishful thinking" suggestions put forward that the NP would be prepared to change its policy in several respects and to modify or even dispense with its anti-Semitism²⁹. Speaking as a member of the NP's Federal Council, he stated that the Party had no intention whatsoever of modifying its attitude in regard to the Jewish question. Louw made it clear that the Nats would continue to fight the Jews with their "gloves off". This position was reinforced in the following issue of New Era³⁰, which asserted that the majority of Afrikaners (as well as 'many English-speaking people'), regarded the "Jewish question" as an urgent "economic issue". The fairly cordial relations which had once existed between Jew and Afrikaner had deteriorated on account of the hold the Jews had acquired on commerce, the industries and the professions. This prevented the Afrikaner from gaining a place in these spheres.

²⁶ Statements issued to the press on 7, 9 and 10 of May 1948

²⁷ 23.5.47 South African Jewish Times

²⁸ Minutes of meeting of Deputies, 1.6.47

²⁹ New Era, April 1945, Press Digest 438 quoting the Zionist Record, 16.3.45

³⁰ the English organ of the NP. Press Digest 438, 440 and 19.4.45, Press Digest 439

In response, Jewish Affairs³¹ stressed that Jews were entitled to the same rights as other European sections. They were ready to fulfil all the duties which flowed from a true and broad SA nationalism. They had never in the past sought special privileges, merely insisted that there be no discrimination against Jews qua Jews. Recent immigration figures attested to a virtual stoppage of Jewish immigration during the last five years, exposing the Nationalists' cry for the cessation of Jewish immigration as "a deliberately deceptive political device." With regard to the alleged preponderance of Jews in certain economic spheres, it was pointed out that Jews were prominent in certain spheres because others, such as heavy industry, the mines, banks, building societies and the civil service, were closed to them.

In a stinging reply to a would-be Jewish Malanite³², Louw wrote that even though there were Jews in the Union who were prepared to break links with the Empire, this did not make the slightest difference to the Party's policy towards the 'Jewish problem'. The NP was concerned with protecting the interests of those whose ancestors had laid the foundations of white Christian civilisation against peoples who would always remain foreign. There was absolutely nothing Jews could do to become 'assimilable'. Louw displayed the same intransigence when responding to a proposal to extend the hand of friendship to the Jews in their struggle in Palestine³³. He categorically rejected the proposal³⁴ as detrimental to SA. The Smuts Government, he contended, had already yielded to the pressure of influential Jews and Jewish organisations to receive Jewish refugees. It would be fatal, he concluded, for English-speaking as well as

³¹ published by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, April 1945

³² South African Jewish Times, 9.8.46 described the correspondence between 'Jewish Republican' and Louw which had appeared in Die Burger. The headline of the article in the Jewish Times encapsulated what it felt was Louw's message: "White Christian Civilisation Must Be Protected from Jews".

³³ Letter to the Editor, J Rust, Die Burger, 13.1.48

³⁴ Die Burger, 15.1.48

Afrikaners, if the NP modified its position³⁵. By implication, Louw admitted that anti-Semitism was a permanent feature of NP policy.

In reaction to Nossel's assertions in 1947 that the NP had changed its policy³⁶, Louw quoted in Parliament³⁷, the declaration of policy made by the Federal Council of the Party in 1941. In conclusion he said: "People who make statements such as a change of policy are indulging in wishful thinking." In his column "*Plain Talk*" he reiterated his view:

Certain UP papers are assiduously spreading the story that the NP has modified its policy in regard to the Jewish Question. Again I state that the Party has done nothing of the sort...On this issue also, we stand exactly where we stood in the past³⁸.

He proclaimed that the NP's anti-Jewish policies would be perpetuated. "As far as I am aware there has been no change in the policy of the NP as set out from time to time in the Principles, Programmes, Motions and Resolutions³⁹." NP policy, Louw insisted, were set out in five official pronouncements of the Party: the Party desired development of national life along Christian national way; a serious Jewish problem existed in SA; Trade licences would be issued to guarantee that alien elements would be eliminated; Members of the Jewish race would be proscribed from permanent residency; aliens would be prohibited from engaging in business, profession or trade without a licence; and further Jewish immigration must be stopped, and their participation in trades and professions be limited.

³⁵ Louw expressed these views in New Era, 12.4.45, in his column "Plain Talk".

³⁶ for example his interpretation of Malan's letter 6.2.47; announcements to the Cape Times, 9.10 and 11.10.47

³⁷ HoA debates, 25.2.47 col

³⁸ New Era, quoted in South African Jewish Times, 28.2.47

³⁹ In a letter to the Cape Times, 15.10.47

6.3 NP policy as enunciated by D F Malan

The crucial factor in the evolution of D F Malan's attitude towards the Jewish community was his self-image: he saw himself, as he often reiterated, as a 'pro-South African' Afrikaner nationalist, not an anti-Semite. Undoubtedly his analysis of the economical and political situation was distorted by anti-Semitic prejudices and preconceptions, but his world-view was not unredeemably entrenched in anti-Semitism. In the 1930s and 1940s Malan had perceived Jews as obstacles to the realisation of the goals of Afrikaner nationalism in the political and the economic spheres. However circumstances had changed. The 1940s had witnessed a rapid integration of the Afrikaner into the industrial and commercial worlds obviating the need to impose a quota on Jews. In his assessment, the State of Israel, by absorbing Jewish refugees, would solve the "Jewish Problem", dispelling his fears that they would flood SA. This was reinforced by his perception that anti-Semitism had not yielded the political leverage that he had hoped for⁴⁰. With the grievances of the Afrikaner redressed, it was a rational decision to discard anti-Semitism and to solicit Jewish support.

The turning point in the relationship can be pinpointed to the latter half of 1947, when it became clear that Malan and Louw were propagating two opposing lines of policy. B.A. Ettlenger, the President of the Board, and Simon Kuper, the Chairman, had a clandestine unofficial, unprotocoled meeting with Malan at a hotel where he indicated that he wanted to re-establish a relationship on a basis of friendship with the Jewish community⁴¹.

An interview with Malan in Die Burger, October 30th, 1947, conducted through the initiative of Jewish Nationalists, may be regarded as the watershed in the relations between the NP and

⁴⁰ Transcript of taped interview between Gus Saron and Simon Herman at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, August 1961

⁴¹ This meeting was never made public. Transcript of a taped interview, between Gus Saron and Simon Herman, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, August 1961. Found in the archives of the Jewish Board of Deputies.

the Jewish community. In the course of answering the questions posed to him, Malan strove to demonstrate that the NP had turned away from its anti-Semitic policy. He denied that the Party was anti-Semitic. It did not oppose the Jewish race, he said, "*independent of circumstances*". It was self evident that a Jewish problem existed; a Jewish National Home in Palestine would go far towards solving this problem.

In response to a question as to whether the NP will discriminate against 'established' Jews, Malan replied: "As far as its declared policy is concerned, the Party does not stand for legislative measures which discriminate between Jew and non-Jew." When asked if he expected any considerable Jewish support in the coming election, he replied that while Jews were as welcome as others to associate themselves with the mandate they were asking of the people:

I do not believe, however, that they are going to support us in any considerable numbers, but that is their business. I only want to say that if their chosen leaders are going to call upon the Jews as Jews, as now appears to be the case, to fight the Nationalist Party, it certainly will not be the best way to further the interests of their race. The Jews need friends to-day and not political enemies.

The Afrikaner press commended Malan's statements⁴², contending that they had disproved the allegation often made against the NP that it was a racial Party which wanted to be unjust towards other racial groups. Malan had shown that the NP hoped to achieve racial peace between Jew and non-Jew and would in no way discriminate between Jews and other citizens. Forum⁴³ commented that, although Malan's statements marked an advance in thinking, it was still the same old Malan and there was no danger of the ranks of the NP being swollen by Jewish voters at the next election. The Board itself expressed reservations as to prospects of change in policy

The Nationalist Party's utterances have undergone some interesting changes, intended apparently to show up the moderation of the Party. It should be stated at once,

⁴² Die Volksblad, Die Burger, 30.10.47

⁴³ 8.11.47. The Forum was the mouthpiece of Jan Hofmeyr.

however that there is no evidence of any radical change from the policy of discrimination against Jews which the Party adopted some years ago⁴⁴.

The Jewish press was reserved in its reaction. The Zionist Record welcomed the repudiation of anti-Semitism by the NP, but pointed out that this conflicted with statements of other NP leaders, notably Louw⁴⁵, while the SA Jewish Times⁴⁶ drew attention to existing anti-Semitic NP practices.

6.4 The Nationalist Victory - May 1948

In May 1948 Afrikaner Nationalism realised its dream of attaining political power⁴⁷. When the votes were counted, the NP had won 70 seats, mainly rural, the UP 65 seats, mainly urban⁴⁸. On June 1 Malan arrived in Pretoria to a tumultuous welcome. "In the past", he said, "we felt like strangers in our own country, but today SA belongs to us once more. For the first time since Union, SA is our own. May God grant that it always remains our own⁴⁹." He then formed a Government in alliance with the Afrikaner Party⁵⁰, incorporating members of the radical right into his Cabinet, their ideas contributing to the shaping

⁴⁴ Report to the 16th Congress, 1947

⁴⁵ 7.11.47

⁴⁶ 7.11.47

⁴⁷ Malan exulted "*Today South Africa belongs to us*" in his victory speech in May 1948. (Alistair Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa: the Story of the Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, Mandarin, Great Britain, 1990, p 183)

⁴⁸ Ironically the UP would have won the elections if the urban electoral divisions had not contained fewer voters than the rural divisions, as laid down in the constitution for which Smuts had been responsible. (Thompson, p 186)

⁴⁹ Thompson, 186, quoting Rand Daily Mail, 2.6.48

⁵⁰ There were allegations that the UP had lost the election because of its recognition of Israel. Die Burger labelled these insinuations crazy, contending that by granting influence to this factor the UP was exposing the magnitude of its anti-Jewish feeling. (27.7.48)

of Apartheid ideology⁵¹ and Apartheid state⁵².

Giliomme ascribed great importance to the feelings of insecurity and inferiority felt by the Afrikaners as a dominant motivating force in NP political ideology. "It was because the 1930s was such a traumatic period for them that the Afrikaners were attracted to the 'radical solution' of Apartheid⁵³". The innovative aspect of Apartheid was in its ideological rationalisation of the existing caste-structure and in the institution of far-reaching social engineering to perpetuate it⁵⁴. As a programme of action, it meant the reinforcement of White domination over the political and economic life of the country⁵⁵. Political ideology triumphed over the economic

⁵¹ In the first years of NP rule Apartheid ideology was still amorphous and under debate. (Deborah Posel, "The Meaning of Apartheid Before 1948: Conflicting Interests and Forces Within the Afrikaner Nationalist Alliance", Journal of Southern African Studies, 14 (1), 1987, pp 123-139)

⁵² Furlong, 1991. By 1952 the radical right had merged into the NP.

⁵³ Hermann Giliomme, "The National Party and the Afrikaner Broederbond", in Price, R and Rosberg C, *The Apartheid Regime*, Institute of International Affairs, Berkeley, University of California, pp 14-44, p 16

⁵⁴ Apartheid became a central slogan of nationalist propaganda. It was an elaboration of earlier segregationist tradition, derived partly from Stallardism, partly from the thinking of the Broederbond in the 1930s. According to MDC de Wet Nel, who later became a leading exponent of the doctrine, it originated in the mid 1930's among Afrikaner intellectuals who wanted some vertical separation of the races. (Davenport, 1977, p 323).

⁵⁵ ibid. There exists a wide range of books on Apartheid, its ideology, development, its ideological refinement etc. Shimoni, 1980 gives a short overview pp 224-227; Allister Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, 1990; Du Toit Andre and Hermann Giliomee, *Afrikaner Political Thought: Analysis and Political Thought*, 1983; Hermann Giliomee and Lawrence

interests of the country, whereby the NP attached more importance to the maintenance of White political domination in white SA than to economic development⁵⁶.

Throughout most of the period covered in this study, SA was in a throes of a conflict over the hegemony of the country. On the one side, stood the NP, resolved to preserve white supremacy and the survival of the white man in the southern tip of the African continent through the exploitation of political power. In opposition to the Afrikaner nationalists stood a wide array of Black, Indian and Coloured opposition movements supported by white liberal and radical movements⁵⁷. The UP remained, as it had been historically, the parliamentary white opposition to Afrikaner nationalism as espoused by the NP. The opposition to the Government's oppressive legislation precipitated widespread black unrest. The Government reacted with an escalating series of police and legislative measures aimed at maintaining law and order. Thousands of protestors were arrested, hundreds put on trial indicted for planning the overthrow of the Government. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 empowered the Government to arbitrarily ban organisations and persons as it saw fit.

To the amazement of the community, rather than being one of the

Schlemmer, *From Apartheid to Nation-Building*, 1980; Muriel Horrel (ed) *A Survey of Race relations in South Africa*, Institute of Race Relations, annually, Johannesburg; Edgar H Brookes, *Apartheid*, New York, Barnes and Noble, 1968 and many more.

⁵⁶ Deborah Posel highlighted the conflict and division of opinion between different Afrikaner groups and institutions regarding what the concept "Apartheid" really meant, and what practical policies could be derived from it. (Deborah Posel, *"The Meaning of Apartheid Before 1948"*, Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol 14, No 1, October 1987, pp 123-139

⁵⁷ Shimoni, 1980, pp 224-225

victims of this policy, its members were beneficiaries because of their white skins. Many of its leaders, as well as outspoken critics, emphasised that Jews were part and parcel of the white community, their fate linked to its fate⁵⁸.

6.5. The Impact of the Nationalist Victory on the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the Jewish Community

In the year prior to the 1948 general election, the Jewish community had received contradictory messages from the NP. Whereas Malan had declared that the Party honoured the principle of 'non-discrimination⁵⁹' towards Jews, Louw was adamant that no change had occurred. Presaging the change in policy was the fact that the 1948 elections were remarkably free of anti-Jewish manifestations on the part of the NP.

The victory of the NP caused great consternation in the Jewish communities worldwide. The Zionist Review⁶⁰ of Great Britain published "**A WARNING**" proclaiming that the Jews in SA were in danger. A situation where there was a Government committed to racial discrimination would not create a climate of tolerance towards Jews. The Jewish Chronicle, London⁶¹ expressed the fear that the NP Government would curtail the rights of Jews in respect of property, purge trade and commerce and enforce a

⁵⁸ This was overtly articulated by Arthur Suzman in the 1960's and 1970s, both as the chairman of the Public Relations Committee and later as the President of the Board of Deputies.

⁵⁹ Report to Congress, August 1947 to 1949, p 9 and in his interview in Die Burger in October 1947

⁶⁰ organ of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain, 4.6.48

⁶¹ 30.6.48, memorandum from Jacob Rich, Secretary of the Board of Deputies

numerous clausus in the professions. In an interview⁶², David Dainow, the erstwhile editor of the Zionist Record, said that it had come as a shock.

It is known that in this fight the S.A. Board of Jewish Deputies lent its aid. Today some Jews question the wisdom of a representative body of this character concentrating its support on one political Party. It is now felt that every Jewish citizen should have been encouraged to vote as he chose. Some might then have supported the Nationalist Party...

In contrast, the Nationalists endeavoured to persuade the Jews that they need not be distraught. Die Kruithoring, the NP's official organ, commented that the results of the general election had hit the Jewish community like a thunderbolt⁶³. Die Burger, criticised the Jewish press for having cast doubt on the sincerity of Malan's statement. It had carried on a campaign which was very hostile to the Nats.

Of all racial groups the Jews were least prepared for a Nationalist victory...The Jewish leaders took a strong attitude in connection with the election...to such an extent that they were prepared to advise the Jews to vote as a racial group against the NP...if [leaders] were going to make an appeal to oppose the NP as Jews, this would not be the best manner of advancing the interests of the Jewish race⁶⁴.

Thus, contrary to the very real fears of the Jewish community, the NP adopted a non-discriminatory policy towards Jews and were to adhere to it firmly.

The transformation which occurred in Afrikaner attitudes towards Jews can be attributed to the convergence of several crucial

⁶² Jewish Chronicle, London, 23.7.48;

⁶³ Die Kruithoring 23.6.48

⁶⁴ Die Burger, 8.6.48

factors. The victory in 1948 gave Afrikaners political power by changing the constellation of forces in SA. Within the context of their Apartheid policy, Jews, as Europeans, were conceived as potential allies rather than hostile adversaries. Already prior to the elections a process of reorientation away from the ideology of National Socialism had ensued in Afrikanerdom after the defeat of Hitler, conjunctive with the break with *Ossewa-Brandwag* and *Nuwe Order*. This trend was reinforced by the total ignominy of anti-Semitism after the atrocities of the Holocaust had been exposed. In fact, the NP Government went to great lengths to disassociate itself from this 'racist' ideology, and to prove that it was no longer anti-Semitic. Another crucial factor was the pervasive fear of the "Black danger" as a real threat to Afrikanerdom, as well as to the white man in general. This made dissension within the white group untenable and was conducive to the unification of the white population against the non-white challenge. In this context, rapprochement with English-speaking South Africans made an approach to the 'European' Jewish community a critical component in NP policy.

Economics played a major role by inducing a more realistic awareness of the Jew's economic role as non-threatening, especially as the 1940's had witnessed the amelioration of the Afrikaners' economic grievances as they began to enjoy the benefits of industrialisation, urbanisation, economic progress, integration and commercialisation⁶⁵. Moreover, the NP had begun to realise that economic prosperity was a pre-requisite for political stability in the long term, as it empowered the institution of Apartheid in general and social-economic

⁶⁵ Some of these considerations were suggested by Saron in his personal papers, written in the 1970s with the view of publishing a book on the Jewish community in politics from the turn of the century. The project was never completed.

engineering in particular.

Another important consideration was the State of Israel. The establishment of the Jewish state assuaged the fears of the NP that Jewish refugees would swamp SA. This, combined with the empathy felt by the Afrikaners with the Israelites of the Bible and with Israel's struggle for survival, dispelled one of the NP's major concerns, Jewish domination. The enthusiastic reports of Israel by a delegation of Dutch Reformed Ministers who visited the country in 1951 bolstered this admiration further.

Representatives of the Board met Malan on 5 July 1948 and requested that he make an official statement as to the position of the Government vis a vis the Jewish community, in order to reassure it of his future policy. In response, Malan said that he looked forward to the time when the so-called "Jewish Question" would disappear from the life of SA and its politics. "We believe that there must be no discrimination in regard to Jews who are in SA⁶⁶", he said. The Board summed up the position by stating

The Jewish Community as a whole has welcomed what it hopes will prove to be a new and lasting chapter in the policy of the Nationalist Party towards the Jewish citizens of this country...and the complete elimination from South African life and politics of the so-called "Jewish Question"...⁶⁷.

The transformation of the NP's policy towards the Jews could be considered official in October 1948 when Louw, in an interview

⁶⁶ Report to the Community 1947-1949 and Shimoni, 1980, p 207. It is possible that Malan was expecting some indication of support from the community in response.

⁶⁷ Report to Congress, June 1949 to May 1951, p 12

with the Cape Times⁶⁸, stated that the Jewish population was no longer above the 'certain level' at which a "Jewish Problem" arose. "In the Union, the level was just right and South African Jews themselves believed that this was so. There was no discrimination...against the Jewish People."

This position was further confirmed in a statement by Hans van Rensburg the Commander-in-Chief of *Die Ossewa-Brandwag*:

...when we see the dangers which threaten white humanity, and especially white SA, then we feel that it is just as well to emphasise that in spite of racial and religious differences there are certain common white interests which are connected with the survival of everyone of us who has found his Fatherland here. There come times when you can undertake common action with your English-speaking or Catholic (or Jewish) neighbour in the interests of the Whites, without affecting one iota...of your own Afrikanerdom or Protestantism⁶⁹.

But accommodation was attained at a price. Die Oosterlig⁷⁰, commenting on a statement by S M Kuper, upon retiring as chairman of the Board, that there had been no discrimination towards Jews, despite the concern the change of Government had evoked, appealed to the English-speaking section to take notice

⁶⁸ 23.10.48

⁶⁹ A similar reversal is evident in a letter sent to the Zionist Record by Louis Weichardt, and the NP, upon his nomination as a party candidate for the Maitland constituency in late 1952. "...I do not intend to discuss the Jewish Question, since my attitude to the Jews is simply this: since the establishment of the State of Israel, with which my country is on friendly terms, it does not behove me to behave towards the Jews as Jews other than in a proper manner. As far as those Jews are concerned who were, or are, connected with Communism, they will have to reckon with my enmity, in the same way as any other person, white or black..". Published in the Zionist Record. PR File 1953/54. Confidential translation of correspondence on the subject of the nomination of L T Weichardt. Gus Saron papers in the archives of the Board.

⁷⁰ 7.6.49

of what the Jewish community had learnt. All those who demonstrated their love for the country would be protected. By the same token, the Government would show no mercy towards those who "blacken South Africa and who disturb racial peace in the country by spreading a heathenish ideology. Action would be taken against such people in the interests of SA." In the same vein, African Jewish Newspaper⁷¹, in an attempt to placate the community, wrote that Jews need not fear for their future. "But it also depends on how the Jews play their cards ...Such privileges Jews can only secure if they help the Government and give it practical and Political help."

Indeed, the NP in Government adhered to its promise to eliminate the "Jewish Question". At Saron's behest, Kentridge wrote a letter, to be read aloud at Congress⁷² in 1951, in which he expressed satisfaction that the Jewish Question was no longer a political issue and that there were no signs of discrimination or anti-Jewish references in Parliament or in the press. This is also evident from the Report to Congress, which noted that there had been a "welcome abatement in the public life of our country of what has been called the 'Jewish Question'...the overall impression is a satisfactory one and markedly different from the situation some years ago."

6.6 The "Nationally-Minded" Jews and a "Jewish Wing" of the NP
On the 19th of October, 1948⁷³ Joseph Nossel announced his intention of establishing a "Jewish wing" in the NP. The SA

⁷¹ a Yiddish paper which tended to be right-wing in its views, February 17, 1950

⁷² May 29, 1951

⁷³ Cape Times, 19.10.48

Jewish Times⁷⁴ condemned the attempt to set up exclusively Jewish groups in order to gain Jewish support for the NP. It was mischievous in its concept and counter-productive, as it militated against the desire to eliminate the Jewish question from the political arena. Nossel and Rabbi Dr Romm, a retired rabbi⁷⁵, interviewed Malan⁷⁶ who welcomed the movement to win Jewish support for the NP⁷⁷. He gave them his assurance that restrictions on Jewish immigration would be relaxed and that the community would be prejudiced in no sphere. Regarding Israel, Malan said that he favoured granting *de Jure* recognition but would await the outcome of the UN discussion before acting⁷⁸. They subsequently called a press conference where they announced that they had received Malan's blessing to the formation of an organisation dedicated to the support the NP⁷⁹. Nossel declared that the NP was not anti-Semitic and was favourably disposed towards Israel⁸⁰. In an open letter to the community he wrote:

...many Jews throughout the Union have urged me to organise the Jewish supporters of the Government...The Prime Minister has heartily welcomed such a scheme, and assured us of the Government's moral support...

⁷⁴ 22.10.48

⁷⁵ from Bloemfontein

⁷⁶ Die Burger, 2.10.48 as well as Die Transvaler, 4.10.48 and Die Vaderland, 5.10.48. The latter added the comment that Malan's reassurance surely applied to the political sphere and therefore it could be expected that the ban on membership in the Transvaal would now be removed.

⁷⁷ Press Digest 1948/39/291

⁷⁸ Jewish Telegraphic Association, 8.10.48

⁷⁹ ibid

⁸⁰ Jewish Telegraphic Association, 12.10.48

In response, the Secretary of the Cape Board⁸¹ stated that the Board had no connection, official or unofficial, with Nossel. Jews had an unquestioned right of complete freedom of political action but it was quite a different thing for anyone to seek to organise a Jewish wing of any political Party. The Jewish community "*strongly deprecated any attempt to bring about a separate political organisation for Jews*" as it was a cardinal principle that Jews participated in politics as individual citizens and not as members of a religious group.

In reply, Nossel said⁸² the Board did not express the views of SA Jewry, as it was not democratically elected. He denied saying or doing anything prejudicial to the Board. "I saw my leader, Dr D F Malan, on October 1st, and he gave his blessing and recognition to such a Jewish movement⁸³."

Die Burger⁸⁴ challenged the authority of the Board to represent the Jewish community, and cast doubt on its neutrality. Nossel's success indicated that many Jews were no longer prepared to accept its political leadership.

The Jewish position is not a favourable one at the present; the Jewish leaders have committed political suicide; the Jewish Press has worked against itself, the Board of Deputies is discredited in the eyes of the Government so that it will not have any truck with it. The more the Board insists that it alone represents SA Jewry, the worse it is for Jews⁸⁵.

⁸¹ Cape Times, 27.11.48, under the caption "*Jewish Board repudiates Mr Nossel; Opposed to Jewish Wings*"

⁸² Cape Times, 29.11.48 and Rand Daily Mail

⁸³ ibid

⁸⁴ 29.11.48

⁸⁵ ibid

6.7 Confrontations between the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Nationalist Government

While it was true that the NP Government strived to maintain conciliatory relations with the Jewish community, several incidents marred these relations. The first of these, the Newlands Affair, was a minor misunderstanding, but underscored the punctiliousness of the Board to disassociate themselves from political controversy. In the course of submitting a report on disturbances at a UP meeting at Newlands to the House of Assembly on February 24th 1949, the Minister of Justice, CR Swart, referred to the "ex-Servicemen Political Action Committee", which aspired to run as a new political party. This body, he contended, had the support of certain communists and members of the Jewish Board of Deputies. The Minister mentioned a "Mr Cooper" as being one of its leaders. The Board immediately issued a press statement denying that it was in any way connected with the Ex-Servicemen's Political Action Committee⁸⁶, nor was Cooper a member of the Board.

S M Kuper K.C, Chairman of the Executive Council, stressed in his statement to the press, that the Board took no part whatsoever in Party politics, and it was concerned only with protecting the Jewish community, making it clear that individual Jews had the right and duty to play a part in the political life of the country in terms of their personal convictions and Party affiliations. This applied equally to the freedom of political action by members of the Board in their individual capacities. "We would strongly resent the suggestion that the actions of individual members should be interpreted as the official policy of the Board⁸⁷.

⁸⁶ 1.3.49

⁸⁷ Report to Congress, August 1947 to May 1949, p 15

Ultimately, on April 20th, Swart apologised, explaining that subsequent enquiries had shown that the person referred to in the police report was not Mr S Kuper of the Board but a Mr L Cooper, who was not a member of the Board.

A more serious problem was the ban on membership in the NP in the Transvaal. In 1939 Jews had been excluded⁸⁸, J G Strijdom, the future Prime Minister, contended that although there was no clause in the constitution specifically excluding Jews from membership, this was impossible as they were precluded from joining by the very first clause, which stipulated that no person could be a member unless he subscribed to the principles of Christian Nationalism⁸⁹.

Nossel claimed that the question of Jewish membership of the Transvaal Party would be the first item on the agenda of its National Congress⁹⁰. The retention of the ban after the Congress

⁸⁸ Die Transvaler, 5.2.40

⁸⁹ Cape Argus, 21.9.44 and memorandum to the Board 8.12.54. In May 1951 the Council of N.G.K. (the main Dutch Reform Church) issued a pamphlet outlining "The Fundamental Principles of the Calvinist Political Science". The State was born of God and His infallible goodness. Its approach was Christian, not universal, and emphasised the unique character of each state. God's commands were the source of all the Government's will, authority and competence, not the mass of individuals. Obedience to God brought freedom. The theme of the Principles was Christian control of politics. The correct approach was to see the **Christian franchise** as a trust which was to be used by the mature with a sense of responsibility towards God. In conclusion the concept of Christian domination was unequivocally expressed: "Both Scripture and History show that God demands Christian states. This is only possible with a Christian political confession." As can be seen from the N.G.K. pamphlet, the boundaries of "Afrikanerism", both by definition and by religion, excluded Jews.

⁹⁰ Die Vaderland, 12.10.48

in November 1948⁹¹, after moderate Nationalists had given reassurances that it would be removed⁹², caused Jewish Affairs⁹³ to speculate that there had been a struggle between moderates and extremists, and that the whole matter had been dropped from the agenda to avoid a public controversy. Dagbreek⁹⁴ confirmed that there had been a rift. The Executive of the NP acknowledged that the opponents of removal were determined to fight to the bitter end, while those in its favour of removal were not prepared to force the issue⁹⁵. Further attempts to induce the NP to abolish the ban on Jewish membership in the Transvaal were made on 12 October 1950. The President of the Board wrote to Strijdom, leader of the Transvaal branch, requesting a meeting to discuss the possibility of reconsidering the ban. Strijdom replied on the 17th, dashing any hopes of the ban's removal.

In view of my interpretation of Article One of our programme of principles states...that we seek the development of our national life along Christian national lines...I do not think that the discussion as envisaged by you could bear fruitful results. On the contrary, it might occasion more harm than good⁹⁶.

Replying to Strijdom on 10 November, the President of the Board

⁹¹ In fact the Transvaal branch of the NP was completely dominated by the Cape branch. After the NP victory in 1948 7 cabinet ministers were from the Cape and only 2 from the Transvaal. (Giliomee, 1983, p 93)

⁹² Report to Congress August 1947 to May 1949

⁹³ January 1948

⁹⁴ 31.10.48

⁹⁵ RDM, 27.11.48, labelled the non-removal of the ban as a snub to Nossel, and as proof of the failure of his campaign of ingratiation to the NP.

⁹⁶ archives of the Board

reminded him of Prime Minister's Malan's statement⁹⁷ that he and his Government stood for a policy of non-discrimination towards any section of the European population. Strijdom contested this interpretation⁹⁸. A political Party, he contended, was a voluntary association whose policy to grant or refuse entrance to its ranks was not related to the policy of non-discrimination adopted by the Prime Minister⁹⁹.

In August 1951 Malan and Havenga, leader of the Afrikaner Party¹⁰⁰, decided on the amalgamation of their two parties¹⁰¹. In September, the two parties announced that there was complete agreement on principles, but Die Vaderland¹⁰² reported that there were points of difference, one of which being the issue of Jewish membership. The press¹⁰³ reported that the Afrikaner Party had said that, if the NP continued to exclude Jews, its position would be untenable. Ultimately, at the Transvaal Provincial Congress in September 1951, the proposal of the Federal Council that the Afrikaner and Nationalist Parties amalgamate was unanimously adopted, opening the way for Jewish members of the Afrikaner Party¹⁰⁴ to join the NP. For all intents and purposes the ban had been rescinded, although not

⁹⁷ At the July 1948 interview with Dr Malan

⁹⁸ 21.11.50

⁹⁹ ibid

¹⁰⁰ Malan's coalition partner

¹⁰¹ Rand Daily Mail, 2.8.51

¹⁰² 5.9.51

¹⁰³ Die Transvaler and Die Vaderland, 19.9.51

¹⁰⁴ Although it is not clear whether there were Jewish members in the Afrikaner Party.

formally revoked through proper procedures. Jewish voters would be accepted provided that they were prepared to subscribe to the Party's programme of principles¹⁰⁵. The Board was welcomed the removal of the ban as the disappearance of the last vestige of the so-called "Jewish question" from the public life of the country¹⁰⁶. In a speech to the Deputies¹⁰⁷, Saron stated that the Board had always deplored the ban as being contrary to South African democratic principles and had indicated an attitude of discrimination towards citizens. He stressed that each and every Jew would decide for himself what Party served the interests of the state best, and give it his political support¹⁰⁸. It is significant that he mentioned 'the interests of the state' rather than his/her own individual interests, as a citizen and as a Jew. Apparently this reflected the Board's anxiety to demonstrate the Jew's loyalty to the STATE.

A more serious threat was the "Dr Loock Affair". Jack Loock, former General Secretary of the UP in the Cape¹⁰⁹ before becoming a Nationalist MP, attacked Harry Oppenheimer and his Trust Fund in the House of Assembly on April 5, 1951¹¹⁰, specifically charging that the Jews had financed practically 90 percent of the election expenses of the UP during the 1938

¹⁰⁵ Die Vaderland, 18.9.51

¹⁰⁶ editorial in Jewish Affairs, October 1951

¹⁰⁷ 30.9.51

¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁹ Die Vaderland, 9.1.52, Jan Brand's column "Politiek"

¹¹⁰ HoA debates, col 3808-9

general election¹¹¹. Endeavouring to impute anti-Semitic sentiments to the UP, Loock insinuated that its attitude had always been "Let the Jews pay". He warned Oppenheimer not to expect English-speaking members of the UP to love him or that "*members of his race*" would ever succeed in getting "*people of his own belief in the House*" with his Trust Fund¹¹²,

On 18 June Loock gave a notice of motion in which he demanded the House's disapproval of the subsidisation of political parties and an investigation into the feasibility of regulations requiring political organisations to publish compulsory income returns showing their sources of income. Foreseeing problems, Saron wrote to Kentridge¹¹³ to prepare him for the debate. As regards to the allegation of Jewish support for the UP in 1938, Saron told Kentridge to remind the House that the 1938 election had been fought by the Nationalists on a blatant anti-Semitic platform¹¹⁴. Under such circumstances it was not possible for Jews to support the NP¹¹⁵. Since then the NP had repudiated its

¹¹¹ See chapter 1.3.3 which deals with the financial support Jews gave UP candidates, the 1938 general elections, in electoral divisions where the elections were contested by anti-Semitic politicians. Jan Brand wrote, in his column in Die Vaderland, 9.1.52 that Loock had assured him that they had virtually financed the election to the tune of 186,000 Pounds.

¹¹² On April 18, HoA debates, col 4784

¹¹³ 31.1.52

¹¹⁴ In its election manifesto, the NP had included clauses which envisaged anti-Jewish discrimination. See chapter 1.2.2.

¹¹⁵ See above. Shimoni cites anonymous sources, persons who had been members of the Executive in 1938, who confirmed that certain UP candidates had been assisted financially (Shimoni, 1980, 152-153) but not directly by the Board. The Board's involvement was in the form of *encouragement*: Jewish citizens should provide financial support to UP candidates.

anti-Jewish policy. The Jewish community, in its turn, had clearly affirmed its non-party political standpoint, implicitly implying that the community was reciprocating by not opposing the Government or its legislation.

The most serious threat to the growing complacency of the Jewish community was the 'Communist Allegation'. In April 1952 a report appeared in the Afrikaans press¹¹⁶ that the Minister of Justice had quoted, in the House of Assembly, a police report from 1947 which had been handed to the then Minister of Justice, to the effect that the Jewish Board of Deputies 'was controlled' by the Communist Party¹¹⁷. The Board felt that an immediate denial was imperative and a telegram was accordingly despatched by the President to the Minister, categorically denying that the Communist Party had ever been in control of the Board nor had it ever been associated with the Party¹¹⁸.

Apparently, during a police raid on the headquarters of the SA Communist Party in 1947, a letter, dated 7.3.45, from a Michael Harmel, to the General Secretary of the Communist Party, had been uncovered, in which he had stated that "the Communist Party was in control of the Jewish Board of Deputies and that their majority was to be increased with the forthcoming elections." In response, Harmel was severely reprimanded him for sending the

¹¹⁶Die Volksblad, in its 14th of June issue reported on the allegation in bold type and underlined. Apparently, this episode suggests a degree of hostility towards Jews by a future President (C R Swart) who appears to have gone out of his way to ignore the Board's protests, while attaching credibility to the 'letter'.

¹¹⁷ Saron, in a memorandum to the Secretaries of the Provinces, April 30, 1952

¹¹⁸ 30.4.52

information by post¹¹⁹. When questioned by a member of the Board, Harmel replied that it was inconceivable that he could have written anything of the kind as his knowledge of Jewish communal affairs was negligible¹²⁰.

Swart, in a letter on May 3 1952, stated that he had based his statement on the "*Police Report on Communist Activities in the Union*" which Lawrence had circulated in the Cabinet. He was in no position to confirm or deny the allegations. I A Maisels, President of the Board, requested that Swart give publicity to the Board's denial¹²¹. Saron expressed his concern to the Chairman of the Cape Committee, Dave Cohen¹²². It was imperative, he emphasised, that the Board be 'cleared'. He asked Cohen to approach Lawrence with the request that he issue a statement to the effect that he had never placed any credence on Harmel's letter. If he could not comply, then Cohen should approach another member of Smuts' Cabinet". Failing this, Saron wrote Kentridge on the 28th requesting that a Jewish MP make an explicit denial in the House¹²³.

The "*Police Report on Communist Activities in the Union*" was

¹¹⁹ cover letter No. 426/45 dated 14/3/45.

¹²⁰ memorandum dated 29.7.52, Archives of the Board

¹²¹ 8.5.52

¹²² 27.5.52

¹²³ Die Transvaler, 14.5.52 published an uncorroborated allegation that the Chief Secretary of the Communist Party had written a letter to Harmel on the 14th of March, 1945 reprimanding him for sending the information by mail.

tabled on 13 June¹²⁴, making it imperative that the Board's official denial be recorded in Parliamentary Records¹²⁵. Kentridge tabled a question to the Minister of Justice on 20 June, asking whether the Board of Deputies had telegraphed him denying the truth of the allegations¹²⁶. Swart merely replied in the affirmative, and the matter rested there. Ultimately, the matter was resolved, the Board absolved. This was the last time that the Board was ever accused, by official sources, of having any association with the Communist Party¹²⁷.

6.8 Harmony Between the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Nationalist Government, 1952-1958

In 1952 New Year messages were received from the Prime Minister, who sent hearty congratulations and good wishes to the Jewish People, adding that

The magnitude and success of their combined effort to rebuild their national home in Israel commands the admiration of the whole world, and proves conclusively to what extent that same spirit of co-operation and devotion can and will be an asset to any country in which they are settled.

The South African Government recognised Israel *de jure* on the 14 May 1949¹²⁸, and in August 1953 Malan visited Israel, the first

¹²⁴ The report itself, from which Swart had quoted extracts had been sent to H G Lawrence in 1947 who had circulated it in the Cabinet, but no reference had been made of it in the House of Assembly until Swart had quoted it.

¹²⁵ in Hansard. See memorandum sent by Saron to the Secretaries of the Provinces, 17.6.52

¹²⁶

¹²⁷ Anticom, resurrected the accusation in the 1960s. The Board responded by referring it to the denial in Hansard.

¹²⁸ Shimoni, 1980, p 208

head of Government ever to do so¹²⁹. He found many points of resemblance between Afrikanerdom and Israel¹³⁰, and called upon the Jewish settlers from SA not to forget Afrikaans or SA. Upon his return, he was honoured at a banquet by the Zionist Federation. His speech was marked by biblical allusions and replete with praise for Israel and its people. The resounding applause he received elicited a hostile reaction from Dawie¹³¹, who expressed his disbelief that there was no 'organised opposition' in the community to Jews who were members of the NP. Whereas, he contended, the NP was moderate and understanding towards the Jewish community, this was not reciprocated, as hostility towards nationalist Afrikanerdom was rampant. In response 'Karl Lameer'¹³² reminded him that the community had no control over the political views of its members. 'Hasofer'¹³³ explained¹³⁴ that Malan's reception in the Weizman Hall did not signify that those present wished to join the NP. Many of those who had cheered and sang there were, in fact, political opponents. Nevertheless, the ovation was genuine and heartfelt, an expression of the joy that the overwhelming majority of SA Jewry felt at the closing of one chapter in the relations between Jews and Afrikaners, and the opening of a new and

¹²⁹ ibid, p 213

¹³⁰ Die Burger, 20.6.53

¹³¹ Die Burger's political columnist, 29.8.53

¹³² Zionist Record, 11.9.53 (Karl Lameer is the pseudonym of Henry Katzew, the editor of the Zionist Record).

¹³³ the pseudonym of Max Melamet, the then Secretary of the Cape Council of the Board of Deputies

¹³⁴ SA Jewish Chronicle, 10.9.54. "Hasofer" tied Dawie's remarks with Nossel's complaints that Jewish Nationalists were ostracised SA Jewish Chronicle, 27.8.53

happier chapter. In a letter to Saron, Max Melamet¹³⁵ related that he had informed Malan that his visit to Israel and his presence at the banquet had made many Jews realise that the hostility between Jews and Afrikaners was not inevitable and ineradicable. Malan, he wrote, had been very grateful to hear this, because it contradicted his own impression that he had not made the slightest impact on Jewish opinion and that the relationship towards Nationalists had remained unchanged.

Following Malan's announcement of his pending retirement, Nossel requested permission to inscribe his name in the **Golden Book**¹³⁶, "*the highest honour*" the Jewish community could bestow¹³⁷, in recognition of what the Prime Minister had done for the Jewish community in SA and for the Zionist movement, and "towards better race relations in South Africa". Malan accepted the offer which, according to Nossel, was enthusiastically received in the community, including by many who were not political supporters. Die Burger¹³⁸ explained that Malan's name would be inscribed in the Golden Book of the World Zionist Organisation by his Jewish supporters and admirers through the initiative of Nossel, "who has already striven for years for good relations between the National Afrikaners and the Jewish community."

The Public Relations committee of the Cape Council¹³⁹ discussed Nossel's initiative with marked discomfort. Melamet argued that

¹³⁵ Secretary of the Cape Council

¹³⁶ The book is, in fact, sponsored by the Keren Kayemet Le-Yisrael - the Jewish National Fund.

¹³⁷ memorandum from the Secretary of the Board, Jacob Rich, to the members of the Executive Council, 23.11.54

¹³⁸ 23.11.54

¹³⁹ 23.11.54

Nossel was probably trying to stampede the community into taking a certain stand. The Council was faced with the dilemma of clarifying its a policy towards the function. On the one hand, if it was a failure, it would do a great deal of harm to the community. On the other hand, the community should not be seen as 'falling over backwards' to establish good relations with the Government. The matter itself aroused extensive controversy, as the community was divided as to the merits of Malan¹⁴⁰.

In June 1955 a committee of Jewish "friends and admirers of Dr Malan" presented him the Book of the Jewish National Fund. A silver plate accompanying it was engraved with these words: "*To a great Afrikaner, promoter of good relations between Jews and Afrikaners and a true friend of the land of the prophets.*" In his last speech before retirement, Malan expressed genuine friendship to the Jews, affirming his conviction that there was no such thing as a Jewish question in SA¹⁴¹. In an oblique reference to the Jewish attitude towards Afrikaner Nationalism, he said that the tenacity which Jews had shown in maintaining group identity should help them to have respect and goodwill towards similar aspirations of other groups. Exemplifying the 'metamorphosis' he had undergone, Malan rejected the idea of Jewish unassimilability. The adaptability of the Jews, he said, enabled them to identify with the people among whom they resided. It is evident that the defect of the past - Jewish cohesion and isolation - had become a virtue.

The national and the international are not with him, as in truth they need not be, two irreconcilable opposites, but a sound basis supplementary to each other. Accordingly the Jew can...become a good national as well as a good Jew...a good

¹⁴⁰ Daily Mirror, 18.1.55

¹⁴¹ South African Jewish Chronicle, 17.6.55 and South African Jewish Times, 21.6.55

South African as well as a true son of Israel¹⁴².

Upon Malan's resignation the Board thanked him for the services he had rendered to SA during his long period of public life, and especially for the sympathy and understanding he had personally shown towards Israel¹⁴³. In evaluating Malan, Melamet acknowledged the great improvement that had occurred in the relations between the community and the Government. He had honoured his promise to remove the "Jewish Question" from public life and the relationship between Jew and Afrikaner had become one of goodwill, mutual respect and friendly cooperation¹⁴⁴. Saron paid tribute to Malan both in the interview with Simon Herman¹⁴⁵, and in a series of talks on Jewish history¹⁴⁶. In his appraisal, Saron stressed that he had had no anti-Semitic convictions, and had truly wanted to drop anti-Semitism as a plank in NP policy¹⁴⁷.

I am satisfied that Malan was not in his hearts of hearts an anti-Semite... was pushed by political forces¹⁴⁸. I don't think Malan was the villain of the piece at all...a

¹⁴² Jewish Affairs, July 1955; Report to Congress, June 1953 to August 1955, 13; Shimoni, 1980, pp 213-214.

¹⁴³ November 30, 1954

¹⁴⁴ Die Burger, 30.4.56; Jewish Affairs, May 1956

¹⁴⁵ in 1961. A transcript was found in the archives of the Jewish Board of Deputies. Simon Herman, an ex-South African, was a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

¹⁴⁶ A series of 6 taped lectures April - May 1969

¹⁴⁷ Transcript of taped interview with Simon Herman at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, August 1961

¹⁴⁸ From the transcript of tape 5. Saron quotes Malan where he had said that the Jews "were the only true patriots in South Africa", loyal to their people and to South Africa.

restraining influence all the way¹⁴⁹.

Saron's propitiatory stance towards Malan is quite evident in this evaluation, nevertheless, in retrospect, it cannot be denied that Malan, despite his overt anti-Semitic prejudices and actions in the past, adhered to his commitment to remove the 'Jewish Question' from the political arena and to quell anti-Jewish discrimination in the Party.

Upon J G Strijdom's assumption of the premiership in November 1954, the President of the Board sent him a letter¹⁵⁰, expressing his hope that the country would continue to prosper under his leadership¹⁵¹. Saying this, his appointment was, in fact, a cause of considerable trepidation for the Jewish community on account of Strijdom's many virulent anti-Semitic statements, before and during World War II. At a Nasionale Jeugbond meeting in Brakpan in 1941, for example, he had said that the Afrikaners had no grievance against Germany, which had never done them any harm. They had been dragged into the war by England and by the Jews. At the 1942 NP Transvaal congress he had said that, if the Afrikaners attained their republic, not only would no more Jews be allowed into the country, but those residing in SA would have to leave. Those who remained would have to become Afrikaners¹⁵² The Africa X-Ray Report¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Hancock, in his biography of Smuts, *Smuts: The Fields of Force, 1919-1950*, Cambridge University Press, 1968) remarks that Malan was not personally anti-Semitic, but politically "drew profit from anti-Semitic feeling" (p 290).

¹⁵⁰ December 1, 1954

¹⁵¹ Strijdom's private secretary replied to the Board expressing his appreciation for its kind interest. (21.12.54)

¹⁵² Die Transvaler, 18.9.42

¹⁵³ April 1955

regarded the disquiet of the Jewish community as being not without foundation. Although the present Government was not as aggressively anti-Semitic, it employed a double technique of threat and favour to neutralise potential opposition among minority white groups.

In the course of time, it became apparent that, despite the initial apprehension, Strijdom had every intention of carrying on Malan's policy. A delegation of the Board met Strijdom on the 7 February 1955 to acquaint him of the activities of the Board¹⁵⁴. The deputation emphasised that it was a non-political body; Jewish politicians spoke for themselves alone. The Prime Minister made it clear that he expected Jews to be loyal first and foremost to SA, and that should be beyond question. Pre-figuring one of the major conflicts between the community and the Government, the rest of the interview focused on the anti-Government activities of the students¹⁵⁵.

They were challenging the things fundamental not only to the Afrikaners way of life but of the whole white population of this country....These fill the Afrikaner with fear and with suspicion. You would do a service to South Africa and also to your own Jewish Community if you could curb these tendencies.

In a subsequent interview to the SA Jewish Times¹⁵⁶, Strijdom assured the Jewish community that they need have no fear for their rights in SA either now or under a possible future Republic. SA was a Christian state, in the same way as Israel

¹⁵⁴ report of the meeting in the files of the Board of Deputies

¹⁵⁵ This issue was not discussed at Board meetings, but is discussed in "Letters to the Editor" in the Nationalist press. Either the debates were unminuted or it was not, at this stage, a major bone of contention between the community and the government, as it surfaced in the 1960's.

¹⁵⁶ 11.2.55

was a Jewish state. He reassured the community that the good relations with the State of Israel would be maintained¹⁵⁷. "Our policy is to mete out fair treatment to all sections...of the White population. All are full and equal citizens...¹⁵⁸."

6.9 Conclusion

In 1948 the worst nightmare of South Africa's Jewish community transpired in front of them. The NP, which had professed an anti-Semitic ideology for the past 18 years, was now in power. Although only a few Afrikaners had adopted undiluted National Socialism, and many Afrikaners saw it as foreign and alien to Afrikaner thought, those that did adopt it subsequently played key roles in the Nationalist government. Verwoerd, Strijdom, Louw and Swart¹⁵⁹ became Cabinet Ministers, while two of the most important Nationalist political figures had been fervent supporters of Nazi Germany: Nico Diedrichs, a future chairman of the Broederbond and subsequently the President of the Republic of SA, 1975-1978 and Piet Meyer¹⁶⁰, chairman of the Broederbond (1958-1972) and subsequently the head of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, 1960-1980¹⁶¹.

¹⁵⁷ However, the Sunday Express questioned whether an article by Neels Natte, which had attacked the ties between local Jews and Israel, could be taken to indicate a subtle change of attitude towards Jews by the new Strijdom government. (Memorandum to Board from Mr Rich, 15.2.55)

¹⁵⁸ South African Jewish Times, 11.2.55

¹⁵⁹ The MP who proposed the amendment that the Quota Act should come into force on 1 May 1930, instead of July to avert an influx of immigrants.

¹⁶⁰ He named his son 'Izan', the reverse of 'Nazi'.

¹⁶¹ Hagemann, 1992. See also Alister Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa: The Story of the Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, Mandarin, Great Britain, 1990, pp 163-164. Bloomberg comments

However, their worst fears did not materialise, and anti-Semitism receded from the political arena. Although Jews had been accused of not being 'assimilable' during the years prior to 1948 because they preserved their identity and did not assimilate by converting to Christianity, after 1948, NP ideology underwent profound change. 'Pluralism' within the white population became a 'value' extolled by the NP because it seemed to assure Afrikaners of their identity. The establishment of the Jewish 'homeland' - Israel - coincided with the Afrikaners' concern with preserving national identity so that loyalty to the Jewish nation and to Israel no longer seemed to conflict with loyalty to SA. All and all, Jews were no longer perceived as opponents of the NP and of the goals of Afrikaner nationalism, but rather as allies in a common struggle for the welfare and progress of SA. Within this constellation, the Jews became an accepted and welcomed means to the ultimate end. Although mutual distrust had not been completely allayed, on the whole, the Board was pleased with the relationship which had been established.

Nevertheless, the question remains: If anti-Semitism was embedded in South African society, as argued by Milton Shain, and is evident from the intensive anti-Semitic rhetoric which characterised the NP and the widespread support enjoyed by anti-Semitic movements in the 1930s and 1940s, how did it dissipate with such ease after 1948? A partial answer, based on Shain's analysis, can be found in the new historical context, where anti-Semitism was no longer necessary to define or consolidate Afrikaner identity, and scapegoating the Jew was no longer necessary to elevate the Afrikaner, who now held total power in SA. The NP's political victory obviated the need to use anti-

that in the 1960s, after Verwoerd, he was the most powerful Afrikaner in the country. (Bloomberg, 1990, p 2)

Semitism as a political tool.

In addition, the Nationalists' preoccupation with the removal of the last vestiges of "The Empire", and creating the groundwork for 'Apartheid', deflected them from the issue of the 'assmiliability' of the Jews, especially as anti-Semitism, by 1948, had become totally discredited as by this time the atrocities committed by the Nazis during the Holocaust had been exposed and nearly universally denounced.

Chapter 7. THE JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES AND ITS POLICY TOWARDS
THE NATIONAL PARTY: COMMUNAL CONSIDERATIONS

In 1948 political power passed decisively into Afrikaner hands. One of the most significant phenomena of the process of change in the following decade was the transformation of African national consciousness into political fact. The legislative restrictions and the penal system imposed by the Nationalist Government exacerbated the situation, so that vast numbers of Africans suffered from a sense of frustration, humiliations and rank injustice. The refusal to meet their demands for a share in privileges and political power moved from passive resistance to direct flouting of the law, and finally to overt acts of sabotage and violence.

On the one hand, Jewish morals and historical experience made it imperative that the community protest Government actions. On the other hand, many Afrikaners believed that in view of their own struggle to survive as a nation, the Jews should understand their struggle to preserve their right to self-determination¹⁶², exerting pressure on the community to support them. In this context, it was clear to the leaders of the community that Jewish interest demanded a positive response to the National Government's overtures of appeasement, for it was Afrikaner nationalism rather than African nationalism which dominated the force-field.

¹⁶² These Afrikaners ignored, or were impervious, to the vast and vital differences in the background and history of the two peoples. By this time the Afrikaners were the masters of their country and were no longer 'struggling' to survive, whereas the Jews in SA were a minority, and actively fighting for survival in their country, the State of Israel.

7.1 Formulating a Policy of Collective Non-intervention

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies was established to deal with issues directly related to the Jewish community¹⁶³. Its mandate was to liaison with and to represent the Jewish community¹⁶⁴ and to be the sole channel of communication between the community and the Government. Between 1930 to 1948 the Board had been preoccupied with issues of anti-Semitism, with restrictions on immigration and naturalisation, and with vicious propaganda. The accession of the NP presented challenges, causing it to abandon its pre-1948 pro-liberal¹⁶⁵ bias to one of political "neutrality".

The obstacles facing the Board in formulating its policy are well illustrated by the warning given by J G Strijdom, Minister of Lands and Transvaal leader of the NP, when he opened the Party's Congress in 1948¹⁶⁶. He stated that opposition to the Government's policy of Apartheid was as treasonable an act as refusing to take up arms in defence of the country. A similar, sinister, warning was given to the Jewish community in 1958 by Dr C F Albertyn, General Manager of Nasionale Pers Bpk in an

¹⁶³ Gus Saron wrote several articles on the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, its role and development. For example the Board published a pamphlet on the subject in and a series of articles in Jewish Affairs in 1973.

¹⁶⁴ It must be admitted that this was a de facto situation rather than a democratic process in which the individual Jews had been called upon to express their support for the Board in this role or to vote for the members of the Executive Council.

¹⁶⁵ which, for the Board, was a euphemism for not embracing anti-Semitism/anti-Jewish discrimination as a political platform but rather recognising the equality of the European communities.

¹⁶⁶ Rand Daily Mail, 17.11.48

address at the Orangjeklub¹⁶⁷. Albertyn pleaded with the Jews not to be linked with the 'incitement of the native' against the white man, for this would endanger the whole of Jewry. The Afrikaner had to live or die in SA and would eradicate everything and everyone who endangered his existence.

The racial policies of the NP precipitated a serious dilemma. Jews found themselves in the anomalous situation of having their support solicited by a Government whose racial policies were harsh and discriminating against other elements of the population, confronting the leadership with fundamental and crucial questions. Was the Board, as the representative body of the community, obligated to take an active stand on the moral issues which transcended formal Party politics? Should the Board condone or oppose a societal system, which was beneficial to the community, but based on legally enforced racial discrimination¹⁶⁸? Could it remain neutral in the face of a policy which was morally abhorrent? Could it afford to take a 'political' stance when there was a risk that this could possibly provoke charges of 'disloyalty'? Thus, articulating a policy towards the political arena which would satisfy the wide spectrum of political opinion within and without the Jewish community, posed a cardinal problem for the Jewish Board of Deputies.

These issues were hotly debated at many congresses. While some delegates argued that the Board had no business making statements on any controversial public issue which did not directly affect Jewish rights, others asserted that the principle of non-involvement did not preclude some statement

¹⁶⁷ Die Transvaler, 28.7.58

¹⁶⁸ Shimoni, 1988, p 27

being made against racial prejudice and in affirmation of fundamental human rights. The crux of the issue was: should the Jews, as a collective, take a stand against Apartheid or should this be left to individual choice?

In approaching its dilemmas, the Board maintained that Judaism did not dictate any absolute imperative on the question of how society should be politically and socially ordered, and used this to justify its neutral role in politics. Jewish opinion was not unanimous on the subject, especially as the argument became clouded by considerations of self-preservation as opposed to moral imperatives. Thus, the most compelling factor which dictated the policy of the Board of Deputies was not Jewish values and ethics nor Jewish historical experience but rather the interpretation of collective Jewish interests. The basic assumption was that as a minority the community could not become embroiled in the party political arena¹⁶⁹.

...in the final analysis the policy of the Board of Deputies must be understood in sociological terms as a function of self-interest both as Jews and as Whites, rather than in ideological terms as a function of Judaism or Jewishness...Self interest that is to say in assuring the full rights of Jews as white citizens, as well as the free and unhindered existence of the Jews in community. It spoke out only on what was in [its] judgment necessary for the good (for the community), on whatever might have been harmful to the community it kept silent¹⁷⁰.

¹⁶⁹ Gus Saron, Jewish Affairs, February 1972, pp 6-9

¹⁷⁰ Saron writing in his private papers in the archives of the Jewish Board of Deputies. Apparently Saron had planned on writing a book on the Jew and the Political Scene from the 1920's but died when the project was still in its initial stages. Nevertheless, he clearly delineated the Board's grasp of the political situation and its imperatives. See also Saron's memorandum on "*Race Policies in South Africa*", 21.6.73 in which he wrote that "...the Board's role is seen as a restricted one dealing with matters which are of specifically Jewish interest." (underlined added.)

This was affirmed by Maurice Porter in 1964, then chairman of the Public Relations committee. In addressing the World Jewish Congress he explained that the interests of the community were paramount in the deliberations of the Executive, as it was convinced that "...it would be suicidal to throw the community into the political arena¹⁷¹.

The solution evolved was a move from the doctrine, held by the Board from 1930 to 1948, that Jewish welfare could best be secured by supporting liberal causes¹⁷², to a doctrine of collective non-intervention¹⁷³. The Board was a non-political body, which strictly eschewed any and all intervention in the political arena, strictly adhering to the narrow parameters within which the purposes of the Board had been defined: political action was the concern of the individual Jew, not of the collective. It denied that this meant a policy of '**neutrality**' towards the social and political issues of the

¹⁷¹ Maurice Porter's address to the World Jewish Congress in Jerusalem, July 1964. In the draft of the address Porter wrote: " We must always remember that in terms of the Board's constitution, its function is limited to protect the interests of the Jewish community as such...If we were at any time to yield to pressures which are constantly being applied both from outside South Africa and from within South Africa, to take a positive stand as a community; y on political issues, no matter how far they may infringe on moral issues (e.g. 90-day clause) it would lose its force and influence, and would in fact be disowned by the community. (archives of the Jewish Board of Deputies)

¹⁷² The policy was never clearly enunciated, but Saron alluded to it in his address to the 15th Congress of the Board in May 1945 as well as Report to Congress 1947-1949. The Board was manoeuvred into this position not through political design but because of pragmatic reasons: those parties on the right wing of the ideological struggle were all anti-Semitic.

¹⁷³ Gus Saron, "The Jews in Complex South Africa", Jewish Affairs, February, pp 6-9

country, but contended that there was a major difference 'neutrality' and 'non-involvement'.

A 'two-fold principle'¹⁷⁴ guided the Board in formulating its policy. On general public issues affecting all citizens (in contrast to specifically Jewish issues), Jews do not act as a group; individuals should follow their own political line according to personal convictions. It followed from this that Jews were involved in politics as individuals and not as members of a religious group. They were to be found among the supporters of all political parties and all political trends of thought¹⁷⁵. The Board went on to point out that the wide differences in opinion in the white community on how to achieve lasting peace between the white and black communities were reflected in the Jewish community. Moreover, even if there was a general consensus on these matters, the adoption of a collective Jewish policy would lead to the community being embroiled in fierce political concerns to the detriment of overall Jewish concerns¹⁷⁶. There was no Jewish vote and no collective attitude towards race issues. This policy was justified in view of the reality where it was impossible to separate the moral from the political aspects of Apartheid.

Racial issues form the very warp and woof of party politics in South Africa, and it has been a long-standing principle of the Jewish community that there is not and should not be a Jewish vote on controversial questions of national policy. The only possible exception to this rule is where

¹⁷⁴ Articulated by Suzman on the occasion of the 21st Congress in March 1958.

¹⁷⁵ In fact a return to the situation which existed before 1930, when there were many Jews who supported the NP.

¹⁷⁶ "Race Policies of South Africa: The Attitude of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies", memorandum written by Gus Saron, 21.6.73 and address by D K Mann on South African Jewry, 12.1.72

the rights and status of Jews themselves as citizens may be directly threatened¹⁷⁷.

It must not be forgotten that the Board was the representative body of the Jewish community, and as such it should conform to the opinions and sentiment which prevailed in the community. In adopting 'neutrality' the Board felt that it was reflecting the Jewish viewpoint. In his address to the Executive upon retiring as Director General, Aleck Goldberg¹⁷⁸ characterised the Board's policy as 'walking on a tightrope¹⁷⁹.' The benefits which accrued to Jews as whites far outweighed the moral obligation to condemn Apartheid. They were a privileged group, safe, wealthy and with a strong economic status. There was no reason, or incentive, for them to incur the wrath of the NP. The Board never undertook a scientific survey of opinions, but the leaders had no doubt that the community would condemn them if they should criticise Apartheid. Both the Board and the community were all convinced that opposing the Government and its racial policies would jeopardise the existence of the community¹⁸⁰.

Implementing this policy of 'neutrality' sometimes bordered on self-intimidation "which at times went beyond the expectation of the Afrikaner himself¹⁸¹". In commenting on the transition the

¹⁷⁷ The editorial in Jewish Affairs, January 1958

¹⁷⁸ Director General of the Board of Deputies from 1975 to 1990

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Aleck Goldberg, 16.11.95

¹⁸⁰ ibid

¹⁸¹ Simon Herman and Gideon Shimoni, "*The Jewish Community in the Apartheid Society of South Africa*", the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1973, Study circle on Diaspora Jewry in the home of the President of Israel, 10. Indicative of the trepidation of the Board was the reaction to the results of Prof Kuper's study on Racial Ecology

policy had undergone, the SA Jewish Chronicle¹⁸² observed that it had become incumbent on both the Jewish group, and the individual Jew, to bear in mind the possible repercussions of its actions on the whole community. From a communal point of view it was an inescapable fact that the Jewish community was a permanent part of the white community. "It is only by assuring the future of the white community in Africa", declared Suzman, "that we can assure the future of the Jewish community, as such¹⁸³". It had little option but to hold together with other Whites for mutual protection.

One can say the non-Whites constitute no factor in the constellation of the powers which motivate the policy of the Board of Deputies, which is not so in relation to the Afrikaner¹⁸⁴.

But the dialogue was sensitive and precarious, involving the acceptance of the commitment "not to disturb the grip of the Afrikaner on the social order desirable for the State"¹⁸⁵. Within this framework, the Board rigidly adhered to its policy of non-intervention. Arthur Goldreich¹⁸⁶, one of the anti-government activists arrested in Rivonia together with the leadership of the ANC in 1963, diametrically opposed the normative view that the fate of the Jews was intrinsically

in Durban where a view was put forward that the information in the book could be used by anti-Semites to the detriment of the community. (Minutes of the PR meeting of the CNJ, 22.2.59).

¹⁸² South African Jewish Chronicle, 22.6.51

¹⁸³ "The Jew in the South African Scene Today", address by A Suzman to an extended meeting of Deputies, 29.6.63

¹⁸⁴ Gideon Shimoni and Simon Herman, 1973, pp 10-11

¹⁸⁵ ibid

¹⁸⁶ His escape, together with A Wolpe, in 1963 compromised the relations between the Jewish and Afrikaner communities.

intertwined with that of the white community. After scathingly castigating the Board for not supporting the struggle against racial oppression, he said

Had they manifested any desire or ability to place events in historical perspective, they would have seen that the future of the Jewish community was inextricably connected with that of the population at large, which is overwhelmingly black. Instead they backed a political approach which is facing extinction today...¹⁸⁷

The Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, Dr. Rabbi Jakobowitz¹⁸⁸ expressed empathy with the predicament of the South African Jewish community. He posed a number of rhetorical questions to those who were castigating the community and the Board: were Jews morally in default when they lived in inquisitorial Spain or in Fascist Italy, or in negro-baiting America before the civil war? Were they wrong for refusing to pay the price of persecution or expulsion for public protest against systems that were incompatible with Jewish values? He himself was not aware of any precedent of a Jewish community choosing collective martyrdom for a cause. It was irresponsible not to feel profound concern for South African Jewry.

It would be an act of hypocrisy and inhumanity to belabour the potential victims of inverted racism with moral cowardice because they fail to accept the liquidation of their community with equanimity¹⁸⁹.

E Feit¹⁹⁰, in analysing the complex situation, argued that Jews in SA had very little option but to hold together with other

¹⁸⁷ In an interview following Mandela's release, New Outlook, April 1990/32.

¹⁸⁸ Dr. Rabbi Jakobowitz, "What Future for SA Jewry," Jewish Affairs August 1977, pp 4-7

¹⁸⁹ ibid

¹⁹⁰ an ex-South African and lecturer

Whites for mutual protection, even if they wished to do otherwise. There was no guarantee that should they move strongly in opposition to the Government this would make them allies of the Africans. By detaching themselves from the rest of the white community, they might simply be inviting isolation without advantage to anyone¹⁹¹. I A Maisels, past president of the Board, expressed a similar view in an address at a dinner given in his honour. He was not, he said, propagating the view that Jewish organisations should throw themselves into the political arena¹⁹². It would be wrong, if not fatal, for them to do so, and should be avoided at all costs. At the same time, however, it was morally indefensible and ethically unsound to say that Jewish citizens, because they were Jews, must keep out of politics¹⁹³.

The historian Gideon Shimoni, himself an ex-South African, attributed the pride and the stability of the community to the particular form of pluralism, moulded by the dominant Afrikaner majority, which had acknowledged and encouraged Jews to sustain their religious and ethnic differences, as well as to maintain ties of national sentiment with the Jewish nation as a whole¹⁹⁴, with the "proviso that these do not clash with the Afrikaner's own conception of how society as a whole ought to function and

¹⁹¹ Feit, "Community in a Quandry; the South African Jewish Community and Apartheid", Race, 8 (4) 1967 pp 395-408

¹⁹² Zionist Record, 5.5.61

¹⁹³ Zionist Record, 5.5.61

¹⁹⁴ It is ironic that what had been regarded, by Afrikaner policy from 1930 to 1948, as the 'sin' of not assimilating, has been transformed into the 'virtue' of pluralism.

what national loyalty entails¹⁹⁵." In reply to the question as to whether articulating a clear liberal attitude would be dangerous, he said that, although it was not feasible that Jewry would be brought down to the level of the 'underprivileged castes', or that espousing a liberal attitude would be tantamount to martyrdom, the leadership's conviction that the community was vulnerable was correct, as there was every indication of the imminence of anti-Jewish reactions.

There is no doubt that public opinion among Afrikaners at times reaches manifestations of enmity because of the prominence of Jews in opposing Apartheid as it does in certain manifestations of Israel policy towards South Africa...one should not take lightly the fact that an escalation of reactions of this sort might well impugn the position of the Jew in the White society and his freedom of communal activity¹⁹⁶.

A dissenting opinion was expressed by Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz, who believed that there was little tangible evidence for the widespread conviction that the Jewish community was in a position of "*special vulnerability*". Nonetheless, he admitted that there was a pervasive fear that anti-Semitism could rear its head at the slightest provocation. There was a tendency to regard a Jew who expressed a view not in conformity with the policy of the Government as a traitor who was guilty of a disservice to the Jewish community by bringing its loyalty to

¹⁹⁵ Gideon Shimoni, "*The Future of the South African Jewish Community in South Africa*", Jewish Affairs, 1973, pp 7-10. See also Geoffrey Wigoder's column in the Jerusalem Post, 31.8.77. Wigoder quotes Shimoni as stating that if the Board had been bolder it would not have resulted in a loss of rights but would have led to anti-Jewish reactions. He was doubtful whether the community would be prepared to follow a leadership that would embrace a liberal platform.

¹⁹⁶ Gideon Shimoni, 1973, p 10

the regime into question and laying it open to attacks¹⁹⁷. Hellman¹⁹⁸ took issue, making the point that he presented a distorted picture of Jews being cowed and intimidated when the truth was that they played a significant role, as individuals, in the opposition to the Government's racial policy¹⁹⁹.

7.2 The Jew in the Political Arena

Notwithstanding the inclination to avoid political involvement, the turbulence of the political environment made it increasingly impossible to avoid controversies. The dilemma involved the community at different levels: the Jewish community as a whole, the Jewish politician and individual Jews. This dilemma was described by Gus Saron²⁰⁰ as follows: should Jews act politically as individuals or should their behaviour be influenced by the fact that they were members of the Jewish community? He then presented what, in his opinion, were the two major alternatives in resolving this dilemma²⁰¹: the one was to act as a Jewish citizen in accordance to the dictates of conscience and the other was to defer to the prejudices of the wider society and act on the principle that *All Israel is accountable one for the other*²⁰². Hasofer²⁰³, advocated

¹⁹⁷ Chief Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz, "A Rabbi's Right to Speak Out", Jewish Chronicle, London, 22.9.61

¹⁹⁸ Chairperson of the "South African Institute for Race Relations" for many years.

¹⁹⁹ Jewish Chronicle, London, 13.10.61

²⁰⁰ "The Dilemma of the Jew in Politics", Jewish Affairs, July 1952, pp 3-7

²⁰¹ ibid

²⁰² *Kol Yisrael Haverim*

²⁰³ South African Jewish Chronicle, May 19, 1954

restraint by calling attention to the fact that Jews were a minority in the midst of a majority whose goodwill must at all times be kept in mind. It was, therefore, incumbent upon them to behave with a sense of responsibility towards fellow Jews. Right or wrong, the unchangeable fact remained that a Jew's behaviour, especially in politics, could have repercussions on the community as a whole.

If defining a political viewpoint was an intricate process for the individual Jew, the status of the Jewish politician made it even more complex, as he had to endure conflicting pressures. Objectively speaking, Jewish politicians represented a specific political Party, not the Jewish community. This obvious truth was not always so clear cut to certain Nationalist politicians. This can be illustrated by Senator Viljoen's remark²⁰⁴ that there were 'too many Jews' in the front benches of the Opposition. It was incomprehensible to him how 5-6% of the population enjoyed such representation in Parliament. Viljoen was articulating a pervasive fallacy: that Jewish MPs were representatives of the Jewish community by virtue of their being Jewish. This perception was a cause of friction between the Nationalists and the community, especially when opposition to the Government by Jewish MPs resulted in attacks, by NP MPs on the entire community. Even within the community the Jewish politician had to endure pressures as there were members of the community who were so apprehensive that they favoured a policy of moderation and caution that would have paralysed all action on the part of the Jewish politician. Senator Leslie Rubin argued that, despite the overt pronouncements of individual freedom, it was an open secret in SA that "the Board does all it can to discourage individual Jews from opposing Government

²⁰⁴ Zionist Record, 29.4.50

policies²⁰⁵."

The quandary of a Jewish politician, when confronted by the NP, was highlighted by Dawie²⁰⁶, who pointed out that however much Jewish politicians might attempt to separate themselves and their views from the community, the unalterable fact remained that their political behaviour would have repercussions on the community. Protestations that they did not speak as the representative of their 'race' may be completely true, but were not to the point. It was an unalterable political fact that opposition to the NP was tantamount to opposing Afrikaner nationalist aspirations.

Much misunderstanding will be eliminated if it is understood more generally, also by the Jews, that the Nationalist Party is indeed a political Party but in important respects it is more than this. The Nationalist Party is at the same time an embodiment of the national striving of the Afrikaner. The speaker without the necessary touch may often be of the opinion that he is only attacking the nationalists in their political striving, whereas in reality he is attacking the Afrikaner in his national striving.

Although the Evening Post²⁰⁷ repudiated Dawie's contention, on the grounds that the Nationalists did not exclusively represent Afrikaans culture and ideals, it admitted that Afrikaner nationalist ambitions had been identified with the policies of a particular Party which had been imbued with a mystique that regarded opposition as a kind of sacrilege.

This dilemma was put in sharp focus in September 1952 when Rabbi

²⁰⁵ Leslie Rubin, "Dialogue: South African Jewry and Apartheid", African Report, February 1970, p 24

²⁰⁶ Die Burger, 19.5.54

²⁰⁷ 8.6.54

Swift²⁰⁸ published an article in the Rosh Hashanah issue of the SA Jewish Times, which generated great controversy in the community. His unambiguous message was that it was time for the Jews in the Diaspora to stop meddling in the politics of the country in which they lived, because their actions were exploited to besmirch the Jews as a whole.

We must be courageous enough to admit that if the Jew is to do his share in the advancement of social justice economic freedom and international peace, it can now only be done in Israel. A politician who is a Jew must withdraw from the arena of politics if his attitudes or observations provoke hostility from opposing political groups and implicate directly or indirectly Jewish personalities or Jewish issues..

Rabbi Swift's article was discussed at many stormy Executive meetings²⁰⁹. Horwitz, the chairman of the Board, criticised and described it as destructive and harmful to the community. He said that the doctrines advocated were calculated to undermine the position of the Jew in the country. The article was unanimously condemned as subverting the Board's expressed view that individuals had the right to adopt any political attitude they wished and to play a full role as citizens. Rabbi Swift's opinions were "*symptomatic of a movement to get us back to the ghetto*"²¹⁰. Horwitz recommended that Federation of Synagogues dissociate themselves from these irresponsible views.

...here is a person who holds a public position and gives expression to views which have outraged Jewish public opinion because they tend to undermine the very basis of the status of the Jew as a free citizen in a democratic society. These doctrines are actually a repudiation of the hard-won

²⁰⁸ a rabbi who had recently arrived from the United States to take up a rabbinical post in SA

²⁰⁹ Minutes of the meeting of 19.9.52 and 28.9.52

²¹⁰ Executive Meeting 28.9.52. This opinion was expressed by M Gonski but encapsulated the opinions of all the speakers.

political emancipation of the Jew and an advocacy of the voluntary return to the ghetto²¹¹.

Although the Board did make sporadic attempts to dissuade individual Jews from publicly criticising government policies, nevertheless, it was the definitive policy, reiterated in the public relations' resolutions of all the Board's Congresses that the individual had the right, and even the duty, to define his political views for himself, in accordance to his beliefs and convictions.

Consequently, the need to balance the imperatives of Jewish communal self-interest with the imperatives of Jewish ethics and historical experience led the Board to enunciate a policy of neutrality, despite the realisation that being neutral was to be acquiescent and, in the last analysis, supportive of Government policies. Saron revealed in his private papers how difficult it was to find consensus on policy. The struggles members of the Executive had with their conscience, he observed, was evident in the internal, closed and unminuted discussions of the Executive and the Public Relations committee, as well as in private discussions outside the official framework of the community. "Generally", Saron wrote, "it was scrupulously omitted from any written records²¹²".

²¹¹ Minutes of the meeting of Deputies, 30.9.52

²¹² Saron's private papers in the Board's archives

Chapter 8. THE JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES AND ITS ATTEMPTS TO
ARTICULATE POLICY ON POLITICAL ISSUES

The evolution of the Board's policy is well illustrated by the changes that occurred in the editorial policy of Jewish Affairs, the official publication of the Board. In the months prior to the historic May 1948 elections it had exhibited a consistent political awareness and moral sensitivity on a wide range of issues, both related and unrelated to the Jewish community¹. The June issue, however, revealed a precarious ambivalence. The editor now defined the role of the journal as being the 'interpretation' of contemporary Jewish life, without entering party politics unless it had a direct bearing upon the position of the Jewish community. He cautiously urged the Government to be aware that the only route to peaceful development was a policy of justice for all sections of the population. In a rare affirmation of the rights of non-Europeans², the editor wrote

...the progress of South Africa depends upon the preservation of such democratic principles and institutions as we now possess and their gradual extension to ever-widening sections of the population³.

In the April 1951 issue Saron wrote⁴ that the rights of Jews could only be safeguarded in a Democracy. Observing that in SA the non-Europeans were deprived of fundamental rights and human freedoms, he posed this question:

Are we Jews called upon as a group to make their

¹ The April issue published Phyllis Lewsen's article "*Apartheid - a Nostalgic Dream*" and the July issue Ellen Hellman's (SAIRR) article "*Apartheid Will Never Work*" and Saron's "*After the Elections*".

² The articles did not refer specifically to Blacks

³ Jewish Affairs, June 1948

⁴ "Saron, "Let's be Honest with Ourselves", Jewish Affairs, April 1951, pp 44-49

contribution to the solution of this, the deepest crisis of South African life? Or are we driven by the logic of facts to say that, however deeply this crisis touches everyone of us in common what all other South Africans, as an organised Jewish community we remain anonymous?

Increasingly with time, however, the journal eschewed controversial issues, confining itself to issues which had a direct bearing on the Jewish community.

8.1 Official Statements

After 1948 the statements of the Board painstakingly endeavoured to be politically innocuous. The 17th and 18th Congresses, in May 1949 and June 1951 respectively, as well as subsequent Congresses, reaffirmed that the Board was not a political body, did not take part in the party-political struggle but adhered to strict political neutrality. Saying that, the individual Jew had both the right and duty to play a part in the political life of the country in terms of his own point of view. The Public Relations resolutions invariably championed democratic principles and practices as the sine qua non of assuring the welfare of all sections of the population. The general feeling was that the Board should not undertake political education nor unite the community behind any particular ideology as it did not have a mandate to do so. It should make all efforts to highlight the pre-eminence the community attributed to tolerance and the elimination of prejudice as means towards solving the country's problems.

8.1.1 The Lovell Affair, 1951

The Lovell affair compelled the Board to confront the issue of political involvement head on. On 17 June 1951 Leo Lovell, a Jewish MP (LP), was invited to be the keynote speaker at a function of the Jewish Ex-Servicemen League. In his talk he warned the League that the Nationalists were using undemocratic and unconstitutional means to retain power, urging them not to

be misled just because Jews had not been singled out by hostile legislation. The Jewish voting strength, which comprised 4% of the country's total, was so dispersed that it could make no difference to either of the two major parties. He warned the Jews not to forget what Louw had said during the war⁵. In an interview with the Cape Town correspondent of the Zionist Record,⁶ he succinctly repeated the essence of his speech: Jewish ex-servicemen should not hesitate to participate actively in political demonstrations if their conscience demanded it, and that the NP attacked the Jews when it was politically expedient.

Die Burger⁷ sought a statement from the Board in view of its avowal that it was not a political body, casting doubt on its apparent neutrality:

What sort of neutrality in politics is it of which a leading Jewish politician and the Jewish Ex-Servicemen League appear to be ignorant. A Jewish communal organisation is used for an attempt to consolidate the Jews as a racial group against the Government, but at the same time the Jewish Board claims political immunity on the grounds of the "neutrality" of official Jewry.

The paper linked the issue with the supposed ostracism of nationally-minded Jews⁸. It contended that the positive contribution made by Jews who were 'friends' of the Afrikaners in the political and cultural sphere was being overlooked, while high praise was given to opposition-minded Jews. Only the latter were admitted to the 'inner circles', whereas nationally-minded Jews were excluded.

⁵ The Guardian, 21.6.51

⁶ A Abrahamson, 19.6.51

⁷ 18.6.51

⁸ "Boland", Letters to the Editor, Die Burger, 14.6.51

The chairman of the Cape Board, M H Goldschmidt, and the Secretary, Max Melamet, in an interview with Die Burger⁹, conceded that the speech should not have been made under the auspices of an organisation affiliated with the Board. This prompted the Guardian¹⁰ to pour contempt on the Board's haste in disclaiming any responsibility for Lovell's statements. "The anxiety of official Jewry to appease the Nationalists and to show them what "good boys" they really are reached a new low in Cape Town" The Chairman of the League, in a letter to the Secretary of the Board's Cape Council¹¹, expressed alarm at the implication that Lovell had had no right to make such a speech to a Jewish organisation. This was tantamount to an infringement on the right of an individual to free expression of opinion on matters of public interest.

In the wake of all the controversy surrounding Lovell's speech, Horwitz, chairman of the Board of Deputies, submitted to the Executive Council, on 8 July, the most comprehensive statement to date defining the viewpoint of the Board. It carefully differentiated its neutral position vis-a-vis party politics from the rights of individual Jewish citizens to act politically according to their own convictions. Subsequent to its approval, the statement was widely published¹².

First of all, the statement highlighted the fact that the Jewish

⁹ 18.6.51

¹⁰ the organ of the Communist Party, 18.6.51

¹¹ 22.6.51

¹² South African Jewish Chronicle 13.7.51; Forum, 10.7.51; in Die Burger, 12.7.51 under the headline "Incitement of Jews as a Group - Board of Deputies Warning"

community was not a political entity. It could not identify itself with either side without incurring the charge that it was embroiling itself in party politics. The Board, as representative body of all Jews, was a non-political body and acted only in matters of common concern to all Jews. This neutrality, however, did not imply neutrality on the part of the individual Jew. Individual Jews had diversified political convictions and these motivated their political behaviour. As citizens they had a right to support any Party they wished - and it could not and should not be construed that these political viewpoints were that of the whole Jewish community.

The neutral stance of the Board did not, in any way, imply the curtailment of the right of the individual Jewish citizen to freely take part in the political life of the country. However, deriving from this freedom of action, the individual was personally responsible and accountable for his or her actions, the community itself carrying no responsibility for the actions of the individual member.

This was especially true of Jewish Parliamentarians, who were not elected by Jews but by their constituents. It was, therefore, utterly wrong to attribute their views to the entire Jewish community. The Jewish politician should accept the challenges of his time as a Jew and as a citizen of SA.

The statement also rejected the allegation that Jews, who were "nationally inclined", had been deliberately excluded from the Board and its deliberations on the ground of their political opinions. It went on to point out that although affiliate bodies appointed delegates to the Board's Congresses, they do not surrender their autonomy. The Board had no right to intervene in their internal policy nor in the election of its deputies and delegates. An address, such as Lovell's, did not infringe upon

the Board's neutrality in Party politics. Individuals and groups could not be deprived of their freedom to listen to whomever they please; the views of the speaker did not make the organisation political nor commit it to the views of the speaker. The Board emphatically disapproved of attempts to persuade Jews as a group to support or vote for any one political Party. Jews belonged to all parties, and it was unhealthy when they felt unwelcome in any Party.

In conformity with the above, it was decided that statements defining policy would emanate from the Executive Council only. If a Provincial Executive found it necessary to make a statement, it was urged that, wherever possible, this should not be done without prior consultation¹³.

While ostensibly the logic of the statement was impeccable, it represented a substantial move away from the position the Board had adopted in the pre-1948 period when it had openly supported 'democratic forces'. This change was welcomed by the pro-Nationalist press. The editorial in Die Burger¹⁴, under the heading "Jews in Politics", praised the "tenor and tone" of Horwitz's statement, agreeing that Jews had the legitimate right to vote for whatever Party they desired, and to play their part in politics as South Africans and not as Jews. Notwithstanding this, the editorial deplored what it said to be a 'concerted effort' on the part of Jewish and non-Jewish opposition politicians to mobilise and consolidate the "Jewish vote" against the NP Government with the cry that the Nats planned to suppress South African Jewry. The Board, it alleged, had done

¹³ In a memorandum to the Secretaries of the Provinces
11.7.51

¹⁴ 12.6.51

little to counteract this.

In our opinion, anyone, Jew or non-Jew, who wants to form a united Jewish front on one or other side in South African politics is a threat to race relations and to Jewry as a whole; because the consolidation of Jewry against one of the big parties can only lead to the formation of a front against Jewry.

The Cape Council, in general, expressed satisfaction with the Board's statement¹⁵, but conflict flared up again when the editorial of the South African Jewish Chronicle¹⁶ pointed out that, in essence the fundamental question remained open: could a Jewish communal organisation take sides in the party-political struggle and still retain its membership on the Board? What would be the situation if one of the Board's constituent bodies aligned itself with one of the political parties? "*Would the Board's insistence on its non-political character still make sense?*" The editor expressed her opinion that every individual and organisation enjoyed complete freedom to participate in political life, but always subject to the over-riding consideration that no action of theirs compromise the Jewish community as a whole¹⁷.

The Board's Public Relations committee condemned the editorial¹⁸. While conceding the editor's right to differ, they intimated that she should have consulted the Board prior to

¹⁵ Melamet in a letter to Saron, 12 July 1951

¹⁶ 13.7.51

¹⁷ ibid

¹⁸ 18 July, 1951. Both Horwitz and Saron sent letters of complaint to the editor, 19.7.51

publication¹⁹. The Cape Council disagreed and sent a telegram²⁰, stating that the Chronicle was not the mouthpiece of the Board. Melamet wrote to Saron²¹ that there was absolute agreement on the Council that the Board could not sit as a Board of Censors and examine everything that appeared in the paper, which was independent and entitled to its own opinions. The basic point of disagreement that had arisen, and not resolved, was the degree of responsibility the Board had for the actions of affiliated bodies. In the Cape's view, the Board was responsible for the actions of its affiliated bodies, and this necessitated greater control over their decisions. The Board in Johannesburg believed that this was impossible. The most it could do was to appeal to affiliated bodies to conduct themselves responsibly²².

8.2 Conferences and Public Relations

In his keynote address at the Annual Cape Committee Conference, 22 March, 1953, the Chairman of the Board, N Philips, stated that members of the Jewish community should shoulder their full

¹⁹ The Board has not lost its penchant of attempting to gag opinions which it feels should not be made public. The Council of Natal Jewry (the CNJ, the Board's regional committee in Durban) protested strongly to a notice of a public meeting organised by the Natal Zionist Council (NZC), in which one of the items to be discussed was the relationship between the CNJ and the NZC (Hashalom, Oct 1994). In a letter to the chairman of the NZC (13.10.94), the President of the CNJ declared: "Correct procedure would have required that we be informed of your intention to discuss our organisation prior to promoting this to the entire Jewish community."

²⁰ 20.7.51

²¹ 27.7.51

²² This debate foreshadowed the controversy over the actions of individual Jews, active in the anti-apartheid movements, and the degree of responsibility the Board and the community had for their [subversive, anti-government] deeds.

responsibilities as citizens. Although the Jewish community could not speak with one voice in the political field, it was incumbent upon individuals to play their full part, while the Board itself strove to improve relations and achieve better understanding between the Jew and his neighbour through *Hasbara*²³. In the course of his address he praised the Government for having adhered to a policy of non-discrimination, obviously referring to having discarded anti-Semitism. These principles were restated at the Golden Jubilee Congress in 1953²⁴: the Board did not get embroiled in Party politics while the individual had the right to belong to any Party and to uphold its principles²⁵.

In his report to the Annual Conference of the Cape Deputies on March 27, 1955, Saron spoke on the subject of the widespread misunderstanding that existed regarding the attitude adopted by Jews to the current problems of SA. He explained that from its inception the Board had made it clear that it was not a political body but was concerned with safeguarding the rights and interests of the Jewish community. It could not and did not advocate any policies in regard to the complex racial problems of the country. However Jews could exert their influence in the direction of good-will, the promotion of justice and fair dealings towards all races, even though there could be no collective "Jewish" policy in these matters.

The 20th Congress in September 1955 strove to imbue several of

²³ enlightenment through knowledge/information

²⁴ 29.5 - 1.6.53

²⁵ Saron reiterated these principles in his speech to the Congress, emphasising that there was no collective Jewish attitude or a Jewish vote. (Jewish Affairs, May 1960, "Fifty Years and the changes they brought")

its resolutions with the Jewish ethos of justice and righteousness. In his address I A Maisels, President of the Board, said that the welfare of the community was inseparable from that of the country as a whole. While reaffirming the Board's neutrality, Congress qualified this stance by reiterating its belief that the racial policies of SA should be based on principles of justice and respect for fundamental human rights²⁶. The 21st Congress in 1958 reaffirmed this position²⁷. Both the Report to Congress²⁸ and the debate in the plenary session dealt with the pressures that were being exerted on the Board. On the one hand, there were anti-Government critics who called for an explicit statement on controversial racial issues. On the other hand, there were pro-Government elements, particularly the Afrikaans press, which looked to the Jewish community for signs of support for Government policies, notably on racial issues. The Report endeavoured to explain to overseas critics, who tended to interpret the community's attitude as one of callousness or indifference to the burning issues of the country, that the Board's lack of intervention was not actuated by indifference but arose from the belief that it was not the function of the Board to enter the political arena other than in matters of specific Jewish concern²⁹. In regard to the Jewish

²⁶ Resolution adopted at 1958 Congress

²⁷ Adhering to this policy the Board issued a statement to Die Transvaler, 18.3.58, that they regarded as deplorable the appeals to the Jewish community made by C Zeff and Lefin, Jewish nationalists, which had appeared the previous day in the newspaper.

²⁸ September 1955 to March 1958

²⁹ Of course, the overseas response was usually that it WAS a matter of specific Jewish concern that official policy in SA was based on institutionalised racial discrimination, since there was nothing to stop the government from including the Jews in this web of discrimination, if they should so wish.

ministry, the Board had taken the position that they had the right, and indeed the duty, of speaking to the community on the relevance of Jewish religious and ethical principles to everyday problems, but the rabbis should do so in moderate and sober language and with a due sense of public responsibility.

In opening the Public Relations session, Saron stressed that the Board was not competent to act or to express views on general questions of national policy. Even if there had been unanimity among Jews, it was doubtful whether the adoption of a collective group attitude would be in the interests either of the community itself, or of the country as a whole. Thus, the Board's formula was further refined: it was not the function of the Board to take any collective political stand; it was not possible to define such a stand, because no collective attitude existed; and even if there had been unanimity in the community, taking a collective stance would have been detrimental to the community and to the country.

The highlight of the Board's efforts during this period to ingratiate the Jewish community with the wider non-Jewish community was publication of The Jews of South Africa³⁰.

The book was launched at a symposium in February 1956. The first speaker, Professor C J Uys, professor of history at the University of OFS, made some very controversial statements. He urged Jews to find salvation in the Bible and the Synagogue not in Capitalism or Communism, "*which was essentially a Jewish conception*". He enjoined the Jews to take a closer interest in the Afrikaans language and culture and to establish closer

³⁰ edited by Saron and Hotz, and published by Oxford University Press. The book itself was an anthology covering the growth and development of South African Jewry from the earliest days until about 1910.

relations with Afrikaners. Anti-Semitism on the part of the Afrikaner was "unhistorical", he stated, and had broken out largely because the Jews had abandoned the Afrikaner during the Anglo-Boer war³¹.

Ellen Hellman disputed his basic thesis that Jews should associate almost exclusively with Afrikaners, contending that as citizens they should feel a wider loyalty and should identify with the whole of SA and with all sections of its population³². There was a tendency in political life for Afrikaners to label any Jew, whose statements were disagreeable, as a Jew, and to treat him as representative of the community at large, and this was a measure of the non-acceptance of Jews as equals³³.

8.3 The Problematics of Formulating A Public Relations Policy Towards the Afrikaner Community

8.3.1 The Similarities and Differences Between the Jewish and Afrikaner Communities

By 1948 it could not be denied that Jews had assimilated into the English cultural community. Apart from the relations which had developed in the pre-capitalist economy between the Jewish smous and the Afrikaner rural population, contact between Jew and Afrikaner had been minimal. It was widely believed that in the rural areas there had been cordial relations in the past between Afrikaners and Jews but that urbanisation had broken

³¹ Historically this is not correct as there are accounts of Jews fighting by the side of the Boers. One example of many was presented by Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz, Herman Judelowitz, in a lecture on June 6, 1948. Sammy Marks made contributions to the Boer effort. (See R Mendelsohn, *Sammy Marks: the Uncrowned King of the Transvaal*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1991).

³² South African Jewish Times, 17.2.56

³³ ibid

these links. "It is sad but true that apart from commercial and professional contact, there is, on the whole, little social contact between Jew and non-Jew in the cities³⁴." Nonetheless, comparisons between Jew and Afrikaner were not infrequently drawn by Afrikaner spokesmen. The Administrator of the Orange Free State, J J Fouche, for example, highlighted the "clear and marked resemblance between the Jews and the Afrikaners" in a speech in honour of C Hyman, Minister of Israel³⁵. One of the most singular similarities was the preoccupation in defining their identity. The perennial question of "Who is a Jew?" was mirrored in the question "Who is an Afrikaner?". Chris Barnard, the Afrikaans writer, asked why the Afrikaner posed this question so frequently.

Is it because there is a greater uncertainty here? Is it because we feel threatened in greater measure than other nations? Is it because the Afrikaner is not geographically demarcated but feels encircled sometimes, even threatened, within the borders of his own country? The answer to all three questions is, yes³⁶.

One of the most striking similarities could be perceived in that both laid great store by a feeling of a common historical experience. In both Afrikaner nationalism and in Judaism this expressed itself in an inexorable determination to ensure survival. Both nations were prepared to defend their land and their own way of life³⁷. This was intimately related to an

³⁴ Markowitz, Arthur, "Spotlight on Jews", Jewish Affairs, October 1947, pp 13-16

³⁵ On 8.11.52. Memorandum from Rich to Executive Council and Secretaries of Provincial Committees, 17.11.52

³⁶ Buurman, September 1970. The Buurman was an Afrikaans-language journal published by the Jewish Board of Deputies, as one of the vehicles for improved relationship with the Afrikaner community.

³⁷ ibid

attachment to language and culture. Just as Hebrew was the holy language of Judaism, Afrikaans gave "Africanerism" its identity. Dr N Diedrichs, a future President of the Republic, highlighted what was to him another feature common to both peoples, and that was their sense of a God-given calling³⁸. The Afrikaners, too, believed that God had chosen them for a special destiny, to be a "light unto the nations" of Africa³⁹. However, Diedrichs, in contending that there was a similarity because Judaism had the mission to carry the belief in the one God to the heathens, was demonstrating his ignorance of Jewish belief, where the concept means serving as a model and an example. It was not a command to impose the belief in the God of Israel on other nations. Nevertheless, Christian Nationalism incorporated this concept of the 'chosen-people with a sacred mission', its terminology replete with references from the Jewish Bible⁴⁰, as a theological defense of Afrikaner nationalism and hegemony in politics⁴¹. The Great Trek (1836-1838) assumed momentous importance in the development of Afrikaner Nationalism⁴², and this evoked a strong sense of identity with the Israelites wandering in the Desert. Afrikaner historiography portrayed many

³⁸ Inspan, official organ of the Reddingsdaadbond and the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge, April 1948; See also D Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom and the Afrikaner Civil Religion, California Press, 1975; S Patterson, The Last Trek, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957, pp 176-178.

³⁹ Moodie, T Dunbar, The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion, University of California Press, 1975; Van Jaarsveld, pp 16, 24-25; Hermann Giliomee, The Development of the Afrikaner's Self-Concept, p 14; Die Transvaler, 19.9.53

⁴⁰ ibid

⁴¹ Bloomberg, 1990, pp 13-18

⁴² Dr N Diedrichs, Inspan, 1948

trekkers as interpreting the Old Testament as their own story⁴³. The British were perceived as Pharaoh while the Afrikaners were seen as Israel. Comparisons with the ancient Israelites were often made⁴⁴. Voortrekker terminology, also, was replete with phrases derived from the Bible, such as "*the land of milk and honey*", "*the promised land*", "*the God of our fathers*"⁴⁵.

Moreover, Afrikaners identified strongly with the demand that the Jewish nation should once more live in its own national home. During the 1950's, commendation of Israel as a model for the Afrikaner became commonplace⁴⁶. In spite of the record of animosity towards Jews in their midst, Afrikaners identified with Israel⁴⁷. The Jews were God's chosen people and the Saviour was born out of the chosen people. The anguish of the Jews in Palestine was analogous to the grim suffering and deprivation experienced by the Afrikaner during the Anglo-Boer war. Malan, as he stood on Mount Carmel in Israel, declared that civilisation, as the Afrikaners conceived it, had its origin on the eastern coasts of the Mediterranean, thus giving recognition to the contribution of Israel to the faith of mankind and to Afrikaners' indebtedness to it⁴⁸.

⁴³ The Friend, 9.8.43 - This observation was made by N Kirscher, the chairman of the South African Zionist Federation.

⁴⁴ See Van Jaarsveld F A, *The Afrikaner's Interpretation of History*, Simondium Publishers: Cape Town, 1964, pp 1-33

⁴⁵ *Nystroom*

⁴⁶ Shimoni, 1980, p 214

⁴⁷ Kruger Jannie, "Afrikaners and Jews", Jewish Affairs, June 1967, pp 33 - 36

⁴⁸ ibid

However, while religious awareness⁴⁹ laid the foundation for the esteem in which the Jewish People were held by the Afrikaner, it also created enmity for not accepting Christianity. Hostility towards Jews, the outsiders, was thus inherent in the political Afrikaner identity⁵⁰. In its original setting, Afrikaner nationalism had emerged as an Afrikaner minority movement in Afrikanerdom⁵¹. However, gradually the voice of those Afrikaners who wished to equate *Volk* and Nation, and to exclude non-Afrikaners, began to prevail. Afrikanerism became equated not only with whiteness, language and the Calvinist faith, but with a political creed.

The White population of our country, which is in the minority, can remain white only if they retain their consciousness of colour...national pride, their pride as a race...The White race in SA [could] be maintained only if the Whites held the franchise in their hands⁵².

⁴⁹ Van Jaarsveld, Patterson, Moodie and others.

⁵⁰ See Furlong 1987 and Giliomee, 1987 for an analysis of the decisive influence of Calvinism on the formation of Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner identity.

⁵¹ See Bloomberg, 1990 as well as most of the writings of Hermann Giliomee.

⁵² Giliomee quoting J G Strydom, the future Prime Minister, in 1949. (Hermann Giliomee Hermann, "The Development of Afrikaner's Self-concept", in *Looking at the Afrikaner Today*, compiled by Hendrik W. Van der Merwe, Tafelberg, 1975, pp 1-39, 1975, p 26. See also Shelia Patterson, The Long Trek, Routledge and Keegan Ltd., 1957. Giliomee surmises that contrary to the notion that the Afrikaner succeeded in "keeping the white race pure" because his philosophy in life was rooted in the Christian faith, it was because he was white that he remained a Christian. To be white was symbolic of belonging to a class which claimed dominance in a multi-racial society. Religion defined citizenship. On the frontiers, where all non-whites were heathen at the end of the 18th century, being a Christian was not only factually synonymous with being white; it was also the justification for white political and economic domination. This

It is, thus, ironic that precisely those features which were sacrosanct to the Afrikaner - separation, survival and perpetuation, and a sense of being a "chosen People" with a God-given mission, came to be denigrated and despised in the Jews. One reason for this was Jewish 'liberalism', both feared and denounced by so many NP speakers.

8.3.2 The Attitude of the Jews towards Afrikaner Nationalism

In giving an overview of the relations between Jews and Afrikaners in 1956⁵³, Max Melamet⁵⁴ argued that it was important to distinguish between Afrikanerdom and the NP, the two terms not being synonymous. Opposition to the NP was not intended to be, and was not, opposition to Afrikanerdom⁵⁵.

He emphasised that Jews had facilitated the entry of Afrikaners to the commercial and industrial life of SA. In reference to the controversial subject of the political relations between them, he unhesitatingly proclaimed:

Like most Jews I did not equate Nationalism with Afrikanerism...Jews found it quite possible to reconcile political opposition to Nationalism with sympathy for the Afrikaner's cultural and national aspirations."

A Nationalist thinker had told him that in the 1930's the Afrikaner had had his back against the wall, was fighting for his very existence and could afford no compromises; whoever was

was underscored by the concept of "*the chosen People*" which was imbued with the conviction that it was the Afrikaner's God-given task to civilise and Christianise the non-whites. The Jew in such a context was an anomaly.

⁵³ Melamet Max, "*Jews, Afrikaners and Nationalists*", Jewish Affairs, May 1956, pp 8-12

⁵⁴ chairman of the Cape Council of the Board

⁵⁵ ibid, pp 9-10

not his avowed friend had to be treated as an opponent. There may have been truth to that assertion, but at that time Jews themselves had been engaged in a life-and-death struggle for survival in Europe. The Jew, just as much as the Afrikaner, believed he had his back to the wall and was fighting for his very existence. "He too could afford no compromises. People were either pro- or anti-Nazi⁵⁶". The 1938 election was often cited as proof of the Jews' implacable hostility to the legitimate aspirations of Afrikanerdom. It was true that they had fought the NP, Melamet argued, but this was not because they wanted to harm Afrikanerdom.

I did not identify the Malanites with Afrikanerdom. I fought them for purely political reasons because of their anti-Jewish attitudes...not because I was in any way antagonistic towards the cultural and other aspirations of the Afrikaner.

In response to Melamet's article, W Pienaar, the assistant editor of Die Burger, questioned whether Jews could, in fact, be regarded as allies⁵⁷. Whereas the Afrikaner had opened the sub-continent for civilisation, foreigners, he claimed, first the British and then the Jews, had come along and built upon these foundations. The Afrikaner had extended his hospitality to the Jews, but they had predominantly identified themselves with the non-Afrikaans community, which was, at that time anti-Afrikaans. Pienaar ascribed to Jews a major part in the breaking up of the Government in 1933. "The Afrikaner felt that he was fighting for his life. He who had as much right to be in this country and to be acknowledged, had to endure hate, contempt and humiliation"⁵⁸. Pienaar's primary thesis was that a pre-

⁵⁶ ibid, p 11

⁵⁷ W Pienaar, "Afrikaners and Jews", Jewish Affairs June 1956

⁵⁸ ibid

requisite to good relations between the Jewish and Afrikaner communities was support for the NP. He demanded, in essence, that a "large section" of the community identify with the national strivings of the Afrikaner people, as espoused by the NP.

I want to posit as the first demand that the Jews must understand that the National Party is more than a political Party. Historically and also today it is a national movement which is sustained by its striving to achieve for the Afrikaner recognition as a complete nation...Only then will we have a foundation for natural relations between Jews and Afrikaners⁵⁹.

In assessing the two articles, it is quite evident that there was a vast difference between Melamet's and Pienaar's perception of history⁶⁰. Melamet conceived the economic relations between Jews and Afrikaners as a mutuality of interest, whereas Pienaar viewed it as a competition of interests. Whereas Melamet believed that opposition to the NP on political grounds should not be equated to opposition to the legitimate national aspirations of Afrikanerdom, Pienaar rejected this on the grounds that the NP was the rightful and only representative of the Afrikaner National Movement. Improved relations, therefore, depended on the extent to which the Jews were prepared to "Afrikanize" themselves and to come closer to the viewpoint of the NP⁶¹.

⁵⁹ ibid

⁶⁰ See the editorial of Jewish Affairs, July 1956

⁶¹ Subsequently Melamet had a luncheon meeting Schalk Pienaar who complained that Jewish Affairs had not acted fairly with him. He had been approached by Saron to contribute an article, and when he submitted it he had warned Saron that it might cause controversy and the magazine did not have to publish it. To his great surprise and embarrassment the editorial had attacked his article. Even more surprising was that in the following issue there was a letter to the editor from Etienne

Henry Katzew⁶², although a great admirer of the Afrikaner nation, attempted to demonstrate that Apartheid exacerbated the problems of the Afrikaners because, rather than assuring survival, it endangered the future of Afrikanerdom. He proposed that the richness of Jewish history and heritage could guide the Afrikaner people in implementing a policy which would be beneficial, without being oppressive or detrimental to the Black population of SA. While he felt deep sympathy for their fight for self-preservation, he regarded the means as reprehensible⁶³. Jews felt a keen sympathy for the Black man, for they too had suffered⁶⁴. He proposed that the Cape Province should become an Afrikaner Republic, in which the Afrikaner would be sovereign, as the Jew was sovereign in Israel. In this Republic, his language, freedom and racial purity would be maintained and assured. The rest of SA would be a "Mixed State" with equal opportunities for everyone, where unrestricted immigration would be allowed⁶⁵.

8.3.3 Formulating Public Relations Policy Towards the Afrikaner Community

At the 17th biannual Congress of the Jewish Board of Deputies in 1949, Dr H Sonnabend⁶⁶ attempted to refute the allegation that the Jews were an obstacle to Afrikaner nationalism. The alleged

Malan who conveyed the impression that only Afrikaners in the NP who shared his views, not those who were in the UP camp.
(Melamet in a report to Rich, 17.1.57)

⁶² editor of the Zionist Record and the columnist "Karl Lameer"

⁶³ Dagbreek, 9.1.55

⁶⁴ Post, 10.3.58

⁶⁵ Dagbreek, 22.5.55

⁶⁶ a member of the Executive Council

Jewish hostility to Afrikanerdom, he said, was a misrepresentation⁶⁷. Edel Horwitz, the chairman of the Executive Council, then addressed the problem of the Jewish attitude towards the Afrikaners⁶⁸. An important aspect, he explained, of the question of Afrikaner-Jewish relations was the anti-Semitism of the Die Transvaler during the Nazi era. The paper had generated great bitterness and this had not yet evaporated. He expressed the hope that the time would come when the breach would be healed. He emphasised the importance the Board and the community placed on knowing Afrikaans, its literature and their eagerness to participate in the process of creation mutual understanding and goodwill. Personal contact and friendly relations, on an individual basis, were desirable and important. Despite cultural differences, both had in common an abiding love for SA, concern for the country's welfare and a strong faith in its future.

Notwithstanding the criticism voiced by Adolph Schauder, Vice President of the Board and former mayor of Port Elizabeth⁶⁹, in 1950, that the Board had failed to realise that times had changed and it was necessary to accept the gestures of friendship that were being made on the part of the Afrikaner community⁷⁰, the Board was actually very conscious of the need to improve relations with the Afrikaner community. Already at the Public Relations meeting on 29 February 1950 it had been resolved that there should be closer cultural contact. In the course of 1950 a brochure on Jewish holidays appeared in

⁶⁷ Jewish Affairs, June, 1949

⁶⁸ Letter to Die Transvaler, 22.6.51

⁶⁹ 1940-42

⁷⁰ "We must live in goodwill with the Afrikaners in a spirit of tolerance, friendship and mutual respect." 10.1.50

Afrikaans⁷¹, while a cultural relations sub-committee was established. A memorandum⁷² set down the guideline that all programmes should be conducted in both Afrikaans and English. It recommended that special attention be given to programmes aimed at the Afrikaans and English-speaking communities, and at furthering the ideal of a broad South African nationhood and healthier inter-group relations.

Gus Saron placed before the Public Relations sub-committee, at the 17 January 1951 meeting, a number of recommendations which focused exclusively on the relations between Jews and the Afrikaner community with a view to creating a more favourable attitude on the part of the Afrikaans-speaking section. It was also decided that there should be greater social and cultural contacts to promote mutual understanding. On 23 February 1951 these proposals⁷³ were submitted for the approval of the Executive and approved on the 29 of August⁷⁴.

⁷¹ Minutes of PR meeting, 31.8.50 as well as Report to Congress, 1949 to 1951, 23. In fact the bulk of the PR activities were aimed at the Afrikaner community, as witnessed by the publication of pamphlets in Afrikaans, endeavours to invite Afrikaners to address Jewish audiences, and Jews to address Afrikaans speaking audiences, the effort to inculcate the need for bilingualism in the Jewish community. This is also reflected in the subsequent publication of the Board's quarterly in Afrikaans Buurman (neighbour). (See sections on PR in the Reports to Congress during this period.

⁷² undated

⁷³ drafted by the sub-committee of PR committee on 15.12.50

⁷⁴ Minutes of Executive Council meeting, 19.10.53. In 1953 Rabbi Weiler, the Chief Rabbi of the Reform Congregation, presented the Mayor of Germiston with a Bible translated into Afrikaans. In the course of the ceremony he said that it was unfortunate that the Jews knew so little about Afrikaner culture. ((Rich in a memorandum to the Executive, 17.3.53)

The efficacy of the programmes, which, aimed at making the community more Afrikaner orientated, was discussed at the 22 May 1956 Public Relations meeting after the chairman, N Philips, had asked whether this was the main task of the committee and Saron had responded that the increasing Afrikanerisation of the country had made it necessary to find more points of contact. Similar sentiments were expressed by Max Melamet at a meeting of the Cape Council on 6 March 1957. He regretted that efforts to establish better and closer relations with the Afrikaner community had, hitherto, failed lamentably. The key to the creation of better understanding⁷⁵, he maintained, lay in learning Afrikaans.

I am not leading an exodus of Jewish voters. I am not referring at all to politics when I speak of getting closer. We want the Afrikaner to get to know a little more about the Jew as a man. At the same time we want the Jew to get to know the Afrikaner as a man, as a person - to acquire some understanding of his mind..⁷⁶

However, although the subject was discussed on many occasions by the Board and affiliated organisations, there was a conspicuous lack of interest⁷⁷. It can be seen, then, that the Board was preoccupied with improving relations with the Afrikaner community, the topic intermittently being raised at Public Relations meeting. At the same time, the fact that the discussions interminably covered the same ground illustrates the extent of their failure to actuate them. Although the Board had

⁷⁵ Dagbreek, 7.6.59 reported that there was a growing tendency for Jewish businessmen to prefer Afrikaners as business partners.

⁷⁶ Cape Council Meeting, Minutes of 6.3.57

⁷⁷ examples: at the PR meeting of the CNJ 24.2.57 the proposal to teach Afrikaans was rejected. At the PR meeting on 29.4.59 Greenberg complained that there was a lack of interest in Afrikaans culture and language

failed dismally to bring the communities into closer contact, it can be argued that its efforts contributed towards counteracting anti-Semitic propaganda, and, therefore, to defusing anti-Semitism. It must not be forgotten, however, that this concealed the reality that anti-Semitism lay dormant, largely because during this period Jews were not perceived as threatening Afrikaner nationalism. The preponderance of Jews in anti-Apartheid movements of the 1960s was to precipitate an upsurge of anti-Semitic rhetoric.

8.4 Jewish Loyalty Questioned: Israel in the UNO, 1952-1958

Israel's success in liberating herself from British imperial rule and her victory over the Arab countries won the empathy of Afrikaner Nationalists who identified with her predicament, perceiving great similarities between both countries. However, in the course of time it became increasingly evident that this was not being reciprocated by Israel. They were affronted that while they had treated Israel as the 'chosen one', Israel, by taking an anti-South African stand, had dealt with SA rather "as one who had been driven from the Synagogue"⁷⁸.

On November 1952 Israel supported the Asian-Arab proposal of a Commission of Enquiry into the policy of Apartheid, despite a Western "middle course proposal". Die Burger commented that of all the votes on South African affairs heard by the UNO, "that of the State of Israel caused the greatest surprise"⁷⁹. The paper contended that by her vote Israel had shown a complete lack of insight into SA's problems, a blatant ingratitude for the support she had received from successive SA Governments, and

⁷⁸ Kruger, 1967

⁷⁹ Die Burger, 20.11.52, translated and discussed at the PR meeting 24.11.52; Shimoni, 1980, 221

disregard towards public opinion, especially that of the Afrikaner. The issue of Jewish 'dual loyalty', was raised by Die O.B.⁸⁰ when it asked the following rhetorical questions:

To which country do the South African Jews owe loyalty? To South Africa or to Israel? And if the South African Jews are loyal towards Israel, what right have they to claim South African citizenship?

Fouche⁸¹, the Administrator of the OFS, similarly asserted if Israel continued to side against SA in future, this would create a problem for the South African Jew. It would be impossible for him to maintain a loyalty to 'two fatherlands'. This was the present "Jewish Problem". Any indication that Jews had 'dual loyalty' would create "repercussions" for the community⁸². In the same vein Die Burger regarded Israel's failure to support SA at the UNO as a failure of the Board of Deputies and of the SAZF who had been derelict in their duty and therefore not true and loyal South Africans⁸³.

The Board spent many long nights trying to find a suitable response to this delicate matter. Eventually it stated that while Jews, as loyal South Africans, could not support Israel's stance against Apartheid, Israel as an independent state, had

⁸⁰ 10.1.51

⁸¹ In a speech in honour of Mr C Hyman, Minister of Israel, and Mrs Hyman, 8.11.52

⁸² An urgent meeting of the OFS Executive of the Board met in Bloemfontein on 11.12.52. The members felt uneasy at the suspicion cast on Jewish loyalty. The Secretary of the Board, Jacob Rich, was invited to the meeting where he expressed the view that there was very little that the Board could do under present circumstances. It could not ask the community to subscribe less to Israel funds or mitigate its enthusiasm for Zionist causes.

⁸³ Die Burger, 20.11.52

the right to formulate the foreign policy which served best her own interests. South African Jews were not citizens of Israel. They could not influence her foreign policies, nor could they claim any right to do so. Since there were Jewish minorities in numerous countries, it was imperative that Israel take up an attitude in support of the principle of human rights⁸⁴. The appropriate strategy would be to open a mission in Israel which could argue SA's case, thus reciprocating the diplomatic mission which Israel had opened in July 1949⁸⁵. However, the Government consistently ignored these appeals, opening a mission only in 1972⁸⁶.

8.5 Controversy Over "Neutrality" Towards Apartheid, 1948-1958

Following the institutionalising of Apartheid, the Board endured pressures from all sides: from the left, members of the community who insisted that it make an unequivocal condemnation of Apartheid policy; on the right it was counselled to adopt a more pro-Government stance. While this dichotomy existed within the Jewish community itself, Afrikaners, sceptical of the Board's neutrality, fearing that it was hostile towards the aspirations of Afrikaner nationalism, imposed external constraints on the Board. Added to this, the Board had to contend with the criticism of overseas journals and organisations. The following sub-chapters deal with these conflicting pressures.

⁸⁴ Die Transvaler, 6.12.58

⁸⁵ Shimoni, 1980, p 222

⁸⁶ Shimoni, 1980, pp 222-223. We can only speculate as to the reason, but perhaps it possible to attribute the government's tardiness to the fact that Louw was the Minister of Foreign Affairs during this period.

8.5.1 The Liberal Critique of "Neutrality"

Whatever a 'liberal' is in other parts of the world, in the Republic of SA the definition of a liberal was obfuscated. In general terms, a liberal was defined as a person who was against discrimination, supported civil liberties and wanted to uplift under-privileged sections of the population. The local meaning of the word became a little blurred when one strived to establish exactly what kind of political order was desired¹. Though liberal in the **South African political context**, the average Jew tended to be conservative in other respects, without detracting from his/her integrity.

Opposition to discrimination, which comes naturally to a Jewish community, has often caused its protagonists in South Africa to be classified by opponents as leftist liberals, although the left and right in South African politics cannot be equated with these trends elsewhere in the world².

At least four major premises underlay the liberal position. In the first place, Jewish liberals contended that Judaism provided definitive guidelines as to how to respond to the oppressive system of Apartheid: Jewish ethics and morals demanded of the Jew to actively oppose the injustices of the system. Much of the liberal argumentation was anchored in Jewish ethics and morality. Segal and Jacobson³ debated on whether lessons could be derived from Judaism. Professor Julius Lewin⁴ was convinced that the Jewish tradition was a liberal and progressive one and

¹ Harry Schwarz, "South African Jewry: Political Attitudes and Interactions", in *South African Jewry: A Survey*, edited by Marcus Arkin, 1984, p 142

² *ibid*, p 143

³ *Commentary*, "Apartheid and South African Jewry: An Exchange", November 1957, pp 424-431

⁴ Senior Lecturer of African Law at Wits University

it was wrong for the Jews of SA to deny or disguise this fact⁵. Second, the experience of persecution, and especially the Holocaust, had sensitized the Jew to the sufferings of others, and impelled him to oppose the evils inherent in the South African social system. The Board was accused of not championing the oppressed of SA, thus betraying the experience of Jewish suffering.

Third, the self-interest of the Jews as an ethnic minority evoked the realisation that the fight against all forms of discrimination was indivisible. The constant apprehension that the NP could re-adopt a formal policy of anti-Semitism, therefore, made the community natural allies of the oppressed non-Europeans. Solly Sachs⁶, the General Secretary of the Transvaal Garment Workers Union, for example, was adamant that the NP, if it suited them, would not hesitate to direct their weapons against Jews⁷. Senator Rubin, a past Native representative in the House of Assembly and a member of the Labour Party who emigrated in 1959 to the USA, asked rhetorically: was not racialism indivisible and, therefore, Apartheid contained an implied threat to any racial minority?⁸

⁵ From his talk to the Yiddische Folk Shule as reported in Jewish Observer and Middle East Review, 8.5.64, p 11

⁶ an important member of the Labour Party and a leading executive member of the SA Trades and Labour Council. His brother, Barnard Sachs, described him as being so clerical that he was called "The Rabbi" long after he had become a full-blown atheist. (Sachs, 1948, p 226)

⁷ for example his statement outside SA when he represented the South African trades and Labour Council at the Commonwealth Trade Unions Conference in 1950 (Jewish Chronicle, 28.7.50) as 21.5.65.

⁸ "Afrikaner Nationalism and the Jews", Africa South, April-June, 1957, p 29

Fourth, by disregarding the imperative to oppose the Apartheid system, the Jewish leadership was abdicating its role as the bearer of normative Judaism. It was failing to provide a model for the community in general and for the youth in particular, and was, thus, in danger of losing its value as a focus of identification. Shimoni⁹ points out that it was the unaffiliated Jews who expressed, in their deeds, the dictates of Jewish social justice whereas the identifying Jew refrained from doing so. This contributed to the alienation of the youth, who tended to view Judaism as irrelevant, thus alienating an important section of Jewish youth from positive identification with the organised Jewish community¹⁰.

Ronald Segal, erstwhile editor of "African South"¹¹, further argued that unless Jews, as a collective unit, carried out the imperatives of their Jewishness, there could be no validity for institutionalised Jewish collective existence¹². In response,

⁹ Shimoni, G and Herman S, "The Jewish Community in the Apartheid Society of South Africa", Study circle on Diaspora Judaism in the home of the President of Israel, The Institute of Contemporary Judaism, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1973, pp 20-21. See also "The Jewish Scene", Geoffrey Wigoder's column in the Jerusalem Post, 31.8.77. Shimoni pointed out the tragic irony that the marginal Jews were closer to traditional Jewish ethics than the official community. This was the price that the Board had to pay for not committing "Judaism" to a stand on the racial issues of the country, thus, among other consequences, alienating university students.

¹⁰ Gideon Shimoni, 1971, pp 7-10

¹¹ Africa South was sharply critical of the government and the whole social system. It provided a platform for those forces prepared to challenge Apartheid and the whole ideology of white supremacy. In July 1959 Segal was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act from attending any public meetings for five years, although he was avowedly non-Communist.

¹² Segal, 1957, pp 424-431

Saron denied that the Jews had abdicated Jewish values; on the contrary, they were sensitive to the teachings of Judaism and were alive to the moral issues involved in racial discrimination. The dilemma was not a specific Jewish one but confronted all persons who subscribed to the ethical values of Judeo-Christian civilisation¹³.

Throughout the period covered, Jewish names were prominent in the opposition to Apartheid, their prominence particularly marked during the Treason Trial, which began in December 1956. Of the 23 whites who stood trial, of which at least 12 were Jews¹⁴. The defence counsel was led by I A Maisels while the prosecutor was Oswald Pirow. This meant that a prominent Jewish communal leader was defending those who desired to overthrow white supremacy against an opponent who was an ex-Nazi supporter and an extreme Afrikaner nationalist¹⁵. The trial itself had remarkably little impact on the Jewish public as none of the Jews on trial had been associated with communal affairs¹⁶pite the prominence of Jews in the opposition, it must be borne in mind that this activism characterised only a small segment of the Jewish population. Katzew, while acknowledging that moral neutrality was reprehensible, and that it was incumbent upon the Jew to protest the immorality of white domination over the black majority, pointed out that Senator Leslie Rubin, who had fought

¹³ Gus Saron, "The Jews in Complex South Africa", Jewish Affairs, February 1972, pp 6-9

¹⁴ including Joe Slovo and his wife Ruth First

¹⁵ Shimoni, 1980, p 228; 1988, pp 11-12

¹⁶ Jewish Chronicle, London, 11.6.57 and Shimoni, 1980, pp 227-229

tooth and nail against Government policy, was now in exile¹⁷.

With compelling inherent socioeconomic factors reinforcing their position within the white racial group, for the most part Jews conformed to the norms of English-speaking Whites. Empirical studies published in the 1970's indicated that the political preferences of Jews tended to be much the same as those of English-speaking non-Jews of the same socioeconomic status¹⁸.

The most vociferous opponent of the Board's policy was Jewish Opinion¹⁹, the official organ of the Jewish Democratic Association (JDA), a group with an affinity to communist ideology²⁰. In its July 1954 newsletter Jewish Opinion attacked the Board's policy not to participate in political life and to concentrate efforts exclusively on Jewish affairs and Jewish interests. The journalist condemned the policy of neutrality towards the suppression and injustice committed in SA. He reminded the leaders that in the days of Tsarist oppression, when Hitler-barbarians had aimed to exterminate the Jewish people, the Jews had justifiably complained that the peoples of the world had not rallied to their defence. Under such

¹⁷ Henry Katzew, "Dialogue: South African Jews and Politics: Another View", Africa Report, May 1970, pp 22-23

¹⁸ Shimoni, 1988, p 12

¹⁹ The newsletter was established in April 1954 and continued to appear until about June 1962

²⁰ The leader of the JDA, and probably the editor of Jewish Opinion, was M Szur, an erstwhile member of the Board of Deputies. The group comprised of a small group of grass-roots Jews, remnants of the leftist Yiddish groupings, such as Yiddisher Arbeter Club (Shimoni, 1980, 289). Indicative, perhaps of its policies is the fact that it often reflected the opinions of the Soviet Union. It is significant that M Szur, together with J Slovo, Sam Kahn, Michael Harmel, A Fischer, signed a statement condemning Israel, Britain and France for their acts of aggression against Egypt in October 1956 (New Age, 8.11.56). (Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu also signed the petition)

circumstances, how could the community maintain a neutral stance in the face of the various laws and regulations passed with the aim to keep the Africans in slavery?

It is disgraceful that this attitude is being propagated by persons, groups and bodies who continually talk of Judaism and of the teachings of the Prophets, and by their actions violate the ethics of justice and humanity²¹.

The April 1955 issue of Jewish Opinion censured the Jews for their indifference to the plight of the Blacks, drawing a parallel between this and the disinterest of the non-Jew to the plight of the Jew in the Holocaust. It was the duty of the Jew to make sacrifices, even endanger himself, in order to assist the African. The October issue accused the Board of following a policy of "indirect support of the Nationalist government and its evil racialism."

In June 1956 the precariousness of the Jewish community became evident when Professor Julius Lewin published an article in the Nation in the USA. Lewin, a senior lecturer at the Witwatersrand University in African Law and Administration, alleged that, despite their peace with the Government and their general prosperity, Jews in SA felt nervous and were frightened of the "ruling race", the Afrikaners. The Nationalists were determined to keep the Jewish community neutral in politics and the Jews as a whole were not unwilling to accept this role. They enjoyed unprecedented financial success and the Strijdom Government, like the Malan Government, had displayed a cordial attitude towards Israel, granting South African Jews every possible facility to send money and goods there²².

In its September 1956 issue, Jewish Opinion attacked the Board,

²¹ Jewish Opinion, July 1954

²² Die Transvaler, 25.6.56

the SAZF²³ and the Jewish press for failing to oppose the Group Areas Act. The paper expressed outrage at the Act which would cause immeasurable misery for the sole crime of having a skin of a different colour.

Why are we as a community silent when other communities are going through this hell... With the deepest regret we see that the Board of Deputies which claims to be the representative body of the whole Jewish population in South Africa does not find it necessary to take a stand as regards the implementation of the Group Areas Act...

The newsletter denounced the policy of "neutrality" as false. This was precisely the appropriate time to make a stand in accordance to Jewish justice and righteousness. It was the duty of Jews to act. The editorial of the SA Jewish Chronicle²⁴ denigrated this attempt by the Jewish Democratic Association to enlist support. The leaders of SA Jewry had made it clear on more than one occasion that they strongly disapproved of any attempt to establish a Jewish "wing" or branch of any political Party, and they did not wish to prevail upon Jews to participate in SA politics qua Jews.

There is no justification for this self-imposed Apartheid. Those who support the policies and programmes of the Council should experience no difficulty in finding a congenial political home for themselves where, in common with other citizens of other faiths, they can strive for the achievement of their lawful aims.

Evidently Saron had personally appealed to Lovell not to participate in the Group Areas rally, and thus prompted him to write to Phillips, Chairman of the Board²⁵, complaining that the General Secretary had phoned him to suggest ("*ever so politely*")

²³ South African Zionist Federation

²⁴ 14.12.56

²⁵ In a memorandum from Rich to the Secretaries of the Provinces, 17.10.56

that he might consider withdrawing from the symposium on "Group Areas" organised by the JDA. Lovell expressed his indignation at the appeal, emphasising that although there was no Jewish point of view in Party politics, there was a basic and characteristic Jewish point of view concerning political measures which amounted to the oppression of groups solely on the grounds of race. Lovell insisted that the Board could not deny his right, or that of any Jewish group, to express a view opposing that of the Board. It was beyond the Board's mandate to tell him, or any public representative on what platform he should or should not speak or what he should or should not say. Saron's appeal demonstrated that the Board was not immune to the Government's incessant attack on freedom of speech and of association.

I conclude by saying that it is a false neutrality that lends itself to the stifling of criticism of inhuman acts against other groups committed by the Party in power. If this is the price that Jewish Community must pay for its freedom from discrimination, then when its own turn comes (God forbid) what right will it have earned to claim from others any sympathy or consideration.

Phillips replied²⁶ that there had been no intention of depriving Lovell of his right or of any Jew to express an opposite view than that held by the Board. In examining the question of what was the wisest and most appropriate way in which Jews could act, the Executive was unanimously of the opinion that it was contrary to the best interests of the community that Jewish groups should organise politically.

In reaction to the 1957 Rosh Hashanah message of the President of the Board, I Maisels, in which he had urged the community to contribute to healthy relations between all groups, Jewish

²⁶ 22.10.56

Opinion²⁷ condemned the community's silence in the face of the repressive legislation and oppressive measures against the non-white majority. Surely it was its duty to participate in the removal of all signs of persecution and to participate in the removal of all signs of persecution?

The April 1958 issue denounced the Board's constitution as undemocratic. There had not been any proper elections of delegates, and all proposals to democratise had been turned down. The Board professed that it was called upon only to safeguard the rights and the welfare of the Jews in SA, but had achieved very little, as it acted only from fear. The Board, by its false conception of neutrality, had unwittingly assisted the spread of reactionary trends among the Jews of the country; far from promoting understanding towards the Blacks, it had antagonised the majority of the population.

The October issue sought to analyze the relations between the Board and the Zionist Movement. It contended that before 1933, when the Board had not been "under the sway" of Zionism, it had been able to express certain amount of sympathy for and solidarity with other victims of racialism. It had then been recognised that Jews were not safe in an atmosphere of racialism, even if they were not immediately under threat. By the end of the forties, the newsletter went on to argue, the Board had completely come under the control of the Zionists and the stage had been set for a grand "rapprochement" between Nats and Zionists. The Nationalists had seen that Jews were by far the most liberal part of the white population, and it was, therefore, of great importance to them to immobilise them. At the same time the Zionists needed allies and permission to

²⁷ September 1957 issue

transfer funds to Israel. Thus what had formerly been an attitude of sympathy towards the 'underdogs' was turned into a policy of 'neutrality'. The Board's "neutrality" had reached the stage at which official Jewish bodies were thoroughly paralysed, and the Board itself had become a satellite of the Nationalists and their Apartheid policy²⁸.

Jewish Opinion, in line with communist strategy on all Jewish issues²⁹, thus ascribed to "Zionism" the change in the policy from limited involvement in the political arena to total disengagement, ignoring the fact that it was the compelling issue of anti-Semitism that had induced it to collaborate with liberal forces in the pre-1948 period³⁰, and was, at the end of the day, the decisive factor in formulating policy after 1948. The *a priori* assumption expressed in the article in Jewish Opinion was that there was, ostensibly, an exclusivist relation between Zionism and a concern for the justice and equality towards the oppressed populations of the country. The Board could either support one or the other, but could not be committed to both simultaneously. Following this same line of thought, the JDA could not believe that it was possible to be concerned for the non-Whites and to seek a closer relationship with the Afrikaner community at the same time. The Board, and

²⁸ October, 1958

²⁹ for example accusations of the Zionist movement involved in American espionage (Jewish Opinion, July 1955, 4); the communist onslaught on Israel, in which the Jewish Democratic Association (JDA) took part, during the Suez Campaign in 1957; JDA were convinced of Kastner's guilt of complicity with the Nazis as well as the scurrilous accusations against Zionism; JDA supported communist, propaganda, during the Slansky trial in Prague, where the Zionist movement was accused of espionage. (Jewish Opinion, July 1959)

³⁰ This attitude towards Zionism coincides with the anti-Israel stand taken by the JDA during the Suez Campaign in 1956.

the community, had to choose where their loyalties lay: with the oppressed majority or with the Afrikaner oppressors.

Criticism of the Board's policy of neutrality emerged not only from organisations, but from individuals, very often couched in terms of Jewish suffering. Jack S Kraus wrote to the Board³¹ that Jews who have suffered so much could not keep quiet in the face of racial distinction when others are oppressed. M D Berman³² and Ostroff³³ wrote that the loss of 6 million Jews was an compelling reason for official leadership to make a statement on the Government's oppressive legislative. Silence could only mean that they agreed with such attacks on fundamental rights. One of the deputies, G Monty³⁴, inquired why the Board did not express the attitude and feelings of all 'conscious thinking Jews'³⁵. Why had it kept silent when the Group Areas Act, would deprived Blacks of their livelihood and elementary human rights. " We Jews know what it means to live in a Ghetto and to be banned from freedom of movement...The Jews not only as individuals but as a community must raise their voices in protest³⁶."In its response³⁷, the Board explained that although the Group Areas Act could be viewed as having a humanitarian, rather than a political, character, it would not be proper for the Board, in its official capacity, to express a

³¹ 22.3.57

³² 12.6.57, sent to Jewish Affairs and circularised by Saron

³³ Star, 15.8.57

³⁴ Monty was later 'named' under the Suppression of Communism Act.

³⁵ Minutes of Meeting of Deputies, 30.9.56

³⁶ 21.9.56

³⁷ 24.9.50

standpoint on behalf of the community as a whole.

The divergence of opinion that existed within the Jewish community was brought into focus by the exchange of views in 1957³⁸ between Ronald Segal, an anti-Apartheid activist and Dan Jacobson³⁹, an author and an ex-South African living in England. The exchange arose out of an article on the Jews of SA written by Jacobson⁴⁰. Segal was infuriated at Jacobson's exoneration of the Jewish community for not protesting against Government oppression, when the leaders of the Churches had done so⁴¹. Jacobson had justified the silence of the community by pointing out that those who told Jews that it was their duty to throw in their lot with the victims of oppression, were asking them to disrupt their lives, to demonstrate a readiness to go to jail, and, to some extent, accept martyrdom. Segal rejected this argument in light of the stance taken by prominent leaders in the various Churches, pointing out that they seemed to find the prospect of martyrdom less alarming.

...I do believe that the Jews have a peculiar heritage and a special character formed by that heritage... Unfortunately, that heritage and character also instill in them an enormous fear of authority, a reluctance to fall out with those in power unless it is absolutely necessary to their continued existence...

Segal was not at all disconcerted by the prospect that Jewry

³⁸ Segal, Ronald and Dan Jacobson, "Apartheid and South African Jewry: An Exchange", Commentary, pp 424 - 431, 1957

³⁹ "Apartheid and South African Jewry: An Exchange", Commentary, November 1957, pp 424-431

⁴⁰ Commentary, January 1957

⁴¹ For example, Reverend Beyers Naude, a former NGK Moderator, together with A S Geyer, a former NHK Professor of Theology, established the Christian Institute in 1963, declaring that Apartheid and Christianity could not be reconciled.

would have to undergo "martyrdom". They had done so in the past. Jewish tradition absolutely and unequivocally obligated the Jews to resist the Government's oppression of the natives.

Jacobson, an author, was a liberal Jew who did not demand a collective liberal stand from the Jewish community, but rather propounded that the individual Jew had an obligation to be liberal. He "confessed" that he could not derive guidance from Jewish tradition on how to relate to the situation prevailing in SA. Tradition enjoined the Jews to seek justice, but it also encouraged a reluctance to confront those in authority. He refuted the proposition that Jews should protest, if only because of self-interest. On the contrary, a collective communal stand against Government policies would intensify the danger of Government inspired anti-Semitism. While affirming the basic principle of the indivisibility of freedom, he underscored the crucial significance for the Jewish people, as for all peoples, of survival. Communal opposition to Apartheid and Government policies would run counter to the community's right and obligation to perpetuate and develop.

The crux of the debate, as defined by the editor of the South African Jewish Times⁴², was: should the Board have protested against the various Apartheid laws enacted by Government? Segal said yes, on the grounds of common humanity and enlightened self-interest; Jacobson said no, on the grounds that Jews were not living in a world of abstract morality. In this case, the editor argued, the Jews, as a group, had every right to act in a way that their future was not jeopardised. The stance of the Board was not, therefore, a mere subterfuge calculated to shift responsibility. It was there to act when Jewish interests were

⁴² 10.1.58

directly assailed; it would be disastrous if it involved itself in every political issue on humanitarian grounds.

In responding to Segal's article, W Zukerman⁴³, the editor of an American newsletter which was especially outspoken in its criticism of the Board's policy, charged that Jews, despite having suffered discrimination, were, as an organised group, next to the Boer nationalists, the most indifferent of all the Whites in SA to Apartheid. While Christians had all registered strong protests against the Government's racial policy only the Synagogue had sat in silence. He added that it was fortunate that the organised Jewish community did not reflect true Jewish opinion, for many individual Jews were not afraid to speak out for justice. In response to Zukerman's article, which was, in the opinion of the Board of Deputies, a "highly tendentious and one-sided version", Saron accused Zukerman of misquoting him⁴⁴. He had not contended⁴⁵ that Jewish involvement with Israel militated against their taking a stand on the "*Native question*". What he had written was that on general political issues Jews never acted as a group. Even those Jews in SA who held that the tenets of Judaism, and the historical experience of Jews, demanded that they champion the cause of the Blacks and non-Europeans, had accepted the argument that Jews, as a group, could not advocate any particular policy⁴⁶.

⁴³ Jewish Newsletter, published in the US, 16.12.57; Zukerman, the editor wrote the article under pseudonym "Diarist". The Jewish Newsletter took a very critical view of the Board's 'neutral' policy towards apartheid, and often attacked it on the pages of the newsletter.

⁴⁴ 3.1.58

⁴⁵ Zukerman was purportedly quoting from Saron and Hotz's book The Jews of South Africa

⁴⁶ pages 374-5 in "Epilogue" in Saron and Hotz, 1955

A more temperate criticism of the Board's policy than that of Segal came from Dr Leslie Rubin⁴⁷. In 1957 he wrote an article analyzing the complex situation of the Jews in SA⁴⁸. He attributed the pro-Semitic face of the NP to two factors. First, Jewish businessmen were prepared to overlook Louw's past as long as they were accorded normal facilities to carry on their trade; and second, the NP felt an affinity with the Israelis who had overthrown British rule. He pointed out that Jews reacted as a group only when they were specifically threatened; otherwise they displayed the same wide range of views as was found among white South Africans as a whole. The great majority had come increasingly to excuse or condone many aspects of Government policy which they had condemned in 1948, or had submitted to indirect intimidation, while many other Jews had been in the forefront of the fight against Apartheid.

...in this they do not differ at all from their non-Jewish fellow South Africans. Of all the generalisations about the Jews of South Africa, that which charges them with being unassimilable is the least valid. They have, in fact, assimilated only too well⁴⁹.

8.5.2 The Nationalist Critique of the Board's Policy

The Nationalist critique of the Board during the period of 1948-1958 took two forms: the Board's claim to "neutrality" was questioned and it was alleged that Jewish Nationalists were victimised. From the outset Die Burger expressed reservations as to the Board's sincerity, scathingly commenting that it

⁴⁷ a past Native representative in the House of Assembly and a member of the Labour Party, who emigrated in 1959 to the United States.

⁴⁸ Rubin, L, "Afrikaner Nationalism and the Jews, Africa South, April-June, 1957

⁴⁹ ibid

"...obviously still maintains its attitude that the individual Jew has an unquestioned right to choose which political Party he will support - as long as it is not the National Party⁵⁰. The paper accused the Board of enmity towards the NP, of being dominated by UP members, and of victimising Jewish supporters of the NP. Although the President of the Board, Simon Kuper had stated that the Board prided itself as being a representative body "supporting every shade of political opinion"⁵¹, but, as far as was known, not a single Jew who supported the NP was in any responsible position on the Board, which was dominated by supporters of the UP. The enemies of the Nationalist Government, thus, had an 'iron grip' on the leadership of organised Jewry, and the Board's statement, that it stood above and outside party politics could, therefore not be taken seriously.

Die Volksblad⁵² judged the Board's statement, regarding its non-participation in politics, as presumptuous. Only deeds could remove the impression that the Board was "nothing other than a camouflaged branch of the UP". The same point was made by the columnist Dawie⁵³. The Board, Dawie contended, had consistently discriminated against Jews who were active members of the NP. It was only through its deeds that the Board would be able to really "serve members of the [Jewish] racial group which it represents." Dawie rebuked the SA Jewish Times for propagating 'ancient' UP propaganda against the NP despite its claim of complete neutrality. The Board's obsession with the question of anti-Semitism blinded it to reality, whilst discriminating

⁵⁰ Die Burger 29.11.48

⁵¹ Kuper's statement to the press following the Newlands Affair in February 1949

⁵² 25.5.49

⁵³ Die Burger, 29.10.49

against Jewish nationalists.

I for my part am now heartily tired of the official Jewish querulousness. They fought the NP in the General Election and now they have the impudence on top of it to ask for the sun, the moon and the stars from the Government...They should remove the beam of anti-nationalism from their own eyes before they come bothering Nationalists.

Two years later, in 1951, Dawie accused the opposition-minded Jews of merely paying lip-service to the Board's stated policy of neutrality, expressing scepticism in regard to the firmness of this policy: "As far as possible they want to employ the Jews as a racial group against the Government." Although the Board had taken the credit for the improvement in the Jewish position, "...the handful of Jews to whom credit is really due, are still continually abused and boycotted". Jewish nationalists, 'nationally-minded' Jews, who had opposed the 'incorrect' leadership of the Board had not yet received recognition from official Jewry⁵⁴.

The Jewish citizen was constantly aware that he was not perceived as an individual but as a representative of the Jewish community. There seemed to be a perception of mutual accountability and responsibility: the individual Jew for the Jewish community and the community for the actions of the individual Jew. This is manifestly illustrated by an article written by the columnist "Willem" in his column "Ons Gesels Politek"⁵⁵. He wrote that the 'nationally-minded' and 'moderate' Jews were apprehensive lest the good feeling between Jew and Afrikaner be disrupted by people whose names "*sounded*" Jewish.

⁵⁴ Die Burger, 1.9.51. Dawie was the pseudonym of Professor Piet Cilliers. Indicative of the change of attitude of the Nationalists is the fact that Professor Cilliers was a keynote speaker at the 1978 Congress of the Jewish Board of Deputies.

⁵⁵ Die Volksblad, 19.4.52

They were eager to get an assurance that it was pure coincidence that the most influential men of the present opposition alliance (referring to Harry Oppenheimer⁵⁶, Kane-Berman, the chairman of the Torch Commando and to Solly Sachs⁵⁷) may be seen as Jews.

Will the Jewish Board of Deputies not reassure these disquieted Jews who very much do not want to see the present agitation against the Nationalist Government being given a strong Jewish colour.

The underlying assumption was that these activities raised doubts as to the loyalty of the entire Jewish community. To diffuse this situation, the Board was expected to publicly reaffirm the loyalty of the Jews to SA⁵⁸. Responding to these insinuations, Henry Katzew pointed out that the first two activists had no affiliations with the Jewish community and even if they were Jewish they were free as citizens to hold whatever political opinion they pleased and to express these in political actions⁵⁹. In his newsletter, The Jewish People⁶⁰, he contended

⁵⁶ who was prominent in the opposition in Parliament. Harry Oppenheimer's father, Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, founder of the giant Anglo-American Corporation of SA, came of German-Jewish stock. His initial success in the diamond industry were due to his close ties with Jewish firms in Germany. That is to say that Oppenheimer's Jewish milieu was an integral part of the circumstances that accounted for his rise to tycoon status in the mining world. (Marcus Arkin, One People, One Destiny, Owen Burgess Publishers, Hillcrest, 1989, 46). With his second marriage to a non-Jewess, Oppenheimer converted to Anglicism.

⁵⁷ in the words of Willem: "*an acknowledged Jew*". Bernard Sachs wrote that it was especially galling to the government that a Communist Jew should be at the head of the Garment Workers' Union, the vast majority of whom were Afrikaner girls. (Sachs, 1978, p 227)

⁵⁸ Moreover, it seems that he was also insinuating that the opposition was controlled by Jews.

⁵⁹ in his column under the pseudonym of Karl Lameer, Zionist Record, 7.5.52 .

⁶⁰ Katzew's newsletter, The Jewish People, July 1957

that both the rabbinate and the Jewish leadership were greatly remiss in fulfilling their duties and functions. He called for the setting up of a new leadership, unafraid of talking about the dangers that existed in SA⁶¹. Contrary to Board policy, he wrote, it was the duty of the Jew to 'interfere' in South African affairs⁶², because injustice and the need to enrich neighbours were 'Jewish affairs'. The Board "...was useless, futile, mean and narrow as a representative body, because it had been unable to find a technique whereby it can operate with a conscience".

After 1948 anti-Semitism ceased to be a political issue for the NP and was relegated to the pages of the nationalist press where both the editorials, and letters to the editor, employed the threat of the upsurge of anti-Semitism to coerce the Board and the community to support Government policies. Letters critical of the Board's policy emanated from both Jews who supported the NP, and Afrikaners who equated opposition to the National Government to opposition to Afrikaner nationalism.

Letters appeared in the Afrikaans press denouncing the liberal tendencies of the Jews, and their predominance in the anti-Apartheid movement.

"*Dissatisfied with the Board*", expressing the view of a section of the community, warned the Board that its ill-considered policy could land "true" Jewry in a difficult quandary which

⁶¹ In Die Burger, 1.11.56, wrote that the Community was so badly led that it was impossible to state with perfect clarity what it felt and said about the Afrikaner's fight for self-preservation.

⁶² The Jewish People, No 2, August 1957

could culminate in catastrophe⁶³. He claimed that a large number of Jews had repudiated avowals of neutrality and were serious in their sympathy for the Government. He called for a change in leadership, for persons "who will establish a policy which will promote mutual confidence between the Government and Jewry⁶⁴". "Brandwag"⁶⁵, intimated that the predominance of people of "Jewish origin" in the liberalistic movements, and the general lack of support on the part of Jews, at a time the Afrikaner was struggling for self-preservation, could lead to anti-Jewish feeling.

It would be advisable for the Jewish Board of Deputies, that state within the state, to show their compatriots that many of them are engaged in causing a 'Jewish Question' to arise here⁶⁶.

Die Transvaler published correspondence condemning the Jews for their involvement in anti-Government activities, the gravamen of their grievances focusing on their 'liberal politics⁶⁷, and for agitating "among non-Europeans" and for inadequate support of the NP despite the Government having adopted a friendly attitude towards Israel⁶⁸. A.H. Pretoria wanted to know why so many Jews were 'liberalists', agitating among the natives against the declared policy of the SA people and Government⁶⁹. It outraged him that while the Afrikaner had always been so well-disposed to them, so many of their actions verged on sabotage. "One would

⁶³ Die Burger, 22.6.51

⁶⁴ ibid

⁶⁵ Die Transvaler, 19.7.56

⁶⁶ Die Transvaler, 22.8.56

⁶⁷ Die Transvaler, 8.8.56, 21.8.56, 28.8.56, 17.12.56

⁶⁸ 19.7.56

⁶⁹ Die Transvaler, 22.8.56

have expected that they had acquired enough knowledge in the past to know that one should not make enemies of your friends".

"*In Terrorem*"⁷⁰ posed some pointed questions, encapsulating the bewilderment and frustration felt by Afrikaner Nationalists at the prominence of Jews in anti-Apartheid incidents: why do Jews work so conspicuously in every sphere against the government's Apartheid policy; what do they aim at with their liberalistic policy of mingling between white and non-white?; and why has none of the leaders of the Jewish community stepped into the breach in support of the government's Apartheid policy? The writer warned that these actions could not be observed by the South Africans as a whole, without there being consequences.

"*Hollandse Immigrant*"⁷¹ expressed strong disapproval for the support they had readily given to the forces which aimed at the downfall of the Boer: in photographs of resistance processions, the Jewish facial type [sic] was in the majority; books depicting the 'bad conditions' in SA were in the main written by Jews, while Jewish names always appeared on petitions protesting against Boer policy. The writer inquired why the Jews had taken such an aggressive part in the affairs of the country instead of being grateful that SA had given them and their children the opportunity to clamber out of their ancestral ghettos.

To balance this perspective, letters appeared, mainly written by Jews, which challenged these assumptions, explaining the independent position of the individual Jew in political life in contradistinction to the Jewish community. N Sloot⁷² pointed out

⁷⁰ Die Transvaler, 31.8.56

⁷¹ Die Transvaler, 11.9.56

⁷² A member of the Executive Council of the Board

that those criticising Jews for their opposition to Apartheid were committing a fundamental error of confusing "some" Jews with "all" Jews. Jews belonged to all political parties and there was a great diversity of political outlook among them⁷³. L.M.⁷⁴ entered into the defence by pointing out that Jews, as a community, had no more power or influence over individual members than Afrikaners did.

...to the extent that these protesters have not yet completely absorbed the South African climate of opinion, they will do so when they become more integrated with their South African fellow-citizens. Secondly, these extremist elements are undoubtedly very few in number and not at all representative or even typical of the average Jew in South Africa, who is only anxious to live in peace with his neighbours...

8.6 Conclusion

Throughout the period 1930 to 1958, non-Jews did not differentiate between Israel, Jews active in the anti-Apartheid movement and the organised Jewish community. Afrikaners in particular viewed the Jews in similar terms to which they conceived their own national group, with the Jewish collective and Israel being fused together into a whole. This perception of the Jewish community as a collective entity also militated against distinguishing between Jewish anti-Apartheid radicals and the rest of the community. The nationalist was, thus, not able to grasp that it was possible to be a loyal South African and at the same time oppose Apartheid; that it was possible to feel sympathy for the sufferings of the Blacks and not be hostile to Afrikaner Nationalism; that it was possible to support Israel's vote in the UN and be a patriotic South

⁷³ Die Transvaler, 11.9.56

⁷⁴ Die Transvaler, 18.9.56

African, and that Israel's vote of condemnation was not tantamount to public condemnation of SA by the local Jewish community. This weakness was also evident in the ranks of the Jewish Democratic Association, which could not believe that it was possible to experience the suffering of the Blacks, to feel revulsion at the Government's repressive legislation, but at the same time feel an empathy to Afrikaner Nationalism and to be an ardent Zionist.

The problem was not a simple one. In the political context Jews who empathized with the aspirations and achievements of Afrikaner nationalism had to express this through overt support for the NP. This created a dilemma for both Jews and Afrikaner Nationalists. For the latter, it seemed impossible to be a pro-Afrikaner Nationalist and yet to be anti-National Party. Jews, on the other hand, wrestled with the dilemma of conscience: how could a Jew who felt an affinity towards Afrikanerdom actively sympathise with it when he/she was politically opposed to the NP and its politics? This Jewish dilemma was perceived as antipathy and hostility to the Afrikaner People and nationalism.

One of the basic tenets of Judaism is that Jews should sustain good relations with non-Jews. This orientation, combined with the precarious situation in which the community found itself in SA, provided a compelling incentive for the wide-range goodwill efforts of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Although the Government had repudiated anti-Semitism as a political platform, the Board and the community felt that this dispensation was conditional. This fear of the resurgence of anti-Semitism overshadowed all the deliberations of the Board of Deputies, precluding any policy which could be construed as challenging the National Party Government.

Furthermore, although the Government took pains to make it clear that it was perfectly willing to allow the Jews to preserve their cultural integrity, this was contingent on their demonstrating 'undivided loyalty' to the country. Taking all this into consideration the Board made painstaking efforts to highlight the community's empathy with Afrikaner aspirations, to 'enlighten' the Afrikaner community regarding the Jewish religion and to accentuate the separation of 'politics' from individual Jewish action. All these measures were embodied in its policy of 'neutrality' and the avoidance of a 'collective' stance towards the political arena.

On balance, there can be no doubt that the Board responded more positively to the more powerful pressures of Afrikaner national ideology than it did to pressures emanating from Black ideology or liberal ideology. This was, in part, the natural consequence of the lingering effect of trauma which continued to intimidate Jews for decades, even after Nationalist Afrikaner anti-Semitism had abated. In commenting on this phenomenon whereby the forces of Afrikaner nationalism constituted the greatest danger to the community, Saron wrote:

...there was a glaring imbalance in the overriding concern of the Jewish communal leadership with Afrikaner-Jewish relations rather than relations with Blacks or Coloureds or Indians, or indeed, even with English-speaking Whites...that structure made it virtually inconceivable that the Jewish Board of Deputies enter into a dialogue with non-White sectors. They simply did not form part of the field of social forces in which Jews qua community functioned⁷⁵.

⁷⁵ Saron, in his private papers in the archives of the Board. Saron wrote in fits and starts in the course of the 1970s for the purpose of publishing a book on the Jew in politics from second decade of this century, but he never completed his work which resides there in draft form.

Thus, under the constraint to protect the collective Jewish interests, the most judicious policy the Board could choose was one with a distinct pro-Afrikaner bias. It was the Nationalist Afrikaner that dominated the field of socio-political forces to which the Jewish community and the Board related. In evaluating the situation Saron said:

...in the final analysis the policy of the Board of Deputies must be understood in sociological terms as a function of self-interest as Jews and as Whites, rather than in ideological terms as a function of Judaism or Jewishness...what determined the Board's policy as representative of the collective community, was not these ideological tensions, but basic considerations of self-interest. Self-interest that is to say in assuring the full rights of Jews as white citizens, as well as the free and unhindered existence of Jews in community.

**PART 3 - APPREHENSION
AND UNCERTAINTY:
1958 - 1966**

Chapter 9. THE VERWOERD ADMINISTRATION

Upon his accession to office H F Verwoerd initiated two major changes in political orientation. The first was the idea of creating 'independence' for the Bantu 'homelands'. The second was secession from the Commonwealth and the establishment of a Republic¹. Verwoerd shifted the emphasis from *baaskap* and white supremacy, which had been advocated by Malan and Strijdom, to that of 'separate development'. His "Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Bill" in May 1959 envisaged the creation of 8 national homelands where the Blacks will have self determination, while ensuring that Whites would never be dominated by 'others'². The White political parties continued to debate the future of the Blacks with little regard to the thinking of Black leaders. The political differences between the UP, the official opposition and the Government were not substantial and revolved principally around means rather than ends. The Federal Party collapsed after the 1958 elections after winning a third of the Natal votes but failing to take a single seat³. The Progressive Party stood for a non-racial but qualified franchise and a constitution which would prevent the domination of any race by another. The Liberal Party, led by the distinguished novelist Alan Paton, stood for universal adult franchise and a non-racial society, but its policy was decidedly rejected by the white electorate. Support for Verwoerd and the NP grew during the 1960s. He appealed to the people who felt that in his hands the future of the Whites was safe. The

¹ The decision was taken in cabinet on 18.1.60 and adopted by the NP caucus the following day.

² Kenney, H, *Architect of Apartheid: H F Verwoerd: An Appraisal*, John Ball, Johannesburg, 1980, p 355

³ Davenport, 1977, pp 393-394

establishment of Black governments all over the African continent, which had precipitated an exodus of Whites, was considered proof that Whites and Blacks could not live together⁴.

Dr Verwoerd, was even more identified with "controversial policies" towards the Jews than previous Prime Ministers⁵. It was he who had agitated against the immigration of German Jews on the Stuttgart in 1936. In his first leading article as editor of Die Transvaler, he had advocated a quota system for Jews in trade, industry and the professions. During the war years he had openly expressed German sympathies. Although he was anxious to portray himself as 'pro-South African' or pro-Afrikaner and not anti-Jewish, references made by him to "Jewish colonisation"⁶ belied this.

Verwoerd's assumption of the premiership provoked numerous reactions in the press. Stanley Uys commented in Africa South⁷, that, in his opinion, the Nationalist Government had been friendly towards the Jews only for reasons of expediency. Anti-Semitism had never been far beneath the surface. The Israeli newspaper Yedioth Achronot expressed fears for the future of the Jews in view of the fact that Verwoerd had been the only member

⁴ Professor CJ Muller, *500 Years: A History of South Africa*, Pretoria, 1969, revised in 1981, P 510

⁵ H Kenney, in his autobiography of Verwoerd, *Architect of Apartheid: H F Verwoerd: An Appraisal*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1980, related that when Verwoerd wanted to abuse the former government, he would sometimes use the term "*British-Jewish Democracy*" (p 34).

⁶ H Kenney, *The Architect of Apartheid: H F Verwoerd: An Appraisal*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1980, p 32.

⁷ January - March, 1959

of Strijdom's Cabinet who had avoided any contact with Jewish bodies and had exhibited Nazi leanings. Melamet, Chairman of Cape Council, expressed shock at what the newspaper had written, labelling it 'unfounded and nonsensical. The community, he believed, had no reason to fear that Verwoerd would abandon the policies of his predecessors, who had pledged that they would treat Jewish citizens on the same basis of equality as all sections of the white population⁸.

Die Transvaler⁹ gave prominence to reports that Verwoerd had sent assurances to S Kluk, a member of the Sea Point branch of the NP, that he would continue the policy of Malan and Strijdom towards the Jewish Community and towards Israel¹⁰. On 4 September, the President of the Board officially conveyed the community's good wishes to Verwoerd on his appointment, taking the opportunity to request that he receive a delegation¹¹. Nevertheless, these public proceedings concealed considerable misgivings among members of the community and the Board. Saron informed Melamet¹² that he planned to propose that the Jewish

⁸ Die Transvaler, 8.9.56

⁹ 9.9.58

¹⁰ Die Vaderland 9.9.58

¹¹ L Marquand, in a letter to Mr Maisels of the Board, 30.10.58, protested at the usage of the words "confidence" and "continued progress" in the Board's message, since they presumed that there had been progress, but no reasonable man could maintain that there had been progress for four-fifths of the population. It was understandable that the Board had to pay its respects to whoever occupied high public office but these expressions went beyond the dictates of courtesy and came perilously close to public approval of racial policies. Saron (7.11.58) replied that his criticism was justified but arose from a translation mistake.

¹² 5.9.58

Press should not ignore the past, for self-respect and realism demanded that the past should not be glossed over. In light of the abundance of articles that had appeared in the local and the international press, all referring to Verwoerd's anti-Semitic past, the Board was of the unanimous opinion the past should not be completely overlooked, especially as this would make a particularly unfortunate impression overseas.

On 21 October 1958 a delegation of the Board met with Verwoerd¹³, who exuded excessive friendliness, and on several occasions stressed that he was not anti-Semitic. As a Nationalist, he said, he was pro-Israel. His opposition to Jewish immigration in the 1930's, he explained, had stemmed from the economic situation, and not from anti-Semitic feelings. Jews had been over-represented in commerce, and under-represented in other spheres. In order to obviate friction and prejudice, re-adjustment had been necessary. His approach had been sociological and had not been prompted by anti-Jewish prejudice. Throughout the interview, he emphasised that the disputes of the past and should be laid to rest¹⁴.

9.1 Friction Between the Jewish Community and the Nationalist Government

In the first years of Verwoerd's administration the only issue which shook the community was the outburst of anti-Semitic invective in Parliament during the Farm Labour debate. This spoke volumes for the change in relations that had occurred between SA Jewry and the NP. In June 1959 two Jewish MPs, Helen Suzman and Boris Wilson, criticised the abuse of the labour

¹³ memorandum of meeting in the archives of the Board

¹⁴ Verwoerd's attitude here was akin to claiming 'some of my best friends are Jews'.

system. As a result they became targets of an anti-Semitic tirade¹⁵, whose consequences spilled over into a confrontation between the Board and the Nationalist press¹⁶. Responding to the controversy, the Board issued a statement on 19 June 1959, which underscored the fact that the debate had not revolved around a Jewish issue. Jewish politicians were free to function in Parliament unrestrained by considerations of the well-being of the community, and by the same token, the Board and the Jewish community had no responsibility for their views and actions. In particular, the Board deprecated the introduction of a Jewish angle into current public questions, and appealed to everyone to "Keep the Jew out of politics". "We cannot too strongly deplore this practice of attaching a religious or racial label to a speaker..."

The response of the Nationalist press was one of outrage, charging that the reactions of the English press and the Board had been a deliberate attempt to initiate a campaign against Afrikaners in order to prove that they were anti-Semitic¹⁷. Inasmuch as the relations between the Afrikaner, "his" Government and the Jew were particularly good, more caution should have been displayed. The editor of Die Burger¹⁸ argued

¹⁵ Natal Witness, 18.6.59, calling it the most violent anti-Semitic outburst from the benches since the war days.

¹⁶ NP MPs insinuated that, being Jews, they should have been the last people to criticise farmers for ill-treating their African workers because of the number of Jewish farmers who had appeared in court accused of such misdemeanours. Rich wrote to the Executive, 7.6.61, that there had been 25 prosecutions in reference to assaults on farm labour, from 1950 to 1961, of these there were four Jews: Max Mann, Max Hirshowitz, Frankel, and Feldt.

¹⁷ Die Volksblad, 26.6.59

¹⁸ 22.6.59

that the Board's statement had been hasty and injudicious. Jewish parliamentarians had been responsible for the confrontation. They had been guilty of "*bringing the Jew into politics*" by making anti-Afrikaner statements.

In deliberating on this controversial issue, at the meetings of the Deputies on 28 June¹⁹, the chairman, N Philips, made it absolutely clear that Jewish MPs did not sit in Parliament as representatives of the community but as representatives of their constituencies. The Board firmly upheld the principle of their right to express sincerely held views without being inhibited by the fact that they were Jews. At its following meeting on 26 July Saron reported that after studying the full Hansard reports, press reactions and other comments, he had come to the conclusion that the incident had not been as serious as had originally been feared. The accusations in the House had been made during a heated and rather acrimonious exchange, and all anti-Semitic intentions had subsequently been disavowed. Philips disagreed with the opinion voiced at the meeting that Jewish politicians should be moderate and restrained: such constraints would place them in the impossible position of not being able to express views on any matter upon which they felt qualified to speak, especially as they did not purport to be spokesmen of the community.

The furore surrounding the anti-Semitic ambience of the farm labour debate had embodied most of the issues which the Jewish Board of Deputies had been agonizing over for decades: the freedom of the Jewish citizen to express his views on political issues; the perception of the Jewish MP as a Jew, as a member of the community, and his opinion representative of the community;

¹⁹ minutes of meeting of Deputies, 28.6.59

the misconception that the Board was responsible for the views and actions of Jewish citizens; attacks on the Apartheid being construed as attacks on Afrikanerdom; and finally the question as to the extent the Board should get involved. The satisfactory resolution of the clash is a measure of the change that had occurred in the political climate towards the Jewish community.

The following chapters, in Part 3, will deal with the three central issues which occupied the SA Jewish Board of Deputies during the Verwoerd era, each of which contributed to exacerbating the community's sense of insecurity. The first was the preponderance of Jews in violent anti-Apartheid activities, raising the question of the extent of the 'responsibility' and 'accountability' of the Jewish community for the actions of individual Jews. The second was Israel's alliance with the African-Asian bloc in condemning Apartheid at the UNO, and flowing from this, the extent of the 'responsibility' and 'accountability' the local Jewish community had for Israel's anti-South African stance. The third, a corollary of these two concerns, was the urgency of dealing with the accusations of 'disloyalty' and 'dual loyalty' which precipitated demands that the South African Jewish community, once more, 'prove' its allegiance to the Republic. While blatant anti-Semitism had been relegated to the fringes, anti-Semitic sentiment probably underlay part of the backlash against the Jewish community and Israel.

Chapter 10. RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL: CONFLICT AND STRAIN,
1960-1967

Israel's hostile attitude to SA, especially at the UN¹, raised the central question, debated in the press, as well as in the highest echelons of government: Should the community be held responsible for Israel's policy towards the Republic? The answer was to have a profound effect on the position of the community in its relations to the Government and to Israel.

In Israel, the debate surrounding policy towards SA centred on the question whether it should take into account the views of SA's Jewish citizens, especially when these policies could have adverse repercussions on them. Two forcibly-expressed opposing views were held²: The first was that Israel must follow certain general principles, irrespective of their effect on the Jewish population, as it was intolerable that a community should be held hostage against Israeli policy. The second view was that Israel had a special responsibility not to imperil relations between a particular government and its Jewish citizens.

In the 1960s, Israel's foreign policy on the African continent concentrated on gaining the support of the newly-emerging black independent states. As a consequence, formulating policy towards SA was an intricate and complex process devolving on two opposing considerations: vehement opposition to racial discrimination and concern for the welfare of South African Jewry³. When the subject became a public issue in the press and in the *Knesset*⁴, the Government defended its votes against SA on

¹ Israel's attitude must be viewed in the context of a hostile attitude towards SA and its apartheid policy throughout the world, not only in the African-Asian bloc. What had singled Israel out was her alliance with this bloc rather than the Western bloc, which had a more moderate attitude.

² Letter A L Easterman, editor of *World Jewry*, the official organ of World Jewish Congress, of 12 November, 1962

³ For a more comprehensive analysis of the problems involved, see Shimoni, 1980, pp 320-326

⁴ the Israeli Parliament

the grounds of the moral heritage of the Jewish people and of Judaism; the duty to defend the interests of Jewish communities in the diaspora; and the interests of the State of Israel which demanded public protest against Apartheid in support of the Afro-Asian bloc whose votes were crucial to Israel in the UN⁵. Nathaniel Lorch, former director of the African division of the Israeli Foreign Ministry outlined three main motives for Israel's policy⁶: outflanking hostile Arab countries, trading hopes and concern for the plight of the African, who like the Jew, had historically been a victim of racial discrimination. When asked why Israel voted for sanctions in November 1962, Golda Meir replied: "*We voted according to our conscience.*" Israel was aware that there was a Jewish community in SA, but it would have been out of character if a Jewish State did not sound the alarm about the outrage of Apartheid. "*If not we, who else will do it?*"⁷

Foreshadowing the major crises was the joint statement, issued in July 1961, by Ben Gurion and President Yamengo of Upper Volta, which included the statement that they "*considered the Apartheid policy of SA detrimental to the interests of the African majority of that country*". In response, Die Transvaler warned the community that Israel's 'failure' to understand the aspirations of the Republic placed a responsibility on the local Jews to prevent a recurrence: "Has the time not arrived for these Jews to do a little work of enlightenment in Jerusalem⁸? At a meeting with Dr J Scholtz, editor of Die Transvaler, Edel Horwitz, a former chairman of the Board of Deputies and now the Chairman of the Zionist Federation, explained the factors shaping the policy of South African Jewry towards Israel. The major factor was the deep spiritual obligation to help in the establishment and the consolidation of the State of Israel,

⁵ ibid, pp 321-322

⁶ Daily News, 6.8.63

⁷ Jewish Chronicle, London, 16.11.62

⁸ Die Transvaler, 13.7.61; Report to the Public Relations Committee, 30.7.61

which did not compromise or contradict their political loyalty to SA. Jews in the diaspora could not dictate foreign policy of Israel, whose policy was actuated by the very real disapproval of Apartheid as well as the necessity of "leap-frogging" over her enemies. Furthermore, Horwitz contended, by striking a blow for its own self-preservation, Israel was helping to keep these African-Asian countries in the western orbit and this would benefit SA. Scholtz replied that, notwithstanding these considerations, Israel's statement had been inexcusable. While accepting that SA Jews could not dictate to the Israeli Government, he did feel that they could have conveyed the feelings of resentment which its action had engendered⁹.

10.1 Israel Supports Censure Motion Against Eric Louw and the Response of the Jewish Board of Deputies

A more serious controversy broke out when, in October 1961, Israel joined 67 delegations at the UN in voting in favour of a resolution censuring Eric Louw, South Africa's Minister of Foreign Affairs, for making "*offensive, fictitious and erroneous statements*" in a speech to the General Assembly in which he defended on South Africa's racial policies. Sources close to the Israeli delegation said that they would have preferred that the problem be discussed in a substantive rather than a procedural manner, however,

since the debate developed in such a direction that it became a symbolic demonstration on the principle of discrimination, Israel voted on the resolution...¹⁰

The SA Government perceived this vote as a virtual denial of its right to defend itself in the General Assembly. Israel's support was especially regrettable¹¹, as the Netherlands had been the only other Western nation to vote in favour of the resolution. Even the Jewish press in SA disapproved, asserting that Israel

⁹ 18.7.61. See Shimoni, 1980, pp 306-307

¹⁰ Jewish Telegraphic Association, 13.10.61

¹¹ the columnist Jan Buurman, a pseudonym for Clive Cowley, in Natal Mercury, 18.10.61

should have abstained¹², because the denial of freedom of speech to Louw was tantamount to a complete betrayal of all the ideals of the UN¹³. The issue was 'fully ventilated' by the Board¹⁴ and exhaustively discussed in the Cape Committee¹⁵, where the discussion revolved on three alternative courses of action: do nothing, a note of protest or statement should be issued explaining the position of the community. The Board consulted the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF)¹⁶ and it was decided to defer further discussion on the matter.

On October 20 Louw announced that he had not expected Israel to support SA, but had expected an abstention in view of the fact that the SA Government had gone out of its way to foster good relations. After referring to telegrams received from Dutch immigrant organisations in SA expressing resentment at the Netherlands vote, Louw added that he was sure¹⁷

as in the case of the people of the Netherlands...so also South Africans who have racial and religious ties with Israel will disapprove of the hostile and ungrateful action of the Israeli delegation to the UN.

Much prominence was given in all SA papers to Louw's challenge, which could no longer be ignored by the communal leadership,

¹² Zionist Record, 20.10.61; Jewish Herald, 24.10.61. Objectively speaking, the abstention on the part of the 'Western nations' reflected the hypocrisy of the entire process. If the basic issue had really been freedom of speech, surely they should have voted AGAINST the Afro-Asian motion?

¹³ 20.10.61. Letter addressed to Saron from Sydney Walt, chairman of the Cape Council Jewish Herald, 24.10.61. The *Herut* Party in Israel and its newspaper stated that Israel should not have voted against SA, as she had always been sympathetic to Israel and the country owes her a debt of thanks for her support during difficult times. The Jewish Herald itself strongly supported Herut policies.

¹⁴ Jewish Herald, 31.10.61

¹⁵ 20.10.61, letter addressed to Saron by Sydney Walt, chairman of the Cape Committee

¹⁶ Minutes of the Executive Council meeting 20.10.61

¹⁷ Radio South Africa, 20.10.61; quoted in Shimoni, 1980, pp 307-308

especially considering the abundance of evidence of support in Jewish circles for the viewpoint that Israel had voted wrongly. Nossel sent a message of support to Louw 'on behalf of the South African Jews' who protested against Israel's vote, many of whom indicating that they would withdraw financial support from Israel if the country persisted in its unfriendly attitude to SA¹⁸. Both the Board of Deputies and SAZF¹⁹ found themselves under pressure from sections of the Jewish public²⁰, as well as the general press, to issue a statement²¹, creating a dilemma for them. On the one hand, if they should respond this would contradict their insistence that they could not influence Israel. On the other hand, evidently under the impact of the pressure from within the community, it was felt that this was an exceptional case, relating to the question of 'freedom of speech'. When apprised of their decision to issue a statement disassociating themselves from Israel's actions, Israel's Minister, Simha Pratt indignantly opposed it, contending that it was misguided as well as contrary to the community's own self-interest to break the rule of silence on Israel's foreign policy.

The Board ultimately issued a statement²², expressing regret for the unfortunate incident at the UN where Israel had cast her vote against SA. The statement stressed that the Jews of SA were citizens²³, loyal to, and owing allegiance only to SA and had

¹⁸ Cape Argus, 20.10.61

¹⁹ There was further consultation with the SAZF on the 23 November and it was decided to maintain close contact and watch developments.

²⁰ Text of statement of Board submitted to Rand Daily Mail and published 21.10.61.

²¹ See Shimoni, 1980, pp 308-9

²² not a joint statement with the Zionist Federation

²³ Indicative of the importance attached to their citizenship was the letter Saron sent to the to the Secretaries of Provinces on 1.2.62 in which he reported that at a joint meeting of the Board and the Zionist Fed it had been decided that at Jewish functions a toast must first be given to the

no influence at all on Israeli affairs, far less on its foreign policy. Notwithstanding its political impotence, SA Jewry was 'bound' to Israel, and was greatly concerned with building a healthy, independent Israeli state, for which reason it had always been greatly appreciative of the general understanding and practical assistance of the SA Government.

...Israel's vote of censure on Mr Louw's speech had given rise to strong criticism among many South African Jews, It is recognised that Israel, in determining her international policies, must take into account delicate and complex factors which she alone is competent to judge. Nevertheless it is felt that this was a case where the issue was a simple one: the question of freedom of speech in the international forum. In these circumstances, Israel should have joined the Western nations in abstaining from voting on the Afro-Asian motion of censure²⁴.

The spokesman added that it was sincerely hoped that the incident would not mar the very friendly relations which had hitherto existed between Israel and SA. This statement contrived to adhere to the Board's traditional stance that Israel was a sovereign state which determined its own policies in accordance with its own principles and interests. Significantly, in conformity with its traditional policy of not intervening in political issues, the Board was careful not to express any views on Government policy as such. The editorial of Jewish Affairs²⁵ questioned the validity of Louw's contention that citizens of SA could be held accountable for the policy of another country because they had cultural or religious ties with it. The community's predicament was not eased by the further deterioration of relations between the two countries following a debate in the Israeli Cabinet on the proposed suspension of SA from the UNO²⁶. Reports of this debate elicited a flood of

President of SA and then to that of Israel. Die Stem and Hatikvah should both be presented in the same way. In order to resolve the issue an opinion had been expressed that no anthem be played at Jewish functions.

²⁴ Rand Daily Mail and Report to South African Jewry, 1960-1962, p 11

²⁵ November 1961

²⁶ Die Vaderland, 26.10.61

letters to the editor²⁷, in response to which the Board restated its position. It had not supported Louw²⁸, but had taken a stand on a matter of principle.

The only action taken by the Board...was a comment by a spokesman of the Board ...to the effect that many Jews expressed the view that Israel should have abstained from voting, as the question of freedom of speech at the international forum of UN was involved²⁹.

It should be noted that within Israeli political circles there was no wide consensus regarding policy. Menahem Begin, leader of the official opposition, pointed out that, in fact, the majority of the Knesset members, including those in the Government coalition, had opposed imposing sanctions on SA³⁰. Begin's Party, Herut, was especially adamant in its opposition to Israel's anti-South African policy in the UNO³¹.

The question arises here as to why would the Board involve itself in an issue which ostensibly was exclusively within the purview of the SAZF? That it did so is an indication that it had become impossible to distinguish between communal affairs and Zionist affairs. Israel's policy towards SA had become a major bone of contention not only between the two countries, but had

²⁷ For example Jack Tarshish, Rand Daily Mail, 1.12.61, castigated the Board for questioning Israel's stance against racial discrimination, especially in view of its expedient policy of political neutrality. "Democrat", ibid, 25.10.61 criticised the Board's deviation from its sedulously adhered policy of non-intervention in the political arena, calling on it to rectify its mistake of breaking its inviolable rule on the issue of UN censure vote, by denouncing the "Nuremberg legislation" enacted by the government. "Failure on its part to do so, would clearly establish that it has been browbeaten by the Government...and that this body is today the representative of frightened Jews. In contrast K Udwin wrote that he had ceased all monetary assistance for Israel (Die Vaderland, 29.11.61) and David Wolf, past mayor of Nigel, insisted that it was his public duty to support Louw.

²⁸ In fact the headline went even further and declared that "*South African Jewry split on letter to Louw*".

²⁹ Sunday Express, 7.11.61. For the reaction in the Israeli press. See Shimoni, 1980, 310

³⁰ Jewish Herald, 12.12.61

³¹ Jewish Herald, 7.11.61; 28.11.61

spilled over into the relationship between the Jewish community and the Government. When the polemics over the "Mr East" letter erupted, the 'spheres of interest' of the Board and of the SAZF converged.

10.2 The "Mr East Letter"

The controversy took an unexpected, and sinister, turn when on November 19 The Sunday Express³² published a private letter, which had been sent by Prime Minister Verwoerd³³ to a Mr A S East, a Jewish attorney and a member of the Cape Town City Council³⁴. In his letter he stated that Israel's attitude was "*a tragedy for South African Jewry*"...

Fortunately the reaction of many Jews and Jewish organisations was such that what might have been worse was relieved to a certain extent by this pro-South African reaction...it might even have had a disadvantageous effect upon group relations here if South African Jewry had not expressed itself so forcibly in favour of South Africa's stand. The fact that during the last Election so many Jews had favoured the Progressive Party and so few the National Party, did not pass unnoticed...People are beginning to ask why if Israel and its Rabbis feel impelled to attack the policy of separate development here, the policy of separate development of Israel is not wrong in their eyes as well³⁵.

The publication of this letter raised much debate, especially as it contained three outrageous statements: that Israel's attitude was a 'tragedy for SA Jewry', relieved only, "*to a certain extent*", by the "pro-South African reaction" of many Jews; that the Jewish support for the Progressive Party had '*not passed unnoticed*'; and that there was no difference between Apartheid and Israel's policies towards Arabs³⁶.

³² 19.11.62

³³ The letter had been written on behalf of Verwoerd by his private Secretary, Fred Barnard (Shimoni, 1980,311)

³⁴ 2.11.61

³⁵ A copy of the letter in the archives of the Board of Deputies and Report to South African Jewry, 1960-1962, 13. Also Annexed to the Executive Council minutes 22.11.61

³⁶ For a comprehensive analysis of the press reaction to the letter, see Shimoni, 1980, pp 312-315

The apprehension of the community was not allayed when Neels Natte highlighted in Die Transvaler a long list of "failings" on the part of the Jewish community³⁷. The first step, according to him, was taken when the Israeli Government, a "*Jewish government*", was only one of two western countries to vote for the UN motion of censure. Thereafter, Israel was the only western country to vote for sanctions. While the State of Israel was adopting this hostile attitude at the diplomatic level, individual Jews, such as the former Chief Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz, had been guilty of anti-South African activities, and the election results in constituencies with strong Jewish communities showed strong support for the PP³⁸. He warned that

There is no anti-Semitism in South Africa, just as there is no pro-Semitism. There is only pro-South Africanism and those who wish to help build this are welcome allies. Those who oppose this must expect to be fought against. And this also applies for every individual regardless to which group he belongs.

The Nationalist papers unequivocally condemned the publication of Verwoerd's private letter, charging that its only purpose was to estrange the Jewish community from the NP. Jewish sensitivities were well known and this was being exploited to evoke fear of the recurrence of anti-Semitism. Die Burger³⁹ condemned the "*heinous and entirely unnecessary agitation*" aimed at alienating the community from the Nationalists by rousing fears of anti-Semitism. Die Transvaler⁴⁰ accused the English papers of being bent on arousing strife and disagreement "*with the apparent purpose of bringing about a collapse*" of SA. The crisis had been precipitated by a spirit of anti-South

³⁷ 22.11.61 "In the Political Hustle"

³⁸ In fact Natte blamed members of the community for the fuss around them. "I specifically mention this because I would like to show that the attention, which is at the moment directed towards the Jewish Community, is the result of the actions of members of the Jewish Community..."

³⁹ Die Burger, 22.11.61

⁴⁰ Die Transvaler, 24.11.61

Africanism, which was now endeavouring to incite world Jewry⁴¹. *Die Burger*⁴² called on "Jewish South Africans" to bring pressure to bear on the Israeli Government. "South Africans must at this time should certainly not be diffident to use every available channel and medium in the interests of the Fatherland." The paper⁴³ expressed its consternation that the foreign press would regard the incident, 'conjured up by opposition propaganda', as a prelude to Jewish persecution, and appealed to 'Jewish South Africans' to present 'the true facts' and to contain the damage to a minimum by emphasising "how South Africa, through evolution, healthy intelligence and statesmanship on both sides, practically completely surmounted a once acute problem of human relations". *Die Burger* pleaded with the Jewish community to declare that the NP was no longer anti-Semitic and that there was no danger of the Government adopting anti-Semitic policies.

Dirk Richard⁴⁴ labelled the publication of Verwoerd's letter to East 'unethical'⁴⁵. Incidents like these, he charged, had engendered such thoughts as "Can you ever trust the Jews? Look how they again let us down in the recent election: heaps of promises of NP support before the election, but results show the opposite." In the same edition of the *Sondagblad*⁴⁶, Blaar Coetzee (NP), after introducing himself as "a friend of the Jews", earnestly warned them not to be influenced by the 'scandalous' campaign or 'to let themselves be taken in tow

⁴¹ *Die Transvaler*, 25.11.61. The paper went on to speak of the Heresy trial in the Hervormde Church of SA, which was being portrayed to the world as a case of political persecution and was being exploited to incite world Christianity against SA. The paper concluded that "The spirit of anti-South Africanism within the gates of South Africa will have to be obliterated no matter where it finds expression because its purpose is to wipe out South Africa itself."

⁴² *Die Burger*, 22.11.61

⁴³ *Die Burger*, 24.11.61

⁴⁴ the editor of *Dagbreek*

⁴⁵ *Sondagblad*, 26.11.61, "Political Perspective"

⁴⁶ 26.11.61

by the English Press'. After commending the Board for condemning Israel's actions, he expressed his disappointment that its reaction had not been stronger.

...it is the duty of every Jewish citizen of the Republic to make Israel understand in no uncertain manner that they condemn and reject its attitude. That is the least that South African can expect from her Jewish children.

Leon Feldberg, the editor of the South African Jewish Times, called on Jews to stand firm by their rights and dignity. The day had gone when the Jew could be pushed around or "held as a hostage" to force Israel's hand at the UN⁴⁷."

Verwoerd defended his attitude in a speech at the Witwatersrand Annual Conference of the NP on 22 November. He denied the inference that SA Jews were being made "hostages for Israel" and that he had attempted to 'threaten' or put pressure upon Jewish supporters of the PP. Far from wanting to threaten anybody, he said, he wished "to gather together everybody in the best interests of the country." He denounced "attempts to sow discord amongst and against the Jews", coupled with an attempt to win Jewish support by means of estranging them from the NP. There had been times when one could have spoken of anti-Semitism in the country, but during the Government's term of thirteen years not a single action had been taken against the Jews. Newspapers which supported the PP had deliberately misinterpreted his letter, and had attempted to exploit it in order to prevent Jews "as a group from coming closer to the NP". He deplored the insinuation that he wished to withhold from Jews the right to exercise their free vote as citizens of SA. Issuing a warning against the spread of racial hatred, he said that "neither the deeds of the State of Israel nor the actions of certain persons in the country must lead to the arising of anti-Semitism⁴⁸."

⁴⁷ Shimoni, 1980, pp 313-314

⁴⁸ Die Transvaler, 23.11.61 and Report to South African Jewry, 1960-1962, pp 13-14

10.2.1 The Response of the Jewish Board of Deputies

In view of the polemics surrounding Verwoerd's letter, the Board could no longer remain silent, especially as it was of the opinion that Israel had voted wrongly⁴⁹. At the next monthly meeting of the Board of Deputies⁵⁰ a statement was approved which re-stated its position that the publication of the letter without approval had "understandably caused considerable disquiet among the SA Jewish community". This, however, had been alleviated by the Prime Minister's statement which dispelled "the unfortunate impressions which had been created by the letter"⁵¹. The statement pointed out that the Prime Minister demanded no more from Jews than was already guaranteed by the Board's traditional policy: the right of the individual Jewish citizen to support whichever Party he wished and the assurance that the differences between SA and Israel would not influence the loyalty of Jewish citizens to SA. The statement emphasised that the policies of the State of Israel lay beyond the 'jurisdiction' of South African Jews⁵², and expressed the hope that the friendly relations which hitherto had existed between the two countries would in no way be impaired. Verwoerd's appeal, to keep the country free of anti-Semitism, was to be welcomed.

The English and Nationalist press reacted in diametrically opposing directions to this statement. The Rand Daily Mail⁵³ labelled it as a "wishy washy" attempt to defend, at all costs, "a policy which Jews, of all people, should know does not pay." There had been undeniable menace in Verwoerd's statement that Israel's vote at the UN was a "tragedy" for South African Jewry", as was his observation that their lack of support for

⁴⁹ Minutes of the Executive Council meeting, 23.11.61

⁵⁰ 26.11.61

⁵¹ Rand Daily Mail, 26.11.61

⁵² A stronger assertion that the Prime Minister had declared that "his criticism of Israel had nothing to do with the attitude to Jewish citizens of South Africa", was omitted.

⁵³ 27.11.61

the NP had "not passed unnoticed". Verwoerd had 're-interpreted' his indiscretions in an 'off-the-cuff' speech, commented the editor, and the Board of Deputies had "practically swooned with gratitude." In contrast, Die Vaderland⁵⁴, while expressing the hope that the "*winds of oblivion [would] blow away this letter*", commented that refusal to accept Verwoerd's explanation could only result in further unpleasantness. The editorial in Die Oosterlig⁵⁵ also had an undertone of menace, warning the "*spokesmen of the Jews*" that it was foolish to encourage feelings of hostility against the Government, because this could only "*disturb and disrupt*" the Government's and the Afrikaner's friendly disposition towards the Jew.

The national secretary of the "South African Congress of Democrats", Ben Turok, in a memorandum to the Board⁵⁶, expressed his grave concern that by condemning Israel's stand as an opponent of Apartheid, the Board had made an important political statement which would have far-reaching repercussions⁵⁷. The Prime Minister had not retracted his statements in the 'Mr East letter', making it obvious that he and his Party would not be deterred from exploiting anti-Semitism, and the Jews, as a scapegoat should the need arise. The danger, therefore, existed that, as the Government resorted to even stronger methods of repression, it would be well nigh impossible for the Jews, who constituted a small minority, to raise their voices against any injustices perpetrated against them. Furthermore, the policy of neutrality was jeopardising the attitude of the non-Whites towards Jews. Although there was a fund of goodwill among non-Whites as Jews were well known opponents of Apartheid,

...without doubt- the non-Whites of South Africa will achieve their political emancipation in the not too distant future...It would therefore seem advisable that the Board begin to reevaluate their attitude, lest the people who will constitute the future non-racial government should come to

⁵⁴ 27.11.61

⁵⁵ 27.11.61

⁵⁶ 5.12.61, memorandum found in the archives of the Board

⁵⁷ Natal Mercury, 15.12.61

feel that the Board constitutes an antagonistic force⁵⁸. Notwithstanding its attempts to placate the local Jewish community, the South African Government took punitive action. In December 1961 it withdrew the special transfer facilities of gifts and funds from South African Jewry to Israel, despite the protests which Edel Horwitz, Chairman of the SAZF, submitted to Finance Minister Donges⁵⁹. The latter made it clear that the Government was determined to demonstrate its annoyance at Israel's actions⁶⁰. A further interview on 22 March with Joe Daleski, Acting Chairman of the SAZF and Philips, the President of the Board, was to no avail⁶¹, although Donges intimated that if circumstances changed, the Government would reconsider its position.

10.3 Israel votes for sanctions against South Africa

Relations between SA and Israel reached a crisis when, in November 1962, Israel voted with the majority in the General Assembly of the UN for sanctions against SA, together with a recommendation for her expulsion⁶². The Israeli ambassador to the UN, Abraham Darom, categorised Apartheid as the transforming of discrimination into a system of government which was "irredeemably doomed". The history of the Jews, he said, which had been marked by martyrdom and sacrifice for the crime of being Jewish, compelled Israel to voice its opposition to racial

⁵⁸ ibid

⁵⁹ January 1962

⁶⁰ Shimoni, 1980, pp 317-318

⁶¹ Report to South African Jewry, 1960-1962, p 15

⁶² 2 November 1962. The resolution came before the Special Political Committee which castigated apartheid as reprehensible and repugnant. The clause recommending to the General Assembly that it invoke diplomatic and economic sanctions against SA failed, by a narrow margin, to obtain the two-thirds majority required before endorsement. Initially Israel had opposed South Africa's expulsion (Jewish Herald, 14.11.61), but her policy eventually became more militant. Herut's motion in the Knesset that Israel abstain from the vote on sanctions against SA was defeated (Jewish Herald, 28.11.61). For a recapitulation of the pressures which influenced the Israeli vote, see Shimoni, 1980, pp 316-317.

discrimination, fanaticism and the misguided idea of racial supremacy. The tenets of Judaism conceived all men as free and equal and any deviation from this was "a negation of our own selves."⁶³.

Rhetoric notwithstanding, the Israeli delegation was faced with a serious dilemma. It was aware that support for the sanctions vote would antagonise Jews in SA, that it would lead to a future deterioration in relations with the South African Government and that it would cause dissatisfaction among the governments of the western bloc who were endeavouring to avoid an out-an-out confrontation⁶⁴. To abstain, on the other hand, would not only have run counter to strong convictions of principle, it would have disappointed Israel's Afro-Asian friends, acquired with such great effort⁶⁵. While voting for the resolution as a whole, Israel, nevertheless, recorded its opinion that SA's expulsion from the UN would be self-defeating, because it would greatly diminish the possibility of influencing her policies⁶⁶.

⁶³ Jewish Telegraph Agency, 1.11.62

⁶⁴ African Jewish Newspaper, 26,7,62. Israel's vote was coupled with important reservations - the right to determine what those sanctions should be and record her opposition to SA's expulsion from the UN.

⁶⁵ Jewish Chronicle, London, 16.11.62; The Afro-Asian bloc succeeded in having their resolution, which condemned apartheid and called for various measures, including economic sanctions, be voted on as a "package vote" and not per paragraph (Report to the Executive Council, 12.11.62)

⁶⁶ speech by Israel's ambassador to the UN, Abraham Darom, before the Political Committee, 1.11.62. Despite her vote Israel did not break off diplomatic relations and El-Al, the Israeli airline, continued its flights to SA (Die Burger and Die Transvaler, (quoting the Zionist Record), 8.11.62). Edel Horwitz also announced that the Zionist organisations would continue collecting monies for Israel in the hope that the estrangement between the two countries would soon disappear (Die Burger, 8.11.62). By August 1963 Israel was in the awkward position of being the only nation of the 67 countries who had voted for sanctions that still had diplomatic ties with the Republic, paving the way for pressure being brought to bear on her to close her legation. This was further complicated by Israel's security interests which aimed at winning the friendship of those African states that the Arab states were anxious not to offend (Rand Daily Mail, 1.8.63; Eastern Province Herald,

The ramifications of Israel's support for sanctions were far-reaching for the local community. It once again raised the spectre of "dual loyalty", and again provoked the ire of the Prime Minister and the Nationalist newspapers, who very pointedly demanded to know what the community had to say about the matter. "The Jews of South Africa will have to choose...as to where they stand: with South Africa or with Israel. It can no longer be with both"⁶⁷. On 8 November Verwoerd, speaking at Roodeport, issued a challenge to the Jewish community to disassociate itself from the action of the Israeli stance.

...I am convinced that South African Jewry is deeply disturbed and does not agree with what the Government of Israel has done...I wonder what SA Jewry are going to say about this? Are they still going to send gifts, are they still going to allow their sons to die there, are they still going to build up one area after another?⁶⁸

He went on to condemn Israel's 'ungratefulness' in no uncertain terms. "We are not going to help Israel out of her dilemma.." In contrast to the observation made by the Rand Daily Mail⁶⁹ that Verwoerd's speech did not resolve the dilemma, Dawie of Die Burger⁷⁰ praised the Prime Minister for the deep understanding he had shown of the painful choice facing South African Jewry. "They owe him a great debt of gratitude for the way in which he had approached this matter. He had shown them the way to solve this Jewish problem...No matter how difficult it may be, they must stand by the country of which they are now citizens of, by their own free will." The Star⁷¹ protested that "South African Jews are as much South Africans as he [Verwoerd] is and have no control over the decisions of the Israeli Government." Neels

6.8.63)

⁶⁷ Die Transvaler, 7.11.62, Neels Natte, "In die politieke gedrang".

⁶⁸ Die Transvaler, 9.11.62

⁶⁹ 10.11.62

⁷⁰ Die Burger, Dawie "Uit My Politieke Pen", 10.11.62

⁷¹ 9.11.62

Natte⁷² repeated the libel that while Israel condemned 'separate development' in SA, she practised it towards Arabs, legislating influx control, job reservation, forbidding intermarriage between Jew and Arab.

10.3.1 The Response of the Jewish Board of Deputies

The Executive Council deliberated at its meeting of 5 November whether to respond to the demands that the community should disassociate itself from Israel. Opinions were divided and it was finally agreed that nothing would be done until a combined meeting of all provincial chairmen of both bodies, the Board and the SAZF, could be called to consider the matter⁷³. The Executive of the Board met on the 7 and 8 November, and drafted a statement which took cognisance of both the critical comments on Israel's actions and statements at the UN, as well as Israel's strategic interests⁷⁴.

The Executive accepted Saron's proposal that the Board disassociate itself from Israel's 'vote' without attacking Israel per se. In doing so, the Board would be clarifying its status vis-a-vis Israel without being obsequious⁷⁵. The opportunity arrived when, coinciding with Verwoerd's Roodeport speech, the President of the Board, T Schneider, gave an address to the Pretoria Jewish Community Council on 8 November. In defining the Board's stance⁷⁶, Schneider expressed profound

⁷² Die Transvaler, 10.11.62

⁷³ Shimoni, 1980, p 333

⁷⁴ Minutes of Executive Council, 7.11.62. See also the minutes of Executive Council meeting, 12.11.62. For a more comprehensive description of the dissension in the Board over this issue, see Shimoni, 1980, pp 333-336.

⁷⁵ Shimoni, 1980, p 334

⁷⁶ The speech was an attenuated version of the original draft formulated by the Executive on 7.11.62, (found in the archives of the Board) which was more assertative, making allusions to the fact that "Israel does not see eye to eye with our country", to the "*complex race problems*" of the country, and the use of pressure as a means of enforcing change in SA. Especially notable was the omission of the paragraph referring to past and future relations between Israel and SA. "We

concern at the UN resolution to impose sanctions on SA and his regret at the "*recent unhappy developments*" which had occurred regarding relations between Israel and SA. He underscored the fact that the Jews owed their political allegiance solely to the Republic and had "no say in, and cannot in any way be held accountable for, the policies of another sovereign state"⁷⁷.

Dagbreek en Sondagnuss⁷⁸ praised Schneider for officially expressing the displeasure of "*Jewish-speaking South Africans*" with the Israeli Government. But this was not enough. The paper called on the community to make known, by "a still clearer disassociation", their disapproval in the double game being played by Israel", who had cast her vote for diplomatic and economic sanctions and then expected to continue "*her deceitful game*" of profitable "business as usual" with SA.

Following Verwoerd's speech, the conference of representatives of the Board and the Zionist Federation, was held on 11 November. It issued a statement, after heated disagreement had taken place, expressing appreciation for the '*understanding*' the Prime Minister had demonstrated in his speech at Roodeport. The statement made no reference to Israel's vote, and limited itself to Verwoerd's '*sympathetic*' approach to the predicament of South African Jewry. It welcomed the fact that Verwoerd had recognised that the Jewish community was not implicated in Israel's policies⁷⁹. While reaffirming Jewry's unequivocal loyalty and allegiance to SA, the statement stressed that a love for the Holy Land was inherent in the Jewish religion. It was the sacred duty of the Jew to participate in the revival of the Land, in Jewish redemption and in the relief and rehabilitation of Jewish refugees who had been oppressed in their own countries.

ferently hope that notwithstanding Israel's regrettable stand at UN, there will be no serious disruption in the relations between the Republic and Israel ...The address merely expressed hope that the present difficulties would soon disappear.

⁷⁷ Star, 9.11.62

⁷⁸ 11.11.62

⁷⁹ Report to South African Jewry, 1962 - 1965, p 6

The joint statement was praised by the Nationalist press as having clearly disassociated South African Jewry from Israel's actions. By openly taking sides, the community had shown how strongly it felt for the Republic. Credit for this improvement belonged with the Nationalist Government⁸⁰. Nonetheless, Die Volksblad went on to urge SA to retaliate against Israel, as an example to other countries who might believe that they could vote against her but continue their advantageous trade. "Our Jewish fellow countrymen", the editor suggested, could explain to the Israeli Government the folly of slapping SA in the face while enjoying the benefit of SA's goodwill. In line with Verwoerd's speech, Die Oosterlig⁸¹ wrote that the Government should, in the future, draw a distinction between its goodwill to Jewry and its policy towards Israel.

D Gamsu, ex-mayor of Nigel, wrote⁸² that he, as well as all Jewish citizens, had been deeply impressed and pleased at Verwoerd's diplomatic statement. Other letters to the editor were also critical of Israel, while praising Verwoerd for his standpoint⁸³. One view of dissent was that of "S" in the Star⁸⁴, who reprimanded the Board for making a 'forcible entry' into the political arena, without uttering a word of protest against the Prime Minister's vilification of Israel.

Israel continued to ally herself with the Afro-Asian bloc against SA on the international arena. At the end of September

⁸⁰ Die Volksblad, 13.11.62

⁸¹ 15.11.62

⁸² Die Transvaler, 23.11.62

⁸³ for example G Koves, Die Burger, 19.11.62, and "Sea Point Jew", 23.1.63, who praised Nossel for supporting the government, a stand which was shared by many other Jews; R.B. Egbert, Die Transvaler, 20.11.62, who stressed that the friendship of "the people of Israel" had remained unchanged; J Shear congratulated the Prime Minister on his "unprejudiced" statement, emphasising that SA was the homeland of South African Jewry, who regarded themselves as South African in the first place and Jews in the second (Die Transvaler, 23.11.62).

⁸⁴ Star, 16.11.62

Israel announced that she was banning the export of arms to SA, and, at the same time, replaced her Minister Plenipotentiary⁸⁵ with a Charge d'Affair. This added further strain to the relations between the two countries⁸⁶. Rumours were rife that the Israeli Cabinet had "ordered the country's air, sea and trade links with South Africa to be cut" as a result of growing pressures by Afro-Asian countries⁸⁷, and, in fact, a final break between Israel and SA was regarded as "*fairly imminent*"⁸⁸, although this was denied by Israeli spokesmen⁸⁹. Speaking at Heidelberg⁹⁰ on 28 September, Verwoerd referred to these developments and sharply criticised Israel⁹¹. He added, however, that no anti-Jewish feeling would be permitted to arise. Jews had demonstrated their patriotism and they could not be held accountable for Israel's ingratitude. "Israel has chosen to attack SA in the hope of winning the favour of the non-White states." By not replacing her Minister, Israel had given a 'slap in the face' not to SA but to Jews who had helped her so much in the past.

...no conclusions should, however, be drawn or any actions taken against the Jews of South Africa. They are citizens of the Republic. In many cases they have clearly said that they disapprove of Israel's action. It would be extremely unfair of us to take revenge on them...There need not be any anti-Jewish feeling in South Africa against the Jews here...I repeat it as the standpoint of the Government, that if any feeling against the Jews of the Republic should arise in South Africa because of the attitude of Israel, it would be as unfair as the world is today towards SA.

The Deputies discussed Israel's decision to recall her Minister

⁸⁵ Israel had a legation in SA, not an Embassy, at this stage. At the same time, SA still had no representation in Israel.

⁸⁶ Die Transvaler, 26.9.63

⁸⁷ Star, 27.9.63; Pretoria News, 26.9.63

⁸⁸ Sunday Express (29..9.63

⁸⁹ Rand Daily Mail, 30.9.63, Star, 27.9.63 - based on an interview with El-Al's representative in the United Kingdom.

⁹⁰ Die Transvaler, 30.9.63

⁹¹ September 28, 1963

on 29 September⁹². Schneider expressed the deep distress that all felt with the impasse which had been reached between SA and Israel. "I believe that the Israeli Government is acting reluctantly under pressure, and that her position is a very difficult one." He welcomed the statement by the Prime Minister which had absolved the community of complicity with Israel's decision. Disquiet at these trends pervaded Israel⁹³ as well as the Jewish community in SA⁹⁴. On 2 October the Board sent a letter to Verwoerd in which it expressed appreciation for his re-affirmation that Jewish citizens could not, and should not, be held accountable for Israel's foreign policies, and that these policies should not be permitted to become the cause of 'ill-feeling' towards the Jewish community⁹⁵. Sydney Walt, chairman of the Cape Council, said that, while the community regretted Israel's decision, South African Jews owed loyalty only to SA, and this in no way conflicted with their religious, historical and cultural ties with the people of Israel⁹⁶.

The Afrikaans press was quick to dabble in these troubled waters. It now suggested that there was a great deal of anger towards Israel among the great bulk of the Jews⁹⁷, some feeling that the time had come to make it clear to the world that they were South Africans who could no longer divide their loyalty between SA and Israel. Israel had left no doubt that it was not concerned about them, whereas Verwoerd had come forward to stand at their side⁹⁸. In response, I A Maisels, Vice-President of the

⁹² minutes of the 29.9.63 meeting of the Executive Council

⁹³ Die Burger, 28.10.63; Cape Argus, 1.11.63

⁹⁴ Die Stem, 29.9.63; Sidney Walt, chairman of the Cape Council, Cape Times, 26.9.63; Joe Daleski, vice-chairman of the SAZF (Die Transvaler, 30.9.63)

⁹⁵ N Philips, President of the Board, read out the letter he had sent to Verwoerd at the Executive Council meeting, 14.10.63.

⁹⁶ Cape Times, 26.9.63

⁹⁷ Die Stem, 29.9.63; Die Vaderland, 30.9.63

⁹⁸ Die Vaderland, 30.9.63; Financial Mail, 22.10.65, an article by a Joe Rogaly

Board 'set the record straight' by stressing that the Jews of SA were not responsible for Israel's foreign policies. The community was constantly aware that an undercurrent of anti-Semitism existed which could burst out at any time. Israel's vote was merely being used to exert pressure on Jews to adopt a certain political attitude. The greatest danger was that the pro-Government press, with the collaboration of Jews who supported the NP, would succeed in driving a wedge between Israel and the community⁹⁹. This was, undoubtedly, what Verwoerd aimed to do.

Reports of Israel's intention not to replace its Minister to Pretoria, and to reduce the legation to a Charge d'Affairs, aroused strong, and even hostile reactions, in NP circles¹⁰⁰ and in the Nationalist press¹⁰¹. The recurring theme was that there should be no retaliation against the local community, not only because it was not incriminated by Israel's actions, but also because anti-Semitism would further inflame anti-South African sentiment in the world¹⁰². While bewailing the hostility on the part of a "pre-destined friend, the community could not be held accountable. "The truth is that Israel pursues its tragic course in this matter against the vain protest and advice of the most important voices from the South African Jewish community¹⁰³." The "adjustment" and "correct conduct" of the South African Jew will not be furthered by directing justified indignation at

⁹⁹ Die Vaderland, 27.10.63

¹⁰⁰ Jewish Observer and Middle East Review, London, 11.10.63

¹⁰¹ a particular virulent article appeared in the Die Suidwester, entitled "A Vicious Circle", 21.9.63.

¹⁰² Die Burger and Die Vaderland, 26.9.63

¹⁰³ Dawie in Die Burger, 26.9.63, later quoted by Karl Lameer in his column in the Zionist Record, 4.10.63. In an interview with the Durban representative of Die Transvaler (2.10.63) Gert Claassen, a Durban businessmen who had visited Israel twice and was "well acquainted with the conditions in Israel" said that the Deputy-leader of the Opposition, Yaakov Merridor had expressed his regret at the hostile attitude of the Israeli Government to SA at the UN. It was an act of weakness on the part of the Israeli Government to fight SA in order to win the friendship and sympathy of the immature African States.

Israel's action against local Jewry as a more accessible target. Nothing would give our enemies now greater pleasure than something which they could represent as anti-Semitism, for nothing would hurt our increasing internal solidarity more.

The English-language press conveyed its understanding for Israel's predicament: surrounded by Arab states, she was dependent on the African states in the international arena. It was emphasised that the local Jewish community had no responsibility for Israel's foreign policy as its ties with Israel were cultural and religious, not political¹⁰⁴. The Star¹⁰⁵, and the Cape Times¹⁰⁶ were both repelled by the warnings, made by Verwoerd and echoed in the Nationalist press, of the danger of a resurgence of anti-Semitism. The Cape Times inquired why Verwoerd did not warn the English speaking South Africans every time Britain announced that she regarded Apartheid as repulsive? The Jewish community of SA had as much right to respect as any member of the English or Afrikaans-speaking communities. The Star warned that "...attempts to implicate South African Jews and saddle them with some of the responsibility for what has happened, is at best crude and at worst malicious¹⁰⁷."

10.4 South Africa's Policy During the Six-day War, June 1967

The Six Day War, in June 1967, was a turning point in the relations between SA and Israel. In the intervening years Israel's foreign policy had ceased to be an contentious issue, the differences, which had caused strained relations, greatly diminished. While continuing to adhere to a firm policy of repudiating discrimination based on race or colour, Israel demonstrated greater restraint in expressing disapproval of the Republic's policies. At the same time, there was more understanding on the part of the SA Government of Israel's

¹⁰⁴ Rand Daily Mail, 26.9.63

¹⁰⁵ 27.9.63

¹⁰⁶ 30.9.63

¹⁰⁷ Star, 27.9.63

special position as the national homeland of the Jews, and her dependence on the support of the African states¹⁰⁸.

Initially, when news of the outbreak of the war hit the world, SA took a neutral stance¹⁰⁹. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr H Muller, stressed, in the Senate, that SA would maintain strict neutrality¹¹⁰ since the parties involved were both unfriendly towards SA¹¹¹. He ignored the fact that trade relations existed with Israel, whereas the Arab states had boycotted SA¹¹². The press was astounded by Israel's victory, and gratified at Nasser's humiliating defeat¹¹³. It was anticipated that the Israeli Government would now have a more 'realistic' view of world affairs, and would realise the uselessness of making a strong stand against SA as a means of countering Arab enmity¹¹⁴. The SAZF and the Board sent a cable to the Israeli Government, expressing thanks to God and gladness at Israel's deliverance through the unparalleled courage and ability of Zahal¹¹⁵. The basic, inherent, sympathetic attitude of the people and the Government was impressively revealed in the reactions to the war in June 1967: almost unanimous support for Israel's cause. The

¹⁰⁸ Report to Congress, 1965-1967.

¹⁰⁹ Die Vaderland 6.6.67

¹¹⁰ Die Transvaler, 8.6.67

¹¹¹ i.e. both had voted in favour of the proposal in UN on October 27, 1966 to declare that the Mandate over South West Africa had fallen away.

¹¹² Financial Mail, 9.6.67 SA's ties with the Middle East were largely confined to Israel. On capital account the Board of Deputies was trying to raise and get exchange control clearance for R20M. Exports to Israel in the first nine months of 1966 totalled R2.1 M comprising foodstuffs, chemicals, pig iron, manufactures and machinery. Imports over the same period amounted to only R1.5M, including manufactured goods, textiles, phosphates and vegetable oils.

¹¹³ Die Burger, 8.6.67, Dagbreek 11.6.67

¹¹⁴ Die Beeld 11.6,67

¹¹⁵ The Israeli Defence Forces; RDM, 10.6.67

SA Government's decision to permit the transfer to Israel of the funds collected for humanitarian purposes met with general approval. The SAZF and the Board, in a joint statement, expressed appreciation of the sympathetic reception by the Prime Minister to its delegation, and thanked fellow South Africans of all faiths for their goodwill, sympathy and support for the cause of Israel¹¹⁶.

At the end of the 1960s relations between the country improved, and were cemented when, in April 1969, Israel appointed a new Charge d'affairs, Michael Maichal. He held a higher rank in the diplomatic service than his predecessors.

Furthermore, the Nationalist Government no longer protested against Israel's diplomatic stance towards Apartheid, and accepted Israel's obligation to intervene in all instances of discrimination against Jews in any country. It also appeared to accept that Israel's strategic national interests dictated an alliance with the Afro-Asian bloc.

10.5 Conclusions

It is ironic that both Afrikaner Nationalists, and the African states which supported the anti-Apartheid movement, expected support from Israel, the former because of similarities and the latter because of the history of oppression. Israel's hostile attitude towards SA created a crisis for the local Jewish community as it fomented insinuations of double loyalty. The perception that the Jewish leadership had a responsibility for Israel's actions revealed another aspect of the precariousness of the community's position. The Board's 'enthusiasm' for Verwoerd's statement, ambiguous as it was, and containing as it did the demand that all ties with Israel should be repudiated, amply demonstrated the Board's desire to placate the Government. The Board preferred to ignore the implication that these pronouncements discriminated against them relative to other 'foreign' communities. Nonetheless, neither the Board nor the SAZF, while applauding Verwoerd's statements, fell into the trap

¹¹⁶ Sunday Times, 11.6.67. Report to South African Jewry, 1965-1967

of severing bonds with Israel. Both bodies continued to assiduously adhere to these ties, highlighting that these were religious, spiritual, traditional and humanitarian ties, and not political ones.

The reaction of the NP and of the Nationalist press to Israel's 'bad behaviour' clearly suggests the existence of latent hostility towards the SA Jewish community, which could easily get out of control. Verwoerd kept a tight rein on anti-Semitic rhetoric, and the Nationalist press was very vigorous in repudiating the existence of residual anti-Semitism. The motivation for these denials was not a desire to accept the Jews as equals but rather the fear that anti-Semitic manifestations would exacerbate the anti-South-African sentiment prevalent in the Western World. The public support for the NP and the Government, elicited by Verwoerd from the Jewish leadership, effectively corroborated the declarations on the part of spokesmen and the nationalist press that the SA Government was not anti-Semitic. There is no doubt that the SA Government hoped to extract political gain from forcing the Jewish leaders to show support, both locally and in the international political arena. The Jewish leadership co-operated, and to some extent, even appeased the Government, in order to avert the risk of the resurgence of anti-Semitism. It can clearly be seen that the Verwoerd Government successfully wielded the threat of anti-Semitism to manipulate the Board.

In conclusion, the first half of the 1960s unequivocally demonstrated that an undercurrent of anti-Semitism still existed and under strained circumstances could burst through.

Chapter 11. JEWISH INVOLVEMENT IN RADICAL POLITICS

11.1. Introduction

In December 1956, 156 people were arrested and charged with treason in the form of a conspiracy to overthrow the state by violence and replace it with a state based on Communism. Of the twenty three whites arrested more than half were Jews. Among the Jews arrested was Joe Slovo, Ruth First, Sonia Bunting, Ben Turok, and Jacqueline Arenstein¹. Their protracted trial ended when all charges were withdrawn. A new page in African militancy, under the leadership of the African National Congress ensued. The police station at Sharpeville was the site of the worst incident when, in March 1960, the police resorted to shooting at the enormous crowd, killing 69 Africans and wounding another 178. In Cape Town a mass demonstration took place on 30 March under the leadership of the PAC. In retaliation, the Government declared a state of emergency, mobilised the armed forces, outlawed the ANC and the PAC, arresting 98 Whites, 36 coloureds, 90 Asians and 1,279 Africans². Public meetings were banned, Liberal and Radical publications like Torch and New Age were prosecuted for publishing subversive statements and in some cases were suspended altogether. The Government's actions effectively destroyed almost all the means of lawful opposition. During the three years, December 1961 to 1964, over 200 separate acts of sabotage took place, mainly involving government buildings, public transport and electrical installations.

The Government reacted to the underground resistance movement with drastic legislation. The General Law Amendment Act of 1962 outlawed sabotage, extended the Government's power to issue special regulations to ban organisations, to control the activities of listed and banned persons, to prohibit gatherings, and introduced a system of house arrest. In 1963 its powers were further extended to enable it to declare virtually any organisation unlawful, and to control any individuals suspected

¹ Shimoni, 1980, pp 227-228

² HoA debates, 6.5.60, col 6818 and 3.2.61, col 698-9

of radical opposition of any sort, without their being able to have any recourse to courts of law. Section 17 of the 1963 Act provided for a period of up to 90 days of arrest without a warrant and without the detainee having the right to receive visitors³. By these draconian measures, the State had, by 1965, virtually destroyed all underground opposition, and many of its members had fled abroad. The only opposition remaining was the Progressive Party and the English-language 'liberal' universities. The axis around which the controversy over Apartheid raged in the wider white community was not the aims but rather the oppressive legislative and administrative measures taken to implement the policy. In the assessment of Maurice Porter, the chairman of the Public Relations committee of the Board:

...as far as the white community in South Africa is concerned, the general aims of Apartheid are, if not actively, certainly passively, supported by almost the entire white population. It is in regard to the methods that there have been strong differences of opinion...forms the main corner-stone of difference between the two major political parties...⁴

11.2. Jewish Socialists in the 19th Century

In the 19th and 20th century Europe two prototypes of Jewish activists appeared on the political scene: the activist who affiliated with the Jewish people and Judaism and the activist who was alienated from them, even hostile to their very existence. A similar bifurcation can be found within South African Jewry: anti-Apartheid activists who were affiliated with the community and anti-Apartheid activists who were estranged from the community and from its interests. This reflected the unresolved tension between the universalist thrust of prophetic Judaism and the particularist belief in the chosenness of Israel with its particular mission among the nations.

Nevertheless, there was a cardinal difference between the Jewish socialist in Europe and his SA counterpart. In Europe the

³ this became known as the '90-day clause'

⁴ draft of Porter's address to the World Jewish Congress, July 1964

alienated Jewish activist aspired to the early disappearance of the Jewish People and of its religion, whereas this was not an issue for the Jewish anti-Apartheid activists. They did, however, fervently believe, as did their brothers in Europe, that the interests of society transcended those of Jews, and these could be sacrificed on the altar of transforming society into the image of a democratic, multi-racial society.

In Western Europe the Jewish intellegentisa tried "to dissolve Jewish identity through socialism⁵", believing intensely in the advent of a classless, international society. In the process, they were inured and even indifferent to Jewish suffering, their remarks permeated with anti-Semitism. Karl Marx equated the universal domination of money with the 'Jewish spirit' insisting that the "*social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of society from Judaism*⁶. Ferdinand LaSalle, the founder of the German labour Movement was convinced that Judaism represented the most complete self-alienation of spirit. In 1860 he summed up his feelings of antipathy: "I do not like the Jews at all. I even detest them in general. I see in them nothing but the very much degenerated sons of a great but vanished past⁷. Otto Bauer, one of the most original Marxist theorists on the national problem, explicitly denied that his theories of nationality could be applied to the Jewish people, as they were in the process of irreversible dissolution⁸. The misery and the suffering of Jewry in Eastern Europe engaged neither their minds or hearts. Rosa Luxumberg, one of the most prominent Jewish revolutionaries and internationalists wrote that she had no room in her heart for Jewish suffering. "Why do you come with your particular Jewish sorrows. I feel equally close to the wretched

⁵ Robert Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, New Jersey, 1982, p 17

⁶ Robert Wistrich, 1982, p 25. Quoted from Karl Marx, *Die Judefrage*. See also Prager Dennis and Telushikin Joseph, *Why the Jews: the Reason for Antisemitism*, Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 1983

⁷ Wistrich, 1982, pp 46-47

⁸ Wistrich, 1982, p 9

victims of the rubber plantations in Putumayo or to the Negroes in Africa⁹."

Nevertheless, the majority of the Jews who were at all politically active adhered to the moderate democratic movements. This was true in Europe; it was true in SA. The South African Jewish activist and the European Jewish activist were bound together by the prophetic vision of Messianism. Just as the biblically trained youth of the Pale of Settlement¹⁰ embraced Marxism as a means of redemption, although socialism was rooted in atheistic materialism¹¹, so to did the South African anti-Apartheid activist embrace the causes of Communism, Socialism, liberalism, and humanism. A modern Jewish philosopher wrote:

Every influence and contact and experience has made him a universalist and an internationalist...He has participated out of proportion to his numbers in movements for international justice, understanding and humanitarianism, and has been receptive to social philosophies with a world view....¹²

11.3 Jewish Prominence in Subversive Activities

It was an inescapable fact that the number of Jewish names on the lists of banned people was conspicuous. In sharp contrast to Rabbi Swift's position was the reality where Jews played a

⁹ *The Jew in the Modern World*, edited by Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinhardz, Oxford University Press, New York, 1980, p 225. This cosmopolitan socialism was characteristic of many assimilated Jewish socialists who played pivotal roles in the history of the Socialist movement in Western and Eastern Europe: Axelrod, Martov, Trotsky, Jogiches, Alexander Helphand (Parvus), Karl Radek. "Uprooted emigres who had emerged in one generation from their pariah status in Eastern Europe to the centre of the historical stage, they embraced socialism with all the fervour of a new religion." (Robert Wistrich, *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky*, Harrap, London, 1976, p 13

¹⁰ The only region in Russia where Jews were permitted to settle.

¹¹ Jacob B Augus, *Jewish Identity in the Age of Ideologies*, Fredrick Ungar Publishing Co, NY, 1978, p 164

¹² J O Hertzler, "The Sociology of Anti-Semitism Throughout History", in *Jews in a Gentile World*, edited by Issac Graeber and S H Britt, MacMillan, NY, 1942, p 76

crucial role in labour and communist politics which could not be denied. In particular, they stood at the forefront of the trade unions, including non-white unions. Gabriel Weinstock, Louis Karovsky, Issy Diamond, Issy Wolfson were active in the Labour Movement. Ben Weinbren served in the major trade unions of the country for decades; Solly Sachs¹³ who was the General Secretary of the Transvaal Garment Workers Union, was also an important member of the Labour Party and a leading executive member of the SA Trades and Labour Council. In Parliament, Morris Kentridge had been a member of the Labour Party¹⁴ and H Basner was a communist lawyer who had succeeded in getting the Senatorial seat representing Africans in 1939. The first communist member ever to be elected to Parliament was Sam Kahn who was elected as Native Representative in the House of Assembly for the Cape Western Circle in 1948¹⁵.

Jews also constituted a percentage of the Communist Party, in both the rank and file and leadership, which exceeded their proportion of the population¹⁶. The leadership boasted such people as Ray Alexander who was elected in 1954 as a Native Representative until she was banned as a named communist, and Eli Weinberg who was also a major union figure until his banning in the 1950's. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the prominence of Jews in leftwing and Labour Union politics, the great majority of Jewish politicians stood for the UP, including one Cabinet Minister, Henry Gluckman¹⁷. The pervasive suspicion of Jewish

¹³ eventually moving to London in the early 1950s

¹⁴ but left and joined the SAP in 1915

¹⁵ Star, 24.11.48

¹⁶ for example Molly Douglas, Lazer Bach, Rebecca Bunting

¹⁷ Gluckman was appointed Minister of Health, the first and only Jewish Cabinet Minister until 1993. Other Jewish UP MPs include Robinson, Ginsberg, Bertha Solomon, Mann Hollander, Friedlander, Sonnenberg, and many more. (I am indebted to Gus Saron's papers for the above information.) In the general election of 1958, there were 10 Jewish candidates: 7 stood for the UP, 1 each for the Labour Party and the Liberal Party; and 1 for the South African Bond. 5 Jews were elected and another 2 returned in the separate election for MPs to represent the Cape

hostility to the Nationalist Government was intensified by the publication, on 17 November 1962¹⁸ of a list of named Communists, it too including a not insignificant number of Jewish names¹⁹. The arrests and trials during the period of 1963 to 1965 perpetuated the impression of Jewish prominence in the radical opposition, which had resorted to violence to overthrow the Government.

The central event in the Government's clampdown on subversive activity was the 'Rivonia Raid'. On 11 July 1963 the police raided Arthur Goldreich's house in Rivonia and captured the leadership of the *Umkonto we Sizwe* underground movement, including Sisulu and Kathrada, leaders of the banned ANC²⁰. All five Whites apprehended were Jews: Arthur Goldreich, Leonard Bernstein, Hiliard Festentein, Bob Hepple²¹, and Dennis Goldberg²². Harold Wolpe, another Jew, was arrested after being linked to the conspiracy²³. In a dramatic sequel, four of the conspirators, including Goldreich and Wolpe, made a spectacular escape²⁴.

Coloured voters. (*The South African Jewish Yearbook*, 1959)

¹⁸ Die Burger

¹⁹ prompting letter writers to express their reservations towards these communist Jews, e.g. Ruben de Villiers (Die Burger, 22.11.62, 'Jewish South African' (Die Vaderland, 22.11.62). In contrast the editorial of the Daily Dispatch defended Jewish citizens as the strongest opponents of Communism.

²⁰ Daily News, 13.7.63

²¹ son of a Labour MP.

²² M Horrel, Survey of Race Relations, 1963, pp 54-55

²³ Goldreich worked with Mandela, who had led the military wing of the ANC from the time of the Sharpeville massacres in 1960. Mandela was imprisoned in 1962, and when Goldreich was apprehended on July 11 1963 a secret ANC plan for guerilla warfare was found hidden in the hubcap of his car. Police also found Mandela's journals which Goldreich had hidden under the false floor of a coal shed.

²⁴ Wolpe and Goldreich entered Swaziland disguised as priests, and were then flown to Bechuanaland. Wolpe eventually settled in England and Goldreich in Israel where he is a professor at the Bezalel School of Art.

Throughout these sensational events, the prominence of Jews was highlighted²⁵. The entire Jewish community was, thus, put under scrutiny. An interesting twist was that the Prosecution during the Rivonia Trial was led by Dr Percy Yutar, a Jew who played a prominent part in communal affairs²⁶, against a defence team headed by Bram Fischer, son of the Afrikaner national hero and president of the OFS Republic. In the trial itself, three of the accused Jews were ultimately acquitted. The fourth, Dennis Goldberg, received a life sentence²⁷. Of 24 other conspirators who had escaped abroad, 6 were Jews²⁸. Adrian Leftwich became a state witness, and after receiving indemnity, emigrated²⁹. In another major trial in November 1964, members of the "*African Resistance Movement* were charged with sabotage. As in previous

²⁵ When the trial against the remaining men arrested at Rivonia eventually opened, the indictment was very serious as very incriminating documents had been uncovered by the police. The main accused were named as members of the National High Command of the *Spear of the Nation* and mostly non-whites - Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada and Raymond Mhalaba, while the only two whites accused were Jews - Lionel Bernstein and Dennis Goldberg. Festenstein was charged later under the Suppression of Communism Act (Star, 27.12.63).

²⁶ In the 1950's he served as President of the United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg, a member of the Council of United Hebrew Schools and of the SA Jewish Board of Education. In 1958 he served as President of the SA Jewish Board of Education Fund Drive. (Saron's private papers, SAJT, 6.1.56, 12.9.58, 21.11.58)

²⁷ Sunday Express, 21.6.64

²⁸ Another Jew, James Kantor (Wolpe's partner in a legal firm) together with two non-whites were accused of conspiring with the SA Communist Party, the ANC and *Spear of the Nation* to commit acts of sabotage. Another 24 alleged conspirators included 6 more Jewish names - Vivian Ezra, Benjamin Turok, Julius First, Joe Slovo, Michael Harmel and Ronald Kasrils - all of whom fled the country. (M Horrel, Survey of Race Relations, 1963, pp 55-57. Kantor and Bernstein were eventually acquitted and emigrated.

²⁹ (Race Relations Survey 1964 p 93). Adrian Leftwich had played an important role of sabotage activities of the "*African Resistance Movement* (founded by another Jew Montague Berman, Sunday Times, 27.9.64). After being held for two successive periods of arrest under the 90 day detention clause, he decided to give state evidence and became, in the Treason Trials, the key witness against his own associates (Star, 4.11.64).

trials the preponderance of Jews was undeniable³⁰.

Time magazine³¹, in reporting on the Goldreich case, called attention to the split which had developed in the Jewish community. It commented that Jews were among the most zealous White opponents of Apartheid, although the majority of the community tacitly condoned it. While the Board had always been careful never to attack Apartheid directly, and although some of the wealthiest Jews contributed to the NP, thousands of younger, university-educated Jews were protesting against Apartheid as it smelled of Nazism. Goldreich's escape had touched off ominous rumblings, and was having acute repercussions within the community.

In the aftermath of the Rivonia trial, more people were arrested under the 90-day detention. In August 1964 thirteen were charged with furthering the aims of Communism. The main accused was Bram Fischer, the Afrikaner QC, who had led the defence at the Rivonia trial. Of the 13 accused with Fischer, five were Jewish³². During the trial, Fischer jumped bail. After his subsequent arrest, several Jews were implicated in aiding him while he was in hiding and were sentenced to prison terms. In 1966 Jews, such as Albie Sachs, were detained under the 180-day clause as potential state witnesses. In 1967, 37 Whites were listed as office-bearers, members or supporters of the multi-racial Congress of Democrats; 18 were Jewish³³.

³⁰ The central accused was Betram (Baruch) Hirson, a university lecturer, together with 2 other Jews, Frederick Prager and Raymond Eisenstein (Rand Daily Mail, 17.11.64). The list of conspirators, alleged to have worked in liaison with the accused, included several Jews, such as Rhoda Prager, Ann Swersky, Michael Schneider, Harry Cohen, as well as Adrian Lefwich (Rand Daily Mail, 18.11.64)

³¹ Dagbreek, 30.8.63,

³² Their Jewish background in interaction with their communist backgrounds were highlighted by their statements.

³³ Government Gazetter extraordinary 25 April 1967, (compiled in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950) Saron's private papers, archives of Jewish Board of Deputies

11.4 The Critique of Jewish Prominence in the Opposition To Government Policy

The prominence of Jews in radical politics resulted in the accusation being made that the community as a whole was implicated. A subtle variant of this crude accusation was the contention that the community could in some way restrain the political activities of its members³⁴.

An anonymous letter from "Nabob", published in Die Burger on 14 September 1962³⁵ caused much comment. It stated that the Board should be disturbed at the prejudice against the Jews which had resulted from the exceptionally high proportion of Jews who appeared among the members of the Congress of Democrats and other leftist organisations, as well as by the contribution which Jewish journalists had made to distorting SA's image abroad. He urged a thorough investigation into the causes of their extremely 'liberalistic' tendencies.

The Whites in South Africa are fighting for their lives but there are people (among the Jews too) who do not recognise our right to survival. In present circumstances, those who are not with us, are against us.

The SA Jewish Times³⁶ reacted by pointing out that Jews did not, in fact, predominate in leftist political organisations, which were, in any case, a negligible force in white politics. To draw such a conclusion was to play into the hands of the anti-Semites. Dawie³⁷ rebuked the paper for evading the major issue, which was that Jews were conspicuously prominent in leftist politics. If only a minority was involved in leftist politics, why was this minority so much more active in politics than was the majority? The SA Jewish Times responded by denying that it had evaded the issue. It admitted that it had adopted a cautious approach, but this was because it was dealing with an

³⁴ for example, Carel De Wet (MP NP) commented that "Jewish leaders should use their influence on these individuals so that the name of Jewry in general did not come into disrepute (Rand Daily Mail, 23.6.62)

³⁵ Die Burger, 14.9.62

³⁶ 29.9.62

³⁷ Die Burger, 29.9.62

inflammable subject, with many "gutter-politicians" ready to assail the Jew³⁸. Since SA was a multi-racial country, politics assumed racial demarcations. A disparity between the historical experience of the English and the Jew, relative to that of the Afrikaner, had engendered different attitudes towards SA's race problem. While it was true that, in the final analysis, they all shared the same white skin and thus the same fate if extreme African Nationalism were to prevail, this was not inevitable if reasonable concessions were made. To regard such an attitude as treasonable was to prepare the ground for totalitarianism. The fact that one quarter of the Afrikaner people, despite their historic experiences, supported a policy of accommodation, was proof that this was the only way out of the predicament of race relations³⁹.

Notwithstanding this comprehensive clarification of the situation, "Nabob" persisted in focusing upon the involvement of Jews in leftist groups⁴⁰. "If anti-Semitism ever takes on serious proportions in South Africa, it will be the Jews' own fault, and that because they have not stood actively on our side in our hour of crisis." That "Nabob" was not a lone voice is borne out by the support he received from other correspondents, including "Inquirer"⁴¹ and Bob-Clark⁴² who contended that the high percentage of Jews among those prosecuted for sabotage and subversion, combined with their divided loyalty, demonstrated their 'ungratefulness' towards SA. Jewish opposition was likened to a stalk-borer of a mealie plant - "in a surreptitious manner it brings about the extinction of the plant, while it thrives on its substance"⁴³. 'Fides' complained that some Jews were listed

³⁸ Sunday Times, 14.10.62, quoting the SA Jewish Times

³⁹ Eastern Province Herald, 15.10.62, quoting the Times.

⁴⁰ Die Burger, 11.10.62

⁴¹ 21.2.66

⁴² 14.2.66, Items of interest no 7, 24.2.66

⁴³ Die Transvaler, 23.9.63

communists, and had no concern for the harm they caused⁴⁴.

Grensboer, the columnist of Die Oosterlig, commented that it would have been extremely 'abnormal' if "the high percentage of Jews, prominent among the detainees in terms of the 90 day clause", had not become a 'subject of discussion' in the non-Jewish community⁴⁵. The phenomenon was striking. This did not mean that the entire community was being accused; it was merely to state an absolute fact. An anti-Jewish movement would be in no one's interest, but this did not mean that the problem could be ignored.

It would be natural if the community went out of its way to let no doubt remain, even with the most ill-disposed, that it dissociates itself from such individuals. It would be natural if its condemnation were even sharper than that of other communities.

It should come, therefore, as no surprise that Suzman, in an address to the Board on 25 June, 1963, emphasised that the primary task of the Board in the past months had been to

contain these unfounded generalisations and to make it clear that it is unwarranted...The forthcoming sabotage trial, with all its revelations, is likely to exacerbate the position. We must, in this respect, accentuate our endeavours to present an accurate image of our community to the outside world⁴⁶.

11.5 The Response of the Jewish Board of Deputies

The Jewish leadership was placed in an extremely difficult predicament by the involvement of Jews in left-wing politics. Because their actions involved allegations of subversion and threats to the security of the State, it was feared that the community as a whole would be perceived as responsible for these individuals, and therefore implicated in their deeds. At the

⁴⁴ Die Transvaler, 29.5.63. It is interesting that all these writers use pseudonyms rather than their real names.

⁴⁵ in his column "On the Political Horizon" in Die Oosterlig, 20.9.63

⁴⁶ "The Jew in the South African Scene Today", address by Arthur Suzman to an extended meeting of the Deputies

Executive meeting on 29 September⁴⁷ Saron complained that it was difficult to comprehend the argument that a community was expected to disassociate itself from the actions of individuals, allegedly guilty of illegal acts, for whom it was not responsible, and over whom it had no control whatsoever. This was especially true insomuch as the great majority of them were completely alienated from Jewish communal life. Notwithstanding official policy, however, the Board could not ignore the expectations that the community explicitly disassociate itself "in some official manner", from alleged subversive activities of "certain individual Jews"⁴⁸. Insinuations that the community disown the men concerned raised the inference that SA Jewry, as a whole, was somehow accountable for their conduct.

No other community in South Africa, no other section of the population, would for a moment be held responsible, or would accept responsibility for the misdeeds of individuals over whom it has no control...⁴⁹.

The major difficulty which faced the Board was the perception amongst the Afrikaners that the community was monolithic, led by a "Jewish Broederbond", whereas, in fact, every shade of political opinion could be found in the community, encompassing enthusiastic support for Apartheid, through various nuances of neutrality, to outright condemnation.

In view of the turmoil surrounding this issue, spokesmen for the community felt compelled to unambiguously re-affirm that there was no such thing as a collective 'Jewish attitude' towards SA's political and racial problems and that the community could not, in any event, be saddled with any responsibility for the political views and deeds of individual persons over whom they had no control. The Board's statement emphasised that the principles of Judaism and Jewish historical experience had taught Jews to respect the ordered processes of the law, which stipulated that change was achieved through negotiation, not

⁴⁷ Minutes of Executive Council meeting, 29.9.63 as well as in Jewish Affairs, October 1963, 41

⁴⁸ Saron addressing the Executive Council, 4.9.63

⁴⁹ Jewish Affairs, October 1963, editorial comment

through civil disorder⁵⁰. All attempts to impute to the community en masse a share of responsibility for the actions and designs of those involved in the treason trial were manifestly unwarranted. The community stood for law and order. It unreservedly condemned unlawful activities and individuals who defied the law. The Board, and the community, could not bear any responsibility for anything such persons might do or fail to do⁵¹. The statement⁵² stressed that Jews were a loyal and patriotic section of the population. Acts of individuals were their own responsibility, not that of the community.

The Nationalist press gave great prominence to the Board's statement. A bold 6-column headline appeared on the front-page of Dagbreek en Sondag⁵³ **"Cannot Take Blame for Their Subversive Activity - Jewish Board Condemns Goldreich and Co."** The paper reported that the "highest Jewish authority" in SA had rejected illegality in whatever section of the SA population, including members of its own 'race', like Goldreich and Wolpe. This had become apparent from the answers given to questions posed to the Board, such as why such a high percentage of Whites detained under the 90-day clause were Jews, and what was the official Jewish standpoint towards the actions of people, such as Goldreich and Wolpe? The Board had replied that the facts had abundantly shown that the community was a loyal and patriotic section of the population⁵⁴.

The "Jewishness" of the Jewish radical opponents of the system was placed under scrutiny by both the community and the pro-Government forces. Pro-nationalist Jews asserted that the

⁵⁰ Jewish Affairs, September 1963

⁵¹ Jewish Affairs, October 1963. Other statements made by the Board on this topic: Dagbreek, 1.9.63; Die Transvaler, 21.10.64. See also Chief Rabbi Casper's sermon on 6.11.64 and that of Rabbi Rappaport (Rand Daily Mail, 23.9.63)

⁵² Minutes of the Executive Council, 4.9.63

⁵³ 1.9.63

⁵⁴ Chairman's Report, Annual Conference of the Cape Council, 19.4.64

accused were Jewish in name only, having long ago alienated themselves from the community and the Jewish people. As one Jewish nationalist felt constrained to explain, following General van den Bergh's controversial statement linking Jews and Communism: Jews became involved in communist activities because they had been brought up outside the Jewish fold, despised their Jewishness and lacked an identity⁵⁵.

...when this liberal urge is alienated from the Jewish fold and Jewish expression, it is translated into a foreign radicalism which, all too often, violently rejects Jewishness while embracing communist...ideals.

Edel Horwitz, in reply to a question why such a high percentage of Jews in SA were communists, replied that the Zionists had no control over them⁵⁶. They were no longer full-bodied Jews, and no longer respected their traditions.

Not one of them was an orthodox Jew; none took an interest in Jewish affairs or had any standing in the Jewish community...Jews are not lacking in humanitarianism...but when this liberal urge is alienated from the Jewish fold and Jewish expression, it is translated into foreign radicalism which, all too often, violently rejects Jewishness while embracing communist and quasi-communist ideals⁵⁷.

There was just enough truth in this generalisation to make it 'common coin'⁵⁸, but, in Saron's view, what gave it credibility was "wishful thinking born of great discomfort and embarrassment, in turn engendered by wide-spread white reaction to Jewish prominence in the opposition." In fact, Jews prominent in the opposition ranged across the entire spectrum of degrees of Jewish identification, no less than non-politically conscious Jews in the community at large⁵⁹.

⁵⁵ L.S., Rand Daily Mail, 7.10.64.

⁵⁶ implicitly agreeing that 'far too many' Jews were communists

⁵⁷ Die Transvaler, 8.8.67. See also S Kluk, DB, 11.10.64

⁵⁸ This was, in fact, one of Saron's arguments in response to Dirk Richard's article, in September 1965, which cast doubt on Jewish 'reliability' as well as to Chief of Police Muller in 1968.

⁵⁹ Saron's private papers, archives of Jewish Board of Deputies

Die Vaderland⁶⁰ depicted Goldreich as the prototype of a communist: detribalised and denationalized. Jewish leaders, the editor claimed, had assured him that Goldreich, except at his circumcision, had never been in a synagogue, and was detached from his own people, Goldreich refuted this portrayal of him⁶¹. He had had a Bar Mitzvah, had served in Mahal⁶² and had lived in Israel. He was not surprised at the reaction of the official leadership.

I must criticise the leaders of SA Jewry for the attitude they have taken up with regard to Apartheid. These leaders have said that the Jews as a community can hold no view, that each individual Jew must make whatever stand he wishes. I consider that this is irresponsible, ...they have to take a stand on the all-important matters in South Africa - either you are for white supremacy or you are against it." The traditional Jewish values demand that the Jews should be opposed to the supremacy of any race, creed or colour.

In Goldreich's assessment, the various Zionist movements had exerted a strong influence, and one of their main effects had been to encourage ideological debate. As a result, analysis of what was going on in South African society was unavoidable⁶³.

The rabbis referred to the preponderance of Jews in the anti-Government movements in their 1963 Rosh Hashanah messages. Rabbi Rappaport stressed that those who advocated violence in no way represented the dominant attitude of the Jewish community⁶⁴, which should endeavour to contribute its share to a just and viable solution to the race problem. Chief Rabbi I Abrahams reiterated that the community expressed its unequivocal faith in the future of

⁶⁰ 30.8.63, under the heading "The Portrait of a Communist"

⁶¹ Jerusalem Post, 10.1.64

⁶² Jews from the diaspora who volunteered to serve in the Israeli army

⁶³ Interview with Goldreich following Mandela's release from prison, New Outlook, April 1990/32

⁶⁴ Rand Daily Mail, 23.9.63

the country and wholehearted devotion to its needs⁶⁵. Dr Ahron Opher, Chief Minister of the United Progressive Congregation in Johannesburg, declared that subversive actions were contrary to Jewish tradition and the perpetrators shut themselves out of the community⁶⁶.

We condemn all undermining and unlawful activities, whoever may commit them. We declare that those who are involved in such activities and are Jews, act contrary to Jewish tradition and that they shut themselves from the Jewish community⁶⁷.

I.A. Maisels Q C, Vice-President of the Board, alluded to these sermons in his address to the Western Province Zionist Conference⁶⁸. While conceding that the prominence of Jewish names amongst those Whites who had openly associated with the militant African liberation movements had "given rise to a feeling of anti-Semitism on the part of many Whites", he, nevertheless, reproached the sermons as they could easily be interpreted as support for Apartheid and Government policies, while ignoring the possibility of opposition without hostility to SA. "I take the view that it is possible to be a good and loyal South African and a good and loyal Jew and yet not wholeheartedly support the Government's policy."

Although, proportionately speaking, an insignificant handful out of the total Jewish population was involved, the charge was made, if not explicitly, at least by implication, that these individuals were in some way instruments of Jewish policy, and that their actions had the approval, tacit or avowed, of the

⁶⁵ Star, 14.9.63. In fact Saron wrote to the Secretary of the Cape Council on 11.9.63 that it would be appropriate for Rabbi Abrahams to issue a message of goodwill to the general community, in order to correct the distorted image of the Jewish community which was being depicted as indifferent to SA's vital interests, passive about, if not condoning, acts of sabotage and subversion, and to have divided loyalties, and lukewarm in its SA patriotism.

⁶⁶ Die Transvaler, 13.9.63

⁶⁷ Die Transvaler, 16.9.63

⁶⁸ 27.10.63

whole community⁶⁹. As a consequence, the community became excessively anxious to demonstrate its patriotism and loyalty, going to great pains to stress that the individual was accountable for his own conduct⁷⁰. The leadership felt that it had to make the public aware of the danger inherent in the subtle transition from the charge that these Jews were responsible for the state of unrest, to one that the Jews were responsible⁷¹. As Suzman pointed out, while a relatively high proportion of liberals were Jews, a relatively small proportion of Jews were liberals⁷².

Shimoni, in analysing attitudes prevalent in the community, came to a similar conclusion to that of Suzman. Despite the public salience of the involvement of Jews in opposition movements, their dissent reflected the attitudes of only a very small segment of the total Jewish population. "With compelling inherent socioeconomic factors reinforcing their position within the white racial group, for the most part Jews conformed to the

⁶⁹ "A Review of the Present situation of the Jewish Community in SA", Arthur Suzman's "Wings of Change" speech delivered on 19.10.63 to the Executive Council, in emulation of Harold MacMillan's 'Winds of Change' address delivered on 3.2.60

⁷⁰ for example Solomon Kluk wrote (DB, 11.11.64) that he dreaded seeing "Jewish-sounding " names in connection with sabotage cases when he opened his newspaper. He placed the blame on the English-language universities, most of whom occupy themselves with sabotage "Are they being indoctrinated with the worshipping of false gods? Are our children not being brought as sacrifices to the Moloch of Communism?"

⁷¹ Arthur Suzman, chairman of the PR committee, in his address to the Executive

⁷² ibid. This 'pilpul' (a method of argumentation in formulating Jewish Law) argument rests on the definition of a liberal as someone who opposes governmental policies and legislation - and NOT someone who espouses the principles of liberal ideology - as there were many 'liberal ideologists' in the Jewish community. Beyond this, undoubtedly there were Jews who belonged and were active in the Communist Party, but not all Jews who opposed the government were communists. The differences between liberals and 'liberals' and communists were obscured during this period, where the demarcation lines effectively differentiated between those who actively, whether politically or through the resort to violence, opposed the government, and those who were reticent in their opposition.

norms of English-speaking Whites"⁷³.

The Board was firm that it was not its function to silence or coerce individual Jews who spoke out against what they perceived as unjust and wrong⁷⁴. The painstaking task of the leadership was to manoeuvre between external pressures to conform, and, at the same time, to be seen adhering to the values of Judaism. In assessing the impact of the Board's reticence on Jews opposed to the Government, Saron wrote:

...it is extremely difficult to evaluate the extent to which alienation from Jewish identification was the result of ideological principles as in the Communist case, rather than in reaction to what appeared to many, even including identifying Jews, as the South African community's official abdication of all universalistic guidance in consequence of the Board's political neutralism and the Rabbinate's relative quiescence⁷⁵.

11.6 Jewish Loyalty Under Scrutiny: The Richard

Allegations and the Response of the Board of Deputies

On 26 September 1965 the Jewish community was shocked by an article written by Dirk Richard, the editor of Dagbreek, where he asked "*Where Does the Jew Stand in the White Struggle for Survival?*"⁷⁶. In his conclusion, he wrote:

⁷³ Gideon Shimoni, "South African Jews and Apartheid", American Jewish Yearbook, 1988, pp 1-57, p 12

⁷⁴ "*The Jew in the South African Scene Today*", address to an extended meeting of the Deputies, 29 June, 1963

⁷⁵ Saron's private papers, archives of the Jewish Board of Deputies

⁷⁶ In his regular column in Dagbreek. The article was organised in the form of questions and answers. Apparently Richard had sought out some Jewish individuals to whom he put various questions, and then summarised their answers. For example: Why did local Jewry not take a stand on Israel's anti-South African attitude at the U.N, as the Hollanders here did...? Richard contended that the view of the average Nationalist was that the Jews were not well-disposed to his party and its policy of separate development - that they were even hostile to it....so that he could not rely on them when his country has to be defended 'to the last ditch'. The transparent dishonesty of Richard, in equating NP apartheid policies with '*defending SA to the last ditch*', aggravated the predicament of the Jewish community and its leadership.

If Jewry as a group wishes to protect its identity...then it must also as a group adopt an attitude on cardinal issues of the country. Then such assertions as 'no collective political opinion' appear too much like a form of dualism, a convenient excuse for a policy...This is the Jewish dilemma: At the same time to be Jewish but to convince incontrovertibly that he (the Jew) puts South Africa before everything, the South Africa that all conservatives wish to protect.

The crux of Richard's contention was that the Jewish community was not like any other community and the collective had to prove its loyalty in order to have a right of existence in SA. Loyalty, as Richard conceived it, was adherence to the policy of segregation and support of the Nationalist Government. The article conveyed the unambiguous message that lack of support for Government policies was tantamount to the betrayal of SA. Richard claimed that the Jew was 'not a true citizen of SA', nor was he 'totally South African'. The article, understandably, caused great consternation in the Jewish community for it faced the realisation that the position of the Jews was not as secure as they had imagined. The questions posed in the article seemed to signify that the Board's public relations and goodwill efforts had been far from successful.

Prior to the publication of the article, Saron had met Richard to discuss these issues⁷⁷. Saron's distinct impression was that there was a "deliberate purpose to push the whole community on certain political lines." Richard had completely disregarded the role which the anti-Semitic chapter of the NP had played in determining the Jewish attitude towards the Party. His general ignorance of Jewish affairs had also been reflected in the questions he had posed at the meeting.

Richard's cardinal question was: how far did the Jew regard himself as a South African who placed SA first?⁷⁸ In gauging Afrikaners' attitude towards Jews, he had come to the conclusion that they had doubts as to whether Jews could be relied upon when the time came to defend the country, as they did not regard

⁷⁷ 22 September. On 29 September Saron gave a report to on the meeting. Saron's notes on the meeting, archives of the Board of Deputies

⁷⁸ Which in itself was a very 'loaded' question

themselves as South Africans. It was obvious that the issue around which a war would be fought was the policy of separate development, to which Jews had so amply demonstrated their opposition. In response, Saron stressed that the widespread impression that Jews would not support Apartheid was unfounded. Jewish attitudes were as diversified as those of the rest of the population. If it was true that Jewish students were prominent in Nusas⁷⁹, this was not due to any intervention by the Board. Jews were influenced by the same forces as non-Jews and in fact there was a general movement towards the 'right'. Nor was the community in any way responsible for the large number of Jewish communists, who invariably dissociated themselves from the community, and were, therefore, beyond its control⁸⁰.

Richard, then, concentrated on Jewish reactions to Israel's stand in the UN. Why, he asked, had the community not repudiated her stand as unequivocally as the Dutch immigrants had condemned the Netherlands⁸¹? This had strengthened the impression in the Afrikaners' minds that Jewish people had a divided loyalty. Saron explained that repudiation of Israel would have been tantamount to taking a political stand. In response to a final question as to whether the Jews were happy in SA, and whether they had special worries, Saron replied that Jews felt secure, although they expressed the same anxieties as did the 'white man' generally.

If Saron had hoped to disarm Richard, the publication of the

⁷⁹ National Union of South African Students, the student's organisation which incorporated student opposition to government policy and therefore regarded by the Nationalists as being inimical to the country's interests.

⁸⁰ It seems that Richard was impressed by the report that certain Communists had sent cables of congratulations to Nasser in 1956.

⁸¹ Note the vast difference in the reactions of the Jewish and the Dutch communities. While the latter did not hesitate to repudiate the Netherlands' vote, the Jews were confronted with conflicting internal and external pressures, forcing them to make an agonizing decision. Presumably these 'immigrants' were not unsympathetic to the NP. In any event, these would have been recent Dutch immigrants.

article revealed that the editor had merely contrived to use Saron's replies for his own purposes. Richard's basic thesis was that Jews had become "a theme of suspicious discourse" due to the prominence of Jewish names among underminers, leftists, poisonous journalists. The situation had been exacerbated by "the official silence" of local Jewry consequent upon Israel's vote against SA. If Jews wished to retain a group identity, he contended, they must be prepared to adopt an unequivocal stand on cardinal issues. The protestation that they could hold 'no political opinion" was a convenient, but unacceptable, excuse. The explicit message was that the Jewish community was obligated to demonstrate loyalty to Nationalist policy.

The article was a painful surprise⁸², and aroused deep resentment, frustration and disappointment⁸³, in particular because it had called into question the status of Jews as citizens and their loyalty to the Republic⁸⁴. The reaction in the community was shock and condemnation. Karl Lameer⁸⁵ commented that the outstanding impression left by the article was that there existed an almost hopeless misunderstanding between Jews and some Nationalist Afrikaners. H Miller⁸⁶ described the article as an insult to all South Africans; it was degrading to a Jew, as much as it was to a non-Jew, to have his loyalty publicly doubted. The editor of the SA Jewish Times sharply criticised what he defined as the prime error which lay behind all the baseless suspicions: to ask where the Jew stood in SA's political struggle. Afrikaners could also be found in

⁸² South Africa Jewish Times, 5.10.65

⁸³ Zionist Record, 8.10.65

⁸⁴ Zionist Record, 8.10.65. Richard's doubt regarding Jewish 'reliability' was not shared by government officials. The Minister of Coloured Affairs, Botha, while delivering an address in London at the time, was asked a specific question as to whether Zionism was the 'real enemy'. Botha's reply was: *The Jewish people in South Africa would also do their part in defending the country if it were attacked.* (Chairman's report to the Annual Conference of the Cape Council, 19.4.64)

⁸⁵ the weekly columnist of Zionist Record, 1.10.65

⁸⁶ Sunday Express, 3.10.65

all Parties, including among those arraigned for subversive activities, but why was the question never asked where the Afrikaner stood in SA's political struggle? This was because it was accepted, that as citizens of SA they were entitled to their diverse political opinions⁸⁷.

Richard was confusing two different issues: the right of the Jew to maintain a separate religious identity with their right, as individual citizens, to exercise political freedom. The contention that Jews could remove suspicion from themselves only if they could prove their support for a particular political or racial ideology implied one or the other of two presuppositions, each of which was destructive of fundamental democratic principles: Either Jews were not full and equal citizens or the test of loyalty had become whether a citizen supported the ideology of the Party in power⁸⁸.

The article was heatedly discussed at the meeting of the Board of Deputies on 3 October⁸⁹. There was disagreement as to whether a statement should be made or not. E Bernstein was of the opinion that the Board should not take action every time the word "Jew" appeared in the press, especially as an official statement could provoke further hostility. The immediate past-president, Horwitz, disagreed. He argued that Richard was not an obscure writer but the editor of an important newspaper. He had confronted Jews with a serious dilemma by challenging their loyalty, and in so doing had also inflicted a grave insult. The Board should act immediately, not in an offensive way, but with dignity and a sense of responsibility. He was supported by N Philips, the president, who described the article as one of the most dangerous statements to have been made about Jews and their relations with the Government. "We are being 'lined' up....This is part of an intensive campaign against anything not in line with Government policy." It was finally agreed to issue a

⁸⁷ South African Jewish Times, 5.10.65

⁸⁸ Zionist Record, 8.10.65

⁸⁹ Minutes of Executive Meeting, 3.10.65

statement, making it very clear that country was above Party.

The statement asserted that the retention of Jewish identity was fully consonant with full SA citizenship, the ideal being 'cultural pluralism' not 'cultural assimilation'. The demand that Jews adopt a group attitude was rooted in the basic misconception that the Jewish community formed a distinct political entity. Above all, it was a dangerous fallacy to suggest that failure to agree with the policies of the political Party in power was equivalent to disloyalty to the country⁹⁰. At the meeting of Deputies on 8 October, D K Mann, vice-chairman of Board, reiterated that the Jews had deeply resented this questioning of their loyalty. It would be a sad day for SA if any citizen were required to prove his loyalty to the Republic by being compelled to support a particular political point of view or racial ideology⁹¹.

Rabbi Super, of the United Jewish Reform Congregation in Johannesburg, gave a clear exposition of Judaism's attitude to the duties of citizenship in his Yom Kippur sermon. Basing his words on Jeremiah and *Dina Demalchuta Dina*, he said that an offence against the law of the country was also an offence against his religious law. The record of the loyalty of the Jewish community was unblemished and its contributions beyond question. It was therefore immoral to single them out and to try to put special pressure to bear on them⁹².

Dagbreek⁹³ reported that it had been inundated with letters assuring it of increasing support for the NP amongst SA Jewry, and of increasing goodwill between the Afrikaans and Jewish communities. The paper published two letters expressing confidence in the loyalty of the Jews, amongst others which

⁹⁰ Report to Congress, 1965 to 1967, 6

⁹¹ Zionist Record, 8.10.65

⁹² South African Jewish Times, 15.10.65

⁹³ Dagbreek, 10.10.65

expressed qualms⁹⁴. 'Boerejood'⁹⁵ wrote in their defence, whereas 'Pro Patria' charged that "Pro Afrikaans Jode were very scarce indeed"⁹⁶. 'Oom Guys' warned Jews not to throw stones in a glass house. If anti-Semitism should break out, 'our leaders' would hold them responsible⁹⁷.

At the Board's initiative, a luncheon took place between Richard and Suzman, Horwitz, and Saron on 26 October⁹⁸. On this occasion Richard maintained that his intention had been to interpret 'the Afrikaner nationalist viewpoint to Jews' and to help clear up misunderstanding among Nationalists as to the Jewish viewpoint. He denied any anti-Jewish feeling, but made it clear that Nationalists did entertain doubts and suspicion about Jews, not merely because they differed from the NP in their political conviction, but especially as there were doubts regarding where

⁹⁴ This was possibly one of the reasons for publishing Richard's controversial piece in the first place. for example: Louis Ginsberg who wrote that for him there was no country other than SA (10.10.66), "Ons Land" and Afrikaanssprekende Jood, 24.10.66, E Elias and N Bloch (31.10.66) and, "pro-Jood" (28.11.65). In contrast R C Smith expressed doubts as to Jewish patriotism. They had harmed SA's name overseas and a large percentage were communist-minded, inciters and underminers (Dagbreek 10.10.65); L van der Vyver reinforced Richard's thesis that the Afrikaner could not rely on the Jew to defend the country. Whereas the Jew was hypersensitive to signs of anti-Semitism, he had no respect for the honour of the Afrikaner, nor did he endorse national policy. (Dagbreek (17.10,65). Bloch replied to van Vyver (Dagbreek 31.10.65) that it would be a farce if the Jew had to comply to the policy of each and every party that was in power. In the same edition P F Flamingh (the active anti-Semite of the 30s and 40s) congratulated the paper for having the courage to discuss the position of the Jew in "our fatherland", and for approaching the political problems' objectively'. "They [the Jews] are merciless in their attacks on the Government and the Afrikaner...any report is good as long as the Afrikaner and his Government are besmirched by it."

⁹⁵ Die Burger, 17.9.63

⁹⁶ Die Burger, 27.9.63

⁹⁷ ibid

⁹⁸ Notes on the luncheon found in the archives of the Jewish Board of Deputies

they stood in the struggle for white supremacy in SA⁹⁹. There was a 'general impression' that Jews, as a group, could not be relied upon. He repeated more than once that the onus was on the community to project the 'right' image of Jewish attitudes¹⁰⁰.

The matter did not end here. In November Richard questioned the bona fides of SA Jewry's Zionism:

Zionism is fundamentally grounded in religion¹⁰¹ and as such it merits international respect, but if it acquires a political undertone, then it comes under suspicion and then support for Israel no longer has the sanctity of an act of faith¹⁰².

If the Jews wished to maintain their own identity, their own institutions and their Zionist struggle, then they must not retreat behind the defence "'Why single us out?'. Jewish affairs, like others in SA, could not remain outside the public arena, particularly in the critical times that lay ahead, when the 'white man's struggle' for existence would require an unequivocal answer. In the future, the stereotype defence of "no opinion" would no longer be valid.

In his second article, Richard answered the main objection to his first article. He had not, he insisted, maintained that membership of the NP was the only accepted proof of undoubted patriotism. The patriotism of Sir de Villiers Graaff and Dr Jan Steytler, he said, stood above suspicion. The same applied to the 'average' Jew, who was in the first place a South African of the Jewish faith and not a Jew with SA citizenship. He closed

⁹⁹ The term was never defined during the discussion, but it seemed to mean granting Africans the political rights enjoyed by whites.

¹⁰⁰ implying a more pro-Afrikaner stance

¹⁰¹ Richard was thus manifesting his ignorance of Zionism and the history of the Zionist movement which was a secular, national and political movement. In fact large sections of the religious community opposed Zionism because it sought to give a secular-political solution to the "Jewish Problem" rather than wait for a messianic-divine-apocalyptic solution.

¹⁰² Dagbreek, 7.11.65

with two questions: Did the impression that Jewry was very liberal-minded derive from the example set by its leaders and was Zionism being imbued with political motivations?

If local Jewish leaders use Zionism for a purpose other than the fulfilment of a religious ideal, as it professed, then their relationship to Israel comes into the political arena. Then it can be wondered, why a stronger attitude was not taken towards the government of Israel when it made itself guilty of unfriendly acts towards SA; and then there creeps in the uncertainty about dual loyalty.

Richard had again confused the issue. It was not through the community that Jews derived their rights and duties as citizens. It was the essence of democratic freedom that rights and duties devolve upon them as individuals¹⁰³. Any attempt to exert pressure upon Jewish citizens, the editor of the Zionist Record stated emphatically, amounted to a denial of their freedom of conscience. "There is a vast difference between the practical motives of Zionism and "political" motives¹⁰⁴."

¹⁰³ In the South African context - any [white] group.

¹⁰⁴ Zionist Record, 12.11.65

CHAPTER 12. POLITICS AND ANTI-SEMITISM

12.1 The Jewish Community in Support of the National Party

A perennial bone of contention between the Board and the Afrikaaner press was the attitude towards Jewish Nationalists, its hostility fuelled by Nossel's insistence that he was victimised by the Board because of his affiliation with the NP. Throughout his political life he was incensed at his ostracism by the Jewish community in general and by the Board in particular, which had, as he repeatedly complained, maligned him because he was a nationalist¹, and had excluded him from the Executive and from Congresses. In January 1957 he called into question the sincerity of the Cape Board's leaders in their commitment to improving relations between Jews, Afrikaners and the Government², placing the blame for the fragility of these relations on them. "The fact that I am a supporter of the ruling Party counts against me", he declared. Melamet contacted the editor of Die Burger³ and expressed his disappointment at the publication of Nossel's letter. At a subsequent meeting, Professor Olivier⁴, told Melamet that thousands of readers of the Afrikaans press regarded Nossel as a person of standing in the Jewish community and believed that he had been elbowed out of Council because of his political affiliations. Olivier said that he himself was satisfied that the Board was genuinely impartial in politics, and that it had been making a genuine attempt to create better understanding between Jews and Afrikaners. To further this end, it was not crucial that Jews join the NP; it was sufficient that they regard it as any other Party. Nevertheless, he confirmed that Nossel was held in genuine esteem by the Nationalists. When he died of a heart attack in October 1963, Dawie said of him: "Joe Nossel did a solid and important piece of work in Jewish-Afrikaans relations

¹ African Jewish Newspaper, 17.5.49

² Die Burger, 16.1.57

³ The meeting with Olivier was described in a letter from Melamet to Rich, 17.1.57 found in the archives of the Board.

⁴ probably the editor of the Paper

which in his lifetime was never rated at its true value⁵." S Pienaar, the Parliamentary commentator wrote⁶: ...the remarkable Jew and the unloved Jew of modern South African politics...I can well say that among Afrikaners he became the best-known Jew in the country."

Without a doubt the Jewish community voted predominantly UP until the 1960s⁷, when a gradual swing from the UP towards the NP occurred. With time, a bifurcation became evident in the political orientations of the Jews, with support for the UP declining while the actual and potential supporters of the NP increasing. In the 1960's, politicians who would have shrunk from doing so in the past, began to appear on Nationalist platforms⁸. A contemporary journalist noted that "there is evidence that the Jews of South Africa are moving politically to the Right"⁹. Whereas Progressives received strong support in "Jewish" constituencies, the much more radical Liberal Party did not gain widespread support in the community. In point of fact, very few, if any, Jews joined the Liberal Party at its

⁵ Die Burger, 28.9.63

⁶ Die Burger, 28.9.63

⁷ Henry Lever, The South African Voter, Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol 2 No.2, October, 1979, pp 428-440. Nevertheless, not only was their religion a predictive factor but also their background: the UP had a high proportion of upper and middle class English-speaking supporters. Lever points out that class was a much stronger determinant of a Progressive voter than Jewishness.

⁸ In the 1961 election S Frank was elected to the National Assembly on the nationalist ticket in South West Africa, and was re-elected in 1966. Only three other Jews were elected, Emdin and Fisher of the UP and Suzman of the PP. On the Provincial level the affinity of the Jews to the UP is especially discernible. In 1950 7 out of 8 Jewish members of the Johannesburg Council were UP, in 1951 and 1954 all 11 Jewish councillors were UP, in 1957 there were 10 Jewish UP councillors. In the 1962 elections there were 20 Jews among the candidates, 14 UP; 13 were elected, all UP (SAJT, 16.3.62). In 1967 12 Jewish UP councillors were elected. There was one Jewish Nationalist candidate, A Widman, who lost. (RDM, 3.3.67)

⁹ Henry Katzew, Jewish Chronicle, London, 14.5.65. Also Rubin, 1970.

foundation¹⁰.

The Jewish issue played little part in the 1962 election campaign with few references to Jews as such. Periodic pressure on the community to align itself with the Nationalists appeared in the press. In September 1962, the South African Patriot, the organ of the John X Merriman English-speaking Branch of the NP¹¹ solicited Jewish support for the NP¹². While acknowledging that the political home of many Jewish citizens was either the UP or the PP, the editorial argued that the time was ripe for greater collaboration between the NP and the Jewish section. The editorial expressed confidence that anti-Semitism had been eradicated from the country "where the Jewish section is one of the important, distinct, and positive factors of the South African State and Nation." The support of the Jewish People was needed to establish a nation "consisting of Afrikaans, English and Jewish citizens and the new settlers; people who share the same civilisation and have a community of interest."

Bernard Sachs¹³ countered that the growing support for Verwoerd among Jews was created "more by fear than by conviction - fear of both the Blacks and Dr Verwoerd". Jews were prepared to make every reasonable concession to reach accommodation with Afrikaner nationalism. The Government was a fact of life and

¹⁰ Saron's private papers, archives of the Jewish Board of Deputies. Saron gives as an example the occasion when a Jew, Gerald Gordon, who had stood as a Liberal in Sea Point, against a UP man, Basson, who had been imported from another area and was Afrikaans, whereas Gordon was a local and well-liked man. Gordon himself nearly lost his deposit. UP canvassers maintained that a large proportion of the 1,600 Gordon had canvassed, were cast for him personally, not as a LP candidate.

¹¹ According to its founders the branch was formed 'with the aim of promoting better understanding between our various language sections and has extended its activities to include in this spirit, and embrace within a common patriotism, the new settlers who arrive in our country'.

¹² The Patriot also sent letters to Jewish editors and to Philips, President of the Board for his comments.

¹³ Solly Sachs' brother who was himself involved in South African political life, but, unlike his brother, identified closely with the concerns of the Jewish community.

Jewry had to learn to live with this¹⁴. A similar view was expressed by Professor Julius Lewin¹⁵, who called on Jews not to appease the NP. Inspired by the spate of anti-Semitic outbursts in Parliament in March 1964¹⁶, in the course of his address at a Warsaw Ghetto commemoration meeting, he declared that there "was a deplorable tendency within the Jewish community to try to appease the nationalists by keeping silent in the face of racial discrimination -as long as it was not applied to Jews¹⁷."

In his opinion, the NP had abandoned formal anti-Semitism only because there was no need for it at the present time. It was high time, he argued, that Jews recognised that appeasement never paid. The Nationalist leaders wanted to maintain a feeling of insecurity among Jews so that they would not support

¹⁴ Sunday Chronicle, London 7.2.65

¹⁵ associate professor of African Law and Administration at Wits

¹⁶ In the course of the debate on the Bantu Laws, Coetzee, NP, accused Helen Suzman, PP, of attacking the Afrikaner because she had no knowledge of the conditions on the farm (RDM, 6.3.64). The release of James Kantor, arrested during the Rivonia raid, prompted C T Wilcox, NP, to present a motion to the Minister of Justice to explain why he had been released when it was well known that a large percentage of 'a certain population group' was involved in undermining action, and subversive activities. (The Star, 11.3.64, Evening Post, 12.3.64) This was accompanied by anti-Semitic gestures towards Miller and Suzman (RDM 19.3.64, The Star 19.3.64). In response, Die Burger 20.3.64 criticised the furore, commenting that the anti-Jewish remarks in the House were sporadic and mannerless; to treat every anti-Jewish remark as a prelude to a pogrom was to answer provocation with provocation. The NP itself took pains to play down the outbursts (Sunday Times 22.3.64). The Nationalist papers tended to regard the anti-Jewish remarks in Parliament as provocation (Schalk Pienaar in his column "In the Assembly", items of Jewish interest no 13; Willem in Die Volksblad, 3.4.64 and Dawie in Die Burger). The Jewish press called nationalist leadership to disassociate itself from these outbursts (Jewish Chronicle 27.3.64). Overseas journals reported on this so-called "rabid anti-Semitism", prompting Saron to deny that these outbursts reflect either the policy of government or the NP (Herald Tribune, 2.4.64)

¹⁷ Rand Daily Mail, 20.4.64

opposition parties, and they, thus, had become the half-conscience victims of political blackmail. Nationalist leaders did not rebuke their followers who indulged in anti-Jewish outbursts because they might want to revive anti-Semitism some day when they needed a scapegoat. Jews, he warned, could not hope to enjoy permanent security while other non-conforming groups felt threatened in the atmosphere created by the ruling race¹⁸.

The Board was prompt to disassociate itself from Lewin¹⁹. Levin, chairman of the NP of Houghton, contended that the statement was part of a planned attempt to build up the bogey of anti-Semitism in order to discourage Jews from supporting the NP²⁰. Helen Suzman, while agreeing with the basic philosophy underlying the speech, that no group could ensure its security by condoning discrimination against other groups, asserted that this applied not only to the Jewish community, but to all South Africans²¹. Fisher (UP) denied that Jews were being intimidated to accept any political point of view.

The SA Jewish Times²² criticised the haste in which the Board had disassociated itself from the opinions which Lewin had promulgated. While the Nationalist press called on Jews to resist political pressure²³, the English press concurred that appeasement did not pay and was deplorable²⁴. Lewin had stripped away several illusions that the Nationalists were in any way impressed by the 'political discretion' of the Jews or by their

¹⁸ Jewish Observer and Middle East Review, 8.5.64, 11
"Professor flays Jewish neutrality on racism"

¹⁹ Star, 20.4.64

²⁰ Die Transvaler, 25.4.64

²¹ Cape Times Parliamentary correspondent, 21.4.64

²² 24.4.64

²³ Die Volksblad, 21.4.64

²⁴ Star, 21.4.64; "Jewish student", Star, 27.4.64

'official reticence to oppose Apartheid'²⁵.

By the time of the 1966 general election, Jews were canvassing openly for the NP. Although they continued their massive support for the opposition parties, significant, if not overwhelming numbers, had turned to the Nationalists.

As the pressures of the Africans rise, and as abstention from anti-Semitism continues, more Jews are likely to go over to the Nationalist side. It is, for many, simply a matter of balancing dangers²⁶.

The cordial relations between the community and the Government continued after B Vorster was appointed Prime Minister following Verwoerd's assassination in September 1966. Initially there was considerable trepidation at his accession, considering that he had been interned during the war for his active opposition to SA's war effort. These fears were allayed at a meeting which took place between him and a deputation of the Board on 5 December. Vorster went to great pains to dispel the impression that he was opposed to any section of the community. He was only pro-South African, he said. He then steered the conversation towards the prominence of Jewish participants in 'communist' activities, asking whether the Board could do something about the matter. He also inquired as to the reasons for Israel's hostility towards SA, and wanted to know what the Board's attitude was towards this. Rich, the Secretary of the Board, explained that Judaism and Communism were incompatible. Jewish communists had severed all ties with the community and were consequently outside its sphere of influence. Moreover, as the Board had repeatedly emphasised, neither the Board or the community, as a whole, could take responsibility for the actions of individuals. In a subsequent interview with a Jewish newspaper, Vorster once more stressed that the NP had no particular 'attitude' towards any community. All 'South Africans' enjoyed equal citizenship rights and absolute

²⁵ Rand Daily Mail, 21.4.64

²⁶ Feit, 1966

religious freedom²⁷.

The waning support for the UP in the Jewish community became a subject of widespread speculation. There was general agreement that this, to a large extent, was due to the fact that their propaganda regarding the NP threat to Jewish rights had been discredited²⁸. This was evident in their campaign in Gardens, where it was pointed out that

It is now nearly four years since the coming of the Republic. The Jewish Community must admit that there is not only no sign of the persecution which was threatened, but that, on the contrary, public life is as free of anti-Semitism as it has been at any time in the past²⁹".

This shift in Jewish public opinion was highlighted by ex-Senator Leslie Rubin, writing in 1970³⁰.

As the prospect of the UP's return to power became more remote and the government's position more strongly entrenched, the Jews (like the English-speaking group as a whole) have moved from initial revulsion against Apartheid, through tolerance, to support.

The Rand Daily Mail³¹, in discussing the contradictory claims that Jews were prominent in subversive movements and that there had been a great swing of Jewish people towards the NP, concluded that both claims had a certain validity. That both could occur at the same time demonstrated how varied and individual were their standpoints. The Sunday Express³² commented that Jews were being bombarded from all sides. On the one hand, there were people who would like them to oppose the Government and its racial policies and on the other hand, they were urged to support the Government. The Jews, as a community, should not be influenced by either view.

The Jews are to be found on the Left, in the Centre and on

²⁷ Report to Congress, November, 1967 to May, 1970, 7

²⁸ Die Burger, 17.3.65

²⁹ ibid

³⁰ Leslie Rubin, "Dialogue: South African Jewry and Apartheid", Africa Report, February 1970, pp 22-24

³¹ 21.9.63

³² 29.9.63

the Right in politics - in the same way as the members of any other religious section. The Jews must be allowed, like anyone else, to exercise the freedom to agree or disagree with any political belief or policy, without intimidation and without fear. Anything less than that would be outrageous and completely unacceptable³³.

12.2 Anti-Semitism in the Political Arena

Without a doubt anti-Semitism had not disappeared from the South African scene by the 1960s, but it had ceased, for the most part, to constitute a force in the political arena. It was for this reason that the Executive endeavoured to refute allegations that appeared intermittently in the foreign press that there was a danger of a resurgence. The anti-Semitism that did exist emanated from local fringe groups and racist propaganda material imported from abroad. In 1963 there was an increase in the number of anti-Jewish pamphlets and brochures fomenting hatred against Jewry, which were distributed in SA³⁴. In addition to denying the Holocaust, they strung together a conglomeration of facts and falsehoods aimed at conveying an impression of authenticity. In general, they propagated the accusation, espoused in the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion³⁵", that the Jews aspired to dominate the world. The anti-Jewish activity of these groups was intensified in 1965³⁶. The chairman of the

³³ ibid

³⁴ Saron in an interview with Die Transvaler, 10.5.63. He had been approached by the paper in connection with a pamphlet edited by the Swede Einar Aberg, which denied the death of six million Jews during World War II.

³⁵ an anti-Semitic pamphlet, proven beyond a doubt to be a forgery conjured up by the Russian Secret Police, but which continues to be disseminated (even in the 1990's) all over the world by anti-Semitic organisations.

³⁶ A list of incidents of an anti-Semitic nature from September 1964 to June 1966 was attached to Dr Schneider's affidavit to the Security Branch, 15.5.67. The great majority were minor incidents, mainly the distribution of anti-Semitic literature. In September 10-12, 1965 tombstones in the old Jewish cemetery in Pretoria were daubed with swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans, and April 20, 1966 on the Sydenham-Highlands North Synagogue and the Beth Hamidrash Hagadol.

Board reported, at the Annual Conference of the Cape Council³⁷, that the upsurge in anti-Semitic manifestations seemed to be caused by a combination of factors, including international pressures on SA which had led to a search for scapegoats; the anti-South African actions and policies of Israel; the propensity of right wing groups to look for inspiration to right wing propaganda abroad; and to the involvement of Jewish individuals in Communism and subversion.

Among the fringe groups that were identified as being active in this campaign were: the Candour League of SA, Die O.B³⁸, which had stepped up its anti-Semitic campaign on the lines of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion", and O Pirow's Nuusbrief. A new journal, "World Opinion Fact or Fiction", issued by Boomerang Publications, devoted about 30 pages to a vicious attack on "international Zionism". Although anti-Semitic intentions were disavowed, it was not difficult to read the word "Jew" for "Zionist". Despite the prevalence of this type of material, in the assessment of the Board there was no cause for alarm. In 1967, however, Schneider, President of the Board, issued a warning about the upsurge in the circulation of imported Nazi and anti-Semitic propaganda³⁹.

12.3 Anti-Semitism in the Guise of Anti-Communism and the Response of the Jewish Board of Deputies

The most prevalent anti-Semitic allegation was identifying Jews with Communism. This was brought to the forefront by Major-Gen H J van den Bergh, Deputy Commissioner of Police and head of the Security Branch, while addressing the International Symposium on Communism in Pretoria⁴⁰. On 22 August 1963, Van den Bergh, referring to the arrests in Rivonia, in his address to the Afrikaansae Kultuur-raad in Pretoria, said that there was usually

³⁷ 9.5.65

³⁸ official organ of the Ossewa-brandwag

³⁹ 7.4.67

⁴⁰ Daily News, 5.10.66 and Report to South African Jewry, 1965 to 1967, 10

a white hand behind the Black in acts of subversion. To the interjection "Jews", he responded that not only Jews had been engaged in subversive activities. When the same person interjected "*Instruments of the Jews*", he conceded that they were indeed "*instruments of the Jews*"⁴¹. After coming under considerable attack⁴², he issued a statement in which he said that he regretted the interpretation placed on his speech. In a subsequent interview⁴³, he insisted he had said "*Maybe, instruments of Jews*", but certainly had not said "*the Jews*".

The Board welcomed the General's "clarification", expressing its gratification that he realised that individuals who were alleged to be guilty of illegal conduct were personally accountable for their actions, and that he was not holding a section of the population responsible for individuals over whose actions they had no control⁴⁴. In October 1966 Van den Bergh once more aroused controversy at the International Symposium on Communism held in Pretoria, where he linked Jews and Communism⁴⁵. In his opinion, the reason why Jews 'tend to be involved' was because Communism was 'an extreme form of capitalism'. He capped this extraordinary statement by relating that during the Rivonia Raid the police had found a vital 'action plan' which had been left lying on a table, having, apparently, been overlooked when other items had been destroyed. He added: "*Jy weet as 'n Jood skrik, skrik hy vreeslik*"⁴⁶. Once more he was forced to retract his words. "I could never blame the Jewish

⁴¹ Rand Daily Mail, 22.8.63

⁴² Sunday Times, 9.10.66 and Jewish Herald, 4.10.66

⁴³ Star, 22.8.66

⁴⁴ Rand Daily Mail, 23.8.66

⁴⁵ 7.10.66

⁴⁶ (You know, when a Jew gets scared he gets very scared). Report of the proceedings in Gus Saron's private papers in the archives of the Board of Deputies quoting Pretoria News, 30.9.66 and the South African Jewish Times, 5.10.66.

Community because individual Jews became Communists..⁴⁷.

The August 1964 edition of the newsletter Anticom⁴⁸, issued by the Inter-church Commission of the Dutch Reformed Church, contained a number of articles which purported to 'prove' that Communism and Bolshevism were basically of Jewish origin, and that Jews had, therefore, been responsible for the spread of Communism throughout the world⁴⁹. Margaret Smith, the journalist who reported on the newsletter in the Sunday Times, observed that "the tone and character of the "Anticom" articles are clearly aimed at whipping up feelings against Jews among members of the DRC". The articles had formed part of Nazi propaganda, and had been used by Oswald Mosley's Fascist organisation and by Father Coughlin, in the US in the 1930s, to whip up anti-Jewish feelings⁵⁰. S J Marais Steyn, MP, speaking as a member of the DRC, denounced the pamphlet as "blatantly anti-Semitic propaganda". Professor A H Murray, the head of the Philosophy Department at UCT, and a member of the Publications Control Board, in an effort to quell the controversy, aggravated the situation by 'explaining' that those Jews who had been associated with agitation and sabotage had been raised in a tradition of unrest in Central Europe. Some had been impressed by the intellectual strength of Marxist-Leninist literature, while others suffered from personal insecurity arising from the fact that they had not integrated into the new society⁵¹.

⁴⁷ Friend, 8.10.66 and Report to South African Jewry, 1965 to 1967, 10,29. He made this statements after saying that he had 'many Jewish friends' of whom he was very proud. He also said that vital security tip-offs which had helped to solve the Security Branch's biggest cases had come from Jews. (Sunday Express, 9.10.66)

⁴⁸ The Editor of the controversial issue of Anticom was Rev. J H Reyneke, minister at Eendrage, Sunday Times, 25.10.64

⁴⁹ The articles alleged, for example, that Lenin was Jewish; Bolshevism was organised and directed by Jews who had no nationality and whose one object was to destroy the existing order of things.

⁵⁰ Sunday Times, 11.10.64

⁵¹ Sunday Times, 18.10.64

These comments were condemned by Nationalist press, which pointed out that the National Council for the Combatting of Communism had never identified Jews with Communism. Jewish leadership had, on numerous occasions, affirmed that the community stood for law and order, and for political progress through constitutional means⁵². It transpired that, in this unique situation, it was the precisely the Nationalist press, which had been openly hostile to Jews in the 1950's, now came to their defence.

The DRC endorsed the position which had been adopted by the nationalist press. The Moderator of the Cape N G Kerk, repudiated the anti-Semitic articles which had appeared in Anticom in a letter which received prominence in the press⁵³. It stated that the NGK would never be a party to a campaign which aimed at the persecution of Jews⁵⁴. However, he qualified his statement by saying that "more positive" statements by the Jewish leadership would "contribute much to create mutual solidarity and trust in our common fight against Communism⁵⁵. Dr A J van der Merwe, the Moderator of the NGK, subsequently stated that Anticom did not speak on behalf of the Afrikaans churches nor did NGK support any movement aimed against Jews⁵⁶. It was even suggested in certain NGK circles that

⁵² Die Transvaler, 21.10.64; Die Vaderland, 19.10.64

⁵³ The letter was in reply to letters written by Gus Saron General Secretary of Jewish Board of Deputies

⁵⁴ Of interest was the leading article in Die Kerkbode (18.11.64) denying that Die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk was anti-Semitic. That the Jews in the community continued to foster their own religious and social unity amongst themselves, and consequently did not "disappear" in the wider community, was not attributable to the fact that they remained branded as Jews on the part of the Christ, but that they wish to be and remain Jewish in their religion and to a large extent also socially. This was their "other-mindedness" which Christians viewed with a feeling of grief, because it was essentially still based upon a rejection of Christ the redeemer. But, the article explained, this feeling of grief was not anti-Jewish feeling.

⁵⁵ ibid

⁵⁶ Sunday Express, 25.10.64, and Die Burger, 29.10.64, quoting the editorial in that week's Zionist Record

Dr J D Vorster, Actuary of the Church⁵⁷, had seriously jeopardised his chances of becoming Moderator by claiming that the articles were not anti-Jewish and defending their publication⁵⁸.

The Board could not disregard the matter for several reasons. The allegations had aroused a great deal of public discussion; the newsletter had been published in an organ of the NGK, and the belief in a "Jewish Communist" plot appeared to be gaining ground. As Communism was outlawed in SA, it was clear that much harm could result if these inflammatory articles were allowed to go unchallenged⁵⁹. After establishing conclusively that most of the so-called 'facts' were sheer falsifications, or distortions of facts⁶⁰, the Board addressed a strong letter of protest to the Anticom Committee⁶¹. The next phase in the controversy came as a surprise and a shock. J D Vorster called upon the Jewish community to collectively state where it stood in relation to Communism and to associate itself openly with "*the fight against Godless Communism*". He drew attention once more to the high percentage of Jews among the listed Communists⁶².

Picking up Vorster's challenge, the Board issued a press statement in which it was pointed out that he had evaded the real issue, which was not where did the Jewish community stand vis-a-vis

⁵⁷ and the brother of the future Prime Minister. He was also, by 1967, the chairman of the SA National Council for Combatting Communism.

⁵⁸ Sunday Times, 1.11.64

⁵⁹ Report to South African Jewry, September 1962 to June 1965, p 8

⁶⁰ subsequently Saron, in a long letter in Die Burger, 16.11.64, gave details in which he refuted various articles in Anticom - emphasising that the quotations included were stock in trade of anti-Semitic publications of decades, many blatant forgeries.

⁶¹ Report to South African Jewry, 1962-1965, 8.

⁶² ibid. Vorster's views were subsequently publicised in the SA Jewish Times in successive issues: 30.10 and 6.11.64.

Communism, but where did the Afrikaans churches stand vis-a-vis Anticom, which was associated with the NGK⁶³. Anticom had published articles alleging links between Jews and Communism, based on evidence that had been authoritatively refuted many times. The statement inquired whether the bulletin fulfilled its purpose of combatting Communist "as an evil conspiracy of underhand and dark forces against mankind" by representing Communism as "Jewish"? What it had actually accomplished was to cast a cloud of suspicion over Jews generally, and, therefore, also on the SA Jewish community. Vorster must know that those Jews, who were allegedly guilty of fostering Communism, constituted only a tiny fraction of the Jewish population, and the community had as little control or influence over them. "The underlying assumption of...Vorster's call seems to be the mistaken idea that the Jewish community somehow constitutes a political unit or political entity". In conclusion, the statement pointed out that not only was Judaism incompatible with Communism, the Soviet Union⁶⁴ had a long record of suppression of Jewish religious practices and of cultural expression⁶⁵.

Rabbi B M Casper delivered a sermon condemning the articles as resembling the type of anti-Semitic literature which had been the speciality of the Nazis⁶⁶. Commenting on the Rabbi's sermon, Dr D E O'B Geldenhuys, Moderator of Northern Transvaal Synod of the NGK, said that Anticom did not reflect the attitude of his Church, and that the whole dispute with the Board of Deputies had been referred to an the General Moderature of the NGK⁶⁷, who called for an inquiry to establish where the articles had been obtained, who had inserted them, and why they had been published in a Church magazine⁶⁸. Despite these assurances, Anticom and the committee

⁶³ issued to Die Transvaler on October 21, 1964

⁶⁴ Die Burger, 23,10.64 had a leading story on discrimination against Jews in the Soviet Union.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* Also Report to SA Jewry, 1962 to 1965, p 8

⁶⁶ Rand Daily Mail and Die Transvaler, 7.11.64

⁶⁷ Die Transvaler, 12.11.64

⁶⁸ Sunday Times, 22.11.6

responsible for its publication, refused to modify its position. It rejected the Board's representations, and categorically denied that it was anti-Semitic.

In 1965 the newsletter published several items "which seem to have been expressly selected and included in order to create the impression that there is a special relationship between the Communist movement and the Jews⁶⁹. All attempts to arrange a meeting with the Anticom Committee proved fruitless. The anti-Semitic agitation, linking Jews to Communism, under the guise of combatting Communism, continued in 1965-1966⁷⁰.

12.4 Anti-Semitism and Fascism: Hillbrow Beer Cellar Clashes

The only serious anti-Semitic outburst to occur during this period was sparked off by an incident in a Hillbrow Beer Hall on 20 April 1967. A beerhall, whose customers usually included a considerable portion of Germans, was the scene of a neo-Nazi demonstration on the occasion of Hitler's birthday. The press reported that Nazi salutes had been made, Nazi songs had been sung and anti-Jewish slogans had been shouted⁷¹. The incident was viewed with seriousness because it coincided with the reported formation of a Neo-Nazi movement in SA⁷².

In retaliation, some young Jews entered the Beer Hall on April 28 in a show of strength⁷³. During the intervening week, the Board unsuccessfully attempted to dissuade the young people from acting as it disapproved of hooliganism⁷⁴. On 5 May a large group of

⁶⁹ Report to South African Jewry, 1965 - 1967, p 10

⁷⁰ A report by Gus Saron, Sunday Times, 26.6.66

⁷¹ Dr T Schneider's statement to the press, 6.5.67

⁷² Rand Daily Mail, 8.5.67

⁷³ memorandum from Gus Saron, General Secretary of the Board to the Secretaries of the Provinces, 8.5.67

⁷⁴ Arthur Suzman, Maurice Porter and Gus Saron met with them on the first of May and called upon them to call off their demonstration (minutes of the PR committee, 3.5.67 where Saron requested authorization to try to dissuade the youth.

Jewish demonstrators⁷⁵ clashed with the pro-Nazi sympathisers, necessitating the intervention of the riot police⁷⁶. Prior to the demonstration, one of the youth, L Kagan, made an urgent plea to the Board to denounce the neo-Nazi activities, and to support the proposed demonstration⁷⁷. Nothing was done however, and only after the demonstration had occurred was there an attempt to mobilise the Board to act. Saron wrote Rich, Secretary of the Board, that "Should there not be forthcoming a clear expression of disapproval by the authorities of Nazi activity, then I recommend that the Board must contact the Government⁷⁸."

Saron proposed that the Board of Deputies should ascertain whether the Government intended to thoroughly investigate the reports of an incipient neo-Nazi movement. If they were shown to be correct, the Government must give assurances that it would act vigorously to suppress it. At the same time, the Board should convey its disapproval of people taking the law into their own hands.

At the morning session of Parliament of 5 May G F Jacobs (UP MP) inquired in Parliament of the Minister of Police whether any steps had been undertaken to investigate the disturbances. The Deputy Minister replied that three 'irresponsible youths' had

⁷⁵ They had broken into the beer hall, danced on the tables and sang Jewish songs, and had '*provoked the Germans there*' (Prime Minister Vorster's speech in the House, 8.5.67, HoA debates, col 5659-5666)

⁷⁶ described by SABC broadcast of 9 May as an "*ugly brawl*, with young men who made threats of violence against the beerhall and against the offices of the German Consulate. The clashes involved 200 policemen, dogs, the use of a baton charge and tear gas (D F Jacobs, HoA debates, 8.5.67, col 5658-5666). Reports also in the Sunday Express, Sondagastem, Sunday Times, 7.5.67. Of interest is Schalk Pienaar's column in Die Beeld, 14.5.67, in which he wrote that he was gratified that the Afrikaner was not involved, although SA and the Afrikaner got the blame for the 'unpleasantness'.

⁷⁷ Letter from Saron to Rich, 8.5.67

⁷⁸ Saron in a letter to Rich, 6.5.67

been arrested⁷⁹. Consequent to the clashes of that same night, Jacobs conferred with the Board⁸⁰, and subsequently initiated a debate in the House on the matter which, as he emphasised, transcended party-political lines. He called for a thorough investigation as to what had actually transpired in order to verify whether or not radical right-wing groups from abroad were trying to establish cells in the country⁸¹.

On 6 May Dr Schneider issued a statement to the press in which he deprecated the acts of hooliganism on the part of the Jewish youth. He qualified his condemnation, however, by stressing that they had wanted to express their frustration, as well as their determination "*that there should be no repetition of the Hitler story*". While welcoming the fact that the German embassy had issued a forthright condemnation of the events, he commented "'I trust that the authorities will lose no time in tracking down the individuals who are guilty of these pro-Nazi demonstrations⁸²."

The press agreed on two points. The first was that, although the actions of the youth had been irresponsible, the proliferation of anti-Semitic phenomena, which had precipitated the violence, was a matter of grave concern. The authorities should, therefore, heed Dr Schneider's appeal for official measures against activities by neo-Nazis⁸³. It was of the utmost importance that it was made clear that Nazism was unwelcome and would be fought with the same merciless weapons which had been

⁷⁹ HoA debates, 5.5.67, col 5391

⁸⁰ 7.5.67, Saron's letter to Rich 8.5.67. He also conferred with representatives of the German community and with organised commerce

⁸¹ HoA debates, 8.5.67, col 5658-5666

⁸² ibid

⁸³ Rand Daily Mail, 8.5.67; Die Burger, 7.5.67; Die Oosterliq, 9.5.67; Star, 7.5.67

used to ward off Communism⁸⁴. South Africans would not tolerate a "re-arousing of the hatreds of the Second World War"...South Africa's future depends on the elimination of race antagonism⁸⁵."

In his Day of Remembrance address on 7 May Schneider alluded to the increasing activities of neo-Nazi groups.

Any subversive and dangerous activities in which they might indulge should be the deep concern, not merely of the Jewish community, but of the whole population. We look to the authorities not merely to denounce these individuals and groups, but to take prompt and effective measures to curb their disruptive activities...⁸⁶.

On 8 May Saron informed Col. Howell, of the Security Branch⁸⁷ of the recent visits of the leader of the German NPD⁸⁸ in Germany, a radical German right-wing group. He⁸⁹, as well as Schneider⁹⁰, gave affidavits to the Security Branch, in which they presented evidence of the recent anti-Semitic manifestations in SA. Saron gave a detailed list of the international links with anti-Semitic groups overseas, whose central textbook was "*the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*", the import of anti-Semitic literature, and a list of anti-Semitic groups in the Republic. Despite this, Prime Minister Vorster maintained that after intensive inquiries the police had not been able to find evidence of organised neo-nazi activity in SA. He stated that the Government would take extremely strong measures against anti-Semitism or any other racialistic feud⁹¹. He could not, however, resist the temptation to impute ulterior

⁸⁴ Die Oosterlig, 9.5.67

⁸⁵ SABC broadcast, 9.5.67

⁸⁶ copy of the address in the archives of the Board

⁸⁷ Dr T Schneider's affidavit to the Security Branch, 15.5.67

⁸⁸ National Democratic Party, a radical right-wing group

⁸⁹ 1.6.67

⁹⁰ 15.5.67

⁹¹ Die Volksblad, 10.5.67

motives to the English press in "mischievously" reporting inaccuracies, and thus inciting the "*ugliest racial feelings*" between Jews and Germans. "I want to repeat what I said to the Jewish Board of Deputies. they must use their influence with the people who initiate just this sort of thing for their own gain, like these people in respect of the newspapers⁹²." The Rand Daily Mail⁹³ regarded this statement with utter contempt, pointing out that the Jewish youth would not have acted if the Jewish community had had confidence in the firmness of the authorities in their determination to track down the sources of race hatred which had been directed against them.

The Jewish Herald⁹⁴ shed light on another aspect of the affair. While ridiculing the claim that what had happened was 'innocent fun', the paper proudly pointed out that the Jewish youth had disproved the wide-spread impression that they were a 'lost generation'. Their spirit, which had won a great deal of sympathy from Jews and non-Jews alike, was ample evidence of their deeply ingrained Jewish consciousness and of their determination to defend Jewish honour and pride. The youth had been impelled to take matters into their own hands

because of the silence and inaction of the Board during the two vital weeks. Had they reacted swiftly, nobly and firmly at the first signs of the disgusting Nazi manifestations the youth may have been satisfied to let matters rest. But they procrastinated, pondered and investigated while Nazi songs resounded in Hillbrow.

News/Check⁹⁵ commented in the same vein. In its opinion, the Board was still "*in the ghetto*". It had dragged its feet in its reaction to the Hillbrow cellar neo-Nazi celebrations, prompting the Jewish youth to 'spontaneously' fill the vacuum. The Board must realise that it was being severely criticised for its

⁹² Prime Minister's speech in the HoA, 9.5.67, col 5659-5666

⁹³ 11.5.67

⁹⁴ 9.5.67. The paper was published by the Revisionist group in the SAZF, a right wing political party.

⁹⁵ 19.5.67

policy of restraint⁹⁶.

The uproar eventually fizzled out, neo-Nazism did not take root in SA, and anti-Semitism continued to be a marginal force in South African politics. Nevertheless, the whole affair portrayed the Board in negative light. The Board, who had justified abdicating its lead in delineating a stance towards the Government's policies in the sphere of race relations, on the grounds that its mandate was limited to monitoring and curbing the inroads of anti-Semitism, lost the initiative in the campaign against neo-Nazism. Rather than dealing with it head on, the Board of Deputies had confined itself to recording the phenomenon. It was the pressure at grass-roots level that had ultimately forced the Board to appeal to the Government to take action.

12.5 **The Chief of Police Muller Affair and the Response of the Jewish Board of Deputies**

In August 1968 students at UCT protested against the decision of the Council to rescind the appointment of Archie Mafege, an African, on racial grounds⁹⁷. On 28 August, 1968, in the course of a speech at a public meeting in Potchefstroom, the newly-appointed Minister of Police and Internal Affairs, S L Muller, criticised student protest at the Witwatersrand and Cape Town universities, and made a point of reprimanding the Jewish community for not restraining its youth from participating⁹⁸. He said that it appeared from available information that the protests had been 'politically-inspired', and that the leaders were foreign students and *"quite a few people with Jewish*

⁹⁶ Meeting of the Executive Council, 22.5.67

⁹⁷ Archie Mafegee, a South African black lecturing in London, had been offered a lectureship at UCT. According to Minister Muller, the position to which Mafegee had been appointed had also been applied for by a M H du Toit and a Dr M C Whisson, both of whom were considered to be better qualified for the post. In contrast, the students were of the opinion that the government had bullied the Council of UCT to rescind the appointment on racial grounds.

⁹⁸ Star, 29.8.68

surnames". He had no personal feelings against the Jewish community, he insisted, "many of his best friends being Jews", but "...it is a hard fact that a huge percentage⁹⁹ of listed Communists in the past years are Jews, and a large percentage of Jews are among those who committed acts of sabotage¹⁰⁰". He was aware that the community was incensed about that,

and that is why I want to appeal to them to search in their own hearts and to exercise an influence on the young people so that they can at least respect authority...It is time that the leaders of the community use their influence to see to it that their students do not play a role in undermining activities.

He then went on to read a list of names of students of Jewish extraction who had been involved in left-wing activity¹⁰¹.

The Board of Deputies promptly issued a statement¹⁰² that any attempt by a Jewish body to interfere with the legitimate political freedom of the individual Jewish citizens would be immediately repudiated. Muller's appeal produced indignant responses from all over the country. The Wits SRC called on him to withdraw his remarks and to issue an apology to the Board of Deputies¹⁰³. The UP branch of the Bezuidenhout constituency condemned him for attempting to intimidate the Jews and for casting unjustifiable aspersions on the community as a whole by the "*counting of Jewish-sounding names*". Jewish and non-Jewish students at Wits began wearing stars¹⁰⁴; one of the first to do so was the university's Anglican chaplain, Father Davies. At the

⁹⁹ although he did not elaborate as to what he meant by 'a huge percentage', nor on what basis he made that pronouncement.

¹⁰⁰ Die Vaderland, 29.8.68. Muller was clearly placing the blame for student protests against government policies on the Jewish students. As Minister of Police it was his brief to prevent the recurrence of student protests, and, from his perspective, the Jewish students were a hindrance and an impediment.

¹⁰¹ Rand Daily Mail, 29.8.68

¹⁰² 29.8.68

¹⁰³ Star, 30.8.68

¹⁰⁴ Rand Daily Mail, 30.8.68

level of national politics, Sir Villiers Graaff demanded that Prime Minister Vorster clearly define his Government's attitude towards remarks like those made Mr Muller¹⁰⁵. Steytler, leader of the PP, labelled them the most dangerous, racialistic thinking witnessed in SA for a long time and Zach de Beer (PP) accused Muller of clearly introducing anti-Semitism into SA's political life¹⁰⁶.

In subsequent interviews Muller repeated his main arguments: although he 'admired' Jews, and some of his best friends were Jews¹⁰⁷, it was irrefutable that Jewish students played a major role in student demonstrations¹⁰⁸. His remarks about the unusually high percentage of Jews listed as Communists had not been intended to threaten or victimise the community but had endorsed his specific appeal to the Jewish community¹⁰⁹.

Whereas the Opposition called on the Nationalists to discard the stigma of anti-Semitism by repudiating Muller's appeal to the Jewish leadership, members of the NP supported his demand that the leaders of the Jewish community voice their strong opposition to Communism and support demands for vigilance against the exploitation of students¹¹⁰. The Nationalist press emphasised the prominence of Jews in the leftist groups and

¹⁰⁵ Sunday Express 1.9.68 and Rand Daily Mail, 2.9.68. For example delegates to the Transvaal UP Congress denigrated Muller's attempt to intimidate a particular community by singling it out for 'special political treatment'. (Star, 22.10.68); Muller clashed with Helen Suzman in Parliament (Cape Argus, 5.6.69) for his gratuitous remark of 'some of my best friends are Jews'.

¹⁰⁶ Rand Daily Mail, 3.9.68

¹⁰⁷ Rand Daily Mail 31.8.68; Die Vaderland, 30.8.68; Sunday Express, 1.9.68; Rand Daily Mail 2.9.68

¹⁰⁸ Die Vaderland, 30.8.68; Sunday Express, 1.9.68; Rand Daily Mail, 2.9.68

¹⁰⁹ Sunday Express, 1.9.68 and Rand Daily Mail 2.9.68

¹¹⁰ Die Nattaler, 6.9.68

among the demonstrating students¹¹¹, reproaching the Jewish community for being unduly sensitive to criticism¹¹². The accusation that the NP was anti-Semitic was dismissed as groundless¹¹³. Die Volksblad was especially outspoken.

This newspaper, just like the NP leadership, combats any manifestation of anti-Jewishness because it impedes the realisation of white national unity. It would be good if, in this connection, the Jewish community would be helpful by not resorting too quickly to the shout 'Nazi'¹¹⁴...Every time the pattern is the same, when a Nationalist utters a word about the Jewish Community, which may be interpreted as criticism, there is immediately one cry of protest after the other because the hideous monster of anti-Semitism is then once again sticking its head out....This is a tactic which is really beginning to make one feel a bit sick¹¹⁵.

From the Jewish perspective, Muller's remarks did much to destroy the success of successive NP governments in disposing the vestiges of its anti-Semitic reputation. The Jewish press stressed that the community was '*sick and tired*' of being labelled as '*too sensitive*'¹¹⁶. It rejected the demand that Jews

¹¹¹ Die Beeld, 8.9.68; Die Nataller, 6.9.68. In a letter to the editor '*pro-Jood*' explained that although his only objection to Jews was that they were anti-Christ, it was striking that such a tremendous percentage of the people who sabotaged and betrayed SA were Jews (Dagbreek 15.9.68).

¹¹² Willem Cruywagen, newly appointed information officer for the NP, RDM 2.9.68; fully supported by the Jeugbond RDM, 4.9.68. J J Scheepers wrote that he was tired of the cry of anti-Semitism every time the Jews were shown their faults (Die Transvaler, 17.9.68).

¹¹³ Die Nataller, 6.9.68; Die Volksblad, 2.9.68; Die Transvaler, 3.9.68; Hoofstad, 2.9.68;

¹¹⁴ Die Nataller, 6.9.68

¹¹⁵ Die Volksblad, 2.9.68.

¹¹⁶ In a letter to the editor from Louis Babrow, a well-known sportsman and rugby springbok, wrote that "there were manifestations of considerable student unrest at the universities of Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Stellenbosch; the surnames Coetzee, Du Plessis, Van der Merwe, Botha and Holthuizen hardly sound Jewish to me. The Minister had been picking on Jewish students who were loyal to the country no less than the Minister himself." (Die Burger, 4.9.68).

declare where they stand. "We are sick of being held collectively responsible and accountable for acts of individuals, which have nothing whatsoever to do with the community as such¹¹⁷". While standing for law and order, the community believed that where great issues were at stake freedom of thought and of political action must be permitted, provided that this was done with discretion and moderation as "*All too frequently the transition is made from the individual to the group*¹¹⁸." The journalist, L Hotz¹¹⁹, admitted that Jews tend to be 'hyper-sensitive', looking for an anti-Semite 'behind every bush', but their tragic history had taught them be apprehensive¹²⁰. If anything could be learned from the incident, it was that conventional political controversies, centred on group and race distinctions, could easily sink into the miasma of anti-Semitism.

A copy of this issue of Jewish Affairs was sent to Muller, who expressed surprise and shock at Hotz's article. At no time, he insisted, had he suggested that the actions of individual Jewish students were the responsibility of a collective Jewish community. It was an alarming fact that such a high percentage of listed communists and of saboteurs in SA were Jews. Although aware of the abhorrence these individuals were held by the Jews, he felt it would serve a good purpose if this could be stated openly by one or two leaders.

I have appealed to the Jewish Community as I have done to other sections, for assistance to maintain law and order. Evidently I am allowed to do so to others but not to the Jews...Since my appeal, I have not had one public suggestion of assistance and I must inevitably come to the conclusion that the Jews are not prepared to assist. You have assisted, through your article, to create ill-feeling

¹¹⁷ Jewish Herald, 3.9.68

¹¹⁸ Jewish Affairs, September 1968 editorial

¹¹⁹ a columnist for Jewish Affairs

¹²⁰ Jewish Affairs, September 1968, "Mr Muller and the Students" by Louis Hotz, pp 35-37

where it need not have existed¹²¹.

The president of the Board, Schneider, responded by writing a personal letter to Muller¹²² expressing his distress at the comment that he "*must inevitably come to the conclusion that the Jews are not prepared to assist*". At a meeting with Muller on the 18 of October a deputation reaffirmed the community's concern with the maintenance of law and order, and the need to safeguard SA's peaceful development. In a subsequent statement, the Board stated that it unreservedly accepted the Minister's assurances of goodwill, but repeated its view that the singling out of any section of the population was wrong in principle and could be harmful to inter-group relations¹²³. In its report to the Board, the delegation stated that it felt that, although Muller may not harbour anti-Jewish feelings, his remarks could arouse popular anti-Jewish sentiments¹²⁴. In the course of the interview he had taken out a file and quoted from one of the documents which contained a statement that 23% of listed communists, and 47% of the persons involved in cases of sabotage and treason, were Jews, and 17 of the leaders of the sit-ins were Jews. To Muller's proposal that the community could assist by asking rabbis to preach sermons on the subject, it was pointed out that those who were involved in these activities, in the main, did not attend synagogue and were for the greater part "*de-tribalised Jews who took little or no part in Jewish communal affairs*". Although he conceded the complexity of the problem, Muller persisted that, when the security of the State was involved, it was incumbent upon the leadership to make general statements of support for law and order. "You should have replied to my appeal by saying that you disapproved of

¹²¹ A letter from Muller to Chaim Lewis, the editor of Jewish Affairs, 2.10.68; Lewis replied (4.10.68), pointing out that Hotz, in writing that Muller's statement had been blown out of all proportion, had actually intended to allay the controversy.

¹²² 4.10.68, consequent to an Executive Council meeting on the 2.10.68.

¹²³ 22.10.68

¹²⁴ Report of the interview to the Executive in the archives of the Jewish Board of Deputies.

'sit-ins' and that you supported respect condemnation of individual Jews would mean that the community tacitly accepted responsibility for their conduct.

Although it was by no means certain that the delegation had effectively conveyed its viewpoint about the danger of mentioning Jewish origin in relation to wrongdoers¹²⁵, there definitely seemed to have been an atmosphere of appeasement on both sides. Muller was anxious to pacify the Board and the deputation was eager to be helpful, even suggesting that the Minister bring special cases to the Board's notice so an approach could be made to the parents.

The Muller affair highlighted several critical issues which are crucial to understanding the role of the community in politics: first, the bounds of communal responsibility and accountability for the actions of individual Jews; second, the measure of success of the Board's oft-publicised policy towards political events; third, the extent of involvement of Jews in anti-Government activities; fourth, the exploitation of the spectre of anti-Semitism in the political arena; and finally, the quality of the relationship between the Jewish community and the Government.

The affair exposed a double failure, that of the Board to explicate its policy towards political events in a comprehensible and acceptable manner, and the failure of the Government and the Nationalist press, at the outset, to understand the total separation between the community and the individual Jew in the political life of the country. Neither grasped that it was beyond the scope of the Board to impose a particular viewpoint on individual Jews in general, and on Jewish students in particular. The Government and the Nationalist press did their utmost to repudiate anti-Semitism, to suppress anti-Jewish sentiment and to reassure the community

¹²⁵ Report on Interview with the Hon S L Muller, Minister of Police and of the Interior, 18.10.68, (archives of the Jewish Board of Deputies)

that they were not anti-Semitic. Anti-Semitism had become a pejorative term in the political context of SA.

The conclusion of the affair shed light on the profound change which had occurred in the relations between the Board of Deputies and the Government. Contrary to past conflicts, where only the Board was on the defensive and tended towards obsequiousness, in the course of the Muller affair both sides strove to ingratiate themselves with the other. All parties, the Board, the Government and the Nationalist press, endeavoured to contain the damage to a minimum by preventing anti-Semitism from becoming the thin edge of the wedge. The ultimate success of the Board in impressing upon the Nationalists the limits of its responsibility is substantiated by the unimpeded improvement in their future relationship, this clash being their last serious confrontation.

12.6 Conclusion

The central issue that preoccupied the Board during the 1960's was the scope of the community's responsibility and accountability. The Nationalist press and sections of the population endeavoured to expand this scope to encompass the individual Jew and Israel's foreign policy, while the Board strove to circumscribe the boundaries. The Board could not ignore the widespread misconception that not only did the individual Jew have a responsibility towards the community, but the community was understood to have a responsibility for every individual member. In the context of the 1960s, although many Jews may not have accepted the phrase "*Arevim zeh baze*" (mutual guarantee of Jews for other Jews), the milieu in which they lived was very often guided by this principle.

Israel's hostility to SA in the UN, Jewish prominence in subversive activities, coupled with the implacable opposition to Communism in SA, all converged in the 1960's to threaten the well-being of the community. Israel's enmity seemed to validate the accusation of 'dual loyalty' and Jewish preponderance in the lists of named communists tended to substantiate anti-Semitic propaganda that Communism was Jewish. Considering the reality

where Communism was perceived as the greatest threat to SA, it was not such a great 'leap of faith' to believe that Jews not only could not be relied upon to defend SA, but were a menace to the future of the country.

The period under discussion is thus characterised by a successive series of events which impelled the Board to repeatedly re-articulate its traditional policy of non-intervention in the political arena and to pre-empt any attempt to re-define the boundaries of its responsibilities. By the end of this period it was clear to everyone that neither the Board, nor the community as a corporate body, had a role to play in the political arena, and the borders of its responsibility, and accountability, encompassed only those issues which pertained directly to the community as a whole. Israel's foreign policy and the actions of individual Jews were beyond the purview of the community.

Anti-Semitism was contained to a minute fringe population. Although the NP had espoused anti-Semitism as a political and ideological platform in the 1930's and 1940's, it now perceived it as a pejorative phenomenon and a hazard for SA as it undermined the goals of preserving white unity at all costs and sustaining a 'non-racist' image abroad, at least as far as Jews were concerned. The Party went to great lengths to repudiate any anti-Semitic feelings and policies. It is ironic that it was Verwoerd, who as Prime Minister, and despite considerable provocation, pleaded not to succumb to anti-Semitism. In contrast, it seems that it was the Opposition which exploited anti-Semitism, and the fear of its upsurge, as a political weapon against the ruling Party. This is not to say that there were no anti-Semitic outbursts, both in Parliament and outside - the most sinister being the Anticom articles - but they were never condoned or tolerated. On the contrary, the Nationalist Government went to great lengths to absolve itself from the stigma of anti-Semitism.

A possible explanation for this policy was concern for SA's image in the eyes of the world. The Government was anxious to

persuade the world that its policy of 'separate development' was not racist, nor were they a 'racist' regime. Anti-Semitic excesses belied this image - and had, therefore, to be suppressed without hesitation. Thus, it was not necessarily a ideological transformation which induced this policy of soliciting the community's good will.

It was, in fact, fortuitous that the Board had, on many occasions, stressed the freedom of political conviction and action of the individual. Its unswerving stance enabled the Board to evade any responsibility for the subversive actions of the individual Jew, thus vindicating the policy of collective non-intervention as a 'protective shield'.

Saying this, it must not be overlooked that this policy was spawned by a sense of apprehension and insecurity. The Board of Deputies, in effect, disassociated itself from Israel on two occasions, once in support for the arch anti-Semite Eric Louw. The leadership adopted an apologetic stance, obsequiously welcoming Verwoerd's pronouncements against the escalation of anti-Semitism despite their nuances which bespoke disdain. The Board's trepidation is especially evident in its procrastination in taking action after being informed that Hitler's birthday was being celebrated in Johannesburg. The Board was aware of the upsurge of Nazi and anti-Semitic propaganda in the Republic, but had been content to issue an innocuous warning. The issue was debated in Parliament and the police was constrained to take active measures only after Jewish youth had taken the law into their own hands. The Board's *raison d'être*, as so often elucidated to rationalise the Board's silence in the face of immorality of Apartheid and Government restrictive and discriminatory legislation, was to defend Jewish rights and to combat anti-Semitism. At the crucial moment, the Board acted only under compulsion. It was only after the Board had succeeded in freeing itself from this sense of apprehension that it could scrap its policy of collective non-intervention.

Part 4. 1968-1978:
THE THIN LINE BETWEEN
POLITICS AND MORALITY

Chapter 13. ISRAEL, ANTI-ZIONISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM, 1971-1978

13.1 Fluctuations in the Relations Between SA and Israel

The key to understanding the relationship between the South African Government and the local Jewish community after the Sixth Day War lay in improved relationship between SA and Israel as part of SA's desperate attempts to find allies in the international arena. The only ripple in the good relations occurred in 1971 when Israel donated \$2,850 to the OAU (Organisation of African Unity), a gesture towards black Africa which backfired. Israeli Government spokesmen said that the grant was meant as a humanitarian gesture, aimed at purchasing tents, blankets food and medicines, not arms or explosives, and it had never been intended for the promotion of violence against SA. Representatives of seven black liberation movements reportedly rejected the Israeli offer, suggesting that if the grant was received it would be passed on to Arab guerrilla groups¹. Israel eventually withdrew the offer and diverted the donation to the UN Higher Commissioner for Refugees².

In the meantime the offer provoked sharp reaction in SA, precipitating strains between the local Jewish community and the State of Israel. The turbulent emotion was generated mainly by initial reports in the South African press which represented the Israeli grant as aid for African terrorists. Prime Minister Vorster voiced dissatisfaction at the Israeli grant and Finance Minister Nico Diederichs announced that the transfer of funds would be suspended until the Government had obtained 'greater clarity' on Israeli policies. The Nationalist press branded it an "*odious decision*" which had caused "*a sadness of heart*" to Afrikaners³. The Board of Deputies was asked, and itself considered it to be timely and important, to voice its reactions

¹ New York Times, 5.7.71

² ibid and Report to South African Jewry 1970-1972

³ See also Die Vaderland, 4.6.71.

to the developments. In a joint statement with the SAZF⁴, it condemned support for terrorism, confident that the Government of Israel shared that view⁵. The Government expressed its satisfaction that Israel's intention had not been to aid terrorists and lifted the ban on the transfer of funds⁶.

In 1974 Israel upgraded her consulate to the status of embassy⁷ and on 29 December, 1975 SA reciprocated by formally elevating its diplomatic representation to an embassy⁸. The normalisation of relations with SA was an Israeli response to the African states' severing diplomatic relations following the October 1973 war⁹, in contrast to SA which had rallied to her assistance.

13.2 Prime Minister Vorster's Official Visit to Israel

In 1976 B J Vorster made an official visit to Israel. He was the first South African Prime Minister to officially visit the

⁴ A few days later the Central African Jewish Board of Deputies went on record, on behalf of Rhodesian Jewry, affirming its opposition to the sponsorship or encouragement of terrorist activities in any part of the world (Gus Saron's letter to the Editor, Jewish Chronicle, London, 3.10.71)

⁵ Gus Saron's letter to the Editor, Jewish Chronicle, London, 3.10.71

⁶ Report to Deputies, 26.9.71. See also Cleveland Jewish News, 17.9.71

⁷ Star, and Die Vaderland, 12.3.74, Rand Daily Mail, 13.3.74, Die Transvaler, 14.3.74 Yitchak Unna, who had served as Israel's Consul-General in SA from 1968 to 1972 would return as Ambassador.

⁸ Star, 30.12.75. The first South African ambassador to Israel was Dr Charles Fincham (Eastern Province Herald, 13.1.76). See also J Leo Cefkin, "Israel and South Africa: Reconciling Pragmatism and Principle", Middle East Review, Volume XXI, No. 2, winter 1988/89, 29-40. Prior to the establishing of the embassy, SA did not have any diplomatic representation in Israel.

⁹ Golda Meir voiced Jerusalem's outlook: "Ungrateful those governments have most certainly been, and it will take a great deal of effort on their part to remove the bad taste left by their desertion of us in time of crisis..." (Cefkin, 1988/89, 30)

country¹⁰. The visit, from 8 to 12 April, was given maximum publicity in the South African press, with extensive speculation as to its purpose, although officially it was one of goodwill between two friendly nations. In an interview Vorster said that "...relations between South Africa and Israel have never ever been better¹¹". It relieved SA of its pariah status, and enabled her to gain collaboration on compatible goals, such as the containment of Soviet influence in Africa¹². In the course of the visit, a pact to co-operate in economic, scientific and industrial spheres was concluded¹³. There was widespread agreement in the Afrikaans press that the pact would be of mutual benefit for both countries¹⁴. The English press, in contrast, surmised that only SA had something to gain, the incentives for Israel being nebulous¹⁵, as it would intensify criticism against her. The newspapers inquired why should Israel

...invite a storm of international abuse by inviting the South African Prime Minister for an official visit. With Mr. Vorster's visit imminent, the anti-South African lobby has already started its campaign¹⁶.

The Leader of the Opposition, Sir de Villiers Graaff, complimented the Prime Minister on the diplomatic initiative, congratulating him for the agreements made between SA and Israel¹⁷. The visit was also welcomed by the SA Jewish community. One of its leaders described it as "*brilliant*

¹⁰ Malan visited Israel in 1953 in his private capacity

¹¹ Rand Daily Mail, 10.4.76

¹² J Leo Cefkin, "Israel and South Africa: Reconciling Pragmatism and Principle", Middle East Review, Vol XXI, no. 2, winter, 1988/89, pp 29-40

¹³ Rand Daily Mail and Die Transvaler, 13.4.76. There were many rumours, unconfirmed, there was also provisions for military collaboration.

¹⁴ Die Vaderland, 6.4.76, Hoofstad, 7.4.76, Dawie, writing in Die Oosterlig, 7.4.76, Die Transvaler, 9.4.76

¹⁵ Rand Daily Mail, 9.4.76 and 14.4.76, Star, Eastern Province Herald, 13.4.76

¹⁶ Star, 8.4.76

¹⁷ Star, 22.4.76

*statesmanship*¹⁸". On May 10 the SAZF and the Board of Deputies held a banquet in honour of Vorster. Among the guests were the Minister of Foreign Affairs Muller, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs Fourie, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Assembly and members of Parliament¹⁹. At the banquet Vorster proposed a toast to the State of Israel. Thereafter, Julius Weinstein, chairman of the SAZF, recorded the Federation's gratitude for the Government's recognition and understanding of the desire on the part of SA Jews to help their brothers²⁰. Nevertheless, even within SA Zionist circles there was much disquiet over this public banquet. In fact, the leadership of Habonim - the largest of the Zionist youth movements - threatened to organise an anti-Vorster demonstration²¹.

The OAU declared that the visit had showed that Israel and SA stood "together in oppressing the Blacks of Southern Africa, and also the people of Palestine²²". The ties between Israel and SA were condemned by the Presidents of Zambia and Mozambique as a "racist-fascist" alliance²³. In 1977 Israel began to experience

¹⁸ Beeld, 13.4.76, Star, 13.4.76, Hoofstad, 13.4.76, Beeld, 16.4.76

¹⁹ Press items of Jewish interest, NO. 10, 13.5.76. The RDM and Die Vaderland, 12.5.76, published photographs of the Prime Minister, focusing attention to the yamulke, the "Jewish skull-cap" on his head.

²⁰ Beeld, 11.5.76

²¹ Information provided by Professor Marcus Arkin who was the then Chairman of the SAZF.

²² Die Transvaler, 16.4.76. For more on the backlash see an article by the political correspondent of the Star, John Patton, 17.4.76. The OAU completely ignored diplomatic ventures between Vorster and other African states. Diplomatic relations with Malawi were opened in 1967 (Dr Banda paid a state visit to SA in 1971). In September 1974 Vorster paid a secret visit to Ivory Coast and in February 1975 he visited Liberia. (Davenport, 1987, 489)

²³ Star, 26.4.76

international pressure because of her ties with SA²⁴, while the Israeli Government encountered growing opposition within Israel itself²⁵. Leading figures in the US Carter Administration informally told Israel that they were disturbed by her relations with SA²⁶. Despite these pressures, when the UN imposed a mandatory arms embargo on SA in November 1977, Israeli leaders, while affirming that they rejected racism, stated that there was "no reason to shun a hand of friendship that has been reaching to us from a forest of hatred and violence."²⁷

The anti-Israel and anti-Zionist invective which singled out Israel for its relations with SA had, as its primary purpose, the delegitimisation of Israel by labelling it 'racist'. The General Assembly adopted a resolution strongly condemning Israel for its 'continuing and increasing collaboration with the racist regime of South Africa'²⁸. Chaim Hertzog, Israel's representative in the UN, called the resolution malicious, irrelevant and a concoction of lies. The truth was that Israel's trade with SA was 2 fifths of 1 percent of SA's total trade and one eighth of Asia's total investment²⁹. Israel was a negligible factor in SA's overall military picture as Israel had adhered to the UN resolution regarding a military embargo on SA. The intensive propaganda carried on by the Arab states did not provide a shred of evidence for military collaboration between Israel and SA. According to the 1976 Yearbook of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, whereas the western countries conducted more than a billion dollars worth of trade in arms and war materials between 1963-1975, Israel had merely

²⁴ Financial Gazetteer, 13.5.77 Citizen, 16.5.77, Die Vaderland, 17.5.77

²⁵ Star, 23.11.76, "To the Point", 21.10.77

²⁶ Citizen, 25.3.77; Sunday Times, 12.6.77

²⁷ Menachem Begin, Prime Minister of Israel, quoted in Argus, 7.11.77

²⁸ Citizen, 16.12.77

²⁹ Kenneth Jacobson, "Israel and South Africa", The Israel Economist, December 1979

built 6 patrol boats for SA and supplied missiles to arm these boats³⁰, although Israel admitted that she was training SA soldiers in "counter-insurgency methods"³¹.

The importance of the relations between SA and Israel is reflected in an interview with Botha³², in which he praised the Jewish contributions to the country and debunked the myth of 'dual loyalty'. The Jews should, he said, be proud of their cultural links with the Jewish state, while simultaneously adhering to political loyalty to the Republic³³. Adherence to Israel, for which Jews had in the past been criticised, was now conceived as an advantage and a blessing.

³⁰ Jacobson, 1979. The anti-Israel propaganda continued into the 1980s, despite the abundance of evidence controverting it. In 1985, while Israel's total volume of trade was \$230M, the United States' was \$3.38 billion, Japan's \$3.26 billion, West German \$2.77 billion, Britain \$2.56 billion, Italy \$2.10 billion and France \$1.02 billion. Israel's trade accounted for a mere 0.7% of SA's total trade. Israel's investment represented 0.1% of all investment in SA (Cefkin, 1988/89, 31-32. The Israel Economist, December 1979, "Israel and South Africa" by K Jacobson, gives a detailed breakdown of SA's trading partners in 1978, demonstrating that SA's imports from Israel were 0.4% of her total imports, and 0.5% of her total exports were to Israel). Nevertheless, of all these countries that constitute most of the UN membership, Israel alone was routinely and systematically singled out for condemnation in international forums (Kenneth Bandler and George E Gruen, "Israel and South Africa", 1985 - an article found in the archives of the Board of Deputies. Bandler was a research analyst in the Israel and Middle East Affairs Division and Gruen is the Director of the Division.)

³¹ in 1975. Meir Amit, the director-general of the Histadrut enterprise Koor revealed this in a speech in South Africa (Michael Wade, "Bypassing Africa - and History", New Outlook, November 1976, pp 23-26, p 23

³² Zionist Record, 2.11.79

³³ Adelberg, 1982, p 455; Report to South African Jewry, 1970 - 1980, p 10. In fact the Prime Minister stated: "...my government is aware of the unique position which Israel occupies as the spiritual home of Jews wherever they are. This is a special relationship which has no bearing on the loyalty which I know our Jewish citizens hold for South Africa."

13.3 Anti-Zionism in the Muslim and Black Communities

The NP Government continued to conscientiously condemn any manifestations of anti-Semitism. When Y Unna, the Israeli Consul General³⁴, made the observation, in 1972, that an element of anti-Semitism was apparent in statements in and out of politics, Die Oosterlig³⁵ hastily reaffirmed that the Nationalist Government would not tolerate anti-Jewish prejudice. In contrast, anti-Semitism took on a different form in the Muslim and Black communities, and was invariably articulated as anti-Zionism. In light of the political struggle of all the non-white people of the country, anti-Semitism from that quarter evolved into a surrogate for the real problems that beset them. The anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic stance of the Muslim section can be attributed to a large extent to the bond of Islam they shared with the Arab people of the Middle East. Anti-Semitic articles were for a long time a constant feature of many pro-Arab Muslim publications which held rabidly anti-Israel and anti-Zionist views. Articles in Muslim News, published weekly in Cape Town, and pamphlets emanating from the Islamic Propagation Centre³⁶ in Durban, and inspired by Achmed Deedat, were especially vicious and malevolent³⁷.

A survey among Africans and Coloureds in Soweto, undertaken in 1971, revealed that their feelings towards Jews were only slightly different from those towards Afrikaners³⁸. Their image

³⁴ and from May 1976 Israel's ambassador to SA

³⁵ 6.12.72

³⁶ situated in Durban

³⁷ After the Board of Deputies complained, his pamphlet, "Crimes of Begin" was declared 'undesirable by the Publications Control Board (Annexure Executive Council meeting, 29.11.82. See also Citizen, 20.10.82.)

³⁸ "Attitude of Africans and Coloureds to Jews", Jewish Affairs, April 1974, pp 47-49. See also Henry Lever, "The Jewish Voter in South Africa", Ethnic and Racial Studies, Volume 2, No 2, October 1979, pp 428-440, H Lever and OJM Wagner "Ethnic Preferences of Jewish Youth in Johannesburg, Jewish Journal of Sociology, June 1967, pp 34-37 and Melville Edelstein, What Do Young Africans Think?" , Johannesburg, 1972 and "The Urban

of the Jew was derived from the New Testament. They were perceived as white and wealthy and therefore identified with power, privilege, and as belonging to the oppressive minority. Those Jews who opposed government policy were not regarded as Jews but as 'South African English'. There was more hatred towards "Jews" than towards "English-speaking Whites"³⁹. Although Blacks conceded that the Jewish community had made a contribution to charitable work for Blacks, this did not significantly alter this image. Subsequently, Percy Yutar, who had served as a member of the Cillie Commission to investigate the Soweto riots, reported that he had learnt that there was a growing resentment of Jews among Blacks. In considering this disturbing report, the Board conceded that there was not a great deal that could be done apart from the promotion of broader educational programmes for Blacks' advancement⁴⁰.

The question was once more raised at a meeting of the Board's Public committee in April⁴¹, as well as at the Public Relations meeting of the CNJ⁴². On September 1979 the Executive Council discussed the outcome of a seminar organised by the Union of Jewish Women at which Dr N Motlana, Chairman of the Soweto Committee of Ten, had allegedly expressed anti-Semitic

African Image of the Jew". Jewish Affairs, February 1972, pp 6-8

³⁹ "The Jewish Scene", Geoffrey Wigoder's column in the Jerusalem Post, 31.8.77

⁴⁰ PR session of Congress, 28.5.78

⁴¹ Minutes of PR meeting. On 20 June 1976 Melvin Edelstem, sociologist and welfare officer for the WRBA was murdered in the Soweto riots.

⁴² 11.5.76, where Professor Gering reported that there was increased anti-Semitism amongst Coloureds. See also Minutes of Deputy meeting, 25.2.79 where it was reported that blacks were evincing alarming anti-Semitic attitudes because 'Jews exploited the blacks. This could be attributed by to the conspicuousness of Jews in industry and commerce.

remarks⁴³, and Leah Tutu had said that her mind 'boggled' at the fact that Jews paid their servants less and gave them less time off than did their non-Jewish counterparts⁴⁴. Although the organiser of the seminar contended that the outrage of some of the participants arose from 'paranoia', and that the matter had been blown out of proportion, the Executive expressed its concern at the spread of anti-Jewish feeling among Blacks.

Black anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist views derived in part from identification with other oppressed communities, particularly the Palestinians. Black communities were supported by Arab and African states at the UN and on other international forums, and these countries were anti-Israel, and, by extension, anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic. It is, therefore, not difficult to understand why these attitudes should have been adopted by local black communities. This state of affairs was exacerbated by the distorted propaganda of the relations between SA and Israel which greatly exaggerated the co-operation that existed between the two countries, giving rise to the fallacy that Israel was propping up and reinforcing the prevailing political system in the Republic. Anti-Israeli propaganda depicted the country as sharing a common policy with SA towards her Arab citizens⁴⁵. Two

⁴³ Motlana allegedly said that Jews knew all about discrimination, having brought it upon themselves by killing Christ. He accused Prof Philip Tobias of trying to prove that the black man's brain weighed less and had less 'grey matter' than his white counterpart. (The Jewish Herald, 4.9.79 and later copied by Citizen, 11.9.79). Motlana denied making anti-Semitic remarks, Argus, 12.9.79

⁴⁴ The Jewish Herald, 4.9.79, and later copied by the Citizen, 11.9.79

⁴⁵ The Peace for Galilee campaign in Lebanon broke out in June 1982 as a consequence of years of terrorist and missile attacks on the northern cities and settlements of Israel. The war itself radicalised Jewish/Muslim relations and resulted in a sharp increase in anti-Semitic incidents. Shortly after these events Board leaders met with leading members of the Muslim community where they were assured that there were no widespread feelings of animosity against the community amongst Muslim citizens. Black students supported the Muslim Student Association when friction broke out between Jewish and Muslim students on the Wits campus in April 1984. In the view of Leah Bernstein, SAUJS chairperson, the Blacks on campus neither knew

of the most prominent organisations leading black opposition to Apartheid and to the Republic, the United Democratic Front and Azapo, were anti-Zionist. The UDF shied away from formal contact with the organised Jewish community, demanding a denunciation of Zionism as a pre-condition for any such contact⁴⁶. AZAPO, on its part, not only rejected co-operation with whites, it also negated the contribution made by individual Jews to the struggle for black liberation⁴⁷. Shimoni⁴⁸, in his remarks on the panel discussion on the Jews of SA, said: "Black leaders in South Africa have rejected feelers from Jewish leaders for dialogue", commenting that black leaders had "adopted classic anti-Semitic myths as well as an anti-Israel stance⁴⁹."

Although, under these circumstances, there was no room for contacts between the Board and these organisations, this did not obviate the ongoing process of building bridges towards the non-white communities⁵⁰ despite widespread negative attitudes towards Jews⁵¹. The Board began taking its first positive steps into opening up channels of communications into the non-White

anything about Israel nor did they want to know, but readily related to the propagandist slogans of the 'brotherhood of the oppressed Palestinian masses'. This had been further aggravated by the UN resolution of 1977, that "Zionism is racism" which portrayed Jews as 'white colonialists'.

⁴⁶ In March 1984 the Board of Deputies organised a luncheon with members of the UDF which was cancelled when the UDF invitees refused to come.

⁴⁷ Board of Deputies memorandum on anti-Semitism in SA, September 1985

⁴⁸ professor at the Hebrew University Institute of Contemporary Jewry in Jerusalem

⁴⁹ under the auspices of the Harry Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Jewish Times, 20.6.86

⁵⁰ IPC 14.11.81; Report to Congress, 1974-1976, p 8

⁵¹ Zionist Record, 3.4.80, reporting on a talk given by Gerald Stone, a trustee of the Joseph Stone Foundation, to a Council meeting of the Jewish Board of Deputies; interview with Lorraine Bernstein, chairperson of SAUJS, ZR, 1.11.85.

communities⁵², and formulating positive public relations⁵³". It invited, for example, leaders of these communities, such as Sam Motsuenyane, a prominent Africa businessman, Dr Ntatho Motlana, Chairman of the Soweto "Council of 10", the Reverend Allan Hendrickse, leader of the labour Party and J N Reddy, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the SA Indian Council, to address Club 44⁵⁴ and the editor of the Sowetan, Mr J Lapakgomo⁵⁵.

⁵² for example Resolution of 28th Biennial Congress in June 1976 which called for improving relations with the Black community; Minutes of Public Relations meetings 23.11.78 and 17.9.80; Minutes of Transvaal Council, 14.10.83 and 6.12.83.

⁵³ For example Leissner, Chairman of the Board, compiled a tentative plan for "Initiation in Race Relations (1.11.83) and Franz Auerbach's proposal to the National Council 27.8.85.

⁵⁴ Report to South African Jewry, 1978-1980, p 12

⁵⁵ Luncheon with editors of major papers, 20.10.83

Chapter 14. RE-EVALUATING POLICY TOWARDS THE POLITICAL ARENA

14.1 The Winds of Change in South African Politics

Towards the end of the 1960's an ideological fissure developed within the NP between the *verligtes*¹ versus *verkrampste*. In the context of Afrikaner politics, *Verligte* did not signify extensive Liberalism nor did *verkrampste* denote straightforward reaction². The first implied openness within carefully defined limits and the second contained a streak of right-wing ultra-conservatism. The bone of contention was the implementation of separate development and its pace. Separate development envisaged the creation of a series of independent black homelands to which all the Blacks in the urban areas would belong³. By the 1960s, it had become obvious that many of Verwoerd's ideals were a futile dream, the *Verligte* realising that the old policies would not work in the future⁴. His prediction that Blacks would move out of the cities of white SA to the homelands was confuted as their percentage grew from 27% in 1951 to 37% in 1980, due to the abundance of labour

¹ Professor Terreblance, in his speech to the National Congress of the Board of Deputies in 1983, contended that the differences between *verligte* Afrikaners and Jews are smaller than those that had existed between Afrikaners and Jews in the past because the *verligte* are more reform-oriented, internationally-sensitive and are situated more to the centre politically than the *verkrampste*. (Professor Terreblanche, "The relationship between the Afrikaners and the Jewish Communities", Jewish Affairs, vol 6, June 1983)

² Dawie, the political correspondent of Die Burger, supported the *verligte*, declaring that the NP was not a reactionary party but was also innovative and radical. (Professor CJ Muller (ed) *500 Years: A History of South Africa*, Pretoria, 1969, revised in 1981, p 513)

³ John de St. Jorre, "Inside the Laager: White Power in South Africa", Foreign Affairs, 16.11.76

⁴ Bloomberg argued that although the real debate was between traditionalists versus modernists and isolationists versus expansionists, the conflict was expressed in religious terms. Dr Andries Treurnicht, then the editor of the Hoofstad, questioned whether the *verligte* were still 'standing by God and His word, contending that they were subverting Christianity. (Bloomberg, Charles, *Christian-Nationalism and the Rise of the Afrikaner Broederbond in South Africa, 1918-1948*, edited by Saul Dubow, Macmillan, Hants, 1990 p xxvi)

opportunities available in the white cities, in their absence in the black homelands⁵. The Soweto riots in 1976 were an unambiguous indication of the growing black resistance to the system, and created widespread fears of a revolt⁶. In 1977 a sports boycott and a UN arms embargo were placed on SA. At the same time the ANC, a banned organisation, grew in strength as it reorganised itself in exile, enjoying widespread patronage. Within SA, black radicalism was on an increase, aggravated by the shortage of skilled labour, which stemmed from the policy of job reservation which denied Blacks access to job opportunities. In time it became clear that Whites would not be able to fill the requirements, forcing the Government to relax the application of this policy⁷.

Within the social life of the country, the accent began to shift towards the idea of interdependence, of reconciliation and of cooperation. An increasing number of South Africans of all shades of opinion were realising the pressing need of an inter-relationship and rockbottom unity⁸. White society in general was moving into a more tolerant era in social matters, and no longer saw the need for so many social barriers⁹. The Jewish community was affected by this no less than other sections of the white population. Within this context the Board launched an out-reach programme aimed at establishing contact with the non-white

⁵ B J Leibenberg, "The Struggle Against Isolation", in *South Africa in the 20th Century*, 1992, B J Leibenberg and SB Spies,

⁶ Leibenberg, 1992, pp 480-482

⁷ In reality, there was such a multitude of restrictions placed on blacks that there was little relief in the shortage of skilled labour, making the scrapping of further apartheid laws imperative. To this effect the government appointed the Riekert Commission, in August 1977, to investigate the effect of a number of apartheid laws on the effective use of labour.

⁸ "New Trends in the Political Scene in South Africa", editorial in Jewish Affairs, September 1973

⁹ Martin Meredith, *In the Name of Apartheid: South Africa in the Post War Period*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1988, p 163

community¹⁰.

What is perhaps even more arresting is that people of all shades of opinion, and in ever-growing numbers, are looking with a critical eye at established institutions and habits of thought, and finding them no longer acceptable...Uncertain and halting as some of the first steps may be, there is no mistaking the fact that a spirit of change.. is at work among broad stratum of the South African people - and, one can only hope, at the level of creative leadership¹¹.

In September 1978¹² PW Botha became the new Prime Minister, and with that the process of dismantling Apartheid began.

Within the Jewish community there was an acceleration in the momentum in the support for the NP in the community¹³ in the 1970s. Henry Lever ascribed the change the 'Jewish vote' had undergone during this period to the change in the political climate rather than a change in a uniquely Jewish response to perceived threats to the community¹⁴. In his assessment, the

¹⁰ The Report to South African Jewry, 1974-1976 reports that black leaders and academics had addressed meetings organised under the Board's auspices. The Report to South African Jewry, 1976-1978, depicts pictures of official functions in which black leaders were the keynote speakers (Dr C N Phatudli, Chief Minister of Lebowa and Lennox Sebe, chief Minister of Ciskei).

¹¹ Louis Hotz, in Jewish Affairs, August 1974

¹² With the elevation of Vorster to State President

¹³ The Afrikaans-language magazine published by the Board, Buurman, was launched in September 1970. Saron defined its function as a platform for mutual understanding between the Jewish and Afrikaans communities (Minutes of Board of Deputies, 30.8.70) At its launching, 17.9.70, Professor G Viljoen, the Rector of Rand Afrikaans University, said that the Jew and the Afrikaner had grown apart as a result of urbanisation. He expressed his hope that Buurman would lead to a spirit of friendship not only between the Jewish and the Afrikaner community, but with all sections of the population.

¹⁴ as was argued by Peter Medding, "Towards a General Theory of Jewish Political Interests and Behaviour", Jewish Journal of Sociology, Vol 19, no.2, 1977, 115-144, quoted in Lever, 1979. Medding had expressed the view that Jews favoured a position towards the centre of the political spectrum as representative of the old UP (in 1977 the NRP). The Jewish political response was inversely related to the direction from which the greatest perceived threat to their micro-political interests was seen to come. In the 1970's they perceived a threat from the African

differences in political preferences between Jews and English-speaking non-Jews, **of the same socio-economic status**, were negligible. They responded to the same influences as white non-Jews. It was, therefore, wrong to believe that a distinctive Jewish vote existed: Jews assumed the social and political characteristics of the people among whom they lived¹⁵. Political uncertainty and escalating violence¹⁶ raised apprehensions, but their foreboding stemmed from their being white, not Jewish. "Jews react firstly as white South Africans - will their interests be protected, their living standards drop, their children be safe?¹⁷" The increase in Jewish support for the NP can also be attributed, in part, to the growing fear of a black revolution arising out of the Soweto disturbances. Many Jews had begun to believe that only a strong conservative government

population: promoting racial equality would threaten their political and economic security and would involve sacrifices for the benefit of a group which was not well disposed towards them. Medding stated that "Jews have nothing to gain and everything to lose by actively opposing apartheid, since it would inevitably result in political and economic retaliation by the regime." (op. cit. 129). Medding, therefore predicted that Jews would not support the Progressive Party (PPF) which advocated a radical re-structuring of society. (Quoted in Lever, 1979) A diametrically opposing view was presented by H Brotz (The Politics of South Africa, London 1977, 53) who maintained that Jews were inclined to support the PP.

¹⁵ Henry Lever, 1979. In a debate at Wits University on the topic "How could a Jew be a Nat", Russel Crystal, a student leader and a member of the NP, argued that if enough Jews joined the party they could pressure the government into reforming its policies. His arguments were countered by Tony Leon, a former vice-president of Wits Student Representative Council, who underscored the fact that many aspects of NP policy were contrary to the basic principles of Jewish law, as apartheid set out to destroy the system of justice which was fundamental to Judaism. (Rand Daily Mail, 25.9.81; Citizen, 25.9.81. Die Beeld, 25.9.81, reported the debate as unequivocally showing that Nationalists - particularly Jewish Nationalists - were not welcomed at the university)

¹⁶ including an explosion at Temple Israel in Johannesburg in August 1983

¹⁷ "South Africa in Transition: Implications for Jewry", Steven Friedman, paper published by the Jewish Board of Deputies, undated but around the time of the Gulf War.

could protect the white man's interests in SA¹⁸. The improvement in the relations between Israel and SA, in particular following the Prime Minister's official visit in 1976, did much to improve the NP's image in the eyes of the community. The political editor of Die Vaderland¹⁹, while conceding that the Jew would not allow the visit to sway his vote, nevertheless added, "there are a lot of John Vorster people among the Jews."

Harry Schwarz, MP²⁰, speaking in July 1975²¹, rejected the view that Jews should not participate in politics on the grounds that anti-Semitism might increase if too much attention was focused on them²². In the course of his address, he said that, although some Jews were of the opinion that Jews should adopt a 'low profile', he believed that they should actively participate in politics as they had the same civic rights and obligations as other citizens²³. It would, however, be wrong for Jews to adopt a specific "Jewish" attitude towards party politics, but should feel free to support any political Party. Furthermore, Jews were under an obligation to play a part in the promotion of justice and better race relations. As victims of centuries of discrimination, they had to guard against being two-faced, protesting discrimination only when they were directly threatened, and themselves discriminating against other people,

¹⁸ Martyn Adelberg, 1982, p 454

¹⁹ 17.5.76

²⁰ who was at this stage the leader of the Reform Party, which had just been founded by Alf Widman, MPC for Orange Grove, and which included many Jewish Mps and Jewish City Councillors, most of whom had broken away from the UP. For a list of names and positions, see Die Vaderland, 14.2.75. Also Rand Daily Mail, 12.2.75

²¹ under the auspicious of the United Progressive Congregation of Johannesburg

²² Beeld, 2.7.75. The paper mentioned that prior to the address, the chairman had asked the press not to report the questions put to Schwarz, as this might inhibit those who put them.

²³ Schwarz repeated this viewpoint at the AGM of the Council of Kwa-Zulu Natal in June 1995.

while they maintained a comfortable lifestyle²⁴.

14.2 The Crucial Factors in formulating policy

Eli Weisel tells a story in one of his books of a man who arrived in Sodom and stood at a street corner protesting against the evil he saw around him. Nobody took any notice of him. Nevertheless he continued to protest. After some years of this people asked him: "Why do you continue to protest? You aren't achieving anything?". To which he replied: "At the beginning I protested in the hope of changing other people's attitudes. Now I am protesting for the sake of my own attitudes, my own conscience²⁵".

For decades Jews had been inhibited by fear, aware that as a minority they were vulnerable. However great their

"...sympathy for the oppressed, they believe, with some justification, that minorities which stick their necks out, get their heads chopped off. Jewish communities, as opposed to individuals, are rightly cautious about being in the vanguard of political movements²⁶.

The fundamental problem which dogged the Board throughout this period was that of distinguishing between morality and politics in the South African context: how could the community raise its voice against the immoral and unethical aspects of Apartheid without being perceived as taking a political stance or becoming involved in the political arena²⁷? Although sharing in the prosperity of the country by virtue of their white skin, Jews were uneasy and uncomfortable about remaining silent on the moral questions inherent in Apartheid. Despite the reaffirmation of the policy of not getting involved in race issues, underpinned by the vulnerability of the Jewish community, it was

²⁴ Beeld, Rand Daily Mail and Die Transvaler, 2.7.75.

²⁵ in "A Jewish View of the Just Society in South Africa", Patterns of Prejudice, July-August 1978, pp 20-24

²⁶ ibid

²⁷ In the words of Harry Schwarz: "Politics in South Africa is dominated by race. Elections in the white community are little affected by economic issues, they are decided by attitudes to race." (1984, p 131)

generally agreed, in the words of Rabbi Casper that Jews 'as citizens [have the] right and perhaps...the duty to be involved in these issues²⁸."

In accord with these convictions, the policy delineated at the 1965 Congress, which deplored all attempts to introduce Jewish issues into political controversies, was periodically challenged, punctuated by calls to take a stand on 'moral' issues. The difficulty was that for the Board to enter the political arena on every issue which has moral overtones would "be self-defeating and counterproductive²⁹", especially as the role of the Board³⁰ was essentially the protection of the Jewish community's civil rights and eliminating, where possible, anti-Semitism. Although there was little likelihood of the Jews, since they were "...part of the white group", being prejudiced as far as political rights were concerned, on the few occasions when it was necessary for the Board to approach the Government to enact legislation which would affect the community directly such as the funding of private schools, they did so with trepidation and apprehension.

It took us many years to build up the strength and confidence we feel today in dealing with the government. There were many years of obsequiousness and they are not altogether gone...when they introduced their Apartheid legislation they were unyielding and uncompromising, just as they are today³¹.

Gus Saron defined the role of the Board as being restricted to dealing with matters which were of "strictly Jewish interest"³².

²⁸ Report of the American Jewish Committee - sent to Gus Saron on 11.5.73

²⁹ Memorandum by Gus Saron to the Board, 21.6.73

³⁰ Memorandum to the Executive Council of the Jewish Board of Deputies from Gerald Leissner, President of the Board, 22.6.87 - but just as relevant in the preceding period.

³¹ Mervyn Smith, Chairman of the Cape Council and National Vice-Chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, in a symposium on "*The fate and future of South African Jewry: a Jewish Quarterly symposium*", Jewish Quarterly, Vol 33, No. 4 (124) 1986, 18-27, p 24

³² a memorandum written by Saron, *Race Policies in South Africa*, 21.6.73

While the majority of the community had accepted this approach, there were individuals and groups, in particular the Jewish student body, who held that the tenets of Judaism and historical experience demanded that they be particularly sensitive to matters affecting human rights. Nevertheless there was a consensus that it was not possible for Jews collectively to propound a specific solution or approach to the country's racial problems³³. However, by 1972 Saron had retired and a new leadership of the Board of Deputies had emerged which adopted a bolder approach to the political arena, with the new executive beginning to crystallise a stance against the immoral and inhumane aspects of Apartheid. It realised that it should at least speak out on moral issues, despite the awareness that "to do so without entering the political arena, appears to be a well-nigh insuperable task"³⁴. At the same time, in the political context where the NP was strongly entrenched, the leadership felt it was not wise to attack the policy of Apartheid per se.

Although South African Jewry was branded as "racist" by its critics³⁵, Suzman, the chairman of the Public Relations committee, was convinced that the community, despite its minimal political influence, could be a potent force in instigating changes of attitude towards racial discrimination. He rejected both the policy of desperation, which advocated radical means to bring about change, as well as the policy of despair, which professed that nothing could be done to avert an ultimate catastrophe³⁶. However, taking a pro-active stance towards political issues was not a smooth process. While it could not be

³³ as defined by Arthur Suzman, chairman of the Public Relations committee, in his address to the Inter-Provincial Consultation, June, 1973. See also Report to South Africa Jewry, 1972-197, p 5

³⁴ Arthur Suzman's address to the 24th National Congress, June 1965

³⁵ Suzman, in his speech on 22 February 1970, alluded to the fact that the ANC had adopted a strong anti-Israeli policy and alleged that Jews of SA were in league with the regime.

³⁶ Suzman's address to the 26th National Congress June 1970

denied that Jews were beneficiaries of the system³⁷, especially in the economic sphere, Suzman argued that although Jews, as past victims of racial discrimination, might be expected to react adversely to racial discrimination practised against others,

as part of the dominant white minority, it is difficult and well-nigh impossible to run counter to the way of life of the country in which we live...This compassion, on the one hand, and a desire to preserve our privileged position, underlies a basic dilemma, added to which there is the natural reluctance to run counter to the philosophy of the dominantly political group³⁸.

Suzman's call for "*pragmatic idealism*"³⁹ engendered much debate as to what he actually meant by the term. While there was unanimity among the delegates that there should not be a collective Jewish standpoint on political matters, and that the Jewish community possessed very little political influence⁴⁰, it was acknowledged that it was crucial to present a collective Jewish viewpoint on matters of morality. In the final resort, it was up to the individual concerned to decide whether or not to court martyrdom by opposing the Government. As a group, the Jews bore a responsibility in helping mould and shape public opinion, which, in the long run, determined policy⁴¹.

Suzman differentiated between the neutralists, who contended that the Jews bore neither more nor less responsibility than other groups; the pragmatists, who argued that the Jews should remain inconspicuous and not be in the forefront of unpopular causes; and the idealists, who contended, "with a measure of ethical justification", that Jews, precisely because of their historical experience, should be in the forefront of the battle

³⁷ The Jews, in this respect, were no different to any other white group within the overall white minority. The difference lay in the conclusions derived from this set of circumstances.

³⁸ "*the Dilemma of the Jewish Community in South Africa*", at Vereenging, 22.2.70

³⁹ in his address to 26th Congress in May 1970

⁴⁰ Minutes of the public relations debate, 30.5.70

⁴¹ Arthur Suzman's address to the 26th National Congress, May-June 1970

against all forms of racial discrimination. While agreeing with the neutralists that it was axiomatic that there was no specific Jewish viewpoint on strictly political issues, he pointed out that the difficulty lay in determining exactly where politics end and where morality began⁴². Suzman argued that it was spiritual values, deriving from a 'collective or group conscience' that had sustained the Jewish nation over the centuries. Principle not expediency had guided the Jewish people. The main focus of the Board's activities should, therefore, be directed on arousing in an awareness in the community that race relations were not exclusively a matter of 'politics', but concerned human values⁴³.

Let us foster a greater realisation among our own community at least...a deeper concern for human dignity and human suffering, and that those ringing words in Deuteronomy: "*Justice, justice, shalt thou seek*", means justice for others, no less than justice for ourselves.

Suzman did not advocate a collective Jewish opinion towards racial legislation nor the formulating of a policy explicitly condemning 'separate development'. He, nonetheless, proclaimed that the community had a significant role to play in effecting a peaceful solution to the racial problems of SA, not through political activism, but through 'goodwill' activities. At the same time it must be made clear that no Jewish leader would be tolerated who used his position to commit the whole community to a unified stand on any political issue⁴⁴.

Thus, by the middle of the 1970s it was possible to discern a conceptual change in the stance: 'non-intervention' and 'neutrality' no longer encompassed moral concerns, 'morality' entering the province of the Board and the community. This

⁴² Arthur Suzman, "*South Africa at the Crossroads: Responding to Winds of Change*", the South African Institute of International Affairs, Occasional Paper, Jhb, November 1978.

⁴³ Arthur Suzman's address to the 26th Congress of the Board in 1970

⁴⁴ Address delivered by Dennis Diamond, Secretary of the Board, at the Political Commission of the 6th Plenary Assembly of the World Jewish Congress in Jerusalem - February 1975

could, undoubtedly, be attributed to the easing of the feeling of insecurity which had dogged the community since 1930.

During the 18 years that I have been a member of the Executive Council of the Board, I cannot recall any period more free of incident and tension, as far as the Jewish community in South Africa is concerned, than the past period of some two-and-a-half years, since Congress last met in November 1967⁴⁵.

In summary, the process of moving away from collective non-involvement and 'neutrality' progressed in fits and starts, the leadership conveying a double message: the community as a whole should express itself on the moral issues of Apartheid, and not on the political aspects, while confessing that it was virtually impossible to extricate the moral from the political in the South African context. The Board, in the early 1970s, did not yet give an unreserved, unqualified answer to the community as to how to respond to Apartheid.

14.3 The Debate Over Political Policy

Three options of action faced the Board in confronting the political changes that SA was undergoing in the 1970's⁴⁶. The first two were the 'competing' policies which had confronted the Jewish community since 1948. The first course of action was to accept that Judaism had a specific message and that it was the community's duty to propagate it. If this were to be adopted, the Jewish community's role would be to evaluate events in the light of Jewish tradition and develop a Jewish response to them. However, this policy would have required a major shift in the role of organised Jewry⁴⁷, and was made even more difficult to achieve because Jews were a small community with little direct political influence. Notwithstanding their limited political

⁴⁵ Arthur Suzman's address to the 26th Congress in 1970

⁴⁶ Harry Schwarz, a private and confidential memorandum to the members of the Executive Council of the Jewish Board of Deputies: "*Possible Contribution by S.A. Jewry Towards a Solution of Political, Economic and Social Problems in South Africa*", undated, but probably in the first half of the 1980's.

⁴⁷ "*South Africa in Transition: Implications for Jewry*", Steven Friedman, paper published by the Jewish Board of Deputies, undated but around the time of the Gulf War.

influence, it was argued that Jews would be evading their responsibility if they did not apply Jewish teachings to events around them. The pressure on the community to adopt a high profile stance on the most serious problems, similar to that of certain Christian churches, and to take an active political role, intensified during the 1970's and 1980's. However, as articulated by Harry Schwarz (MP PP):

This option is not advocated. the Board is not the religious leadership of the community...In addition, and perhaps more important, it is not believed that a high profile situation in conflict with the authorities will achieve either the desired result for the Jewish community as a whole. Nor will the community as a whole back such a stance by its leadership⁴⁸.

The reluctance to embrace this option did not signify silence on issues offensive to Jewish moral values nor did it mean non-participation⁴⁹. Rather, it referred to a perspicacious and realistic grasp of the political situation.

The second approach, the one traditionally followed by organised Jewry, was to evaluate events in the light of their effect on Jews as an interest group, and encourage individuals to make their personal contribution. In overall, the question which confronted the Board was how it could, without deviating from its prudent attitude of the past, guide individual Jews in implementing the moral teachings of Judaism⁵⁰.

A third option emerged in the latter half of the 1970's, initially proposed by Harry Schwarz. Schwarz was, in the tradition of Morris and Kentridge, involved in politics, active in the struggle for the rights of the non-white population, and,

⁴⁸ Harry Schwarz, undated memo from the 1980's

⁴⁹ ibid

⁵⁰ Harry Schwarz, referring to the verses in the Bible regarding Justice should be sought, called upon Jews to be seen doing Justice. they should belie anti-Semitic propoganda and demonstrate that Jews were charitable, and promoted freedom and liberty for all. (Harry Schwarz, "South African Jews towards the 1980s", (Jewish Affairs, Vol 35(1) 1980

at the same time, committed to the Jewish community and its concerns. He firmly believed that Jews should oppose all discrimination. If they reacted only to discrimination against themselves, they would be compromising their principles, their beliefs and their history⁵¹. They should seek a constructive role in politics and commit themselves to peaceful change by identifying problems that needed and could be solved. Jews, in his view, could act as catalysts for better social relationships, and in finding enforceable means of protecting minorities⁵². Schwarz also gave some concrete proposals. Jewish businessmen and industrialists could propagate a non-discriminatory social-behaviour code based on Jewish ethics. They could adopt a code for employment practices. They could establish liaison committees with the authorities on a formal basis rather than on an ad hoc basis, which had, hitherto, been the case, and assist in the removal of discriminatory practices⁵³.

Frank Bradlow, Vice President of the Board, too, proposed that Jews could improve their personal relations with black people, to accord them human dignity and to treat them with compassion, make friendships across the colour-line, and afford practical aid, financial and material. By remaining aloof, the Jew was not really being impartial, but, in reality, he was taking sides in favour of the status quo. It was inevitable that this status quo had to go and it was incumbent upon the community to prepare itself to be committed to the new situation⁵⁴. The Blacks wanted immediate change now and not in some distant future and they

⁵¹ South African Jewish Times, 11.4.79

⁵² Harry Schwarz, op. cit. as well as the statement made by Michael Katz, National Chairman of the Board, at the Transvaal Conference of the Board in April 1985. (South African Jewish Times, 5.4.85)

⁵³ South African Jewish Times, 54.4.85, in his address at the launching of the Board of Deputies' Women's 18th United Communal Fund Campaign

⁵⁴ Frank Bradlow, "The Need for Change", Board's Eye's View, August 1977 & Jewish Affairs, October 1977, pp 19-20

were supported by world opinion. At the bottom it was a matter of justice with which all Jews should be concerned. The problem was to make the transition as painless as possible, with compassion to all peoples - above all for the black masses in his sufferings - but also for the Englishmen in his political futility, and the Afrikaner for his agonizing dilemma⁵⁵.

These were very significant statements. This was the first time that Jewish leaders publicly recognized that a new order was imminent and that Jewish policy must take this into account. Schwarz and Bradlow expressed the nearly universal position of the Deputies, both in Johannesburg and Cape Town, that the Board should be more active, but should not be in the forefront of the political opposition. The Board could not ignore the Government's power to repress. Although Blacks were the most frequent victims of repression, Whites who disagreed with the Apartheid policy risked serious repercussions. The effective suppression of anti-Apartheid activity and the curious indolence of the police in the face of right-wing terror could scarcely be ignored⁵⁶. It was felt that in such a situation, although SA's Jews were free to practice their religion, run their organisations, partake in the political life and even be Zionists, they could not, without serious risk, take an active part in the struggle against Apartheid. When they do so, there are frequent reminders that anti-Semitism has a longer tradition than hospitality to Jews in SA, where "tradition is tradition⁵⁷".

⁵⁵ Grosskopf notes that although there is a desire for closer relationship between Jews in Afrikaners it is difficult in the context of the city where there are few opportunities to meet. Furthermore there is a language barrier. In the past many Jews spoke Afrikaans, but today few Jews were bilingual. (Grosskopf, "The Relationship Between Afrikaners and Jews", Jewish Affairs, Vol 26, May 1971.)

⁵⁶ The information Service of South Africa, 29.4.70, defended the country's police procedures and race policy as necessary "to protect this last outpost of Western civilisation".

⁵⁷ American Jewish Committee Report submitted to Gus Saron 11.5.73, 9. The report was paraphrasing Vorster's comment on the Broederbond when he referred to all their clandestine

14.4 Resolutions at National Congresses, 1970 - 1974

Whereas the 26th National Congress in May 1970 resolved not to deviate from its position that individuals, who desired to give vent to their feelings on Apartheid, should do so through alternative organisations "in which they can exercise their individual political rights"⁵⁸, by 1972 there was a move towards advocating that the Board itself should adopt an active stance and take concrete actions.

The resolution of the 27th Biennial Congress of the Board in May 1972, which called for the establishment of peaceful relations between all races, may have appeared innocuous⁵⁹, but the speeches of the leadership had by now become more assertative. The President of the Board, Maurice Porter, spoke of the challenge of building up and maintaining just and peaceful relations between all peoples and races. During the Public Relations session, Suzman, chairman of the committee, while reiterating that the Jewish community was an integral part of the European community, its fate inextricably bound with it⁶⁰, praised the trend in the dominant white community to question long-held beliefs - "and this without any longer incurring the

'idiosyncrasies' as "tradition".

⁵⁸ Ellen Hellman speaking at Congress

⁵⁹ Benjamin Pogrud, formerly Deputy Editor of the Rand Daily Mail, accused the Board of being timid, pallid and nervous. (In the symposium on "*The fate and future of South African Jewry: a Jewish Quarterly symposium*", Jewish Quarterly, Vol 33, No. 4 (124) 1986, 18-27)

⁶⁰ This was very often repeated in explicating the precarious and impotent position of the Jewish community in SA. For example Mann, as president of the Board, in his address to the World Jewish Congress in November 1977: "We have no political power and could not win a single seat on our own strength in Parliament." Gideon Shimoni also made the point that the community "Never wielding more than the most peripheral influence on the determination of South Africa's future, periodically subjected to antipathies and laager pressures from the core of White South African society, the fate of the Jewish community remains heavily dependent on forces outside its control." (quoted by Carel Birkby in his column "Point Insight", 26.9.80)

taint or odium of heresy"⁶¹. The idea of dialogue was gaining support, and greater concern was being shown for the plight of others. He warned that powerful pressures were gaining force and that, if these were not dissipated, they would erupt. "We may be buying time, but even time must be paid for and we cannot continue to mortgage the future indefinitely." There was growing consensus that radical changes could eventually be forced upon SA; whether change would be peaceful or violent was, largely, still in the hands of South Africans. The chairman, D K Mann explained that "...we as Jews are not neutral, still less indifferent to the fundamental questions of justice and human rights" in SA⁶².

Thereafter, the Board began to take an increasingly active pace in ameliorating of the plight of non-Whites in SA. The IPC⁶³, held in June 1973 recommended that all Jewish institutions⁶⁴ ensure that fair and just wages, with no discrimination, were paid to their black employees, and that arrangements were made for medical aid and pensions⁶⁵.

The resolutions of the 28th Congress in May 1974 continued to preserve the distinction between the collective and the

⁶¹ A Suzman's address to the 27th National Congress, May 1972

⁶² Report by Edgar Bernstein in The Jewish News, New Jersey, 7.9.72

⁶³ Inter-Provincial Conference - a conference which encompassed delegates from the Board's branches from all the provinces

⁶⁴ Notice that the appeal was to "Jewish organisations" and not to 'Jewish businessmen'.

⁶⁵ Report to South African Jewry, 1972-1974, 5; In his address to the Inter-Provincial Consultation in June 1973, Suzman pointed out that few people appreciated that there was no simplistic solution to the country's problems; peaceful change had to be a phasing-out process. Furthermore, critics of the Board's policy had failed to realise that the Board was neither a political nor a religious body, and to enter the political arena on every issue which had moral overtones would be self-defeating and counter-productive. It was not a question of sacrificing principle for expedience.

individual⁶⁶, but changes in nuances were evident. Speeches became more critical of Government policy and its repression of Blacks. In his address, Suzman reminded his listeners of the importance of cultivating a relationship with the Black majority. While defending the Board's policy of non-intervention and avoidance of an explicit condemnation of Apartheid, it should, he asserted, remain committed to a dynamic policy of moulding public opinion, and of bringing to the fore the moral aspects of the racial problems as a means of finding just and viable solutions. The Board was not a political body and could not align itself with any existing political Party, but it was not impotent or a silent spectator

...of those aspects it disapproves. The moral arena is not closed and we can canvass man's moral values...The time is long past when our community can concern itself solely with its domestic affairs...⁶⁷

He stressed the importance of the Government initiating change voluntarily. "When the voices of the governed are silenced, or when rulers are deaf, history has shown that eventually bombs will be heard."

⁶⁶ Although ultimately shelved the Public Relations committee drafted a proposed resolution for the 28th Congress at its meeting on 22.4.80, to be discussed at the meeting of May 1st, which read: "*This Congress, mindful of the widening gulf between Black and White in this country, urges the Government to mount a total national strategy towards the removal of discrimination, the abolition of the pass laws and other oppressive legislation...to plan a rightful share for all in government...*"

⁶⁷ Suzman's address to the 28th Congress, May 1974

Chapter 15. THE BOARD COMES OUT OF THE CLOSET: 1976-1978

15.1 Official Jewish Involvement in the Moral

Aspects of Apartheid

The Board reacted to Apartheid in two ways: One was to assist the victims of the system¹, and the other was to endeavour to change the system. From the beginning of the 1970's, it began to draw itself more sharply into the debate by making increasingly stronger statements. It abandoned its non-involvement policy and began to issue statements on matters which had little direct bearing on the Jewish community.

In recent years the Board has come out of its shell and today we speak out on matters where morality and common civilized decency is offended - perhaps not hard enough, perhaps not often enough, but at least and at last a Jewish voice is being heard².

No longer were there only two alternatives facing the community: to take up the prophet's mantle, irrespective of the consequences, or to squelch moral misgivings. In the late 1970s it had become possible to follow the path of pragmatic action and to establish relationships with all segments of the population from the grassroots level up to the leadership. It was increasingly recognized that the pre-eminent status of the Board, as the co-ordinating body for the initiation and orchestration of efforts to meet the challenges of the times, had to be augmented and strengthened³. The openness of the Board to new directions gained momentum with the election of a new leadership who was less apprehensive of anti-Semitism⁴. At the head of the Executive Council stood such eminent leaders as D K

¹ Testimony of Rabbi David Saperstein, Director Religious Action center of Reform Judaism, before the Senate Foreign relations committee, sub-committee on African Affairs, 19.5.88

² Mervyn Smith, Chairman of the Cape Council and National Vice-Chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, in a symposium on "*The fate and future of South African Jewry: a Jewish Quarterly symposium*", Jewish Quarterly, Vol 33, No. 4 (124) 1986, 18-27, p 24

³ Mark Cohen, "*A Look into the New Decade*", Jewish Affairs, January 1980, pp 8-11

⁴ Sunday Tribune, 18.6.78

Mann, who grew up in the Orange Free State and had a greater understanding of Afrikaner mentality, A Suzman, who was pre-eminently a level-headed, objective and outstanding analyst, I Abramovitz and Gerald Leissner, both capable but soft-spoken men, who felt that it was urgent for the community to speak out on the political issues which permeated SA society. The Cape Council, with such outspoken members as F Bradlow, Dr Zabow, Michael Katz, John Simon, and Mervyn Smith, unrelentingly took the lead, urging the Board to make unambiguous statements against racial discrimination and in support of the dismantling of Apartheid. This is not to say that there was consensus regarding this dilemma as there were still voices who insisted that it was not for the Jewish community to lead and to be in the limelight. Despite these differences, the debates between the members of the Executive were never acrimonious or contentious, but were low-key and focused on issues, concern for the welfare of the community uppermost in the mind of the leadership⁵.

Notwithstanding their greater involvement in these issues, SA's Jews remained sensitive to anything that may be misconstrued and reflect badly on their loyalty to the country. This was especially evident in their strong reactions to Britain's Chief Rabbi, Dr Immanuel Jakobovits' assertion, in 1977, that they would flee the country in the face of Black aggression⁶. The President of the Board, Mann, responded by saying that Jews were part of the SA nation and their fate was bound up with that of all South Africans. They had a profound concern for justice and were determined to see the establishment of an equitable

⁵ interview with Bernard Lazarus, December 1995

⁶ Reported in the London Observer the previous week. Rabbi Jakobowitz had said that the Jews had become so closely associated with the white community that they could not expect any special consideration from an incoming black government in the future. The tightening up of repressive measures had made their position unendurable and the tragic answer for their predicament could only be wholesale emigration. (Sunday Times, 19.12.76, RDM, 23.12.76 Eastern Province Herald, 24.12.76)

society⁷. The possibility of mass emigration was also considered unlikely by the chairman of the Cape Council, John Simon, who remarked that from information at his disposal not only were the Jews not getting ready to scuttle the country, but, on the contrary, the vast majority would stay and battle for change⁸. The Chairman of the Board, Rosettenstein, pointed out to Rabbi Jakobowitz that in the current situation there was great sensitivity about the whole question of commitment to solving the country's problems, and his statements, intimating that South African Jews were potential scuttlers⁹, were unjustified. The rabbi replied¹⁰ he held the community in great esteem, and it had been his anxiety to present both sides of the moral dilemma, and to vindicate the attitude of its leadership, which had prompted him to make his statement. He subsequently published an article¹¹ in defence of the community.

It is easy enough to be an armchair critic from a safe distance. The realities in South Africa are too foreboding for Jews, and Whites generally, to justify outbursts or righteous indignation against a remote community trapped in the vice of an insoluble moral dilemma...it would be an act of hypocrisy and inhumanity to belabour the potential victims of inverted racism with moral cowardice because they fail to accept the liquidation of their community with equanimity.

Simon was too optimistic, considering the fact that in 1977 alone more than 10,000 Jews emigrated, compared to 10,000 in the previous 6 years¹².

⁷ Citizen, 20.12.76

⁸ Eastern Province Herald, 24.12.76 and the Cape Times, 24.12.76.

⁹ 10.1.77

¹⁰ 10.2.77

¹¹ "The South African Jewry Dilemma", Jewish Chronicle, London, 4.2.77 and substantially the same arguments in "Survival of South African Jewry", Jewish Affairs, August 1977

¹² Allie Dubb, *The Jewish Population of South Africa: The 1991 Socio-Demographic Survey*, Kaplan Centre, 1994, p 20, Table 2.1. Of the 21,041 Jews who had emigrated during the period 1970-1979, 49.6% emigrated from 1970-1976 and 50.4% emigrated in 1977 alone.

Towards the 1980's the policy of vacillation underwent a drastic shift in focus. The Jewish community gained confidence as it became manifestly clear that it was regarded as an integral part of society and need not fear anti-Semitism, with the leadership commencing to make its voice heard on issues that diverged from the direct Jewish orbit of interest. In particular, it was conceded that the community had a contribution to make in solving one major problem: the protection of the rights of minority groups¹³. Saying that, the Board remained cautious, weighing each word and statement in order to avoid adverse reactions in government quarters, which could retaliate against the community¹⁴.

Jews were concerned about the face of the post-Apartheid regime: whether it would be a free-world type Democracy, in which human rights were respected and minorities protected¹⁵. These concerns caused most Jews to be protagonists of negotiation as opposed to violence, to promote better economic conditions so as to create jobs to deal with massive unemployment and to choose the path of peace as opposed to revolution¹⁶. The survival of the community was dependent on a situation prevailing which would permit it to exist and prosper, and this would be impossible in a

¹³ Harry Schwarz, MP PFP, in an address to the Chairman's Club in Cape Town, SA Jewish Times, 28.5.82

¹⁴ interview with Steven Cohen, Public Relations worker at the Board of Deputies in the first half of the 1980's.

¹⁵ The South African Jewish Times, 22.6.77, wrote that the Jews, **as a community**, had to realise the need to participate in debate surrounding the changing social pattern of South African society. The Jewish voice could not be silent when the nationalist Afrikaners and the various African entities were trying to direct the changing situation

¹⁶ Address by Harry Schwarz, Chairman of the international affairs committee of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies to the Council of Jewish Federations Fifty-Fifth General Assembly, November 14, 1986. Dr Abramovitz, chairman of the Board, speaking at a meeting of the Deputies, exhorted the community not to act as the proverbial ostrich in the face of the ferment taking place in South Africa. (South African Jewish Times, 6.7.77)

deteriorating conflict society¹⁷. At the same time, they were painfully aware that the fate of the community was inextricably aligned with that of the white group with which it was integrated, geographically, socially and politically. "...we must accept that the fate of the small Jewish minority of this country...is largely in the hands of forces it is powerless to control or ...to influence decisively¹⁸."

Statements by the Board were issued by Rosettenstein, the Chairman, on the unrest at the squatter camp at Crossroads¹⁹ and by Mann²⁰, the President, regarding the unrest and the violence in the black townships. Both stressed that these developments had demonstrated that it had become urgent to solve the complex problems that confronted the country. This could only be done through commitment to an equitable and harmonious society, and through positive action to alleviate hardship and to put an end to discrimination²¹. The task of the community was to translate into concrete patterns of living...the great injunction of the Bible: "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue, that thou may live and inherit the land which the Lord Thy God gave thee²²."

The speech by the President of the Board, D K Mann, on 10 May 1976, at a banquet in honour of the then Prime Minister, B J Vorster, on his successful visit to Israel, finally marked the demise of the policy of neutrality. Mann declared that there was

¹⁷ Harry Schwarz, a private and confidential memorandum to the members of the Executive Council of the Jewish Board of Deputies: "*Possible Contribution by S.A. Jewry Towards a Solution of Political, economic and Social Problems in South Africa*", undated

¹⁸ D K Mann, Chairman of the Board "A New Chapter Opens", Jewish Affairs, March 1973, 34-36, p 35

¹⁹ Jewish Affairs, April 1976

²⁰ on June 27 in the English press

²¹ Jewish Affairs, July 1976

²² Report to South African Jewry, 1974-1976 and Jewish Affairs, May 1976, p 12

now a new urgency in SA, and a realisation that the country had to move away, as quickly as possible, from discrimination, and accord to every man respect, human dignity and the opportunity to develop to his fullest potential. He went on to urge all Jewish institutions to implement a policy of equalisation of wage and job opportunities, and to improve working conditions for black employees. The Board and the community, he said, must continue to translate their concern over racial discrimination into action. No longer would the Board remain aloof from pressing controversial issues of the country, but would adopt a stance consonant with Jewish religious values and principles.

The speech did not catapult the community into the centre of political controversy because Mann's statements were, as could be foreseen, completely consistent with policies that the Government itself had already begun initiating before the Soweto uprising²³. His speech was followed by a resolution at the 29th Biennial Congress in May 1976²⁴ which explicitly referred to the necessity of initiating changes in the "*existing political, social and economic conditions*" in order to achieve an '*equitable society*'. Moreover, Congress urged individual members of the community to strive for '*peaceful change - in particular for the elimination of unjust discriminations*'. Although still equivocating and speaking in euphemisms, the Board's official stance had undergone a major change, taking a giant leap forward with its call for change. Suzman, in his address to Congress, expressed optimism as the authorities had finally begun realising the urgency of the problem. Although the dismantling of the legislative structure underlying racial discrimination²⁵ could not be achieved overnight, there was hope that a meaningful start had been made. He re-affirmed that, although the influence of the community on policy-making was minimal, and

²³ Martyn Adelberg, "The Future of the Jewish Community in South Africa" South African International, 31.1.82, pp 445-456, p 454

²⁴ which also focused on the theme of "*Winds of Change*"

²⁵ Rather than calling it by name, Apartheid, Suzman talked in euphemisms.

it was not the function of the Board to seek to directly influence State policy, the community had a duty to pursue, by all legitimate means, ways to influence public opinion.

In a press release in June 1976 Mann expressed his distress at the violence that had occurred throughout the country. It was not a time for prevarication, he said, but for deep commitment to the establishment of an equitable and harmonious society. Jews should break out of the confines of the community, and, actuated by Judaism's ethical imperatives of justice and truth, become involved.

It is no longer our right to be concerned with ourselves alone, but it has become our duty to express in a concrete way our concern with the people with whom we share our lives...We can no longer exist as an entity within an hermetically sealed compartment. Today more than ever, life is with the other and to live with him peaceably, he must know us and we must know him²⁶.

In calling on the Board to re-issue an appeal to Jewish businesses, and indeed to all employers, to equalise salaries for equal work and to introduce medical aid and pension schemes for black employees, Ellen Hellman stressed that, while she would not be party to the call of 'one man one vote', there were many young Jews who would be satisfied with nothing less²⁷. Indeed, on 11 November 1976 the IPC²⁸ called upon Jewish managers to go beyond expressing public charitable generosity, especially in view of the reality where many Blacks were employed in secondary industry under Jewish management which could give rise to black hostility directed towards Jews. There were certain legitimate areas where they could legally aid black aspirations and try to foster some degree of better understanding between Blacks and Whites²⁹.

²⁶ 28.6.76

²⁷ Zionist Record, 10.9.76

²⁸ The Inter-Provincial Conference

²⁹ Minutes of the Consultation, archives of the Jewish Board of Deputies

In his address to the Jubilee Biennial Congress in May 1978, the President of the Board, I Abramovitz, alluded to the growing body of opinion which maintained that the Board was not merely a 'representative', but had a bounden duty to mould Jewish opinion, to offer guidance and to speak out loudly and clearly when the need arose.

I would like to make a plea for patience and care. We need not necessarily be bound entirely by our traditional responses, but at the same time, we dare not become feathers in the wind of change to take off in the direction of the slightest gust. In a situation which had undergone tremendous upheaval almost overnight, the Jewish community of South Africa finds itself walking the tightrope at a time of great challenge for the white community as a whole.³⁰

A resolution was then passed urging all Jewish organisations, as well as individuals, to actively support, by peaceful and legitimate means, "*the elimination of unjust discrimination based on race, creed or colour*". Although not spelling it out explicitly, the Board was exhorting its members to associate themselves with the efforts that were being made to dismantle Apartheid³¹. Following the Congress, the Sunday Tribune interviewed a number of the leaders of the community who made it clear that the community was "*getting ready to fight racial discrimination*". Whereas in the past the Board had maintained a position of strict political neutrality, the new generation of

³⁰ "*Measure Against the Yardstick*", report delivered by Dr I Abramovitz to the 30th Biennial Congress, 1978, 61-68, 63

³¹ At the Congress, Chief Minister Buthelezi said, inter alia, in his address: "I have been encouraged to come and skate on thin ice because the Jewish people, more than any other people, know what it is to be cold-shouldered because you are different...The Jewish people have learnt the hard way what racial discrimination meant. There are very few whites who know and understand what is going on in the black community and they do not understand the black struggle for human rights. Most of the whites do not want to be accused of disloyalty and lacking patriotism. The manipulation of the media by apartheid creates an image that rejecting apartheid means alignment with alien forces that want not only to destroy apartheid but also South Africa. Real change amongst whites has to take place in the National Party."

leaders considered it urgent that the community spoke out³². Moreover, people were more outspoken in urging the Board to widen the scope of its activities to encompass concerns for other populations. The question was asked³³:

Are we to limit ourselves to being a spokesman of the Jewish community on matters Jewish, or are we to adopt a more activist and wider approach and say that we are the conscience of the Jewish community on moral issues, whether they directly affect the...community or not?

In appraising the situation in January 1978 Bradlow, vice-president of the Board, wrote that the Jews had to be flexible and pragmatic and must be prepared to make enormous changes in their attitudes. They had an important part to play in the struggle that was taking place, and if they failed to do so, they would have failed to fulfil their historical destiny. They should engage not only in open protest, but should be involved in education and should bring pressure to bear on the authorities to provide more amenities for non-Whites³⁴. Franz Auerbach, a deputy of the Board who had argued for years for the Board to take a more anti-Apartheid stance, commended him on his speech³⁵. For years, he said, he had felt that there should have been a Jewish response to 'the agony of SA'. Jews had been frustrated by their predicament as it had prevented them from regarding their Jewishness as relevant to their involvement in the country's affairs.

The altered political circumstances of the period, therefore, led not only to the greater involvement of those elements in the community which had been in the forefront of open anti-Apartheid activity, but it also meant that a broad cross-section of the community became involved in the struggle against Apartheid as well as in a wide variety of social services to the oppressed

³² 18.6.78

³³ Michael Katz, addressing the Deputies as the chairman of the PR Committee, Minutes of meeting of Deputies, 2.7.78

³⁴ Frank Bradlow's, "A Need for Optimism", Jewish Affairs, January, 1978

³⁵ Jewish Affairs, March 1978

communities, ranging from providing child care, feeding the hungry and supplying medical care to youth education and community dialogue. For decades the Union of Jewish Women had been a leader in social action projects, and their activities were supplemented by a wide array of educational programmes and aid to the Black and Coloured populations initiated by the Synagogues and the Temples³⁶.

15.2 Dissension Between the Executive Council and the Cape Council, 1977-1978

The urgency of a more pro-active approach was the subject of debate at many of the conferences of the Cape Council and at Council meetings. At the Western Province Conference of the Cape Board, the chairman, Dr Aubrey Zabow, declared that the time had come for the voice of the Jewish community to be heard on "*significant moral issues*". In calling for closer inter-group relations with Black communities, he alluded to the importance of accommodating the legitimate aspirations of other communities by means of a new constitution. At the Cape Conference in July 1977, the outgoing Chairman John Simon declared that the community should be present in the vanguard of political change³⁷.

At a Cape Council meeting towards the end of 1977³⁸, in which members of the Executive Council participated, the Board's political role, as articulated by the Johannesburg Council, was challenged. Archie Shandling made the point that it was a dereliction of responsibility to draw a distinction between moral and political issues. The Board, in view of the Jewish people's long experience of religious and racial discrimination,

³⁶ For example the Board invited non-white leaders to address Club 44: Sam Motsuenyane, a prominent Africa businessman; Dr Ntatho Motlana, Chairman of the Soweto "Council of 10"; the Reverend Allan Hendrickse, leader of the labour Party; J N Reddy, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the SA Indian Council. (Report to South African Jewry, 1978-1980, 12)

³⁷ "South African Jewry Should Spearhead Change", Cape Conference, 11.6.77

³⁸ Report to deputies, 1/78

should oppose all discriminatory practices, as well as all inroads into individual freedom.

The Cape Council contended that it could no longer evade the issue, and it was now necessary to comment on crucial issues in the light of Jewish ethics. Jack Aaron, a member of the Cape Council, urged the Board to "*stand up and be counted*". It was contrary to Jewish ethics to allow discriminatory legislation to exist without voicing condemnation. "*We must act with conscience, not for the sake of expediency*". The preservation of Jewish identity, he argued, was contingent upon displaying such ethical courage. He went so far as to propose that a clause be introduced to include a political function to deal with matters not affecting the Jewish community directly³⁹. The chairman of the Cape Council, Dr A Zabow, rejected the proposal on the grounds that this would be tantamount to a major policy shift and was in conflict with the decisions of the IPC. John Simon disagreed, urging that the Board move beyond the original idea of defending Jewish rights and engage in speaking up on any issue connected to individual freedom which could ultimately affect the community. Zabow, supported by Meyerowitz, called for caution. Jews, they emphasised, were a minority, and, as they belonged to all political parties, the Board should refrain from making political statements unless this was on a Jewish aspect.

D K Mann, President of the Board, who was present at these deliberations of the Cape Board, spelled out what he believed should be the formula which would guide the Board: in matters of general principle affecting all citizens, it was not obliged to comment if the matter had no Jewish content, but it had a duty to speak out on moral matters. In Jewish matters, especially in regard to Jewish rights, the Board was obligated to react. In response to these exhortations, Michael Katz, the vice-chairman, proposed that the Board should adopt a broad definition as to what constituted a Jewish matter.

³⁹ minutes of the Cape Council Committee meeting, 21.10.77

At the Cape Council meeting of May 1978⁴⁰, the pressure to accelerate the pace of involvement in the political arena exacerbated the conflict between the Cape and the Executive in Johannesburg. Dr Zabow explained that the fundamental question was how to separate the moral from the political issues. South African leaders of all sections, including cabinet ministers, had realised that the old system with its unjust discriminatory practices could no longer persist. Everywhere the effort was being made to bring these practices to an end. Within the community itself, it had become increasingly clear that it was necessary to relate to the non-white sections as fellow citizens with their own human aspirations. "It is not only a matter of morality, but of recognising the changing situation in South Africa that the Jewish community should be publicly seen to stand by its principles⁴¹." Consonant with these views, the Cape Committee proposed to establish contact with Black leadership and to educate the community regarding the aspirations of other groups⁴².

Realising that these decisions would be perceived by Johannesburg as being contentious, Bradlow, the representative of the Cape Council on the Executive Council, expressed regret at the divergence of opinion with Johannesburg, but nevertheless proposed that the Board convey its commitment for full participation by all persons resident in the country in every aspect of life. Simon and Kessler commented on the unlikelihood that any effective, far-reaching statement would be endorsed by the National Congress. Shandling went so far as to propose a Cape minority statement rather than an unsatisfactory compromise resolution, even if it meant taking an unpopular stand that would risk estranging a section of opinion⁴³. "The Board must have the courage to take the correct decision and back it up." Such a moral stand would have the support of Jewish communities

⁴⁰ Minutes of the meeting on 12.5.78

⁴¹ ibid

⁴² ibid

⁴³ Blumberg's observation

abroad⁴⁴. It was finally agreed to record the view that the Board should incorporate in its policy a positive statement or resolution favouring full participation by all persons 'in all aspects of society'. The Board's status would assure that the community took heed of these views⁴⁵. In response, Mann asserted that the Board too had urged the community to move away from discrimination, had appealed to it to narrow the wage gap, and was endeavouring to build bridges with other population groups by means of making contact with people like Chief Buthelezi and Chief Phataudi of Lebowa⁴⁶. Subsequently, the Board committed itself to take a stand on public matters when they were contrary to moral ethics and to speak out against racial discrimination⁴⁷. The IPC in November 1981 called on the Board to make regular statements on behalf of the community on the moral and ethical aspects in cases of public importance, such as squatters, trade unions etc notwithstanding the fact that the Jewish community was not strictly involved⁴⁸.

In contrast to the activism of the Cape Council, the Council of Natal Jewry tended to be more cautious. The 1971 the Public Relations committee decided, after prolonged debate, to abandon positive public relations work among non-whites⁴⁹. Only in 1977 was this decision reversed⁵⁰. In regard to the issue of detention without trial, the CNJ⁵¹ recommended to the Board that rather than issue a statement it should seek an interview with

⁴⁴ Kessler

⁴⁵ Dr Frank Bradlow

⁴⁶ Cape Council meeting, May 1978

⁴⁷ Solly Kessler reporting to the Cape Council remarks made to him by Dennis Diamond, Secretary General of the Board, in reference to the Board's change of policy. (Minutes of Cape Council meeting, 3.8.79)

⁴⁸ Agenda of the IPC, 14-15 November, 1981

⁴⁹ Minutes PR committee, 3.6.71 and IPC, June 1971

⁵⁰ Minutes PR committee, 6.11.77

⁵¹ Council of Natal Jewry

the Minister of Justice⁵². With time the CNJ became involved in educational activities for non-whites, forming in 1986 a committee to investigate providing practical assistance to the black community, especially educational assistance such as English lessons⁵³.

As can be perceived, in the latter half of the 1970s, the Cape Council took the lead in totally abandoning the Board's conservative policy towards the political arena. The Board and Congress were slower in undergoing the transition to active involvement in SA's political problems.

⁵² Minutes of CNJ meeting, 19.11.81. The CNJ joined the other provinces in condemning detention without trial (Minutes Public Relations committee, CNJ, 12.5.82).

⁵³ Minutes PR committee, 17.3.86. The CNJ is still involved in giving English and Matric lessons to Black students at the Durban Jewish Club.

Chapter 16. EPILOGUE: THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES ENTERS THE
POLITICAL ARENA, 1978-1985

From 1978 the South African Government began to steer towards reform. This could be seen in a series of groundbreaking steps such as the decision not to demolish Crossroads; the 99 year leasehold scheme for black townships¹; promises to commit substantial resources to the improvement of amenities in Black townships and towards education; permission for wives and children to settle in urban areas with those had legal rights to live there; lifting of some of the restrictions on Black entrepreneurs; and P W Botha's visit to Soweto². In the wake of these reforms, the Board also increasingly made its voice heard on political issues. At the same time the Board began to send out feelers to leaders in the Black community. A forcefully worded resolution, adopted at the 31st National Congress in May 1980³ called upon all South Africans, particularly all members of the Jewish community, to cooperate in securing the immediate improvement and *ultimate removal* of all unjust discriminatory laws and practices based on race, creed or colour. The resolution warned that

While welcoming the recent reforms, and there have been reforms, congress believes that unless more meaningful and more significant changes in our social, economic and political structure are initiated, the ever-mounting external and internal pressures may well erupt into violence and bloodshed.

¹ Previously home occupancy for Blacks could only be obtained in the homelands.

² The first South African head of government to officially set foot in a Black township. (Robert Price, "Apartheid and White Supremacy: the Meaning of Reform", in *The Apartheid Regime*, edited by Robert Price and Carl Rosberg, Institute of International Affairs, California, Berkeley, 1980, pp 297-331

³ Although ultimately shelved, the Public Relations committee drafted a proposed resolution for the 28th Congress at its meeting on 22.4.80 to be discussed at the May 1st meeting, which read: "This Congress, mindful of the widening gulf between Black and White in this country, urges the Government to mount a total national strategy towards the removal of discrimination, the abolition of the pass laws and other oppressive legislation...to plan a rightful share for all in Government..." (archives of the Board of Deputies)

At Congress, the chairman, Michael Katz affirmed that the Board would be guided primarily by moral principles. In his first address to the Deputies in June, the newly-elected president, Suzman, repeated his warning that "when the voice of legitimate protest goes unheeded, bombs would be heard"⁴. The future of the Jewish community ultimately depended on the maintenance of harmonious race relations.

To confine our attention exclusively to specific Jewish problems is to lose sight of the far wider issues in which, whether we like it or not, we are immediately and intimately involved...⁵.

At the 1981 Cape Conference, the outgoing chairman, Archie Shandling, called on the community to make its voice heard.

"Must the Board make statement only on matters Jewish?"

Thereafter, the 1981 IPC⁶ resolved that it was incumbent upon the Board to make regular statements on behalf of the community on moral or ethical issues of public importance, such as squatters, the trade unions etc. Despite the dangers, it was incumbent upon the Board to becoming actively involved in the wider community and to speak out against Apartheid.

On 25 July 1981, the Cape Council joined the Western Province council of Churches in condemning the evictions which had taken place in Langa, near Cape Town⁷, as well as the constant arrests which were being made on pass law offenses. On 9 February 1982 the Board issued a statement condemning detention without trial⁸. While recognising that in appropriate circumstances,

⁴ South African Jewish Times, 9.7.80

⁵ Rand Daily Mail, 8.7.80. Nathan Berger, *Chapters from South African History, Jewish and General*, Johannesburg, 1986, p 39 and South African Jewish Times, 9.7.80

⁶ The Inter-Provincial Council, November 14-15, 1981

⁷ Cape Times, 25.7.81

⁸ Citizen, 10.2.82, Rand Daily Mail and the Star, 11.2.82 as well as Die Transvaler, 10.2.82. On 12.5.82 the Council of Natal Jewry also issued a statement regarding detention without trial. Simon Jocum, of the Cape Council, wrote a letter to Aleck Goldberg, Secretary of the Board, 10.3.82, which while congratulating the Board for finally 'making the plunge' qualified his enthusiasm by complaining about its tardiness and that it was a "somewhat watered down statement rather late."

strict measures might be necessary in the interests of State security, however "...the wider the discretionary powers vested in the authorities, the greater the necessity for adequate safeguards to prevent abuse..⁹.

When, in 1983, the Government proposed to empower the Minister of National Education to limit the admission of Blacks to white universities by means of a quota, the Board joined other groups in demanding that this legislation be withdrawn. At the 32nd Congress in May 1983, Suzman, as President of the Board, stated categorically that the community must involve itself in moral issues. It was possible, he argued, to criticise the evils of racial discrimination, as reflected in the policy of Apartheid without entering into party political debate¹⁰." Congress then adopted a resolution which welcomed "all policy changes designed to ameliorate the widespread hardships resulting from racial discrimination", and stated that "unless these changes were hastened and intensified, the bitterness and frustration will inevitably escalate and result in ever-increasing and more widespread violence".

The Board's lead was followed by the Transvaal Council which issued two leaflets in 1983. The first, entitled "*You and Your Fellow South African*¹¹", stressed appropriate Jewish attitudes towards other racial groups, while the other focused largely on suitable conditions of employment and wages with particular reference to domestic workers¹².

⁹ Report to Congress, 1983-1985

¹⁰ Arthur Suzman's address to the 32nd National Congress, May 28th to May 31, 1983

¹¹ Report on Activities of Transvaal Council, 6.9.84. Reprinted in the October 1984 edition of "Hashalom", the local Jewish newspaper of the Durban Jewish community

¹² "*Domestic Workers and their Jewish employers*", re-issued on 22.4.85. The Eastern Province Committee of the Board espoused their cause in December declaring that it would endeavour to improve race relations and working conditions of the domestic workers (Eastern Province Herald, 9.12.85) The PR committee of the Council of Natal Jewry also passed a resolution in this regard on 28.8.73. The PR committee discussed the

In its resolution dealing with the squatters in the Cape, the Board not only expressed its profound concern and distress at their suffering, but there was implicit criticism of the implementation of Apartheid laws. The Board subsequently issued a statement in September 1983 which noted with dismay that despite its previous protests the destruction of shelters at Crossroad had continued. It urged authorities to halt this inhuman practice¹³. A resolution to this effect was submitted to the 32nd Congress, which recorded that the Board

...viewed with concern the profound and ongoing suffering of those who...were removed from place to place...such actions by the authorities, if indeed they were essential, should be pursued with compassion and consideration for the feelings, dignity and basic human rights of those who...found themselves ...lacking effective means of rectifying their situation¹⁴.

In March 1984 the Board made a submission to the Select Committee which had been appointed to examine the prohibition on mixed marriages in which it pointed out that it had consistently pleaded "for the amelioration and ultimate removal of all unjust and discriminatory laws based on race, creed or colour", urging that "the racially discriminating provisions in the legislation be repealed¹⁵." In March 1985 there were demonstrations in the black townships of Uitenhage. According to the statement of the Minister of Law and Order, the crowd had started hurling stones and petrol bombs at the police who opened fire. 19 people were killed and 36 injured. The Cape Council issued a statement which

subject as a matter arising from the Inter-Provincial consultation (4.10.73)

¹³ Leaflet issued by Board in January 1986

¹⁴ In April 1984 the Transvaal Council appealed to the authorities to halt the forced removals (sent by Dr H A Fabian to Aleck Goldberg, 17.4.84). As the demolition of these shelters persisted, a memorandum was submitted to Dr Piet Koornhof, the Minister of Cooperation and Development on 11 July 1984, that stated that the Jewish community, on humanitarian grounds and on the grounds of its own history of suffering, urged him to put an end to the practice.

¹⁵ Report to South African Jewry, 1983-1985 and leaflet issued by the Board "*The Board and Racial Discrimination*" in January 1986

expressed its deep concern at these events. It called upon all concerned to exercise restraint and tolerance, and to use their utmost endeavours to find a solution for the problems which had lead to the tragic events¹⁶.

16.1 Condemning Apartheid, June 1985

The turning point for the Board was its 33rd National Congress in June 1985. Aside from expressing appreciation for "*steps already taken in the process of peaceful reform*", Congress recorded "its support and commitment to justice, equal opportunity and the removal of all provisions in the laws of South Africa which discriminate on grounds of colour and race." The resolution then explicitly stated that the Board rejected Apartheid - the first time the term had been used in any of its resolutions¹⁷. The profound change which had taken place in the Board's stance was further evident in the circular it published entitled "*The Board of Deputies: Its Purpose and Functions*". Whereas in the past, the Board had taken pains to delimit the boundaries of its responsibilities to Jewish matters, this document explicitly spelled out the its obligation to address the issue of racial discrimination.

The Board seeks to promote harmonious relations with the different sections of the South African population for the purpose of creating better mutual understanding. It also addresses itself to the hurtful issue of racial discrimination in South Africa"

¹⁶ Report to South African Jewry, 1983-1985, p 12. Also Eastern Province Herald, 23.3.85

¹⁷ Saperstein, 3 and Board's leaflet on "*The Board and Racial Discrimination*", January 1986. The Board reaffirmed this stance in a statement in 1986 (Cape Times, 21.8.86 and Star, 25.8.86) at its quarterly meeting in response to "certain misleading reports which recently appeared in the press". The impetus was a controversy in the Johannesburg press in which Rabbi Isaacson said that most Jews in SA condoned the evils of apartheid by their silence. The statement itself read "The Board's rejection of a apartheid was clearly and unequivocally expressed in the unanimous resolution which was passed at the last national congress of the Board." The executive appealed to Jews not only to take part actively in improving race relations and the lot of underprivileged people but urged that immediate steps be taken to dismantle unjust and oppressive laws based on racial discrimination. (Daily News, 20.8.86)

In the spirit of the resolution adopted at the 33rd Congress, the circular confirmed the opinion of the Board, that Apartheid was indeed a moral issue. Escalating violence and civil unrest in the country then prompted a further resolution which recorded dismay at these developments, and called on all concerned to do everything possible to ensure the establishment of a climate of peace and calm so that dialogue, negotiation and the processes of reform could be continued.

The resolutions of the 33rd Congress did not connote a major shift in the perception organised Jewry had of its role, which was to evaluate events in light of their effect on Jewish rights¹⁸. The task of the Board of Deputies was promoting and protect the interests of the local Jewish community. It certainly did not have the clout that the Jews of the United States had¹⁹. The community was desperate for reform to proceed²⁰, but its only persuasive power on unjust policies was anchored in Jewish ethics and morality, not on political power. It could only issue statements and wield personal intervention with the authorities as measures in a concerted effort to convey their position to them. In the judgment of Mervyn Smith, Chairman of the Cape Council, the Board did not have a mandate for anything more intrusive.

...the Board's record for the first 30 years or so of Nationalist rule was self-centered and self-protective ... However, the Board has become aware that the government does regard what the Board has to say and the Board is less fearful and does express its opinion and speaks out on matters it considers morally worthy. The Board has

¹⁸ "South Africa in Transition: Implications for Jewry", Steven Friedman, paper published by the Jewish Board of Deputies, undated but around the time of the Gulf War.

¹⁹ "In Perspective", Marcus Arkin's column in the South African Jewish Times, 15.7.85

²⁰ This is reflected in the constant conscience-wrestling which characterised the debates on racial issues at Congresses and Conferences for the past 15 years. Furthermore, as was underscored by Suzman in most of his addressees to Congress - if reform did not proceed, bloodshed and violence would bring calamity to South Africa, and the Jewish community would inevitably be one of the victims.

abandoned its stance of non-interference²¹. The resolutions were the culmination of years of agonizing debate. They were also the harmonisation of conscience and Jewish teachings and history, with reality. Nevertheless, Marcus Arkin²² was not particularly impressed by the acclaim the resolution had been received in the wider community. In his estimate, the resolution was an "exercise in innocuous rhetoric" because the Board had simply been following the Government's lead, as Apartheid was already "well beyond the pale in terms of current official policy"²³.

In conclusion, it is appropriate to mention the comment of the Executive Director of the Board, Aleck Goldberg, in referring to the inclusion of the term Apartheid in the resolution at the 33rd Congress in 1985²⁴:

Some may well argue that in using this word, the Board abandoned an old established policy of not entering the political arena, which is the prerogative of individual Jewish citizens. Although the criticism would have been perfectly valid several years ago, 'Apartheid' no longer has the same political connotations. Although by including it in its resolution the Board came closer to the fine dividing line between politics and morality, it is very doubtful it was crossed.

²¹ Mervyn Smith, chairman of the Cape Council, in an interview with the South African Jewish Times, 14.6.85

²² former Director of the South African Zionist Federation

²³ "In Perspective", Marcus Arkin's column in the South African Jewish Times, 15.7.85

²⁴ in his column "*Issues and Angles*", Jewish Affairs, June 1985

Chapter 17. CONCLUSIONS

By 1985, the community had travelled a long way since January 1930 when the Quota Act was introduced in Parliament by Malan. The process of change was characterised by the Board of Deputies' overriding concern for the protection and survival of the Jewish community in SA. The anti-Semitic agitation of the 1930's and 1940's, when the "Jewish Question" occupied centre stage in the political arena, had traumatised and sensitised the leadership, who had personally experienced the fears of the repercussions of a nationalist victory in 1948. For decades the process of framing policy and decisions making had been dictated by the fear of reprisals against the community. Jewish historical experience was often evoked as a prime motivation for Jews to oppose the Government and to support the anti-Apartheid movements. However, it was this same 'historical experience' which had a decisive effect on shaping the Board's policy in the opposite direction, towards neutrality in order to pre-empt official anti-Semitism.

The mandate given to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies was to protect Jewish rights. Thus, by definition, the Board was an inherently *defensive* body, not an active one. The Public Relations committee differentiated between defensive activities and positive public relations. The former concentrated on countering anti-Semitic propaganda and in obtaining legislation prohibiting its distribution, while the purpose of the latter was to cultivate goodwill. In sum, the Board was never intended to be the vanguard of social change, but rather had much more narrow, limited goals.

There can be no doubt that anti-Semitism was a real force in the NP in the 1930's. Apparently these prejudices were less ingrained in Malan, and, therefore, he succeeded in jettisoning them and setting down a rigid policy against anti-Semitism in the NP. As a consequence, the entire Party, even the most dyed-in-the-wool anti-Semites, such as Louw and Verwoerd, were forced to toe the line. It was the 'luck of the draw' for the Jewish community that Malan, and not Louw, was the leader of the Party.

In the ensuing years, Malan moved even closer to the Jewish community and philo-Semitism in his outlook, with the Jews' 'non-assimilability' transformed from a defect into a virtue. In essence, it was the political forces in the NP, and in the political arena, which moderated anti-Semitism in the Party, and not the efforts of the Board.

Throughout the period covered by this study the Board's political policy underwent a gradual evolution. From 1930 to 1948 the Board supported "democratic forces" which were allied to it in their opposition to anti-Semitism. After the Nationalist victory in 1948, and until 1968, the Board perceptibly withdrew from all political confrontations, rigidly adhering to an increasingly 'neutral' policy. After 1968, the Board became more open and from 1973 increasingly flexible and more outspoken. The key difference between the policy adopted in 1948 and the one articulated in the resolution in 1985 was the question of individual versus collective opposition to Government discriminatory policies. Whereas in the past the Board had unwaveringly insisted that the attitude towards racial discrimination was the province of the individual, the 33rd Congress, expressed collective opposition to Apartheid, and so rendered it a concern for the entire Jewish community.

The Board's reticence on this issue was deeply rooted in its fear of a resurgence of anti-Semitism and reprisals against the community should they oppose the NP. Past experience in SA, and Jewish historical experience, had 'programmed' Jewish leadership to take a conciliatory stance towards the ruling powers. This was the existential tension of living in the Diaspora. The Board may have protested Julius Lewin's pronouncement, in 1964, that they had adopted a policy of appeasement towards the Nationalist Government, but this did not detract from its validity. The implication that this approach should be supplanted with an oppositionary stance is moot. From the Board's perspective, and in the context of Israel's support of sanctions against SA and the preponderance of Jews among anti-Apartheid activists and subversives, accommodation was the more prudent strategy.

This policy was intrinsically consistent with the practical results of the Board's Public Relations efforts. In 1930 all the Members of Parliament had acknowledged the great contribution Jews had made to the development of SA. This was true also of all the newspapers who supported the Bill. Nonetheless, despite the accolades heaped on the Jews by the MPs, they all enthusiastically voted for a Bill which would limit the further entry of Jews. The qualities of diligence, success and achievements, which were whole-heartedly lauded during the debate in 1930, were eventually turned against the Jews in the debate on Jewish immigration in 1937. They were then accused of blocking the progress of the Afrikaners in the economic sphere by their wide-ranging activities, and that their very presence created the 'poor White' problem.

From the aforementioned it can be concluded that the Public Relations efforts of the Board of Deputies that focused on the Jewish contribution to SA did not have the desired effect in mitigating anti-Semitism and of forestalling anti-Jewish legislation. At best it was irrelevant, and at worst it aggravated the precariousness of the situation. The disappearance of anti-Semitism from the political arena was in no way due to the Board's efforts. The NP, for political reasons, abandoned its use as a political weapon. The Board was very well aware, and often reminded, that the NP could, if it deemed it expedient, reinstate anti-Semitism, and, formulated its policies accordingly.

Thus, one conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the Board perceived the precariousness of the Jewish community in SA as analogous to the status of other Jewish minorities in the Diaspora. The Jews of SA were never accepted as equals. They were invariably judged, scrutinized and unremittingly under pressure to prove their credibility and loyalty. Under these circumstances, the paramount consideration which guided the Board was sustaining the local Jewish community and preserving its civil rights.

The major issues which preoccupied the community in the 1960s

intensified the Board of Deputies' apprehension: Israel's hostility and anti-South African stance at the UN, and the prominence of Jews in the anti-Apartheid and 'terrorist' movements. The Board was called upon to disassociate itself both from Israel and from Jewish radicals. Capitulation would have been tantamount to abdication of Judaism because Israel was the Jews' spiritual homeland, and the Jewish radicals were Jews. Moreover, even those Jews who were not involved in the Jewish community had been actuated by Jewish ethics, morality and the Jewish experience of oppression and suffering. The solution evolved by the Board was to divorce itself from responsibility for actions but not to disassociate itself from the 'actors'. The Board steadfastly insisted that the community held no responsibility for the actions of individual members who had broken the law nor for Israel's foreign policy. Eventually, all the community's detractors, including the NP and the Nationalist press, accepted this rationale.

By the 1970's Jews composed just 2.5% of the total white population¹. By then, although still a small minority, their self-assurance had grown. The "Jewish Question" had totally disappeared from the political arena, the Government having made it abundantly clear that anti-Semitism was intolerable and that all anti-Semitic manifestations would be eradicated. Jews now regarded themselves as well integrated into South African society. From the economic perspective, there was a preponderance of Jews in business, in professional, scientific and technical fields, who had made, and were making, substantial contributions in their fields of endeavour.

Nevertheless, in many respects, the Jewish community still felt threatened by both the Left and the Right and by Whites and

¹ Testimony of Rabbi David Saperstein, Director Religious Action centre of Reform Judaism, before the Senate Foreign relations committee, sub-committee on African Affairs, 19.5.88, p 2. At the meeting of the Board of Deputies 30.1.72 it was reported that the latest census had show that there were 117,990 Jews in SA

Blacks². On the Right, there was an active neo-Nazi movement in the Afrikaner community which was as ardent in its anti-Semitism as it was in its determination to preserve the racist character of Afrikaner rule. On the Left, there was an amorphous anti-Israel feeling, including segments of the anti-Apartheid movements, as well as animosity on the part of many Blacks and Indians. Jews constituted a mere 3% of the white electorate and exerted almost no influence in national affairs³. "One result of these forces", a Jewish leader from the USA remarked, "is to make the Jewish community boxed in and created pressure to refrain from taking any action which could be construed as supporting either side⁴."

The convergence of several factors in the latter half in the 1970's created an environment in which the Jewish Board of Deputies could begin to take its first hesitant steps into the political arena, a process which culminated in the overt condemnation of Apartheid. These were: the strides the South African Government itself was making towards easing Apartheid laws; growing discontent towards Apartheid in the White non-Jewish community; an atmosphere which was more conducive to dissent; the disappearance of anti-Semitism as a factor in the political arena; and an Executive at the helm of the Board which was less restrained by the fear of a backlash of anti-Semitism, and therefore felt more confident and free to enter the political arena and oppose Apartheid. Already in 1977 Frank

² See remarks made by Prof Shlomo Avineri, Herbert Samuel Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in a panel discussion on the Jews of South Africa held under the auspices of the Harry S Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace. Jewish Times, 20.6.86.

³ Although Harry Schwarz and Helen Suzman were very active in politics, they were there as representatives of their parties, not of the Jewish community, and expressed the views of their parties, not of the community. Marcus Arkin, Professor of Economic History at UDW, in an interview to the Pretoria News, 26.6.85 in reply to a question how could a people who suffered centuries from discrimination, adapt to an apartheid society. The reply he gave was "*They tread lightly...on a very narrow tightrope...*".

⁴ Saperstein, p 2

Bradlow⁵, Vice President of the Board, referred to the inevitability of change and argued that it was vital to prepare the community for the new situation through greater involvement in the transition by assisting Black communities. These efforts were redoubled in the course of the 1980s and began to bear fruit in the 1990s.

Reflecting the change in stance is the modification in the definition of the role of the Board which occurred by the latter half of the 1980s. Whereas in 1979 the role of the Board, as defined by Gerald Leissner, the then Chairman of the Public Relations Committee, was confined to issues relating to the Jewish community, in 1987 Leissner, by now Chairman, proposed that its role include the issuing of statements on non-Jewish issues of a political and ethical nature⁶. The Board never condemned the political aspects of Apartheid but rather focused on the **moral aspects** of Apartheid by appealing to the Government to ameliorate the sufferings of non-Europeans, to desist from inhumane practices such as imprisonment of minors and forced evacuations. It never directly condemned the Nationalist Government.

In assessing the whole political context, it is obvious that by the latter half of the 1970's the Board was not a 'voice in the wilderness' but one voice in a 'choir' calling for reform, and appealing to the government to find a solution based on humanitarian principles. The NP had already begun dismantling Apartheid and introducing reforms. While the changes that the may have been too little and too late, the NP, and with it the white community, was already seeking

"...to evolve social, economic and political structures which will satisfy the aspirations of Blacks, coloureds and Asiatics and so eliminate the possibility of violent change, but at the same time secure the future of the Whites⁷."

⁵ "The Need for Change", Board's Eye's View, August 1977

⁶ Memorandum from Gerald Leissner to the Executive Council, June 22, 1987

⁷ Schwarz, 1984, p 131

A compelling question that arises is the extent to which the Board's pronouncements influenced Government policy. First of all it must be stressed the Jews never, in contrast to the United States, had political influence. In fact, until 1994 there had been only one Jewish Member of Cabinet, Henry Gluckman, who was the Minister of Health for a short period. In exposing the inhumane practice of demolishing houses and removing squatters, Jewish leaders were joining a wide spectrum of political, religious and welfare organisations. The Board had nothing new, unique or distinctive to offer. In such a context, the Board's influence was probably no more and no less than other politically powerless bodies. In realistic terms, the only influence the Board of Deputies and the Jewish community could wield was moral⁸. This evaluation can, however be qualified by one observation. The Government had always gone to great lengths to refute allegations of racism. It is possible that its fear of being accused of anti-Semitism, as well as the Jewish presence in key economic positions, created a wedge which enabled the Board to exercise, to some limited extent, more clout over the Government than their numerical strength warranted.

Notwithstanding the feeling of security, the community had to act with caution, for it had to be concerned about not prejudicing the community's position in the country. Rabbi S Franklin⁹ explained from the rabbis' point of view:

Let's face it, the Jewish people in South Africa come from states of insecurity all over the world. South Africa opened the door to the Jewish community. On the one hand, their strong natural sense of justice is outraged. But on the other hand, they feel instability could bring their own society into trouble. The maintenance of law and order is of concern¹⁰.

⁸ It is true that Jews had a pivotal role in the economy of SA, especially in big business and the professions, but no one ever contemplated that they would use their 'economic power' in concert in order to attain any goal whatsoever - political or otherwise.

⁹ Incumbent rabbi of the Durban Congregation. He was one of the founding members of "Jews for Justice" in December 1985 in Cape Town but eventually emigrated to Australia.

¹⁰ Weekly Mail, 23.8.85 (in an interview with B. Ludman)

A major issue which preoccupied the Board was the relations between the Jewish Community and other 'communities' in SA. Throughout the period covered 'other communities' was a euphemism for the Afrikaner community, because the NP was the Government and they were intolerant to criticism. Opposition to NP policies was tantamount to opposition to Afrikanerdom, to its aspirations and right of survival. It was only in the latter half of the 1970s, and increasingly so in the 1980s, that the Board turned its goodwill efforts to 'other communities', such as the Black and Coloured. Here also, the Board was in line with the political developments occurring throughout the country.

Whereas involvement as a group in political issues was proscribed, the contribution of individual Jews to the struggle against Apartheid was proportionally greater than their numerical strength would indicate. They were found in the ranks of human rights organisations, anti-Apartheid movements and among the leaders who advocated better wages and working conditions for Black workers. A broad section was involved in supporting the struggle against Apartheid by providing a wide variety of social services to the oppressed communities, most notably the Union of Jewish Women¹¹. However, the questions of Jewish involvement in politics has yet to be resolved. When Harry Schwarz was asked at a public meeting, in Durban in June 1995, why there were so few Jews in politics¹², his response echoed the words of Gus Saron in 1951: there was pressure on Jews to maintain a low profile in politics. He, as Saron did in the past, unequivocally called upon Jews to disregard this pressure and to take an active part in the processes of change SA was undergoing. Only time will tell if the Jewish community will have the confidence to encourage members of the community to be openly active in South African politics in the future.

¹¹ Testimony of David Sapperstein, Director Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in the USA - Before the Senate Foreign relations Committee, Sub-Committee on African Affairs, May 19, 1988 (resides in the archives of the Board of Deputies). See also Gideon Shimoni, "South African Jewry and Apartheid", American Jewish Year Book, 1988, Philadelphia, 1989, pp 1-57

¹² the AGM of the Council of Kwa-Zulu Natal Jewry, 7.6.95

In the "New South Africa" the Board of Deputies has been placed in a similar situation to the one it occupied in 1948. It has, once more, to prove its loyalty to the Government and to the country. It is interesting to note that the Board, as in 1948 to 1968, is once more over-reacting because of feelings of insecurity. In the Summer 1994 issue of Jewish Affairs a short article appeared, written by Abe Hyman¹³, a lawyer, in which he complained that in the recent election the Board had violated the long-established principle of scrupulously refraining from supporting any political Party. He criticised the Board for its direct and systematic support of the ANC, citing the honour given to Nelson Mandela to deliver the keynote speech at its 1993 National Congress and the Summer and Autumn issues of Jewish Affairs, which reached subscribers a few weeks just prior to the election which were dedicated to interviews with Jewish members of the ANC, such as Joe Slovo, Ronnie Kasrils and Gil Marcus. In the view of the writer, the 'discernible theme' of these articles was that Jews should vote for the ANC. Whether this was the intention of the editor or not is a moot point, but it cannot be denied that these issues were a radical departure from the principles which had guided this official publication for decades.

In conclusion, the major finding was that the Jewish community of SA was really no different than any other Jewish community in the Diaspora: the majority assimilated the ideologies of the local population, and only a minority of Jews were mavericks at the forefront of the struggle for change. The individual Jews expended much energy to prove their loyalty, and the leadership, on political issues, concentrated its efforts on appeasing the ruling Parties, underscoring the community's unflagging patriotism. For the South African Jewish Board of Deputies to adopt a oppositionary stance to Government would have been totally out of character for a Jewish leadership in a Diaspora community.

¹³ "The Apolitical Role of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies" pp 67-68

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Arenstein Rowley, anti-Apartheid activist who was under house-arrest and eventually jailed by the South African Government

Auerbach, Frans, member of the Executive of the Board of Deputies and a founding member of the Jews for Justice movement

Cohen Steven, wrote his PHD on the history of the Durban Jewish Community and worked in Public Relations at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in the 1980s

Goldberg Aleck, former General Secretary of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 1972-1989

Goldberg Josh, former Director of the Council of Natal Jewry

Lazarus Bernard, President of the CNJ, Vice President of the Jewish Board of Deputies

**THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN
JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES**

1935 to 1937

President:	S Raphaely J P
Vice Presidents:	Cecil Lyons Morris Alexander, KC H Moss Morris J Philips
Chairman:	Cecil Lyons
Secretary:	G Saron

1937 to 1940

President:	M Franks KC
Vice Presidents:	E P Woolf, JP Morris Alexander, KC H Moss Morris J Philips A Schauder
Chairman:	Cecil Lyons
General Secretary:	G Saron
Secretary:	J M Rich

1940 to 1942

President:	Maurice Franks, KC
Vice Presidents:	E B Woolf Morris Alexander, KC H Moss-Morris A Schauder I Philips
Chairman:	G N Lazarus
Acting Chairman:	S M Kuper
General Secretary:	G Saron
Secretary:	J M Rich

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1942 to 1945

President: B A Ettlenger, KC
Vice Presidents: G N Lazarus
Morris Alexander, KC
I Geshen
A Schauder
W Harris
Chairman: G N Lazarus
Acting Chairman: S M Kuper
General Secretary: G Saron
Secretary: J M Rich

1945 to 1947

President: B A Ettlenger
Vice Presidents: David Hayden
Leon Segal
I Geshen
A Schauder
W Harris
Chairman: S M Kuper, KC
General Secretary: G Saron
Secretary: J M Rich

1947 to 1949

President: B A Ettlenger K C
Vice Presidents: W Harris
L Segal
A Schauder
I A Maisels
H Bradlow
H L Magid
Chairman: S M Kuper KC
General Secretary: G Saron
Secretary: J M Rich

1949 to 1951

President: B A Ettlenger K C

Vice Presidents: S M Kuper K C
L Segal
A Schauder
H L Magid
H Bradlow

Chairman: I A Maisels K C
Vice Chairman: J Daleski
General Secretary: G Saron
Secretary: J M Rich

1951 to 1953

President: I A Maisels K C

Vice Presidents: S M Kuper K C
L Segal
A Schauder
J J Friedman
H Bradlow
B A Ettlenger

Chairman: E J Horwitz
General Secretary: G Saron
Secretary: J M Rich

1953 to 1955

President: I A Maisels QC

Vice Presidents: D Cohen
Dr B Moshal
A Schauder
M H Goldschmidt
H Bradlow
B A Ettlenger, QC
A B Klipen

Chairman: E J Horwitz
General Secretary: G Saron
Secretary: J M Rich

1955 to 1958

President: I A Maisels K C
 Vice Presidents: A Schauder
 H Bradlow
 B A Ettlenger
 D Cohen
 L S Ditz
 M H Goldschmidt
 A B Klipin
 Chairman: N Philips
 Vice Chairmen: Dr T Schneider
 A Suzman Q C
 General Secretary: G Saron
 Secretary J M Rich

1958 to 1960

President: (Vacant)
 Immediate Past President: E J Horwitz
 Vice Presidents: A Schauder
 H Bradlow
 D Cohen
 M H Goldschmidt
 A B Klipin
 I J Greenberg
 I A Maisels
 Chairman: N Philips
 Vice Chairmen: Dr T Schneider
 A Suzman Q C
 General Secretary: G Saron
 Secretary J M Rich

1960 to 1962

President: N Philips Q C
Vice Presidents: A Schauder
H Bradlow
D Cohen
J Goldberg
M H Goldschmidt
A B Klipin

Chairman: Dr T Schneider
Vice Chairmen: A Suzman Q C
M Porter

General Secretary: G Saron
Secretary: J M Rich

1962 to 1965

President: N Philips Q C
Immediate Past-President: E J Horwitz
Vice Presidents: A Schauder
H Bradlow
D Cohen
R N Leon
M H Goldschmidt
A B Klipin
I A Maisels Q C

Chairman: Dr T Schneider
Vice Chairmen: A Suzman Q C
M Porter

General Secretary: G Saron
Secretary: J M Rich

1965 to 1967

President:	Dr T Schneider	
Immediate Past-President:	N Philips Q C	
Vice Presidents:	A Schauder	H Bradlow
	D Cohen	Dr S Harris
	M H Goldschmidt	A B Klipin
	I A Maisels Q C	
	A Suzman	
	E J Horwitz	
Chairman:	M Porter	
Vice Chairmen:	D K Mann	
	A Mendelow	
General Secretary:	G Saron	
Secretary:	J M Rich	

1967 to 1970

President:	Dr T Schneider	
Immediate Past-President:	N Philips Q C	
Vice Presidents:	D Levy	
	F R Bradlow	
	G Kane	
	Dr S Harris	
	M H Goldschmidt	
	A B Klipin	
	I A Maisels Q C	
	A Suzman	
	E J Horwitz	
	H Bradlow	
Chairman:	M Porter	
Vice Chairmen:	D K Mann	
	A Mendelow	
General Secretary:	G Saron	
Secretary:	J M Rich	

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1970 to 1972

President:	Maurice Porter
Immediate Past-President:	Dr T Schneider
Vice Presidents:	D Levy F R Bradlow G Kane Dr S Harris A B Klipin A E Jacobs
Additional Vice-Presidents	M H Goldschmidt A Suzman S Moshal H Bradlow A Mendelow
Chairman:	D K Mann
Vice Chairmen:	J Rosettenstein M G Fredman
General Secretary:	G Saron

1972 to 1974

President:	Maurice Porter
Immediate Past-President:	Dr T Schneider
Vice Presidents:	D Levy F R Bradlow A E Jacobs C Meltz M Greenstein
Additional Vice-Presidents	M H Goldschmidt A Suzman S Moshal H Bradlow N Winik A Mendelow
Chairman:	D K Mann
Vice Chairmen:	J Rosettenstein M G Fredman
Executive Director:	D Diamond

1974 to 1976

President: D K Mann
Immediate Past President: M Porter

Vice Presidents: D Levy
F R Bradlow
Dr H Davidson
W Joffa
E J Horwitz

Chairman: J R Rosettenstein
Vice Chairmen: Dr I Abramowitz
M G Fredman

Executive Director: D Diamond
Secretary: A Goldberg

1976 to 1978

President: D K Mann
Immediate Past President: M Porter

Vice Presidents: D Levy
J Sandler
G Lazarus
L Belikoff
E J Horwitz

Chairman: Dr I Abramowitz
Vice Chairmen: M Kaplan
M Katz

Executive Director: D Diamond
General Secretary: A Goldberg

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1978 to 1980

President: D K Mann
Immediate Past President: M Porter

Vice Presidents: D Levy
J Sandler
B Lazarus
L Belikoff
E J Horwitz
Dr F R Bradlow

Chairman: Dr I Abramowitz
Vice Chairmen: M Kaplan
M Katz

Executive Director: M Cohen
General Secretary: A Goldberg

1980 to 1983

President: A Suzman Q C
Immediate Past President: D K Mann

Vice Presidents: D Levy
G Bernstein
I Teeger
N Horwitz
Dr F R Bradlow
T Blumberg

Chairman: Dr I Abramowitz
Vice Chairmen: G Leissner
M Katz

Executive Director: A Goldberg

1983 to 1985

President: Dr I Abramowitz
Vice President: M Kaplan

Chairman: Dr I Abramowitz

Co-option: H Schwartz MP
Executive Director: A Goldberg

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NAMES

- Aaron, Jacob**, an advocate, served on the Cape Council
- Abramovitz, Israel**, vascular surgeon and lecturer at the medical school at the University of Witwatersrand, Member of the Executive Council of the SAZF; Chairman and President of the Board of Deputies (1983-1986)
- Acutt, Frank Horace**, MP (SAP, 1929-1933; 1938-1948, Dom)
- Alexander, Morris**, MP (SAP, 1924-1929; Ran as an independent in the general election of 1929 but was defeated by A J MacCullum who stood for the SAP; UP, (1932-1933); Vice President of the Board of Deputies until 1945.
- Arenstein Rowley**, member of the SACP, Chairman of the Congress of Democrats 1960/1, under house arrest, detained without trial and incarcerated for four years.
- Bailey, Abe**, mining magnate and MP (SAP) 1915-1924
- Barlow Arthur**, MP (1921-1929 (Lab); 1943-1958 (UP); journalist
- Basson, Jacob Adriaan**, MP (UP, 1958-1974)
- Bekker, Jan Fredrik**, MP (NP, 1929-1938)
- Berman, Major Aaron Zalman**, Member of Parliament and Senator (1960-1965)
- Bernhard, Norman**, Rabbi of Oxford Shul, Johannesburg
- Blackwell, Leslie**, KC, MP (SAP, 1921-1933; UP, 1933-1943)
- Bloomberg, Abe**, MP (UP, 1946-1958; 1958-1970 coloured constituency)
- Booyesen, Lt.Col Willem Adriaan**, MP (NP, 1938-1948)
- Bradlow, Frank**, director of companies, chairman of the Cape Council and Vice-President of the Board from 1967
- Bremer Karl**, MP (NP, 1929-1953)
- Buirski, Eli**, MP (SAP, 1924-1931)
- Burnside, Duncan**, MP (Lab, 1933-1943; SP, 1943-1948)
- Casper, Bernard**, Born in Britain, Chief Rabbi United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg and SA Federation of Synagogues until 1986
- Conradie, Jonannes**, Senator, 1948-1965
- De Villiers, Petrus C**, MP (NP, 1925-1937)
- De Wet, Dr the Hon Carel P Cronje**, (NP, 1953-1964)
- De Wet, The Hon Michiel**, Senator, 1955-1958

- Diederichs, Dr the Hon Nicolaas**, MP (NP, 1948-1975), Chairman of the Broederbond, Finance Minister and President of the Republic 1976-1978.
- Donges, Dr the Hon Theophilus E**, MP (NP, 1941-1967). Minister of Justice and Minister of Finance in the NP government.
- Duncan, The Hon Patrick**, KC, MP (SAP, 1921-1936)
- Ettlinger B A**, KC, President of the Jewish Board of Deputies (1942-1951)
- Erasmus, The Hon Francois C**, MP (NP, 1933-1961)
- Franklin, Selwyn**, Rabbi of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation (and one of the founding members of Jewish for Social Justice in December 1985)
- Franks, Maurice M.B.** Ch. B, Ophthalmic Surgeon; Ex Principal Surgeon Dept. of Ophthalmology, General Hospital Joburg; President of the Board of Deputies (1937-1942)
- Friedman, Dr Bernard**, MP (UP, 1943-1955)
- Friedman, M**, chairman of the SAZF
- Friedlinghaus, Heinrich O**, MP (UP, 1948-1961)
- Goldberg, Abraham**, MP (Dom, 1938-1948)
- Goldberg Aleck**, Executive Director of the Board 1972-1989
- Goldschmidt, Meyer**, Indent Agent, Chairman of the Cape Council of the Board
- Harris, Cyril**, Born in Scotland, Chief Rabbi United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg and SA Federation of Synagogues from 1987
- Hirsch, Helmut**, immigrated from Germany in 1935, an entrepreneur
- Hellman, Ellen Dr**, for many years a member of the Executive of the Board of Deputies and member of its Public Relations committee, President of SA Institute of Race Relations
- Hopf, Frank**, MP (UP, 1943-1948)
- Hoppenstein, Abraham**, Advocate Supreme Court, NP candidate
- Horwitz, Edel J**, Chairman of the SAZF and subsequently Chairman of the Board of Deputies (1951-1955)
- Ginsburg Franz**, Senator (1927-1936)
- Jonker, Dr Abraham**, MP (UP, 1948-1958)
- Kahn, Sam**, MP, (Native Representative, 1948-1952). Only member of Communist Party ever to be elected to the House of Assembly. Ceased to be a member in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act, 1950)

- Katz, Michael**, LIM (Harvard Law School) Professor of Law, Director of many companies and member of Margo committee appointed to investigate the taxation structure of SA. President of the Board of Deputies in 1990's
- Kentridge, Morris**, MP (Lab, 1914-1915; UP (SAP, 1933), 1924-1958), collaborated with the Jewish Board of Deputies in the struggle against anti-Jewish legislation
- Kessler, Solly**, member of the Cape Council of the Board
- Kuper S M** KC, Chairman and Vice President of the Board of Deputies (1951-1955). Murdered (assailant unknown)
- Leissner, Gerald**, Manager of Anglo American Property Services, Chairman and then President of the Board
- Loock, Johan Hendrik**, MP (NP, 1949-1953); (Senator 1965-1980)
- Lovell, Leo**, MP (Lab, 1949-1958); Minister of Finance, Swaziland
- Lyons, Cecil**, a director of Lever Brothers, chairman of Transvaal Chamber of Industries; Chairman and President of the Jewish Board of Deputies in the 1930s
- MacCallum, Alexander J**, MP (SAP, 1929-1938)
- Maisels I A** KC, Defense lawyer in the Treason Trial; Past President of the Court of Appelas Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho; Chairman and subsequently President of the Board of Deputies (1951-1958)
- Malan D F**, Leader of the National Party from 1930-1948 when anti-Semitism became one of the fundamental guidelines of Party policy. Prime Minister (NP) from 1948-1954
- Mann David**, Advocate; Executive member of the Transvaal Chamber of Business; President of the Jewish Board of Deputies (1974-1980)
- Melamet, Max**, born in SA, left his legal practice to join Board of Deputies as its first organiser and 'propagandist'. From 1938 he was the Secretary of the ~~Cape~~ Council, and its Chairman in 1955.
- Meyerowitz, D**, advocate, served on the Cape Council
- Nathan, Emile**, MP (SAP, 1910-1931)
- Nossel, Joseph**, Born in Lithuania. Settled in SA in 1928. Owned two shoe shops. Joined the NP in 1948, becoming the first Jewish member of the NP, thus paving the way for other Jews to join.

- Oost Harm**, MP (AP, 1929-1943; NP, 1948-1953)
- Oppenheimer, Sir Ernest**, Kt, MP (SAP, 1924-1938)
- Oppenheimer, Harry F**, MP (UP, 1948-1958)
- Pirow, Oswald**, MP (NP, 1924-1929; UP, 1929-1943; Founded the *Nuue Order* in 1941);
- Phillips Nehemiah**, Q.C., Chairman and then President of the Board of Deputies (1960-1965)
- Porter Maurice**, Director of Companies; President of the Board of Deputies (1970-1974)
- Rabinowitz, Louis**, Chief Rabbi United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg and SA Federation of Synagogues, emigrated to Israel in 1961
- Rich Jacob**, Secretary of the Board of Deputies (1937-1970)
- Robinson, Charles P**, MP (SAP, 1921-1938)
- Romm, Rabbi Moses**, Settled in SA in 1932 as rabbi of the Blomfontein Hebrew Congregation. Translated the Hebrew prayer-book into Afrikaans.
- Rubin, Leslie I**, Senator (1954-1960), emigrated to the USA in the 1960s
- Saron, Gustav**, General Secretary of the Board (1937-1972)
- Sauer, Paul**, Senator (1965-1970)
- Schneider, Tobias** (Teddy), physician, past chairman of of Ethical Committee and of the Association of Physicians of SA & member of the Federal Council Medical Association of SA, President of the Jewish Board of Deputies (1965-1970)
- Schoemann, Daniel W**, Senator (1948-1956)
- Schoonbee, Johannes F**, MP (NP, 1953-1966)
- Schwarz, Harry**, MP (UP, 1974; RP & PFP, 1975; PFP, 1977; DP)
- Smuts, FM the Rt Hon General Jan Christiaan**, KC, leader of the South African Party and Prime Minister
- Simon, John**, attorney, Chairman of the Cape Council of the Board (1975-1977)
- Shandling, Archie**, attorney, Chairman of the Cape Council of the Board
- Smith, Mervyn**, present President of the Board of Deputies
- Sonnabend, Henry Dr**, Head of the Bureau of Statistics and Research of the Board of Deputies and on Executive
- Stallard, Col the Hon Charles F**, KC, leader of the Dominion Party

Steenkamp, Dr, the Hon Willem P, Senator, 1946-1948
Strydom, Gert H, MP (NP, 1938-1961)
Strydom, J G, Prime Minister (NP), 1954-1958
Stuttaford, Richard, Minister of the Interior in the 1940s
Suzman, Arthur, Q.C., for many years chairman of the PR committee of the Board and then President of the Board (1980-1983)
Suzman, Helen, MP (UP, 1953; PP 1959; PRP, 1975; PFP, 1977)
Swart C R, MP NP and Minister of Justice in 1950s
Tannenbaum, Arthur, Director of Adcock-Ingram, Executive member of the Jewish Board of Deputies
Van den Berg, Martinus J, MP (Lab, 1934-1970)
Van der Merwe, Dr Nicolaas J, MP (NP, 1924-1940)
Van Nierop, Dr Petrus J, MP (NP, 1938-1964)
Verwoerd, Dr the Hon Hendrik F, Prime Minister (NP), 1958-1966
Viljoen, the Hon Johannes H, MP (NP, 1933-1951 AP 1941)
Von Moltke, Johannes, MP (NP, 1950-1966)
Vorster, the Hon Balthazar J, Prime Minister (NP), 1966-1978
Weichardt, Louis Theodor, Leader of the Greyshirts, Senator (nominated, 1955-1970)
Yellin, Solly, journalist and columnist of the Jewish Herald
Yutar, Percy, Attorney-General of SA, prosecutor in the Rivonia Trial in 1965, President of the United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg
Zabow, Aubrey, Chairman of the Cape Council of the Board