

A HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF DURBAN

1919 - 1961

by



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## INTRODUCTION

This doctoral work grew out of my Master's dissertation, in which I traced the history of Durban Jewry from its origins until 1918. On commencing this thesis it was my intention to complete that history by bringing it up to the present time. I therefore regret that I allowed my fascination with each aspect of my community's history to hold me too willingly, with the result that I found myself exhausted on reaching the end of 1961. Whilst I know that with this date, the history of Durban and its Jewish community does not end, it does afford a convenient and appropriate stopping point. Not only was it the year in which South Africa began a new era in its history as a Republic, outside of the British Commonwealth, but, by 1961, almost all the organisations which constitute the framework of Jewish communal life had emerged and were already firmly established.

The ability with which Jews have been able to settle in all the far-flung parts of the world and to take root there, establishing communal institutions and preserving their unique heritage, whilst at the same time sharing in the affairs of the wider community of which they are a part, has long been a source of fascination and pride to me. In this work I have consequently focused on these two characteristics of Diaspora Jewry, and have sought

not only to detail the emergence and development of Durban's Jewish communal institutions, but also to trace the contribution made by the Jewish community to their City and Country. The history of Durban and South Africa has not, however, been treated as a central issue, and only those developments which directly affected the Jewish community have been discussed and analysed.

For the sake of clarity this work has been written in a chronological form, the period under review being broken down into sections, which are roughly divided as follows: 1919-1929, 1930-1935, 1936-1939, 1939-1945, 1945-1955, 1956-1961. Within each of these loosely defined sections are chapters dealing with Durban Jewry and general life, as well as with the specific Jewish organisations. In this way the story of a particular institution can be traced by referring to the relevant chapter within each section, with only minimum reference being necessary to chapters dealing with other topics. Although this has made the work longer than might otherwise have been the case, it is my sincere hope that it will facilitate easy reference for those wishing to examine an aspect of the history of the community, and will spare the reader having to wade through much material which is of lesser interest to him.

The present study was handicapped by the absence of a complete history of Durban, and by the almost total dearth of published material relating to the contemporary history of South African Jewry, a welcome and notable

exception being Dr Shimoni's masterly and incisive work *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967*.

Research of the history of Durban Jewry was also complicated by an absence of many early minute books or institutional records, and by an unwillingness on the part of certain institutions in possession of such records to allow access to these sources. Work on the chapters related to local Zionist activity was further handicapped by the unavailability of copies of the *Zionist Digest* in Durban. In the present study much use has, therefore, been made of contemporary newspaper reports, primarily *The Natal Mercury*, *The Natal Daily News*, *The Zionist Record* and the *South African Jewish Times*. As will become clear from the body of this work the journalists did not cover all events and much information relating to communal activities was gleaned from the *Hasholom*, which proved to be an invaluable source of reference.

\* \* \*

In the course of researching and compiling this work I was fortunate to enjoy the support and assistance of a number of people and institutions. For all their help, my grateful thanks go to the librarians of the Don Africana Library in Durban, as well as to the staff at the libraries of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the South African Zionist Federation in Johannesburg. The interest and encouragement shown me

at all times by Mrs S. Hodes and her staff at the South African Zionist Federation (Natal), as well as by Mr J. Goldberg, the Communal Director, and the staff of the Council of Natal Jewry were also extremely gratifying and very much appreciated. In the course of my research I enjoyed the good fortune of being able to draw on the assistance of certain well informed members of the Jewish community whose wealth of memories and mementos of milestones in the community's history helped to make the past come alive, and gave a very human angle to the recorded word. To Mr S. Ernst, Mr S. Moshal, Mr L. Brewer, Mr D. Strous, Mrs L. Cohen, Mrs M. Broomberg, Mrs E. Stange and Mrs P. Weinberg go my most sincere appreciation.

To Mrs Marion Berman, who helped me to correct my drafts, and Mrs Bernice Friedman and Mrs Cynthia Adelson, who typed this dissertation I feel a very special sense of gratitude.

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The costs incurred in typing and duplicating this

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In accordance with the rules of the University of Natal, I hereby state that this whole thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

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SECTION ONE 1919 - 1929

CHAPTER I

1919

The new year of 1919 was universally welcomed with hope. After much bloodshed and terrible suffering the Great War had ended with the Armistice and the world, weary of fighting, looked forward to the conclusion of a treaty that would ensure a lasting peace.

Although they numbered only three percent of the total population of the town<sup>1</sup> the 1,644 Jews resident in Durban,<sup>2</sup> having participated fully in every aspect of the war effort,<sup>3</sup> also welcomed a new year unclouded by conflict. The multifarious activities undertaken by the

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<sup>1</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 30, 1920, p.8.

<sup>2</sup>This figure was made up of 901 males and 743 females. (*The Zionist Record*, April 30, 1922, p.25.)

<sup>3</sup>See S.G. Cohen, *A History of the Jews of Durban, 1825-1918*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban, 1977), pp.364-401.

Jewish community during the years of hostilities were characteristic of the Jews of Durban as was borne out by their history, which was contemporaneous with that of White settlement in Natal.<sup>4</sup>

Until the turn of the century Durban Jewry was essentially Anglo-Jewish in background and culture. Differing little, therefore, from their fellow townsmen, except in matters related to their faith, and unhindered by any legislation directed against their religion, the Jews of Durban had consequently participated in full measure in the general life of the wider community<sup>5</sup> and had shared in its economic,<sup>6</sup> social<sup>7</sup> and political affairs.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Nathaniel Isaacs who was amongst the first Europeans to be associated with Port Natal, reached the port on October 1, 1825. See *Ibid.*, pp.4-20.

<sup>5</sup> The Jewish community of Durban, for example, in common with other sectors of the population, organised special religious services to mark milestones in the Empire's history, (*Ibid.*, pp.127-128, 146, 253, 261.) and Jews played their part in the Anglo-Boer War, (*Ibid.*, Chapter VI) and the Bambata Rebellion. (*Ibid.*, pp.338-340.).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.77-117.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.211-214, 346, 354, 406-407.

<sup>8</sup> In 1857 Jonas Bergtheil sat in Natal's first Legislative Council, (*Ibid.*, p.36) and Jews showed interest in elections at both municipal and government levels. (*Ibid.*, pp.127, 331, 342) Jewish residents of Durban were elected as Town Councillors. (*Ibid.*, p.331) Mayor, (*Ibid.*, pp.352, 357, 360) Members of the Legislative Assembly, (*Ibid.*, 341.) the Provincial Council, (*Ibid.*, pp.361-362.) and the Union Parliament. (*Ibid.*, pp.352, 363.)

On occasions economic rivalry<sup>9</sup> or religious prejudice<sup>10</sup> had, however, manifested themselves in activity directed against individual Jews. Within a society which prided itself on its dominant British tradition, an integral part of which was religious toleration, such feelings had never found expression in overt acts of anti-Semitism on the part of the local populace. No organised anti-Semitic activity had, in fact, ever occurred in Durban to cause the Jewish residents to feel threatened, or give them cause to believe that their right of domicile was in any way impermanent. If anything, those isolated outbursts of anti-Semitism that were felt, were offset by the practical sympathy that members of the Gentile community showed for oppressed Jews abroad,<sup>11</sup> and by the respect that they generally accorded the Jewish faith and its adherents at home.<sup>12</sup>

Such discrimination against the Jewish community as did occur, generally took the more subtle, but no less hurtful, form of social prejudice. Members of the

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<sup>9</sup>See *Ibid.*, pp.128-131, 333-337.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.192, 373-374, 394-395.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.125-126, 330-331, 391-393.

<sup>12</sup>At services of a Civic nature the religious representative of the Jewish community was accorded an equal place to that of representatives of other faiths followed by the White section of the population. (*Ibid.*, p.128.) Prominent Christian personalities in the town also responded generously to an appeal for funds for the erection of the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue. (*Ibid.*, p.241.)

Jewish faith other than those most prominent in public life, and therefore more socially acceptable, were thereby effectively precluded from certain clubs and sporting bodies, as well as from certain public schools.<sup>13</sup> Whilst such discrimination diminished gradually after World War I it never entirely disappeared.

The predominance of the Anglo Jewish element within the community had, to a certain extent, tendered to be an inhibiting factor in the emergence of Jewish communal institutions. Consequently, until 1899 the only Jewish organisations in the town had been the Durban Hebrew Congregation, founded in 1883,<sup>14</sup> the Durban Jewish Benevolent Society, which had been formed in 1898,<sup>15</sup> and an inactive Zionist Association.<sup>16</sup>

Unlike their more observant and traditional East European co-religionists, the Jewish leaders of Durban, who were English in all but their religious affiliation, had not experienced the need to maintain a branch of the Jewish national movement or exclusive Jewish social and cultural forums. It was, therefore, only with the arrival of numerous East European Jewish refugees during the Boer War, and in the waves of immigration which followed the restoration of peace, that organisations

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<sup>13</sup> See below pp.44, 50, 55, and *The Natal Mercury*, April 29, 1931, p.16., April 30, 1931, p.23.

<sup>14</sup> S.G. Cohen, p.140.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.160.

<sup>16</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp.155-159.

such as the Durban Zionist Association,<sup>17</sup> the Durban Ladies' Zionist Association,<sup>18</sup> and the Durban Jewish Social and Literary Society<sup>19</sup> had been successfully established in the town.

For the Jews from Eastern Europe, who had come from an environment steeped in Orthodox tradition, the level of orthodoxy and standard of Jewish education which was provided by the Hebrew Congregation had given ground for much dissatisfaction. This discontent had ultimately resulted in a split within the ranks of the Durban Hebrew Congregation and, in 1909, had witnessed the emergence of the Durban New Hebrew Congregation.<sup>20</sup>

At the dawn of 1919, however, the Jewish community of Durban, notwithstanding its dominant English tradition, which made it appear different from its sister communities in other centres, was neither isolationist nor exclusivist in outlook, nor was its division in congregational affiliation a sign of weakness and inactivity. Through its bonds with the South African Jewish Board of

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<sup>17</sup> Founded in 1901 (*Ibid.*, p.201.)

<sup>18</sup> Founded in 1903 (*Ibid.*, p.290.)

<sup>19</sup> Founded in 1905 (*Ibid.*, p.311.)

<sup>20</sup> For a full account see *Ibid.*, pp.247-248.



Deputies<sup>21</sup> and the South African Zionist Federation<sup>22</sup> it remained linked to communities in other parts of South Africa. At the same time its active Jewish Ladies" Guild,<sup>23</sup> Benevolent Society<sup>24</sup> and Literary Club and Zionist Association<sup>25</sup> were evidence of its vibrant communal life.

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<sup>21</sup>On the origins and development of the Board see Gustav Saron, "The Long Road to Unity" in *The Jews in South Africa A History*, ed. Gustav Saron and Louis Hotz (London, 1955), pp.226-269..

<sup>22</sup>On the origins and development of the Zionist Federation see Jack Alexander, "South African Zionism," in *The Jews in South Africa A History*, pp.270-282.

<sup>23</sup>Formed in 1904. (S.G. Cohen, p.284.)

<sup>24</sup>Which was reorganised and properly constituted in 1906 (*Ibid.*, p.277.)

<sup>25</sup>Formed in 1916 (*Ibid.*, p.428.)

## CHAPTER II

THE YEAR OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

Although in 1919 Europe was no longer embroiled in conflict, for some time the war and its aftermath continued to overshadow life in Durban.

Even after the Great Peace Conference opened in Paris on January 18 under the presidency of the French Premier Georges Clemenceau,<sup>1</sup> troops from Durban were still being repatriated or demobilised, and preparing to return home.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously, Imperial troops returning to England from East Africa, and Australians homeward bound from Europe, passed through Durban. Many of these soldiers were entertained at the West Street Hut, one of the many set up for the convenience of soldiers during the war, and

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<sup>1</sup>David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon* (London, 1972), pp.613-615. For a more detailed account of the Peace Conference see Harold Nicolson, *Peace Making 1919*, (New York, 1965.)

<sup>2</sup>They included Isidore Hanreck, who had served on the Western Front since 1915 (*The Natal Mercury*, March 25, 1919, p.5.) B.L. Emanuel, who had served with the 4th S.A. Infantry (*Ibid.*, March 31, 1919, p.7.) Edgar S. Henochsberg (*Ibid.*, April 18, 1919, p.7.) Eric Super (*Ibid.*, April 24, 1919, p.10.) Joel Emanuel (*Ibid.*, April 29, 1919, p.5.) J.G. Aronson, who had served with the R.A.F. (*Ibid.*, May 21, 1919, p.7.) and Max Wolpert, who had been in the Royal Flying Corps. (*Ibid.*, September 22, 1919, p.11.).

which was supported by numerous bodies and individuals including the Durban Jewish Ladies Guild.<sup>3</sup>

The ladies' concern for the welfare of troops returning from the battlefields of Europe, was also shared by their menfolk. Mr C.P. Robinson, the Member of Parliament for Umbilo and a prominent member of the Jewish community, interested himself in the work of the Returned Soldiers and Sailors League, and in particular in their efforts to secure increased pensions for their members. He demonstrated this concern by joining with Major Silburn and Mr T. Boydell in presenting to Parliament the League's petition for higher pensions.<sup>4</sup> Mr Philip Wartski, one of the doyens of the Jewish community, channeled his efforts on behalf of the former servicemen through the Durban branch of the South African Prisoners Association, on whose committee he served.<sup>5</sup>

The Vigilance Committees which were formed in response to the question of repatriation of Germans,

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, March 25, 1919, p.8. Recognition of the Guild's war time activities was reflected in the invitation which it received to join representatives of other women's organisations at a garden party given for the Durban Womens Patriotic League on June 30, 1919 by the Viscountess Buxton, the wife of the Governor General. Mrs I. Kahn, the President of the Guild, who served on the General Committee of the Patriotic League and Mrs L. Hart, who represented the Guild on the Red Cross Society, availed themselves of Viscountess Buxton's invitation, as did Mrs V. Robinson, who represented the Women's Unionist Association on the Patriotic League's General Committee. (*Ibid.*, July 1, 1919, p.14.)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, February 13, 1919, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, April 1, 1919, p.13.

found a champion in the articulate person of Mr F.C. Hollander M.E.C., one of the town's leading Jewish public personalities. In December 1918 at a public meeting held in the Town Hall in connection with this issue he had moved the principal resolution.<sup>6</sup> His sympathy with the work of the Durban committee was reflected in his willingness to address meetings on behalf of the Committee,<sup>7</sup> and in his participation in the Congress of representatives from the various Committees in Natal, which was held in March 1919 in a Committee Room in the Town Hall. The proposals which Hollander put before the meeting called for a prohibition on the immigration of enemy aliens into South Africa, and the power to repatriate all enemy aliens and revoke naturalisation certificates.<sup>8</sup> These proposals met with wide acceptance. A sub-committee, which included Hollander, was set up to redraft the proposed Bill and incorporate the principles expressed in the resolution for presentation to Parliament.<sup>9</sup>

Hollander's interest and involvement in the work of the Durban Vigilance Committee was shared by his co-religionist L. Emanuel. In connection with the

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<sup>6</sup> *South African Jewish Chronicle*, December 20, 1918, p.1134.

<sup>7</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 3, 1919, p.11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, March 26, 1919, p.9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Committee's work he undertook a tour of the South Coast,<sup>10</sup> and also carried out the arrangements for a luncheon given by the Durban Committee at the conclusion of the Congress.<sup>11</sup>

On June 30, news of the signing at Versailles of the long awaited Peace Treaty reached Durban,<sup>12</sup> and was the signal for an outburst of public rejoicing. The Mayor, Mr T. Burman M.P.C., declared Monday, June 30, a holiday and arranged for a thanksgiving service to be held outside the Town Hall. Public entertainment was also organised with three band performances at the Beach.<sup>13</sup> Two days later a Victory Fair was held under the auspices of the Sportsmen's Contribution to the Governor General's Fund.<sup>14</sup>

In the midst of the festivity the Governor General, Viscount Buxton, held an investiture in the Durban Town Council Chambers, at which decorations were conferred upon a number of people for services in connection with the war. Amongst those decorated was Mrs Ethel Hollander, who was invested as a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for her services

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, February 3, 1919, p.11.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, March 26, 1919, p.9.

<sup>12</sup> David Thomson, p.626. See also *The Natal Mercury*, June 30, 1919, p.9.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, July 3, 1919, pp.7 and 9.

to the Red Cross Society.<sup>15</sup>

The climax of the celebrations was the four day holiday held throughout the Empire from August 2-5, which was marked by sports tournaments, community singing, a Victory Ball, Peace Procession and bonfires, and a special pageant for children.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the United Thanksgiving Service held in the Town Hall on August 3,<sup>17</sup> a special service was held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>18</sup> Under the auspices of the United Masonic Constitutions of Natal a Public Thanksgiving Service was held in the Town Hall on Sunday August 10, at which Mr F.C. Hollander, the District Grand Master of Scottish Freemasonry in Natal, presided.<sup>19</sup>

No sooner were the celebrations over, than Durban welcomed the Right Hon. W.M. Hughes, Prime Minister of the Australian Commonwealth, and Sir Joseph Cook, the Australian Minister for the Navy, who stopped over in the town *en route* home from Versailles. In honour of the visitors a civic luncheon was held at the *Marine Hotel*, to which about fifty guests, including

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, July 29, 1919, p.8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1, 1919, p.8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, August 11, 1919, p.8.

Mr F.C. Hollander M.E.C., were invited.<sup>20</sup>

At a public meeting a few weeks later Durban welcomed General J.C. Smuts,<sup>21</sup> who together with General L. Botha had represented South Africa at Versailles. Not only had the South African delegation secured for the Union the mandate over former German South West Africa, but Smuts had also earned much admiration for his efforts in helping to create the League of Nations. With the sudden death of the Prime Minister on August 27,<sup>22</sup> Smuts was chosen as Botha's successor.

The joy which Durban Jewry, in common with the rest of the Empire, felt on the conclusion of a peace in Europe, was however, tempered by news of continued outrages against Jews in Eastern Europe. The political and military instability which characterised the post-war period in Germany, and lands further to the east,<sup>23</sup> resulted in enormous hardship and suffering for the Jews, who were caught up in the turmoil of social and economic revolution.

Nowhere, however, was the suffering of the Jews more terrible than in Russia, which was embroiled in a civil

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, August 7, 1919, p.13.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, August 25, 1919, p.6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, August 28, 1919, p.8.

<sup>23</sup> David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon* (London, 1972), pp.592-597.

war. In August 1919 news of the excesses committed against the Jewish population of the Ukraine<sup>24</sup> shocked world Jewry. First reports told of widescale pogroms in which it was estimated that altogether 40,000 Jews were killed, 40,000 crippled or wounded, and 10,000 women violated, while damage to property exceeded one hundred million roubles.<sup>25</sup> In synagogues throughout South Africa, including Durban, memorial services for the victims of the massacres were held on August 10.<sup>26</sup>

The extent of anti-Semitism in Europe and the dread of it spreading still further, caused the South African Jewish community to watch warily that its' loyalty should not be brought into question or doubted. Through its Board of Deputies<sup>27</sup> the suggestion that the Jews were sympathetic to Bolshevism, an idea which found expression even in the Durban press,<sup>28</sup> was strongly repudiated at the Board's Congress in May 1919.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets*. (New York, 1976), pp.181-186. See also *The Natal Mercury*, August 16, 1919, p.10.

<sup>25</sup> Salo W. Baron, pp.181-186. See also *The Natal Mercury*, November 5, 1919, p.9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, August 8, 1919, p.6.

<sup>27</sup> For a full account of the creation of the Board see Gustav Saron, "The Long Road to Unity," in *The Jews In South Africa A History*, ed. Gustav Saron and Louis Hotz (London, 1955), pp.226-269.

<sup>28</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 30, 1919, p.9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, May 26, 1919, p.7.



Free from persecution themselves, the Jews of South Africa strove to help alleviate the distress of their suffering co-religionists through the Jewish War Victims Fund. This fund, which had been created during the war to provide relief for the needy Jews of Europe and Palestine, was continued in the post-war period in response to the needs of European Jewry. During the year meetings of the Durban branch of the Relief Fund were held<sup>30</sup> and money and clothing sent to the London Central Committee for the Relief of Jewish War Victims in Eastern Europe. South African Jewry took enormous pride in the fact that, outside of the United States, they were the largest contributor to the Fund.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, May 21, 1919, p.6., June 18, 1919, p.8.,  
November 21, 1919, p.6., December 17, 1919, p.8.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, May 26, 1919, p.7.

## CHAPTER III

JEWISH CONTRIBUTIONS TO LIFE IN DURBAN : 1920 - 1929

In 1920, as the work of the Jewish War Victims Fund on behalf of European Jewry continued,<sup>1</sup> Jewish attention now also became largely focused on Palestine. On April 18, 1920 the Allies met at San Remo to draw up a peace treaty with Turkey and to decide on the future of the former Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup> The Conference's decision to incorporate the Balfour Declaration in the Peace Treaty,<sup>3</sup> and to grant Britain the mandate over Palestine,<sup>4</sup> gave cause for universal Jewish rejoicing.<sup>5</sup> Durban Jewry gave expression to its happiness at a Thanksgiving Service and Festival at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>6</sup>

The tragic plight of Jews in Eastern Europe, and the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 6, 1920, p.8., May 14, 1920, p.6., May 15, 1920, p.14., July 28, 1920, p.6., August 28, 1920, p.11., February 16, 1921, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon* (London, 1972), pp.629-631.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, (New York, 1972), p.453.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, See also *The Natal Mercury*, April 28, 1920, p.9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, May 3, 1920, p.11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, April 29, 1920, p.6.

relative insecurity of Jews in Palestine in the face of Arab opposition to a Jewish homeland,<sup>7</sup> contrasted sharply with the security and freedom which Jews in Durban enjoyed, in common with all subjects of the British Crown. This freedom was no where more clearly illustrated than in the participation by Jewish residents of Durban in all levels of the political life of the town.

In January 1920, Mr C.P. Robinson, a veteran Parliamentarian, who had sat in both the Natal Legislative Assembly<sup>8</sup> and the Union Parliament,<sup>9</sup> was requisitioned to stand for a third time in the Umbilo division, as a candidate for the pro-imperial Unionist Party.<sup>10</sup> In the General Election, held on March 10, significant gains were made by both J.B.M. Hertzog's National Party and Col. Creswell's Labour Party at the expense of Smuts's South Africa Party and the Unionist Party of Dr Jameson. Amongst the Unionist candidates to be unseated, was Mr Robinson, who lost to his Labour rival Mr F. Nettleton

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<sup>7</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.453. See also *The Natal Mercury*, March 13, 1920, p.9., April 8, 1920, p.7., April 9, 1920, p.8., April 20, 1920, p.7.

<sup>8</sup>In 1906 he was elected as one of the representatives for Durban County. (S.G. Cohen, *A History of the Jews of Durban 1825-1918*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban, 1977), pp.340-342.)

<sup>9</sup>In September 1910 he was elected to represent Durban Umbilo in the first Union Parliament (*Ibid.*, pp.352-353.) and in October 1915 he was re-elected to Parliament for Durban Umbilo. (*Ibid.*, pp.403-404.).

<sup>10</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, January 22, 1920, p.7.

by 366 votes.<sup>11</sup> A short time later Robinson was returned to Parliament as a Senator.<sup>12</sup>

Mr Nettleton's election to Parliament in place of Mr Robinson caused a vacancy on the Town Council, where he had represented Ward 2, and necessitated the holding of a by-election.<sup>13</sup> This resulted in a victory for the Labour Party's Jewish candidate, Mr Israel Davis.<sup>14</sup> The sixteen months during which Councillor Davis sat on the Town Council<sup>15</sup> might have passed unnoticed, had it not been for the unprecedented crisis that he created in Municipal circles three months after his election. By invoking a Municipal ordinance which prohibited a councillor to become interested in a contract made with the Council, Councillor Davis took legal action against the Mayor, Mr T. Burman, the Deputy Mayor, Mr Walter Gilbert, and Councillors **Henwood** and Hutt, who were all members of the Turf Club which had a contract to hire Corporation land, and had them unseated.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, March 11, 1920, p.7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, June 23, 1920, p.10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, May 6, 1920, p.7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> In the Town Council elections on August 3, 1921, Mr Davis lost the Ward 2 seat by 25 votes. (*Ibid.*, August 4, 1921, p.11.).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, August 28, 1920, p.11., August 30, 1920, p.10., September 1, 1920, pp.8-9., September 2, 1920, p.9., September 3, 1920, p.7., September 11, 1920, p.13., September 28, 1920, p.5., September 29, 1920, p.11., October 11, 1920, p.9., October 28, 1920, p.10., November 2, 1920, p.9., February 11, 1921, p.7., February 15, 1921, p.15.

In the Stamford Hill Division Mr F.C. Hollander<sup>17</sup> conducted a successful campaign for re-election to the Provincial Council which saw him returned with a majority of 228 votes,<sup>18</sup> whereupon he was again elected to the Executive Committee.<sup>19</sup>

The set-back that Smuts had suffered in the General Elections caused him to look for ways to strengthen his position in Parliament. After lengthy negotiations he brought about a merger of the South African and Unionist Parties in November 1920, and immediately thereafter he called a General Election for February 1921.<sup>20</sup> Warning principally against the danger of the idea of secession from the Empire,<sup>21</sup> which enjoyed support in National Party circles, Mr Robinson won the Durban Central seat for the South African Party in the General Election by 159 votes.<sup>22</sup>

In the course of the next three years the support

<sup>17</sup> He was first elected to the Provincial Council in 1914 (S.G. Cohen, p.361.) and was re-elected in 1917. (*Ibid.*, p.406.).

<sup>18</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 10, 1920, p.9.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, June 23, 1920, p.10.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, November 25, 1920, p.10. On the Election and subsequent political developments, particularly in so far as Durban and Natal were concerned see E.G. Haines, *Natal and the Union 1918-1923*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation, (University of Natal, Durban, 1976), pp.75-97.

<sup>21</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 15, 1921, p.14., January 29, 1921, p.12., February 5, 1921, p.14.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, February 9, 1921, p.5.

that Smuts initially enjoyed, was wittled down by the massacre at Bulhoek in 1921, the Rand rebellion in 1922, and the general losses that his party suffered in by-elections.<sup>23</sup> Evidence of the increased support gained by Smuts's political opponents, was the surprise defeat of Mr F.C. Hollander, the South African Party candidate, by a Labour Party nominee in the Provincial Council election of 1923.<sup>24</sup>

In 1923, Jewish support for the Government was strained by the application of Section 4 (1) (a) of the *Immigrants Regulation Act of 1913*, which had formerly been applied exclusively to exclude Asiatics, and which now came to be used as a vehicle to limit Jewish immigration. The Government's belief in the need to apply the Act to limit immigration was justified by the Minister of the Interior, on the grounds that the large scale unemployment existing in the country would be aggravated by an uncontrolled influx of immigrants.<sup>25</sup> Jewish members of Parliament<sup>26</sup> and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies<sup>27</sup> on the other hand, challenged

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<sup>23</sup> For a full account see B.J. Liebenberg, "The Union of South Africa Up to the Statute of Westminster, 1910-1931," in *500 Years a History of South Africa*, ed., C.F.J. Muller (Pretoria, n.d.), pp.355-358.

<sup>24</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 7, 1923, p.11.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1923, p.11., March 10, 1923, p.13., May 29, 1923, p.11., August 8, 1923, p.9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1, 1923, p.11., May 29, 1923, p.11.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, August 3, 1925, p.8. Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967*, (Cape Town, 1980), pp.89-91.

the Minister's contention arguing that the application of the Act was discriminatory and unjustified.

Whilst the Board of Deputies continued to assist Jewish immigrants arriving in Durban, through Mr J. Rothstein, its honorary official representative on immigration matters in the port,<sup>28</sup> it also worked unceasingly to have the Government desist from applying Clause 4 (1) (a). The Jewish community's dissatisfaction with the application of the Act ended in May 1924 when the Government issued a notice agreeing not to put the clause into operation for six months, and not to apply the Section to Europeans.<sup>29</sup>

For all the talk in certain quarters in South Africa at this time of secession from the British Empire, the citizenry of Durban retained a strong bond of loyalty with the Empire. This was never more clearly evident than during events of an Imperial nature, such as the visit to Durban by the Commander in Chief of the British Army, the Right Hon. Earl Haig of Bemersyde, and Countess Haig, in April 1921. Prominent members of the Jewish

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<sup>28</sup> The South African Jewish Board of Deputies Report of the Executive Committee for the period August 1st, 1921 to May 31st, 1923. To be submitted to the Fifth Congress Pretoria, August 5th and 6th, 1923, p.12.

<sup>29</sup> The South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Report of the Executive Committee for the period August 1st 1923 to June 30th, 1925. To be submitted to the Sixth Congress, Durban. August 2nd and 3rd 1925, p.6. Gideon Shimoni, p.91.

community joined in all the public activities in connection with the visit,<sup>30</sup> whilst the Jewish women of the town contributed to the gift presented to Countess Haig.<sup>31</sup> No less warmly received in Durban were the newly appointed Governor General, Prince Arthur of Connaught and Princess Arthur, who in July 1921 paid their first official visit to the town.<sup>32</sup> In a demonstration of affection for the Royal Family, the Jewish women of Durban joined women all over South Africa in contributing to a fund set up by Mrs Smuts, to provide a gift for Princess Mary on the occasion of her marriage to Viscount Lascelles in 1922.<sup>33</sup>

Fears for the retention of this Imperial connection were widely felt in Durban after the General Election of 1924 saw Smuts swept from office to be replaced by the Pact Government, made up of the National and Labour Parties under General Hertzog. Although, in the election, support for the South African Party declined considerably, Mr C.P. Robinson nevertheless retained the Durban Central Seat.<sup>34</sup> Notwithstanding the change of Government the links with the Empire remained strong in Natal.

In Durban, concern with national politics was

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<sup>30</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 20, 1921, p.9.,  
April 21, 1921, pp.7 and 11.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, April 27, 1921, p.9.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, July 18, 1921, p.10.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, January 25, 1922, p.14.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, June 18, 1924, p.9.



momentarily eclipsed by the Natal Centenary Celebrations which were held from June 26-29, 1924. The guest of honour was the Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, the wife of the newly appointed Governor General of South Africa,<sup>35</sup> who was received by the townsmen with much acclaim. In an even greater outburst of affection for the Royal Family, Durban welcomed Edward, Prince of Wales in June 1925, and members of the Jewish community were amongst those presented to the future King.<sup>36</sup> Only a few months later, together with the Empire at large, Durban joined in mourning the death of Queen Alexandra, the Queen Mother.<sup>37</sup> To coincide with the memorial service held in Westminster Abbey on November 27, prior to the burial at Windsor, a Public Memorial Service was held in the Durban Town Hall, in which the Minister of the Durban Hebrew Congregation officiated.<sup>38</sup>

The election of the Pact Government coincided with a complete economic revival in South Africa. Evidence of the benefit of this revival within the Jewish community, was reflected in the emergence of a number of successful businessmen who merited inclusion in the delegation from Durban to the Eleventh Congress of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, June 21, 1924, p.13.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, June 4, 1925, pp.12 and 14.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, November 21, 1925, p.13.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, November 28, 1925, p.13.

Empire.<sup>39</sup> Amongst them was Mr Karl Gundelfinger, who was the President of the Chamber of Commerce.<sup>40</sup>

Notwithstanding the country's economic revival, Natal generally, nevertheless, remained wary of Hertzog and the Nationalists who sought to weaken the bond between South Africa and Great Britain.<sup>41</sup> An indication of the opposition in Durban to the Nationalists and their Labour allies was the defeat of Dr Minnie Alper, the Labour candidate in the Town Council elections of 1924,<sup>42</sup> and the return of Mr F.C. Hollander, of the South African Party, to the Provincial Council in 1927<sup>43</sup> where he was immediately elected to the Executive.<sup>44</sup>

At the Imperial Conference in London in October 1926, the South African Prime Minister determined to change his country's status from one of subordination to Britain, to one of sovereign independence within the Commonwealth, and he exerted much pressure to place the Dominions on an equal footing with Britain. The declaration of 1926 which emerged from this Conference provided the basis for

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<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, October 29, 1927, p.10.

<sup>40</sup>*The Zionist Record*, May 28, 1926, p.36.

<sup>41</sup>For a fuller account see B.J. Liebenberg, pp.359-360.

<sup>42</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 7, 1924, p.7.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, February 17, 1927, p.11.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, March 9, 1927, p.8.

the Statute of Westminster of 1931.<sup>45</sup> Although Hertzog's activities caused concern in Natal, his introduction of the *Flag Bill* in Parliament in 1927 evoked enormous opposition and an outburst of public feeling.<sup>46</sup> Initially introduced in the 1926 parliamentary session, the Bill, which provided for a national flag, created nation wide controversy. Many Nationalists demanded a flag that did not include any British symbols. In Natal on the other hand there was overwhelming support for the retention of the Union Jack. In the House of Assembly Mr C.P. Robinson expressed the sentiments of his townsmen by voting against the Bill in each of its stages.<sup>47</sup> In Durban devotion to the Union Jack and the Empire, was affirmed at a service of re-dedication held in front of the Town Hall which was attended by 15,000 people,<sup>48</sup> and in a meeting of protest which rejected the proposed new flag.<sup>49</sup>

In an attempt to reach an agreement a Parliamentary

<sup>45</sup> For a fuller account see B.J. Liebenberg, pp.360-362.

<sup>46</sup> For a fuller account of the response of Natal to the *Flag Bill*, see M.J. Williamson, *Natal and the Flag Issue 1925-1928*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban, 1972).

<sup>47</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 17, 1927, p.11., June 3, 1927, p.11.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, May 17, 1927, p.17.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, May 26, 1927, p.9.

Select Committee, that included Mr C.P. Robinson was set up.<sup>50</sup> The issue was finally resolved by a compromise which resulted in South Africa having two official flags, a national flag, which included miniature versions of the Union Jack and the flags of the former Boer Republics, and the Union Jack.<sup>51</sup>

In keeping with their tradition of loyalty to the Union Jack and all that it represented, the people of Durban, including the Jewish community, joined in mourning the tragic passing of Viscount Trematon, the son of the Governor General.<sup>52</sup> On the occasion of the Silver Wedding of the Governor General and Princess Alice the Jews of Durban joined in the general rejoicing by contributing to a special Fund set up to suitably commemorate the event.<sup>53</sup> An indication of the affection which King George V enjoyed amongst the residents of the town was reflected in the concern shown for the King during his illness in 1928. In all places of worship, including the Synagogue, prayers were offered for his recovery<sup>54</sup> and for his restoration to health.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, June 4, 1927, p.13.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, October 27, 1927, p.13.

<sup>52</sup> *Hasholom*, VI No.1 (August 1928), 14.

<sup>53</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 5, 1928, p.13., October 8, 1928, p.9., November 7, 1928, p.11., November 14, 1928, p.11.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1, 1928, p.15., December 10, 1928, p.11.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, July 5, 1929, p.18.

The close ties which the people of Durban felt with the Empire, and their dissatisfaction with the policy of the Pact Government, was evident in the uproar that followed the Trade Treaty which the Government negotiated with Germany. Memories of the war and a fear that the Treaty would close the door to further preferential treatment of South African products in the British market, united opponents to the Government's Treaty. For coming out in defence of the Trade Treaty Mr Karl Gundelfinger was severely criticised, and ultimately forced to resign as president of the Association of Chambers of Commerce of South Africa.<sup>56</sup> The Government's decision to pass the Trade Treaty with Germany without submitting it to the Senate, evoked a storm of protest. Among those who gave expression to the feelings of indignation aroused by the Government's action was Mr F.C. Hollander M.E.C.,<sup>57</sup> who also addressed a public meeting on the issue in the Town Hall.<sup>58</sup>

For all the opposition to the Trade Treaty, the Pact Government enjoyed increased support in the General Election of 12 June, 1929, with Hertzog's National Party emerging with a majority over all the other parties. The South African Party, however, also made gains in the election and amongst those returned unopposed to the

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, March 4, 1929, p.11.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, February 28, 1929, p.11.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, March 2, 1929, p.15.

Opposition benches was Mr C.P. Robinson.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, May 16, 1929, p.11.

## CHAPTER IV

JEWISH RELIGIOUS LIFE : 1919 - 1929

Ever since 1909 when the ranks of the Durban Hebrew Congregation had been seriously depleted by the resignation of 43 members, who had established the Durban New Hebrew Congregation, the Jewish community of Durban had remained divided in its religious affiliation. The split within the Congregation had been a manifestation of the diverse views which members of the Jewish community had held in respect of their faith.

The St. Andrew's Street Synagogue with its dominant Anglo-Jewish tradition had long satisfied the religious needs of a large section of the local Jewish population. It had at the same time, however, alienated many of its members of East European origin, who had found its English influence and its innovations, such as a mixed choir and women soloists, both strange and unacceptable. Characterised by its more traditionalist approach to Judaism and by its advocacy of the creation of an independent *Talmud Torah*, the Durban New Hebrew Congregation mirrored the sentiments of its predominantly East European membership. Naturally the division of the community along ethnic lines and synagogal affiliation was not absolute. Just as some Jews of East

European descent retained their membership of the Durban Hebrew Congregation, so too some Jews of English origin, who identified with the more traditional outlook of their East European co-religionists, took out membership of the New Hebrew Congregation.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst they had been unable to agree to a unitary *shechitah* arrangement or to the establishment of an independent *Talmud Torah*, a spirit of cordiality had nevertheless governed relations between the two Congregations. In 1911, 1912 and 1917 unsuccessful attempts had been made to reconcile the two Congregations and to bring about an amalgamation. Although those efforts had proved groundless members of both Congregations had succeeded in working harmoniously on various communal organisations.<sup>2</sup>

The most pressing problem that faced the Durban New Hebrew Congregation upon the cessation of the war was the incapability of the Synagogue in Grey Street to meet the needs of the growing Congregation's requirements. Whilst plans were made for the construction of a new and larger Synagogue, High Festival services were held in the *St. George's Hall*, on the corner of Park and Smith Streets.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For a fuller account see S.G. Cohen, *A History of the Jews of Durban 1825-1918*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban, 1977), pp.246-248.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.269-270 and 411-416.

<sup>3</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 14, 1924, p.10.



On December 17, 1922, the Foundation Stones of the new Synagogue in Park Street were laid by Mr I. Rosenbach<sup>4</sup> and on September 2 of the following year the Synagogue was opened and consecrated.<sup>5</sup> The doors were opened by Mr M.K. Rosenbach, and the service was conducted by the Revs. H. Rubin, A. Levy (the former minister of the Durban Hebrew Congregation), J. Levine (of the Pietermaritzburg Hebrew Congregation) and N. Menachemson (of the Durban Hebrew Congregation).<sup>6</sup>

Indicative of the cordial relations that existed between the two Congregations in Durban was the participation of the Cantor of the Durban Hebrew Congregation in the consecration ceremony, and the loan of *Siphrei Torah* to the New Hebrew Congregation for the service.<sup>7</sup>

For the leaders of the Durban Hebrew Congregation the most pressing issue remained the need to find a suitable incumbent for the post of minister. Ever since the resignation of the Rev. Abraham Levy in 1910<sup>8</sup> ministerial responsibilities had largely been borne by the aged Rev. Samuel Pincus, who had assumed office in

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, December 9, 1922, p.10

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, September 3, 1923, p.10.

<sup>6</sup> *South African Jewish Chronicle*, September 7, 1923, p.717.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> S.G. Cohen, p.256.

Durban in 1891,<sup>9</sup> and by visitors who periodically conducted the services.<sup>10</sup>

The absence of a minister was most keenly felt whenever services of an extraordinary nature were held,<sup>11</sup> because of the wider community's recognition of the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue as the Mother Synagogue of the town and its services as representative of Jewish community sentiment in general.

The void in the spiritual leadership of the Congregation came to be partly filled in 1922 with the appointment of the Rev. N. Menachemson, of Johannesburg,

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148.

<sup>10</sup> They included the Rev. Jacobs of Johannesburg (*The Natal Mercury*, January 23, 1919, p.6.), the Rev. A.M. Kaplan of Boksburg (*Ibid.*, February 20, 1919, p.6.), the Rev. Kellan of East London (*Ibid.*, May 22, 1919, p.6.), the Rev. M.L. Cohen of Standerton (*Ibid.*, August 1, 1919, p.8.), the Very Rev. Dr J.H. Hertz, the Chief Rabbi of the United Congregations of the British Empire, who visited South Africa in the interests of the Jewish War Memorial (*Ibid.*, December 28, 1920, p.10.), The Rev. Wilder of Cape Town (*Ibid.*, February 3, 1921, p.8.), the Rev. M. Kay (a former reader of the Congregation) (*Ibid.*, March 10, 1921, p.8.), the Rev. A. Levy of Port Elizabeth (a former minister of the Congregation) (*Ibid.*, June 30, 1921, p.6.), the Rev. E.H. Matthews of Kroonstad (*Ibid.*, August 18, 1921, p.6.), and Mr W. Marcus of Pretoria (*Ibid.*, September 14, 1921, p.6.).

<sup>11</sup> These included a Thanksgiving Service upon the signing of the Peace Treaty (*Ibid.*, August 1, 1919, p.8.), a Memorial Service for victims of Polish massacres (*Ibid.*, August 8, 1919, p.6.), and a Thanksgiving Service for the restoration of Palestine to the Jews under the mandate of Great Britain (*Ibid.*, April 29, 1920, p.6.).

as Assistant Reader.<sup>12</sup> In the same year, however, the Rev. Pincus died, after having faithfully served the community for 32 years,<sup>13</sup> and the responsibility of caring for the Congregation's spiritual needs devolved largely on one man again.

For the Durban Hebrew Congregation the appointment in 1924 of the Rev. Eric Montagu Levy brought to an end, "many years of almost heartbreaking delay and disappointment, not altogether unmixed with impatience and growing despair."<sup>14</sup> Having received his religious training at Jews' College and having graduated B.A., both at Oxford and London, and L.L.B. London, the Rev. Levy, who was the former Jewish chaplain of Aldershot Command, was considered imminently qualified to occupy the pulpit of the newly enlarged St. Andrew's Street Synagogue which had stood vacant for so long.<sup>15</sup> The new minister and his family arrived in Durban on August 29, 1924,<sup>16</sup> and were welcomed by the Mayor and the Congregation's President at a communal reception given in their honour.<sup>17</sup> On September 7 the Rev. Levy was

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<sup>12</sup> "The Durban Hebrew Congregation. Its Origin and Development" in *The Durban Hebrew Congregation Fiftieth Anniversary 1884-1934, 5644-5694*, (Durban, 1934), pp.11-12.

<sup>13</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 26, 1922, p.11.

<sup>14</sup> *Hasholom*, I. No.9 (May 1924), 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 30, 1924, p.8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, September 4, 1924, p.7.

inducted into his new position in a special ceremony in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>18</sup>

Almost immediately the new minister threw himself into the multifarious tasks associated with his office. At the *Kol Nidrei* service, a short while after his arrival, the Rev. Levy broached the question of *Kashrut* and its general non-observance within the community.<sup>19</sup> In Durban it had long been customary for each Congregation to award a contract on an annual basis for the supply of *Kosher* meat to its members. Attempts by the two Hebrew Congregations to arrive at a unitary *shechitah* arrangement, had in the past proved unsuccessful.<sup>20</sup> The system of contracting, which placed the monopoly of the *Kosher* meat supply in the hands of one butcher, caused dissatisfaction, since it was regarded as the root cause of the poor service and the inferior quality of meat supplied by successive *Kosher* butchers in Durban.<sup>21</sup> Consequently only 60 householders, in a community numbering more than 600 families, patronised the *Kosher* butchery.<sup>22</sup> Notwithstanding the efforts of the Rev. Levy it was some years however before

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, September 9, 1924, p.11.

<sup>19</sup> *Hasholom*, II No.2 (October, 1924) 1 and 2.

<sup>20</sup> S.G. Cohen, pp.414-416.

<sup>21</sup> *Hasholom*, II No.3 (November, 1924) 1 and 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

the question of *kashrut* could be satisfactorily settled.<sup>23</sup>

Confronted by poor Synagogue attendance the Rev. Levy, who reflected a very traditional outlook, rejected the suggestion that a mixed choir, once a feature of the Synagogue service in Durban,<sup>24</sup> would increase the number of regular worshippers.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless he encouraged the creation of an all male Synagogue choir, under the direction of Mr J. Lurie, which was credited for the increase in attendances at Sabbath eve services.<sup>26</sup> He also introduced a youth service that attracted large numbers of young people to Sabbath morning services.<sup>27</sup>

As minister of the Congregation the Rev. Levy also came to involve himself fully in the communal life of his community. Shortly after his arrival in the town, he was elected an honorary member of the committee of the Durban Zionist Association,<sup>28</sup> and it was not long before he identified himself with the work of the Jewish Benevolent Society<sup>29</sup> and involved himself in the

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<sup>23</sup> See below pp.203-204.

<sup>24</sup> S.G. Cohen, p.218.

<sup>25</sup> *Hasholom*, II No.7 (March, 1925), 2-4.

<sup>26</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 14, 1926, p.19.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, March 4, 1927, p.21. and *Hasholom*, V No.9 (April, 1928), 13-14.

<sup>28</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 31, 1924, p.5. On the Zionist Association see below pp.110-118.

<sup>29</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 29, 1924, p.16. On the Benevolent Society see below pp.125-128.

activities of the Durban Jewish Circle.<sup>30</sup> Together with the Rev. Menachemson he also encouraged the work of the Young Israel Society.<sup>31</sup>

A man of wide and diverse interests the Rev. Levy, on the founding of a lodge of the Hebrew Order of David in Durban, assumed office as its first president.<sup>32</sup> In addition he extended his patronage to the Durban and District Boy Scouts Association<sup>33</sup> and lent his support to the establishment of a troop of Jewish Boy Scouts<sup>34</sup> and a Company of Jewish Girl Guides.<sup>35</sup> Upon the creation of a Durban committee of the South African Jewish Orphanage the Rev. Levy assumed office as its first chairman.<sup>36</sup> He also founded a Jewish Musical Society in Durban<sup>37</sup> and encouraged his community to

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<sup>30</sup>*Hasholom*, II No.6 (February, 1925), 3-4. On the Durban Jewish Circle see below pp.44-55.

<sup>31</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, December 13, 1924, p.15., and *The Zionist Record*, September 18, 1925, p.54. On the Young Israel Society see below pp.119-123.

<sup>32</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, January 28, 1925, p.8. On the Hebrew Order of David see below pp.72-78.

<sup>33</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, October 28, 1925, p.12.

<sup>34</sup>*The Zionist Record*, November 6, 1925, p.19. On the Jewish Boy Scouts Troop see below pp.63-67.

<sup>35</sup>*The Zionist Record*, July 29, 1927, p.24. On the Jewish Girl Guides Company see below pp.67-68.

<sup>36</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 1, 1926, p.24. On the Regional Committee of the South African Jewish Orphanage see below pp.133-135.

<sup>37</sup>*The Zionist Record*, December 2, 1927, p.29. On the Musical Society see below p.68-71.

support the work of the South African Jewish Historical Society.<sup>38</sup>

The minister of the Durban Hebrew Congregation also enjoyed much respect within the wider Jewish community. During a visit to Cape Town the Rev. Levy was invited to preach at the Gardens and Roeland Street Synagogues and to address Zionist meetings.<sup>39</sup> In August 1927 he attended the first conference of South African Jewish ministers called by Chief Rabbi Dr J.L. Landau.<sup>40</sup> When the Conference agreed to establish a permanent association of Jewish ministers of the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Natal, the Rev. Levy was elected an office bearer and chosen Provincial Vice-President representing Natal.<sup>41</sup>

In the Rev. Levy not only his Congregation but the entire Jewish community had a leader who could be looked on by the general public as a spokesman and representative of the Jews of the town. In 1926 and again in 1928 he participated in the Armistice Day Service at the Town Hall,<sup>42</sup> and he was also invited to take part in the community service on Delville Wood day.<sup>43</sup> In the face

<sup>38</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 31, 1928, p.32.

<sup>39</sup> *Hasholom*, IV No.8 (February 15th, 1927), 3-4.

<sup>40</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 3, 1927, p.11.

<sup>41</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 5, 1927, p.13.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, November 19, 1926, p.25. and *The Natal Mercury*, November 12, 1928, p.11.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, July 27, 1929, p.6.

of criticism of the method of Jewish slaughter, Rev. Levy ably presented the viewpoint of the Jewish community,<sup>44</sup> and through his writings, published in the local press, he did much to engender good will on the part of many townsmen towards their Jewish neighbours.<sup>45</sup>

A talented educator, the Rev. Levy made a significant contribution to the community in the field of Jewish education. Ever since the split in the Congregation, each of the Synagogues had maintained an afternoon Hebrew school for the religious education of its members.<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, however, lessons were poorly attended. Only a few months after his having settled in Durban, the Rev. Levy estimated that of approximately 300 children eligible for classes, the weekday afternoon classes were attended by an average of no more than 30 pupils, whilst the classes held on Sundays attracted an average of 70 pupils.<sup>47</sup> He attributed this state of affairs to the lack of interest on the part of parents. Many parents encouraged their children to participate in other extra curricular activities of their schools rather than to attend the supplementary afternoon religious schools. This was to the detriment of their Hebrew and religious education. Furthermore, after a full day at

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, November 16, 1927, p.12.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, September 15, 1928, p.14. and September 20, 1928, p.8.

<sup>46</sup> See S.G. Cohen, pp.264-269 and 417-421.

<sup>47</sup> *Hasholom*, II No.10 (June, 1925), 3-4.



school the difficulties of travelling long distances in order to reach the lessons were often burdensome.<sup>48</sup>

In an attempt to overcome the problems besetting Hebrew education, the Rev. Levy augmented the facilities for better Jewish education by re-organising the classes at his Synagogue and by providing an additional member of the teaching staff.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore he secured permission from the headmasters of at least two of the schools in the town to meet with their Jewish pupils in order to enable him to conduct Hebrew language and Jewish history classes.<sup>50</sup>

The zeal and sense of urgency with which the Rev. Levy approached the problem of Jewish education was not shared by all his congregants. In fact his own Congregation did not see its way clear to sending a delegate to the first South African Conference on Jewish Education, that was held in Bloemfontein in August 1928. Only the Rev. H. Rubin, of the Durban New Hebrew Congregation, attended the Conference from Durban.<sup>51</sup> At this Conference, at which the South African Board of Jewish Education was created, the Revs. E.M. Levy, H. Rubin and Mr F.C. Hollander, were chosen as the Natal

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 18, 1925, p.31.

<sup>50</sup> *Hasholom*, V No.6 (December, 1927), 23. and *Ibid.*, VI No.1 (August, 1928), 26-27.

<sup>51</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 31, 1928, p.32.

representatives on the Executive.<sup>52</sup>

The Rev. Levy's ultimate objective, however, was the establishment of a United *Talmud Torah* for the entire Jewish community. As a first step towards realising this ambition the Rev. Levy directed his energies towards forming a Hebrew kindergarten in Durban.<sup>53</sup> With the financial assistance of Mr Moses Morrison, of Escombe, the support of the Durban Jewish Circle<sup>54</sup> and other Jewish bodies, the assistance of the Durban Hebrew Congregation, and the private subscriptions of ardent supporters, whose total promises amounted to £65 per month for twelve months, the dream of a Hebrew kindergarten became a reality.<sup>55</sup>

The kindergarten, which opened on July 28, 1929,<sup>56</sup> met on the lawns of the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue every morning except Saturday from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm.<sup>57</sup> To ensure attendance at the kindergarten the Rev. Levy and a group of volunteers arranged for the daily

<sup>52</sup> *Hasholom*, VI No.3 (October, 1928), 1-2.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, VI No.4 (November, 1928), 10-11.

<sup>54</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 51.

<sup>55</sup> "The Durban United Talmud Torah. The Young Idea Moulding" in *The Durban Hebrew Congregation Fiftieth Anniversary 1884-1934*, 5644-5694, p.37.

<sup>56</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 25, 1929, p.12.

<sup>57</sup> From an original notice announcing the opening of the kindergarten. In the possession of Mrs L. Cohen of Durban.

transport of the children.<sup>58</sup> Within two months there were twenty six young children attending the kindergarten.<sup>59</sup> By the time the pupils of the kindergarten presented their first Grand Sacred Concert and Display at the Railway Institute on December 6, 1929, under the direction of their teachers, the Misses L. and R. Levy, the number had risen to 34,<sup>60</sup> giving cause for much satisfaction.

For the Rev. Levy, as indeed for many members of the Jewish community, the continued existence of two Hebrew congregations in the town was felt to be most undesirable. Not only did it hamper the establishment of a united *Talmud Torah* but it also hindered the creation of a *Shechitah* Board, and divided an otherwise united and harmonious community. On *Yom Kippur* 1926, in a sermon from his pulpit, the Rev. Levy gave expression to this dissatisfaction by urging the two Synagogues to find a way of working as one institution.<sup>61</sup> This appeal was relayed to the members of the Durban New Hebrew Congregation by the Rev. Rubin, who read a message to his congregants from the Rev. Levy, in which he called for the amalgamation of the two Synagogues.<sup>62</sup> The

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 13, 1929, p.37.

<sup>60</sup> From the original concert programme. In the possession of Mrs L. Cohen of Durban.

<sup>61</sup> *Hasholom*, VI No.5 (October 15, 1926), 8 and 10.

<sup>62</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 6, 1927, p.36.

Rev. Levy's initiative not only aroused interest within the community, but also led to a number of meetings between representatives of the two congregations which, however, failed to bring about the desired union.<sup>63</sup>

This the Rev. Levy attributed to, "the unofficial harmony which constantly prevails between the two Councils and which deprives the amalgamation cause of any practical *raison d'etre*."<sup>64</sup>

Although the two Synagogues could no longer purport to represent different sections of the community,<sup>65</sup> they did reflect a difference in attitude which became apparent during the negotiations between the two Congregations in 1929. In that year a concrete step was taken in the direction of union by the formation of a joint committee with equal representation from each congregation which was charged with the task of finding a basis for union. The committee, which was made up of Messrs. S. Bloom (Chairman), S. Sevel and C. Lyons representing the Durban Hebrew Congregation, and Messrs E. Magid, S.A. Nathanson, F.M. Levy and H.L. Magid representing the Durban New Hebrew Congregation, met for the first time in the Synagogue Chambers St. Andrew's Street on Sunday, January 20.<sup>66</sup> On June 16, 1929, the

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, September 26, 1927, p.23.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Hasholom*, V No.4 (October, 1927), 1-2.

<sup>66</sup> *The Durban Hebrew Congregation* issued by the Durban United Hebrew Congregation 1952:5712 (Durban, 1952), p.20.

final joint report was signed and dated.<sup>67</sup> A week later, however, the Committee of the Durban Hebrew Congregation informed the secretary of the New Hebrew Congregation that it would be opposed to any provision being incorporated in the Draft Agreement which anticipated a possible dissolution of the proposed union. Whilst acknowledging that the basis of Union between the two Congregations was the need to provide a *Talmud Torah*, it did not believe that a time limit should be placed on the erection of a *Talmud Torah*. The Durban New Hebrew Congregation, which had initially split from the Mother Congregation, partly over dissatisfaction with the educational facilities provided for members' children, remained emphatic that unless within three years from the date of Union the erection of a *Talmud Torah* had been commenced, the foundation members of each Synagogue should have the right to vote for a dissolution.<sup>68</sup> For the New Hebrew Congregation, the primary motivation for union stemmed from a realisation of the benefits which would accrue to Durban Jewry, principally from the establishment of a united *Talmud Torah*. In order, therefore, to ensure that the promise of building a *Talmud Torah* was implemented, the New Hebrew Congregation

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<sup>67</sup>The Joint Agreement is in the Archives of the Council of Natal Jewry.

<sup>68</sup>In a letter from Mr H.L. Magid, Hon. Secretary of the Durban New Hebrew Congregation, to the Committee of the Durban Hebrew Congregation, dated June 11 1929. In the archives of the Council of Natal Jewry.

insisted that the clause allowing for dissolution of the Union remain.<sup>69</sup>

Having come so far the agreement fell away. The Rev. Levy nevertheless remained hopeful of seeing a union established. When, in 1929, he returned from a trip to Europe and Lithuania, where he was ordained a Rabbi, he again reiterated his appeal for the amalgamation of the two Congregations at a community reception given in his honour.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 28, 1929, p.33.

## CHAPTER V

THE DURBAN JEWISH CIRCLE : 1919 - 1929

During the war Durban Jewry had witnessed a movement of young men away from the town, many of whom had gone to serve in the different branches of the armed forces. A gap had thus emerged between the younger and older members of the community which had been aggravated by the general disorganisation of communal life.

At the beginning of 1919, when a number of these young men returned to the town, they were struck by the need for some organisation which would not only fulfill the social requirements of the youth of the community, but would also serve as a link between them and the older members.

Since the existing Jewish communal organisations were incapable of satisfying this need within the community, and as social discrimination against the Jews effectively excluded them from many existing clubs,<sup>1</sup> these young men who were sufficiently concerned sought a way to overcome the situation in which they found

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<sup>1</sup>The issue of social discrimination is alluded to above p.4.

themselves. For them the obvious way to ameliorate the existing conditions lay in the creation of a new society. As a first step in this direction a "Bachelor Dance" was held, at the suggestion of Marcus Lewis. In an attempt to reciprocate the hospitality that they had received at the hands of the older members of the community, the young men joined together and invited the whole of the Jewish community, in the name of the bachelors, to this dance which was held in the *Alexandra Hall*. "It proved a sociable affair, and opinions were expressed that a society should be formed to arrange such functions regularly."<sup>2</sup>

Whilst informal meetings were being held to decide on a future course of action, Max Wolpert, assisted by Carrie Emmanuel, issued a circular to the community which called for support for the establishment of a social guild or club. This circular,<sup>3</sup> which came to be known as the "blood, murder and thunder" circular, was the subject of heated debate at a meeting held a few days later on November 19, 1919 at the home of Mr Sol Moshal in Avondale Road. At this meeting, attended by Sol Moshal, Max Wolpert, Marcus Lewis, Mr and Mrs Bernard Kahn, Cecil Lyons, B. Shapiro, L. Moshal, B.H. Bloom, W. Cranko, E.S. Henochsberg and L. Miller, none of whom

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<sup>2</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 25.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in full in Arnold Miller, *Durban Jewish Club A History Issued on the Occasion of Its Silver Jubilee*, (Durban, May, 1956), p.6.



was more than 25 years of age, it was resolved to form a literary and music club to be called the Circle. Entrance fees were fixed at 2/6 for ladies and 5/- for men and subscriptions, payable monthly in advance, were set at 1/- for ladies and 2/6 for men. It was resolved furthermore that membership would be restricted to members of the Jewish persuasion.<sup>4</sup> A decision was also taken not to admit married people, "an exception being made in the case of Bernard Kahn and his wife, because he was so young and in our opinion shouldn't have been married so soon anyhow."<sup>5</sup> On this issue, however, the committee later relented and within three months the first married members were accepted.

Those present at this historic meeting proceeded to elect Sol Moshal as President and Max Wolpert as Hon. Secretary and Treasurer. A committee was appointed consisting of M. Lewis, B. Kahn, and W. Cranko.<sup>6</sup> At this inaugural meeting the first members were also elected. They were: the Misses Mann, Miller, (Mrs I. Greenberg), Woolf (Mrs C. Lyons), J. and E. and H. Blumenfeld (Mrs M. Wolpert), Bautzer (Mrs A. Kaplan), and Wolpert (Mrs M. Sack); Messrs H. Blumenfeld, S. Couzens, J. Robinson, J. Woolf and

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

N.A. Weinstein.<sup>7</sup>

On December 7, 1919, the first function to be given by the Circle, in the form of humorous readings from literature, was held at the residence of the president and was attended by the total membership of about one dozen.<sup>8</sup>

The provision of a central meeting place was a priority for the Executive of the Circle. After considerable difficulty, arrangements were made to hold meetings on Monday evenings at the *Central Tea Rooms*. In 1920 the meetings were moved to the *Anzac Tea Room*, and in the following year the Circle moved back to its original venue. At the beginning of 1922 a new home in the hall of the newly erected Railway Institute, at the corner of Aliwal and Pine Streets, was secured, and this remained the centre of Circle activities for almost a decade.<sup>9</sup>

At the inaugural meeting it was resolved that the Circle would meet every Monday night, and in time Monday night came to be known within the Jewish community as "Circle night."<sup>10</sup>

In the first year of its existence the Monday night

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 25.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, and Arnold Miller, pp.9 and 11.

<sup>10</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 25.

programme included musical recitals, debates, lectures, motor tours, moonlight cruises, concerts, hat debates, bridge drives, and book evenings.<sup>11</sup> These activities laid the ground plan and established a pattern for future Circle activities.

Although, as with any organisation, there were times of keen interest and times of extreme apathy on the part of its members, the Circle nevertheless obviously fulfilled a serious need in the communal life of Jewry in Durban. This was reflected in the increased membership and in the growth of the Circle in the decade following its establishment.

Membership grew from twelve in 1919 to 257 only five years later,<sup>12</sup> and by the time the Circle was celebrating the tenth anniversary of its establishment, it had a membership roll of 450.<sup>13</sup> An indication of the growth in Circle activities was the election of Sectional Sub-Committees in 1921. Although sub-committees had been chosen rather prematurely in 1919<sup>14</sup> the entertainment, dance, culture, dramatic, music and tennis sub-committees, elected at the Circle's second annual general meeting, fared far better.<sup>15</sup> With the passage of time and an

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<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>12</sup>*The Zionist Record*, July 31, 1924, p.58.

<sup>13</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), p.25.

<sup>14</sup>Arnold Miller, p.7.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p.9.

intensification of Circle activity additional sub-committees were formed. In 1923, the year in which the name of the Circle was changed to the Durban Jewish Circle,<sup>16</sup> a new sub-committee was founded to edit the organisation's house magazine. It first appeared in September 1923 under the designation of *Hasholem*,<sup>17</sup> which was later changed to *Hasholom*. From the time of its introduction the *Hasholom* concerned itself not only with Circle affairs, but was, as its logo proclaimed, "Devoted to the interests of Durban Jewry."<sup>18</sup> All communal organisations enjoyed the hospitality of its columns, whilst its editorials addressed themselves to the wider issues concerning the community and exerted considerable influence and authority.

1924 Witnessed the opening of the Circle's own tennis courts in Berea Road, just opposite Botanic Gardens Road,<sup>19</sup> a reflection in itself of the growth of this Section, and a year later a third tennis court was erected.<sup>20</sup> The founding of a Dramatic Section in 1925<sup>21</sup> aroused enormous interest, and the first production by this sectional committee was the presentation on

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>17</sup> *Hasholem*, 1 No.1 (September, 1923), p.1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Hasholom*, 1 No.8 (April, 1924), 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, II No.12 (August, 1925), 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, II No.9 (May, 1925), 7-8.

September 14 of Mrs Bertha Goudvis's one act comedy *A Husband for Rachel*.<sup>22</sup> Four years later the dramatic section staged its first three act play, A.A. Milne's *Belinda* which was regarded as "a red letter day in the Circle's 10th year."<sup>23</sup> Following on the creation of a Dramatic Section a Debating Section, run on Parliamentary lines, was formed in 1927,<sup>24</sup> and the first Circle Parliament opened in the Town Hall basement on June 16.<sup>25</sup>

At the initiative of Messrs J. Goldman and S. Isaacs a Circle Cricket Section was formed in 1929.<sup>26</sup> In the same year, a number of Jews, finding themselves excluded by virtue of their faith, from membership of existing golf clubs in the town,<sup>27</sup> formed themselves into a Golf Committee under the auspices of the Durban Jewish Circle.<sup>28</sup>

Whenever it was impractical to establish additional sub-committees to cater for the diverse interests of the Circle's membership, the Executive Committee gave its encouragement to these activities being catered for under the existing Sub-Committees. Thus in 1925 a Hebrew

<sup>22</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 9, 1925, p.19.

<sup>23</sup>*Hasholom*, VI No.11 (July, 1929), 7.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, IV No.11 (May, 1927), 6.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, V No.1 (July, 1927), 5.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, VI No.6 (January/February, 1929), 7.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, VII No.3 (December, 1929), 4.

<sup>28</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VIII No.1 (September, 1930), 47.

study class was inaugurated by the Circle,<sup>29</sup> which also gave its support to the formation of a Hebrew Speaking Society under its auspices.<sup>30</sup> For those desirous of functions devoted to Yiddish language and culture, the Circle made provision for the presentation of Yiddish evenings.<sup>31</sup> These functions not only gave the younger members an opportunity to encounter the world of the Yiddishists, but also extended to the older members of the community the chance to participate fully in Circle life.

From the outset, the Circle's view of itself had been a wide one, and in line with this attitude even those events of a strictly social nature, such as balls, dances and concerts, were made the vehicles for extensive fundraising, which was used by the Executive Committee for philanthropic purposes. From the proceeds of its dances and concerts the Circle contributed to the Ukranian War Orphans Fund,<sup>32</sup> and supported the three war orphans in Palestine whom it had adopted.<sup>33</sup> Through

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<sup>29</sup>*The Zionist Record*, February 27, 1925, p.23.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, September 3, 1926, p.26, December 31, 1926, p.11.

<sup>31</sup>*Hasholom*, III No.5 (February, 1926), 3., and *Ibid.*, IV No.1 (June 15, 1926), 4.

<sup>32</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, September 27, 1921, p.9. On the Orphan's Fund see below pp.98-101, and 135-137.

<sup>33</sup>*The Zionist Record*, November 21, 1924, p.22., February 27, 1925, p.23., April 8, 1925, p.38., *The Natal Mercury*, June 18, 1925, p.5., June 17, 1926, p.16.

concerts and bazaars the Circle demonstrated its support for the work of the Durban Jewish Benevolent Society<sup>34</sup> and the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild.<sup>35</sup> From 1927 the Circle joined with the Ladies' Guild and the Benevolent Society in presenting the annual July Ball, a highlight of the Durban social season.<sup>36</sup>

The Circle not only gave support to worthy charitable causes but came to embrace the whole range of communal interest in the town. In 1923, it established a bursary for a Jewish child tenable at any high school in Natal;<sup>37</sup> it encouraged Hebrew education by sponsoring an essay competition,<sup>38</sup> and by presenting prizes to the pupils of both *Talmud Torahs*.<sup>39</sup> The Circle also supported the

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, August 10, 1922, p.9., June 7, 1923, p.12., June 5, 1923, p.10., *Hasholom*, V No.4 (October, 1927), 2 and 4., *Ibid.*, V No.8 (March, 1928), 12., *Ibid.*, V No.11 (June, 1928), 5., *Ibid.*, V No.12 (July, 1928), 5., *The Zionist Record* November 23, 1928, p.22., *Hasholom*, VI No.10 (June, 1929), 20. On the Benevolent Society see below pp.125-128.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, V No.6 (December, 1927), 2., *Ibid.*, V No.8 (March, 1928), 12., *Ibid.*, V no.11 (June, 1928), 5., *Ibid.*, V No.12 (July, 1928), 4-5., *The Zionist Record*, November 23, 1928, p.22., *Hasholom*, VI No.10 (June, 1929), 20. On the Ladies' Guild see below pp.128-133.

<sup>36</sup> Arnold Miller, p.26.

<sup>37</sup> *Hasholom*, I No.4 (December, 1923), 2-3.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, II No.1 (September, 1924), 7-8., *Ibid.*, II No.3 (November, 1924), 2-3., *Ibid.*, III No.1 (September, 1925), 4., *Ibid.*, IV No.5 (October 15, 1926), 16-18., *Ibid.*, V No.4 (October, 1927), 5.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, II No.4 (January, 1925), 2., *The Zionist Record*, December 18, 1925, p.39., and December 30, 1927, p.24.

Hebrew kindergarten,<sup>40</sup> and agitated for a united *Talmud Torah*.<sup>41</sup>

Not only did the Culture Section present a varied programme of educational value, but through the Circle, facilities for adult education were enhanced by the creation of a Jewish library, which was initiated in 1924.<sup>42</sup> Arrangements were made with the Mayor and the Public Librarian to house the Jewish library in a specially reserved section of the Public Library.<sup>43</sup> Within a few years the number of books in the Circle's Jewish library ran to several hundred.<sup>44</sup>

The Circle's interest in the youth of the community was reflected in the interest shown by the Executive in the activities of the Durban Young Israel Society. Hampered in its development by a lack of interest and the absence of a suitable meeting place, the Young Israel Society was affiliated to the Durban Jewish Circle in 1925. Whilst remaining a separate entity, the Society's members were given representation, without voting powers, on the Circle's Sectional Committees and were free to attend Circle functions on the same basis as

<sup>40</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 51.

<sup>41</sup> *Hasholom*, VI No.3 (October, 1928), 8., *Ibid* ., VI No.4 (November, 1928), 10-11.

<sup>42</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 31, 1924, p.58.

<sup>43</sup> *Hasholom*, II No.3 (November, 1924), 6.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, VI No.4 (November, 1928), 10.



other members. At the same time the Circle appointed delegates to the Society's committee, thereby enabling the Circle to give assistance and direction to the youth in their work.<sup>45</sup> The Circle also provided funds to support the Jewish Boy Scout Troop and made it possible to send a local Jewish scout to the great Jamboree.<sup>46</sup>

In the realm of synagogal affairs, Circle members were active in the work of both Congregations, whilst wholeheartedly supporting efforts towards achieving a union of the two Hebrew Congregations.<sup>47</sup>

Although the Circle was unwilling to affiliate to the South African Zionist Federation, because it was neither essentially a Zionist organisation nor wished to rival the existing Zionist body, it nevertheless gave its full moral support to the Zionist work undertaken in the town. It not only aided the many campaigns launched in Durban,<sup>48</sup> but also provided a venue for both local and

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<sup>45</sup> Arnold Miller p.16. On the Young Israel Society see below pp.119-123.

<sup>46</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 29. On the Troop see below pp.63-67.

<sup>47</sup> *Hasholom*, VI No.5 (October, 1926), 8 and 10., *Ibid.*, V No.4 (October, 1927), 1-2., *Ibid.*, V No.5 (November, 1927), 1-2., *Ibid.*, VI No.9 (May, 1929), 1-2.

<sup>48</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 29.

visiting Zionist speakers to articulate the ideals and principles of their Movement.<sup>49</sup>

The absence of a representative body capable of speaking on behalf of Durban Jewry, led to the Circle, which was the most widely embracing of all the communal organisations, assuming this role. Whether laying wreaths on the Cenotaph,<sup>50</sup> working to prevent discrimination against Jewish children applying for bursaries,<sup>51</sup> preventing the conducting of school classes on the Jewish Sabbath,<sup>52</sup> or helping to raise funds for worthy causes such as the purchase of radium for the treatment of cancer,<sup>53</sup> the Circle acted on behalf of Durban Jewry as a whole.

In 1923 the Circle affiliated itself to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and at subsequent Conferences of the Board it put forward resolutions virtually on behalf of Durban Jewry.<sup>54</sup> Concerned by

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<sup>49</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 17, 1924, p.8., *The Zionist Record*, November 21, 1924, p.22., *Hasholom*, II No.7 (March, 1925), 4., *The Zionist Record*, (December 18, 1925, p.39., April 29, 1926, p.25., *Hasholom*, IV No.1 (June 15, 1926), 20., *Ibid.*, IV No.6 (November 15, 1926), 14-15.

<sup>50</sup> Arnold Miller, p.12., *The Natal Mercury* March 8, 1926, p.6., *Hasholom*, VI No.4 (November, 1928), 15.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, IV No.9 (March 15, 1927), 1-2., *Ibid* V No.7 (January/February, 1928), 1-2.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, IV No.11 (May, 1927), 20 and 2.

<sup>53</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 27, 1929, p.14. and *Hasholom*, VII No.3 (December, 1929), 25.

<sup>54</sup> *Hashalom* [XLII No.3] (November, 1963), 11.

anti-Semitic incidents in Durban the Jewish Ladies' Guild turned for guidance to the Circle, who in turn referred the matter to the Board of Deputies. From discussions with the Board it was realised that the South African Jewish community had no statistics with which to refute the allegations of anti-Semites. Accordingly at the Board of Deputies Congress held in 1927, Mr H. Moss-Morris moved, in the name of the Durban Jewish Circle, that a Statistical Bureau be established. This resolution led to the formation of the Jewish Historical Society, a branch of which was formed under the Circle's direction in Durban. It served as the forerunner of the Statistical Committee and Public Relations Committee of the Board and its constituents.<sup>55</sup> The Circle could thus claim with some justification to have extended its influence beyond the community in which it operated, and into the wider Jewish community of which it was an active part.

#### THE DURBAN JEWISH INSTITUTE

The call for a permanent home for the Circle was made at the Society's annual general meeting in 1920.<sup>56</sup> It was echoed repeatedly thereafter in the face of the

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<sup>55</sup> Arnold Miller, p.17.

<sup>56</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 33.

difficulties encountered by the Executive in finding a satisfactory venue for Circle activities. Even when the Circle came to be accommodated in the hall of the Railway Institute the problem persisted as functions were limited to Monday evenings, and committee meetings had to be held at other venues.

The support that the idea of a building scheme enjoyed amongst the members of the Circle, contrasted sharply with a body of opinion within the community, which argued that the creation of a *Talmud Torah* or a communal hall, should take precedence over the erection of a permanent home for the Circle. Those most sceptical were largely older members of the community, an exception being Mr Hirsch Hillman, who, in 1924, wrote to the Circle Executive and promised them his active support.

Arising from Mr Hillman's letter, a sub-committee consisting of Messrs S. Moshal, H. Moss-Morris, B. Kahn and C. Lyons was formed to report on Mr Hillman's proposals.<sup>57</sup> In its report the committee outlined its idea for a central building capable of serving as a meeting place for the community, which it proposed should be called the Durban Jewish Institute. Although it was intended essentially to provide a home for the Circle, the Committee proposed to make the Institute a communal, rather than a Circle, undertaking by inviting all Jewish

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<sup>57</sup> Arnold Miller, pp.15-16.

institutions to participate in its development and control.<sup>58</sup>

At the beginning of 1926 the Circle Executive appointed a Home Building Committee, chaired by Mr Hillman, to draw up a definite plan for the building campaign. By arrangement with the Executive it was agreed to have the appeal for the community's support made under the auspices of the Circle, which would also govern and administer the proposed Institute, subject to the Constitution which had yet to be prepared. The task of drawing up a constitution was assigned to a special sub-committee led by Mr Moss-Morris. To finance the scheme a target of £15,000 was set. To raise this amount it was proposed to enlist Foundation Members who would take up debentures of £60 for men and £30 for women, and £300 for organisations, payable over five years.<sup>59</sup>

On April 19, 1926, a special general meeting of Circle members was held to discuss the scheme and to examine the proposed constitution. Among the resolutions which were passed, was one which gave the Executive authority to contribute a sum of £1,200 towards the Institute.

The constitution which was adopted gave the community a considerable say in the control of the Institute, whilst at the same time it allowed the Circle

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

to assume the routine management of the scheme. The Council of Control was made up of a representative appointed by each of the Synagogues, the Hebrew Order of David, F.C. Hollander Lodge, and three representatives appointed by the Circle. In addition there was a chairman and vice-chairman who remained on the Council for a period of ten years. This Council was responsible for the collection of funds, the administration of the capital assets, and policy matters generally. A Committee of Management was made responsible for the running of the premises.<sup>60</sup>

The first Council of Control, which also acted as the Committee of Management, consisted of Mr H. Hillman, Chairman; Mr F.C. Hollander, Vice-Chairman; Messrs S. Bloom, representing the Durban Hebrew Congregation; H.L. Magid, the Durban New Hebrew Congregation; L.M. Braham, Hebrew Order of David; H. Moss-Morris, C. Lyons and S. Moshal, Durban Jewish Circle.<sup>61</sup>

On October 13, 1926 the first meeting of the Foundation Members was held. Although there were a few members who expressed criticism of aspects of the Constitution, the overwhelming majority was nevertheless, satisfied with the great progress which was being made. In only a very short space of time 150 members had already been enrolled, and over £8,000 had been subscribed

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21. On the Hebrew Order of David see below pp.72-78.

<sup>61</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 35.

of which over £1,000 had actually been collected.

To assist the Council of Control to find a suitable site for the Institution, a Site and Building Committee was appointed, whilst a Propaganda Committee was set up to obtain further Foundation Members.<sup>62</sup>

By the time that the second general meeting of Foundation Members took place on June 28, 1927, the general progress that was recorded provided sufficient justification for the election of the first Committee of Management. The Committee was made up of Mr C. Lyons, Chairman; Mr L.M. Braham, Vice-Chairman; Mr H. Brown, Hon. Treasurer; Mr I. Smith, Hon. Secretary; Messrs W. Cranko, M. Gevisser, J. Green, E.S. Henochsberg, H.C. Isaacs, J.L. Jacobson, A.J. Lipinski, A. Ritte, T. Schloss, M. Wolpert, Committee.<sup>63</sup>

In their search for a suitable piece of ground the Site and Building Committee inspected almost every available piece of ground and a full report on each was put before the Committee of Management. The choice came to lie between a town scheme, on freehold property, on which only a Club House could be built, or a country scheme on Durban Corporation leasehold land, on which a club house and sports grounds could be erected.<sup>64</sup> Since

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<sup>62</sup>*Hasholom*, IV No.6 (November 15th 1926), 22-23.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, V No.1 (July, 1927), 6.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, V No.3 (September, 1927, Special *Rosh Hashonah* Number), 23.

a site in the centre of town was beyond the Institute's limited means, increasing attention came to be directed to the country scheme.

At a special general meeting of the Institute held on November 27, 1928, the Council of Control and Committee of Management were authorised to conduct negotiations with the Durban Corporation for the acquisition of a lease of a piece of land, of approximately three acres, situated in Old Fort Road, for a minimum period of 50 years, upon terms and conditions to be agreed upon with the Corporation.<sup>65</sup> Some reservation was, however, expressed at the meeting over the proposed site, which was in a most underdeveloped area, and over the question of building on leasehold land.<sup>66</sup> Others shared the vision of Mr F.C. Hollander, who correctly foresaw, "that the Old Fort Road would in a short time become the main approach to the Beach from the residential parts of Durban."<sup>67</sup>

Not long after the negotiations with the Town Council were completed,<sup>68</sup> the target of £15,000 was realised,<sup>69</sup> and attention now came to be focused on the scheme for the proposed building. Messrs Obel & Grant were

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, V No.5 (December, 1928), 13-14.

<sup>66</sup> Arnold Miller, p.22.

<sup>67</sup> *Hasholom*, VI No.5 (December, 1928), 13-14.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, VI No.6 (January/February, 1929), 18.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, VI No.8 (April, 1929, *Pesach* Number), 18 and 20.



appointed architects to the Institute with Mr Wallace Paton as Consulting Architect.<sup>70</sup> Preliminary plans envisaged a two storey building that included a library, cloakrooms, gymnasium, several card rooms, a ladies' parlour, billiard room, offices, kitchen and storeroom on the ground floor. A main hall occupied the first floor and a supper room, tea lounge, buffet and kitchen completed the rest of the plan.<sup>71</sup>

When the question of cost was more closely investigated, however, it was found to exceed by too big a margin the sum originally intended to be spent. On the initiative of Mr Hillman rough plans were drawn up of a single storey structure that contained everything shown in the double storey building that had previously been accepted. Mr Hillman's plan, which had the advantage of being within the limits of expenditure, was adopted,<sup>72</sup> and at the end of 1929 the dream of a home for the Durban Jewish Institute stood on the threshold of becoming a reality.

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<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, VI No.10 (June, 1929), 22.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, VI No.12 (August, 1929), 26.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, VII No.2 (November, 1929), 31.

## CHAPTER VI

GIVING PURPOSE TO LEISURE TIME

The varied interests of the different sections of the Jewish community in post-war Durban found expression not only through the Durban Jewish Circle, but also through involvement in other organisations. Although some of these foundered after only a few years, for as long as they remained active they contributed to the diversity of Jewish communal life and benefitted those whom they attracted into the ranks of their membership.

## THE 22nd TROOP OF JEWISH BOY SCOUTS

The 22nd Troop of Jewish Boy Scouts was formed largely through the efforts of the Rev. E.M. Levy, a former scoutmaster, and a patron of the Durban and District Boy Scouts Association,<sup>1</sup> who believed that the Scout movement could serve as a vehicle for instilling Judaism into the Jewish boys.<sup>2</sup> Together with Mr E.S. Henochsberg,

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<sup>1</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, October 28, 1925, p.12.

<sup>2</sup>*The Zionist Record*, November 6, 1925, p.12.

who was well known in Durban Scouting circles, the Rev. Levy aroused the interest of the pupils of the Hebrew schools in scouting. With the arrival in Durban from Bloemfontein of Scoutmaster K. Rosendorff the troop was established in October 1925.<sup>3</sup>

The troop, which met each Saturday evening at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, enjoyed considerable support, and before long was 35 strong.<sup>4</sup> In 1926 as new recruits further swelled the size of the troop<sup>5</sup> a Wolf Cub Pack was formed to cater for younger boys.<sup>6</sup>

The progress of the 22nd Judean Troop was watched by the Jewish community with considerable interest, and members of the community assisted the Scout and Cub masters in their work. As a prize for the best all round Scout for a period of three months Mr P.H. Manham presented a specially carved stave to the Troop.<sup>7</sup> Mr L. Hirschfield, a member of the St. John's Ambulance Association, who served as an instructor in first aid for the Troop,<sup>8</sup> presented a cup and medal for inter-patrol

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, December 18, 1925, p.39.

<sup>5</sup> In March 1926 four patrols were formed (*The Natal Mercury*, March 25, 1926, p.12.). A few months later the increase in membership necessitated an alteration to the patrols. (*Ibid.*, July 1, 1926, p.19.)

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, April 15, 1926, p.7. and April 29, 1926, p.7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, May 27, 1926, p.21.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, July 23, 1926, p.9., October 7, 1926, p.17., and November 26, 1926, p.23.

competition and individual competition.<sup>9</sup> In his capacity as Troop Chaplain<sup>10</sup> the Rev. Menachemson lectured at Scout meetings.<sup>11</sup> In 1928 together with Miss T. Chaikin and Messrs A. Zaidel, J. Meyer, E.M. Hanson and L. Brewer, the Rev. Menachemson also formed a committee to arrange a concert, organised by Miss Grace Brewer, to raise funds to send a member of the Troop to the 1929 Scout Jamboree.<sup>12</sup> Free swimming tuition was given to the Scouts by Miss L. Cohen<sup>13</sup> and funds were provided by the Durban Jewish Circle to support the Judean Troop.<sup>14</sup>

Alongside the usual activities associated with Scouting, the 22nd Judean Troop reflected their distinctly Jewish character by their involvement in communal activities. The Troop annually participated in services held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue,<sup>15</sup> and made regular visits to Jewish patients at Addington Hospital.<sup>16</sup> They also formed a guard of honour when the

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, March 9, 1928, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, October 1, 1926, p.6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, March 9, 1928, p.5.

<sup>12</sup> *Hasholom*, V No.11 (June, 1928), 18.

<sup>13</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 19, 1928, p.20.

<sup>14</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 29.

<sup>15</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 10, 1925, p.23., March 25, 1927, p.19., and December 10, 1928, p.11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, November 10, 1927, p.22.

prominent Zionists Nahum Sokolow and later Col. F. Kisch visited the town,<sup>17</sup> and to mark the tenth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration they held their own celebrations.<sup>18</sup> Members of the Troop also frequently assisted at Circle functions.<sup>19</sup>

Notwithstanding the support that it enjoyed from the community the 22nd Judean Troop failed to hold the interest of its members, and its numbers steadily diminished from nearly 40 in 1927,<sup>20</sup> to fifteen some seventeen months later.<sup>21</sup> A similar reduction in membership was experienced by the Wolf Cub Pack, which, although never more than thirty in number,<sup>22</sup> was reduced to twenty Cubs by 1929.<sup>23</sup> Shortly after sending Scout Gerald Lyons to represent the Troop at the 1929 Jamboree,<sup>24</sup> the Troop apparently ceased functioning. In October the following year, at the annual meeting of the Durban and District Boy Scouts Association, the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, June 14, 1926, p.11. and *The Zionist Record*, June 15, 1928, p.7.

<sup>18</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 3, 1927, p.7.

<sup>19</sup> *Hasholom*, IV No.2 (July 15th, 1926), 12-13. and *Ibid.*, VI No.2 (September, 1928, Special *Rosh Hashonah* Number), 29.

<sup>20</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 13, 1927, p.17.

<sup>21</sup> *Hasholom*, VI No.7 (March, 1929), 17.

<sup>22</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 10, 1927, p.18.

<sup>23</sup> *Hasholom*, VI No.7 (March, 1929), 17.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, VI No.11 (July, 1929), 7.

closure of the Judean Troop was officially reported.<sup>25</sup>

#### THE 4th DURBAN JEWISH GIRL GUIDES COMPANY

A natural outcome of the initial success of the Judean Scouts was the establishment of a Jewish Company of Girl Guides. In a ceremony at the schoolroom of the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue the first members of the 4th Durban Jewish Girl Guides Company were enrolled by the Commissioner for Natal in July 1927.<sup>26</sup> The creation of the 12th Durban Jewish Brownies Pack followed a short time later.<sup>27</sup> During 1927 the Jewish Guides under Misses R. Green and Chaiten learnt all aspects of Guiding. In keeping with the distinctly Jewish character of the Company, the girls were also addressed by the Rev. Menachemson,<sup>28</sup> were taken to see a marriage ceremony at the Park Street Synagogue,<sup>29</sup> and were taught Hebrew songs.<sup>30</sup> Together with the Jewish Scouts the Guides of the 4th Durban Jewish Company also held a highly successful concert and dance at the home of

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<sup>25</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 29, 1930, p.24.

<sup>26</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 29, 1927, p.24.

<sup>27</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 2, 1927, p.18.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

Dr and Mrs M. Witkin in September 1927 in aid of Company funds.<sup>31</sup> In 1928 the Jewish Brownies and Guides joined with the Judean Scouts and Cubs in forming the guard of honour on the arrival of Col. Kisch<sup>32</sup> and participated in the parade at the *Chanukah* service at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>33</sup>

Hampered in their progress by insufficient encouragement from the parents of eligible members and by their inability to secure a permanent home,<sup>34</sup> the Jewish Company and Pack took on a new lease of life in 1930 under the direction of Miss Leah Magnus and her assistant Miss Silpert who not only found them a suitable meeting place,<sup>35</sup> but also placed the Company on a sound footing.<sup>36</sup> By the following year, however, the Jewish Girl Guide Company, and **Brownies** Pack had ceased to be operative.

#### THE DURBAN JEWISH MUSICAL SOCIETY

Arising from a desire to provide opportunities for

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, September 30, 1927, p.6.

<sup>32</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 15, 1928, p.7.

<sup>33</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 10, 1928, p.11.

<sup>34</sup> *Hasholom*, VI No.7 (March, 1929), 17.

<sup>35</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 6, 1930, p.6.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, October 3, 1920, p.6.

Jewish fellowship amongst those interested in musical matters and to cultivate a familiarity with Jewish music, the Rev. E.M. Levy took steps, in 1927, to establish the Durban Jewish Musical Society.<sup>37</sup> Instead of becoming a Musical Section of the Durban Jewish Circle, as was expected by the Circle Executive, with whom the Rev. Levy had first discussed this project, the Jewish Musical Society was formed instead as a separate and distinct society.<sup>38</sup> Whilst the reason for this development remains unclear it would appear to have been the possible result of a difference of opinion between the Rabbi and the Circle Executive. Membership of the society was fixed at 10/6 per annum, and the first committee included the Rev. E.M. Levy as President, the Rev. N. Menachemson as Treasurer, Mr Joseph Cowen, of the Durban Orchestra, as Hon. Conductor and Mr Isidore Rothstein and Miss Rita Feinberg as Joint Hon. Secretaries.<sup>39</sup> Membership of the new Society rapidly increased.<sup>40</sup> The orchestra, made up of Miss C. Rothstein (piano), Mr J. Rothstein (violin), Miss Magnus (violin), Mr Kaplan (violin), Mr Joseph Cohen (violin), Miss Victoria Foote A.T.C.L., Miss Rachel Cohen, A.T.C.L., Master Roberts (cellist), and the Rev. E.M. Levy

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<sup>37</sup> *Hasholom*, V No.3 (September, 1927, Special *Rosh Hashonah* Number), 16.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, V No.6 (December, 1927), 13-14.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 2, 1927, p.29.



(violin),<sup>41</sup> met each Sunday morning for practice, which was at first held in the *Park Gala Hall*,<sup>42</sup> and later at the Synagogue classrooms, St. Andrew's Street.<sup>43</sup>

Almost immediately after its formation the orchestra participated in the *Chanukah* service of the Durban Hebrew Congregation.<sup>44</sup> Thereafter it played at the special meeting held for the children at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue in June 1928, that was addressed by the Zionist leader Col. Kisch,<sup>45</sup> at the Herzl Memorial Service,<sup>46</sup> and the *Chanukah* service<sup>47</sup> held in the same Synagogue in that year.

After 1928 no more is heard of the Musical Society which possibly disbanded with the departure of the Rev. Levy, who spent the early part of 1929 abroad studying for his rabbinic ordination. Members of the orchestra, however, as the Circle had originally suggested, later came to be absorbed into the orchestra of the Jewish Club, into which the Circle later developed, and were amongst the first members of the Club's

<sup>41</sup> *Hasholom*, V No.9 (April, 1928), 13.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, V No.8 (March, 1928), 17.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, V No.9 (April, 1928), 13.

<sup>44</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 30, 1927, p.24.

<sup>45</sup> From an original programme from the meeting. In the possession of Mrs L. Cohen of Durban.

<sup>46</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 27, 1928, p.20.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, December 28, 1928, p.18.

Musical Section formed in 1932.<sup>48</sup>

THE SHIELD OF DAVID VAT OF THE ANCIENT ORDER OF  
FROTHBLOWERS

In 1928 a Jewish Ladies' Vat of the Ancient Order of Frothblowers was established in Durban.<sup>49</sup> Called the Shield of David Vat it operated under the direction of its first President, Mrs D. Weiss, as the Jewish section of this large charitable organisation and sought to raise funds specifically for charities connected with Jewish children.<sup>50</sup> Although reportedly quite active<sup>51</sup> its work was little publicised, except for the party at the home of Mr and Mrs H. Linder<sup>52</sup> in 1928, and the dance held the following year at the residence of Mr and Mrs M. Stone.<sup>53</sup> The money which was raised at these two functions, and which amounted to £25, was forwarded to the Seaside Fund inaugurated by the South African Jewish Orphanage,<sup>54</sup> and marks the Vat's only recorded contribution to a Jewish

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<sup>48</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.8 (April, 1932), 14.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, V No.7 (January/February, 1928), 17.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, VI No.3 (October, 1928), 13.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 4, 1929, p.29.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, November 1, 1929, p.26.

charity.

#### THE HEBREW ORDER OF DAVID

An important addition to the communal institutions of the Jews of the town was the creation of a Durban lodge of the Hebrew Order of David<sup>55</sup> in January 1925. This Order, which had been established in Johannesburg in 1904, sought to raise and further the social, moral and intellectual status of its members and to foster a feeling of brotherhood and mutual aid between members. It provided free medical aid, with reduced rates for dependants, assisted financially during sickness, disablement and distress, provided funds towards the payment of funeral expenses, and provided at death, a definite sum to the widow or dependants of the late member. The Order furthermore assisted kindred

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<sup>55</sup> Founded in England in 1896 the Hebrew Order of Druids sought to provide relief and medical assistance, to offer relief during the period of confined mourning and to provide a sum of money on a member's death. On November 27, 1904, the Dr Herzl Lodge, the first South African branch of the Order was established in Johannesburg. In 1921 the name of the organisation was changed to the Hebrew Order of David. (Sheila M. Aronstam, *The Historical Development of Jewish Welfare in the Republic of South Africa*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of the Orange Free State, Bloemfontein, 1967), pp.208-209.

institutions, and granted aid to benevolent and charitable causes whenever advisable.<sup>56</sup>

The formation of a Durban lodge of the Order dates from 1924 when Joseph Distiller, the founder of the Order, met with the Rev. Levy and other interested individuals during a visit to the town.<sup>57</sup> Further meetings followed at which foundation members were enrolled and the aims and objects of the Order were outlined by Mr Ludwig Frankel, a delegate of the Grand Lodge in Johannesburg.<sup>58</sup> On January 25, 1925, the Durban lodge of the Hebrew Order of David was consecrated in the presence of six of the most prominent members of the Grand Lodge, including the Grand President J. Distiller. Thereafter the first officers, the Rev. E.M. Levy, President; J. Rothstein, Vice-President; A. Berman, Treasurer; A.J. Lipinski, Hon. Secretary; E.L. Greenberg, Master of Ceremonies; M. Ettman, Inner Guard; Max Woolfson and P. Rothstein, Book Examiners; the Rev. H. Rubin, S. Sevel and M. Moss, Trustees; B. Fisher, W. Levy, J. Greene, L.M. Braham, S.B. Lazarus,

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<sup>56</sup> Pamphlet *H.O. of Druids (Friendly Society) Constitution and Laws*. Johannesburg, 1916. In the Archives of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Johannesburg. Cited in *Ibid.*, p.209.

<sup>57</sup> *Hashalom*, XXXIII No.2 (October, 1954), 19.

<sup>58</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 24, 1924, p.9. and December 30, 1924, p.8. According to Mr Frankel, who was at that time secretary of the Sir Harry Graumann Lodge, Benoni, his visit to Durban in the interests of the Order preceded that of Joseph Distiller. (*Hashalom*, XXXIII No.4 (December, 1954), 17.

N.B. Stern and J. Shapiro, Committee; Messrs Rev. Menachemson, Winberg, Levine and Cohen, Marshals; Mr Foote, Recorder; were installed.<sup>59</sup> In recognition, not merely of his services to Jewry, but to Natal as well, it was unanimously decided to name the new lodge the F.C. Hollander Lodge.<sup>60</sup> In keeping with the custom of the Order the new Lodge agreed to become a constituent body of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.<sup>61</sup>

Any doubts that might initially have existed as to whether a branch of the Hebrew Order of David would meet with success in Durban proved to be entirely groundless, for during the first six months of the existence of the F.C. Hollander Lodge, its progress, both from the point of view of members and keenness, was most favourable.<sup>62</sup> The enthusiasm shown for the Order by Durban Jewry was so great that it soon spread to Pietermaritzburg. After a meeting addressed by the Rev. Levy and Mr A.J. Lipinski, the President and Secretary of the F.C. Hollander Lodge, Maritzburg Jewry decided, practically unanimously, to form a lodge.<sup>63</sup>

In view of the favourable response to the creation of a lodge of the Hebrew Order of David in Durban, it

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<sup>59</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 28, 1925, p.8.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *South African Jewish Chronicle*, January 30, 1925, pp.96-98, 111-113.

<sup>62</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 1, 1925, p.20.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, March 14, 1925, p.8.

is somewhat surprising that it was only twenty years after the Order's founding in Johannesburg that the F.C. Hollander Lodge came to be formed. This might possibly have been due to the fact that the purpose for which the Order was originally conceived, namely a mutual aid and sick benefit society, had far less relevance to the situation of Jews in Durban than it had for communities in Johannesburg. Many of the Jewish immigrants drawn to South Africa had come to settle in the Transvaal, where social and economic conditions were particularly severe in the period following the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War. It was therefore among these people that the need for such an Order would first have been felt. By the time that the Hebrew Order of David came to Durban the original purpose of the Order had been extended to include cultural pursuits and thus had greater relevance for the men of the Durban Jewish community. At the same time, however, the Order naturally provided far more than a forum for social and cultural intercourse, which was, in large measure, satisfactorily catered for by the Durban Jewish Circle, and was far more than a vehicle for benevolent work, which was already undertaken by existing welfare bodies. The scope of the Order's activities, in fact embraced both intellectual and benevolent activity, and at the same time it fostered a feeling of brotherhood amongst its members at a time when South African Jewry had few binding links of a fraternal nature.

Constituted as it was in the form of lodges, with distinctive ritual and regalia, the Hebrew Order of David no doubt had a strong attraction to the Jews of Durban who had long been associated with the Masonic Craft,<sup>64</sup> which was similarly structured, and who lived in a town in which organisations such as the Sons of England, which ran on parallel lines, enjoyed considerable popularity.

In Durban the Hebrew Order of David drew its support from among the members of all existing communal bodies, but also successfully brought to its ranks a number of young Jewish men who had hitherto been estranged from Jewish social life.<sup>65</sup> Members of the lodge not only benefitted from the medical and monetary assistance that was extended to all brethren, but also gained considerably from the lodge's varied programme of social activities that included bridge drives,<sup>66</sup> socials,<sup>67</sup> mock trials,<sup>68</sup> picnics,<sup>69</sup> soirees<sup>70</sup> and lectures.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> S.G. Cohen, *A History of the Jews of Durban 1825-1918*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban, 1977), pp.312-313.

<sup>65</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 18, 1925, p.31. and September 8, 1926, p.42.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, August 6, 1926, p.16.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, November 19, 1926, p.25.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, December 31, 1926, p.11.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, September 2, 1927, p.25.

<sup>71</sup> *Hasholom*, VII No.3 (December, 1929), 31. and *Ibid.*, VII No.4 (February, 1930), 17.

Through membership of the lodge bretheren were also able to play a full and active part in Jewish communal life. Shortly after its founding the lodge investigated the whole question of *Kosher* meat in the town.<sup>72</sup> It was represented at a meeting at which a Durban branch of the South African Jewish Orphanage was formed,<sup>73</sup> and it contributed funds to a kindergarten in Palestine.<sup>74</sup> It was under the auspices of the lodge that a welcome was given to Dr Reuben Brainin and his son Joseph who visited Durban in 1929, in connection with the scheme to settle Jews on the land in Russia.<sup>75</sup> At public meetings convened by the lodge the community was afforded an opportunity to discuss problems confronting Durban Jewry, and matters such as Jewish education and the necessity of a *Kosher* kitchen at Addington Hospital were aired and debated.<sup>76</sup>

Fraternal bonds with bretheren of the Order were maintained through the participation by members of the Grand Lodge in the annual installation ceremony of

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, III No.3 (November, 1925), 4.

<sup>73</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 1, 1926, p.24.

<sup>74</sup> *Hasholom*, V No.7 (January/February, 1928), 9.

<sup>75</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 1, 1929, p.24.

<sup>76</sup> *Hasholom*, V No.9 (April, 1928), 13., *Ibid.*, V No.12 (July, 1928), 11 and 14., *Ibid.*, VI No.7 (March, 1929), 16.



officers of the Durban lodge,<sup>77</sup> and through the National Conferences of the Order at which Durban was always represented.<sup>78</sup> Of particular importance was the mutual co-operation between the F.C. Hollander Lodge and the Sir Matthew Nathan Lodge in Pietermaritzburg.<sup>79</sup> This not only furthered the ideal of brotherhood within the Order, but also served to strengthen the ties between the two principal Jewish communities in Natal.

In 1929, less than five years after its establishment, the F.C. Hollander Lodge No.XI of the Hebrew Order of David could justifiably claim, "its rightful place among the rest of Durban's Jewish Institutions, proud of its ideals and conscious of its achievements."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 1, 1925, p.20., March 2, 1926, p.8., January 31, 1927, p.11., August 11, 1928, p.17.

<sup>78</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 27, 1927, p.17., *Hasholom* VI No.8 (April, 1929, *Pesach* Number), 21-22.

<sup>79</sup> *Hasholom*, V No.8 (March, 1928), 13., *Ibid.*, V No.8 (July, 1928), 11 and 14., *Ibid.*, VI No.2 (September, 1928, Special *Rosh Hashonah* Number), 26-28., *Ibid.*, VI No.11 (July, 1929), 25.

<sup>80</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 47.

## CHAPTER VII

ZIONISM : 1919 -1929

As has been noted by Gideon Shimoni, "In the comparative perspective of the English speaking countries there is no more distinct feature of South African Jewry than its overwhelmingly Zionist character."<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon has been ascribed to a number of different circumstances. Foremost among them is the predominantly Lithuanian character of the Jewish population which endowed a number of distinctive characteristics, including Zionism, to the Jewish community which emerged in South Africa.<sup>2</sup> As Shimoni is at pains to point out, however, a small but considerably influential portion of the community was Anglo-Jewish or German in origin.<sup>3</sup> This significant portion of the country's Jewish population had not only influenced the form of the community<sup>4</sup> but had also provided many of the early leaders of the local Zionist movement.<sup>5</sup> Contrary to

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<sup>1</sup>Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967*, (Cape Town, 1980), p.27.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p.5.

the pattern which had emerged in the United States and Great Britain where opposition to Zionism had emanated from highly acculturated Jews,<sup>6</sup> in South Africa the corresponding section of the Jewish community, namely the Anglo-Jewish or German Jewish elements, had not, as has been intimated, conformed on the whole to that model.

The available evidence would therefore appear to substantiate Shimoni's hypothesis that "the extraordinary pre-eminence of Zionism was a function not of the *Litvak* [Lithuanian] legacy alone, but also of the social environment."<sup>7</sup> South African society was, and essentially remains, characterised by the compulsory segregation of the population and the maintenance of parallel, if unequal, sets of institutions for each race group. More importantly for Jewry this was coupled with the segmentation of the White community into English and Afrikaner, with a resultant lack of common national symbols and an agreed South African national identity which facilitated the preservation of Jewish identity.<sup>8</sup> More specifically it endowed Jewish identity "with an ethnic national dimension of its own which found expression in Zionism."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.2-4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

The primacy which Zionism had come to enjoy in the community as a whole has also been correctly ascribed to the fact that the foundations of Zionism in South Africa were laid long before any tradition of religious reform or denationalised Judaism had emerged. Zionism in South Africa did not, therefore, have to contend with the opposition of a significant or influential section of the Jewish community as had been the case, for example, in the United States.<sup>10</sup> The South African Zionist Federation, which had come into existence in 1898,<sup>11</sup> actually enjoyed the unique position of embracing not only all Zionist societies and groups but also included many societies and institutions within its ranks. Its membership was therefore made up of almost all of organised Jewry in South Africa.<sup>12</sup>

Those pockets of opposition which did exist were largely ineffectual in altering the overwhelming Zionist character of the Jewish community. They consisted on the one hand of a small proportion of acculturated English Jews, for whom, until the Balfour Declaration had been issued in 1917, the notion of Jewish nationalism and British citizenship had appeared contradictory. Thereafter, however, they had generally dropped their

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.50-51.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.

anti-Zionist stance and had joined the mainstream of communal thinking.<sup>13</sup> Secondly there were the Yiddish speaking leftist inclined groups who, although constantly overshadowed by the Zionist organisations, remained active in one form or another until at least World War II.<sup>14</sup>

The prominent position which Zionism had long enjoyed within the South African Jewish community had also resulted from the fact that the creation of the South African Zionist Federation had predated the establishment of the Board of Deputies of the Transvaal and Natal in 1903, and had thereby made it the first Jewish body to have achieved a countrywide organisational framework.<sup>15</sup> As such it had, when necessary, served as the mouthpiece of the Jewish community and had thereby extended the scope of its work and had considerably advanced its prestige.<sup>16</sup> The Federation had, furthermore, from the time of its inception, been fortunate to have enjoyed the support of almost all the religious leaders of the Jewish community and to have had at its helm men of the highest calibre whose influence on the course of the Movement in South Africa was lasting and profound.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.51-52.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.52-60.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.21-23.

The brand of Zionism that had emerged in South Africa was as distinctive as the circumstances and influential personalities which had surrounded its inception and growth. In 1919 political Zionism enjoyed overwhelming support in the Union,<sup>18</sup> and support for the Movement persisted throughout the period which falls within the scope of this work.

After World War I Zionism in South Africa came, in Shimoni's words, to be, first and foremost the raising of funds, which for many Jews was the sum expression of their Zionist involvement. Secondly it came to entail the propagation of the Zionist objective, namely a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. Owing to the favourable social and economic circumstances in South Africa<sup>19</sup> Zionists did not, in advocating the creation of a Jewish homeland, come to regard the return of the Jewish people to such a land as necessarily applicable to themselves. Nevertheless they came to recognise the need for a Zion both as a haven for their oppressed co-religionists and as a complement for their own future as Jews in the Diaspora.<sup>20</sup> For the geographically isolated Jewish community in South Africa, Zionism came to offer an opportunity for involvement in the affairs and concerns of world Jewry and became, in fact, the only

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.34-36.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.32-33.

tangible link with the leading Jewish personalities of the time and with the political and cultural issues affecting Jewish life. Finally it came to mean whatever pro-Zionist lobbying South African Jewry could bring to bear on their Government and thereby on the international scene.<sup>21</sup>

Although Zionism in Durban came to conform to the above mentioned criteria, the history of the Movement in the town prior to 1919, differed somewhat from that of the rest of the country. Evidence of Zionist activity in the town dates back to 1884 when Philip Wartski, one of Durban's early Jewish residents and a key figure in the community, had joined with a few of his friends and had established a branch of the *Chovevei Zion* Society.<sup>22</sup> Some years later, in August 1891, a report which recorded the formation of a branch of the same Society in Durban had appeared in the Jewish press.<sup>23</sup> Although the differing reports regarding the creation of a branch of the *Chovevei Zion* Society appear to be contradictory, they might simply indicate that the earliest attempt to introduce Zionism into the town had been unsuccessful. A point of interest however, is the fact that the establishment of a branch of the *Chovevei Zion* in Durban

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<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.37-50.

<sup>22</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 53.

<sup>23</sup>*London Jewish Chronicle*, September 25, 1891, p.11.

predated the creation of a similar branch of the Society in Johannesburg in 1896, which Gideon Shimoni has incorrectly described as the first such Society in South Africa.<sup>24</sup> A further account of the establishment of a *Chovevei Zion* Society in Durban relates, that Wartski had formed a branch of this organisation in 1897, in response to a letter which he had received from Joseph Prag, a leader of the *Chovevei Zion* in England.<sup>25</sup> As no reports of any activity exist in regard to the two earlier attempts to create a branch of the organisation in Durban, the last mentioned report may be a sign that in 1897 yet another attempt had been made to revive the apparently inactive Society.

Until the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899 and the arrival in the town of Jewish refugees from the Transvaal, Zionism had, despite attempts to the contrary, failed to take root in Durban. That Zionism had not been without its supporters in Durban is evident from the fact that three unsuccessful attempts were recorded in connection with efforts to set up a *Chovevei Zion* Society in the town. Support for Zionism had, however, been confined to only a small section of the Jewish community and their numbers had apparently been inadequate to maintain an active Zionist group. In Durban it should be remembered, unlike in the rest of the

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<sup>24</sup>Gideon Shimoni, p.19.

<sup>25</sup>Marcia Gitlin, *The Vision Amazing*, (Johannesburg, 1950), pp.60-61.



country, the *Litvak* population had been very small and the community had been overwhelmingly Anglo-Jewish in make up and leadership. Whilst elsewhere in South Africa Anglo-Jewish elements had also tended to predominate in leadership positions, the character of the community had tended to be greatly influenced by the *Litvak* element. Durban Jewry, denied the benefit of this *Litvak* element, had, therefore behaved in a manner that had been noticeably different from that of communities elsewhere in the country. For the most part its communal leaders, in common with many other Jews of English descent, had been opposed to Zionism,<sup>26</sup> or at the very least disinterested in its work, and their thinking had had a profound effect on their community.

One of the far reaching achievements of the Jewish refugees who had come to Durban during the Anglo-Boer War, had been their successful attempt to create an active all male Zionist Association in 1901.<sup>27</sup> The fact that no Durban Jew appears to have been associated with the establishment of the Durban Zionist Association has been seen as a reflection of the antipathy that was felt by the local committee towards Zionism. It has, furthermore, been viewed as an expression of their deep seated aversion to the East European immigrant who was

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.62.

<sup>27</sup> S.G. Cohen, *A History of the Jews of Durban 1825-1918*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban, 1977), p.201.

not only recognisably Jewish by virtue of his accent and other notable characteristics, but who wished to emphasise this distinctiveness through Zionism, in contrast to his English co-religionist who sought anonymity and acceptance from his Gentile neighbours.<sup>28</sup> Whilst there might be a considerable element of truth in these allegations, Durban Jewry's traditional opposition to Zionism should not be forgotten when seeking to explain the composition of the Durban Zionist Association. If, as has been asserted, certain of the Anglicised members of Durban's Jewish community did seek to place obstacles in the way of the Association,<sup>29</sup> their behaviour might be attributed not only to their opposition to the Zionist cause but, more especially, to the challenge which the leaders of the Zionist Association had posed to their authority and leadership.

During the period 1901-1902 Zionism had taken firm root in the town and had flourished in respect of numbers and the scope of its activities.<sup>30</sup> Following the return of a large proportion of the Jewish refugees to the Transvaal, upon the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War, support for the Zionist cause had declined considerably and the Association had thereafter been plagued by bouts of inactivity. Notwithstanding the

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<sup>28</sup> Marcia Gitlin, p.62.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> See S.G. Cohen, pp.203-207.

unfavourable circumstances under which the Zionist Association had had to operate, its members had given every encouragement to the short lived attempts to establish a Ladies' Zionist Association and a Juvenile Zionist Association in the town.<sup>31</sup>

The failure of the branches of the Zionist Movement to become firmly established in Durban, was ascribed to a measure of sympathy amongst certain members for Territorialism, which, in the wake of the Zionist rejection of the British offer of Uganda as a place of Jewish settlement, had come out in favour of Jewish colonies being set up in places other than in Palestine. The limited support which Territorialism had enjoyed amongst the Jews in Durban, was, however, revealed in the fact that, unlike elsewhere in South Africa, no attempt had been made to open a branch of the organisation in the town.<sup>32</sup> Blame for the unsatisfactory condition of Zionism in Durban was also placed on the South African Zionist Federation, which it was alleged had failed to take a sufficient interest in the local Association.<sup>33</sup> The imbalance which had persisted within the community between the Anglicised and the East European elements, had also remained a contributory factor in respect of the

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.289-300.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.296.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.297.

problems which had faced the local Zionist body.<sup>34</sup> The unhappy state of Zionism in Durban has further been attributed to the generally weak and ineffective leadership of the Association.<sup>35</sup> Although an element of truth might exist in respect of the allegations made against the Association's leaders, in the light of the poor support which the community had generally shown for Zionist activities it is understandable that even the most committed and ardent Zionist workers would have found difficulty in sustaining the Association and its activities.

With the outbreak of World War I attempts to maintain a Zionist Association in Durban had been disbanded. In 1916 the Durban Jewish Literary Club, whose inception had coincided with the start of hostilities two years earlier, had adopted a Zionist plank in its programme and had altered its name accordingly in order to reflect its wider purpose. The development of the Durban Jewish Literary Club and Zionist Association had been a most timely one, in light of the far reaching developments which had taken place in respect of Palestine and Zionism during the war. The publication of the Balfour Declaration, which had recorded that "His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.302-303.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.303.

Jewish people,"<sup>36</sup> and the British conquest of Palestine which had culminated in the surrender of Jerusalem in December 1917,<sup>37</sup> had awakened the interest of all sections of the Durban Jewish community in Palestine.

Although the history of Zionism in Durban prior to the Boer War had not been characterised by any activity, members of the Jewish community had, nevertheless, demonstrated their concern for Palestinian Jewry by raising funds to help support them.<sup>38</sup> Such philanthropy does not, however, appear to have had a specifically Zionist motivation, and was exceeded by the support shown for the funds that were set up to help the persecuted Jews of late nineteenth century Russia.<sup>39</sup> The generosity that was displayed by the community would, therefore, appear to have been inspired by a concern for the suffering of fellow Jews irrespective of their place of abode. This bond with suffering co-religionists appears to have also been the underlying motivation for the support given during World War I to the campaigns to relieve Russian Jewry,<sup>40</sup> and to help the Jews of

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<sup>36</sup>Cited in Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, (New York, 1972), p.198.

<sup>37</sup>Solomon Grayzel, *A History of the Jews From the Babylonian Exile to the Present 5728-1968*. (New York, 1968), p.615.

<sup>38</sup>S.G. Cohen, p.158.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.125-126.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.390-395.

Palestine.<sup>41</sup> The fact that fund raising on behalf of Palestinian Jewry and the communities of Eastern Europe was administered by committees led by the same prominent communal personalities who normally kept themselves aloof from Zionist affairs, would seem to corroborate this view.

After 1917 as Palestine moved into the focus of world affairs, interest in Zionism grew in intensity within the Jewish community of Durban, spurred by external circumstances which led to the growing realisation amongst Jews of the need for a homeland. This did not, however, correspond to a large scale enrolment in a Zionist body, instead, as the idea of a National Home in Palestine gained in relevance and acceptability, fundraising came to be the major expression of Zionist identification. Zionist fundraising came to be accompanied by elaborate planning and the visits of leading Jewish personalities, all of whom gave impetus to these drives for funds and helped maintain communal interest in the Zionist ideal. The widescale communal acceptance of Zionist ambitions also came to be reflected in the mass support which the community came to demonstrate for the *Yishuv* and in its solidarity with Zionist efforts to create a home in Palestine.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.396-397.

## PHILANTHROPIC ZIONISM

In the post-war period, as universal Jewish attention came to be fixed on Palestine, Durban Jewry joined with Jewry world wide in following events within the country, and in working assiduously in the task of its development. As the delegates to the Peace Conference were convening in Paris, Zionist circles were pervaded by a spirit of great optimism. This reflected itself in the mood of delegates to the Seventh South African Zionist Conference that met in Cape Town in January 1919,<sup>42</sup> in the growth of the Durban Jewish Literary Club and Zionist Association, and in the emergence of Zionist societies for women and youth in the town.<sup>43</sup>

Whilst the protracted discussions and arguments which were to lead to peace in Europe were being conducted in Paris, the Zionist delegation took the opportunity to lobby with representatives of the Great Powers, for their goal of a Jewish national home in Palestine under British mandatory power.<sup>44</sup> In support of their leaders a mass meeting of Durban Jewry was held in the Club Room of the

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<sup>42</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 14, 1919, p.7, January 16, 1919, p.7.

<sup>43</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 23, 1919, p.25.

<sup>44</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.451-452. See also *The Natal Mercury*, March 1, 1919, p.9.

Durban Jewish Literary Club and Zionist Association in *Acutt's Arcade*.<sup>45</sup>

Lengthy negotiations between the Governments of the United States, Great Britain and France over the future of the Ottoman Empire continued long after the signing of a peace treaty with Germany.<sup>46</sup> As the diplomatic battle for a Jewish Palestine was being waged in the capitals of the world,<sup>47</sup> Durban Zionists were greatly encouraged by the support that General Smuts expressed for their cause. During his first visit to the town after returning from Versailles the General met with a delegation from the Durban Jewish Literary Club and Zionist Association, consisting of Messrs S.A. Nathanson, President; M. Lewis, Vice-President; J.A. Lewin, Treasurer; and L. Hart, Committee Member.<sup>48</sup> In the course of his remarks to the delegation General Smuts reaffirmed his sympathy with the Zionist movement and expressed the hope that Great Britain would be constituted the mandatory power for Palestine.<sup>49</sup>

The Allied leaders finally gathered at San Remo in

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, March 20, 1919, p.8.

<sup>46</sup> David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon*, (London, 1972), pp.629-631.

<sup>47</sup> For a detailed account of this period see Walter Laqueur, pp.450-453.

<sup>48</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 18, 1919, p.11.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*



April 1920 to conclude a treaty with Turkey,<sup>50</sup> against a background of Arab opposition to a Jewish homeland in Palestine that found expression in violence and public demonstrations.<sup>51</sup> Whilst the Peace Conference was proceeding, and before its decision as to the political future of Palestine was reached, the South African Zionist Federation called for mass meetings throughout the country in support of the Zionist demands.<sup>52</sup> In Durban the Jewish community met in the Synagogue Chambers St. Andrew's Street on April 25.<sup>53</sup> By this time the decision to incorporate the Balfour Declaration in the Peace Treaty with Turkey, and to entrust Britain with the mandate for Palestine, had been made,<sup>54</sup> giving cause for an outburst of universal Jewish rejoicing.<sup>55</sup> On May 2 the Jews of Durban gave expression to their feelings at a service of thanksgiving in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> David Thomson, p.631. See also *The Natal Mercury*, April 22, 1920, p.7.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.241. See also *The Natal Mercury*, March 13, 1920, p.9., April 8, 1920, p.7., April 9, 1920, p.8., April 20, 1920, p.7.

<sup>52</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 31, 1920, p.47.

<sup>53</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 27, 1920, p.9.

<sup>54</sup> David Thomson, p.631.

<sup>55</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 3, 1920, p.11.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, April 29, 1920, p.6., and *The Zionist Record*, May 31, 1920, p.38.

At the celebration meeting held after the service a strenuous campaign that was being conducted throughout the country for the Palestine Restoration Fund,<sup>57</sup> was inaugurated in Durban. A special committee comprising Messrs J.A. Lewin, Chairman; B. Lurie, Treasurer; D. Sandler, Secretary; L. Davis, P. Wartski, B. Berman, I. Lurie, J. Shapiro, M.K. Rosenbach, A. Berman, J. Rothstein, M. Morrison, J. Moshal, P. Ditz and C.H. Blumenfeld, was formed to take charge of the Fund.<sup>58</sup> In the short space of one year it succeeded in collecting

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<sup>57</sup>The fund was originally set up during World War I as a means of restoring those natural assets in Palestine that war conditions had destroyed. Later it developed into a fund for the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home. (Jack Alexander, "South African Zionism" in *The South African Jewish Year Book, Directory of Organisations and Who's Who in South African Jewry 1929, 5689-90*. Editor Morris de Saxe, Associate Editor I.M. Goodman, Published by the South African Jewish Historical Society, P.O. Box 2711, Johannesburg (Johannesburg, 1929), p.188.). The fund was launched in Durban on May 26, 1918 by the Rev. M.I. Cohen of Bulawayo, Rhodesia. (*The Natal Mercury*, May 27, 1918, p.6.) The campaign continued through 1919 and was supported by a social evening, (*The Zionist Record*, September 19, 1919, p.53.) collections (*Ibid.*) and by a social and dance. (*The Natal Mercury*, October 30, 1919, p.12.). Although the campaign lagged somewhat in 1919 it received impetus after the San Remo Conference. (Jack Alexander, p.191.)

<sup>58</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 13, 1920, p.8.

more than £5,000.<sup>59</sup> In addition the Committee raised a further £1,200 from the members of both Hebrew Congregations through an appeal made on *Yom Kippur* eve after the *Kol Nidrei* service, which was specifically earmarked for the transfer of orphans from the Ukraine and Poland to Palestine.<sup>60</sup>

The tragic plight of more than 1,000,000 children, the victims of anti-Jewish excesses in the Ukraine and Eastern Europe, who had been orphaned since the Armistice, had filled all South African Jews with an overwhelming desire to render assistance of a practical nature. Through the efforts of Mr Isaac Ochberg and the South African Jewish War Victims Fund, 200 of these young orphans were brought to South Africa.<sup>61</sup> A severe economic recession in the Union, however, resulted in considerable opposition to the admission of large numbers

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<sup>59</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 31, 1921, p.33. The money was raised through appeals, (*The Natal Mercury*, May 22, 1920, p.8., June 1, 1920, p.8., and June 11, 1920, p.9.) the production of a Jewish operetta, (*Ibid.*, August 7, 1920, p.13.) a *Simchat Torah* ball given by the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild, (*Ibid.*, October 6, 1920, p.6.) a dance given by the Juvenile Zionist Association, (*Ibid.*, October 27, 1920, p.15.) a motor car raffle and voluntary contributions (*The Zionist Record*, May 31, 1921, p.33.)

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, October 31, 1920, p.31., and November 30, 1920, p.25.

<sup>61</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 6, 1921, p.7., September 20, 1921, p.7.

of Jewish orphans into the country, and this was reflected in correspondence in the local press.<sup>62</sup>

Instead of transporting war orphans to South Africa, Mr M. Morrison, at the Annual General Meeting of the Palestine Restoration Fund, held on May 8, 1921, at the Synagogue Chambers, proposed that the Durban Jewish community adopt a number of orphans from the Ukraine and Poland and transfer them to Palestine.<sup>63</sup>

Through correspondence with Dr D. de Sola Pool, Regional Director for Palestine and Syria of the Joint Distribution Committee of the American Funds for Jewish War Sufferers, Mr Morrison had received a promise of assistance in the disposal of orphans brought from the Ukraine and Poland whose upkeep could be guaranteed until the age of fourteen years.<sup>64</sup> The Jews of Durban enthusiastically accepted Mr Morrison's proposal and

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<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, September 15, 1921, p.8., September 22, 1921, p.5., September 29, 1921, p.14., October 4, 1921, p.6.

<sup>63</sup>*The Zionist Record*, May 31, 1921, p.33.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*

gave the scheme their unqualified support.<sup>65</sup>

Within three months the Durban Committee of the Palestine Restoration Fund cabled a sum of £1,100 to Dr De Sola Pool for the purpose of transferring 50 eight year old Jewish boys from the Ukraine to Palestine. A further £600 was set aside for transmission to Palestine for the upkeep of the orphans for three months.<sup>66</sup>

Under Mr H. Hillman a Building Fund was also started to finance the construction of an orphanage in one of the agricultural colonies in Palestine in which to house the Ukranian orphans for whom Durban had assumed responsibility.<sup>67</sup>

In September 1921 Mr Morrison issued an appeal to branches of the Palestine Restoration Fund throughout the Union to support the scheme to transfer Ukranian orphans

<sup>65</sup> Many members of the Jewish community became subscribers to the Fund which enjoyed particular support from the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild, who donated the proceeds of three of its functions to the Fund, (*The Natal Mercury*, July 13, 1921, p.10., November 10, 1921, p.7., August 26, 1922, p.11.) and the Durban Jewish Circle, who adopted three orphans and who supported the fund through varied functions. (*Ibid.*, September 27, 1921, p.9., September 16, 1922, p.10., April 1, 1924, p.13., June 18, 1925, p.5., *The Zionist Record*, December 5, 1924, p.31., February 27, 1925, p.23., April 18, 1925, p.38., December 18, 1925, p.39.). The Durban *Bnoth Zion* contributed the proceeds of sales and dances, (*The Natal Mercury*, June 14, 1921, p.6., July 2, 1921, p.12., June 24, 1922, p.8.) and the Young Zionist Association held a dance in aid of the Fund (*Ibid.*, July 2, 1921, p.8.). See also *The Zionist Record*, October 31, 1922, p.40. where a full revenue account was published.

<sup>66</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 29, 1921, p.15.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, November 24, 1921, p.13.

to Palestine.<sup>68</sup> This appeal elicited an encouraging response from many quarters,<sup>69</sup> notwithstanding the economic crisis which beset South Africa at the time.

At the Eighth South African Zionist Conference, held in Johannesburg in January 1922, a round table conference of men and women interested in the project was held. When, in August 1922, a unification of all South African Jewish War Relief Organisations was effected, it was made an essential task of the united body, and indeed a condition of unification, that a children's agricultural settlement should be founded in Palestine to be maintained by South African Jewry and populated by war orphans from Eastern Europe.<sup>70</sup> Among those elected to serve on the Central Executive of the newly formed United South African Jewish Relief, Reconstruction and Orphan's Fund, were Messrs M. Morrison and H. Hillman from Durban.<sup>71</sup> The scheme to transfer Ukranian orphans to Palestine, an undertaking which Durban Jewry had been the first community in the world to initiate,<sup>72</sup> thus became a project of the entire South African Jewish community.

In September 1922 the Durban branch of the Palestine

<sup>68</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 30, 1921, pp.14-16.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, December 31, 1921, pp.25-27.

<sup>70</sup> Jack Alexander, p.193.

<sup>71</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 8, 1922, p.11.

<sup>72</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 30, 1921, p.16.

Orphan Fund, as the Reconstruction Fund had come to be known,<sup>73</sup> learnt of the safe arrival in Jerusalem of the Ukranian orphans whom it had adopted.<sup>74</sup> Although it had been the intention of the Durban committee to adopt 50 orphans only 42 boys, aged from ten to thirteen years, could be found who were sufficiently healthy to be selected for transportation to Palestine. These children arrived in Palestine on September 6 and were taken to their temporary home at *Beth Chinuch Yetomim* where they were joined by two more Ukranian orphans already living in Palestine.<sup>75</sup>

Three years later the 44 orphans maintained by Durban Jewry moved to their new home *Kfar Yeladim*, that had been established by the United South African Jewish Relief, Reconstruction and Orphan's Fund at Givat Hamoreh in the central part of the Jezreel Valley, close to Balfouria. The South African Children's Village which housed 114 children, and stood on land belonging to the Jewish National Fund, was officially opened by the High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, in May 1925.<sup>76</sup>

When the decision was taken in January 1928 to close down the United South African Jewish Relief, Reconstruction

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<sup>73</sup>At the Annual General Meeting of the Fund on September 17, 1922 its name was changed to the Palestine Orphan Fund. (*Ibid.*, October 31, 1922, p.40.)

<sup>74</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, September 8, 1922, p.11.

<sup>75</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 31, 1922, p.31-33.

<sup>76</sup>*Hasholom*, II No.10 (June, 1925),3.

and Orphan's Fund, in consequence of the closure of all branches of the Fund except for those in Bulawayo, Salisbury and Durban, the finance and management of *Kfar Yeladim* was taken over by the South African Zionist Federation. Control of the South African's Children Village was placed in the hands of a special South African Committee, on which Durban, which had initiated the whole scheme, was accorded special representation.<sup>77</sup>

Along with the work undertaken on behalf of the Ukranian Orphans, which culminated in the founding of *Kfar Yeladim*, Durban Zionists also followed with rapt attention the changing course of events in Palestine, their bond with the land intensified by the campaigns held to assist in its development, and by the periodic visits of leading Zionist personalities.

In May 1921, the news of the outbreak of violence in Jaffa<sup>78</sup> shocked South African Jewry and called forth a series of protest meetings throughout the country. At the request of the South African Zionist Federation, the nine largest communities in the country, including Durban, held mass meetings on May 22<sup>79</sup> at which Great Britain and the League of Nations were called upon to state unequivocally their intention to make Palestine the

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<sup>77</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 21, 1928, p.12.

<sup>78</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.209 and Howard Morley Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (New York, 1958), p.377. See also *The Natal Mercury*, May 6, 1921, p.9. and May 7, 1921, p.9.

<sup>79</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 31, 1921, p.25.



Jewish national home, and the violence against the Jews in Palestine was strongly condemned.<sup>80</sup> The deep consternation that was felt over the temporary stoppage of Jewish immigration into Palestine in consequence of the riots was expressed by an influential delegation of Jewish members of Parliament, that included Mr C.P. Robinson, at a meeting with the Prime Minister, General Smuts, who promised to use his good offices with the British Government in the matter.<sup>81</sup>

The cause of Zionism in South Africa received a considerable fillip with the arrival, at the end of 1921, of a distinguished visitor, in the person of Dr Shmarya Levin.<sup>82</sup> A former member of the Inner Actions Committee of the Zionist Movement, Dr Levin's visit was primarily in the interests of the *Keren Hayesod* (the Palestine Foundation Fund) that had been initiated in 1920 throughout the world to raise money for colonising work. On February 13, 1922, Dr Levin arrived in Durban, where during the course of his five day visit, he addressed a mass meeting, and attended a public reception given in his honour.<sup>83</sup>

The interest in Palestine, so strongly reinforced by Dr Levin's visit was heightened still further by the

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, May 31, 1921, pp.8, 13-14.

<sup>81</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 26, 1921, p.8.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, December 20, 1921, p.9.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, February 14, 1922, p.6. and *The Zionist Record*, February 28, 1922, p.19.

news of the ratification of the grant of the Mandate over Palestine to Great Britain, on July 24, 1922.<sup>84</sup>

South African Jewry hailed this momentous event with much joy, and an outburst of celebration, that in Durban took the form of a Thanksgiving Service at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, conducted by the Revs. N. Menachemson and H. Rubin.<sup>85</sup>

The second *Keren Hayesod* campaign was launched in South Africa in 1924 by Dr Alexander Goldstein a prominent figure in the Zionist movement who had served in the Jewish delegation to the Peace Conference. In Durban, where his successful appeal elicited a response of over £3,500 in one week, a local committee, chaired by Mr H. Hillman, and embracing all sections of the community, was singled out by Dr Goldstein for the remarkable manner in which it had organised the campaign.<sup>86</sup>

The campaign on behalf of the *Keren Hayesod* was followed in 1925 by two further drives for funds in support of Palestine. In April a campaign was initiated on behalf of the South African Palestine Enterprise (*Binyan*) Corporation Ltd, whose aim was to secure a capital of R100,000 for investment in industrial and other undertakings in Palestine, with special reference

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<sup>84</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 27, 1922, p.11.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, July 29, 1922, p.13.

<sup>86</sup>*The Zionist Record Keren Hayesod Supplement*, June 30, 1924, pp.23-24.

to the creation of dwelling houses and warehouses.<sup>87</sup> Mr A.M. Abrahams, the President of the South African Zionist Federation launched the campaign in Durban,<sup>88</sup> and through the efforts of Mr M. Morrison, a fair number of shares in the Corporation, priced at £5 each, were sold.<sup>89</sup> Three months later Rabbi J.L. Zlotnik paid a brief visit to the town<sup>90</sup> to inaugurate a drive on behalf of the Jewish National Fund, to which the community subscribed almost £1,000.<sup>91</sup>

The celebrations in connection with the inauguration of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in April were however, the highlight of the Zionist calendar in 1925. In Durban, a public gathering, presided over by Mr F.C. Hollander, and attended by the Deputy Administrator of Natal, Mr J. Hershenhorn; The Senior Magistrate, Mr B. Colenbrander; and other representatives of civic, spiritual and intellectual bodies of the town, was held to mark the occasion.<sup>92</sup>

1926 was made a memorable year for South African Zionists by the visit of Mr Nahum Sokolow, the president of the World Zionist Executive, who was accompanied by

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<sup>87</sup> Jack Alexander, p.197.

<sup>88</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 18, 1925, p.18.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, September 26, 1927, p.16.

<sup>90</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 17, 1925, p.9.

<sup>91</sup> *The Zionist Record J.N.F. Supplement*, July 31, 1925, p.23. and *Hasholom*, II No.12 (August, 1925), 4+

<sup>92</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 2, 1925, p.12.

Dr M. Hindes, a member of the Greater Actions Committee of the World Zionist organisation. After opening the Tenth South African Zionist Conference, the two Zionist emissaries conducted a nation wide tour in the interests of the *Keren Hayesod*<sup>93</sup>, visiting Durban in June.<sup>94</sup>

Upon his arrival in Durban Mr Sokolow was accorded a civic welcome by the Mayor, Mr T.M. Wadley,<sup>95</sup> and on the following day addressed a meeting in the Town Hall that engendered such great enthusiasn, that more than £5,500 was collected before the meeting had closed.<sup>96</sup>

A major achievement of Mr Sokolow's visit to South Africa was the declaration of support by the Government of the Union of South Africa for the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine, which was issued after talks between Mr Sokolow and Government representatives.<sup>97</sup>

Dr Hindes's arrival in Durban on October 17, 1926, for a farewell visit,<sup>98</sup> reawakened some of the excitement and enthusiasm that had been evoked by the *Keren Hayesod* campaign. During the few days of his stay Dr Hindes

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, June 12, 1926, p.12.

<sup>94</sup> For a full account of Mr Sokolow's visit to Durban see *The Zionist Record*, June 25, 1926, pp.13-17.

<sup>95</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 14, 1926, p.11.

<sup>96</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 25, 1926, p.17.

<sup>97</sup> *Hasholom*, IV No.5 (October 15th, 1926), 1-2. Cited in Gideon Shimoni, pp.49-50.

<sup>98</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 5, 1926, pp.14-15.

addressed the weekly luncheon of the Durban Rotary Club,<sup>99</sup> and was the guest of honour at a communal "At Home" at the Kenilworth on the beachfront.<sup>100</sup>

The tenth anniversary of the signing of the Balfour Declaration, on November 2, 1927, was, yet another historic milestone suitably commemorated in Durban by a mass meeting, held in the *Arthur Smith Hall*. The Jewish People's gratitude to Great Britain for making possible the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jews, was a major theme of the different speeches at the meeting, which ended with a resolution pledging Durban Jewry's support in the task of building the land.<sup>101</sup>

In pursuance of its pledge, Durban Jewry accorded an enthusiastic welcome to Colonel Fredrick Kisch, the Chairman of the Palestine Zionist Executive, and Mrs Kisch, who visited the town in the interests of the *Keren Hayesod*, accompanied by Dr I. Olsvanger. A new feature of this *Keren Hayesod* campaign was a separate ladies campaign for the maintenance of *Kfar Yeladim*, which the Jewish women of South Africa had undertaken to maintain, through the Zionist Federation. On June 5 the Women's Campaign was launched at an "At Home" at the

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<sup>99</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, October 23, 1926, p.18.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, October 27, 1926, p.12.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, November 3, 1927, p.8. and *The Zionist Record*, November 11, 1927, p.11.

*Marine Hotel* in honour of Mrs Kisch, arranged by the local Women's *Keren Hayesod* Committee under Mrs M. Morrison.<sup>102</sup>

Colonel Kisch and his party travelled to Pietermaritzburg<sup>103</sup> from Durban. They were entertained there at a luncheon given by the Administrator, and attended a reception given in their honour by the Jews of Pietermaritzburg.<sup>104</sup>

For the first time the *Keren Hayesod* campaign in Natal was also conducted amongst the scattered Jewish families of Zululand. Together with Mr L. Braudo, hon. treasurer of the South African Zionist Federation, the Rev. E.M. Levy visited a number of Jewish residents of Zululand and generous donations were received from Jews in Ginginhlovu, Darnall, Mtunzini, Melmoth, Babanango, Amatikulu and Tongaat.<sup>105</sup>

Shortly after the farewell visit of Dr I. Olsvanger in August 1928,<sup>106</sup> Durban Jewry's attention was diverted from the *Keren Hayesod* campaign to events in Palestine. On *Yom Kippur* a detachment of police interrupted a service being held at the Wailing Wall in order to remove a wooden partition that was separating the men and women

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<sup>102</sup>*The Natal Advertiser*, June 6, 1928, p.5.

<sup>103</sup>*The Zionist Record*, June 15, 1928, p.7.

<sup>104</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, June 7, 1928, p.9.

<sup>105</sup>*The Zionist Record*, June 29, 1928, p.27.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, August 31, 1928, p.32.

worshippers.<sup>107</sup> Although the area in front of the Wall belonged to a Muslim religious endowment, and by raising a screen the Jews had broken with established tradition, the police action nevertheless created intense feelings amongst the Jews who regarded it as a desecration of the sanctity of the Wall.<sup>108</sup>

Underlying tension that had given rise to the unrest between the two sides persisted and was aggravated by the emotional and spiritual significance of the Wailing Wall area to both Jews and Muslims. Building operations carried out on and around the Wall by the Muslims caused great commotion among sections of the Jewish population. The heightened tensions erupted into unprecedented riots in August 1929.<sup>109</sup> The attack on Jews in Jerusalem spread rapidly to Hebron, where rabbis and *yeshivah* students fell victim to the widescale violence that enveloped the country.<sup>110</sup> Jews all over the world were greatly distressed by the riots,<sup>111</sup> and in certain places this manifested itself in anti-British demonstrations.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.255. See also *The Natal Mercury*, September 27, 1928, p.13.

<sup>108</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.255. See also *The Natal Mercury*, November 3, 1928, p.17., and November 9, 1928, p.9.

<sup>109</sup> For a full account see Walter Laqueur pp.255-259.

<sup>110</sup> Howard Morley Sachar, p.386. See also *The Natal Mercury*, August 21, 1929, p.13., August 22, 1929, p.9., August 26, 1929, p.9., August 29, 1929, p.13.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, August 27, 1929, p.11.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.6 and 11.

Whilst Durban Jewry shared the sadness of its co-religionists, it nevertheless, in the words of Rabbi E.M. Levy, "found it impossible to conceive that a British Government would desert the Jewish people in the hour of our need, and encourage the wickedness of that small section of Arab mischief-makers bent on undoing the work of the Versailles Treaty in regard to Palestine."<sup>113</sup>

Throughout South Africa, Jewry was moved to action by the events in Palestine. In Durban, a preliminary meeting of the heads of all Jewish communal institutions was held to appoint a committee to co-ordinate the response of the community. On the Rand and in Cape Town the Jewish organisations took similar action. A deputation from the South African Zionist Federation and the Jewish Board of Deputies, interviewed the Prime Minister in Pretoria on behalf of South African Jewry, in the hope of securing the Government's intervention in this matter.<sup>114</sup> Meetings of protest against the Arab attacks in Palestine were held in London, New York and Paris<sup>115</sup> and in over 65 centres around South Africa.<sup>116</sup> In Durban a mass meeting, chaired by Mr F.C. Hollander, was arranged for September 3 in the *Arthur Smith Hall*, at

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<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, August 28, 1929, p.13.

<sup>115</sup>*The Natal Advertiser*, August 30, 1929, p.9.

<sup>116</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 30, 1929, p.24., *The Natal Advertiser*, August 31, 1929, p.11., *The Zionist Record*, September 6, 1929, pp.7, 8, 40.



which the speakers were the Mayor, Councillor the Rev. A. Lamont, Mr B.M. Narbeth the Principal of the Natal Technical College, Rabbi E.M. Levy, Mr C.P. Robinson M.L.A., Dr B. Moshal and Mr L. Hart. Along with criticism of the administration in Palestine, the meeting expressed appreciation to the British Government for the steps taken to restore law and order in the country.<sup>117</sup> In South Africa a Palestine Emergency Fund was set up to assist in the task of reconstruction. This fund was a national South African Jewish project which undertook to raise £75,000 over three years for the Jewish National Fund, in order to redeem 15,000 *dunams* in *Eretz* Israel.<sup>118</sup> A combined appeal for the Emergency Fund and *Dunam* Drive was made in the two Synagogues in Durban on *Kol Nidrei* night<sup>119</sup> and about six months later total donations amounted to £752.<sup>120</sup>

#### ORGANISATIONAL ZIONISM

The close attention with which the Jewish community of Durban followed the course of events in Palestine, and

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<sup>117</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 4, 1929, p.8.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, October 28, 1929, p.6.

<sup>119</sup> *Hasholom*, VII No.2 (November, 1929), 15.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.7 (May, 1930), 5.

its generous and widescale response to campaigns launched on behalf of different Zionist causes, such as the *Keren Hayesod*, contrasted sharply with the lack of interest which the community generally showed in the activities of the branches of the Zionist movement in the town.

The Durban Jewish Literary Club and Zionist Association, as it had done since its formation, continued in the post-war period, to serve as a forum for both social and cultural intercourse.<sup>121</sup> In the realm of Zionist affairs it participated in all national efforts for Palestine,<sup>122</sup> was represented at the Seventh South African Zionist Conference,<sup>123</sup> and arranged *Shekel* collections.<sup>124</sup> Together with other Zionist societies in the town, the Durban Jewish Literary Club and Zionist

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<sup>121</sup> Providing social evenings, (*The Natal Mercury*, May 2, 1916, p.6., *The Zionist Record*, September 19, 1919, p.53., *The Natal Mercury* December 10, 1920, p.10.) dances (*Ibid.*, October 30, 1919, p.12., *The Zionist Record*, March 25, 1920, p.43., *The Natal Mercury*, October 17, 1921, p.6.) lectures on "Pseudo Messiahs" by Mr D. Harris, (*Ibid.*, July 11, 1919, p.6.) "Zionism and its Prospects" by Mr I. Schwartz, President of the *Dorshei Zion* Capetown, (*The Zionist Record*, October 23, 1919, p.23), "Some Impressions on Palestine" by Mr J.J.L. Simon, (Later Lieutenant R.G.A.) Palestine, (*The Natal Mercury*, November 21, 1919, p.6.), "Life of the Jew and his Hope" by Mr Peretz Hirschbein. (*Ibid.*, June 14, 1921, p.6.).

<sup>122</sup> See above pp.93.

<sup>123</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 14, 1919, p.6.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, March 14, 1919, p.6. and *The Zionist Record*, May 31, 1921, p.31.

Association conducted a successful campaign for the Max Nordau Garden City<sup>125</sup> and solicited contributions for the Samuel Goldreich Memorial Grove.<sup>126</sup>

Alongside the Durban Jewish Literary Club and Zionist Association, a Ladies' Zionist Society, the *Bnoth Zion*, was created in 1919.<sup>127</sup> Although two earlier attempts in 1901,<sup>128</sup> and again in 1903,<sup>129</sup> to establish a women's branch of the Zionist movement in Durban had met with little success, individual women in the community had continued to work for the Zionist cause, and had even served on the committee of the Durban Literary Club and Zionist Association during World War I.<sup>130</sup> During the first year of its existence the *Bnoth Zion*, under its president Mrs B. Franklin, grew to over 100 strong,<sup>131</sup> reflecting the extent of the support which the Society initially enjoyed. The *Bnoth Zion* directed its energies primarily to fund raising<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, March 25, 1920, p.37.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, May 31, 1921, p.31. and June 13, 1921, p.16.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, October 23, 1919, p.25.

<sup>128</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 20, 1901, p.9.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, January 10, 1903, p.13.

<sup>130</sup> S.G. Cohen, pp.461-462.

<sup>131</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 24, 1919, p.27.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, February 25, 1920, p.31., August 31, 1920, pp.24-25., March 20, 1921, p.32., *The Natal Mercury*, June 14, 1921, p.6. and *The Zionist Record*, June 30, 1922, p.36.

and also participated in the sale of *Shekels*.<sup>133</sup>

In May 1922, in the interests of greater unity, the Durban Jewish Literary Club and Zionist Association and the *Bnoth Zion* amalgamated into one organisation, under the name of the Durban Zionist Association.<sup>134</sup>

Whilst this step brought about a unification of those committed to the Zionist cause, it did little to alter the basic pattern of Zionist activity. Apart from selling *Shekels*<sup>135</sup> the Association held collection days for the Jewish National Fund, when blue boxes were cleared and distributed.<sup>136</sup> In addition the Association also worked hard for all national campaigns for

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, May 31, 1921, p.31.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, June 30, 1922, p.36.

<sup>135</sup> In 1922 288 *shekels* were sold (*Ibid.*). In 1923 296 *shekels* were sold. (*South African Jewish Chronicle*, May 25, 1923, p.410.). In 1924 this number increased to 369 *shekels*. (*The Zionist Record*, November 7, 1924, p.23.). In 1925 308 *shekels* were sold (*Ibid.*, April 8, 1925, p.38.) and in 1926 349 *shekels* were purchased. (*The Natal Mercury*, February 27, 1926, p.12.). In 1927 253 *shekels* were sold. (*The Zionist Record*, April 12, 1929, p.21.). In the following year 350 *shekels* were acquired in Durban (*Ibid.*) and in 1929 428 *shekels* were sold. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>136</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 9, 1922, p.10., *The Zionist Record*, September 26, 1924, p.46., January 2, 1925, p.21., April 29, 1926, p.25., June 4, 1926, p.31., November 19, 1926, p.25., April 29, 1927, p.23., June 15, 1928, p.38., October 5, 1928, p.21., October 26, 1928, p.27., December 28, 1928, p.18., January 4, 1929, p.21., July 5, 1929, p.15., September 13, 1929, p.33. and November 15, 1929, p.28.

Palestine.<sup>137</sup> Lectures continued to be a regular feature of the Association's programme,<sup>138</sup> although the venue was no longer the Synagogue Chambers St. Andrew's Street but the Park Street Synagogue.<sup>139</sup> During this period the Association was not only represented at the Conferences of South African Zionists,<sup>140</sup> but also at the World Congresses of the Zionist Movement.<sup>141</sup> Memorial meetings to mark the

<sup>137</sup> See reports *Ibid.*, May 30, 1923, p.23., March 31, 1924, p.56., October 9, 1925, p.19. and November 23, 1928, p.22.

<sup>138</sup> Including a lecture on "Hebrew Education in South Africa," by Mr I. Freedman, (*The Natal Mercury*, May 24, 1924, p.8.) "Religions and Nationalism, by Mr A. Freedman, (*Ibid.*, September 20, 1924, p.10.) "Zionism," by Mr S. Samuel (*Ibid.*, November 15, 1924, p.12.) "What has sustained Jewry as a nation" by Mr J. Shapiro, (*The Zionist Record*, January 2, 1925, p.28.) "The National Fund in conjunction with the Balfour Declaration," by Mr S.A. Nathanson (*Ibid.*, February 13, 1925, p.28.) "Zionism and Democracy," by Mr M. Stone, (*Ibid.*, March 13, 1925, p.19.) "Jabotinsky and the Zionist Movement," by Mr J. Blumenthal (*Ibid.*, June 19, 1925, p.40.) "The Vienna Congress" by Dr Goldberg, Messrs M. Stone, J. Blumenthal, D. Harris, (*Ibid.*, November 20, 1925, p.37.) "Bialik, Our National Poet," by Mr Benzion Shein, (*Ibid.*, October 29, 1926, p.19.) "Philosophy of Max Nordau" by Mr J. Blumenthal, (*The Natal Mercury*, January 23, 1929, p.7.) "Modern Palestine" by Mr Peretz Cornfeld. (*Ibid.*, May 9, 1929, p.12.)

<sup>139</sup> The venue was changed in March 1924. (*The Zionist Record*, March 31, 1924, p.56.)

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3., April 30, 1926, p.17., April 27, 1928, p.15., May 30, 1929, p.9.

<sup>141</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 10, 1925, p.10. In 1927 Mr H. Hillman was a delegate to the 15th Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland. (*Ibid.*, July 22, 1927, p.11.)

*yahrtzeit* of Dr Theodor Herzl came to be observed almost annually by the Association,<sup>142</sup> whilst special meetings were convened on the passing of the Zionist leaders, Dr Max Nordau<sup>143</sup> and Achad Ha-am.<sup>144</sup> An important addition to the cultural amenities available to Durban Jewry was the Hebrew Speaking Circle, created in December 1925 as a sub-section of the Durban Zionist Association.<sup>145</sup> An earlier attempt to form a similar society in 1921, called *Dovrei Ivrit*<sup>146</sup> had apparently met with little success. Its successor *Agudath Sefateinu* however fared far better. Under its president Mr D. Harris, regular and varied meetings were held every Sunday night in the private homes of members.<sup>147</sup> Apart from encouraging the speaking of Hebrew, the *Agudath Sefateinu* also opened Hebrew classes, where members, under the supervision of Mr J. Blumenthal, were taught free of charge.<sup>148</sup> After a period of intense

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<sup>142</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 31, 1922, p.32., August 29, 1924, p.24., July 17, 1925, p.20., *The Natal Mercury*, July 3, 1926, p.12., *Hasholom* V No.2 (August, 1927), 4., *The Zionist Record*, July 27, 1928, p.20. and August 9, 1929, p.34.

<sup>143</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 9, 1923, p.8.

<sup>144</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 4, 1927, p.22.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, December 18, 1925, p.39.

<sup>146</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 15, 1921, p.8. and *The Zionist Record*, February 15, 1921, p.23.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, December 10, 1926, p.23.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, December 31, 1926, p.11.

activity,<sup>149</sup> the absence of some of its leading lights caused the Circle to be temporarily suspended.<sup>150</sup> Upon its revival the *Agudath Sefateinu* resumed its former course,<sup>151</sup> whilst at the same time it strove to encourage the sale of Palestinian goods on the Durban market.<sup>152</sup>

The decision of the *Bnoth Zion* and the Durban Jewish Literary Club and Zionist Association to amalgamate in order to form the Durban Zionist Association did not apparently result in the immediate demise of the *Bnoth Zion*. *Chanukah* dances continued to be held under its auspices,<sup>153</sup> and the masked fancy dress ball first held in June 1920<sup>154</sup> remained an annual feature of the Durban Season.<sup>155</sup> The *shekel* collections continued to enjoy

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, May 6, 1927, p.36., June 3, 1927, p.32., July 29, 1927, p.24., September 2, 1927, p.25., September 26, 1927, p.24., October 28, 1927, p.17., December 2, 1927, p.29.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, September 14, 1928, pp.119 and 121.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, December 21, 1928, p.38., March 15, 1929, p.26., March 22, 1929, p.30., April 5, 1929, p.21., April 19, 1929, p.38., May 17, 1929, p.33., November 29, 1929, p.46.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, November 2, 1928, p.32.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, December 18, 1925, p.39., December 10, 1926, p.23.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, August 31, 1920, pp.24-25.

<sup>155</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 2, 1921, p.12., June 4, 1922, p.8., *South African Jewish Chronicle*, August 3, 1923, p.623., *The Natal Mercury*, August 1, 1924, p.14., June 24, 1925, p.12., August 5, 1926, p.13.

the assistance of the *Bnoth Zion*,<sup>156</sup> who also arranged sales of work for the benefit of the *Keren Hayesod*.<sup>157</sup> Certain of the meetings of the Durban Zionist Association were also held in co-operation with the *Bnoth Zion*,<sup>158</sup> which in September 1926 was described as "the women's branch of the Association."<sup>159</sup> At the same time, however, members of the *Bnoth Zion* no longer elected separate officers and committees, and women who had led the *Bnoth Zion* now instead, came to serve on the committee and as officers of the Durban Zionist Association.<sup>160</sup>

From the end of 1927 the name of *Bnoth Zion* no longer appeared on notices advertising activities arranged by the Zionist Association. In the same year the masked fancy dress ball, which had been the highlight of the *Bnoth Zion's* activities was discontinued. The Zionist women joined forces instead with the Jewish Ladies' Guild, the Jewish Benevolent Society and the

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<sup>156</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 30, 1922, p.36., April 8, 1925, p.38.

<sup>157</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 7, 1922, p.7., December 13, 1922, p.12., January 4, 1924, p.8.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, June 13, 1923, p.10., September 20, 1924, p.10., October 24, 1924, p.8., June 10, 1925, p.10., September 12, 1925, p.12., November 20, 1926, p.12., October 29, 1927, p.12.

<sup>159</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 8, 1926, p.42.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, June 30, 1922, p.36., *South African Jewish Chronicle*, May 25, 1923, p.410 ., *The Zionist Record*, February 13, 1925, p.28., November 23, 1928, p.22., March 15, 1929, p.26., January 3, 1930, p.22.



Jewish Circle in presenting the July Ball, in the interests of the combined Durban Jewish charities.<sup>161</sup>

For all its multifarious activities the Durban Zionist Association remained "the Cinderella of all Durban institutions,"<sup>162</sup> incapable of attracting large numbers to its regular functions or to its ranks.<sup>163</sup> Similar difficulties were faced by the Juvenile Zionist Association, which was formed in 1919,<sup>164</sup> under the guidance of the Durban Jewish Literary Club and Zionist Association, and which foundered two years later. Whilst operative, the Juvenile Association provided its members with a varied programme of activities, both social<sup>165</sup> and cultural,<sup>166</sup> and at the same time involved

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<sup>161</sup>*The Natal Advertiser*, July 6, 1927, p.4.

<sup>162</sup>*The Zionist Record*, September 18, 1925, p.31.

<sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*, September 19, 1919, p.53.

<sup>165</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, April 20, 1920, p.11., April 21, 1920, p.12., July 19, 1920, p.7., July 29, 1920, p.6., *The Zionist Record*, September 10, 1920, p.33., *The Natal Mercury*, February 12, 1921, p.14., *The Zionist Record*, March 20, 1921, p.43., *The Natal Mercury*, July 2, 1921, p.8., September 10, 1921, p.8.

<sup>166</sup>*The Zionist Record*, September 10, 1920, p.33., *The Natal Mercury*, February 12, 1921, p.14.

them in local Zionist work<sup>167</sup> and the sale of *shekels*.<sup>168</sup>

In June 1923 the Association was revived as the Durban branch of the Young Israel Society.<sup>169</sup> The community generally took little interest in the Society, which after six months, had only 37 members,<sup>170</sup> and the committee of the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, in fact refused the Society the use of the Synagogue Chambers.<sup>171</sup> The Society persevered nevertheless, offering a weekly programme of varied activities<sup>172</sup> and assisted wherever possible in the work of the Durban Zionist Association and the *Bnoth Zion*.<sup>173</sup> The offer made to the Society to become affiliated to the Jewish Circle, which was accepted at a general meeting in June 1925, not only gave

<sup>167</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 24, 1919, p.27., *The Natal Mercury*, May 6, 1920, p.10., *The Zionist Record*, September 10, 1920, p.33., March 20, 1921, p.43., *The Natal Mercury*, April 28, 1921, p.6., *The Zionist Record*, September 30, 1921, p.48.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, September 10, 1920, p.33. and May 31, 1921, p.31.

<sup>169</sup> "Durban Young Israel Society The Youth Movement in Durban, in *The Durban Hebrew Congregation Fiftieth Anniversary 1884-1934, 5644-5694* (Durban, 1934), p.48.

<sup>170</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 31, 1924, p.32.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 25, 1923, p.5., June 21, 1924, p.13., July 31, 1924, p.16., *The Zionist Record*, August 29, 1924, p.24., *Hasholom*, II No.6 (February, 1925), 6., *The Natal Mercury*, May 23, 1925, p.13., *The Zionist Record J.N.F. Supplement*, June 19, 1925, p.26.

<sup>173</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 17, 1925, p.20.

the Society one place on each of the sub-section committees of the Circle,<sup>174</sup> but also the much needed encouragement and support of adults outside the Zionist Association. The Society embarked on a process of reorganisation and a senior section was formed by raising the age of admission.<sup>175</sup>

In 1926 a Natal Young Israel Central Executive Council was formed after a meeting attended by delegates from the Society in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.<sup>176</sup> This step not only served to strengthen the bond between the Zionist youth in Natal,<sup>177</sup> but also brought the young Zionists in Natal into closer contact with their contemporaries throughout the Union.<sup>178</sup>

The Society however failed to attract the numbers it needed to effectively continue and early in 1927 a

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, October 9, 1925, p.19.

<sup>176</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 30, 1926, p.15.

<sup>177</sup> Through functions arranged by the Central Executive for the two Natal branches (*Hasholom*, VI No.8 (15th February, 1927) 16., *Ibid.*, VII No.4 (February, 1930), 18.) and Conferences of the Natal Executive (*Ibid.*, VI No.4 (October, 1927), 5-6. and *The Zionist Record*, October 26, 1928, p.27.)

<sup>178</sup> Through national conferences of the Society, Durban hosting the Conference in 1927, (*The Zionist Record*, July 22, 1927, p.14., July 29, 1927, p.24.) and subsequent National Conferences at which the Natal Young Israel Executive and the Durban Young Israel Society were represented (*Ibid.*, April 27, 1928, p.29., May 30, 1929, p.22.) as well as through the national camp held in Natal in July 1929. (*Hasholom*, VI No.12 (August, 1929) 27.)

call was made for "drastical remedial efforts to tide over a serious crisis."<sup>179</sup> The lack of interest of the Durban Jewish community in its work, and the lack of assistance from most of the Jewish institutions in the town, was seen as the root causes of the problem.<sup>180</sup> The Society, nevertheless, weathered the storm. Indeed, it successfully emerged from it strengthened, and with a renewed spirit of enthusiasm.<sup>181</sup> Apathy of the parent body continued to plague the progress of the Society which despite a high standard of activities<sup>182</sup> numbered no more than 60 members.<sup>183</sup> Undaunted, the Society persevered with its work for Zionist<sup>184</sup> and Jewish

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, IV No.9 (March 15th, 1927) 8.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, V No.3 (September, 1927, Special *Rosh Hashonah* Number), 24.

<sup>182</sup> See Reports *The Natal Mercury*, September 15, 1927, p.14., *Hasholom*, V No.5 (November, 1927), 14 and 16., *Ibid.*, V No.6 (December, 1927), 16., *Ibid.*, V No.7 (January/February, 1928), 20-21., *Ibid.*, V No.8 (March, 1928), 12-13., *Ibid.*, V No.9 (April, 1928) 12-13., *Ibid.*, V No.11 (June, 1928) 15-16 and 18., *Ibid.*, V No.12 (July, 1928), 10., *Ibid.*, VI No.2 (September, 1928, Special *Rosh Hashonah* Number), 29-30., *Ibid.*, VI No.3 (October, 1928), 11-12., *Ibid.*, VI No.5 (December, 1928), 14-15., *Ibid.*, VI No.8 (April, 1929, *Pesach* Number), 22 and 24., *Ibid.*, VI No.10 (June, 1929), 22 and 24., *Ibid.*, VII No.3 (December, 1929), 32-33., *Ibid.*, VII No.4 (February, 1930), 18.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, V No.10 (May, 1928), 10 and 12.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, IV No.8 (February 15th, 1927), 16 and 18., *Ibid.*, V No.6 (December, 1927), 16., *Ibid.*, V No.7 (January/February, 1928), 20., *The Natal Mercury*, June 6, 1928, p.8.

causes,<sup>185</sup> whilst proudly claiming to be one of the few branches of the Young Israel Movement to hold a function every Saturday night.<sup>186</sup> The difficulties under which the Society laboured were also aggravated by the insufficient support which members gave to weekly functions.<sup>187</sup> The distraction of other types of entertainment on Saturday evenings made the leadership of the Society recognise the need to provide regular functions of a high standard, whilst in a further effort to swell membership the minimum age limit was reduced to thirteen.<sup>188</sup> For all the problems with which it had to cope the Society nevertheless enjoyed the support of a small band of devoted members through whose dedication and effort the Society's continued existence was ensured.

The lack of interest shown by the community in the work of the branches of the Zionist movement, and the small number of Jews who actively identified with the Movement through affiliation or the purchase of *Shekels*, was ascribed by those most intimately associated with the Zionist cause, to the community's ignorance of the true meaning of Zionism, and its failure to grasp fully the

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<sup>185</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 10, 1926, p.23., *Hasholom*, V No.6 (December, 1927), 16., *Ibid.*, VI No.3 (October, 1928), 6., *Ibid.*, VII No.3 (December, 1929), 28.

<sup>186</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 14, 1928, p.121.

<sup>187</sup> *Hasholom*, VI No.5 (December, 1928), 14.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, VI No.12 (August, 1929), 27.

ideals for which the Movement strove.<sup>189</sup>

Durban Jewry generally equated Zionism with monetary assistance and gave expression to its Zionist sentiment through its support of various fundraising campaigns. Many of the community's leaders acted likewise, for whilst they served on the special committees set up to organise the *Keren Hayesod* campaigns, they generally remained aloof from Zionist affairs.<sup>190</sup> This was certainly a contributory factor to the unhappy plight of the Zionist movement in Durban. When, in 1928, the Durban Zionist Association was reconstituted,<sup>191</sup> the Association enjoyed an upsurge in membership and an increased interest in all aspects of its work, in consequence of the members of the *Keren Hayesod* committee being persuaded to work for Zionism in Durban all year round.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 47.

<sup>190</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 9, 1928, p.28.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, November 23, 1928, p.22.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, January 3, 1930, p.22.

## CHAPTER VIII

JEWISH PHILANTHROPY : 1919 - 1929

The spontaneous assistance which the Jewish community had always extended to its less fortunate co-religionists<sup>1</sup> had, with the creation of the Jewish Benevolent Society by the Jewish men of the town in 1898,<sup>2</sup> given way to organised welfare activity within the community. In the face of the extraordinary conditions that were caused by the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War, and the influx of a large number of Jewish refugees to Durban, the task of assisting the refugees had been borne by a special relief committee that had been formed by the Jewish residents of the port.<sup>3</sup> The return of peace in 1902 had, however, signalled the resumption of all aspects of welfare work by the Benevolent Society,<sup>4</sup> a task which from 1903 had come to be shared by the newly-established Jewish Ladies' Helping

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<sup>1</sup> S.G. Cohen, *A History of the Jews of Durban 1825-1918*, Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban, 1977), p.159.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.159-160.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.169-174.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.276-277.

Hand Society.<sup>5</sup> In 1904 the Helping Hand Society had been extended to become, as well, the Holy Vestment Society, and had been renamed the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst the Jewish Benevolent Society had concerned itself principally with relief work, the work undertaken by the Jewish Ladies' Guild had embraced a much wider spectrum of activities. In addition to extending assistance to the needy, the Guild had also worked for the Synagogues, raised funds for deserving causes and had acted, whenever the occasion had demanded, on behalf of the Jewish women of the town.

#### DURBAN JEWISH BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

The Benevolent Society continued after 1918 to engage in the provision of relief and free medical service, the visiting of the sick, the granting of loans to those eligible<sup>7</sup> and the supply of *matzot*, and other

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.283-284.

<sup>7</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 55.



necessities for Passover, to all those in need.<sup>8</sup>

However, in this period, which was characterised by economic hardships and the increased flow of Jewish immigrants to South Africa through Durban, additional burdens were placed on the Society necessitating increased expenditure. To help those who fell prey to the unfavourable economic conditions of the time money was distributed and loans were granted.<sup>9</sup> So numerous, in fact, were the calls made by the victims of the economic depression, that the Society's funds depleted to such an extent that there was a time when the Society was in danger of being unable to continue functioning.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time those who came to the town in a fruitless search for employment were helped to return to their homes.<sup>11</sup>

Jews who, upon disembarking in their new land, found themselves in need of assistance were also provided for from the Society's funds. At the same time the Society's trustee Mr J. Rothstein, the honorary

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<sup>8</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 12, 1919, p.8., March 31, 1920, p.8., April 21, 1921, p.6., April 4, 1922, p.6., March 17, 1923, p.10., April 4, 1924, p.8., March 28, 1925, p.12., March 10, 1926, p.12., March 30, 1927, p.10., March 20, 1928, p.10., April 17, 1929, p.10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, October 29, 1924, p.16., *The Zionist Record* November 6, 1925, p.19., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 55.

<sup>10</sup> *Hasholom*, IV No.11 (June, 1927), 10.

<sup>11</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 14, 1928, p.119.

official representative on immigration matters for the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, offered his services to all Jewish immigrants.<sup>12</sup> The Society's association with the Board of Deputies was further strengthened by its successful application for membership of the Board.<sup>13</sup>

Funds to sustain the work of the Society came from balls arranged by the Committee,<sup>14</sup> and from functions arranged by the Durban Jewish Circle,<sup>15</sup> the Durban New Hebrew Congregation<sup>16</sup> and the Ladies' Guild,<sup>17</sup> as well as from donations<sup>18</sup> and bequests.<sup>19</sup> The Society also relied heavily upon the support of its members, whose numbers increased from 290 in 1919<sup>20</sup> to over 400 by

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<sup>12</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 55.

<sup>13</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 31, 1922, p.48.

<sup>14</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 14, 1919, p.6., August 2, 1921, p.10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, May 20, 1922, p.9., June 7, 1923, p.12., June 5, 1924, p.10., *Hasholom*, V No.4 (October, 1927), 2., *Ibid.*, V No.11 (June, 1928), 5-6., *Ibid.*, VI (No.3 (October, 1928), 6.

<sup>16</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 29, 1926, p.6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, July 15, 1925, p.12., July 6, 1927, p.13., July 11, 1928, p.8.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, October 31, 1919, p.6., *Hasholom*, VI No.2 (September, 1928, Special Rosh Hashonah Number), 32., *Hasholom*, VII No.3 (December, 1929), 30.

<sup>19</sup> *South African Jewish Chronicle*, November 9, 1923, p.905., *Hasholom*, VII No.3 (December, 1929), 30.

<sup>20</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 31, 1919, p.6.

1929,<sup>21</sup> and on their subscriptions of one shilling a month.<sup>22</sup>

#### DURBAN JEWISH LADIES' GUILD

The reversion to peace time conditions enabled the Jewish Ladies' Guild to devote its full energies to its rich and varied programme of activities. In the course of dispensing its aid to deserving cases the Guild sometimes worked in conjunction with the Jewish Benevolent Society. This working relationship was characterised by complete harmony **and** close co-operation between the two societies,<sup>23</sup> and the Guild's assistance in raising funds for the Benevolent Society<sup>24</sup> only served to strengthen this bond. From 1927 these two societies combined with the Durban Jewish Circle and the Zionist Association in arranging the annual July Ball.<sup>25</sup> This Ball, which was the principle fundraising feature of the

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<sup>21</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 55.

<sup>22</sup> *Hasholom*, IV No.5 (October 15th, 1926), 2-3.

<sup>23</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 31, 1919, p.6., September 8, 1925, p.8., *The Zionist Record*, November 6, 1925, p.19., September 14, 1928, p.119., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 49.

<sup>24</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 15, 1925, p.12.

<sup>25</sup> *Hasholom*, IV No.10 (April 15th, 1927), 4.

Guild's calendar, had first been held in 1904,<sup>26</sup> and was widely acknowledged as the social event of the season.

The close association between the Guild and the Durban Hebrew Congregation was reinforced by the Guild's participation in Synagogal activities. Both the reception given in Rev. Levy's honour upon his arrival in Durban, and upon his return some years later as a rabbi, were catered for by the Guild.<sup>27</sup> In co-operation with the Congregation the Guild also held a *Simchat Torah* ball in aid of Congregational funds.<sup>28</sup>

In its capacity as Holy Vestment Society, the Guild decorated and provided refreshments for the *succah*, and also renovated, and where necessary renewed, the Holy Vestments of the Congregation.<sup>29</sup> On September 9, 1928 a memorial stone to the memory of the late Rev. S. Pincus, paid for by the Ladies' Guild, was unveiled by Mrs S.J. Kaplan, the Guild's President, in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>30</sup> In similar vein, the Guild worked with the Durban New Hebrew Congregation, supporting it with proceeds from the July Ball,<sup>31</sup> catering at the

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<sup>26</sup>S.G. Cohen, p.286.

<sup>27</sup>*The Zionist Record*, September 12, 1924, p.31. and June 28, 1929, p.33.

<sup>28</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, October 14, 1925, p.12.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, September 8, 1925, p.8.

<sup>30</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 26, 1928, p.27.

<sup>31</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 29, 1923, p.8.

reception following the consecration of the Park Street Synagogue<sup>32</sup> and providing it with Holy Vestments.<sup>33</sup>

The Guild's interest in the children of the community was reflected in the assistance that it gave at the annual picnic of the Durban *Talmud Torah*,<sup>34</sup> and in its decision to support the Durban Hebrew Kindergarten with a monthly donation.<sup>35</sup> Similar interest in the welfare of Jewish children beyond the town, was demonstrated by the fund raising undertaken on behalf of the War Victims of Eastern Europe,<sup>36</sup> and the Ukranian Orphans,<sup>37</sup> and the support for a kindergarten in Palestine.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to its many other duties, the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild also traditionally undertook the catering at all Jewish functions. Apart from functions connected with the Synagogues, the Guild prepared the luncheon which followed the consecration of a lodge of

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<sup>32</sup> *South African Jewish Chronicle*, September 7, 1923, p.718.

<sup>33</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 2, 1927, p.29.

<sup>34</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 25, 1924, p.3.

<sup>35</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 51.

<sup>36</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 6, 1920, p.8., August 7, 1920, p.14., August 26, 1922, p.11. and August 31, 1923, p.10.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, July 13, 1921, p.10.

<sup>38</sup> *Hasholom*, V No.7 (January/February 1925), 9.

the Hebrew Order of David in Durban<sup>39</sup> and arranged the banquet during the visit of Dr Nahum Sokolow in June 1926.<sup>40</sup>

Within the wider community of Durban the Guild was best known for its participation, on behalf of the Jewish women of the town, in projects of a national character in which all women's groups co-operated. Building on the fine record of service that it had earned in connection with the war effort, the Guild supported the Women's Patriotic League,<sup>41</sup> contributed to the wedding gift for Princess Mary, the Princess Royal,<sup>42</sup> and the Silver Wedding Fund for the Governor General and Princess Alice,<sup>43</sup> and participated in the Armistice Day wreath laying ceremony at the Cenotaph.<sup>44</sup> The Guild also associated itself with the Durban and District Nursing Association that was formed in 1929.<sup>45</sup> Among the officers of the Association were Miss B. Lazarus the Hon. Secretary, Mr F. C. Hollander, a Committee Member, and representatives from a number of local institutions

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<sup>39</sup> *South African Jewish Chronicle*, January 30, 1925, p.111.

<sup>40</sup> *Hasholom*, IV No.6 (November 15th, 1926), 3.

<sup>41</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 19, 1919, p.11.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, January 25, 1922, p.14.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, November 14, 1928, p.11.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, November 12, 1923, p.7.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, July 12, 1929, p.15.

including the Jewish Benevolent Society.<sup>46</sup>

Notwithstanding its multifarious activities, nor its representation of the Jewish women of Durban on the National Council of Women and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies,<sup>47</sup> the Guild only enjoyed limited support from the ladies of the community. In 1919 its membership roll numbered 165<sup>48</sup> and whilst this figure had grown by 1929 to over 300<sup>49</sup> there were occasions when insufficient support threatened the Guild's continued existence.<sup>50</sup> For the July Ball in 1926 the brunt of the work in connection with this function was undertaken by not more than eight ladies.<sup>51</sup> Although the Ball was considered an outstanding success,<sup>52</sup> having to present so large and important a function with such limited manpower, influenced the Guild's decision to combine with other Jewish organisations in the town, to present this landmark in the communal calendar.<sup>53</sup> One reason advanced for the poor attendance at meetings, and

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 49.

<sup>48</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 16, 1919, p.10.

<sup>49</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1929), 49.

<sup>50</sup> *Hasholom*, IV No.6 (November 15th, 1926), 2.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *The Natal Advertiser*, July 14, 1926, p.5.

<sup>53</sup> *Hasholom*, IV No.10 (April 15th, 1927), 4.

the inability to attract new members, was the fact that meetings were held in the afternoons instead of in the evenings, when it was believed that greater numbers of women would be free to attend.<sup>54</sup> This does not in itself, however, appear to have been the principle cause of the Guild's problem. That problem was more probably rooted in general apathy. Happily this apathy failed to inhibit the Guild to the extent that it discontinued its important work.

#### SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH ORPHANAGE

Whilst the Jewish Benevolent Society and the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild had always served as umbrella bodies for Jewish welfare work undertaken in Durban, the creation of an independent branch of the South African Jewish Orphanage in the town, in 1926, signalled a break with this tradition. Prior to the establishment of the Durban committee of the Johannesburg based orphanage, both the Benevolent Society and the Ladies' Guild had supported the Orphanage in its work. The former had made monetary contributions<sup>55</sup> and the latter had extended hospitality to children from the Orphanage who

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, III No.5 (March, 1926), 1-2.

<sup>55</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 18, 1916, p.11., October 29, 1924, p.16., *The Zionist Record*, November 6, 1925, p.19.



were brought on holiday to Durban,<sup>56</sup> and had canvassed for subscribers.<sup>57</sup> In 1923 the Guild had also been responsible for the catering at a *Simchat Torah* Ball, arranged by an influential committee under Mr F.C. Hollander, to raise funds for the Orphanage.<sup>58</sup>

Together with the Hebrew Order of David, the Durban Jewish Circle and the two Hebrew Congregations, the Benevolent Society and Ladies' Guild were represented at a meeting held on August 7, 1926 at the home of Mrs L. Jacobson, at which it was resolved to form a branch of the Orphanage committee.<sup>59</sup> The Rev. E.M. Levy was appointed Chairman, and the post of Hon. Secretary and Treasurer was filled by Mr E.B. Isaacs,<sup>60</sup> whose mother, Mrs J.H. Isaacs, had formerly represented the Orphanage in the town.<sup>61</sup> The principal task of the Durban committee was apparently the organising of collections and the enrolling of subscribers. By 1928, however, it was noted that in comparison with donations remitted by a number of smaller centres, Durban contributed a negligible sum of money to the Orphanage.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, January 7, 1919, p.3.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, September 8, 1925, p.8.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, October 10, 1923, p.9.

<sup>59</sup>*The Zionist Record*, August 27, 1926, p.25.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, October 1, 1926, p.24.

<sup>61</sup>*South African Jewish Chronicle*, September 14, 1928, p.738.

<sup>62</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 26, 1928, p.27.

Under a new committee, led by Mr H. Hillman, with Mr E.B. Isaacs as Treasurer and Mr N.E. Abrahams as Secretary, interest in the Orphanage was revived and within five months the committee raised nearly £400, which was the largest amount ever subscribed in Natal.<sup>63</sup> Much of the work on behalf of the Orphanage was undertaken by the women of the town. They worked mainly to collect money for a seaside fund inaugurated by the Orphanage to enable convalescent orphans to spend time at the coast.<sup>64</sup> By 1929 the Durban committee of the South African Jewish Orphanage had thus clearly become a feature of the communal life of the town.

#### JEWISH WAR VICTIMS FUND

Alongside the agencies working in Durban in the cause of Jewish benevolence, and entirely unrelated to any of them, was the local branch of the Jewish War Victims Fund. This fund was set up in 1914 to help alleviate the suffering of Jewry in war-torn Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>65</sup> It remained operative after the resumption of peace, in consequence of the enormous hardships which the affected communities continued to

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, March 22, 1929, p.30.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, May 17, 1929, p.55., *Hasholom*, VII No.3 (December, 1929), 14.

<sup>65</sup> S.G. Cohen, pp.389-395.

experience.<sup>66</sup> The Durban committee of the fund held regular meetings,<sup>67</sup> and together with the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild, collected clothes for the victims,<sup>68</sup> whilst the Guild also supported the fund with proceeds from the July Ball.<sup>69</sup> Proceeds from a masked fancy dress ball given by the Zionist Association in 1920,<sup>70</sup> and part-proceeds from the presentation of a Yiddish play *De Americaner Glicker*, presented at the *Theatre Royal*, by the Johannesburg Hebrew Operatic and Dramatic Company helped swell the fund still further.<sup>71</sup> An indication of the extent of the work undertaken by the local fund committee was reflected in a letter from Mr Chas E. Sebag Montefiore, the Hon. Secretary of the Fund for the Relief of Jewish War Victims of the War in Russia, who wrote from the London headquarters of the fund to thank the Durban branch for its donation of £300 and its contribution of clothes.<sup>72</sup>

At a congress held in Bloemfontein in 1922, to

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<sup>66</sup> See above pp.12-14.

<sup>67</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 21, 1919, p.6., June 18, 1919, p.8., November 21, 1919, p.6., December 17, 1919, p.8., May 14, 1920, p.6., August 28, 1920, p.11.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, March 6, 1920, p.8., November 17, 1922, p.8.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, July 14, 1920, p.8., August 7, 1920, p.14., July 14, 1922, p.10., August 26, 1922, p.11.

<sup>70</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 31, 1920, pp.24-25.

<sup>71</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 14, 1920, p.8.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, February 16, 1921, p.9.

unify Jewish relief fund organisations in South Africa operating on behalf of Jewry in Europe and Palestine, the War Victim Fund was absorbed into the United South African Jewish Relief Reconstruction and Orphan Fund.<sup>73</sup>

#### ORT, OZE AND EMIGDIRECT

The devastation to Jewish life in consequence of the prevailing conditions in Eastern Europe was so severe that a third of the Jews, numbering more than 2,000,000 were left without any means of earning a livelihood. To reconstruct Jewish life, three world organisations Ort,<sup>74</sup> Oze<sup>75</sup> and Emigdirect,<sup>76</sup> formed a united committee under the chairmanship of Dr Leon Bramson, the Chairman of Ort, and in 1927 he conducted a campaign on their

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, August 7, 1922, p.8.

<sup>74</sup> The Ort organisation was founded in Russia in 1880 and sought to train Jews for agricultural and industrial pursuits. For a detailed account see Seev Halperin and the Editorial Staff of *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, "Ort", in *The Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), XII, 1481-1486.

<sup>75</sup> Oze was formed in 1913 with the object of maintaining and improving the health of the Jews, paying special attention to the hygiene at schools and the general welfare, of the youth. For a detailed account see Leon Wulman, "Oze", in *Ibid.*, XII, 1537-1539.

<sup>76</sup> Emigdirect came into being to help Jewish emigrants and potential emigrants to leave Eastern Europe for Palestine and other countries willing to accept them as immigrants. For a detailed account see Ann Ussishkin, "Jewish Colonisation Association," in *Ibid.*, X, 44., and Morton Mayer Berman, "Philanthropy", in *Ibid.*, XIII, 388.

behalf throughout South Africa.

At the conclusion of a large meeting addressed by Dr Bramson in the Chambers of the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue on December 20, 1927, it was unanimously resolved, that "This meeting of Durban Jewry deeply sympathises with Dr Bramson's mission and pledges itself to do its utmost to assist him morally and financially in his cause."<sup>77</sup> On December 25 Dr Bramson repeated his address at a meeting held in the *King's Hall*,<sup>78</sup> and a campaign was launched to solicit funds from Durban Jewry. A local committee, chaired by Mr P. Wartski, with Mr A. Berman as Hon. Treasurer and Mr A. Ware as Hon. Secretary, succeeded in raising over £644 in just one month.<sup>79</sup> By the time that the campaign was brought to a close Durban's total contribution to Ort, Oze and Emigdirect exceeded £847.<sup>80</sup>

#### THE JEWISH COLONISATION FUND

Borne out of a similar concern for the Jews of Russia, a third campaign was held in Durban on their behalf in 1929. This campaign, conducted by

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<sup>77</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 21, 1927, p.17., *The Natal Advertiser*, December 21, 1927, p.18.

<sup>78</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 23, 1927, p.14.

<sup>79</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 3, 1928, p.28.

<sup>80</sup> *Hasholom*, V No.8 (March, 1928), 12.

Dr Reuben Brainin, a distinguished scholar and Zionist, sought to raise funds for the scheme, sponsored by the American Agro Joint National Organising Committee, for rehabilitating the declassified Jews by settling them in agricultural colonies in Russia. In all parts of South Africa Dr Brainin encountered considerable opposition to this scheme, which was viewed as a challenge to the Zionist solution of the Jewish problem.<sup>81</sup> At a formal welcome given to Dr Brainin and his son Joseph at the *Marine Hotel* on July 31, it was made clear that in Durban, too, there were influential sections of the Jewish community who were incapable of associating themselves with his campaign, since they opposed any organised settlement of Jews on land outside Palestine.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless at a public meeting held at the *S.A.R. Institute Hall*, on August 4, Dr Brainin was accorded an enthusiastic reception and many donations were made to assist his cause.<sup>83</sup> Elsewhere in the Union Dr Brainin also attracted large audiences to his meetings, but, as in the case of Durban, the impact was not long lasting.<sup>84</sup>

Whilst a number of Jewish artisans in the Union chose to immigrate to the Jewish settlement of

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<sup>81</sup>Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967*, (Cape Town, 1980), pp.56-57.

<sup>82</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 1, 1929, p.24., *The Natal Advertiser*, July 31, 1929, p.10.

<sup>83</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 5, 1929, p.6.

<sup>84</sup>Gideon Shimoni, p.57.

Birobidzan, in Far Eastern Russia,<sup>85</sup> financial support for the Jewish Colonisation Fund remained scant. Almost three years after Dr Brainin's visit to South Africa, not more than £12,000 had been raised and branches of the Fund throughout the country were unable to continue operating.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 10, 1931, p.15.,  
July 11, 1931, p.16., July 20, 1931, p.15.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, July 27, 1931, p.13.

SECTION TWO 1930 - 1935

CHAPTER IX

LIVING DURING TRYING TIMES : 1930 - 1935

The thirties were largely characterised by economic hardship, by political uncertainty and by an upsurge in anti-Semitism which reached its apex in Nazi Germany.

Like the rest of the world, South Africa was, by the end of 1929, in the grip of a severe economic depression. This resulted in marked recessions in almost all spheres of economic activity, which was coupled by rising unemployment and increased numbers of bankruptcies.<sup>1</sup> So grave were the depression and poverty in many parts of the country that, in 1931, the Prime Minister, General Hertzog, called on the people of South Africa to observe January 3 and 4 as days of humiliation and

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<sup>1</sup>B.J. Liebenberg, "From the Statute of Westminster to the Republic of South Africa 1931-1961," in *500 Years A History of South Africa*, ed. C.F.J. Muller (Pretoria, n.d.), p.366.



prayer in their respective houses of worship.<sup>2</sup>

The Jews of Durban were not spared the effects of the depression and appeals to the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild<sup>3</sup> and the Durban Jewish Benevolent Society<sup>4</sup> reached an unprecedented level. By 1932 the funds of these two welfare agencies were exhausted,<sup>5</sup> and a special fund raising drive amongst local Jewry had to be held<sup>6</sup> to enable them to continue operating.

Alongside their efforts on behalf of their co-religionists Durban Jewry also responded to the call of the various relief agencies active in the town. Appeals from the Durban and District Community Chest,<sup>7</sup> the St. Vincent De Paul Society<sup>8</sup> and the Durban Homes for Men<sup>9</sup> met with the support of members of the Jewish community.

In 1932, at the height of depression, the Natal

<sup>2</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 5, 1931, p.12.

<sup>3</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.6 (February, 1932), 19., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 67.

<sup>4</sup> *Hasholom*, VII No.5 (March, 1930), 22., *Ibid.*, VIII No.7 (April, 1931), 8., *Ibid.*, IX No.9 (May, 1932), 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.10 (June, 1932), 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.11 (July, 1932), 14-15.

<sup>7</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 13, 1931, p.11., November 19, 1931, p.9., December 9, 1931, p.15., December 16, 1931, p.12., November 12, 1932, p.10., November 25, 1932, p.18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, November 20, 1931, p.19.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Education Department decided to come to the rescue of the poor school children of Durban, who were faced with hunger during the July holidays through the stoppage of the free midday meal provided at all schools. Soup kitchens for scholars were opened in eight Government schools in the Durban district, and a call was made on the public by the Provincial Executive to assist at the school soup kitchens and to contribute food and money.<sup>10</sup> This scheme met with unqualified support from all sections of the local populace including the Jewish element who contributed in cash<sup>11</sup> and kind<sup>12</sup> towards the more than 20,300 meals provided for nearly 800 children during the holiday period.<sup>13</sup> So successful was this scheme that it was repeated on an even larger scale during the Christmas holidays in 1932, and again in 1933, and 1934, and on each occasion it enjoyed the support and assistance of individuals within the Jewish community.<sup>14</sup>

In order to provide holidays and a change of environment for needy children whose parents were unable

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, June 30, 1932, p.11.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, July 7, 1932, p.13., August 9, 1932, p.7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, July 20, 1932, p.12., August 9, 1932, p.7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, August 9, 1932, p.7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, December 7, 1932, p.8., December 20, 1932, p.16., December 30, 1932, p.10., January 7, 1933, p.8, June 27, 1933, p.20., July 3, 1933, p.12., July 6, 1933, p.10., July 14, 1933, p.8., June 19, 1934, p.18., June 20, 1934, p.11., December 19, 1934, p.17.

to make provision for them during the school vacations, *The Natal Mercury*, in collaboration with leading citizens of the Province set up the Natal Fresh Air and Holiday Camp Fund, in August 1935.<sup>15</sup> Among those invited to serve on a Provisional Committee that was formed to forward the scheme, were Mr F.C. Hollander M.E.C., Mr H.L. Brown, the President of the Durban Jewish Club and Mr W. Cranko, the Jewish Club's Chairman.<sup>16</sup> Upon the acquisition of a suitable camp site, at Hibberdene on the Natal South Coast, a call was made for funds to equip the site and assistance was rendered by both the Jewish Club and the Jewish Ladies' Guild.<sup>17</sup>

For South African Jewry the hardships of the depression were compounded in 1930 by the introduction in Parliament of the *Immigrant Quota Bill*, which was designed to restrict immigration from Eastern Europe and, in effect, to limit the number of Jews entering the country. The question of Jewish immigration to South Africa had for some time been the subject of much controversy, and efforts, by men such as Rabbi E.M. Levy, to dispel the negative views which found expression in Parliament and in the Press,<sup>18</sup> had had little effect.

With a suddenness that caught the South African

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, August 12, 1933, p.13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* On the Jewish Club see Chapter 12 below.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, October 25, 1934, p.22.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, December 4, 1929, p.18.

Jewish community almost entirely unawares,<sup>19</sup> the Minister of the Interior, Dr D.F. Malan, secured the first reading of his *Immigration Restriction Bill*, on January 29, 1930.<sup>20</sup> It aroused immediate protest from Jewish members of Parliament<sup>21</sup> and created a storm of indignation amongst Jewish communities across the country. In Durban the opening function of the Jewish Circle was utilised as a mass meeting, at which the Jewish community's emphatic disapproval of the Bill was eloquently expressed by Rabbi Levy and supported by the heads of every Jewish institution.<sup>22</sup> What particularly aroused the ire of Natal's veteran Jewish politician Mr C.P. Robinson<sup>23</sup> and the members of the Durban Jewish community,<sup>24</sup> was Dr Malan's attempt to win their support for the Bill by his claims that the restrictions on their East European co-religionists would be to their economic and social advantage. Jewry, equally vociferously, rejected the allegations made by Dr Malan,

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<sup>19</sup>Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967*, (Cape Town, 1980), p.97., *Hasholom*, VII No.4 (February, 1930), 2., *Ibid.*, VII No.6 (April, 1930), 2.

<sup>20</sup>*Union of South Africa. Debates of the House of Assembly. Second Session, Sixth Parliament 17th January to 31st May, 1930.* XIV Cape Town, 29th January, 1930, cls, 181-183.

<sup>21</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, January 30, 1930, p.11.

<sup>22</sup>*The Zionist Record*, February 14, 1930, p.26.

<sup>23</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, February 11, 1930, p.15.

<sup>24</sup>*Hasholom*, XVII No.5 (March, 1930), 6.

and which were supported by *The Natal Mercury*, that uncontrolled immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe would disrupt the racial homogeneity of the country and would create serious economic problems.<sup>25</sup>

Notwithstanding opposition from certain members of the South African Party and the National Council Labourites, including Mr C.P. Robinson and the other Jewish Members of Parliament, the Bill passed through all its stages and became law.<sup>26</sup>

This Bill was of enormous significance in that it highlighted a wide cross section of public support for limitation on Jewish immigration which cut across Party and linguistic lines. This was evident from the support which Dr Malan's Bill enjoyed in the editorial columns of Durban's daily morning newspaper, and in the English press generally,<sup>27</sup> and in the approval accorded the Bill by the vast majority of the members of Parliament irrespective of their political affiliation.<sup>28</sup>

In light of the undercurrent of opposition to Jewish immigration, which had last manifested itself in

<sup>25</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 1, 1930, p.14., February 10, 1930, p.10.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, February 11, 1930, p.15., February 13, 1930, p.15., February 18, 1930, p.11., February 21, 1930, p.15., February 28, 1930, p.10., March 4, 1930, p.13., March 5, 1930, p.6., March 6, 1930, p.20.

<sup>27</sup> See Gideon Shimoni, p.100.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.101-102.

1923-1924,<sup>29</sup> it is surprising that the Jewish community should have been caught so unprepared by the Bill and should have been so unaware of the popular feeling of the time. The Jewish community's surprise can, however, be explained when one recalls that up until 1930 Hertzog's National Party had not shown itself to be unfavourably disposed to Jewish immigration. In fact, in 1924 Dr Malan had, as the newly appointed Minister of the Interior in the Pact Government, rejected the policy of his predecessor in the Smuts' Government, who had sought to curb Jewish immigration on economic grounds.<sup>30</sup>

As Shimoni explains, the change which this Bill signalled in National Party policy, may be seen as an indication of the Party's acceptance of its inability to draw Jewish support away from the South African Party.<sup>31</sup> Having failed in both the 1924 and the 1929 elections to win the Jewish vote, Shimoni argues with great effectiveness that, "it was the Nationalist Party's disappointment with the Jews which cleared the path for a radical change in policy."<sup>32</sup>

The broad base of public opinion which favoured the *Quota Bill* becomes increasingly comprehensible when viewed against the socio-economic conditions of the time.

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<sup>29</sup> See above pp.19-20.

<sup>30</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.104.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.104-105.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104.

By this period the problems of the "poor Whites" had reached serious proportions. Large numbers of impoverished White Afrikaners had come to be resident in the towns, where they were confronted by Black competition in areas of unskilled labour, and predominantly English speaking employers. With the problem of the "poor Whites," particularly marked amongst the Afrikaner section of the population, the problem became, as Shimoni points out, a major issue in the consciousness of Afrikaner nationalism and came to be related to the Afrikaner's national struggle.<sup>33</sup> The Jewish community with its extensive involvement in commerce thus came to be a valuable scapegoat for the ills of the poor Whites, hence the broad based public support for the Bill.

To the hardships imposed by the *Immigration Quota Act* on Jews from Eastern Europe, were added the difficulties caused by the increase in the fee for naturalisation certificates, which was raised from £1 to £5 in February, 1931. Through the efforts of Mr C.P. Robinson M.P. an interview was arranged, on March 11, between a deputation from the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the Minister of the Interior in order to discuss the matter. After listening to the representations the Minister pointed out that this increase had been decided upon by the Cabinet in order

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.103.

to increase State revenue and that it would be reviewed when the prevailing economic conditions improved.<sup>34</sup>

The *Immigration Quota Act* had the effect of generating grave suspicion and animosity between the Jewish community and Hertzog's National Party which was only worsened by the increase in the fees for naturalisation certificates. This response, as Shimoni indicates, set a dialectic process in motion, "whereby the Jewish reaction to the Government's policy in turn set up an increasingly negative response from the Nationalists" who came to suspect that the Jews as a whole were now becoming their enemies.<sup>35</sup>

Jewish resentment of the *Immigration Quota Act* came under scathing attack from Dr Malan in an interview which he gave to the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Burger*, in November 1931, in which he warned the Jews that, "if they persisted in attacking his Party because of the Immigration Act, the Nationalists would hit back."<sup>36</sup> Leading members of the Jewish community, including Chief Rabbi Dr J.L. Landau,<sup>37</sup> Mr F.C. Hollander<sup>38</sup> and

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<sup>34</sup>The South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Report of the Executive Committee for the Period December, 1929, to November 30th, 1931. To be submitted to the Ninth Congress, Bloemfontein, January 3rd and 4th, 1932, p.27.

<sup>35</sup>Gideon Shimoni, p.107.

<sup>36</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, November 4, 1931, p.17.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, November 5, 1931, p.14.



Rabbi E.M. Levy<sup>39</sup> were harshly critical of Dr Malan's statement. The feelings of the Durban Jewish community were expressed in an editorial in *Hasholom* which criticised a Minister of the Crown for "hurtful gratuitous threats to any one section of the South African people."<sup>40</sup> A deputation from the South African Jewish Board of Deputies subsequently met with Dr Malan in Pretoria in order to discuss his interview and other matters affecting Jewry. In reply to a written submission handed to him during the interview Dr Malan wrote to the Board that, "the warning in the interview was explicitly directed to one section, and unfortunately, a very large one, which had organised and is still organising, Jews as such for the purpose of defeating the present Government, and for this purpose exploiting the feeling aroused by the *Quota Act*."<sup>41</sup> Whilst the storm surrounding Dr Malan's interview with *Die Burger* gradually subsided, the Jewish community remained wary of the Minister and his Party.

Within the country as a whole the depression and its effects brought about conditions which required a new political dispensation, whilst at all levels of Government this was a period characterised by intense political activity.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, November 18, 1931, p.10.

<sup>40</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.3 (November, 1931), 3.

<sup>41</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 21, 1931, p.13.

In September 1931 the Government's repetition of its oft repeated threat to abolish Provincial Councils and to centralise State control, met with fierce opposition. This opposition was particularly marked in Natal where inclusion of the Provincial system within the Constitution, in order to protect the identity of the Province's White largely English speaking population, had been a pre-condition for entry into the Union in 1910. Resentful of its inability to secure control of the Provincial Council in Natal, and thereby the administration of the Province's internal affairs, the Government's spokesmen had frequently called for a revision of the Provincial Council system. The threat to the Provincial system brought to a head the discontent in Natal over the direction in which Hertzog's Government was leading the country. The growing dissatisfaction in the Province, over what was believed to be a course of policy aimed against the English speaking section of the population, spurred the Government's opponents in Natal into taking action.<sup>42</sup>

Outspoken in his opposition to the Government's plan was Mr F.C. Hollander M.E.C.,<sup>43</sup> who, in 1930, had

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<sup>42</sup>For a full account of the response in Natal to the threat to the Provincial Council system see M. Walker, *The Provincial Council and Natal 1924-1932*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban, 1976), pp.111-181.

<sup>43</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, September 9, 1931, p.13.

again been returned unopposed to the Provincial Council,<sup>44</sup> and who was regarded as "one of the greatest authorities in the Union on the Provincial Council System."<sup>45</sup>

Whilst opposition in Natal to the Government's plan was almost unanimous the response to the Government reflected less unanimity. On the one hand there was the response of the Natal Devolution League which favoured separation from the Union until a federal system of Government had been created for the country. The public representatives of the South African Party, including Mr C.P. Robinson M.P. and Mr F.C. Hollander M.E.C., on the other hand, came out overwhelmingly in support of a federal constitution within the Union.<sup>46</sup>

The Natal Devolution League successfully created great public interest in the Provincial Council issue and its cry for 'Separation then Federation' was taken up at mass meetings, convened under the League's auspices throughout Natal. A Natal Convention summoned by the Devolution League to review Natal's relations with the Union, in September 1932, decided to send a delegation to interview the Prime Minister, and to bring about Natal's separation from the Union.<sup>47</sup> Upon the delegation's arrival in Pretoria General Hertzog

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, May 17, 1930, p.15.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, September 9, 1931, p.9.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, March 28, 1932, p.7., March 30, 1932, p.11., April 7, 1932, p.11., May 19, 1932, p.16.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, September 19, 1932, p.9.

refused, however, to receive them or to discuss the question of Natal's secession from the Union.<sup>48</sup>

The sympathy enjoyed by the League prompted the South African Party in Natal to re-examine its stand. On June 4, 1932 the Natal Members of Parliament met in Durban and decided to form themselves into a Federal Group with their own Parliamentary Leader and their own separate caucus in the House of Assembly. Although still part of the South African Party, they pledged to put Natal's interest and Federation for Natal, before Party interests. The Devolution League, which had prepared the way for this historical development, threw the weight of its influence behind the Federal Group.<sup>49</sup>

At the Natal Congress of the South African Party, held in Pietermaritzburg, in October 1932, a scheme for Home Rule for the Provinces, by the extention of Provincial powers and the reorganisation of the Provincial Executive into a Provincial Cabinet, removable by a majority of the Council, was presented to the Congress by Mr F.C. Hollander.<sup>50</sup> This scheme, which became known as the Hollander Memorandum, was adopted by the Congress and forced the Party's leader, General Smuts, to support a federal programme. At the Congress Smuts announced that he would, in the event of his return

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, October, 10, 1932, p.9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, June 8, 1934, p.11.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, October 15, 1932, p.10.

to power, grant Natal and the other Provinces certain measures of decentralisation under the Act of Union.<sup>51</sup>

The seriousness of the Provincial Council issue was eclipsed for many South Africans by the hardships resulting from the depression, which, as its effects came to be more widely felt, aroused a mood of discontent throughout the country. This discontent was fanned by the country's deteriorating economic situation, which the Opposition and the gold mines attributed to Hertzog's unwillingness to emulate Britain's lead and to leave the gold standard. Hertzog's insistence on keeping the Union fixed to the gold standard resulted in an outflow of capital abroad and a decline in Government popularity.<sup>52</sup>

At a Dingaan's Day<sup>53</sup> ceremony on December 16, 1932, a former Cabinet minister, Tielman Roos, called for the country to leave the gold standard and advocated the formation of a coalition government on a non-party basis. The country's response to Roos's bombshell was to send

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>52</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, p.367.

<sup>53</sup> The former name of the Day of the Vow. The day is one of enormous significance for the Afrikaans section of the population who recall the vow, made by Andries Pretorius and the Voortrekkers shortly before the Battle of the Blood River on December 16, 1838, that if G-d would give them victory over the Zulus, led by Dingaan, then they and their descendants would always commemorate the day and would build a Church in His honour. (C.F.J. Muller, "The Period of the Great Trek, 1834-1854," in *500 Years A History of South Africa*, p.141.)

further large sums of money overseas, and this prompted Hertzog to revise his policy and to agree to the country leaving the gold standard. The effect of this step was felt almost immediately as the price of gold started to rise and money began to pour back into the country.<sup>54</sup>

The renewed interest in gold was reflected in the columns of the local press where Jewish jewellers in Durban published advertisements seeking to buy gold jewellery.<sup>55</sup>

The idea of a coalition government, which had been suggested by Roos, also captured the public imagination, many believing that it was a necessary step to help the country through the depression. General Smuts, who favoured the idea of coalition, moved a motion in Parliament urging the Government to resign to make way for a National Government.<sup>56</sup> Hertzog rejected the proposal,<sup>57</sup> but ultimately entered into negotiations with Smuts,<sup>58</sup> which ended in an agreement on the terms of coalition.<sup>59</sup> A seven point plan for co-operation was drawn up and arrangements were made for Smuts to serve as Hertzog's deputy premier, with a Cabinet to consist of six National Party members and an equal number of

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<sup>54</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, p.367.

<sup>55</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 1, 1933, p.12.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, February 2, 1933, p.9.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, and February 7, 1933, p.9.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, February 15, 1933, p.11.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, February 24, 1933, p.11.

members from the South African Party.<sup>60</sup> A General Election was called for May 17, 1933 to test public opinion over the question of coalition.

In Durban opinion was clearly divided. Many of those in favour of the move towards coalition joined the Coalition Union, in which a member of the Jewish community Mr R. Levisohn served as Organising Secretary.<sup>61</sup> Others joined with Mr C.P. Robinson M.P. in agreeing to give coalition a chance, but at the same time urged that the South African Party remain intact.<sup>62</sup> Those who opposed the scheme, rallied around Colonel Charles Stallard, and joined the Devolution Home Rule Party, which was, in fact, an extension of the Devolution League.

The election was an overwhelming victory for the coalition parties which won 144 of the 150 seats in Parliament. Among those elected on the coalition ticket were Mr C.P. Robinson, who was returned as Member for Stamford Hill.<sup>63</sup> Durban electors, however, used the election to show their disapproval of the South African Party and the pact between Hertzog and Smuts, by defeating three Coalition candidates, and by recording

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<sup>60</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, p.368.

<sup>61</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 20, 1933, p.8.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, March 24, 1933, p.11.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, May 18, 1933, p.11.

more total votes against the Party, than for it.<sup>64</sup>

One of the planks of the Coalitionist programme of the South African Party during the election, had been to set up an Inquiry into the Provincial Council system and in June 1933 the Minister of the Interior, Mr J.H. Hofmeyr, announced the terms of reference and the personnel of the Provincial Council Commission.<sup>65</sup> The Natal representative on the Commission, which was made up of one representative from each Province, and a chairman, was Mr F.C. Hollander.<sup>66</sup> Mr Hollander's participation in the work of the Commission was, however, disrupted by the elections for the Provincial Council in Natal, held on August 22, in which he was elected unopposed for the South African Party in the Essenwood division.<sup>67</sup> Mr Hollander was once again re-elected to the Executive Council, and was also appointed to the Select Committee for Pensions.<sup>68</sup>

With the realisation of a coalition between Hertzog and Smuts a growing body of opinion within the country urged that the coalition should proceed to the fusion or unification of the two parties. Negotiations towards achieving the contemplated fusion continued for much of

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, June 3, 1933, p.13.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, August 2, 1933, p.10.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, August 31, 1933, p.13.



1934. A manifesto that appealed for "racial unity" between the English and Afrikaans sections of the population, on the terms laid down by the leaders of the South African Party and the National Party, was signed by many prominent residents of Durban, including Mr H. Moss-Morris.<sup>69</sup> Other Jewish townsmen might also very well have appended their names to the manifesto, although since only the total number of signatures, rather than the individual names, appeared in the local press, this cannot in any way be corroborated. It would seem that, notwithstanding the *Immigration Quota Act*, which had revealed the extent of the White population's belief that Jews were not fully acceptable in either the English or Afrikaner communities, that Jews resident in South Africa, as part of the enfranchised minority, identified for the most part, nonetheless, with their English speaking fellow Whites and acted accordingly.

In October 1934 Mr C.P. Robinson addressed his constituents, after returning from an extensive trip abroad.<sup>70</sup> He used the occasion to express his support for fusion and to announce his decision to join the Fusion Party.<sup>71</sup> The Prime Minister paid his first official visit to Durban in November 1934 and the

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, August 9, 1933, p.12.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, October 30, 1934, p.10.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, November 1, 1934, p.17.

cordiality extended to General Hertzog reflected, to some extent, the support of much of the populace for fusion.<sup>72</sup> The fusion of the South African Party and the National Party took place in Bloemfontein on December 5, 1934, and resulted in the formation of the United South African National Party, or, as it came to be known, the United Party.

Extremists in both Hertzog's and Smuts's parties rejected the fusion process. In the National Party those who opposed fusion rallied around Dr D.F. Malan and formed the Purified National Party (*Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party*), although it continued to be known as the National Party. Those within the South African Party who refused to fuse with Hertzog, and there were many such people within Durban and throughout Natal, joined Colonel Stallard's Home Rule Party, which after fusion adopted the name Dominion Party. Within a few months of the fusion process, branches of the Dominion Party had sprung up all over Natal. In Durban, upon the formation of a Junior Branch of the Dominion Party, Advocate A. Goldberg was elected the Vice-Chairman.<sup>73</sup>

With the country's attention focused principally on the shifting political situation, concern with local government was far less marked. In September 1935, however, the Municipal elections moved into prominence,

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, November 8, 1934, p.13.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, June 5, 1935, p.24.

particularly insofar as the Jews of Durban were concerned. In that election, a co-religionist Mr Frank Levy, stood as an Independent in the Mayville Ward. Notwithstanding the vigorous campaign conducted by Mr Levy throughout the ward,<sup>74</sup> on polling day he was defeated by the previous incumbent of the seat by 174 votes.<sup>75</sup>

For all its importance to the future political development of the country, the vacillating state of domestic affairs in South Africa was nonetheless greatly overshadowed by the rising spectre of Nazism abroad.

Beginning in 1932, with the Diet elections in Prussia, in which he won overwhelming support,<sup>76</sup> Hitler rapidly rose in power until in January 1933 he was appointed German Chancellor.<sup>77</sup> His meteoric rise was matched by reports of an intensification of anti-Semitism. Newspapers reported the confiscation of the entire property of East European Jews who had entered Prussia after 1914,<sup>78</sup> and carried tales of brutal assaults on

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, September 13, 1935, p.15.,  
September 20, 1935, p.9., October 1, 1935, p.19.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, October 3, 1935, p.15.

<sup>76</sup> David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon*,  
(London, 1972), pp.688-689.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.689-670.

<sup>78</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 27, 1932, p.11.

Jews in all parts of Germany.<sup>79</sup> Such activity intensified still further following Hitler's assumption of the Chancellorship.<sup>80</sup>

Public opinion in Durban generally abhorred the events in Germany which were also severely criticised in editorial columns of the local press.<sup>81</sup> World Jewry felt intimately with the humiliation of their German co-religionists but acknowledged that "little can be done from outside to help them in their bitter struggle with which they are faced for their rights as human beings and as citizens of Germany."<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, in a demonstration of their solidarity with German Jewry, and in expression of their disapproval of the anti-Semitism, which characterised the Nazi Party in its behaviour towards the Jews of Germany, vigorous protests were issued and a boycott of German goods initiated. Throughout Europe and the United States the Jewish boycott of German goods reportedly spread rapidly and grew swiftly in intensity,<sup>83</sup> with Jews in South Africa

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, August 9, 1932, p.9., August 12, 1932, p.11., August 26, 1932, p.9., August 29, 1932, p.9., December 28, 1932, p.7.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, February 20, 1933, p.9., March 1, 1933, p.13., March 3, 1933, p.13., March 4, 1933, p.13., March 10, 1933, p.11., March 11, 1933, p.13., March 14, 1933, p.9., March 15, 1933, p.11.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, August 29, 1932, p.8., March 3, 1933, p.12.

<sup>82</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.8 (April, 1933), 1 and 23.

<sup>83</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 22, 1933, p.11., March 24, 1933, p.11., March 27, 1933, p.9.

taking similar action.<sup>84</sup> Durban Jewry was particularly heartened by the decision of their Town Council not to purchase telephone cable from a German firm, which had submitted the lowest tender, because of the Council's desire "to show its disapproval of the recent aggressive action taken by the German Government against the Jewish and Labour elements of the country."<sup>85</sup> They were also encouraged by the general sympathy shown in Durban for the German Jews, which found expression in St. Thomas's Church, Musgrave Road, on Good Friday, when prayers for mercy for the persecuted Jews of Europe were made.<sup>86</sup>

The general sympathy evinced in Durban for the Jewish victims of Nazism, contrasted sharply with the widely based support shown for the *Immigration Quota Act*. It would appear, that whilst the general public in Durban and the press opposed overt acts of anti-Semitism, they responded differently to covert activity directed against Jewry and more especially if it was of an immediate nature to them. At no time would it seem that sympathy for Jewry abroad corresponded with any desire to have these Jews in Durban, and when restrictions were later placed on German Jewish immigration,<sup>87</sup> they aroused little opposition from the voters of Durban.

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, March 21, 1933, p.9.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, May 24, 1933, p.9.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, April 17, 1933, p.5.

<sup>87</sup> See below pp.399-406.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies in its capacity as the representative organisation of the Union's Jewry, maintained close contact with Jewish organisations abroad and kept South African Jewry fully informed on all aspects of the situation in Germany.<sup>88</sup> The official mouthpiece of Durban Jewry, the Jewish Communal Council, which worked in close co-operation with the Board of Deputies, at a full meeting of its Executive, on May 11, 1933, unanimously adopted a motion of sympathy with the Jews in Germany, and at the same time recorded its protest against the policy of discrimination pursued by the German Government.<sup>89</sup> Under the auspices of the Communal Council, a mass meeting of Durban Jewry, presided over by Mr H. Moss-Morris, the President of the Communal Council, was held at the Jewish Club<sup>90</sup> on May 20th. Reference was made by the chairman to the mass meetings held elsewhere in South Africa, and to the resolutions passed by the Council's Executive, and various speakers dealt with aspects of the injustices perpetrated against German Jewry.<sup>91</sup>

In an effort to render practical assistance, South African Jewry, taking its lead from Jewry in the United

<sup>88</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.8 (April, 1933), 3 and 5.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.10 (20th June, 1933), 3. On the Jewish Communal Council See below Chapter XIV.

<sup>90</sup> On the Jewish Club see Chapter XII below.

<sup>91</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.10 (20th June, 1933), 3.

Kingdom and the United States of America, established a fund to provide for the settlement of German Jews in Palestine, and for their general relief. The Honorary Council of the South African Fund included Mr F.C. Hollander M.E.C., who was one of its six Vice-Presidents, and Mr C.P. Robinson M.P., who was a member of its Council.<sup>92</sup> On July 9, 1933, at a meeting convened by the Communal Council, a committee was formed to conduct the Fund in Durban. Its personnel included Mr Cecil Lyons, Chairman; Mr Harry Brown, Hon. Treasurer; and Mr Otto Ballin, Hon. Secretary.<sup>93</sup> Within a few weeks, the list of donations secured by the local committee of the fund exceeded £1,000<sup>94</sup> and by the end of August, with donations totalling more than £1,400, the Committee in Durban had practically completed its work.<sup>95</sup> Universal efforts by Jewry and by men and women of goodwill, did little to stem the growing tide of anti-Semitism in Germany and reports of outrages against Jews continued to be recorded in the local press.<sup>96</sup> This wave of anti-Jewish activity in Germany culminated,

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<sup>92</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 16, 1933, p.7.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21, 1933, p.7.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, August 4, 1933, p.13.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, August 25, 1933, p.21.

<sup>96</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 2, 1933, p.13., April 2, 1934, p.9., May 14, 1934, p.9., May 18, 1934, p.13., September 1, 1934, p.13., August 12, 1935, p.9., August 16, 1935, p.13., August 19, 1935, p.16.

in 1935, in the proclamation of the Nuremberg Laws, whereby anti-Semitism was channeled into law.<sup>97</sup>

Close on the heels of Fascism's rise in Europe, branches of sympathisers organised themselves into movements which were active in much of the English speaking world as well as in South Africa. As Shimoni has recorded, Afrikaner nationalists in particular, proved particularly susceptible to National Socialist ideas;

Their acute race consciousness; their seething anti-British sentiment; the economic frustrations of their urbanisation; the political frustrations they experienced in a parliamentary system whose rules had been prescribed by the British tradition; a vague sense of affinity with Germany on the part of Afrikaners of German stock - all of these attributes rendered a considerable segment of the Afrikaners amenable to influence by German National-Socialism.<sup>98</sup>

For Fascism to be acceptable to the Afrikaner nationalists, it had, however, to be relevant to the South African situation, and not a mere substitution of British, for German, dominance. A mode of indigenous Nazism, adapted to local conditions, therefore emerged in South Africa after 1933, identified collectively as the "Shirt Organisations."<sup>99</sup> Although their numbers

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<sup>97</sup> Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against The Jews 1933-1945*, (New York, 1975), pp.63-69,

<sup>98</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.108.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.109-110.



were never excessive **these organisations**, with their nationalistic and republican leanings, had considerable influence particularly **in respect of keeping the so-called Jewish question at the forefront** of public notice.

In South Africa the anti-Semitic propaganda characteristic of Nazi thinking, was carried on surreptitiously for some time, prompting the Jewish Board of Deputies to call for legislation necessary to curb such activities.<sup>100</sup> In October 1933 a body responsible for the dissemination of much of this material, the South African Gentile National Socialist Movement, founded by Mr L.T. Weichardt, came into the open when it held its first public meeting.<sup>101</sup> The appearance of this organisation was followed by the public acknowledgement of the existence of the Cape based Nationalist Socialist Working Mens Party, founded and led by Professor H. Bohle, which assumed responsibility for the activities of "real German Nazis" in the Union.<sup>102</sup> Although neither organisation admitted to being anti-Semitic, both were outspoken in their attacks on the Jewish community of the country.<sup>103</sup>

Almost simultaneously evidence of the existence in

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<sup>100</sup>*Hasholom*, X No.11 (July, 1933), 3.

<sup>101</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, October 28, 1933, p.13.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, November 1, 1933, p.13.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, October 28, 1933, p.13., November 1, 1933, p.13.

Johannesburg of an organisation carrying an anti-Semitic propaganda on a large scale, came to light with the distribution of thousands of printed leaflets attacking the Jews. These leaflets came to be widely disseminated throughout the Union and were most in evidence in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, Pietermaritzburg, Kimberley, Boksburg, Port Elizabeth, Volksrust, Pietersberg, Reitz, Piet Retief, Tzaneen and Warmbaths.<sup>104</sup>

The emergence of such organisations was viewed with alarm by the local press in Durban. In calling on the Government to stamp out such activities directed against the Jews of South Africa, the editor of *The Natal Mercury* warned that the, "gravest feature of this Nazi campaign in the Union is that it unquestionably has secret sympathisers in high places."<sup>105</sup> Those alluded to by the editor were not the isolated individuals with Fascist sympathies within the right wing of the United Party, but were more especially those who were distinguishable by their important positions within the National Party.

In the course of the Municipal by-election in November 1933 the activities of a Nazi movement in Durban came to light, when a Greyshirt, Mr Harold Dold, stood as the "Industrial" candidate in Umbilo. Mr Dold's Grey Shirt Corps, which wore a Springbok badge on its

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, October 30, 1933, p.11.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

shirts, was associated with a movement in Cape Town which was known as the Springbok Guard, and was led by Mr H.C. Dashwood Browne. The Guard claimed to be "essentially South African, non-racial and free from any race or class prejudice. It desired to abolish monopolies, to expand agriculture and industry, to assist women, particularly in rearing children, and to care for the aged and infirm."<sup>106</sup> At all times Mr Dold and his followers sought to emphasise that they harboured no hostility towards Jews, although they in fact attributed many of the country's ills to the Jewish community.<sup>107</sup> The local headquarters of the Springbok Guard were situated in Umbilo Road, where Greyshirt recruits were paraded and drilled in the aims and principles of the Greyshirt movement.<sup>108</sup> In the by election in Umbilo Mr Dold was soundly beaten, receiving only 53 votes and so was forced to forfeit his deposit.<sup>109</sup>

The scant support shown for Mr Dold, typified the general attitude of the public in Durban, who were overwhelmingly opposed to Fascism or any of its local manifestations. In part, this stemmed from their essentially English make up, which included a disdain

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, November 10, 1933, p.11

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, November 1, 1933, p.13., November 2, 1933, p.11., November 3, 1933, p.14., November 10, 1933, p.11.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, November 2, 1933, p.11.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, November 23, 1933, p.11.

for dictators or dictatorships and all other expressions of political extremism, whether to the right or the left of the political spectrum. With predominant support within Durban for the Smuts faction of the Government or else for the Dominion Party, support for the Greyshirts or any other such body, particularly insofar as such organisations were known to enjoy considerable sympathy in National Party circles, was anathema, in that it further implied identification with Dr Malan and his colleagues.

Anti-Semitic agitation emanating from the neo-Nazi groups, continued to manifest itself throughout the country,<sup>110</sup> fanned by the largescale unemployment caused by the economic depression, and by the problem of the "Poor Whites", which made Jewry a useful scapegoat for national and economic ills. The Government viewed such activity with disfavour and General Smuts and the Minister of Native Affairs, Mr P.G. Grobler, issued stern warnings against those responsible for the spread of anti-Semitism and assured the Jews of the country of their security.<sup>111</sup> Whilst the faction within the United Party that was led by Smuts and J. Hofmeyr was unquestionably sympathetic to the predicament of local Jewry, other elements within the Party, including the Prime Minister Hertzog, although

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, November 3, 1933, p.19., November 7, 1933, p.9.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, November 2, 1933, p.11., November 6, 1933, p.9.

not necessarily inclined in any way towards the activities of the local Greyshirts, were not as articulate in their sympathy or solidarity with local Jewry. With the Jewish question very much a political issue, political expediency in fact forced Smuts and Hofmeyr to compromise their principles and limit their activities on Jewry's behalf.<sup>112</sup>

In 1934 the activities of the neo-Nazi groups in South Africa became even more pronounced.<sup>113</sup> When it became known that meetings had been arranged throughout the country by organisations whose declared objects were the creation of anti-Jewish agitation and the fostering of imported foreign hatreds, the Executive of the Jewish Board of Deputies appealed to the Jewish community to abstain from attending such meetings in order to prevent hooliganism and possible bloodshed.<sup>114</sup> Such appeals, although for the most part complied with, were not acceptable to the more militant elements of the Jewish population, and as early as 1934, clashes between Jewish youth and Greyshirts were recorded.<sup>115</sup> The counter activities adopted by the Board at this time, and closely

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<sup>112</sup>Gideon Shimoni, pp.137-141.

<sup>113</sup>Beginning in January in Port Elizabeth with a meeting at which calls were made for a check on all Jewish immigration to South Africa. (*The Natal Mercury*, January 17, 1934, p.9.)

<sup>114</sup>*Hasholom*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 17.

<sup>115</sup>Gideon Shimoni, pp.150-151. See also footnotes 120-121 below, p.173.

adhered to for a long time thereafter, fell into three major categories. Apart from the promotion of better relations between the Jews and other White groups, the monitoring of anti-Semitic manifestations, and the publication of literature to refute such manifestations, the Board also pressed for anti-defamation legislation and litigation wherever possible against anti-Semitic acts.<sup>116</sup>

A *cause celebre* in the Board's legal struggle against the Greyshirts, was the action for damages on the grounds of defamation, which the Rev. A. Levy of Port Elizabeth, an early minister of the Durban Congregation, brought against three prominent Greyshirts. The claim by one of the Greyshirt leaders that he had stolen a signed document from the Rev. Levy's office in the Western Road Synagogue, which revealed a plot by world Jewry to destroy the Christian religion, enabled the Rev. Levy to institute legal proceedings. An opportunity such as this to expose the Greyshirts in a court of law, was extremely rare because of the nature of the law, which entitled a claim for libel to be made only when a specific individual rather than a whole community had been implicated, and the lengthy case thus attracted

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<sup>116</sup>Gideon Shimoni, pp.146-152.

considerable attention.<sup>117</sup> Among those called to give evidence for the prosecution, was Rabbi E.M. Levy of Durban,<sup>118</sup> whose testimony helped to convince the court that the documents in question were forgeries published by the Greyshirts with the intention of stirring up hatred towards the Jews. In a judgement handed down on August 21 in the Eastern Division of the Supreme Court, Grahamstown, the three Greyshirts responsible, J. von Moltke, H.V. Inch and D.H. Olivier Jnr., were found guilty and were ordered to pay damages to the Hebrew Minister.<sup>119</sup>

The court proceedings in Port Elizabeth did not, however, dissuade the Greyshirts from pursuing their racist and anti-Semitic activities. Even whilst the case of Levy V von Moltke, Inch and Olivier (Jnr) was being heard in Grahamstown, a well attended meeting of the South African National Party of Greyshirts was held in the Town Hall in Estcourt, Natal. It was chaired by

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<sup>117</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 12, 1934, p.8.,  
 July 12, 1934, p.13., July 13, 1934, p.9.,  
 July 14, 1934, p.9., July 17, 1934, p.9.,  
 July 18, 1934, p.24., July 19, 1934, p.18.,  
 July 20, 1934, p.14.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, July 13, 1934, p.19.

<sup>119</sup> R.P.B. Davis (General Editor) *The South African Law Reports 1934 Eastern Districts Local Division, Decisions of the Supreme Court of South Africa (Eastern Districts Local Division) October, 1953 to September, 1954.* (Cape Town and Johannesburg), 1935, pp.296-327. See also *The Natal Mercury*, August 22, 1934, p.13., September 27, 1934, p.9., October 5, 1934, p.10., and *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 46-48.

Mr Werchardt, the founder of the South African Gentile Nationalist Socialist Movement in the Cape.<sup>120</sup>

Mr Rudman's Greyshirts were particularly active in the north of the Province, where the Afrikaans community in Natal tended to be concentrated, and in the towns around Pietermaritzburg, in which the headquarters were located. In Pietermaritzburg clashes between members of the South African National Party (Greyshirts), and members of the Jewish community, resulted in charges and counter charges being laid.<sup>121</sup> In Bloemfontein similar clashes between Jews and Greyshirts were taken before the Courts for arbitration.<sup>122</sup>

In October 1934 a series of Greyshirt meetings were called throughout Natal to which only Christian Europeans were invited.<sup>123</sup> In contrast to the enthusiastic acclaim which the Greyshirts received in the smaller towns in the Province,<sup>124</sup> Durban afforded the Greyshirts a hostile reception. The Town Council, after allowing the Town Hall to be booked for a public meeting in the name of the South African National Party, upon learning

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<sup>120</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 19, 1934, p.18.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, October 12, 1934, p.18., October 30, 1934, p.16., November 6, 1934, p.15.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, October 13, 1934, p.7., October 20, 1934, p.15., October 24, 1934, p.8., October 27, 1934, p.14., October 29, 1934, p.4.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, October 23, 1934, p.8.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, October 24, 1934, p.14., October 26, 1934, p.5., October 30, 1934, p.16.



from the Council of Natal Jewry,<sup>125</sup> that the Greyshirts were connected with the organisers, decided to deny the use of the Town Hall for the meeting.<sup>126</sup> Thereafter the Greyshirts unsuccessfully attempted to hire a number of other halls and were ultimately forced to arrange to hold their meeting, on October 25, on a vacant piece of land on the corner of Farewell and Smith Streets. In addition to the half dozen Greyshirt supporters, a crowd of between 500 and 600 Greyshirt opponents arrived at the appointed place, and at the instigation of the Anti-Fascist League, converted the meeting into an anti-Fascist meeting.<sup>127</sup> The Greyshirt meetings convened in Pinetown and Durban on October 26 and 27 were similarly turned into anti-Fascist rallies by the members of the Anti-Fascist League, which was largely made up of workers and liberal minded people.<sup>128</sup>

The suggestion by Mr J.H. Hofmeyr, the Minister of the Interior, of possible legislation being introduced in Parliament to stop anti-Semitic propoganda,<sup>129</sup> was taken up by the Durban press, which had long urged such

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<sup>125</sup>On the development of the Council of Natal Jewry see below Chapter XIV.

<sup>126</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, October 6, 1934, p.15., *Hasholom*, XII No.2 (October, 1934), 2-3., *Ibid.*, XII No.7 (March, 1935), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>127</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, October 26, 1934, p.13.

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*, October 27, 1934, p.11., October 29, 1934, p.13.

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*, October 29, 1934, p.11.

action,<sup>130</sup> and was echoed by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the Council of Natal Jewry.<sup>131</sup> Editorials in the *Hasholom* expressed the community's dismay at the Government's apparent reticence in introducing the necessary legislation and made repeated calls for the necessary steps to be taken to outlaw the Greysshirt agitation.<sup>132</sup>

Throughout the period of Greysshirt activities, the Council of Natal Jewry kept a wary eye on the Party's activities and in co-operation with the Board of Deputies did whatever it found possible to counteract the machinations of Fascist organisations in the Union.<sup>133</sup> At the request of outlying Jewish centres of Natal, where Greysshirt activity had been most persistent, the President of the Council of Natal Jewry undertook a visit of the area to study the position. In the course of this tour to Northern Natal area calls were made on civic and legal authorities, members of Parliament and Provincial Councillors, and contact was made with religious leaders in Glencoe, Ladysmith, Dundee and Vryheid. In the course of the frank discussions which took place the Council's President helped foster a better understanding

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>131</sup> *Hasholom*, XII No.7 (March, 1935), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.3 (November, 1934), 2-3., XII No.4 (December, 1934), 2., *Ibid.*, XII No.5 (January, 1935), 2-3.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.7 (March, 1935), CNJ Supplement.

of the situation, insofar as Jewry were concerned. At the invitation of the Council's Honorary President, Mr C.P. Robinson, M.P., a Conference with Natal Parliamentarians and Senators was held in Durban on December 12, 1934, at which the opportunity was taken to make the Council's position clearly known to those Legislators who attended. Interviews were also arranged with legal authorities in Durban, at which consideration was given to possible steps to be taken to deal with the position. Through the offices of Rabbi E.M. Levy contact was established with religious leaders of all major denominations in Natal, from whom much sympathy and help was derived.<sup>134</sup>

A Statistical Sub-Committee was also formed under the Council's direction to obtain accurate data concerning Jewry in Natal. This sub-committee acted as the Council's agent for counteracting racial propaganda, principally through the publication and distribution of leaflets and articles and a brochure dealing with the Inch Case in Port Elizabeth, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, and the conduct of Greyshirt leaders.<sup>135</sup>

When certain anti-Semitic propaganda was traced to New Germany, near Durban, articles on Jonas Bergtheil, the Jewish founder of New Germany, which had appeared in the *Hasholom* were republished in pamphlet form and

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

distributed in the township, thereby effectively ending the dissemination of Nazi propaganda from this source.<sup>136</sup>

In 1935 the Greyshirts succeeded in holding their first complete meeting in the Durban area, on a private plot of land in Greenwood Park,<sup>137</sup> and also managed to convene a private meeting of the South African National Party (Greyshirts) in the basement of the Durban Town Hall.<sup>138</sup> These meetings however had little positive effect for the Greyshirt movement, which after its intense activity of the previous year, now went on the wane, much to the gratification of Jewry, who nevertheless maintained a careful watch on all neo-Nazi activities.<sup>139</sup> In April 1936 Mr E.S. Henochsberg and Mr H. Moss-Morris attended a conference in Johannesburg of a special Legal Sub-Committee of the Jewish Board of Deputies to assist in preparing a draft anti-defamation Bill which the Board hoped to persuade the Government to enact. Four months later the Council of Natal Jewry representatives of all the Natal Jewish institutions met to discuss fully the Jewish position. The feelings of local Jewry were in turn conveyed by a deputation from the Council, consisting of Messrs S. Moshal, E.S. Henochsberg, B. Lurie,

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<sup>136</sup> *Hashalom*, [XL No.2] (October, 1963), 7.

<sup>137</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 18, 1935, p.20.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, June 4, 1935, p.9.

<sup>139</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 4.

M. Wolpert and H. Moss-Morris, to the Minister of Justice, General Smuts, who was introduced to the deputation by Mr F.C. Hollander M.E.C. during a visit to Durban in September 1936.<sup>140</sup>

For all the hardships of the period the social and general life of Durban was not completely dislocated, and members of the Jewish community were equally caught up in the whirl of activities of the time.

Although Durban Jewry generally showed little desire to assume civic responsibility or to participate in the wider field of public service, individual members nevertheless made their contribution in a variety of fields. In March 1930, the Jewish community received, with enormous pleasure, the news of the temporary appointment of Mr Edgar S. Henochsberg as Puisne Judge of the Native High Court, by which appointment he became the youngest Judge on the South African Bench.<sup>141</sup> The election of Mr F.C. Hollander as a Vice-President of the Durban Gold Cup, Agricultural and Industrial Shows<sup>142</sup> and as the Natal representative on the National Roads Board<sup>143</sup> and Mr Karl Gundelfinger's appointment as a member of the Electricity Supply Commission,<sup>144</sup> were

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<sup>140</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.5 (April, 1937), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.5 (March, 1930), 2.

<sup>142</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 3, 1934, p.20.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, May 27, 1935, p.11.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, September 4, 1934, p.7.

further cause for communal satisfaction. Particular pride was taken by the entire community in the achievements of Syd Brews, a stalwart of the Durban Jewish Club, and one of the country's champion golfers. In 1934 he added the French, South African, Transvaal,<sup>145</sup> and Dutch,<sup>146</sup> Open Championships to an already formidable list of wins, that included the 1924 Transvaal Open; 1925 the South African, Natal, Orange Free State and Basutoland Open; 1926 Orange Free State and Basutoland Open; 1927 South African and Natal Open; 1928 Orange Free State and Basutoland Open and Professional Knock Out; 1929 Belgian and Natal Open; 1930 South African and Transvaal Open; 1931 South African and Transvaal Open; 1932 Transvaal Open and 1933 South African and Transvaal Open and Professional Knock Out.<sup>147</sup>

Mr Lionel Alleson was also warmly congratulated by the community for being chosen to represent Natal at the inter-Provincial baseball match against Western Province.<sup>148</sup>

Through participation in events of social and historical significance which occurred in this period, the Jewish community testified to its identification with the wider community of which it was a part.

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<sup>145</sup> *Hasholom*, XI No.11 (July, 1934), 9.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.12 (August, 1934), 22.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.2 (October, 1934), 20.

On August 1, 1931, the Natal University College (Howard College), was officially opened by the Governor General, the Earl of Clarendon, amidst much enthusiasm on the part of the residents of Durban.<sup>149</sup> To mark the event the Mayor and Mayoress held a civic reception in the Town Hall on the evening of August 1, to which a number of Jewish townsmen were invited.<sup>150</sup>

Among the messages of goodwill received from numerous institutions and personalities on the opening of the Howard College, was one from Mr C.P. Robinson, the President of the Natal Technical College.<sup>151</sup> In September 1932 the Technical College, of which Mr Robinson was President, celebrated the twenty fifth anniversary of its founding. At the Commemoration Day celebrations in connection with this event, Mr Robinson was presented with an illuminated address in honour of his quarter of a century of work on the College Council.<sup>152</sup>

An occasion of great historical significance for the town was the incorporation of Greenwood Park, Sydenham, Mayville, Umhlatazana and South Coast Junction into the Borough of Durban. As early as 1911 the first Jewish mayor of Durban, Mr F.C. Hollander, had called for the incorporation into the Borough of the peri-Durban area,

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<sup>149</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 3, 1921, p.5.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, September 24, 1932, p.10.

but the Town Council of that time had not taken up his call in consequence of the costs involved.<sup>153</sup> The incorporation took effect on August 1, 1932, and on August 6 the first Mayor of Greater Durban, Mr Oliver Lea, was installed in office at a ceremony in the Town Hall attended by six ex-Mayors of the Borough, including Mr F.C. Hollander.<sup>154</sup> Mr Jack Greene, an ex-Chairman of the South Coast Junction Health Board, also attended the historic installation ceremony.<sup>155</sup>

In March 1934 Durban Jewry joined heartily in the public demonstrations occasioned by the visit to the town of Prince George (later made Duke of Kent), the fourth son of King George V and Queen Mary. Upon the arrival of the White Train at Berea Station the Prince was greeted by a number of prominent citizens, including Mr and Mrs K. Gundelfinger, who had gathered on the platform to be among the first to welcome the Royal Visitor. From the Station the Royal Procession proceeded down West Street to the Town Hall, where Mr and Mrs F.C. Hollander were amongst those presented to his Royal Highness.<sup>156</sup> At a banquet, at the *Marine Hotel*, given by the Mayor and Town Council in the

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, July 30, 1932, p.18.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, August 8, 1932, p.11.

<sup>155</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.12 (August, 1932), 10.

<sup>156</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 6, 1934, p.7.



Prince's honour, Mr and Mrs Hollander were seated at the main table.<sup>157</sup> During the evening, accompanied by the Municipal Orchestra, Miss Rose Alper (Mrs H.L. Magid) sang two songs, and was personally congratulated by the Prince on her excellent performance.<sup>158</sup> Members of the Jewish community were also present at the Rotary luncheon,<sup>159</sup> Natal Indian Congress Banquet,<sup>160</sup> the Civic Ball<sup>161</sup> and the Royal Luncheon and Race Meeting at Greyville,<sup>162</sup> which were all held in the Prince's honour during his brief visit to the town.

A few months after the visit of Prince George the Prime Minister of the Union, General J.B.M. Hertzog, paid his first visit to Durban. Upon alighting from his train, at the Central Station, General Hertzog was welcomed by the Mayor and Mr F.C. Hollander, who represented the Provincial Council.<sup>163</sup> The one day that General Hertzog spent in the town was filled with official engagements, including a Civic Luncheon and a

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>158</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 69.

<sup>159</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 7, 1934, p.10.

<sup>160</sup> *The Natal Advertiser*, March 7, 1934, p.4.

<sup>161</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 7, 1934, p.10., *The Natal Advertiser*, March 7, 1934, p.5.

<sup>162</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 8, 1934, p.7., *The Natal Advertiser*, March 7, 1934, p.5.

<sup>163</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 8, 1934, p.13.

Civic Reception at which Jewish townsmen were present.<sup>164</sup>

The most outstanding event of 1935 was the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary. In the months leading up to the celebrations in connection with the Jubilee, the anticipation and excitement of the general population was, however, tempered by the death of Lord Hyde, the eldest son of the Governor General and the Countess of Clarendon, as a result of a shooting accident at Kimberley.<sup>165</sup> Among the many messages of sympathy dispatched to the Governor General and his family was one sent by Mr H. Moss-Morris, President of the Council of Natal Jewry, on behalf of the Jews of Province.<sup>166</sup>

On May 3rd the Silver Jubilee celebrations in Durban began, and for the next four days the town was *en fete* as different communities and peoples of all ages suitably commemorated this historic event. A special Thanksgiving Service was held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue on May 4, conducted by the Rev. N. Menachemson, who in a special tribute to the King, recited the prayer for the Royal Family whilst the Ark was open.<sup>167</sup> On the morning of May 6, the anniversary of the King's accession, a United Thanksgiving Service, in which the Minister of the Durban Hebrew Congregation also officiated,

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<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, April 29, 1935, p.11.

<sup>166</sup> *Hasholom*, XII No.9 (May, 1935), 3.

<sup>167</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 7, 1935, pp.11 and 13.

was held from the Town Hall Portico.<sup>168</sup> Another feature of the celebrations was a Pageant of Industrial and Commercial Vehicles and Floats, which was also held on Jubilee day. In addition to participating in the Jubilee Pageant, the *Habonim* and *Habonot* entered a car in the decorated motor parade, and, to the delight of the entire Jewish community, was awarded a prize.<sup>169</sup> A highlight of the Jubilee celebrations in Natal was a banquet given by the Administrator in Pietermaritzburg at which the Jewish community was officially represented by Mr H. Moss-Morris, the President of the Council of Natal Jewry and Mrs Moss-Morris.<sup>170</sup>

Durban Jewry took particular pride in the fact that amongst their townsmen who were awarded the Silver Jubilee Medal, which was a private gift and personal souvenir of the King, no less than three of the recipients were distinguished members of their community. Apart from Mr F.C. Hollander M.E.C. and Mr C.P. Robinson M.P., who were well-known in public life, Mrs Esther Hart, who had dedicated herself to charitable work amongst the Jewish and General communities in Durban, was also awarded the much coveted Jubilee Medal.<sup>171</sup>

To suitably commemorate the King's Silver Jubilee,

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<sup>168</sup> *The Natal Advertiser*, May 6, 1935, p.7.

<sup>169</sup> *Hasholom*, XII No.9 (May, 1935), 19. On *Habonim* see below pp.257-261.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

the Governor General inaugurated a fund, which, with the King's full approval, was devoted to combating the scourge of tuberculosis in South Africa.<sup>172</sup> Provincial Committees of the fund were immediately established and amongst the members of the Natal Provincial Committee was Mr F.C. Hollander.<sup>173</sup> In aid of the Fund the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild held a Bridge Afternoon, at the home of Mrs Moss Freed, at which the sum of £27 was raised.<sup>174</sup> The members of the Jewish community contributed generously to the Fund,<sup>175</sup> which also received the nett proceeds of the Durban Jewish Club's Musical Comedy presentation of *A Country Girl*.<sup>176</sup>

No sooner had the festivities in connection with the Silver Jubilee ended, than the preparations were made for the suitable commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Union of South Africa. With full military pomp and splendour a combined Church Parade of the Defence Forces was held at Kingsmead on the morning of May 31, in which the Rev. Menachemson, of the Durban Hebrew Congregation, officiated with Archdeacon H. Harris, the

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<sup>172</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 9, 1935, p.11.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, April 4, 1935, p.6.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, May 4, 1935, p.18., May 8, 1935, p.22., May 10, 1935, p.16., May 11, 1935, p.17., May 14, 1935, p.16., May 17, 1935, p.18., June 6, 1935, p.15.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, August 5, 1935, p.6., *Hasholom*, XII No.12 (August, 1935), 3.

Rev. G.J. van Rooyen and the Rev. J. Slatter.<sup>177</sup>

Two weeks later, together with communities throughout the Empire, the citizens of Durban celebrated the 720th Anniversary of Magna Carta, when reference to the day was made in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue on June 15, and in the Durban Churches on the following day.<sup>178</sup>

An historic milestone for Durban was reached on June 13, 1935, when it celebrated the 100th Anniversary of its founding by Captain Alan Gardiner. As a fitting climax to the close of its first century Durban attained City status on August 1, 1935.<sup>179</sup> Durban's Jewish community, which had an association with the City dating back to the earliest days of its establishment, joined with its fellow citizens in expressing its satisfaction at this achievement.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> *The Natal Advertiser*, May 31, 1935, p.10.

<sup>178</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 15, 1935, p.16.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1, 1935, p.24.

<sup>180</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 3.

## CHAPTER X

ADVANCES IN HEBREW EDUCATION : 1930 - 1935

The successful establishment of the Hebrew Kindergarten in Durban in 1929, did not lull those who were responsible for its inception into a sense of complacency, but rather prompted them to strive for the creation of a united *Talmud Torah*, of which the kindergarten would be a part.

Behind the enthusiasm and optimism of the Kindergarten's founders, lurked the problem of inadequate support for the school<sup>1</sup> and insufficient monetary support.<sup>2</sup> The kindergarten nevertheless continued to expand and early in 1930, afternoon kindergarten classes were inaugurated.<sup>3</sup> To allay the fears of those parents who felt that an early training in Hebrew would seriously handicap their children in English, and secular subjects, an extra teacher, Mrs Cotterell, was added to the school's staff to teach general subjects.<sup>4</sup>

With the impending expiry in 1930 of the first year

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<sup>1</sup>*Hasholom*, VII No.5 (March, 1930), 20.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, VII No.4 (February, 1930), 15.

<sup>3</sup>*The Zionist Record*, February 7, 1930, p.25.

<sup>4</sup>*Hasholom*, VII No.4 (February, 1930), 15.

for which private subscribers to the kindergarten had committed themselves, the problem arose as to whether or not the community was going to take over the school from private enthusiasts.<sup>5</sup> A sub-committee, consisting of Messrs C. Lyons, H.L. Magid and S. Moshal, appointed by the Durban Jewish Circle to consider the steps to be taken to form a *Talmud Torah* in Durban, suggested that a meeting of Jewish institutions be convened by the Circle and that a *Talmud Torah* committee, comprised of two representatives from each of the major Jewish institutions, be formed in the town.<sup>6</sup> At separate meetings of the two Hebrew Congregations the scheme for a united *Talmud Torah*, as advocated by the Circle, was approved.<sup>7</sup>

On June 22, 1930, a mass meeting of the Jewish community was held and a resolution to the effect that "the Durban United *Talmud Torah* be, and is, hereby formed" was passed after much discussion and with only one dissentient.<sup>8</sup> A Constitution was unanimously

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<sup>5</sup> "The Durban United *Talmud Torah*, The Young Idea Moulding," in *Durban Hebrew Congregation Fiftieth Anniversary 1884-1934, 5644-5694*, (Durban, 1934), p.37.

<sup>6</sup> Arnold Miller, *Durban Jewish Club A History issued on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee*, (Durban, May, 1956), p.28.

<sup>7</sup> *Hasholom*, VII No.7 (May, 1930), 5., *Ibid.*, VII No.8 (June, 1930), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of Mass Meeting of Durban Jewry Held at the Park Gate Hall, Corner Smith and Park Streets on Sunday morning the 22nd June, 1930 at 10.30 am, p.1.

adopted<sup>9</sup> and the first committee of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* consisting of Mr H.L. Magid, Hon. Treasurer; Dr N. Smith, Hon. Secretary; Messrs E.S. Henochsberg, M. Gevisser, C. Lachman, S.W. Brewer and L. Lipinski, Committee; was elected. In addition each local Jewish institution was granted representation on the Committee by two nominees,<sup>10</sup> thereby making the *Talmud Torah* the responsibility of the entire community. The election of a chairman was held over to the first meeting of the committee and resulted in the appointment of Mr C. Lyons.<sup>11</sup>

Centrally situated and well-equipped premises were leased at 204 Musgrave Road and a suitably qualified person in Mr J. Klachko,<sup>12</sup> of Benoni, was appointed headmaster.<sup>13</sup> During Mr Klachko's tenure of office, the *Talmud Torah* Committee agreed to affiliate with the South African Jewish Board of Education.<sup>14</sup> The Board laid down a syllabus which formed the basis of

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> *Hasholom*, VII No.9 (July, 1930), 27.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held at Messrs Henochsberg & Wolpert's offices on Thursday, July 10th, 1930 at 5.15 pm, p.1.

<sup>12</sup> Also spelt Klatchko (*Ibid.*, VII No.2 (October, 1930), 23., *Ibid.*, VII No.11 (August, 1931), 21., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 79.

<sup>13</sup> *Hasholom*, VIII No.2 (October, 1930), 23.

<sup>14</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October, 31, 1930, p.38.



instruction at the Durban United *Talmud Torah* and its Director inspected the classes at regular intervals.<sup>15</sup>

On November 2nd 1930 the headmaster, staff and committee were "At Home" for the opening of the *Talmud Torah*,<sup>16</sup> which began to function on the following day.<sup>17</sup> The *Talmud Torah* opened with an enrollment of 114, with a further 50 enrolled in the kindergarten.<sup>18</sup> Much satisfaction was expressed over the initial daily attendance, which averaged between 75 and 80, and the fact that the majority of the pupils attending were over the age of twelve.<sup>19</sup> Besides the Hebrew language, lessons were given in religious instruction and Jewish history and boys were prepared for their *barmitzvahs* by the Revs. H. Rubin and N. Menachemson.<sup>20</sup> Whilst extensive efforts were made to popularise the *Talmud Torah* and to attract additional pupils, a policy of non-interference with private Hebrew teachers was followed<sup>21</sup> and pupils of Mr D. Harris recorded considerable

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<sup>15</sup> "The Durban United Hebrew Schools" in *The Durban Hebrew Congregation*, issued by the Durban United Hebrew Congregation 1952:5712, (Durban, 1952), p.29.

<sup>16</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 31, 1930, p.38.

<sup>17</sup> *Hasholom*, VIII No.3 (November, 1930), 38.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.4 (December, 1930), 23.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 57.

<sup>21</sup> The Durban United *Talmud Torah*, The Young Idea Moulding," p.37.

successes in the Matriculation and Junior Matriculation Examinations.<sup>22</sup>

Under Mr Klachko the *Talmud Torah* functioned reasonably well. For a considerable while problems existed within the *Talmud Torah* in respect of the standard of the pupils of the Afternoon Classes, and in respect of its administration and organisation.<sup>23</sup> The chief problem, however, remained that of attendances. Many of the pupils were unable to attend classes every afternoon and rarely attended more than two or three times a week, very often not on the same days each week. This, therefore, made classification of the pupils extremely difficult and necessitated a multiplicity of groupings which caused the administration considerable trouble.<sup>24</sup> Lack of parental interest in their children's Hebrew education and their reluctance to enrol their children in the *Talmud Torah*, also caused considerable consternation to the staff and the committee

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<sup>22</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.6 (February, 1933), 17., *The Natal Mercury*, February 17, 1937, p.8.

<sup>23</sup> Report of Mr D. Mierowsky, Director of Education, of the South African Board of Jewish Education 4th November, 1934 in the Minute Book of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*. Minutes of Committee Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* Held in the Durban Jewish Club on Wednesday, 7th November, 1934 at 8.30 pm, pp.1-3.

<sup>24</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 79.

of the school.<sup>25</sup> This problem was, in part, overcome by a vigorous personal canvass<sup>26</sup> and intensive propaganda<sup>27</sup> which resulted in increased and more regular attendances. A Ladies' Committee, chaired by Mrs A. Goldberg, was also formed and charged with the duty of helping to improve *Talmud Torah* attendances.<sup>28</sup> Through calling on the parents of pupils the Ladies' Committee also served as a link between the parents and the staff of the *Talmud Torah*.<sup>29</sup>

In 1933, largely through the good offices of Rabbi E.M. Levy, facilities for the instruction in Hebrew and Jewish history to the approximately 50 Jewish boys attending the Durban High School, were secured.<sup>30</sup> The benefits of Hebrew education were thus made available to an additional group of Jewish pupils who met twice

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<sup>25</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.11 (July, 1932), 26., *Ibid.*, X No.7 (March, 1933), 19., *Ibid.*, X No.8 (April, 1933), 28.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.9 (May, 1933), 23.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.4 (December, 1932), 22.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes of Actions Committee Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Wednesday, 31st October, 1934, at 8.15 pm, pp.1-2. Minutes of Actions Committee Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* Held in the offices of Messrs Wolpert & Abrahams 376 West Street, Durban, on Wednesday, 12th December, 1934, at 5.35 pm, p.1.

<sup>29</sup> *Hasholom*, XII No.5 (January, 1935), 26.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.2 (October, 1933), 23-24.

weekly with Mr Klachko.<sup>31</sup> Similar classes had been held at the same school during 1928<sup>32</sup> but had been discontinued upon Rabbi Levy's departure for Europe at the end of that year.

The provision of adequate financial resources was, and remained, a source of much anxiety. To help meet the financial obligations of the *Talmud Torah* the two Hebrew Congregations imposed a *Talmud Torah* levy of £1 1s on each of its male members thereby making them *ipso facto* members of the *Talmud Torah*. Monetary contributions of varying amounts were also made by the Durban Jewish Circle, the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild, the Durban Young Israel Society and the Hebrew Order of David. The Durban Zionist Association and the Durban Jewish Benevolent Society granted part of the funds allotted to them from the July Ball, to the school, to which the Durban Hebrew Congregation also channeled the surplus funds of its *Chevra Kadisha*.<sup>33</sup> Only through each institution in the community meeting its quota, and through donations and subscriptions, was the *Talmud Torah* able to continue operating, its funds augmented by the profits of various activities undertaken by the communal

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<sup>31</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 79.

<sup>32</sup> See above p.38.

<sup>33</sup> *Hasholom*, VIII No.10 (July, 1931), 24., *Ibid.*, IX No.4 (December, 1931), 23., and "Durban United *Talmud Torah*, The Young Idea Moulding," p.39.

institutions of the town.<sup>34</sup>

Notwithstanding the difficult conditions under which it had to operate, the *Talmud Torah* nevertheless made considerable progress. An indication of its growth was the appointment of an additional teacher, Mr Behr, to its staff,<sup>35</sup> and the assumption of teaching duties by the Rev. N. Menachemson.<sup>36</sup> In 1935 the Rev. Menachemson, in co-operation with Mr Klachko and the United *Talmud Torah*, organised special services for the youth during the High Festival period.<sup>37</sup> In the same year a new headmistress of the kindergarten was appointed in the person of Miss Jerusalem.<sup>38</sup> Increased interest amongst the members of the adult community was reflected in the formation of a Ladies' Hebrew Study Circle, which was conducted by Mr Klachko,<sup>39</sup> and the introduction of adult

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<sup>34</sup>Including a dance given by the Young Israel Society, (*Hasholom*, VIII No.2 (October, 1930), 23.) a cabaret ball presented by the Jewish Circle, (*The Natal Mercury*, November 6, 1930, p.20) a play produced by the Hebrew Order of David, (*Hasholom*, IX No.3 (November, 1931), 25.) the part proceeds of a fete organised by the Zionist Association, (*The Zionist Record*, August 26, 1932, p.30.) a concert held by the Hebrew Order of David, (*The Natal Mercury*, September 5, 1932, p.11.) and a picnic arranged by the Hebrew Order of David. (*Hasholom*, XII No.9 (May, 1935), 4.).

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, IX No.7 (March, 1932), 21.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, X No.4 (December, 1932), 22.

<sup>37</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 4, 1935, p.27.

<sup>38</sup>*Hasholom*, XII No.8 (April, 1935), 27.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, IX No.7 (March, 1932), 21., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 65.

classes for the study of Hebrew.<sup>40</sup>

By the time Mr Klachko left Durban, at the end of 1935, the state of the *Talmud Torah* gave cause for considerable satisfaction. Approximately 65% of the Jewish children in Durban were receiving a Hebrew education through the school,<sup>41</sup> although attendance remained irregular and children continued to be withdrawn from classes after *barmitzvah* age.<sup>42</sup> In his annual report for that year, Mr Mierowsky, the Director of Education of the South African Board of Jewish Education, in fact remarked on the considerable progress that had been made by the *Talmud Torah*. He pressed for the introduction of continuation classes for post-*barmitzvah* pupils and greater communal support for the kindergarten, believing that they would enhance and improve the community's growing educational facilities.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Hasholom*, XI No.9 (May, 1934), 26.

<sup>41</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VIII No.1 (September, 1935), 85-87.

<sup>42</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held in the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 18th June, 1935, at 8.30 pm., p.2.

<sup>43</sup> Report of Mr D. Mierowsky, Director of Education of the South African Board of Jewish Education, 11th July, 1935, in the Minute Book of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*.

## CHAPTER XI

THE ROAD TO A UNITED CONGREGATION : 1930 - 1935

In spite of all the economic, political and social problems of the time, the years 1930-1935 were characterised by much activity and significant developments for the two Hebrew Congregations in Durban.

For the 120 members of the Durban New Hebrew Congregation,<sup>1</sup> their wives and families, this was a period in which the regularity of congregational affairs was offset by the visits of distinguished rabbis and cantors<sup>2</sup> and by the marriage of Lily Rubin, the third daughter of the Congregation's much loved minister the

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<sup>1</sup>*The South African Jewish Year Book, Directory of Jewish Organisations and Who's Who in South African Jewry 1929, 5689-90.* Editor Morris de Saxe, Associate Editor I.M. Goodman, Published by the South African Jewish Historical Society. P.O. Box 2711, Johannesburg (Johannesburg, 1929), p.289.

<sup>2</sup>Including Cantor Lew Zvi, formerly of Riga, (*The Natal Mercury*, May 30, 1939, p.10., September 4, 1930, p.10.) Rabbi Emanuel Zimmerman of *Keren Hatorah* and *Beth Jacob*, (*Ibid.*, August 23, 1930, p.14.) Rabbi J. Gurniansky of Lithuania and Palestine, (*Ibid.*, November 7, 1930, p.12.) Rabbi Schwartz, (*Ibid.*, September 18, 1931, p.11.) Rabbi A. Shur of Warsaw, (*Ibid.*, March 9, 1933, p.12.) Cantor Bernstein of Johannesburg, (*Ibid.*, September 29, 1933, p.10) and Cantor Kuperburg. (*Ibid.*, August 3, 1934, p.12., August 17, 1934, p.10.)

Rev. H. Rubin.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, however, it was a period in which the ranks of the Congregation were disturbed by dissention. The creation of yet another Hebrew Congregation, in 1931, coming at a time when the prevailing mood of the Jewish community was overwhelmingly in favour of a union of the two existing Congregations, greatly disturbed the members of the Durban New Hebrew Congregation.<sup>4</sup>

The decision of thirteen of its members, led by Mr M. Korb, to create the Berea Hebrew Congregation, was prompted by the decision of the New Hebrew Congregation not to retain the services of its cantor, Cantor Zvi, during the High Festival period, as a consequence of which he terminated his services with the Congregation.<sup>5</sup> Incensed by the manner in which the Congregation's leaders had dealt with this issue, at a special general meeting requisitioned to deal with the matter, and dismayed by the Committee's action in summarily appointing a successor without advertising for applications, as the

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, September 19, 1930, p.7.

<sup>4</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 63.

<sup>5</sup> Minutes of the Durban Jewish Communal Council, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, Old Fort Road, Durban on Thursday, 9th September, 1931, at 6.00 pm., p.2. Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Executive of the Durban Jewish Communal Council Held at the offices of Messrs H. Moss-Morris & Greenberg, 48, National Mutual Buildings, Smith Street, Durban, on Monday, 9th October, 1931, at 5.25 pm., p.2.



dissentients had been led to believe they would, Mr Korb and his colleagues had tendered their resignations.

Conscious of the prevailing general dissatisfaction amongst members of the Durban New Hebrew Congregation in regard to the high price of *kosher* meat, supplied locally, and in order to strengthen its finances, the Berea Hebrew Congregation came to an arrangement with a local butchery. In return for the contract to supply *kosher* meat to the members of the Berea Hebrew Congregation the butcher paid, through the Congregation, an amount of £15 per month to the Rev. W. Stark whom the small Congregation had engaged as its minister and *shochet*.<sup>6</sup>

Not long after its inception the Berea Hebrew Congregation claimed to have a membership of no less than 60,<sup>7</sup> and in 1931<sup>8</sup> and 1932<sup>9</sup> it arranged its own High Holy Day services. The Congregation failed, however, to make any significant inroads and by 1934 it had come to an amicable settlement with the Durban New Hebrew Congregation and had officially ceased to exist.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Executive of the Durban Jewish Communal Council, Held at the offices of Messrs H. Moss-Morris & Greenberg, 48, National Mutual Buildings, Smith Street, Durban, on Monday, 9th October, 1931, at 5.25 pm., p.2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 1, 1931, p.12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, September 15, 1932, p.8., Services were conducted by Cantor Rivlin, formerly of Riga.

<sup>10</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.10 (June, 1934), 36.

For the Durban Hebrew Congregation this was a period that was marked by the continued energetic leadership of Rabbi E.M. Levy, who retained a key position in the life of the Jewish community as a whole. On behalf of the community the Rabbi expressed his disapproval of the *Union Immigration Bill*<sup>11</sup> and vigorously protested against the holding of a national army camp over the week of *Pesach*.<sup>12</sup> Not content to be simply involved in the manifold activities of the various Jewish communal institutions, Rabbi Levy also chose to serve as the president of the local committee that was formed to assist Rabbi Emanuel Zimmerman, of the *Keren Hatorah* and *Beth Jacob*, in his campaign for funds to maintain the educational institutions that he represented.<sup>13</sup> His contribution to the South African Jewish Minister's Conference, in July 1931, which he addressed on "The Influence of the Minister Upon the Rising Generation," was considered significant,<sup>14</sup> and his participation in a *Dunam Drive* in Springs, in the Transvaal, was an indication of the standing that he enjoyed amongst the Jewish communities of the Union.<sup>15</sup>

Within the wider community of Durban, Rabbi Levy

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<sup>11</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 14, 1930, p.26.

<sup>12</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 7, 1930, p.14.

<sup>13</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 3, 1930, p.20.

<sup>14</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 3, 1931, p.15., *Hasholom*, VIII No.11 (August, 1931), 11.

<sup>15</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 28, 1932, p.13.

participated in the Annual Armistice Day Services<sup>16</sup> and officiated at a United Masonic Service.<sup>17</sup> In his capacity as spiritual leader of the Durban Hebrew Congregation he was invited by the Mayor to attend Civic receptions<sup>18</sup> and was also asked to address the Cambrian Society.<sup>19</sup> In his personal capacity the Rabbi was appointed an executive member of the Durban branch of the World Disarmament Movement.<sup>20</sup>

The 350 strong Congregation over which Rabbi Levy presided,<sup>21</sup> derived much pleasure from the re-establishment of the Synagogue choir,<sup>22</sup> and, in the face of the severe economic conditions of the time, a particular sense of satisfaction over the release of the Synagogue buildings from their bond that left them all free from debt.<sup>23</sup> The opening of a *Taharah* house at the Jewish Cemetery at Stellawood in November 1930, erected through the

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<sup>16</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 10, 1939, p.9., November 9, 1931, p.9., November 14, 1932, p.10., November 13, 1933, p.13., November 12, 1934, p.13.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21, 1934, p.11.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, August 3, 1931, p.5., April 20, 1933, p.14.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, May 27, 1932, p.10.

<sup>20</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.6 (February, 1932), 15.

<sup>21</sup> *The South African Jewish Year Book, Directory of Jewish Organisations and Who's Who in South African Jewry 1929, 5689-90*, p.289.

<sup>22</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.7 (March, 1952), 21.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.10 (June, 1932), 22.

generosity of Mr A.J. Cohen,<sup>24</sup> enabled the Congregation's *Chevra Kadisha* to better fulfill its noble work. It also brought to an end the practice of using the facilities of local funeral parlours and of beginning funeral services from such parlours or from the home of the deceased.<sup>25</sup>

The synagogue in St. Andrew's Street, at which Rabbi Levy was the senior minister, was the venue for a special service on the day of humiliation and prayer, that was called by the Prime Minister, in view of the prevailing depression in the Union in 1931.<sup>26</sup> It was also the venue for a memorial service held on the passing of Baron Edmond de Rothschild in 1934<sup>27</sup> and the place where, in 1935, the Jewish community gathered to mark the Silver Jubilee of the reign of King George V.<sup>28</sup> Amongst the more distinguished visitors to grace it with their presence, were the Zionist leaders Dr Chaim Weizmann<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.4 (December, 1930), 9.

<sup>25</sup> See *The Natal Mercury*, June 14, 1921, p.8., June 28, 1921, p.8., May 12, 1922, p.8., September 6, 1922, p.8., May 2, 1923, p.8., October 14, 1924, p.8., May 8, 1925, p.10., March 19, 1926, p.10., June 7, 1927, p.9., March 19, 1928, p.7., July 27, 1929, p.13., September, 5, 1930, p.9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, January 5, 1931, p.12.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, November 16, 1934, p.12.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, May 7, 1935, p.11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, April 8, 1932, p.12.

and Mr Nahum Sokolow,<sup>30</sup> whilst from its pulpit a number of distinguished Rabbis addressed the Congregation.<sup>31</sup>

A service of singular importance at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, at which Rabbi Levy officiated, was the special Jubilee Service held on April 15, 1934, to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Durban Hebrew Congregation. The synagogue service was just one feature of the celebrations, that included a Children's Sports Day and a banquet at the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>32</sup> The Golden Jubilee of the Congregation was widely reported in the local press,<sup>33</sup> and a specially illustrated brochure was issued by the Congregation to mark the event. In addition to recording the history of all major Jewish institutions in the town, the brochure included messages of congratulation from leading Jewish personalities. They included Rabbi J.H. Hertz, Chief

<sup>30</sup> *Hasholom*, XI No.12 (August, 1934), 26.

<sup>31</sup> They included Rabbi E. Zimmerman of *Keren Hatorah* and *Beth Jacob*, (*The Natal Mercury*, August 19, 1930, p.6.) Rabbi Hirsch of Pretoria, (*Ibid.*, July 10, 1934, p.14.) Rabbi S. Bassock of Vilna, (*Ibid.*, February 6, 1932, p.14.) Rabbi H. Frenkel, (*Ibid.*, September 17, 1932, p.12.) Rabbi S. Goder from Russia, (*Ibid.*, November 10, 1933, p.10.) Rabbi Soloveitzchik (*Ibid.*, March 16, 1934, p.10.) and Rabbi Kahanaman from Ponevez. (*Ibid.*, June 30, 1934, p.11.). The renowned Cantor Berele Chagy of the *Beth Hamedrash Hagodel*, Johannesburg, also officiated at a Sabbath evening service at the Synagogue. (*Ibid.*, July 28, 1933, p.11.)

<sup>32</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.9 (May, 1934), 5-6. On the Jewish Club see below Chapter XII.

<sup>33</sup> *The Natal Advertiser*, April 12, 1934, p.8., *The Natal Mercury*, April 14, 1934, p.12.

Rabbi of the United Congregations of the British Empire;<sup>34</sup> Rabbi Prof. J.L. Landau, Chief Rabbi of South Africa; Sir Matthew Nathan, a former Jewish Governor of the Colony of Natal; and Dr Cyrus Adler, President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.<sup>35</sup>

Some months later, in January 1935, Rabbi Levy left Durban after receiving a call to occupy the post of Rabbi and Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue in Sydney, Australia.<sup>36</sup> After an association of more than ten years with the Congregation there was widespread regret felt over his departure, and this was eloquently expressed by Mr F.C. Hollander M.E.C. at a farewell banquet given by the Congregation on January 7.<sup>37</sup>

In the course of his ministry in Durban, Rabbi Levy had seen realised many of the objectives for which he had striven. Foremost amongst them had been the establishment of a United *Talmud Torah* in 1930,<sup>38</sup> and the creation of a *Shechitah* Board in 1933.<sup>39</sup> The call for the creation of a *Shechitah* Board had first been made in the editorial columns of the *Hasholom* in 1924,

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<sup>34</sup> *Durban Hebrew Congregation Fiftieth Anniversary 1884-1934, 5644-5694*, (Durban, 1934), p.2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>36</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 4, 1935, p.23.

<sup>37</sup> *Hasholom*, XII No.5 (January, 1935), 7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.7 (May, 1930), 3. On the *Talmud Torah* see above Chapter X.

<sup>39</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XI No.1 (September, 1933), 69.

as a possible solution to the problems, such as inadequate variety and poor service, that had resulted from contracting the supply of *kosher* meat to one butcher.<sup>40</sup> As a first step towards bringing about the regulation of the *kashrut* of the entire community, the two Hebrew Congregations had agreed in 1933 to jointly appoint a contractor for the sale of *kosher* meat.<sup>41</sup> At the same time they had entered into negotiations in respect of forming a *Shechitah* Board.<sup>42</sup> By *Rosh Hashonah* of that year such a Board had become a reality<sup>43</sup> and the issue of *kashrut* had become an affair which was the concern of the community as a whole.<sup>44</sup>

Through mutual participation in the affairs of the *Talmud Torah* and the *Shechitah* Board, the two Congregations were brought closer together.<sup>45</sup> At the

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<sup>40</sup> *Hasholom*, II No.3 (November, 1924), 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 27, 1933, p.8.

<sup>42</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.9 (May, 1933), 23., *Ibid.*, X No.10 (20th June, 1933), 24., *Ibid.*, X No.11 (July, 1933), 24.

<sup>43</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XI No.1 (September, 1933), 69.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 77.

<sup>45</sup> The Durban Hebrew Congregation and the Durban New Hebrew Congregation joined with the Durban United *Talmud Torah* to hold a combined annual *Chanukah* service the venue alternating between the St. Andrew's Street and the Park Street Synagogues. (*Hasholom*, VII No.7 (May, 1930), 3., *The Zionist Record*, February 6, 1931, p.25., *Hasholom*, IX No.5 (January, 1932), 23., *The Zionist Record*, January 13, 1933, p.23., *Hasholom*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 26., *Ibid.*, XII No.5 (January, 1935), 26-27.

same time the issues over which the 1929 attempt at union had come to founder, principally the establishment of a *Talmud Torah*, had now fallen away and this opened the way for the amalgamation of the two Hebrew Congregations.

A new joint Committee, with equal representation from the two Congregations, was formed in 1935.<sup>46</sup> With the 1929 plan on which to work, the Committee soon drew up a new agreement embodying most of its terms. At the end of June 1935, once preliminary negotiations had been concluded, each of the Synagogues simultaneously held separate general meetings.<sup>47</sup> Whilst both Congregations supported the principle of amalgamation they differed over the details,<sup>48</sup> which were pursued until an amicable basis of agreement had been arrived at. On December 1, 1935 the Durban Hebrew Congregation and the Durban New Hebrew Congregation, practically unanimously adopted the report of the combined committee in regard to amalgamation,<sup>49</sup> and thereby brought to an end 25 years of Congregational disunity and division.

In the absence of a spiritual leader for the Durban Hebrew Congregation, the Rev. Menachemson ably stepped into the breach. At the Thanksgiving Services to mark

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<sup>46</sup> *The Durban Hebrew Congregation*, issued by the Durban United Hebrew Congregation 1952:5712. (Durban, 1952), p.20.

<sup>47</sup> *Hasholom*, XII No.10 (June, 1935), 3.

<sup>48</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 83.

<sup>49</sup> *Hasholom*, XIII No.4 (December, 1935), 26.



the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary<sup>50</sup> and the 25th anniversary of the Union of South Africa,<sup>51</sup> and at the Interdenominational services held on Delville Wood Day,<sup>52</sup> and Armistice Day,<sup>53</sup> the Congregation was represented by the Rev. Menachemson. Together with Mrs Menachemson he also attended the Garden Party given by the Governor General, the Earl of Clarendon, and the Countess of Clarendon at King's House,<sup>54</sup> and he was also invited to address a meeting of the Sons of England.<sup>55</sup>

Within his Congregation he was 'at home' to the youth every Thursday evening.<sup>56</sup> Largely through his efforts special arrangements were made for the youth to hold their own services for the High Festivals in the *Succah* in the Synagogue grounds.<sup>57</sup> The Rev. Menachemson not only assumed a position on the staff of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, but, in addition to his duties as cantor and *shochet*, he delivered a number of sermons during the year.<sup>58</sup> Periodically the vacant pulpit at

<sup>50</sup>*The Natal Advertiser*, May 6, 1935, p.7.

<sup>51</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 31, 1935, p.10.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, July 22, 1935, p.16.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, November 11, 1935, p.15.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, July 12, 1935, p.5.

<sup>55</sup>*Hasholom*, XIII No.2 (October, 1935), 16.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, XII No.8 (April, 1935), 21.

<sup>57</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 4, 1935, p.27.

<sup>58</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 83.

the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue was occupied by distinguished guests, including the Rev. M. Konvisser of Kimberley,<sup>59</sup> Rabbi Hirsch of Pretoria,<sup>60</sup> Rabbi Dr Romm of Bloemfontein<sup>61</sup> and Rabbi I. Kossowsky of Johannesburg.<sup>62</sup>

Keenly aware of the need to appoint a minister, the Committee of the Congregation, nevertheless, felt that undue haste in regard to this important appointment would result in undesirable consequences. They therefore carefully considered all applications, guided by the policy that the successful incumbent should "have the dual qualifications in regard to language, namely, Hebrew and English, and at the same time have a sufficiently commanding personality adequately to represent us with our Gentile friends."<sup>63</sup> At the same time no definite decision was taken whilst negotiations towards amalgamation were under way,<sup>64</sup> as it was felt that the minister of the newly united Congregation should be one acceptable to both parties brought together by the Union. Once the agreement to amalgamate the two Congregations had been made the appointment became a

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<sup>59</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, January 24, 1935, p.10.

<sup>60</sup>*The Zionist Record*, April 5, 1935, p.35.

<sup>61</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 19, 1935, p.12.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, August 9, 1935, p.12.

<sup>63</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1935), 83.

<sup>64</sup>*Hasholom*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 22.

matter of the highest priority.

## CHAPTER XII

THE DURBAN JEWISH CLUB : 1930 - 1935

With the acceptance of Mr H. Hillman's plan for a single storey structure to house the Jewish Institute, steps were immediately undertaken to complete provisional plans and schedules and to prepare for the commencement of building operations.<sup>1</sup> During the months of negotiations with architects and surveyors, the Management Committee launched a Brick Campaign, as a means of raising funds to help meet the costs of the proposed Institute.<sup>2</sup>

On June 17, 1930, at a special general meeting of Foundation Members, tenders were accepted and the building plans approved.<sup>3</sup> In the following month building operations commenced<sup>4</sup> and proceeded with such amazing rapidity<sup>5</sup> that by November 10th the Roof Wetting

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<sup>1</sup> *Hasholom*, VII No.3 (December, 1929), 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.5 (March, 1930), 22., *Ibid.*, VII No.6 (April, 1930), 24., *Ibid.*, VII No.8 (June, 1930), 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.9 (July, 1930), 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.3 (November, 1930), 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.10 (August, 1930), 27., *Ibid.*, VIII No.2 (October, 1930), 23.

ceremony had been held.<sup>6</sup>

Notwithstanding a particularly heavy downpour of rain on Sunday, November 30th, numerous guests attended the impressive ceremony held to mark the laying of the foundation stones of the Durban Jewish Institute by Mr Hirsch Hillman, the Institute's President, and Mr Cecil Lyons, the Chairman of the Committee of Management.<sup>7</sup> In the course of the proceedings Mr Hillman launched a campaign to cover the cost of furnishing the Institute and of laying out tennis courts and bowling greens.<sup>8</sup> By early 1931 the interior parts of the Institute were almost completed and work on the tennis courts had reached an advanced stage.<sup>9</sup>

As the proposed Institute building rapidly took shape, the Durban Jewish Circle continued to fulfil its multifaceted role in the life of the Jewish community of the town. Its sectional committees afforded its members a full and varied programme of weekly activities that included 17 evenings devoted to culture and debates, 9 for entertainment, 6 for play readings, 6 for dances, 2 for plays and 1 for a Children's play.<sup>10</sup> Among the innovations introduced by the Circle, was an orchestra

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.3 (November, 1930), 16.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.4 (December, 1930), 12.

<sup>8</sup> For a full list of donors see, *Ibid.*, VIII No.7 (April, 1931), 24.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.5 (February, 1931), 24.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.4 (December, 1930), 3.

which made its first appearance, under the direction of Mr M. Cohen, at the Dramatic Section's production of *The Cat's Cradle*.<sup>11</sup> From December 1930 the orchestra came under the direction of Mr David Cohen.<sup>12</sup> To the many social amenities of the Circle a Luncheon Club was added in October 1930. Formed by the *Hasholom* Committee the club met initially at the *Central Tea Rooms* in West Street, and was addressed by guest speakers on matters of Jewish interest.<sup>13</sup>

Within the wider community the Circle "proved most conclusively that far from being merely a social club run on marvellously efficient lines, it had also established itself as a guiding force in local Jewish affairs."<sup>14</sup> It served as a powerful and influential unifying force within the community, bringing together, as it did, members of both Hebrew Congregations, and having amongst its leaders men who were dedicated to the principle of communal unity. The successful founding of a United *Talmud Torah* was in large measure accredited to the efforts of the Circle, which in 1929 had set up a sub-committee to consider the steps necessary for the forming of such a body. It was the Circle that had also convened a meeting of each of the major Jewish

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<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, VII No.9 (July, 1930), 6.

<sup>12</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 49.

<sup>13</sup>*Hasholom*, VIII No.3 (November, 1930), 4-5.

<sup>14</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 3, 1930, p.20.

institutions in the town to win their support for such a scheme.<sup>15</sup> Sensing the need for a representative body capable of speaking for Durban Jewry, the Circle convened another meeting of local Jewish organisations in July 1930, this time to inaugurate the Durban Jewish Communal Council, the precursor of the Council of Natal Jewry.<sup>16</sup>

The Circle furthermore continued to raise large amounts of money for charity, and in its financial report for the year ending November 30, 1930, it was recorded that of a total expenditure of £829, £365 was donated to Jewish institutions.<sup>17</sup>

At the end of 1930, with the construction of the Jewish Institute nearing completion, the Executive of the Durban Jewish Circle appointed a Sub-Committee to consider the advisability or otherwise of the Circle federating or merging with the Institute, or being incorporated by the latter. On a decision being reached, the Sub-Committee was authorised to consider the conditions necessary for such steps and to advise upon the machinery needed to give effect to its decisions. This Sub-Committee comprised of Mr S. Moshal, Chairman; Messrs N.E. Abrahams, W. Cranko, I. Geshen and Miss M. Smo.

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<sup>15</sup> Arnold Miller, *Durban Jewish Club A History issued on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee*, (Durban, May 1956), p.28.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.

A similar Sub-Committee, comprising Messrs H. Brown, M. Freed, J. Green, M. Lewis and one other, was simultaneously appointed by the Durban Jewish Institute.<sup>18</sup>

In due course the Joint Sub-Committee issued its report in which it was agreed that a merger of the Circle with the Institute was the most desirable object to be aimed at. Since such a move would have necessitated the Institute going into liquidation and a new body being formed, and since this was felt to be undesirable, it was recommended that the Circle rather be incorporated by the Institute. Furthermore it was recommended by the Joint Sub-Committee that the new Institution should not be called the Durban Jewish Circle or the Durban Jewish Institute, but rather the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>19</sup>

On April 28, 1931, a special general meeting, of both the Durban Jewish Circle and the Durban Jewish Institute, were held at the Durban Jewish Club. Whilst theoretically there were two separate meetings, in effect, both meetings were held simultaneously. The evening's proceedings began with a meeting of the members of the Circle, and continued thereafter with a meeting of the Foundation Members of the Durban Jewish Institute. Once the recommendations of the respective administrative bodies had been unanimously accepted, the combined

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<sup>18</sup>"The Durban Jewish Circle A History of a Remarkable Institution," in *Durban Hebrew Congregation Fiftieth Anniversary 1884-1934*, 5644-5694. (Durban, 1934), p.33.

<sup>19</sup>*Hasholom*, VIII No.7 (April, 1931), 14-15.



meeting of all members proceeded to elect the first office bearers.<sup>20</sup> It had previously been agreed that the Durban Jewish Club was to be run by a Council, whose concern would be matters of external policy, and an Executive, which would have sole control of internal affairs. Results of the election were as follows:-

Mr H. Hillman, Hon. President; Mr F.C. Hollander, Hon. Vice-President; Council: Mr C. Lyons, President; Mr S. Moshal, Vice-President; Messrs M. Freed, M. Lewis, H. Brown, M. Gevisser, H.L. Magid and H. Moss-Morris, Council Members. Executive: Mr M. Wolpert, Chairman; Mr W. Cranko, Vice-Chairman; Messrs N.E. Abrahams, O. Ballin, A. Blumenfeld, M. Cohen, A. Goldberg, E.S. Henochsberg, H. Lipinski, J. Goldman, I. Geshen, I. Gevisser, Mesdames S.J. Kaplan and H. Moss-Morris, Executive Members.<sup>21</sup>

Miss M. Smo was appointed Secretary and Mr and Mrs Charles Myer the Caretakers and Managers of the Club.<sup>22</sup>

Following upon the incorporation and absorption of the Durban Jewish Circle by the Durban Jewish Club (formerly the Durban Jewish Institute), the newly completed home of the Club, in Old Fort Road, was opened before an assembly of over 1,000 people on May 4, 1931,

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.8 (May, 1931, Club Opening Number), 16-17.

<sup>21</sup> Arnold Miller, p.32.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25.

by Mr F.C. Hollander. Among the distinguished guests who attended the opening ceremony, and the lavish banquet that followed, were the Mayoress of Durban, Mrs A. Lamont, and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor J.K. Murray and Mrs Murray.<sup>23</sup>

Long conscious of the difficulties inherent in gaining admission to many of the athletic and social clubs of the town, which were reluctant to admit Jewish members,<sup>24</sup> the community derived much satisfaction from having a club of their own. The first year of the Jewish Club's existence was marked by enormous enthusiasm and feverish activity on the part of the Executive Committee and members. Shortly after the opening of the Club a House Committee was formed with the object of having a representative and responsible body to assist the Executive in dealing with the many duties involved in running the Club. The personnel of the Committee consisted of members who volunteered their services, and all members of the Executive and Council.

The duties formerly undertaken by the Durban Jewish Institute, including the completion of the building, laying out of the grounds and the furnishing of the premises, were taken over by the House Committee. In addition the Committee was requested by the Executive

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<sup>23</sup>*Hasholom*, VIII No.8 (May, 1931, Club Opening Number), 6-7 and 9.

<sup>24</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, April 29, 1931, p.16., April 30, 1931, p.23.

to supervise the house staff, to be responsible for the conduct of members, and to enforce compliance with the Club's rules and regulations. Among the matters dealt with by the House Committee were arrangements in respect of catering, the opening of ledger books, the fixing of prices and the ordering and purchasing of requisitories. To ensure greater efficiency, the House Committee subdivided its work between two sub-committees, the Building and Grounds Sub-Committee and the Purchasing Sub-Committee. The former, in conjunction with the manager, held regular inspections of the building and attended to all matters affecting the building contract, whilst the Purchasing Sub-Committee, as its name suggested, dealt with all Club purchases.<sup>25</sup>

To help popularise the Club, and to assist in its smooth running a Ladies' Committee, under Mrs S.J. Kaplan was also formed shortly after the Club's inception. From an initially large committee a small working committee was elected to look after the daily routine of the Club and to assist the manageress in every possible way.<sup>26</sup> Under the direction of the Ladies' Committee Ladies' Club Afternoons were held every Wednesday and proved to be very popular.<sup>27</sup>

The numerous handsome gifts that were presented

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<sup>25</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 43.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>27</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.4 (December, 1931), 9.

to the Club in the course of the year by individual members, bore ample testimony to the pride which members took in their new Club.<sup>28</sup>

Against a background of economic depression, the rise of Hitler and the emergence of the anti-Semitic Greyshirt Movement in South Africa, the Club nevertheless enjoyed a period of growth and development during its formative years. This period was not entirely unclouded by problems. Nevertheless, on the whole, it was a time of achievement and considerable success.

To provide for the functioning of the Club and the conducting of all the activities formerly associated with the Circle, the organisation of the Circle was continued, and where necessary, additional sub-committees were formed. Consequently, in 1931 a Bar Committee was appointed in addition to the existing sectional committees. It was responsible for organising the bar once a liquor licence had been secured. A Billiards Committee was also formed. It took charge of all the arrangements in connection with the introduction and inclusion of billiards in the Club.<sup>29</sup> In the course of that same year the Circle's collection of Jewish books was transferred from the Durban Municipal Library to form the nucleus of the Club Library, which was opened

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.10 (July, 1931), 20., *Ibid.*, IX No.2 (October, 1931), 3., *Ibid.*, IX No.3 (November, 1931), 5., *Ibid.*, IX No.5 (January, 1932), 7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.4 (December, 1931), 10.

in July.<sup>30</sup> Under the direction of the Culture Section, and largely through the efforts of Mr Otto Ballin and Dr Minnie Alper, the library's collection of books was greatly augmented, and by the end of 1935 numbered 2,300 volumes.<sup>31</sup>

On August 4, 1931 the Club's Gymnasium was officially opened and immediately proved to be very popular amongst members. Equipment that had been imported from England was installed, and an official instructor was appointed, who also gave lessons in boxing and wrestling.<sup>32</sup> Five days later Mr Hirsch Hillman officially opened the Club's new tennis courts.<sup>33</sup> Although the Tennis Section of the Jewish Circle had, together with its parent body, been absorbed into the Jewish Club, a condition of the Section's incorporation had been that it should retain its name. In this way the name of the Circle Tennis Club came to be perpetuated.<sup>34</sup>

Under the auspices of the Culture Section a Study Circle was started in 1931 to stimulate an interest in

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.10 (July, 1931), 24.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.11 (August, 1931), 19.

<sup>33</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 51.

<sup>34</sup> *Hasholom*, VIII No.11 (August, 1931), 2.

Jewish history.<sup>35</sup> To keep its members better informed about contemporary Jewish matters, arrangements were made with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in London, in April 1931, to supply news of world Jewry to the *Hasholom*, which had become the official organ of the Club.<sup>36</sup>

Among the activities that were first held in this period, and which came to be regularly included in the Club's programme of events, were a monthly dinner and card evening, first held in February 1932,<sup>37</sup> an annual *Purim* fancy dress for children,<sup>38</sup> an appropriate celebration to mark the anniversary of the Club's opening,<sup>39</sup> and a soiree, which signalled the start of the Club's activities each year.<sup>40</sup> The success of the Club's first musical comedy *The Girl in the Taxi*,<sup>41</sup> ensured that this type of entertainment appeared annually on the Dramatic Section's programme of activities.<sup>42</sup>

The Music Section, established in March 1932 under

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>36</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 45.

<sup>37</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.9 (May, 1932), 5.

<sup>38</sup> First held in March 1932 (*Ibid.*, IX No.8 (April, 1932), 15.)

<sup>39</sup> First observed by a dance on May 9, 1932. (*Ibid.*, IX No.9 (May, 1932), 21.)

<sup>40</sup> First held in January 1932, (*Ibid.*, IX No.6 (February, 1932), 3.)

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.11 (July, 1932), 5 and 27.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.11 (July, 1933), 6-7., *Ibid.*, XI No.11 (July, 1934), 26-27., *Ibid.*, XII No.11 (July, 1935), 6.

the chairmanship of Mr Maurice Cohen,<sup>43</sup> was an important sectional committee which was formed during this period. The Club's Orchestra, which had inspired the creation of this section presented a grand inaugural concert, under the baton of Mr David Cohen, to mark the Music Section's first function on June 20.<sup>44</sup> Thereafter the Orchestra performed regularly at Club theatrical presentations and in concerts. This section also undertook to provide musical programmes for musical afternoons arranged by the Ladies' Committee, and within a few months a Club quartette of lady musicians had been formed for this purpose.<sup>45</sup>

At a general meeting, held on November 18, 1935, a Squash Rackets Section was formed at the Club, with Mr E. Jacobson as its first chairman.<sup>46</sup> In contrast, the Golf and Cricket Sections, which had been formed in the days of the Circle, had been forced to cease functioning by the end of 1935, in consequence of the poor support which they received.<sup>47</sup>

Almost from the moment it was opened, the Club became the hub of Jewish activity in the town, and the

<sup>43</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 57.

<sup>44</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.11 (July, 1932), 3 and 6.

<sup>45</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 57.

<sup>46</sup> *Hashalom*, XIII No.6 (February, 1936), 24.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 10.

venue for meetings of different communal organisations. Its large hall was frequently used for important banquets and communal meetings, and was also widely used for private receptions, the first of which was held the day after the Club's opening, to celebrate the marriage of Miss Roslyn Kahn and Mr David Friedman.<sup>48</sup>

Within its precincts tribute was paid to distinguished members of the Club and the community. In 1933 a supper was held to mark the 80th birthday of Mr Philip Wartski, the doyen of Durban Jewry<sup>49</sup> and the Club's only honorary life member.<sup>50</sup> Two years later a valedictory dinner was held in honour of Mr Cecil Lyons, whose departure for Johannesburg deprived the entire community of a valued communal worker.<sup>51</sup> At the annual general meeting, held at the end of 1934 Mr Lyons was accorded the signal honour of being elected an honorary vice-president, in recognition of the enormous contribution that he had made to the Circle, the Jewish Institute and the Jewish Club.<sup>52</sup> In 1935 the Club's other honorary vice-president, Mr F.C. Hollander was also honoured at a special dinner at which tribute was paid to

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<sup>48</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 7, 1931, p.8.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, January 9, 1935, p.5., *Hasholom*, X No.5 (January, 1933), 3.

<sup>50</sup>He was elected honorary life member in 1931. (A. Miller, p.32.)

<sup>51</sup>*Hasholom*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), p.12.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, XII No.5 (January, 1935), 6.



him for his contribution to the Jewish and general life of Durban.<sup>53</sup>

Honour of a different kind was paid to a Jewish personality associated with Durban. In consequence of the efforts of the Culture Section, the Durban Town Council decided in 1933, to name a thoroughfare adjacent to the Club buildings Nathaniel Isaacs Road.<sup>54</sup> To coincide with the naming of a road in memory of Durban's first Jewish settler, and one of the earliest Natal pioneers,<sup>55</sup> a function was held at the Club at which a lecture on Nathaniel Isaacs was delivered.<sup>56</sup>

The Jewish Club transcended the standard concept of a club, being far more than a place of social and cultural recreation. It was, in fact, involved in almost every branch of communal endeavour and exerted a major influence on the course of Jewish affairs in Durban.

Having been the moving force behind the creation of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* and the Jewish Communal

<sup>53</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 29, 1935, p.5.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, April 11, 1933, p.16.

<sup>55</sup> On Nathaniel Isaacs see S.G. Cohen, *A History of the Jews of Durban 1825-1918*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban, 1977), pp.4-20.

<sup>56</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 13, 1933, p.11.

Council, the Club maintained a lively interest in the welfare of these two bodies, on which it was officially represented.<sup>57</sup> To help advance the cause of Jewish education, financial support was granted by the Club to the *Talmud Torah*,<sup>58</sup> whilst at the same time the policy of awarding bursaries to deserving pupils in Government schools was also continued.<sup>59</sup> In terms of the will of the late Sol Jacobson, the Governing bodies of the Club and the President of the Hebrew Congregation were empowered to award a bursary to encourage the advancement of Hebrew education.<sup>60</sup>

Owing to the prevailing economic hardships of the time, the Jewish Benevolent Society and the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild were forced to issue a joint appeal for funds, to which the Club generously responded.<sup>61</sup> It also continued to participate in the Joint July Ball,

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<sup>57</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.4 (December, 1932), 11., *Ibid.*, XI No.4 (December, 1933), 7., *Ibid.*, XII No.4 (December, 1934), 10., *Ibid.*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 11. On Communal Council see below pp.265-273.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.4 (December, 1933), 7., *Ibid.*, XII No.4 (December, 1934), 10.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.6 (February, 1932), 3., *Ibid.*, XI No.4 (December, 1933), 6., *Ibid.*, XII No.4 (December, 1934), 10., *Ibid.*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 11.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 3.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.4 (December, 1932), 11., *Ibid.*, XI No.4 (December, 1933), 7., *Ibid.*, XII No.4 (December, 1934), 10.

which was held under the auspices of the Guild,<sup>62</sup> and together with the Guild, the Club held a charity function in aid of *The Natal Mercury* Children's Camp Fund.<sup>63</sup>

The youth of the community were shown enormous hospitality by the Club which continued to extend its facilities to the Young Israel Society<sup>64</sup> and lent its support to the *Habonim* and *Habonot*.<sup>65</sup> The Zionist movement also received the sympathetic assistance of the Club and both the Durban Zionist Association and the Durban Women's Zionist League used the Club's facilities for their meetings.<sup>66</sup> The large hall of the Club was

<sup>62</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 59., *Ibid.*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 39., *Hasholom*, X No.11 (July, 1933), 5., *Ibid.*, XI No.4 (December, 1933), 19., *Ibid.*, XI No.11 (July, 1934), 3-4., *Ibid.*, XII No.4 (December, 1934), 4., *Ibid.*, XII No.11 (July, 1935), 4 and 13., *Ibid.*, XIII No.2 (October, 1935), 11.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.3 (November, 1934), 4.

<sup>64</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 45., *Ibid.*, X No.4 (December, 1932), 10., *Ibid.*, XI No.4 (December, 1933), 7., *Ibid.*, XII No.4 (December, 1934), 9., *Ibid.*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 11.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.4 (December, 1933), 7., *Ibid.*, XII No.4 (December, 1934), 9., *Ibid.*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 11. On *Habonim* see below pp.257-260

<sup>66</sup> The Durban Zionist Association held its first meeting at the Club in August 1931, (*The Zionist Record*, September 4, 1931, p.28.) and upon the creation of the Women's Zionist League in 1934 meetings were held on the Club premises (*Hasholom*, XI No.10 (June, 1934), 27.)

the venue for Zionist mass meetings<sup>67</sup> and also for the launching of the *Keren Hayesod* campaigns.<sup>68</sup> Both the Jewish National Fund and the Friends in Natal of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem were the recipients of generous donations from Club funds.<sup>69</sup>

*Hasholom* had, through its editorial columns, long urged the union of the two Hebrew Congregations.<sup>70</sup> In 1935 such a union took place and was attributed by the President of the Durban New Hebrew Congregation to the efforts of Mr C. Lyons, the Club's President at the time of the Union.<sup>71</sup> Rabbi E.M. Levy, who had strongly supported such a union, and who left the community shortly before union was attained, was prior to his departure for Australia, the guest of honour of a banquet held in the Club hall.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Including a mass meeting addressed by Rabbi Meir Berlin (*Ibid.*, IX No.4 (December, 1931), 5.) and Dr Benzion Shein (*Ibid.*, XII No.12 (August, 1935), 5.)

<sup>68</sup>The 1932 campaign launched by Dr Weizmann and the 1934, launched by Mr Nahum Sokolow began with mass meetings in the Club Hall. (*The Zionist Record*, April 15, 1932, p.4., August 3, 1934, p.9.)

<sup>69</sup>*Hasholom*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 11.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, IV No.5 (October 15th, 1926), 8 and 10., *Ibid.*, V No.4 (October, 1927), 1., *Ibid.*, V No.5 (November, 1927), 1., *Ibid.*, VI No.9 (May 1, 1929), 1-2., *Ibid.*, XII No.10 (June, 1935), 3., *Ibid.*, XIII No.4 (December, 1935), 2.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, XIII No.4 (December, 1935), 9.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, XII No.5 (January, 1935), 26.

By affiliating with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the Club reflected its desire for involvement in the wider Jewish community and its willingness to share in the affairs of South African Jewry. In 1932 it was represented at the Board's Conference<sup>73</sup> and took particular pride in the election of its Honorary President, Mr Hirsch Hillman to the Presidency of the Board.<sup>74</sup> At the invitation of the Governing Bodies, the 10th Conference of the Board of Deputies was held at the Club from August 6-7, 1933.<sup>75</sup> The Club's contribution to the Endowment Fund of the Board of Deputies,<sup>76</sup> and its endowment of a cot at the South African Jewish Orphanage in Johannesburg,<sup>77</sup> testified to the wider communal vision of the Club's offices.

The turbulent times in which Jewry found itself in this period made mutual contact between the Jewish and Gentile communities particularly important. The friendly relationships that were cemented between the Jews and other communities in Durban were in large measure the achievement of the Club. The weekly Luncheon Club offered many Gentile speakers an opportunity to address a Jewish audience, and through the interchange

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.3 (November, 1931), 15.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.5 (January, 1932), 3.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.4 (December, 1933), 7.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

of ideas and opinions, greater understanding and mutual goodwill was fostered. A luncheon was given annually in honour of the Mayor and civic dignitaries and from 1933 the practice of conferring honorary membership on the Mayor and Mayoress of Durban was initiated.<sup>78</sup>

Foremost amongst those to whom the hospitality of the Club was extended were the Administrator of Natal, Mr H. Gordon Watson,<sup>79</sup> the members of the Provincial Council Executive,<sup>80</sup> Vice-Admiral E.R.G.R. Evans and Mrs Evans,<sup>81</sup> the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Senator Clarkson and Mrs Clarkson<sup>82</sup> and Bishop Delaille, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Durban.<sup>83</sup> Mr George Bernard Shaw, was one of the distinguished visitors to Durban who spent some time at the Jewish Club.<sup>84</sup>

The Club's presentation of a collection of ancient Jewish coins to the local Municipal Museum<sup>85</sup> was a small gesture which helped further strengthen the spirit of goodwill between Durban Jewry and the local populace.

<sup>78</sup> Arnold Miller, p.35.

<sup>79</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.4 (December, 1931), 9.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.3 (November, 1931), 15.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.11 (July, 1933), 19 and 21.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.12 (August, 1934), 25.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.8 (April, 1935), 3.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.9 (May, 1935), 3., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 6-7.

<sup>85</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 45., *The Zionist Record*, September 25, 1931, p.66.

The Club also identified with the local citizenry through its donations to the Durban and District Community Chest<sup>86</sup> and its presentation of a musical comedy in aid of the King's Jubilee Anti T.B. Fund.<sup>87</sup>

Although at the end of 1935 it had a deficit on its capital account and there was concern for the deteriorating condition of the building, the Club was able to record an increase in membership from 630 at the end of 1931,<sup>88</sup> to 776 at the end of 1935,<sup>89</sup> and was no doubt greatly encouraged by the progress which it had made and the central part it had come to occupy in the life of Durban's Jewish community.

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<sup>86</sup> *Hasholom*, XI No.4 (December, 1933), 7., *Ibid.*, XII No.4 (December, 1934), 10.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.11 (July, 1935), 6.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.4 (December, 1931), 10.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 7.

## CHAPTER XIII

ZIONISM : 1930 - 1935

## PHILANTHROPIC ZIONISM

In the wake of the unrest in Palestine in 1929 the attention of Durban Jewry remained fixed on their National Homeland. Much of their energy was expended in seeking to assist in the building of the country. As in the past, only during the visits of prominent personalities in connection with the various drives for funds, did the full extent of Zionist sentiment in the town manifest itself, both in terms of the community's generosity and its attendance at related functions.

The first distinguished visitors to come to Durban during this period were Dr Benzion Mossinsohn, the principal of the Herzlia Gymnasium in Tel Aviv, and Col. Josiah C. Wedgewood, a Gentile British Parliamentarian, who visited the town in connection with the *Keren Hayesod* Campaign, in February 1930. On their mission to South Africa they were accompanied by Lord Melchett, a leading British industrialist and the Head of the English Zionist Federation and Chairman of



the Jewish Agency Council.<sup>1</sup> During the course of their short stay in the town, Dr Mossinsohn and Col. Wedgwood attended a banquet at the *Royal Hotel* for leading male donors,<sup>2</sup> and addressed a mass meeting at the Pavilion.<sup>3</sup> Mrs Wedgwood met with the ladies of the community to launch the Women's Campaign, to support the *Kfar Yeladim*, the children's colony in Palestine which was the project of the Jewish women of South Africa.<sup>4</sup> Lord Melchett subsequently paid a brief visit to Durban to attend to important business affairs, but no reception was given in his honour.<sup>5</sup> At the conclusion of the campaign Dr Mossinsohn returned to Durban where, prior to his departure for Palestine, he addressed the community,<sup>6</sup> delivered lectures to the Durban Jewish Circle<sup>7</sup> and the Young Israel Society,<sup>8</sup> and officially opened the National Home Fete.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, February 4, 1930, p.15.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, February 17, 1930, p.5. *The Zionist Record*, February 21, 1930, pp.12-13.

<sup>3</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, February 17, 1930, p.9., *The Natal Advertiser*, February 17, 1930, p.5., *The Zionist Record*, February 21, 1930, p.13.

<sup>4</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, February 17, 1930, p.5., *The Zionist Record*, February 21, 1930, p.13.

<sup>5</sup>*Hasholom*, VII No.5 (March, 1930), 5.

<sup>6</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 3, 1930, p.14., *The Zionist Record*, May 16, 1930, p.30.

<sup>7</sup>*Hasholom*, V No.8 (June, 1930), 17.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

In April 1930 considerable interest was aroused over the proposed visit to Durban of the outspoken Zionist Revisionist Leader, Vladimir Jabotinsky, in the course of his nationwide propaganda campaign on behalf of his Party.<sup>10</sup> Jabotinsky's visit to the town failed, however, to materialise. In the light of the enthusiastic reception that Jabotinsky had received in Cape Town and Johannesburg the cancellation of his visit to Durban was a great disappointment, particularly to his supporters and to those who were interested to hear him expound his ideals.<sup>11</sup> The Chairman of the Durban Zionist Association, Mr M. Freed, ascribed the cancellation of Jabotinsky's visit to the attitude of the special committee formed in Johannesburg for the purpose of controlling his movements. According to Mr Freed the Zionist Association in Durban, at the outset, entered into correspondence with the committee in Johannesburg, in order to ascertain the length of Jabotinsky's stay, and the date of his possible visit to Durban. In reply the committee informed the local Zionist Association that it was not certain whether Durban could be included in the itinerary, but that the Association would be advised in due course.

The Zionist Association considered it desirable that the lecture should take place at a Monday Circle

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.6 (April, 1930), p.3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.7 (May, 1930), 5.

evening. The committee in Johannesburg, however, sent notification that Jabotinsky's proposed visit would begin on a Friday and would have to end on the following Monday afternoon. Furthermore, the Association was informed that a charge for admission would have to be made. The officers of the Durban Zionist Association thought that the charge for admission would spoil the possibility of a representative gathering, whilst the Circle did not permit a charge to be made for any lectures held under its aegis, and the Johannesburg committee was notified of these facts. Thus advised, Johannesburg cancelled Jabotinsky's proposed visit to Durban, and refused to reconsider the matter even when a letter was dispatched from the Zionist Association, offering the assurance that Jabotinsky's expenses in the town would be fully covered.

In the opinion of the Chairman of the Durban Zionist Association the decision not to charge for admission was a right one, since he was sure that an insufficient number of people would have been willing to pay to hear Jabotinsky speak. Whilst seeking to justify his Association's standpoint, the Chairman also added that an appeal was to be made for the *Tel Hai* Fund, and that in view of the *Keren Hayesod* Campaign, and the National Home Fete, within a week of the proposed visit, his committee could not consider this, "as Durban's resources

are not unlimited."<sup>12</sup>

Although the Durban Zionist Association, no doubt, felt fully justified in its stand, had the Association been more sympathetic to Revisionism, or truly determined to have Jabotinsky speak in Durban, they would have found an alternative time to that of the Monday Circle evening for Jabotinsky's address. The Association's decision, moreover, not to allow a fee to be charged for admission to the lecture, although based on what the Association's leadership believed to be an understanding of the community, was never in fact tested. Furthermore, the opposition to a collection being made for the *Tel Hai* Fund, although based on sound reasoning, may also have been influenced by the fact that the fund was for the benefit of the Revisionist Party with which the Association had never demonstrated any sympathy. In any event Durban was bypassed by **Jabot**insky during his visit to South Africa.

At the same time as Jabotinsky was touring the Union, seeking support for his goal of a Jewish State on both sides of the River Jordan through mass colonisation, the Shaw Report, drawn up by a commission sent to investigate the causes of the 1929 riots, and published in 1930, was causing much consternation in Zionist circles worldwide. The Report acknowledged Arab responsibility for the bloodshed of 1929, but claimed that the fundamental cause

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<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, VII No.10 (August, 1930), 17.

of the violence was Arab fears resulting from Jewish immigration and land purchase<sup>13</sup> which were, in fact, two of the central planks of the programme that Jabotinsky was trying to publicise during his South African tour.

The publication, in October 1930, of the Hope Simpson Report, on economic conditions in Palestine, at the same time as the British Government issued its statement of policy, the Passfield White Paper caused a further, and more vociferous, outburst of Jewish indignation against the course of policy adopted by the British Government. Although in the White Paper the Government declared its aim to be, "to promote the interests of both sections in a manner consistent with the obligation which the Mandate imposes....,"<sup>14</sup> the general impression that it created was, "that the building of the Jewish national home had more or less ended as far as Britain was concerned, its continued growth dependent on Arab consent."<sup>15</sup>

World Jewry generally, regarded the White Paper as a reinterpretation of the Balfour Declaration, and the Mandate, and felt it to be prejudicial to Jewish interests, and gave universal expression to its feeling

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<sup>13</sup>Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, (New York, 1976), pp.490-491.

<sup>14</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, October 21, 1930, p.9.

<sup>15</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.492.

of betrayal.<sup>16</sup> The indignation of Durban Jewry was expressed in an emotive editorial in the community mouthpiece, the *Hasholom*,<sup>17</sup> and in a resolution, affirming the belief in the re-establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, proposed by the Durban Zionist Association, at the 13th South African Zionist Conference in January, 1931.<sup>18</sup> The local press in Durban adopted diametrically opposite positions over the White Paper. The morning daily, which was **strongly** imperialist in sentiment, justified it<sup>19</sup> whilst its evening counterpart, which followed a less rigid editorial policy, described it as an expression of, "the **bad** faith of Britain."<sup>20</sup>

If at the time of Jabotinsky's tour of South Africa, there was, as some local Zionist leaders believed, insignificant support for Zionist Revisionism in Durban, this situation altered radically in the period following the publication of the Passfield **White Paper**. In the elections in which *shekel* holders chose delegates to the 17th Zionist Congress, **which was** held in Basle in June 1931, the Zionist Revisionists secured the highest

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, and *The Natal Mercury*, October 23, 1930, p.11., October 24, 1930, p.14., October 25, 1930, p.15.

<sup>17</sup> *Hasholom*, VIII No.3 (November, 1930), 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 23, 1931, p.18.

<sup>19</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 24, 1930, p.10.

<sup>20</sup> *The Natal Advertiser*, October 27, 1930, p.8.

number of votes in Durban.<sup>21</sup> This was very possibly an expression of local Zionist dissatisfaction with the leaders of the Zionist Movement, and the manner in which they were dealing with Britain, for when elections were again held in 1933, to select delegates to Congress, support for Revisionism, as reflected in the voting in Durban, had declined very considerably.<sup>22</sup>

In November 1931 Durban welcomed a distinguished Zionist emissary, the great *Mizrachi* leader Rabbi Meir Berlin.<sup>23</sup> His visit coincided with the creation of a Durban branch of the *Mizrachi* Party, whose first officers were Mr M.K. Rosenbach, Chairman; the Revs. Rubin and Menachemson and Messrs Shapiro, M. Fine and I. Friedman.<sup>24</sup> During his visit Rabbi Berlin addressed a mass meeting,<sup>25</sup> addressed the Ladies' Committee of the Jewish Club, and a Club luncheon<sup>26</sup> and visited the Hebrew Kindergarten.<sup>27</sup>

With unbounded enthusiasm local Jewry keenly awaited the visit to Durban of the former President of

<sup>21</sup>The General Zionists polled 19, the *Zeire Zion* polled 4, and the Zionist Revisionists polled 38. (*The Zionist Record*, May 29, 1931, p.3.)

<sup>22</sup>Revisionists only polled 9 votes as against 65 polled by the General Zionists, the 67 polled by Working Palestine and 23 of *Mizrachi*. (*Ibid.*, July 21, 1933, p.11.)

<sup>23</sup>*Hasholom*, IX No.4 (December, 1931), 5.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

the World Zionist Organisation, Dr Chaim Weizmann,<sup>28</sup> who together with his wife Dr Vera Weizmann and Dr Alexander Goldstein was brought to the Union to launch the 1932 *Keren Hayesod* Campaign.

Dr Weizmann and his party arrived in Durban on April 8th, and on the following evening a lavish banquet was held in the hall of the Jewish Club.<sup>29</sup> Much to the chagrin of the Club's Executive, some 30 people, including the principal guests, were taken ill after attending the banquet.<sup>30</sup> The Public Health Department and the Government Pathologist initiated an investigation into the cause of the complaint,<sup>31</sup> which was initially believed to be ptomaine poisoning,<sup>32</sup> but which was ultimately ascribed to bacterial contamination of parts of the foodstuffs.<sup>33</sup> Notwithstanding their indisposition Dr Weizmann and Dr Goldstein were able to address a crowded and enthusiastic mass meeting the following evening,<sup>34</sup> but by the following morning they were both indisposed. Mrs Weizmann was even more seriously affected and was confined to bed for a few

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.6 (February, 1932), 2-3., *Ibid.*, IX No.7 (March, 1932), 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.9 (May, 1932), 2.

<sup>30</sup> *The Natal Advertiser*, April 12, 1932, p.7.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, April 13, 1932, p.8.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, April 12, 1932, p.7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, April 13, 1932, p.8.

<sup>34</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 15, 1932, pp.4-5.



days.<sup>35</sup> In consequence of their unfortunate illness the Weizmanns and Dr Goldstein were forced to abandon their plans to visit Bloemfontein and Kimberley in connection with the campaign.<sup>36</sup> The campaign in Durban nevertheless proved to be an outstanding success. Despite the prevailing economic hardships the initial canvass yielded more than £4,000.<sup>37</sup>

Some two months later Madame Lily Frishman, the widow of David Frishman, one of the great modern Hebrew writers and poets, spent a few days in Durban. The purpose of her visit was to make the life and works of her late husband more widely known among the Jewish community and to obtain support for the publishing of his complete works. In the course of her tour through the Union and Rhodesia, Madame Frishman found the Jewish communities to be most favourably disposed to her cause, and she left the country having attained her object.<sup>38</sup>

In February 1933 the Jewish community of Durban directed its attention to the impending *Dunam Drive*, which was dedicated to completing the redemption of the South African tract at the Sharon.<sup>39</sup> The Drive was launched at a mass meeting at the Jewish Club on

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5

<sup>38</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 3, 1932, p.7.

<sup>39</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 10, 1933, p.7.

February 14, by Mr Joseph Baratz, one of Palestine's leading *chalutzim* and a founder of Kibbutz Degania.<sup>40</sup>

On his tour Mr Baratz was accompanied by Mr Harry Levin, a former South African, who was **the** organiser of the Jewish National Fund. Both in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, the visitors were given a rousing welcome by the Jewish residents who responded generously to their appeal.<sup>41</sup>

The visit to Durban of the President of the World Zionist Organisation, Dr Nahum **Sokolow**, in connection with the 1934 *Keren Hayesod* Campaign, evoked a response equal to that which his **first** visit, some eight years earlier, had generated.<sup>42</sup> Accompanied by his daughter, Dr Celina Sokolow and Mr **Leib** Jaffe, Dr Sokolow stayed in Durban from July 24th-29th, in which time he not only launched the campaign, but also addressed a ladies' meeting, met with the youth of the community<sup>43</sup> and was the guest of honour at a luncheon given by the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>44</sup> From Durban Dr Sokolow travelled with Rabbi and Mrs E.M. Levy and members of the Durban *Keren Hayesod* Committee, to Pietermaritzburg, where a handsome sum was raised at the conclusion of the meeting

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, February 17, 1933, p.17., February 24, 1933, p.14.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> See above p.104-105.

<sup>43</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 3, 1934, pp.9-10., *Hasholom*, XI No.12 (August, 1934), 9-11.

<sup>44</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 27, 1934, p.16.

addressed by Dr Sokolow.<sup>45</sup>

A successful campaign on behalf of the *Keren Kayemeth* (Jewish National Fund) was conducted throughout Southern Africa in 1935 by Dr Benzion Shein, of the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.<sup>46</sup> From the time of his arrival in Durban on August 7, until his departure on August 14, Dr Shein's time was taken up with meetings with the adult community, the youth movements, and a short excursion to Pietermaritzburg.<sup>47</sup> In the midst of a very busy schedule, Dr Shein also took time off to meet with the members of the Durban Literary Group, and to address them on "Modern Jewish Poetry."<sup>48</sup>

#### ORGANISATIONAL ZIONISM

The visits of Zionist personalities helped to maintain the community's interest in Zionist affairs and prompted a generous outpouring of monetary assistance. The task of keeping Zionist consciousness alive between these visits, however, devolved principally on the local Zionist bodies. Generally these local societies

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<sup>45</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 3, 1934, p.10.

<sup>46</sup> *The Natal Advertiser*, August 7, 1935, p.10

<sup>47</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 23, 1935, p.11.,  
*Hasholom*, XII No.12 (August, 1935), 5 and 10.

<sup>48</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 15, 1935, p.8.

received inadequate support, a situation which was attributed in part to abysmal ignorance of a large proportion of the community on the subject of Zionism.<sup>49</sup>

In the forefront of Zionist endeavour in Durban was the local Zionist Association, which in 1929 numbered 150 members.<sup>50</sup> With the creation of a women's society<sup>51</sup> the Association reverted to its original status as an all male body, and it worked in close co-operation with the Zionist women. Although the principal Zionist body in the town, the Association continued to be plagued by phases of inactivity and the problem of inadequate support.<sup>52</sup> Functions arranged by the Association were

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<sup>49</sup> *Hasholom*, XII No.12 (August, 1935), 2-3.

<sup>50</sup> *The South African Jewish Year Book, Directory of Jewish Organisations and Who's Who in South African Jewry 1929*, 5689-90. Editor Morris de Saxe, Associate Editor I.M. Goodman, Published by the South African Jewish Historical Society, P.O. Box 2711, Johannesburg (Johannesburg, 1929), p.289.

<sup>51</sup> *Hasholom*, XI No.2 (October, 1933), 23. See below p.247.

<sup>52</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 11, 1931, p.107., June 24, 1932, p.26., October 21, 1932, p.23., November 16, 1934, p.28.

few, though generally varied and successful,<sup>53</sup> and the Association tended to direct its attention principally to National Fund work<sup>54</sup> and the collection of *Shekels*.<sup>55</sup> Support for the Jewish National Fund was generally disappointing in Durban. Until the visit of Joseph Baratz in connection with the conclusion of the *Dunam* Drive, beginning in 1929, Durban fared poorly in reaching its quota of £1,000 per annum towards meeting the pledges made by South African Jewry. Although in 1930 it raised £1,295,<sup>56</sup> in the following two years it

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<sup>53</sup> They included a *Purim* social, (*Ibid.*, April 4, 1930, p.30.) Herzl Memorial Meeting, (*Ibid.*, September 4, 1931, p.28.) Herzl *Yahrtzeit* service, in conjunction with the Durban Hebrew Congregation, (*Ibid.*, July 29, 1932, p.24.) a lecture by Mr J. Bahr, a member of the South African Zionist Federation, (*Ibid.*, August 26, 1932, p.30.) a talk by Mr L. Braudo, the chairman of the South African Zionist Federation (*Ibid.*, December 16, 1932, p.10.) and a Bialik Memorial Evening, held in conjunction with the Culture Section of the Jewish Club (*Hasholom*, XI No.12 (August, 1934), 24.)

<sup>54</sup> Its major achievement on behalf of the Fund was the National Home Fete, held on May 6, 1930. (*Ibid.*, May 16, 1930, p.30.) See also *The Natal Mercury*, January 27, 1930, p.10., *Hasholom*, VII No.4 (February, 1930), 15., *Ibid.*, VII No.5 (March, 1930), 24., *Ibid.*, VII No.6 (April, 1930), 22., *The Zionist Record*, December 20, 1929, p.26., *Hasholom*, VII No.7 (May, 1930), 28., *Ibid.*, VII No.8 (June, 1930), 24. In 1932 a similar fete was held for the benefit of the National Fund and the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, (*The Zionist Record*, August 12, 1932, p.23.)

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, September 11, 1931, p.107., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 75.

<sup>56</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 9, 1931, p.18.

raised £219 10s 3d<sup>57</sup> and £333 15s 9d<sup>58</sup> respectively.

The sale of *Shekels* fluctuated considerably too, varying from year to year depending on the effectiveness of the *Shekel* Campaign.<sup>59</sup> The Association also represented the community at local Zionist Conferences,<sup>60</sup> and supervised the holding of elections among *Shekel* holders to choose delegates to the International Zionist Congresses.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, June 17, 1932, p.26.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, May 19, 1933, p.18.

<sup>59</sup> In 1930 331 *shekels* were sold, (*Ibid.*, June 24, 1932, p.27.) in 1931 330 *shekels* were sold, (*Ibid.*) in 1932 only 221 *shekels* were sold. (*Ibid.*) 356 were sold in 1933, (*Ibid.*, June 12, 1936, p.32.) 280 *shekels* were sold in 1934, (*Ibid.*) and 352 *shekels* were sold in 1935 (*Ibid.*)

<sup>60</sup> M. Stone and G. Tellem were the Durban Zionist Association delegates to the 13th South African Zionist Conference held in Cape Town in January 1931. (*Ibid.*, January 23, 1931, p.9.) J. Janower and H. Kallenbach represented the Association at the 14th South African Zionist Conference in Kimberley in May 1933 (*Ibid.*, June 2, 1933, p.12.) and A. Rubens and L. Ruben attended the 15th South African Zionist Conference in Bloemfontein in May-June 1935 as delegates from the Durban Zionist Association (*Ibid.*, June 6, 1935, p.6.)

<sup>61</sup> In the election held on May 17, 1931, to choose delegates to the 17th Zionist Congress, held in Basle in June 1931, the General Zionists won 19 votes, *Zeire Zion* won 4 votes, and the Zionist Revisionists 38 votes. (*Ibid.*, May 29, 1931, p.3.) Only 61 out of a total of 331 *shekel* holders voted. (*Ibid.*, June 24, 1932, p.27.) In the election of July 2 to choose delegates to the 18th Zionist Congress, which was held in Prague in August-September 1933, the General Zionists polled 65 votes, the Revisionists 9, Working Palestine 67, and *Mizrachi* 23. 164 Voters thus went to the polls (*Ibid.*, July 21, 1933, p.11.) out of a potential 345 *shekel* holders. (*Ibid.*, April 24, 1933, p.20.)

An offshoot of the Durban Zionist Association, the Hebrew Speaking Circle, *Agudath Sefateinu*, continued to enjoy considerable success during 1930, providing its members with a variety of interesting functions.<sup>62</sup> In the course of the year the Circle's membership, which had, since its inception, been made up primarily of older members of the community who had enjoyed a sound Hebrew education in their youth, was altered by the influx of a number of young Palestinians to Durban.<sup>63</sup> These former *chalutzim* entered into the work of the *Agudath Sefateinu* with a spirit of enthusiasm, considerably strengthening the Circle and the scope of its activities.<sup>64</sup> In view of its augmented numbers, the Circle's demise is all the more surprising, though possibly attributable to the departure of the Palestinian members, and little is heard of the *Agudath Sefateinu* after 1930, apart from a Memorial Meeting for Herzl, held together with the Durban Zionist Association in July 1931.<sup>65</sup>

A Hebrew Speaking Circle, conducted by Mr Klachko,

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<sup>62</sup>Including a debate on "The Reasons for the *Chalutzim*, having left Palestine," (*Ibid.*, February 7, 1930, p.25.) lectures on "Occultism" by Mr J. Blumenthal, (*Ibid.*, May 30, 1930, p.24.) A Herzl Memorial Meeting, (*Ibid.*, July 25, 1930, p.25.) an address by Mr J. Levitan, of the Johannesburg Hebrew Speaking Circle (*Ibid.*, August 22, 1930, p.24.) and a *Simchat Torah* celebration. (*Ibid.*, October 31, 1930, p.38.)

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, February 7, 1930, p.25., May 30, 1930, p.24., August 22, 1930, p.24.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, August 22, 1930, p.24.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, September 4, 1931, p.28.

the principal of the United *Talmud Torah*, was re-established in Durban in 1935 through the efforts of the Herzlia Groups. The first Herzlia Group in Durban was started during the *Dunam Drive* of February 1933, through the inspiration of Mr Harry Levin, one of the personalities who toured the country in the interests of the Drive. Made up of young adults, it was modelled on a similarly named group which had been formed in Johannesburg in 1932.<sup>66</sup> The group was formed "for the purpose of studying the history of Zionism and to serve as a training ground for future leaders of Zionism."<sup>67</sup> Towards that end, each member of the group presented a paper on a phase of Jewish history at one of the Herzlia evenings, which took place at member's homes twice a month.<sup>68</sup>

The success which the Herzlia Group met with in Durban prompted the formation of a Herzlia Group No.2, in September 1933,<sup>69</sup> and the practicality of beginning a Junior Herzlia, for people under 19 years of age, was also fully investigated,<sup>70</sup> but never acted upon. The enthusiasm generated by the members of the Herzlia Groups was infectious, prompting the creation of yet a third

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<sup>66</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.7 (March, 1933), 3

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.12 (August, 1933), 15.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, XI No.2 (October, 1933), 24.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.12 (August, 1933), 15.



Group under the guidance of Messrs D. Friedman and H.D. Freed, during 1934. Plans were also mooted for the establishment of a fourth Group as soon as sufficient numbers warranted such a step.<sup>71</sup> The progress of the Durban Herzlia Groups was watched with keen interest by the members of the adult Zionist bodies, who were encouraged that in Durban, where Zionist commitment had never been strong, more than 40 young people were intensely committed to a sphere of Zionist activity.<sup>72</sup>

The progress which was made by the Herzlia Groups did not, however, endure for very long, and from the end of 1934 their strength began to wane, one group in fact disbanding early in 1935.<sup>73</sup> This reduction in the momentum established by the groups was in no way the fault of the Group's members, whose enthusiasm remained unchanged. Rather, it would appear, that the original policy of strictly limiting the membership of each group was unsound. For, when members of a group were forced, through extraneous circumstances such as marriage, to leave a group, the work of preparing the regular papers every fortnight had to be borne by the remaining members of each group. As many of the group members were also extremely active in the different sections of the Jewish Club, it meant that they were not always able to prepare

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<sup>71</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 82.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 89.

the papers around which the Herzlia meetings were based. Whilst the Herzlia Groups do not appear to have survived beyond December 1935 their incalculating of Jewish consciousness and Jewish values, and their kindling of a spirit of enquiry amongst their members were regarded as adequate justification for their brief existence.<sup>74</sup>

Far more enduring than the Herzlia Groups was the Durban Women's Zionist League, which came into being as the result of a meeting convened by Mrs A. Lieberman, at the residence of Mrs Aaron Kaplan, on October 5th 1933. "The idea was to popularise Zionism, more particularly amongst the women of Durban, and to spread a more cultural concept of what Zionism requires of the Jewish woman."<sup>75</sup> Similar women's groups were already flourishing in other parts of the Union and the women Zionists of Durban were keen to bring the town into line with the rest of the country.

Although earlier attempts to form separate Zionist societies for women in Durban had ended in failure, the League met with considerable success and support from the time of its inception. This may, in no small measure, have been due to the decision taken by the ladies of the League's inaugural meeting, to affiliate with the Women's Zionist Council of South Africa and the South

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> "Durban Women's Zionist League" in *Durban Hebrew Congregation Fiftieth Anniversary 1884-1934, 5644-5694.* (Durban, 1934), p.24.

African Zionist Federation.<sup>76</sup> They thereby became part of a national body and were therefore better able to withstand the pressures which had brought about the demise of their predecessors. Of considerable importance too, were the world pressures on the Jewish people and the universal upsurge in anti-Semitism at this time, which no doubt also stimulated a greater interest in matters Zionist.

At their historic first meeting the League's founders elected the following office bearers:-  
 Mrs E.M. Levy, President; Mrs M. Freed, Vice-President; Mrs A. Kaplan, Hon. Treasurer; Mrs M. Duchon, Hon. Secretary; Mesdames J. Fisher, A. Goldberg, C. Israel, D. Kentridge, A. Lieberman, H. Moss-Morris, L. Shapiro and M. Wolpert, Committee.<sup>77</sup>

The League strove to achieve its aim of promoting Zionism through meetings and practical work, and to this end monthly meetings were arranged at which talks on Zionist and Jewish topics were presented. This pattern was established at its first meeting at which Mrs E.M. Levy presented a paper on "The Value of Zionism in the Home."<sup>78</sup> Thereafter members of the League, or distinguished visitors, addressed the ladies at their meetings, which were generally held at the Durban Jewish

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<sup>76</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 22, 1933, p.34.

<sup>77</sup> *Hasholom*, XI No.2 (October, 1933), 23.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

Club.<sup>79</sup> In its first year of existence the League laid the groundwork for its future practical activities by taking up National Fund work,<sup>80</sup> and by playing a leading role in arranging the Women's *Keren Hayesod* Campaign.<sup>81</sup>

Early in 1935, the League inaugurated Reading and Sewing Circles, which evoked much interest. Six circles were formed, each led by two members of the Committee and meetings were held at fortnightly intervals at different venues.<sup>82</sup> During these meetings papers and books of Jewish interest were read and discussed, whilst garments were made for the creches and kindergartens maintained in Palestine by the WIZO (Women's International Zionist

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<sup>79</sup> In the first year of its existence members of the League heard Mrs A. Lieberman speak on "Women's Work in Palestine," (*Ibid.*, XI No.3 (November, 1933), 23.) Mrs C.I. Israel read a paper on "Jewish Religion in the Home," which was illustrated by the singing of the Rev. Menachemson, (*Ibid.*, XI No.10 (June, 1934), 27.), Mrs Shapiro speak on her travels in Palestine, (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 81.) Mrs Galgut sing Hebrew songs (*Ibid.*) and Mrs L. Ruben read a paper prepared by Mrs Greenberg on Palestine (*The Zionist Record*, November 30, 1934, p.37.)

<sup>80</sup> The League raised money for the purchase of a grove of trees in its name in the Herzl Forest to mark Arbor Day. (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 81.) The money for this project was raised principally through the efforts of individual members of the League. (*The Zionist Record*, October 26, 1934, p.29., November 30, 1934, p.37.)

<sup>81</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 81.

<sup>82</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 5, 1935, p.35.

Organisation),<sup>83</sup> with which the League was affiliated.

The enthusiasm which heralded the League's inception, and which was reflected in its rapid growth within its first year to more than 127,<sup>84</sup> testified to the need which the League filled in the life of Jewish women of the town. Its subsequent development, both in terms of numbers and activities, was a reflection of the League's growing popularity and importance within the community.

The Durban Young Israel Society had, by 1930, notwithstanding times of meagre support and scant enthusiasm, grown into a very active body, which numbered 100 members,<sup>85</sup> from 13 to 18 years of age.<sup>86</sup> For the benefit of its members it provided a full programme of

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<sup>83</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 87 and 89.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 81.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.1 (September, 1930), 51.

<sup>86</sup> *Hasholom* XVIII No.8 (May, 1931, Club Opening Number), 32., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 65.

cultural<sup>87</sup> and social activities<sup>88</sup> and drew them into

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87 Including debates, (*Hasholom*, VII No.5 (March, 1930), 24., *Ibid.*, VIII No.2 (October, 1930), 23., *Ibid.*, VIII No.7 (April, 1931), 21., *Ibid.*, X No.2 (October, 1932), 18., *Ibid.*, X No.4 (December, 1932), 23., *Ibid.*, XI No.10 (June, 1934), 27., *Ibid.*, XII No.10 (June, 1935), 30, *Ibid.*, XII No.11 (July, 1935), 22.) lectures, (*Ibid.*, VII No.9 (July, 1930), 28., *Ibid.*, VIII No.4 (December, 1930), 24., *Ibid.*, VIII No.6 (March, 1931), 23., *Ibid.*, IX No.3 (November, 1931), 27., *Ibid.*, IX No.4 (December, 1931), 23., *Ibid.*, IX No.9 (May, 1932), 23., *Ibid.*, X No.2 (October, 1932), 18., *Ibid.*, X No.3 (November, 1932), 19., *Ibid.*, X No.7 (March, 1933), 21., *Ibid.*, X No.8 (April, 1933), 17., *Ibid.*, X No.10 (20th June, 1933), 24., *Ibid.*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 27., *Ibid.*, XI No.7 (March, 1934), 27., *Ibid.*, XI No.10 (June, 1934), 27., *Ibid.*, XII No.7 (March, 1935), 25., *Ibid.*, XIII No.2 (October, 1935), 22., *Ibid.*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 22-23.), a mock trial, (*Ibid.*, VIII No.6 (March, 1931), 23.) career evening (*Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, VIII No.9 (June, 1931), 23.) and play readings. (*Ibid.*, VIII No.4 (December, 1930), 24., *Ibid.*, IX No.5 (January, 1932), 23., *Ibid.*, X No.7 (March, 1933), 21., *Ibid.*, X No.10 (20th June, 1933), 24., *Ibid.*, XI No.9 (May, 1934), 26., *Ibid.*, XII No.10 (June, 1935), 30.) and book teas (*Ibid.*, VIII No.2 (October, 1930), 23-24., *Ibid.*, VIII No.6 (March, 1931), 13., *Ibid.*, VIII No.2 (October, 1932), 18.)

88 Including a gramophone recital, (*Ibid.*, VII No.5 (March, 1930), 24.) film evenings, (*Ibid.*, VIII No.2 (October, 1930), 24., *Ibid.*, IX No.3 (November, 1931), 27., *Ibid.*, X No.6 (February, 1933), 23., *Ibid.*, X No.7 (March, 1933), 21., *Ibid.*, XII No.6 (February, 1935), 26.) parties (*Ibid.*, VIII No.7 (April, 1931), 21., *Ibid.*, VIII No.9 (June, 1931), 23., *Ibid.*, IX No.12 (August, 1932), 17.) and dances (*Ibid.*, VIII No.7 (April, 1931), 21., *Ibid.*, IX No.12 (August, 1932), 17., *Ibid.*, XI No.12 (August, 1934), 27., *Ibid.*, XII No.11 (July, 1935), 22.) The Society also had an active Tennis Section, which was formed early in 1930 (*Ibid.*, VII No.7 (May, 1930), 26.)

various avenues of communal involvement,<sup>89</sup> religious affairs<sup>90</sup> and Zionist endeavour.<sup>91</sup> Yet for all its activity, and despite the success that it enjoyed, it

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<sup>89</sup>Including assisting at the July Ball, held on behalf of the combined Jewish charities, (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VIII No.1 (September, 1930), 51., *Ibid.*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 44.) and helping with a collection for the Jewish Benevolent Society (*Hasholom*, XII No.8 (April, 1935), 27.) The Society also held functions to help raise funds for the Durban United *Talmud Torah*. (*Ibid.*, VII No.10 (August, 1930), 28., *Ibid.*, VIII No.2 (October, 1930), 24., *Ibid.*, X No.4 (December, 1932), 23., *Ibid.*, XI No.8 (April, 1934), 27.).

<sup>90</sup>The members participated in two *Ongei Shabbat*, (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VIII No.1 (September, 1930), 51., *Hasholom*, X No.3 (November, 1932), 19.) held a concert to mark the *Purim* holiday, (*Ibid.*, VIII No.7 (April, 1931), 21.) and a *Pesach* function, (*Ibid.*, XI No.8 (April, 1934), 27.) conducted High Holiday Services for the youth. (*Ibid.*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 22-23.) and celebrated *Sukkot* in the Synagogue's *Sukkah*. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>91</sup>The Society assisted at the National Fund Fete, in May 1930., (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VII No.1 (September, 1930), 51.) aided National Fund collections (*Hasholom*, XII No.8 (April, 1935), 27.) and *shekel* drives, (*Ibid.*) contributed towards the Palestine University Bursary Scheme, (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1930), 51.) and the 1930 and 1934 *Keren Hayesod* Campaigns (*Hasholom*, XVII No.7 (May, 1930), 26., *Ibid.*, XII No.8 (April, 1935), 27.) and the 1935 J.N.F. campaign (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 90. The Society was also represented at the biennial South African Zionist Conferences. In 1931 its delegate was Miss P. Greenstein. (*The Zionist Record*, January 23, 1931, p.9.) In 1933 it was represented by Miss M. Freed (*Ibid.*, (June 2, 1933, p.12.) and in 1935 Mr J. Sklarchik represented the Society. (*Ibid.*, June 6, 1935, p.6). In 1935 the Society was also represented at the South African Zionist Youth Conference. (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 89.)

was hampered by a lack of interest on the part of a section of the youth eligible for membership, and by inadequate support from parents.<sup>92</sup> For all this, the Society continued to function with varying degrees of success. During the presidency of Miss M. Freed the Society in 1930, formed a Jewish Study Circle to augment its educational programme.<sup>93</sup> Under Mr M. Goldberg, who became President in November 1930,<sup>94</sup> the Society began publishing its own magazine,<sup>95</sup> and was also responsible for setting up a branch of Young Israel in Vryheid in Northern Natal.<sup>96</sup> Troubled by difficulties in seeking to maintain the interest of its members,<sup>97</sup> the Society, which had always enjoyed the support and encouragement of the Durban Jewish Circle, found itself affected by the opening of the Jewish Club, in May 1932. Many of the Society's members were over 18 years of age, and they enrolled as junior members of the Club, and generally showed little interest thereafter in the affairs of the Young Israel Movement.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Hasholom*, VIII No.7 (April, 1931), 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, VII No.5 (March, 1930), 26., *Ibid.*, IX No.10 (June, 1932), 22.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.3 (November, 1930), 25 and 28.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.7 (April, 1931), 21.

<sup>96</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 11, 1931, p.108.

<sup>97</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.9 (May, 1932), 23.

<sup>98</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 65.



In November 1932, in an effort to reawaken the enthusiasm of its members, the committee divided the Society into four houses, namely, Balfour, Nordau, Herzl and Wolffsohn, each with its captain and vice-captain. All future functions were planned as inter-house competitions.<sup>99</sup> This step failed to revive interest in the Society,<sup>100</sup> which had only 100, of the 260 eligible youths enrolled in its ranks.<sup>101</sup> To remedy this state of affairs a membership drive was launched and 34 new members enlisted.<sup>102</sup> A major stumbling block in the effective running of the Society was the difference in age between members, and in an attempt to overcome this problem the committee decided to hold alternate functions for junior and senior members.<sup>103</sup> This failed to solve the problem caused by the diversity of ages, for junior members patronised all functions and seniors were attracted to none.<sup>104</sup> The apathy of the senior body in turn affected the Committee, and was ultimately felt throughout the Movement.

In the midst of all its difficulties the Society observed the tenth anniversary of its founding on

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<sup>99</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.4 (December, 1932), 23.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.5 (January, 1933), 22.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.6 (February, 1933), 23.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.7 (March, 1933), 21.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.8 (April, 1933), 17.

<sup>104</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XI No.1 (September, 1933), 71.

June 24, 1933, with a suitably appropriate programme of events which marked Young Israel week in Durban.<sup>105</sup> Threatened with imminent closure,<sup>106</sup> the Committee of the Society took their situation in hand and worked to rectify matters. Several changes were initiated, beginning with a reduction in subscriptions, to 6d for as long as functions were held twice monthly instead of weekly. Membership was also revived<sup>107</sup> and the minimum age of members was raised to fifteen.<sup>108</sup>

1934 Saw the Young Israel Society take on a new lease of life, under the direction of Miss M. Freed and later Mr Goldberg, who were supported by enthusiastic committee members and workers.<sup>109</sup> In the following year even greater progress and achievement was recorded,<sup>110</sup> possibly, in part, indirectly due to the increased pressure being brought to bare on Jewish communities in Europe, and to a lesser extent within the Union as well. With the upsurge in interest in the Society, a Sunday Luncheon Club, modelled on the Jewish Club luncheons, was introduced,<sup>111</sup> a Zionist study circle and Hebrew

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<sup>105</sup>*Hasholom*, X No.10 (20th June, 1933), 24.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, XI No.8 (April, 1934), 26.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, XI No.2 (October, 1933), 23.

<sup>108</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 82.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 89.

<sup>111</sup>*Hasholom*, XII No.9 (May, 1935), 27.

singing classes were inaugurated<sup>112</sup> and the nucleus of a Zionist library was formed.<sup>113</sup>

Fittingly, in a year characterised by growth and expansion, the Durban Young Israel Society celebrated the thirteenth anniversary of its establishment with a week of *Barmitzvah* celebrations. The programme of activities in connection with this event included a celebratory dinner, attended by Mr Kirschner, the Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation; Mr A. Abrahamson, the Secretary-Organiser of the South African Zionist Youth Council, and representatives of all local Jewish communal institutions. Other activities included a special Youth Sabbath at the St Andrew's Street Synagogue, an "At Home" given to Mr Abrahamson, a tennis tournament, a Herzl-Bialik Memorial evening, a *Barmitzvah* Novelty Ball, given in conjunction with the Club, and a concert.<sup>114</sup> The celebrations aroused enormous interest within the community, in the work of the Young Israel Society, and inspired the members of the Society to strive with increased diligence and commitment for the aims and ideals espoused by their Movement.

Unlike the Young Israel Society, the Natal Young Israel Central Executive Council was unable to weather the difficult times which the organisation experienced

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<sup>112</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 89.

<sup>113</sup> *Hasholom*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 22.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.12 (August, 1935), 26-27.

in Durban, in 1932, and 1933, and in March 1933 it was superceded by the Natal Zionist Youth Executive.<sup>115</sup> The new body aimed to take over the work of co-ordinating and centralising the activities of the individual youth societies in the Province Following discussions with Mr I. Dunsky, the Organising Secretary of the South African Zionist Youth Council, a special revival campaign was held in Natal. Steps were taken by the Executive to institute a Zionist Youth Society in Durban to cater for all those over the age of eighteen years, as the Durban Young Israel Society tended to cater for younger people.<sup>116</sup> The new Society was intended to enable members within its ranks to carry out a definite portion of the Zionist activities of the town.<sup>117</sup> The enthusiasm which heralded its founding testified to the communal recognition of the need for such a body, but sadly its early history was clouded by relative inactivity. The Society more or less continued to be sustained by its most committed members and in 1935 undertook, "to continue to make every effort to attract the Durban youth."<sup>118</sup>

In July 1933, whilst support for the existing Zionist youth society in Durban was at a low ebb, steps were

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<sup>115</sup>*The Zionist Record*, April 7, 1933, p.12.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, May 19, 1933, p.21.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, April 7, 1933, p.12.

<sup>118</sup>*Hasholom*, XV No.4 (December, 1935), 31.

taken to launch the *Habonim* movement in Natal.<sup>119</sup> The first *Habonim* group in South Africa, had been started two years earlier in Johannesburg by Mr Norman Lourie, and had rapidly spread throughout the Union.<sup>120</sup> The attempt to form a *Habonim* group in Durban was met with considerable opposition from people who, regarded it, notwithstanding assurances to the contrary, as an encroachment on the domain of the Young Israel Society.<sup>121</sup>

The opposition of *Habonim's* critics was, however, largely unfounded for whilst the Young Israel Society catered for those above 15 years of age, *Habonim's* members were younger than 16 and thus inelligible, by virtue of their age, from entering the ranks of the Young Israel Society. The first *Habonim Gedud*, with Moey Goldberg at the helm, was nevertheless established.<sup>122</sup> Not entirely unlike the Boy Scout Movement, in terms of structure and activities, *Habonim* also sought to develop an increased interest in the Jewish National Home and in things Jewish. Parental support for the Movement was initially tardy<sup>123</sup> but the

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<sup>119</sup> Moey Goldberg, "Development and Work of the Friends of *Habonim*," in *Habonim Twenty Fifth Anniversary, 1933-1958* (Durban, 1958), p.12.

<sup>120</sup> Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967* (Cape Town, 1980), p.31.

<sup>121</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.2 (October, 1936), 11.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.3 (November, 1933), 13.

meetings of the *Habonim*, at the Jewish Club, gradually attracted increased numbers of Jewish boys to its ranks. At the same time plans were formulated for the creation of a *Habonot Gedud* for girls. This *gedud*, named *Beth Alpha*, and first led by Muriel Freed, was started in November, 1933 with a membership of 35 girls.<sup>124</sup> The *Habonim* and *Habonot* groups were not long in taking firm root in the town, although their numbers were initially somewhat small.<sup>125</sup> Through the fete that they gave in aid of the Palestine Kindergarten for German Refugees,<sup>126</sup> the publicity caused by the visit to their meetings of the Zionist leader Nahum Sokolow,<sup>127</sup> their assistance at Jewish Club functions,<sup>128</sup> their success in the Decorated Car Competition in connection with King George V's Silver Jubilee<sup>129</sup> and their assistance at the communal picnic,<sup>130</sup> they came to be known to a wide section of the Jewish community.

By mid-1935 the organisation numbered 110 children, distributed between 3 *Habonim gedudim* and two *gedudim* of

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<sup>124</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 81.

<sup>125</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 5, 1935, p.35.

<sup>126</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 81.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>128</sup> *Hasholom*, XII No.7 (April, 1935), 19.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.9 (May, 1935), 21.

<sup>130</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 90.

*Habonot*,<sup>131</sup> with David Melmed as its first *Bakoach*.<sup>132</sup>

To help the Movement overcome the problems which inevitably arose as it was developing, a Lay Committee, consisting of representatives of various communal organisations, together with the *Bakoach* and senior officers, was formed under the chairmanship of Mr Jack Rubin.<sup>133</sup> Through the Lay Committee, *Habonim* was brought to the notice of the town's Jewish residents. The Committee also assumed control of the cultural and financial aspects of the Movement and gave general direction to the Movement in Natal.<sup>134</sup>

*Habonim* saw itself principally as a cultural movement, and with Zionism as its *raison d'être* it placed great emphasis on Jewish history and Palestine in its programme, which also included Hebrew music, songs, games, general knowledge, discipline and character building.<sup>135</sup>

Relations between *Habonim* and the Young Israel Society were characterised by a spirit of cordiality and co-operation reflected in *Habonim's* attendance at a Young Israel play reading,<sup>136</sup> the presence of members of Young

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.2 (October, 1936), 11.

<sup>133</sup> Moey Goldberg, "Development and Work of the Friends of *Habonim*," p.12.

<sup>134</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 90.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Hasholom*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 26-27.

Israel at the song lessons<sup>137</sup> and initiation ceremony of *Habonim*,<sup>138</sup> and the participation by members of the *Habonim* in the concert given to mark the thirteenth anniversary of the establishment of the Young Israel Society in Durban, in July 1935.<sup>139</sup>

Associated with the Zionist life of the town, by virtue of their association with Palestine and with things Jewish, were two very different organisations. The first was a branch of the *Maccabi* movement and the second a branch of the Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The *Maccabi* Club in Durban was formed early in 1930, largely through the efforts of Mr Z. Labock, ostensibly "to promote physical culture and sport amongst the Jewish youth of Durban."<sup>140</sup> The new club was a branch of the *Maccabi* World Organisation, which had been created at the Twelfth Zionist Congress in Karlsbad in 1921.<sup>141</sup> Initially the Durban *Maccabi* met every Sunday morning on the beach and on Wednesday evenings its members practised exercises on the grounds adjoining the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.7 (March, 1934), 27.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.11 (July, 1934), 30-31.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.12 (August, 1935), 26-27.

<sup>140</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 4, 1930, p.30.

<sup>141</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.485.

<sup>142</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 4, 1930, p.30.



In November 1934 Dr Alexander Rosenfeld, a special delegate to South Africa of the *Maccabi* World Union, visited Durban,<sup>143</sup> in the course of a nationwide tour,<sup>144</sup> to arrange for a South African team to participate in the second *Maccabiah* (World Jewish Olympic Games) in 1935, the Union having not been represented at the first Games, in 1932. Dr Rosenfeld's visit served to stimulate interest in the local *Maccabi*, which had, after a flurry of publicity surrounding its inception, faded into obscurity. In the course of the five days that he spent in the town, Dr Rosenfeld, organised a committee of young people to retain the interest of the local Jewish community in the *Maccabi* movement.

Through its chairman, Mr I. Smith, this committee arranged for Jewish sportsmen from Durban to participate in the South African trials for the *Maccabiah*, which were held in Johannesburg during December 1934 and January 1935.<sup>145</sup> Of the seven Natal competitors who participated in the athletic events, Selby won the mile event, Isaacs the 440 yards final, Morris Smith came second in the 220 yards final and Dave Panovka was a finalist in the wrestling event.<sup>146</sup> The selectors of the Athletic Team were, however, forced, through

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<sup>143</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, November 13, 1934, p.6.

<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*, August 10, 1934, p.20.

<sup>145</sup>*Hasholom*, XII No.4 (December, 1934), 17.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*, XII No.6 (February, 1935), 4.

insufficient finance, to exclude Morris Smith from the team chosen to go to Tel Aviv. When the Southern Districts Amateur Athletic and Cycling Association of Natal learnt of this fact, it inaugurated a fund for the purpose of providing a place for Smith in the team that was sent to Palestine, and heading the list was a donation of £5 5s from the Durban Athletic Club.<sup>147</sup>

The faith that Smith's fellow athletes had shown in him was fully justified, for at the Games he won the 110 metre sprint,<sup>148</sup> bringing great honour to Durban and its small *Maccabi* committee.

During 1935 the Friends in Natal of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was formed to foster an interest in the University. Prof. P. Stein was elected chairman of the local committee and Miss E. Smo acted as Secretary. In the first year of its existence the organisation directed its efforts to fund raising on behalf of the University, which met with considerable success.<sup>149</sup>

In contrast to the post war decade the period from 1930-1935 reflected an upsurge in local Zionist activity which, whilst not necessarily of dramatic proportions, nevertheless indicated a heightened sense of interest on the part of the Jewish community in the Jewish National

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, XII No.7 (March, 1935), 17.

<sup>148</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 24, 1935, p.9.

<sup>149</sup> *Hasholom*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 11.

Movement. Whether prompted by circumstances in Palestine, or by a growth in Zionist consciousness, Durban Jewry witnessed a proliferation of Zionist groups in the town. For the first time in the history of the community, Jews, irrespective of age or sex, could join a Zionist group, and in so doing were able to identify with the World Zionist Organisation and its dream of establishing a Jewish Homeland.

## CHAPTER XIV

THE EMERGENCE OF THE  
COUNCIL OF NATAL JEWRY : 1930 - 1939

From the time of its inception the Durban Jewish Circle had concerned itself not only with matters affecting its members, but rather with issues which concerned the entire community, of which it was such an important part. It participated in almost every branch of communal activity and came in time to be widely regarded as the unofficial spokesman for Durban Jewry.<sup>1</sup> An affiliate of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies from 1923, the Jewish Circle representatives at the various Conferences of the Board had put forward resolutions on behalf of virtually all the Durban Jewish Community. At the 1927 Conference, a resolution proposed by the Circle which called for the setting up of a Statistical Bureau, led to the formation of the Jewish Historical Society and ultimately to the creation of the Statistical Committee and Public Relations Committee of the Board and its constituents.<sup>2</sup>

Within the Circle, however, there was a growing

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<sup>1</sup>See above pp.55-56.

<sup>2</sup>*Hashalom*, [XLII No.3] (November, 1963), 11.

realisation of the need for a Central Committee officially representing all sections of the Jews of Durban, which would be entitled to express the collective opinion of the community. In 1926, through the columns of the *Hasholom*, the Circle began to agitate for such a Council.<sup>3</sup> This call became more urgent in the wake of the unrest in Palestine in 1929, and the *Quota Bill* of 1930, which led to a growing awareness of the need for Jewry to organise itself to successfully withstand the pressures that it was being forced to meet.<sup>4</sup> Conscious of the setback to the community resulting from the split in the Hebrew Congregation, and aware through the creation of a United *Talmud Torah* and the degree of co-operation between representatives of societies who served on local *Keren Hayesod* Committees, of the advantages to be accrued from greater communal unity,<sup>5</sup> the call was made in 1930, through the *Hasholom* for a Central Council, which would act as a Branch Committee of the Jewish Board of Deputies.<sup>6</sup> The call of the Durban Jewish Circle met with favourable comment, for the creation of Branch Committees was seen as an effective way of strengthening the Board of Deputies, whose contact with Constituent Bodies outside Johannesburg

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<sup>3</sup> *Hasholom*, IV No.1 (June 15th, 1926), 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.9 (July, 1930), 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.7 (May, 1930), 1., *Ibid.*, VII No.9 (July, 1930), 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.7 (May, 1930), 1-2.

was limited to regular receipt of reports, and an annual meeting.<sup>7</sup> Durban, however, was advised that instead of a Branch Committee of the Board, it should strive to create a Communal Council composed of delegates from local Jewish institutions which would deal with local problems, and would serve as a link with the Board of Deputies. At the same time Durban was urged to set up the first Communal Council, which it was hoped, would serve as a model for other communities in the Union,<sup>8</sup> and Durban's response was enthusiastic and affirmative.

On November 18, 1930, at the instance of the Durban Jewish Circle, representatives of all local Jewish institutions attended the meeting, which took place under the chairmanship of Mr Max Wolpert, to inaugurate the Durban Jewish Communal Council.<sup>9</sup> At this meeting Mr Wolpert outlined the proposed scheme to the representatives of the two Hebrew Congregations, the Hebrew Order of David, the Durban Zionist Association, the *Chevra Kadisha*, the Jewish Benevolent Society, the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, the Durban Young Israel Society, the Durban Jewish Institute and the Durban Jewish Circle. In the course of his address the

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.9 (July, 1930), 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 and 7.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Durban Jewish Communal Council, Held at the offices of Messrs Henochsberg & Wolpert, Winston's Chambers, 376 West Street, Durban, on Tuesday, 18th November, 1936 at 8.00 pm., pp.1-2.

Chairman indicated that it was felt that the time had come when an Institution, fully representative of Durban Jewry, should be formed, and that the head of the Institution should be able to speak on behalf of Durban Jewry. This proposal met with unanimous approval, all the Institutions present agreeing to join and to be represented by their President and one other member. It was also agreed that all Natal Jewish Members of Parliament, the Senate, Provincial Council and Town Council would be invited to become ex-officio members of the organisation with full voting powers. The Rabbi and Ministers of the Congregations were also granted ex-officio membership.<sup>10</sup>

As the community grew, the Council came to be constituted of an inner Executive, consisting of Past Presidents and the Senior Officers, an Executive Committee, consisting of the President or chairman of every affiliated organisation, plus ten elected members and ten co-opted, and a Council, consisting of all the above co-opted members and representatives of the affiliated bodies. Their number depending on the membership of the affiliate.<sup>11</sup>

The first meeting of the Communal Council was held on December 18, 1930, with Mr Cecil Lyons in the Chair. At that meeting Mr C.P. Robinson M.P. was elected

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<sup>10</sup> *Hashalom*, [XLII No.3] (November, 1963), 11 and 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

President; Mr H. Moss-Morris, Vice-President; and Mr E.S. Henochsberg, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer. Together with the Hon. Officers, Messrs C. Lyons, S. Moshal, M. Wolpert and L.M. Braham were elected members of the first Executive Committee of the Council.<sup>12</sup> The Executive Committee was instructed to prepare a draft constitution which was ultimately adopted by the full Council in July 1931.

The objects of the Council, as outlined in its constitution were;

- a) To watch and take action in such manner as it may think proper with reference to all matters affecting the welfare of Durban Jewry.
- b) To make observation of all proceedings relative to municipal, provincial or other enactments and use such means as it may deem requisite in order that no information of the rights, customs, and privileges of the Jewish community may ensue therefrom.
- c) To co-operate with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in any matter affecting Jewry as may from time to time be considered advisable.

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<sup>12</sup>Hasholom, VIII No.5 (February, 1931), 3.



- d) Generally to do all such things as may in their opinion be for the welfare and/or benefit of the Jewish community in Durban.<sup>13</sup>

From the time of its inception the Durban Jewish Communal Council worked in close co-operation and total harmony with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. One of the first matters that was in fact brought up for consideration by the Communal Council, was the scheme put forward by the Board of Deputies for the creation of an Endowment Fund, the income therefrom to be utilised to carry on Jewish public work undertaken by the Board. At that time the Board had to depend entirely on subscriptions of institutions that were voluntarily affiliated and whose total subscriptions did not in fact bring in sufficient for urgent everyday needs. As a consequence the Board was obliged to restrict its activities within too narrow a sphere and when emergencies arose it found that it could not fully protect Jewish interests.<sup>14</sup>

The promoters of the Endowment Fund sought to create a fund of £30,000 by securing 100 Founders who would each donate a minimum of £30. Durban, through the Communal Council, committed itself to further this campaign to the

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<sup>13</sup>Cited in *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 57.

<sup>14</sup>*Hasholom*, VIII No.5 (February, 1931), 3.

fullest extent.<sup>15</sup> On two occasions during 1931, Mr Harry Carter visited Durban to discuss the Fund with leaders of the community and members of the Council. In December 1931 Mr I.M. Goodman also visited Durban in the interests of the Fund, addressing a luncheon meeting at the Jewish Club and a meeting of the Communal Council during his stay in the town.<sup>16</sup> The F.C. Hollander Lodge No.XI of the Hebrew Order of David was one of the first organisations in Natal to join the Fund as a Founder,<sup>17</sup> and a number of individual contributors in Durban donated varying sums to the Fund.<sup>18</sup>

In November 1933 a special committee was constituted under Mr S. Moshal to raise Natal's contribution to the Fund,<sup>19</sup> and by 1935 the name of the Durban Jewish Club had been added to the Fund's Founder's Roll.<sup>20</sup> When, in 1938, it devolved upon Durban Jewry to raise its contribution for the Special Fund for the running of the

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.2 (October, 1931), 2.

<sup>16</sup> The South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Report of the Executive Committee for the Period December 1929, to November 30th, 1931. To be submitted to the Ninth Congress, Bloemfontein, January 3rd and 4th, 1932, pp.30-31.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.33-34.

<sup>19</sup> *Hasholom*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 11.

<sup>20</sup> The South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Report of the Executive Committee, for the period July 1st, 1933 to April 30th, 1935. To be submitted to the Eleventh Congress at Johannesburg, May 19th and 10th, 1935, p.24.

Board of Deputies, Mr Moshal again took the matter in hand and again met with an extremely generous response.<sup>21</sup>

The Communal Council's contact with the Jewish Board of Deputies, was strengthened by the attendance of Council delegates at the Board's Biennial Congresses,<sup>22</sup> and at other meetings of the Board.<sup>23</sup> At the Board's Ninth Biennial Congress the Constitution was amended to allow for the appointment of vice-presidents, one from each of the Provinces. As President of the Communal Council Mr H. Moss-Morris thereby became the first

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<sup>21</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.8 (April, 1938), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>22</sup> At the Ninth Congress, held in Bloemfontein in January 1932, Mrs S.J. Kaplan, representing the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild, and Mr A.K. Nyman, representing the Durban Jewish Club, were two of the Durban delegates. (*Ibid.*, IX No.3 November, 1931), 15.) Among the delegates from Durban to the Tenth Congress, held in August 1933 in Durban, were Mr and Mrs H. Moss-Morris (*Ibid.*, X No.12 (August, 1933), 3 and 5.) The Durban delegation to the Eleventh Congress, held in Johannesburg in May 1935, included Mr H. Moss-Morris, (*The Zionist Record*, May 24, 1935, p.5.) At the Twelfth Congress, held in Bleomfontein in 1937, Messrs H. Moss-Morris, S. Moshal, E.S. Henochsberg and M. Freed represented the Council of Natal Jewry: Rabbi Freedman represented the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Mr I. Geshen represented the Durban Jewish Benevolent Society and Mr S. Hackner represented the F.C. Hollander Lodge No.Xi H.O.D. (*Hasholom*, XIV No.10 (June, 1937), 26., *Rosh Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 87.)

<sup>23</sup> See *Hasholom*, XI No.9 (May, 1934), 21., *Ibid.*, XI No.10 (June, 1934), 4 and 12., *Ibid.*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), CNJ Supplement. *Ibid.*, XV No.8 (April, 1938), CNJ Supplement.

incumbent of the post of Vice-President of the Board for Natal,<sup>24</sup> retaining this office until the Thirteenth Congress in 1940.<sup>25</sup>

In 1933 the Communal Council hosted the Tenth Congress of the Board, which was held at the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>26</sup> At the Congress, the Board's Constitution was amplified to provide for the establishment of Provincial Committees. Under the new Constitution the Durban Jewish Communal Council was designated as the Natal Committee of the Board.<sup>27</sup> Resulting from this development and the fact that during 1933 increased anti-Jewish propaganda had led to closer contact between the Council and Jewry in other parts of Natal, it was felt that the name of the Council should be changed to indicate this wider scope. At a meeting in November 1933 the Executive Committee decided to recommend to the Council that the name be changed to the Council of Natal Jewry, which came to be more widely known as the CNJ. This was agreed to at a meeting held at the Jewish Club on December 14, 1933 and invitations were extended to Vryheid and Pietermaritzburg to send representatives to future Council meetings. On 18th January, 1934, the first meeting of the new Council took place, attended by

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<sup>24</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 11, 1933, p.6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, May 24, 1935, p.6., June 4, 1937, p.11., June 7, 1940, p.10.

<sup>26</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.12 (August, 1933), 3, 5, and 20.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 11.

Mr J. Cohn, (Melmoth), Mr I. Feinberg (Pietermaritzburg) and Mr A. Levine (Vryheid).<sup>28</sup>

The formative years of the Communal Council were marked by growing hardship for German Jewry and by an upsurge of anti-Semitism in South Africa. Organised Jewry in Durban tackled both of these problems through its Communal Council, which worked closely with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in determining a course of policy. On behalf of the Jews of Durban the Communal Council lodged its protest against Nazi action which was aimed at Jewish life and property in Germany.<sup>29</sup> It also organised a mass meeting in regard to the condition of German Jewry,<sup>30</sup> convened a meeting for the launching of a Fund for the Jews of Germany,<sup>31</sup> and gave its blessing to other fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Reich's Jewish population.<sup>32</sup>

As immigration to South Africa rose in consequence of events in Germany, the Council of Natal Jewry was approached by the Board to offer all possible assistance to German immigrants.<sup>33</sup> In time a special sub-committee was set up by the Council to help and advise German

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<sup>28</sup> *Hashalom*, [XLII No.3] (November, 1963), 15.

<sup>29</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.8 (April, 1933), 26.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.10 (20th June, 1933), 3.

<sup>31</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 21, 1933, p.7.

<sup>32</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 63.

<sup>33</sup> *Hasholom*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 11.

immigrants in Durban.<sup>34</sup> The Durban Jewish Ladies Guild, which was represented on the sub-committee,<sup>35</sup> afforded the German immigrants all possible help, guiding them through immigration control and securing accommodation, food and jobs for those who chose to remain in the city.<sup>36</sup> The contribution of the Durban Jewish Benevolent Society to the relief of the German immigrants lay principally in providing the sub-committee with funds so as to enable it to assist many of those in transit.<sup>37</sup> The extent of the work carried out by the German Refugee Sub-Committee is, in fact, reflected in an analysis of its expenditure for the period from July 1936 to January, 1937. During these six months the sub-committee spent over £300, principally on boarding expenses, rail fares and the granting of loans; the funds for this work being derived from donations from the Jewish Benevolent Society, the repayment of loans and a grant from the South African Fund for German Jewry in Johannesburg.<sup>38</sup> When the Kenyan Government unexpectedly changed its immigration

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>35</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 93.

<sup>36</sup> *Durban Jewish Women's Guild Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure 1953*, (Durban, 1953), p.18.

<sup>37</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 65.

<sup>38</sup> South African Fund For German Jewry. Analysis of Expenditure for Period 1 st July, 1936/14th January, 1937. In the Archives of the Council of Natal Jewry.

regulations, by raising the monetary qualification necessary for admission, and thereby preventing numerous German Jews from entering the country, the Council of Natal Jewry also extended all necessary financial assistance to those German emigrants and thereby enabled them to still qualify for admission to Kenya.<sup>39</sup>

In 1933, as the problem of anti-Semitism became increasingly more serious in South Africa, the Council of Natal Jewry, through the Board of Deputies, made representations to the Government which gave South African Jewry assurances of its safety.<sup>40</sup> The Board, supported by the Council, pressed, however, for legislation to be introduced in Parliament to prohibit the maligning of sections of the population.<sup>41</sup> Among the initial steps taken by Durban Jewry, through the Council, to counter anti-Semitism, were the convening of a meeting between Rabbi Levy and ministers of other faiths, the arrangement of visits by prominent members of the Council to areas in Natal worst affected by Greysheet agitation and the organisation of meetings with prominent people in these areas.<sup>42</sup> Such tours through Natal were subsequently

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<sup>39</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.9 (May, 1939), 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 11.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.7 (March, 1935), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

repeated by the Council and were greatly appreciated by the Jewish residents of the Province.<sup>43</sup> The Council of Natal Jewry also took all possible steps to prevent, wherever possible, the holding of Greyshirt meetings by urging town councils, churches and social groups to refuse to grant the Greyshirts the use of their halls.<sup>44</sup>

The Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry set up a Statistical Sub-Committee in order to obtain accurate data concerning Jewry in Natal. This sub-committee acted as the medium through which plans to counteract racial propaganda were put into effect. Through the Statistical Sub-Committee leaflets and articles in English and Afrikaans were widely distributed in an effort to discredit Greyshirt propaganda.<sup>45</sup>

At the Eleventh Congress of the Board of Deputies, which was held in Johannesburg in May 1935, a Propaganda Committee was set up by the Board, for the same purpose for which Natal had long pressed for a Statistical Committee, and which in Natal had already been active for some months.<sup>46</sup> The Statistics and Propaganda Sub-Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry sought to

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<sup>43</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 89., *Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 71. Report of the Chairman of Statistical Committee, To be Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, on Sunday, March 26th, 1939, pp.2-3.

<sup>44</sup> *Hasholom*, XII No.7 (March, 1935), C.N.J. Supplement.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.10 (June, 1935), 2.



work in close harmony with the Board's Propaganda Committee,<sup>47</sup> and it lent its full support to the Board's encouragement of a weekly magazine called *Forum* which was a liberal journal strongly opposed to all Fascist and racist influences in South Africa.<sup>48</sup> Following upon the founding by the Board of the Society of Jews and Christians, in 1938, which resulted in the Jewish community gaining important allies from amongst the Gentile population in its struggle against anti-Semitism,<sup>49</sup> steps were taken by the Council of Natal Jewry to form a branch of the Society in Durban. Considerable difference of opinion existed, however, as to the necessity for such an organisation in Durban largely because of the scant support for either the Greyshirts or the National Party in the City.<sup>50</sup>

Through the efforts of the Statistical and Propaganda Committee small branch committees were set up by the Jewish residents of Vryheid and Ladysmith which kept the

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<sup>47</sup> Report of the Chairman of the Statistical Committee, Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held on Sunday, 27th March, 1938, pp.3-4., Report of the Chairman of the Statistical Committee, To Be Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, on Sunday, March 26th, 1939, pp.3-4.

<sup>48</sup> Report of the Chairman of the Statistical Committee, Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held on Sunday, 27th March, 1938, p.4.

<sup>49</sup> Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967*, (Cape Town, 1980), p.152.

<sup>50</sup> *Hasholom*, VXI No.9 (May, 1939), CNJ Supplement.

Council of Natal Jewry fully informed of anti-Jewish activities in their areas.<sup>51</sup> Endeavours to enlighten the general public in regard to the Jewish position were continued by the Statistical Committee, which also closely monitored the dissemination of neo-Nazi literature.<sup>52</sup>

In light of the support shown by large sections of the rural Afrikaans population of the Province for the Greyshirts and the National Party, the Statistical Committee strove to demonstrate Jewish goodwill towards the Afrikaner people by identifying with the *Voortrekker* Celebrations that were held in 1938 to mark the centenary of the Great Trek.<sup>53</sup> The Committee decided to place a span of oxen at the disposal of the local *Voortrekker*

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<sup>51</sup> Report of the Chairman of the Statistical Committee, Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held on Sunday, 27th March, 1938, p.2. Report of the Chairman of the Statistical Committee, To be Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, on Sunday, March 26th, 1939, pp.1-2.

<sup>52</sup> Report of the Chairman of the Statistical Committee, Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held on Sunday, 27th March, 1938, p.2., Report of the Chairman of the Statistical Committee, To be Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, on Sunday, March 26th, 1939, pp.4-5.

<sup>53</sup> The Great Trek which marks the exodus of thousands of Afrikaans speaking farmers from the British Cape Colony to new territories in the east and north east is regarded as an historical epoch by the Afrikaners and as a source of national inspiration. (C.F.J. Muller, "The Period of the Great Trek, 1834-1854," in *500 Years A History of South Africa*, ed. C.F.J. Muller, (Pretoria, n.d.) pp.122-156.

Committee, to draw a wagon from Pietermaritzburg to Cato Ridge,<sup>54</sup> an offer which was gratefully received by the *Voortrekker* Committee.<sup>55</sup> Owing to a delay in procuring a span of oxen the *Voortrekker* Committee was forced to accept another offer.<sup>56</sup> Members of the Statistical Committee were, nevertheless, present at the celebrations in Natal and their efforts were highly commended by the local *Voortrekker* Celebrations Committee.<sup>57</sup>

In order to lessen the gap, which it was felt, existed between the Jewish and Afrikaans communities, the Statistical Committee also lent its support to the formation of an Afrikaans speaking circle and the arrangement of weekly Afrikaans lessons.<sup>58</sup> By such means it was hoped that Jewish individuals would acquire the linguistic skills necessary to converse fluently with Afrikaners in their own language and would thereby

<sup>54</sup> Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held in the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 1st September, 1938, at 5.15 pm., p.3.

<sup>55</sup> Minutes of the General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Sunday, 18th September, 1938, at 5.15 pm., p.4.

<sup>56</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 29th September, 1938, at 8 pm., p.1.

<sup>57</sup> Report of the Chairman of the Statistical Committee, To be Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, on Sunday, March 26th, 1939, p.6.

<sup>58</sup> Minutes of the General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Sunday, 18th September, 1938, at 5.15 pm., p.3.

contribute to breaking down prejudice and developing links with the Afrikaner population.

Whilst the Statistics and Propaganda Sub-Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry strove at all times to be conversant with, and to combat manifestations of, anti-Semitism in Natal, with a decline in Greyshirt activity it came to direct much of its attention to the suggesting and carrying out of educational work.<sup>59</sup>

The Council of Natal Jewry's focus of activity centred, however, on the welfare of the Jewish community of Durban and its organisations which constituted the Council's members. One of the first issues affecting Durban Jewry which was taken up by the Communal Council was the question of *meshullochim*. After setting up a sub-committee which investigated the whole issue of *meshullochim*, the Council decided in 1931, not to grant credentials to *meshullochim*, **except** for such institutions which it considered essential to support. It further advertised the fact, in the Jewish press, that *meshullochim* who had not made application for, and received credentials from, the Council should not come to Durban.<sup>60</sup>

The action taken by the Council in respect of *meshullochim* appears to have been motivated by a desire to regulate the visits of such collectors to the town,

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<sup>59</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937) CNJ Supplement.

<sup>60</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 57.

in order to prevent their overlapping with other fund raising activities or the visits of other *meshullochim*. Suspicion surrounding the credentials of certain *meshullochim* and the worthiness of the institutions which they represented, were further factors which prompted the Council to adopt this particular policy.

The Council's policy regarding *meshullochim* appears to have proved acceptable to the community and to its spiritual leaders and there is little evidence of articulated opposition to this procedure. Rabbi Levy in fact chaired a sub-committee which was responsible for examining the credentials submitted by *meshullochim*.<sup>61</sup> Since *meshullochim* continued to visit Durban without complying with the rules laid down by the sub-committee, it would appear that there were, however, members of the community who disregarded the procedure prescribed by the Council and in so doing they were clearly expressing their dissatisfaction with this policy.<sup>62</sup>

The Council in fact recognised that it had no means of preventing *meshullochim*, who did not comply with its requirements from coming to Durban, although through its influence within the community any unauthorised collection

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<sup>61</sup> *Hasholom*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 11.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.8 (April, 1933), 26., *Ibid.*, XII No.7 (March, 1935), CNJ Supplement.

held in Durban had little chance of succeeding.<sup>63</sup>

The question of *meshullochim* was not, however, satisfactorily settled by the arrangement adopted by the Council. At the Council of Natal Jewry's annual general meeting, in March 1938, a resolution of the *Meshullochim* Sub-Committee, calling for an end to all visits by *meshullochim*, and the creation *in lieu* thereof of a local committee which would raise funds for the approved Institutions, to the extent of a sum not less than £350 per annum, which would be allocated at the discretion of the Council to the Institutions, was met with unanimous approval.<sup>64</sup> Such a scheme it was argued, was to the advantage of the institutions concerned, in that by rendering it unnecessary for collectors to call at all, the institutions would save on travelling expenses and other costs.<sup>65</sup>

An annual fund of £500 was in fact established and from September 1, 1939, no *meshulloch* was permitted to collect in Natal, where all members of the Jewish community were urged to withhold their support from any

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<sup>63</sup>The South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Report of the Executive Committee for the Period January 1932 to June 30th, 1933. To be submitted to the Tenth Congress, Durban, August 6th and 7th, 1933, pp.18-19.

<sup>64</sup>*Hasholom*, XV No.8 (April, 1938), 19.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, CNJ Supplement.

unauthorised collection.<sup>66</sup>

At the same time as it sought to regulate the activities of *meshullochim*, the Council also determined the number of other fund raising campaigns which could be held in Natal in any given year, since the relatively small size of the Jewish population meant that funds available for philanthropic purposes were limited. Accordingly, throughout the years it withheld its support or approval of certain campaigns and gave its sanction and blessing to others.<sup>67</sup>

The procedure adopted by the Council in respect of controlling collections by *meshullochim* and by other outside causes, appears at its inception to have been unique to Durban. By 1937 the Council of Natal Jewry proudly exclaimed that the necessity to control such collections had at last been accepted in principle by South African Jewry<sup>68</sup> and the Board of Deputies did, in fact, come to exert greater control over outside collections of all descriptions. The ban on visits to Natal by *meshullochim* appears, however, to have been

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<sup>66</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 63.

<sup>67</sup> See *Ibid.*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 57., *Hasholom*, IX No.8 (April, 1932), 21., *Ibid.*, X No.8 (April, 1933), 26., *Ibid.*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 11., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 77., *Hasholom*, XII No.7 (March, 1938), CNJ Supplement, *Ibid.*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), CNJ Supplement., *Ibid.*, XV No.8 (April, 1938), CNJ Supplement, *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 63.

<sup>68</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), CNJ Supplement.

peculiar to the Province, possibly because the composition of the community, with its Anglo-Jewish roots, was markedly different from communities elsewhere which were East European in origin, and for whom the *meshulloch* was an inseparable part of communal life.

Within the community the Council took the initiative in seeking to install humane killing apparatus for *shechitah* purposes in order to check criticism of Jewish ritual killing.<sup>69</sup> It furthermore, gave its approval to a special fund-raising drive by the Ladies' Guild and Jewish Benevolent Society, necessitated by the harsh economic conditions of 1932 resulting from the world wide depression.<sup>70</sup>

In April 1935 one of the Council's Hon. Presidents, Mr F.C. Hollander, and Mrs Hollander were guests of honour at a dinner given under the Council's direction at the Jewish Club. On behalf of the Jewish community Mr P. Wartski, the doyen of Durban Jewry, presented Mr Hollander with a motor car, in recognition of his services to the public in general and to Jewry in particular.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.8 (April, 1932), 21., *Ibid.*, X No.8 (April, 1933), 26.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.10 (June, 1932), 23.

<sup>71</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 29, 1935, p.9. (The banquet ended on a most unexpected and unhappy note, when two hours after the presentation had been made Mr Hollander discovered that his car was missing from its parking outside the Club and the assistance of the police had to be called in to recover it. *Ibid.*)



Under the Council's auspices a conference was held in November 1937 to discuss the question of Jewish youth in Durban and of finding ways and means for their cultural and social advancement.<sup>72</sup> Among the matters proposed at the conference were the taking of a Youth Census, the acquisition of a youth centre, the formation of a representative body to look after the interests of the youth and the establishment of a vocational guidance bureau,<sup>73</sup> all of which came to be acted upon in due course by the Council. Tours through Northern Natal, intended to strengthen the ties between the Jewish communities of the Province as well as to offset anti-semitic influences, were also organised by the Council.<sup>74</sup> On September 4, 1938, the Council arranged a conference in Vryheid to enable the Jewish residents of Northern Natal to hear what was being done by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the Council of Natal Jewry. The Council was represented by Messrs H. Moss-Morris, S. Moshal, B.H. Bloom, E.S. Henochsberg and Rabbi A.H. Freedman. The conference was also attended by Mr G. Saron, the General Secretary of the Board, and representatives of Vryheid, Danhauser, Glencoe, Hallingspruit, Dundee, Utrecht and

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<sup>72</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 89., *Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 71.

Paulpietersburg.<sup>75</sup>

Through the Council's President the condolences or good wishes of the Jewish community of the Province were expressed,<sup>76</sup> and the President of the Council was often called upon to participate in events of communal importance.<sup>77</sup>

By 1937 the activities of the Council of Natal Jewry had come to be divided amongst the Statistical and Propaganda Sub-Committee, *Meshullochim* Sub-Committee, German Refugees Sub-Committee and Administrative Sub-Committee, and the Council and its sub-committees endeavoured to follow closely the needs of Natal Jewry.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.9 (May, 1939), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>76</sup> For example in 1935 the President expressed sympathy to the Governor General on the loss of his son (*Ibid.*, XII No.9 (May, 1935), 3.) and in the following year condoled with the Royal Family on the death of King George V (*The Natal Mercury*, January 23, 1936, p.13.) On the appointment of Rabbi Israel Abrahams, as successor to the Rev. A. Bender, as minister of the Gardens Synagogue in Cape Town, the Council's President extended the good wishes of the community. (*Hasholom*, XV No.8 (April, 1938), CNJ Supplement.)

<sup>77</sup> For example in 1935 the President attended the opening of the Herzl Memorial Hall in Pietermaritzburg, (*Ibid.*, XII No.7 (March, 1935), 3.) and in 1936 he was represented at the opening of the new premises of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*. (*Ibid.*, XIV No.4 (December, 1936), 30.) In his capacity as President of the Council of Natal Jewry Mr H. Moss-Morris and Mrs Moss-Morris were invited by the Administrator of Natal to attend a banquet to mark the Silver Jubilee of King George V. (*Ibid.*, XII No.9 (May, 1935), 20.)

<sup>78</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 87.

In view of the problems which resulted from the rise of Nazism in Europe and the emergence of the Greyshirt Movement in South Africa, the creation of the Council of Natal Jewry was indeed most fortuitous. It is impossible to imagine how, without such a body, the Jews of Natal might otherwise have been able to meet the challenges with the effectiveness and unanimity of action which they did. The Council of Natal Jewry successfully minimised the activities of anti-semitic elements in Natal and through the Statistical Sub-Committee counteracted much Greyshirt propaganda. It likewise co-ordinated and controlled relief work amongst refugees and assisted German Jewish immigrants, in a manner in which no community without a body such as the Council, would have been capable of emulating.

Had political circumstances at home and abroad been unmarred by the conditions that in fact prevailed, the creation of the Council would still, however, have been an achievement of no lesser importance. As the Natal Committee of the Board it enhanced the strength and influence of the Board, with which it co-operated in matters of mutual concern. At the same time it contributed significantly to the unity of the Jewish community by bringing different local Jewish institutions together under a Council, whose President was empowered to speak with authority on behalf of all the Jews of the Province. It occupied a meaningful place in community life by regulating and controlling matters such as

fundraising and by co-ordinating communal activity.

In the years that followed it proved itself capable of adopting to changing circumstances in order to fulfill the objectives for which it had been created.

SECTION THREE 1936 - 1939

CHAPTER XV

THE DURBAN UNITED

HEBREW CONGREGATION : 1936 - 1939

The process of amalgamation between the Durban Hebrew Congregation and the Durban New Hebrew Congregation reached its climax on March 29, 1936, when the inaugural meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation was held at the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>1</sup>

The constitution of the new body, whose main bases were, firstly equality of representation on the Council from the two Synagogues, except in the case of the Chairman who was elected by the United Congregation as a whole; and secondly, the protection of the immovable property of the two Synagogues, was ratified by the

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<sup>1</sup>*Hasholom*, XIII No.8 (April, 1936), 3.

meeting,<sup>2</sup> which then elected the first Council of the United Congregation:-

Mr B. Lurie, Chairman; Mr S.W. Brewer,  
Hon. Treasurer; Dr N. Smith, Hon. Secretary;  
St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.

Mr J. Moshal, President; Mr L. Davis,  
Vice-President; Mr P. Wartski, Life Trustee;  
Mr H. Lipinski, Trustee; Messrs N. Myerowitz,  
M. Cohen, B. Levy, Committee.

Park Street Synagogue. Mr D. Harris,  
President; Mr N. Hertz, Vice-President;  
Messrs H. Patz and S.A. Nathanson, Trustees;  
Messrs F.M. Levy, H.L. Magid, L.S. Ditz,  
T. Magid, Dr M. Byala, Committee.<sup>3</sup>

The *Chevra Kadisha* of the Durban Hebrew Congregation remained a separate body directly responsible only to the Council, although under the jurisdiction of the United Congregation.

The Congregation became affiliated to the Council of Natal Jewry, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the South African Zionist Federation and the London Jewish Board of Deputies.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*The Durban Hebrew Congregation issued by the Durban United Hebrew Congregation 1952:5712 (Durban, 1952), p.20.*

<sup>3</sup>*Hasholom, XIII No.8 (April, 1936), 3.*

<sup>4</sup>*The Durban Hebrew Congregation issued by the Durban United Hebrew Congregation 1952:5712., p.20.*

The newly elected Council immediately applied itself to the urgent task of finding a suitable incumbent for the post of Rabbi for the community. Whilst efforts to enlist the services of a suitable minister were underway, the responsibilities of spiritual leadership devolved principally upon the Rev. Menachemson, who was supported by the Rev. Rubin and the newly appointed Rev. Kuperberg.<sup>5</sup> Through the initiative of the Rev. Menachemson the first communal *Seder* to be held in Durban took place on the second night of *Pesach* in 1936 at the Durban Jewish Club, under the auspices of the Durban Young Israel Society, *Habonim* and the Durban United *Talmud Torah*.<sup>6</sup> This communal *Seder*, which became an annual feature in the life of the Jewish community, not only strengthened the bonds between the Congregation and the institutions under whose auspices it was held, but reinforced the close ties that existed between the Congregation and the *Talmud Torah*. This special relationship between the Congregation and the school, found expression in the keen interest and generous financial support that the Congregation showed in the

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<sup>5</sup> First reference to the Rev. Kuperberg is in connection with the *Chanukah* service in December 1935. (*Hasholom*, XIII No.5 (January, 1936), 22.

<sup>6</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 24, 1936, p.39.

*Talmud Torah*.<sup>7</sup> The Rev. Menachemson also officiated at special services held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue to mourn the passing of King George V<sup>8</sup> and the Zionist leader Nahum Sokolow,<sup>9</sup> and, on occasion, he shared the pulpit of the Synagogue with a number of prominent visitors.<sup>10</sup>

In October 1936 the search for a minister ended when at a Special General Meeting the members of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation unanimously accepted the recommendation of the Council that the vacant office of Rabbi be offered to Rabbi Abraham Hirsch Freedman of Ottawa.<sup>11</sup> The minister elect appeared amply qualified for his new post. He was a married man, 36 years of age and nearly six feet in height, with a reputedly commanding and pleasant personality. A graduate of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and *Yeshivah* College of New York, he had, upon his ordination in 1931,

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<sup>7</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 87., *Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 71., *Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 63 and 65.

<sup>8</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 22, 1936, p.12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, May 29, 1936, p.14.

<sup>10</sup> Including Rabbi Perlman of Staudville (*Ibid.*, March 7, 1936, p.14.) Rabbi Dr Romm of Bloemfontein (*Ibid.*, May 22, 1936, p.12.) Cantor Berele Chagy (*Ibid.*, July 24, 1936, p.12.) Rabbi Ittamar Romm, the 16 year old son of Rabbi Dr Romm of Bloemfontein (*Hasholom*, XIII No.12 (August, 1936), 12.) and Rabbi Weinkowski (*The Natal Mercury*, November 6, 1936, p.12.)

<sup>11</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.3 (November, 1936), 8.



been invited to Ottawa where he had worked amongst four congregations. During his ministry in the Canadian capital he had been instrumental in forming a community council and had served as honorary supervisor of the Ottawa *Talmud Torah*. He had interested himself in the Young People's League and had conducted *Talmud* classes in Yiddish. A keen Zionist, he had served on the Canadian Zionist National Council and had conducted several lecture tours in the interests of the National Movement.<sup>12</sup>

The Rabbi and his family arrived in Durban on February 17th, 1937, and were met at the harbour by the Mayor Mr Fleming Johnston, and by representatives of the Jewish community and its institutions. On February 25th, in a ceremony in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, Rabbi Freedman was installed by the Rev. Dr A.T. Shrock of Johannesburg, and was the guest of honour at a reception held after the service at the Durban Jewish Club. Three days later a meeting of welcome to Rabbi and Mrs Freedman was organised by the Durban Young Israel Society and *Habonim*.<sup>13</sup> After he had settled down in his new home the Rabbi undertook a tour of the principal Jewish communities of the Province, visiting

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, and *The Zionist Record*, November 20, 1936, p.29.

<sup>13</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.7 (March, 1937), 4.

Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith, Danhauser, Newcastle and Vryheid.<sup>14</sup>

Annually thereafter, the Rabbi joined with communal representatives in a tour of the Jewish communities of Natal.<sup>15</sup> At the request of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies the Rabbi visited Volksrust some years later for the purpose of installing Mr Serebro, the newly elected Mayor of that town.<sup>16</sup>

Within weeks of his arrival Rabbi Freedman involved himself in all aspects of the communal life of his new community. He accepted office on the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry,<sup>17</sup> became keenly interested in the affairs of the Durban Jewish Club<sup>18</sup> and was initiated into the F.C. Hollander Lodge No.XI of the Hebrew Order of David.<sup>19</sup> He interested himself in the work of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* and helped to widen its scope by starting classes at leading High Schools,<sup>20</sup> whilst he also chaired the school's

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.12 (August, 1937), 3-4. *The Natal Mercury*, July 26, 1937, p.16.

<sup>15</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.9 (May, 1939), CNJ Supplement., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 45.

<sup>16</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.9 (May, 1939), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), 25.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 12.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.6 (February, 1938), 31.

<sup>20</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 89.

educational committee.<sup>21</sup> He identified himself with the work of the Zionist youth movements of the town and addressed meetings held by the Durban Young Israel Society<sup>22</sup> and *Habonim*.<sup>23</sup> His own personal commitment to the cause of Zionism found expression through his participation in the activities of the Durban Zionist Association. Elected to the Association's committee in April 1937,<sup>24</sup> the Rabbi was often called upon to speak on Zionist issues<sup>25</sup> and at meetings held in connection with the changing course of events in Palestine.<sup>26</sup> Upon the creation of a branch of the *Mizrachi* Party in Durban in 1938, Rabbi Freedman assumed the position of chairman.<sup>27</sup> The Rabbi regularly addressed the annual general meeting of the Durban Women's Zionist League,<sup>28</sup> with whose activities his wife was closely identified.

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<sup>21</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.2 (October, 1937), 18.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.9 (May, 1937), 26.

<sup>23</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 15, 1938, p.26.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, April 23, 1937, p.28.

<sup>25</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.10 (June, 1937), 24., *The Zionist Record*, November 12, 1937, p.25., November 4, 1938, p.18.

<sup>26</sup> To protest against the proposed partition of Palestine (*The Natal Advertiser*, July 8, 1937, pp.11-12.) and to express opposition to the White Paper. (*The Zionist Record*, June 2, 1939, p.9.)

<sup>27</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.2 (October, 1938), 17.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.3 (November, 1937), 31., *Ibid.*, XVI No.3 (November, 1938), 26., *Ibid.*, XVII No.3 (November, 1939), 27.

Co-opted as an honorary member of the League shortly after her arrival in the town,<sup>29</sup> Mrs Freedman subsequently came to serve as its vice-chairman<sup>30</sup> and later its chairlady,<sup>31</sup> and in addition was an ex-officio member of both the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild<sup>32</sup> and the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women.<sup>33</sup>

The appointment of a Rabbi not only heightened communal interest in synagogal affairs, but served as a spur to increased efforts to overcome congregational problems. Within months of the Rabbi's induction, the Council of the Congregation embarked on a membership drive in an effort to enrol as many unaffiliated Jews as possible as members of the Congregation.<sup>34</sup> For his part, Rabbi Freedman sought to draw additional worshippers to the Synagogue, particularly on Friday evenings, by delivering bi-monthly sermons.<sup>35</sup> In an effort to attract the youth of the community to the Synagogue and to familiarise them with the liturgy and

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), 26.

<sup>30</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 77., *Hasholom*, XVI No.3 (November, 1938), 26.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.3 (November, 1939), 27.

<sup>32</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 93.

<sup>33</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.3 (November, 1937), 10. On the Union of Jewish Women see below pp.385-389.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.5 (January, 1938), 31., *Ibid.*, XV No.7 (March, 1938), 32.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.2 (October, 1937), 26.

ritual, the Rabbi inaugurated youth services, which took place after the ordinary service on Saturday mornings at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>36</sup>

At the suggestion of the Rabbi effective steps were also taken to overcome the difficult problem of *Kashrut*. At a special general meeting held in January 1938 the decision of the Council of the Congregation and the *Shechitah* Board to establish a Communal *Kosher* Butchery met with wide approval. A limited liability company, with a capital of £1,500, divided into 1,500 shares of £1 each, was formed. The hope was expressed that every Jew would subscribe towards the capital required, by taking up as many shares as he possibly could, so that the butchery would have the financial support of every Jew in the community, thus ensuring its success.<sup>37</sup> A venture of this nature naturally had to endure many vicissitudes at the commencement of its activities, and even after it had been operating for more than a year it was still running at a loss, though not nearly as heavily as formerly.<sup>38</sup> The *Schechitah* Board of the Congregation co-operated closely with the butchery and ensured that a satisfactory standard of *Kashrut* was maintained both in

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<sup>36</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 71., *Hasholom*, XVI No.2 (October, 1938), 3 and 13.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.7 (March, 1938), 32.

<sup>38</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1939), 63.

the abattoirs and butchery.<sup>39</sup>

In the service held to mark the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, Rabbi Freedman gave full expression to the feelings of joy which his congregants shared on that day with all the Empire.<sup>40</sup> This joy contrasted sharply with the enormous sorrow that was evident at the memorial service held at the Park Street Synagogue, on February 28, 1939, prior to the funeral of the Rev. Heyman Rubin. The passing of the revered and much loved Rev. Rubin, after a ministry in Durban of more than a quarter of a century, deeply saddened the Congregation, amongst whom he had enjoyed wide respect and affection. His funeral was attended by all sections of the community and by men and women of all denominations.<sup>41</sup>

With the tide of Nazism increasing in Europe Rabbi Freedman assumed, on occasion, the mantle of spokesman for the Jews of Durban. He forcefully articulated the concern of his community for the welfare of their co-religionists in Germany and Austria at a special service of prayer and intercession at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, which was attended by

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 6, 1937, p.12.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, February 28, 1939, p.20., *Hasholom*, XVI No.7 (March, 1939), 9.

worshippers of all faiths.<sup>42</sup> In an effort to stave off the influences of Fascist groups in South Africa and to defend the honour of Jewry, Rabbi Freedman spoke to the members of the Catholic Men's Society<sup>43</sup> and also addressed a meeting in the Wesley Hall.<sup>44</sup> Events in Europe were, however, moving too rapidly, and only a few weeks after making his appeal for Christian understanding and friendship towards the Jewish people<sup>45</sup> the nations of Europe were engaged in a terrible war which would affect in some way all of Rabbi Freedman's congregants.

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<sup>42</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 18, 1938, p.5.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, March 6, 1939, p.13.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, August 25, 1939, p.14.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

## CHAPTER XVI

THE DURBAN JEWISH CLUB : 1936 - 1939

The four years preceeding the Second World War were years of mixed fortune for the Durban Jewish Club. The initial enthusiasm which had characterised its members in the first years of its existence was considerably dampened by the passage of time, whilst concern over the finances and maintenance of the Club premises expended much of the Council's energies.

Faced at the beginning of 1936 with remedying defects and damage to the Club building, the Council had Mr C.R. Fridjhon draw up a comprehensive report on the state of the Club premises. Upon presentation to the Governing Bodies, the report was immediately acted upon and Mr Fridjhon's recommendations all carried out under his own supervision, at a cost of more than £1,000. To ensure that the building never again was allowed to fall into such a state of disrepair, a permanent Building Sub-Committee was appointed to check on each small defect as it appeared. At the same time a maintenance fund was also set up to spare the Club having again to face an extraordinary sum for maintenance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.4 (December, 1936), 20.



At the same time the Council was caught up in protracted negotiations with the City Council over the question of the rateable value of the Club property. The Club Council felt that since the Club was used for non-profit purposes and in fact constituted an amenity to the City, its land value should be reduced from £3,250 to £100, and that of its buildings, from £16,950 to £10,000. The City Estates Manager rejected this proposal and since it had been pointed out that the valuations were considerably lower than what they should have been the matter was not pressed.<sup>2</sup>

In the following year Messrs M. Stiller and S. Moshal made representations to the City Council on behalf of the Club and succeeded in securing a reduction in the Club's rental from £330 to £130 per annum for a period of seven years.<sup>3</sup> A similar request for a reduction in rates met with no response, and in fact in 1938 a municipal revaluation of the Club's property resulted in the land value being increased. This was offset by a grant-in-aid which, with the approval of the Administrator of Natal, was made by the Durban City Council to the Club, and which brought the rates back to the figure of 1937.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Arnold Miller, *Durban Jewish Club A History issued on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee*, (Durban, May, 1956), p.37.

<sup>3</sup>*Hasholom*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 14.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, XVI No.4 (December, 1938), 15.

In 1939 the consideration of the Council was focused on the advisability of constructing additional premises to house the increased coloured staff, and to provide extra storage space for stage properties. A special Building Committee was formed to take charge of all details connected with the building, which was completed at a cost of about £1,000.<sup>5</sup>

As the Executive clearly knew, the Club's very existence depended on the progress of the Sectional Committees. It was therefore with some concern that they followed the fluctuating fortunes of the different Sections in this period.

The Squash Rackets Section, which was formed in November 1935,<sup>6</sup> aroused enormous enthusiasm and a general meeting was convened to discuss the immediate erection of a squash court.<sup>7</sup> Within a few months negotiations with the Council of the Club had been concluded<sup>8</sup> and building operations had begun.<sup>9</sup> The Court was erected by the Governing Bodies as a result of an undertaking on the part of the Section to provide from interested members, by means of Foundation Memberships, an amount

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.3 (November, 1939), 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.6 (February, 1936), 24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.8 (April, 1936), 25.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.11 (July, 1936), 23.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.12 (August, 1936), 25.

of not less than £400.<sup>10</sup> It was officially opened on October 11, 1936, by Mr Max Wolpert, the Club's President.<sup>11</sup>

Shortly before the opening of the squash court a Bowling Section under the chairmanship of Mr H. Patz came into being. On September 28, 1936, the section was formally inaugurated and the decision was taken to adopt the designation, the Circle Bowling Club. Until such time as the Club's greens were established, the members of the Bowling Section availed themselves of the offer of the neighbouring Hoy Park Bowling Club to use one of their greens, at the nominal rental of £4 per month.<sup>12</sup> As with the squash players, the cost of the green was raised from amongst the bowlers themselves. In order that the Bowling Section should be properly accommodated, a brick pavilion was erected out of monies lent to the section by the Club, which had to be repaid out of sectional revenue.<sup>13</sup> On December 12, 1937, the new green of the Club was opened by the President of the Natal Bowling Association, in the presence of the Mayor and Mayoress, the President of the Durban and District Bowling Association and representatives of the Club's

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.4 (December, 1936), 18.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.2 (October, 1936), 20.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 12. and Arnold Miller, p.38.

Governing Bodies.<sup>14</sup>

Both the Squash Rackets and Bowling Sections enjoyed immediate support, which increased with the passage of time. In contrast the rugby football club formed in 1936, amongst the male members of the Gymnasium Section,<sup>15</sup> and the Ping Pong Section, which was formed in the latter part of the same year,<sup>16</sup> failed to attract many members and were discontinued within a few months of their inception.

Owing to insufficient support the regular dinner and card evenings had to be discontinued in 1936,<sup>17</sup> whilst a decline in the interest of members in the work of the Dramatic Section caused enormous consternation to the Club Executive.<sup>18</sup> At a general meeting, held in October 1936, the enthusiasm of the Section's members was rekindled and plans laid for increased activity.<sup>19</sup> Evidence of the renewed interest of the members in the work of the Dramatic Section was reflected in the production of the first Yiddish play to be presented at

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<sup>14</sup> *Hasholom.*, XV No.5 (January, 1938), 22 and 15.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.8 (April, 1936), 26.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.2 (October, 1936), 22., *Ibid.*, XIV No.4 (December, 1936), 18.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.4 (December, 1936), 17.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.4 (October, 1936), 18.

the Club, *Dee Drie Kahlehs* (The Three Brides), which was staged in November,<sup>20</sup> less than a month after the special general meeting.

In 1937 the Dramatic Section, however, again fell prey to the apathy of its members,<sup>21</sup> a fate which was shared by the once extremely active Entertainment Section.<sup>22</sup> This falling off of interest in the affairs of some of the Sections was viewed with concern by the Executive, which endeavoured to resuscitate the interest of members.<sup>23</sup>

In the midst of so much inactivity the resurgence of energy within in the Culture Section was all the more satisfying. This renewed enthusiasm shown for culture was almost entirely attributable to the arrival in Durban of Rabbi Freedman,<sup>24</sup> at whose home a meeting was held with the view to stimulating the further growth of the Section.<sup>25</sup>

Another satisfying development was the formation in 1937 of a Stage Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr E. Seligman. This Committee, co-operated with all

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.3 (November, 1936), 21., *Ibid.*, XIV No.4 (December, 1936), 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Arnold Miller, p.38.

<sup>25</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 79.

Sections using the stage of the hall, and assumed responsibility for the maintenance and supervision of scenery and equipment.<sup>26</sup>

Notwithstanding the closure of the Gymnasium Section,<sup>27</sup> 1938 witnessed an improvement in Sectional activity, although the support given to the functions arranged by the Sections was not uniform.<sup>28</sup> In an effort to attract greater numbers of members to functions the Annual General Meeting of the Club resolved in 1938 to change Club night to Tuesday night.<sup>29</sup> This step was taken in the belief that most members wished to visit cinemas on a Monday night, owing to there being a change of programmes on Mondays, and that if Club functions were held on another night attendance would increase.<sup>30</sup> The contention of those who had advocated the change in Club night was, however, proved wrong, for during 1939 no improved attendance at functions was recorded.<sup>31</sup> In fact in the nine months preceeding the outbreak of war attendance at activities of the Culture and Entertainment Sections was scant,<sup>32</sup> in large measure due to members

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<sup>26</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 9.

<sup>27</sup> The last report on this Section appeared in *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.4 (December, 1938), 9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.5 (January, 1939), 23.

<sup>30</sup> Arnold Miller, p.39.

<sup>31</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.3 (November, 1939), 4.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.7 (April, 1939), 2., *Ibid.*, XVI No.9 (May, 1939), 20.

taking the Club for granted.<sup>33</sup>

For all the apparent difficulties which certain Sections experienced in this period, the Club's *Hasholom*, Music, Luncheon, Ladies, Billiards, Bar, Tennis, Bowls and Squash Rackets Committees continued to function with different degrees of success, providing a varied and full programme of activities.

Among the more extraordinary functions held in this period were the annual musical comedies.<sup>34</sup> A revue called "Club Cocktail," which was presented in April 1938, for bowlers attending the South African Tournament in Durban, drew such a large attendance that more than 500 people had to be turned away.<sup>35</sup> A ball was also held at the Club in May 1937 to mark the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.<sup>36</sup> Among the many distinguished personalities to address the luncheon section were Vice-Admiral Sir Francis Tottenham, Vladimir Jabotinsky,<sup>37</sup> the Agent General for India, Mr Rama Rau and Mrs Rau,<sup>38</sup> Vice-Admiral D'Oyly Lyon the Commander-in-Chief of Africa Station, and the renowned

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.5 (January, 1939), 22.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.11 (July, 1936), 5., *Ibid.*, XIV No.11 (July, 1937), 20., *Ibid.*, XV No.12 (August, 1938), 31., *Ibid.*, XVI No.11 (July, 1939), 5.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.9 (May, 1938), 26.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.9 (May, 1937), 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 11.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.4 (December, 1938), 11.

pianist Mr Arthur Rubenstein.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time the membership of the Club grew to number 876 in 1939,<sup>40</sup> evidence in itself that the Club, for all its difficulties, still offered sufficient to induce an increasing number of Jewish residents to join its ranks.

The Club continued to display the keenest interest in the work of the different Jewish communal institutions in the City, and could justifiably claim much of the credit for the highly organised state of Durban Jewry. Having achieved a high degree of co-operation among the Jewish population of the City, the Club "exercised a correspondingly important influence not only in the social and cultural pursuits of its own members, but in the affairs of Natal Jewry as a whole."<sup>41</sup>

The central place that the Club occupied in the community became even more marked upon the outbreak of war when throughout this troublous period it served as a rallying point for all Durban Jewry.

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<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, XVII No.3 (November, 1939), 6.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 4

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, XVII No.5 (January, 1940), 1.



## CHAPTER XVII

HEBREW EDUCATION : 1936 - 1939

1936 Was in many ways a year of disappointment and pleasure for the Durban United *Talmud Torah*. On the one hand it was fraught with problems which affected the internal organisation of the school and contributed to a decline in the attendance of pupils.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand it was a year which was characterised by significant developments in the field of Hebrew education in the City.

Having vacated the school premises in Musgrave Road, and having been unable to find suitable alternative accommodation, the *Talmud Torah* Committee was forced at the commencement of the school term, in February 1936, to hold the afternoon classes at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue and the kindergarten classes at the Park Street Synagogue.<sup>2</sup> The problems resulting from this arrangement were compounded by the difficulties which resulted from the late arrival of Mr Klachko's successor. For as long as the *Talmud Torah* was without a headmaster, the Rev. Menachemson accepted the invitation to act in this

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<sup>1</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 76.

<sup>2</sup>*Hasholom*, XIII No.8 (April, 1936), 22.

capacity, assisted by the Rev. Rubin and a new teacher Miss B. Wolk, who took charge of the Hebrew classes of the kindergarten,<sup>3</sup> of which she later became headmistress. During the time that he was in charge of the school the Rev. Menachemson arranged the first Communal *Seder* under the auspices of the *Talmud Torah*, *Habonim* and the Young Israel Society.<sup>4</sup> This proved so successful that it became an annual event with which the *Talmud Torah* remained closely associated.<sup>5</sup> The Rev. Menachemson also instituted High Festival Youth Services, principally for the pupils of the *Talmud Torah*, which were controlled by the leaders of the Youth Movements.<sup>6</sup>

In July 1936 after a lengthy delay, caused by the regulations of the Immigration Authorities, the new headmaster, Mr Sam Ernst, arrived in Durban from Belfast, Northern Ireland, where he had held a similar position.<sup>7</sup> Mr Ernst immediately endeared himself to the community within which he soon became a leading figure. Through the years he came to be much loved and much revered by his community, to whom, for all his other attributes, he was first and foremost a respected teacher and educator.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.6 (February, 1936), 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.8 (April, 1936), 22.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), 27., *Ibid.*, XV No.9 (May, 1938), 27., *The Zionist Record*, April 21, 1939, p.24.

<sup>6</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 71.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

Mr Ernst's arrival in Durban coincided with the acquisition by the school Committee of a centrally situated property, at 37 Silverton Road, which met all the requirements of the *Talmud Torah*.<sup>8</sup>

Together with the Committee Mr Ernst immediately set about working out plans for the Institution's reorganisation and the reconstruction of the curriculum. Among the subjects included in the new syllabus were Religious Instruction, Jewish History, Hebrew Language, Bible and the study of the Prayer Book.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of the problems with which the school had been confronted, attendance at classes had over the months declined enormously. Out of 350 eligible children of school age only 60 attended the *Talmud Torah*, whilst approximately 50 more children received private tuition, leaving the vast majority of the children of the community without any Jewish education.<sup>10</sup>

To rectify this state of affairs the headmaster undertook a house-to-house canvass for pupils. In addition to the kindergarten and the classes for young children, a special class for children above the age of thirteen years was also established, which was scheduled to meet three times a week.<sup>11</sup> At the same

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

time Hebrew classes for adults were started, under the auspices of the Young Israel Society, by Mr Ernst and Miss Wolk.<sup>12</sup> Under Mr Ernst's direction the pupils of the *Talmud Torah* were reclassified according to their degree of knowledge, and efforts were made to achieve regular attendance of pupils and to win support for the school from the parent body.<sup>13</sup>

From Monday, 23rd November, 1936, classes, under the direction of the Headmaster, the Rev. Menachemson, Miss Wolk and Mrs Cotterell, were held at the new *Talmud Torah* premises at 37 Silverton Road. A sign of the renewed interest in the school which Mr Ernst's efforts had succeeded in arousing in the community, was reflected in the large number of pupils who enrolled only a fortnight before the closing of the term.<sup>14</sup> The new premises were officially opened on December 13, 1936, by Mr B. Lurie, the Chairman of the Council of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation. The consecration ceremony was performed by the Rev. Menachemson, assisted by the Revs. Rubin and Kuperberg.<sup>15</sup> The honour of affixing the *Mezuzzah* was given to Mr J. Rubin, who represented the *Chevra Kadisha* on the *Talmud Torah* Committee,<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.3 (November, 1936), 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.4 (December, 1936), 30.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.5 (January, 1937), 18.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.4 (December, 1936), 30.

and who was responsible for the arrangements in connection with the opening ceremony. That same afternoon the annual *Chanukah* service and prize giving was held at the Park Street Synagogue.<sup>17</sup>

When the school year recommenced in 1937, in consequence of Mr Ernst's house-to-house canvass, the number of pupils had increased by 53 to 113, most of whom attended classes regularly.<sup>18</sup> To reach an even wider number of children the headmaster and Rabbi Freedman interviewed the authorities at Durban High School and Maris Stella Convent, with a view to establishing special Hebrew classes for the Jewish pupils of these two institutions.<sup>19</sup> As a result of these interviews special classes for the pupils of Durban High School were formed, and were held at the school premises

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<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.* In 1930 the *Talmud Torah* prize giving was first held to coincide with the *Chanukah* service at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue. (*The Zionist Record*, February 6, 1931, p.15.) From 1931 when the combined *Chanukah* service of the Durban Hebrew Congregation, Durban New Hebrew Congregation and Durban United *Talmud Torah* was again held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, (*Hasholom*, IX No.5 (January, 1932), 23.) the service alternated annually between the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue and the Park Street Synagogues. (*The Zionist Record*, January 13, 1933, p.23., *Hasholom*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 26., *Ibid.*, XII No.5 (January, 1935), 26-27., *Ibid.*, XIII No.4 (December, 1935), 26.) Similar services were also held in 1937, (*Ibid.*, XV No.5 (January, 1938), 31.), 1938 and 1939. (*The Zionist Record*, December 22, 1939, p.14.)

<sup>18</sup>*Hasholom*, XIV No.6 (February, 1937), 17.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, XIV No.9 (May, 1937), 27.

on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5 pm.<sup>20</sup> Under the chairmanship of Rabbi Freedman an Educational Committee was also formed to devise plans for the improvement of the general standard of the school,<sup>21</sup> and in this way assisted Mr Ernst in his efforts on behalf of the *Talmud Torah*.

Having succeeded in drawing a considerable number of children to its classes, the school was now faced with the problem of finances to ensure their continuation. The *Talmud Torah* was fortunate to enjoy the financial support of almost every Jewish institution in the City,<sup>22</sup> although as a result of the acquisition of the new school premises its resources were considerably depleted.<sup>23</sup> To offset the enormous deficit with which it was faced, the Committee of the *Talmud Torah* launched a Building Fund.<sup>24</sup> The appeal on behalf of the school met with a sympathetic response from wide sections of the community and sums of varying amounts were donated.<sup>25</sup> One particularly generous contribution came from

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.10 (June, 1937), 12.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.2 (October, 1937), 18.

<sup>22</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 89., *Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 73., *Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 65.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 89.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.2 (October, 1937), 18.

Mr Moses Morrison of Escombe, who, in honour of his daughter's marriage, donated £100 to the school, which, in gratitude, decided to name one of the classrooms the Moses Morrison Room.<sup>26</sup>

A further problem with which the school had to cope was the sometimes irregular daily attendance of its pupils,<sup>27</sup> which was attributed in part, to parental apathy in ensuring that their children received a sound Hebrew education.<sup>28</sup> Of all the difficulties which confronted the school the problem of poor attendance was regarded, in 1937, as the most serious.<sup>29</sup>

In an effort to alleviate this problem a new scheme was adopted at the beginning of 1938 whereby pupils were only required to attend classes three times weekly.<sup>30</sup> As a result of the new system attendance improved slightly.<sup>31</sup> The number of pupils on the school role, rose still further with the formation of a matriculation class for seven students, all past pupils of the school, who wished to take Hebrew as one of their matriculation subjects,<sup>32</sup> and of a continuation class for pupils above

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.3 (November, 1937), 30.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 22.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.6 (February, 1938), 31.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.9 (May, 1938), 31.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.6 (February, 1938), 31.

the age of fourteen years.<sup>33</sup> Afternoon classes for pupils of the Durban High School were now held at the High School, which proved more popular than the classes which had been specially held at the *Talmud Torah*,<sup>34</sup> and still more names were added in this way to the school register. Despite all the efforts on behalf of Hebrew education at least 150 children in Durban continued to receive no Jewish education.<sup>35</sup>

In November 1938, shortly after his appointment as Director of Jewish Education, the South African Board of Jewish Education allowed Rabbi J.L. Zlotnik to accept an invitation from the Jewish community of Durban to visit the City and to assist with the community's educational problems. During his stay Rabbi Zlotnik preached at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, addressed the Union of Jewish Women, attended the annual general meeting of the United *Talmud Torah*, spoke at a Club luncheon and spent three afternoons inspecting the local Hebrew school.<sup>36</sup>

After making a careful study of the school's problems, Rabbi Zlotnik recommended a number of changes, which the Headmaster and *Talmud Torah* Committee resolved to act upon. Among the suggestions made by Rabbi

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 71.

<sup>36</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 2, 1938, p.28. On the Union of Jewish Women see below pp.385-389.



Zlotnik was the laying of greater emphasis on the kindergarten; the introduction of the *Ivrit B' Ivrit* system into all classes; the creation of separate classes for children who entered the Hebrew school at an advanced age; the emphasis of Hebrew language and *Tanach*, all other subjects being subsidiary to Hebrew; and the teaching of *Siddur*, the laws and customs and history in a practical way, through the medium of *Minyanim* and special history courses.<sup>37</sup> Upon his return to Johannesburg Rabbi Zlotnik convened a Hebrew Teachers' Conference, in December 1938, at which Mr S. Ernst was elected to the Central Council.<sup>38</sup> The local *Talmud Torah* was thereby brought into closer and more direct contact with the Board of Jewish Education.

Most of Rabbi Zlotnik's suggestions were put into practice during 1939, "and as a result considerable improvement was effected."<sup>39</sup> The children's *Shabbat* morning services were reorganised, and, largely through the efforts of the headmaster and his pupils, they were held regularly each Saturday morning at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>40</sup>

During 1939, however, the kindergarten, which provided both Hebrew and English tuition, and from which

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, December 23, 1938, p.19.

<sup>39</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 65.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

pupils could enter into Standard 1 in any school,<sup>41</sup> was very poorly attended with only seventeen pupils on its roll.<sup>42</sup> This was ascribed to the problem which parents encountered in transporting their children to the kindergarten. To help overcome this problem the Committee of the *Talmud Torah* organised transportation, which resulted in an increase in the number of kindergarten pupils.<sup>43</sup>

Having, after almost ten years, gained considerable success, but also its full share of problems and setbacks, the Committee of the *Talmud Torah* decided in 1939, that, notwithstanding the assistance rendered by Rabbi Zlotnik, a full and thorough investigation of all aspects of Hebrew education in Durban was warranted.

At the request of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* the Council of Natal Jewry appointed a committee, consisting of Mr S. Moshal, Chairman; Dr B. Moshal and Messrs H. Moss-Morris, B.H. Bloom, L.S. Ditz and J. Goldman, to enquire into the aims, objects and achievements of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*.<sup>44</sup> This Committee first met on June 12 and concluded its

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 89.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 65.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Report of Committee Appointed to Enquire Into the Aims, Objects and Achievements of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, published 17th November, 1939, p.1. In the archives of the Council of Natal Jewry.

deliberations on September 19, having held ten meetings, at which a number of men and women gave evidence.

From its investigations the Committee found that from 1914, when efforts were first made to form a *Talmud Torah* in Durban,<sup>45</sup> the venue of meeting, the indifference of parents and the consequent poor attendance of children, had always been the main problems. Despite a continuous effort of almost twenty five years, the state of religion and Hebrew knowledge was found to be very poor in the community as a whole, and more particularly among young married people whose children were growing up in an atmosphere almost devoid of anything Jewish. The Committee was forced to the conclusion that ways and means had to be found to encourage the young married people particularly, to observe, at the least, a very minimum of Jewish traditions and ritual.

From figures which were made available to the Committee it was estimated that at least 150 children in Durban were receiving no Jewish education whatsoever. Reasons that were advanced for this state of affairs included the peculiar climatic conditions, the many other calls made upon the children, and the location of the *Talmud Torah* which made transport a problem. The

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<sup>45</sup> See S.G. Cohen, *A History of the Jews of Durban 1825-1918*, Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban), 1977, pp.263-268 and 417-421.

Committee was also told that the *Talmud Torah* Committee was out of touch with the community as a whole, and that the community itself did not know of the *Talmud Torah's* aims, objects and achievements.<sup>46</sup>

After considering the evidence which was presented, the Committee made a number of recommendations. It urged firstly, that the members of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation should form the membership of the United *Talmud Torah*, that they should pay a compulsory levy of £1.1.0 and, together with their wives, should be entitled to attend and to vote at all general meetings of the United *Talmud Torah*. In stressing closer co-operation with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, the Committee recommended a change in the organisation of the school, which would give the Congregation extensive influence over matters of finance and the *Talmud Torah* Committee's personnel.

The Council of the Congregation and the Council of Natal Jewry were urged to appoint a Board of Education, to be chaired by the Rabbi and consisting of two members of the Council of the Congregation, the Chairman of the *Talmud Torah*, the headmaster and five other ladies and gentlemen. Its task was to be to co-ordinate the efforts of the United *Talmud Torah* of the youth, and the Synagogue, and to revive religious feeling and sentiment in the whole community of Durban. The Council of the

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<sup>46</sup>From the Committee Report, pp.2-3.

Congregation was urged to recognise that the functions of the *Talmud Torah*, including the proposed Board of Education, and the Synagogue, were complementary to each other. The Congregation's Council was accordingly advised to give preference to the consideration of problems of the United *Talmud Torah* and to have reports from the United *Talmud Torah* given at the annual general meetings of the Congregation.

In the opinion of the Committee the Youth Services were to be regarded by the Congregation, and the community as a whole, as of primary importance and worthy of preservation at all costs. In urging the holding of children's classes on Sunday mornings for the purposes of delivering lectures on Jewish history and Bible stories, the Committee also recognised the need to keep the mothers of those children better informed on all aspects of Jewish life and thought. In its recommendation that a class for young married Jewish women be formed, the Committee felt that the arrangement of such classes should not be left to the Rabbi, who had to fit such classes into his full and busy work schedule. Instead, it proposed that such classes should be organised on a more formal and structured basis by the Board of Education, assisted by the Union of Jewish Women and the Durban Jewish Women's Guild.

Within its recommendations the Committee also called for honour to be given to pupils of the *Talmud Torah*, and for all Youth Movements to be concentrated around the

*Talmud Torah*. It urged that valuable prizes and scholarships be offered to children for most regular attendance at the *Talmud Torah*, progress made thereat, and attendance at Synagogue. A call was also made for the parents to be invited to visit the *Talmud Torah* in an effort to arouse their interest in its activities.

The holding of an annual revival week was recommended by the Committee which wished to see the members of all community organisations involved in this plan. The underlying aim of this idea was to prove to every institution in the town that without an adequate religious and Hebrew training, which began with the children of the *Talmud Torah*, and diffused through the community, all other work for the community as a whole would eventually be lost and of no lasting value.

In contrast with the opinion expressed by Rabbi Zlotnik after his visit to Durban, the Committee did not see the *Talmud Torah's* principal role as that of a school for the teaching of Hebrew. Instead it urged that the greatest amount of time possible should be spent in teaching religion, customs and traditions, which were areas of education in which the children were receiving scant instruction in their homes, and a knowledge of which was regarded as vital for the continuance of the community.

Among its final recommendations the Committee asserted the need for the Rabbi of the Congregation to take a personal interest in the working of the *Talmud*

*Torah* as apart from his position as Chairman of the proposed Board of Education. It believed that he should be responsible for the general policy of the *Talmud Torah* and should be connected with the supervision of the curriculum. The community, it was felt, should have a right to look to the Rabbi for assurance that all was well with the educational functioning of the *Talmud Torah*. The Committee called for the Congregation's Council to encourage its members to send their children to the *Talmud Torah*, or to private Hebrew teachers. It suggested that the Congregation should not permit boys to be *barmitzvah* unless the Rabbi was satisfied that the boy had sufficient knowledge to entitle him to read his *barmitzvah* portion. The introduction of *batmitzvah* ceremonies for girls was also included among the Committee's recommendations.<sup>47</sup>

From its report it was clearly evident that the Committee regarded the *Talmud Torah* as an institution of paramount importance, capable of determining to a large extent the quality and degree of Jewish life in the City. It therefore deemed the *Talmud Torah* to be worthy of support from the entire community, but in particular, from the **United Hebrew** Congregation, with which it shared many similar objectives.

The report of the special Committee, for all its many sound and practical recommendations, could not,

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.4-7.

however, be acted upon immediately, as the Second World War broke out at the time that the Committee was concluding its deliberations.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48.



## CHAPTER XVIII

ZIONIST ACTIVITY IN DURBAN : 1936 - 1939

## POLITICAL ZIONISM

World Jewry's growing concern in this period for the future of its European co-religionists, was coupled with an increased uneasiness over the course which events were taking in Palestine. The tragic plight of European Jewry added impetus to the Zionist cause, and at the same time brought Jewish nationalist aspirations into conflict with Arab opposition, and with British bureaucracy which was struggling to satisfy both opposing parties.

The year 1936 began with world wide Zionist protests against the establishment of a Legislative Council in Palestine. Jewish opposition was not directed at the idea of a Legislative Council one day being created in Palestine, but rather to the fact that the proposed Council was to be formed on the existing ratio of Arabs and Jews in Palestine, and would be of distinct disadvantage to the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*The Zionist Record*, January 24, 1936, p.27.,  
*Hasholom*, XIII No.5 (January, 1936), 13.

Dissatisfaction over the High Commissioner's proposals for a Legislative Council were, however, superceded by the unrest and violence in Palestine in 1936, by which the Arabs sought to give expression to their demand for a cessation of further Jewish immigration into the country. Beginning with isolated attacks<sup>2</sup> the unrest spread rapidly, culminating in the declaration of a six month general strike by the Arab Higher Committee<sup>3</sup> and the outbreak of guerilla activities in various parts of Palestine.<sup>4</sup> Following the breakdown of peace talks, arranged by the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, fresh outbreaks of violence occurred,<sup>5</sup> which only ceased in October 1936, when at the recommendation of the Arab states to rely on the good intentions of the British, the strike was called off.<sup>6</sup> A Royal Commission, headed by Lord Peel, which was sent to investigate the cause

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, (New York, 1976), p.513., *The Natal Mercury*, April 20, 1936, p.11.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.513., *The Natal Mercury*, May 18, 1936, p.13.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.513., *The Natal Mercury*, May 18, 1936, p.17., May 22, 1936, p.11., May 25, 1936, p.4., June 1, 1936, p.9., June 3, 1936, p.13., June 11, 1936, p.8.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.513-514. *The Natal Mercury*, August 7, 1936, p.15., August 8, 1936, p.13., August 15, 1936, p.7., August 17, 1936, p.11., August 22, 1936, p.15., September 8, 1936, p.11., September 15, 1936, p.13., September 19, 1936, p.15., October 9, 1936, p.13.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.514., *The Natal Mercury*, October 12, 1936, p.11.

of the disorders in Palestine, left London, in November 1936, for Jerusalem<sup>7</sup> returning to the United Kingdom almost two months later.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst the Commission was preparing its report, Vladimir Jabotinsky, the head of the Zionist Revisionist Party and leader of the New Zionist Organisation, which had been formed in 1935 upon the secession of the Revisionist Party from the World Zionist Organisation,<sup>9</sup> visited Durban in the course of his tour of the Union. During his stay in the City he warned of his organisations determination to oppose any scheme which the Commission might recommend for partitioning Palestine, and insisted that the Jewish people needed the whole of Palestine, on both sides of the Jordan, for the Jewish homeless of Europe.<sup>10</sup>

In a public address at a packed meeting in the *Sons of England Hall*, Jabotinsky outlined his scheme to settle 1,500,000 Jews in Palestine over a period of ten years. He also repeated his demand that representation of the Jewish people in the Mandate should be transferred to a world Jewish National Assembly elected by universal suffrage. As a preliminary, Jabotinsky suggested a

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<sup>7</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.514., *The Natal Mercury*, November 6, 1936, p.13.

<sup>8</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.514., *The Natal Mercury*, February 1, 1937, p.10.

<sup>9</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.369.

<sup>10</sup>*The Natal Advertiser*, May 11, 1937, p.4.

round-table conference between the two Zionist organisations, and other organisations sincerely interested in creating a Jewish community.<sup>11</sup>

The Durban Zionist Association, in line with the South African Zionist Federation, came out in opposition to Mr Jabotinsky for having broken away from the Zionist Organisation. At a public meeting of the Zionist Association, held before his visit to Durban, Jabotinsky was attacked by Mr B. Gering of the South African Zionist Federation, for, "spilling Jewry into two camps, with two independent organisations."<sup>12</sup> Notwithstanding the attitude of the local Zionist Association, Jabotinsky's visit "took Durban by storm."<sup>13</sup> On May 27 the Durban Zionist Association held a mass meeting, which was addressed by Mr N. Kirschner, President of the South African Zionist Federation, to clear up various questions that had arisen in consequence of Jabotinsky's visit, and to reaffirm the official policy of the Association and the Zionist Federation.<sup>14</sup> Jabotinsky's visit to Durban also aroused a great deal of interest amongst the youth of the community, for whom his organisation generally

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<sup>11</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 12, 1937, p.16.

<sup>12</sup>*Hasholom*, XIV No.9 (May, 1937), 16. For a fuller account of Jabotinsky's visit to the Union and the response of the Zionist Federation see Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967*, (Cape Town, 1980), pp.183-186.

<sup>13</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 91.

<sup>14</sup>*The Zionist Record*, June 18, 1937, p.13.

had a particular appeal. However, like its parent body, the Durban Zionist Youth Society came out firmly behind the World Zionist Organisation.<sup>15</sup>

In July 1937, the Report of the Peel Commission was issued in London. Among its recommendations were the partition of Palestine into two new independent sovereign States, one Jewish and one Arab, the latter to be joined to Transjordan, with a British enclave under permanent mandate including Jerusalem, and a corridor to the sea at Jaffa; Tiberias, Safed, Haifa and Acre, because of their mixed population, were to remain temporarily under the control of the mandatory authority, who were to also retain control of Nazareth; the port of Jaffa was to belong to the Arab State. The Commission recommended furthermore, that Jewish immigration be restricted to the economic absorptive capacity of the projected Jewish State, and no immigration was to be allowed between the two States.<sup>16</sup>

The partition scheme was rejected by the Arabs, met with similar disapproval from many Zionists, and was strongly opposed by the Jewish community of Durban.<sup>17</sup>

In the two British Houses of Parliament the Report came

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<sup>15</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 91 and 93. On Youth Society see below p.356-361.

<sup>16</sup> On the Peel Commission see Walter Lacqueur, pp.514-518., *The Natal Mercury*, July 8, 1937, pp.18 and 20.

<sup>17</sup> *The Natal Advertiser*, July 8, 1937, pp.11-12.

under slashing attack,<sup>18</sup> and the House of Commons finally decided to have a further inquiry into the Palestine problem, after referring the Partition Report to the Mandates Commission of the League of the Nations.<sup>19</sup>

The question of partition dominated the agenda of the 16th South African Zionist Conference, held in Kimberley from July 30-August 2, 1937.<sup>20</sup> The representatives of the Zionist bodies in Durban<sup>21</sup> joined delegates from all parts of the Union in unanimously urging the World Zionist Congress to reject the proposals for partition, and in reaffirming the Conference's belief in the implementation of the Mandate.<sup>22</sup>

The chief feature of the 20th World Zionist Congress, which opened in Zurich on August 3 was, of course, the partition debate. Weizmann and his followers appealed to Congress not to reject the principle of partition,<sup>23</sup> a call unacceptable to many of the delegates, including Mr H. Moss-Morris of Durban, who was a member of the South African delegation, and who strongly argued against partition. Mr Moss-Morris, in fact, concluded his address at Congress by quoting a

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<sup>18</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 19, 1937, p.11.,  
July 21, 1937, p.13., July 23, 1937, p.15.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, July 23, 1937, p.15.

<sup>20</sup>*The Zionist Record*, August 6, 1937, p.7.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>22</sup>*Hasholom*, XIII No.12 (August, 1937), 6.

<sup>23</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 4, 1937, p.11.

letter from General Smuts expressing grave misgivings about the policy of partition.<sup>24</sup> Weizmann's resolution, which rejected the partition plan proposed by the Commission, but which empowered the Zionist Executive to enter into negotiations with the British Government to determine London's conditions for the establishment of a Jewish State, was passed by 300 votes to 158.<sup>25</sup>

Arab opposition to the partition proposals found expression in a renewed outbreak of unrest in Palestine,<sup>26</sup> which resulted in the murder of the District Commissioner of the Galilee<sup>27</sup> and the subsequent arrest of five prominent members of the Arab Higher Committee.<sup>28</sup> In response to the killing of Jews, individual units of the *Irgun* (the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, the National Military organisation of the Revisionists) began to attack Arab targets.<sup>29</sup> The execution of the *Irgun* fighter

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, August 10, 1937, p.13. Referred to in Walter Laqueur, p.519.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.520., *The Natal Mercury*, August 12, 1937, p.13.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.521., *The Natal Mercury*, September 2, 1937, p.13., October 19, 1937, p.11., October 23, 1937, p.15., November 6, 1937, p.15., November 10, 1937, p.7.

<sup>27</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.521., *The Natal Mercury*, September 29, 1937, p.13.

<sup>28</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.521., *The Natal Mercury*, October 2, 1937, p.15.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, November 15, 1937, p.13., December 21, 1937, p.15. On the *Irgun* see Walter Laqueur, pp.374-378., and Menachem Begin, *The Revolt*, (London, 1951).

Solomon ben Joseph, in June 1938,<sup>30</sup> prompted increased attacks on the part of the *Irgun* against the Arab targets and an escalation of fighting in Palestine.<sup>31</sup> The unrest abated with the British Government's announcement of its abandonment of the Partition Plan, and the convening of a conference in London, to be attended by representatives of the British Government, the Arabs and the Jewish Agency.<sup>32</sup>

Whilst the country was torn by violence, Zionist opinion on the question of Palestine remained divided.<sup>33</sup> To help the community better understand the situation, Mr Eliezer Kaplan, the Treasurer and a member of the Executive of the Jewish Agency, visited Durban in February 1938. During his stay in the City he met with all branches of the local Zionist movement and addressed a mass meeting at the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>34</sup> A month

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<sup>30</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.375., *The Natal Mercury*, July 1, 1938, p.17.

<sup>31</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.375., *The Natal Mercury*, July 5, 1938, p.11., July 6, 1938, p.13., July 7, 1938, p.11., July 11, 1938, p.13., July 12, 1938, p.13., July 13, 1938, p.15., July 14, 1938, p.15., July 16, 1938, p.15., July 18, 1938, p.11., July 19, 1938, p.11., July 26, 1938, p.13., August 1, 1938, p.11., August 19, 1938, p.6., September 15, 1938, p.15., October 4, 1938, p.13.

<sup>32</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.522., *The Natal Mercury*, October 19, 1938, p.13., November 10, 1938, p.15.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, January 5, 1938, p.13., February 7, 1938, p.17.

<sup>34</sup>*Hasholom*, XV No.7 (March, 1938), 12.



later, during his tour of the Union, in the interests of the New Zionist Organisation, Mr Vladimir Jabotinsky passed through Durban,<sup>35</sup> to be followed a few weeks later by Dr Louis Altman, a member of the World Presidency of the Organisation.<sup>36</sup> Both Revisionist leaders held opinions that differed greatly from those held by members of the Jewish Agency. In October 1938 at a mass meeting, to commemorate the 21st anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, Mr M. Kentridge M.P., a Vice-President of the South African Zionist Federation, placed his analysis of the existing situation before local Zionists.<sup>37</sup> Mr Kentridge assured his audience that they could continue to have faith in Great Britain as the Mandatory Power in Palestine, and that the pledge which Great Britain had given Jewry was one which all Britons would fight for.<sup>38</sup>

The London Round Table Conference opened on February 7, 1939<sup>39</sup> and in the ensuing discussions it was found impossible to reduce the sharp cleavage that existed between the Jewish and Arab viewpoints.<sup>40</sup> The

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<sup>35</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 23, 1938, p.15.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, April 7, 1938, p.23.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, October 31, 1938, p.11., *The Zionist Record*, November 4, 1938, p.18.

<sup>38</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.3 (November, 1938), 27.

<sup>39</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.523., *The Natal Mercury*, February 8, 1939, p.13.

<sup>40</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.523-527., *The Natal Mercury*, February 20, 1939, p.11.

Jewish representatives rejected the British delegation's suggestion of a gradual restriction in immigration to Palestine,<sup>41</sup> or its suggestions for Jewish acceptance of minority status in Palestine.<sup>42</sup> The Conference ended with the departure of the Jewish delegation in mid-March.<sup>43</sup> World Jewry, isolated politically, threatened by the forces of Fascism, and unable to find a place of refuge for its persecuted communities in almost any part of the globe, now watched its dreams of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine gradually eroding. At a mass meeting in the *Coronation Hall*, Johannesburg, Dr Deborah Katzen and Rabbi A.H. Freedman, of Durban, called on the Jewish people not to lose their faith, but to face the world with courage.<sup>44</sup>

The British Government published its historic White Paper, which was based on its plans communicated at the London Round-Table Conference, at St. James's Palace, on May 17, 1939. It expressed Britain's intention to establish an independent Palestine state within ten years, limited Jewish immigration to 75,000 in the first five years, making Jewish immigration thereafter dependant on Arab permission, and prohibited or restricted

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<sup>41</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.526., *The Natal Mercury*, February 22, 1939, p.13.

<sup>42</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.526., *The Natal Mercury*, March 1, 1939, p.13.

<sup>43</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.527., *The Natal Mercury*, March 17, 1939, p.15.

<sup>44</sup>*The Zionist Record*, February 10, 1939, p.17.

Jewish settlement in certain parts of Palestine.<sup>45</sup>  
 World Jewry rejected the White Paper as a denial of the Jewish people's right to rebuild their ancestral homeland. They rejected it as a breach of faith on the part of Great Britain and a vain effort to appease Arab nationalism. Particularly painful for World Jewry, in the light of prevailing conditions for Jews in Europe, was the White Paper's curb on Jewish immigration.<sup>46</sup>

Palestinian Jewry organised an all day strike to emphasise its protest,<sup>47</sup> whilst in South Africa, the delegates to the 17th South African Zionist Conference, in Bloemfontein, demonstrated their indignation at the form of the proposals.<sup>48</sup> The White Paper was criticised by General Smuts<sup>49</sup> and by Mr Jan Hofmeyr M.P.,<sup>50</sup> whilst the New Zionist Organisation of South Africa forwarded a petition to General Hertzog requesting "the Union Government in its capacity as head of a co-signatory State on the Palestine Mandate to use its utmost endeavours to negative in the League of Nations the White Paper proposals of the British Government."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.528., *The Natal Mercury*, May 18, 1939, p.13.

<sup>46</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.528.

<sup>47</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 19, 1939, p.13.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, May 20, 1939, p.14.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, May 30, 1939, p.17.

Throughout the Union Jewish communities gathered to protest against the Palestine White Paper,<sup>52</sup> which, in the words of the Editor of the Jewish Club journal, *Hasholom*, came after, "three years of blind faith in the proverbial sense of British justice," for which Jewry had been "rewarded with disillusionment and a betrayal of trust."<sup>53</sup> At a meeting held on May 28 at the Jewish Club the community recorded its protest against the White Paper, and pledged its support for the World Zionist Organisation in its efforts to secure the rights, granted to Jewry under the Balfour Declaration.<sup>54</sup>

Jewry's outspoken criticism of the White Paper aroused the ire of sections of the local Durban press. *The Natal Mercury*, which was unashamedly imperialist, warned the Jewish people that in continuing, "their reckless campaign of inflaming public opinion on the Palestine question they will alienate that large body of public opinion in Britain whose support and sympathy they so desperately needed."<sup>55</sup> It also prompted much correspondence on the matter in the columns of the daily morning newspaper.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, May 28, 1939, pp.14 and 18.

<sup>53</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.9 (May, 1939), 2.

<sup>54</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 2, 1939, pp.9-10.

<sup>55</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 17, 1939, p.16.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, June 16, 1939, p.18., June 17, 1939, p.16., June 19, 1939, p.16., June 20, 1939, p.16., June 22, 1939, p.20., June 23, 1939, p.20., June 24, 1939, p.16.

Undaunted by local public opinion the New Zionist Organisation of South Africa held a public meeting at the *Caxton Hall*, Smith Street, on July 2nd,<sup>57</sup> at which Mr A.A. Menkin, the General Secretary of the Organisation in South Africa, made reference to the editorial and readers' letters published in *The Natal Mercury*.<sup>58</sup> In his address Mr Menkin outlined his organisation's stand, challenged the Palestine Administration's right to restrict Jewish immigration, which he proclaimed the New Zionist Organisation was circumventing by smuggling immigrants into Palestine, and strongly criticised the British Government for issuing the White Paper.<sup>59</sup> Local leaders of the Jewish community mindful of local pro-British sentiment determined not to be identified with the opinions expressed at the meeting. They therefore informed the press that Mr Menkin's meeting was held against their wishes.<sup>60</sup> Mr F.C. Hollander, much respected by the local citizenry for his **years of public service**, added his own personal criticism of the New Zionist Organisation meeting. He disassociated himself from the unrestrained criticism of the British Government and its people which had been voiced, questioned the advisability of

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, June 30, 1939, p.15.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, July 3, 1939, p.13.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

smuggling illegal immigrants into Palestine, and affirmed the loyalty and indebtedness of himself and his community generally, to Great Britain and the Commonwealth.<sup>61</sup>

In August 1939 Zionists gathered in Geneva for the 21st World Zionist Congress, at which the delegation from South Africa included Mr H. Moss-Morris,<sup>62</sup> who also represented the Union at the Jewish Agency meeting held immediately after the Congress.<sup>63</sup> Jewry's bitterness over the White Paper was again expressed by Dr Weizmann, in his presidential address at the opening of the Congress,<sup>64</sup> which, meeting under the shadow of war, was characterised by a mood of seriousness.

Less than a week after the Congress ended, Germany invaded Poland, and with the outbreak of World War II the Jewish opposition to British policy in Palestine was superceded by a common desire to defeat the forces of Nazism.

#### PHILANTHROPIC ZIONISM

Local Jewry's concern over Palestine was mirrored in the rapt attention with which the community followed

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, July 4, 1939, p.17.

<sup>62</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 28, 1939, p.4.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, August 4, 1939, p.26.

<sup>64</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 17, 1939, p.15.

the unfolding of events in the National Homeland, and found practical expression in the generosity with which the community responded to campaigns for funds to assist in the country's upbuilding.

In 1936, as Palestine was experiencing widescale riots and unrest, Prof. Selig Brodetsky, a prominent Zionist and Professor of Applied Mathematics at Leeds University,<sup>65</sup> and Mrs Rebecca Sieff, a pioneer of Women's Zionism and joint Chairman of WIZO,<sup>66</sup> visited Durban in the interests of the *Keren Hayesod* Campaign. Their campaign in Durban was in every way a remarkable success, which was largely attributable to the efforts of the local *Keren Hayesod* Committee, led by Mr S. Moshal. The inaugural banquet drew a record crowd;<sup>67</sup> the women's campaign was launched at a reception attended by over 200 women, and the mass meeting and youth rally established a record mass meeting attendance.<sup>68</sup> In furtherance of the campaign a brief visit to Durban was made by Mr Baruch Zuckerman, who addressed the community in Yiddish at a meeting at the Jewish Club on August 18.<sup>69</sup>

The *Karen Kayemeth* Campaign, held in the following year, was launched only days after the publication of

<sup>65</sup> *Hasholom*, XIII No.9 (May, 1936), 16.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>67</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 19, 1936, p.10.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.2 (October, 1936), 10.

the Report of the Peel Commission. The emotions aroused by the Report added impetus to the appeal made by the prominent American Zionist, Rabbi Dr Solomon Goldman, at a mass meeting at the Jewish Club on July 12, 1937.<sup>70</sup> From Durban, where he concluded his nationwide campaign, Rabbi Goldman proceeded to the 20th World Zionist Congress, to give expression to his opposition to the Partition Plan, which, during his stay in Durban, he had described "as being unfair and contrary to the whole historic outlook of the Jewish people."<sup>71</sup>

The 1938 *Keren Hayesod* Campaign was launched in Durban, from August 2-4,<sup>72</sup> by the Rev. Maurice Perlzweig, minister of the Liberal Synagogue in London, and a member of the Executive of the World Zionist Organisation and of the Jewish Agency; Mrs Roza Ginzberg, one of the first women members of the Palestine Bar, the honorary treasurer of the Palestine Executive of WIZO and the daughter-in-law of Achad Ha'am; and Dr Max Soloweitschik, a distinguished Zionist leader, who was director of the Anglo-Palestine Bank in Haifa and Chairman of the *Keren Hayesod* Committee in Palestine.<sup>73</sup> A notable feature of the campaign was the inauguration of a Youth *Keren*

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.11 (July, 1937), 10-11.

<sup>71</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 14, 1937, p.14.

<sup>72</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 5, 1938, p.7., August 12, 1938, p.10.

<sup>73</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.11 (July, 1938), *Keren Hayesod* Supplement.



*Hayesod* Campaign, at a reception to the Rev. Perlzweig, which drew a fine response on the part of the youth who displayed an irrepressible desire to play a more effective role in Zionist fundraising.<sup>74</sup>

In furtherance of the *Keren Hayesod* Campaign, but primarily in the interests of the *Mizrachi* Party, Rabbi Wolf Gold, President of the World *Mizrachi* Organisation, spent a short time with the Jewish community of Durban. The chief function during his stay was a mass meeting, which took place on September 20, 1938. Before his departure from Durban, the Rabbi formed a nucleus group of the *Mizrachi* Party, with Rabbi A.H. Freedman, Chairman; Mr A.J. Cohen, Vice-Chairman; the Rev. N. Menachemson, Secretary; and Dr N. Smith, Treasurer.<sup>75</sup> From Durban the *Mizrachi* President, accompanied by Messrs N. Hertz and S. Ogus, of Durban, travelled to Vryheid, where at a gathering of the Jewish community of the district he inaugurated the local *Keren Hayesod* Campaign.<sup>76</sup>

By the time Lieut. Col. Fredrick Kisch, the prominent British Zionist leader, visited Durban in July 1939, as the emissary of the *Keren Kayemeth* Campaign, the White Paper had already been published and

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.12 (August, 1938), 27.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.2 (October, 1938), 17.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.3 (November, 1938), 14.

was the subject of the Lieut. Col. Kisch's address to the community.<sup>77</sup> After speaking to the women and youth of the community,<sup>78</sup> Lieut. Col. Kisch continued his tour of the Union, on which he had earlier been accompanied by Mr A. Goldberg M.P., of Durban.<sup>79</sup>

#### ORGANISATIONAL ZIONISM

The meetings in connection with the events in Palestine and the fund raising efforts on behalf of the country, were the principal preoccupations of the Durban Zionist Association in this period.<sup>80</sup>

Upon its reorganisation in 1935 by a few enthusiasts, headed by Mr Alec Rubens, the Association had held regular meetings and had organised Blue Box clearances and the annual *Shekel* collection.<sup>81</sup> With Mr Rubens's departure from Durban in February 1936,<sup>82</sup> and his subsequent decision to settle in Palestine,<sup>83</sup> the local

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.11 (July, 1939), 3.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>79</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 16, 1939, p.9.

<sup>80</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 75., *Ibid.*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 91., *Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 69-70.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 75.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Hasholom*. XIII No.11 (July, 1936), 4.

Association once again went into decline. On April 14, 1937, the members of the Association met at the Jewish Club for the purpose of re-establishing the Durban Zionist Association on a stronger and better organised basis.<sup>84</sup> The intention of the meeting was to create "a structure which was to be essentially of a cultural and educational nature rather than...of a monetary or fund raising nature for which the Society had hitherto existed."<sup>85</sup>

Contrary to its said intentions, the Association, however, never developed into a cultural or educational body within the community. As in the past it directed its energies principally to the sale of *Shekels*,<sup>86</sup> the clearance of National Fund Blue Boxes,<sup>87</sup> the representation of Zionists at conferences of the South

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<sup>84</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 23, 1937, p.28.

<sup>85</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 91.

<sup>86</sup> In 1936 324 *shekels* were sold, in 1937 386 *shekels* were purchased and in the following year the sale of *shekels* totalled 507. (*The Zionist Record*, June 24, 1938, p.24.) In 1939 over 600 persons enrolled as *shekel* holders. (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 69-70.)

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 75., *Hasholom* XIV No.7 (March, 1937), 5., *Ibid.*, XV No.9 (May, 1938), 4.

African Zionist Federation,<sup>88</sup> and the organising of elections to select delegates to the Congresses of the World Zionist Organisation.<sup>89</sup>

Other activities arranged by the Association included the organisation of a visit to Durban of the celebrated author and orator Mr Maurice Samuel,<sup>90</sup> the presentation of the first all Hebrew talking film entitled *This is the Land*,<sup>91</sup> the convening of mass meetings to commemorate the anniversaries of the Balfour Declaration<sup>92</sup> and the co-sponsorship of a *Purim* function.<sup>93</sup>

Of considerable interest to local Zionists was the visit to Durban of Mr Ehud Ben Yehuda, a son of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, who came to South Africa to enlist the

<sup>88</sup> At the 16th South African Zionist Conference in Kimberley from July 30-August 2, 1937, the Association was represented by Messrs J. Goldberg and S.A. Ogus, (*The Zionist Record*, August 6, 1937, p.8.) At the 17th Conference, held in Bloemfontein, in May 1939, Messrs A. Goldberg M.P., M. Goldberg, N. Lochoff and Mrs I. Tager represented the Association. (*Ibid.*, May 26, 1939, p.21.)

<sup>89</sup> Mr H. Moss-Morris of Durban was elected as a delegate to the 20th World Zionist Congress in Zurich, in August 1937, (*Ibid.*, June 25, 1937, p.9.) and was a member of the South African delegation to the 21st Congress in Geneva. (*Ibid.*, July 28, 1939, p.4.) Immediately thereafter he represented the Union at a Jewish Agency meeting. (*Ibid.*, August 4, 1939, p.26.)

<sup>90</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 91.

<sup>91</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 12, 1937, p.11.

<sup>92</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 12, 1937, p.25., November 4, 1938, p.18.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, March 10, 1939, p.22.

support of local Jewry in the work of completing the Hebrew Thesaurus, which had been his father's principal preoccupation. An Eliezer Ben Yehuda Memorial Committee was established in the Union, and this committee received the patronage of the Minister of Education the Hon. J.H. Hofmeyr. Among the committee's personnel were Dr B. Moshal, the President of the Durban Jewish Club, and Mr M. Freed, one of the stalwarts of the Durban Zionist Association.<sup>94</sup>

In contrast to the Durban Zionist Association, the Durban Women's Zionist League devoted much of its energies to cultural and intellectual pursuits, and in so doing it largely fulfilled the cultural needs of the Jewish women of Durban.<sup>95</sup> Regular meetings of the League were punctuated by the visits of interesting personalities, whose participation in League activities indicated the stature which the League had rapidly acquired within the community. Among these visitors were Rabbi Dr Solomon Goldman, who visited Durban on behalf of the Jewish National Fund in July 1937;<sup>96</sup> Justice and Mrs Frumkin from Palestine;<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, April 1, 1937, p.27.

<sup>95</sup> For details of its monthly activities see *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 75-76., *Ibid.*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 93., *Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 77., *Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 69.

<sup>96</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 30, 1937, p.26.

<sup>97</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.5 (January, 1938), 31.

Dr Deborah Katzen and Mrs Rheinhold, the chairman and vice-chairman of the Johannesburg Women's Zionist League, who addressed the League in July 1938;<sup>98</sup> Rabbi Wolf Gold, who visited Durban in September 1938, principally in the interests of the *Mizrachi* Party;<sup>99</sup> Mr H. Rajak, the chairman of the Men's Zionist Society of Johannesburg<sup>100</sup> and Lieut. Col. F. Kisch, who visited Durban in July 1939 for the National Fund Campaign.<sup>101</sup>

As a Zionist body, the League was also active in many avenues of Zionist endeavour, and its work complimented that undertaken by the members of the Durban Zionist Association. Through the activities of its sewing groups the League extended practical assistance to WIZO,<sup>102</sup> whilst it also annually contributed funds towards the Hebrew University of Jerusalem<sup>103</sup> and the *Keren Kayemeth*.<sup>104</sup> In May 1938 the Women's Zionist League took charge of clearing of Blue Boxes,<sup>105</sup> the first J.N.F. conveners of the League being

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.12 (August, 1938), 30.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.2 (October, 1938), 23.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.7 (March, 1939), 23.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.12 (August, 1939), 12.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.3 (November, 1937), 31., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 69.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 75., *The Zionist Record*, November 20, 1936, p.29.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, July 24, 1936, p.34., *Hasholom*, XV No.3 (November, 1937), 31.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.9 (May, 1938), 4.

Mesdames S. Torf, J. Fisher and C.I. Israel.<sup>106</sup>

Members of the League also assisted in local *Shekel* collections,<sup>107</sup> and during the biennial *Keren Hayesod* Campaigns League members served on the local Executive and arranged the women's campaigns.<sup>108</sup> Delegates from the League represented the women Zionists of Durban at National Zionist Conferences<sup>109</sup> and at the Women's Zionist Conferences, which generally preceded the Conferences of the South African Zionist Federation.<sup>110</sup>

Within six years of its inception the League had come to occupy an important part in the life of the Jewish community to which it made a significant contribution, through its many and varied activities. The influence of the League was in fact, however, not

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<sup>106</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 77.

<sup>107</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 17, 1939, p.22.

<sup>108</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 75., *Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 77.

<sup>109</sup> At the 16th South African Zionist Conference in Kimberley in 1937, Mrs C. Torf represented the League. (*The Zionist Record*, August 6, 1937, p.8.) At the 17th Conference, held in Bloemfontein, the League was represented by Mrs H. Moss-Morris. (*Ibid.*, May 26, 1939, p.21.)

<sup>110</sup> Mrs C. Torf attended the 3rd South African Women's Zionist Conference held in Kimberley on July 29, 1937 (*Ibid.*, August 6, 1937, p.8.) and Mrs H. Moss-Morris was present on behalf of the League of the 4th South African Women's Zionist Conference, held in Bloemfontein on May 17, 1939. (*Ibid.*, May 26, 1939, p.21.)

entirely restricted to Durban, for, by 1937, a group of women Zionist workers had been organised in Pietermaritzburg, largely through the efforts of the League.<sup>111</sup> Thereafter contact was maintained with the Pietermaritzburg group,<sup>112</sup> and irregular visits by members of the two groups served to strengthen this bond still further.<sup>113</sup>

Within the ranks of the *Habonim* the period from 1936 to the outbreak of war was one of growth and progress, but one not entirely free from difficulty.

Upon recommencing its activities in February 1936, after a recess to coincide with the summer holidays, the Movement in Durban numbered 163 *Bonoth* and *Bonim* and 16 officers, divided into 2 *gedudim* of *Bonim*, 2 of *Bonoth* and 2 of *Hashtilim* (the junior group). In Pietermaritzburg there were 2 *gedudim* of 24 members and in Vryheid there were also 2 *gedudim*.<sup>114</sup> For a movement that had been started some three years earlier, its rapid growth in Durban, and its expansion to other centres of Jewish residence in Natal, testified to the popularity which *Habonim* enjoyed and the importance of such a movement for the Jewish children of the Province. The movement in Durban was also singularly fortunate to

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<sup>111</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 93.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 77.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 69.

<sup>114</sup> *Hasholom*, XIII No.7 (March, 1936), 23.



to win the immediate support of Mr S. Ernst, the newly appointed headmaster of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, who arrived in the City early in 1936 and thereafter championed the Movement's cause.<sup>115</sup>

For Durban *Habonim* the year 1936 was characterised by a number of firsts, which indicated the Movement's growing influence within the community, and its growing importance in the eyes of the National *Habonim* leaders. In April the *manhig* of *Habonim*, Norman Lurie, paid his first visit to the Durban Movement,<sup>116</sup> and in the same month several officers of the Durban Movement, in turn, travelled to Johannesburg to attend the fifth annual *chagigah*, which marked the fifth anniversary of the founding of *Habonim*.<sup>117</sup> At the *chagigah* Mr J. Rubin of Durban was elected to the South African *Habonim* Council, a personal tribute to Mr Rubin's contribution to *Habonim*, and a national acknowledgement of the significance to the Movement of the Durban branch.<sup>118</sup> When the first Communal *Seder* was held at the Durban Jewish Club in April 1936 it was arranged under the joint auspices of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, the Durban Young Israel Society and *Habonim*,<sup>119</sup> recognition in itself by the community of the Movement's place within the affairs of

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.2 (October, 1936), 11.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.8 (April, 1936), 16.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 17, 1936, p.25.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, April 24, 1936, p.39.

the Jewish youth of the City.

April 1936 also saw the holding of the 1st Natal sport *chagigah*<sup>120</sup> and four months later Natal's first cultural *chagigah* was held. All Natal *gedudim* participated in the cultural *chagigah* which included an address by Mr N. Lourie, various competitions, and a concert, and was concluded by an Investiture Ceremony for officers conducted in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>121</sup> In December 1936, the first contingent of Durban *Bonim* and *Bonoth* attended a national *Habonim* camp at Port Elizabeth.

Building upon their success, the leaders of *Habonim* in Durban, in 1937, attracted additional members to their ranks<sup>122</sup> and in fact were faced with a dearth of young men willing to assist the Movement,<sup>123</sup> rather than insufficient members. In September 1937, a group of *Shomrim*, the senior branch of *Habonim*, was formed in Durban.<sup>124</sup> At the same time a Junior Tennis Club was established, in conjunction with the Zionist Youth Society, and the use of two Circle tennis courts accorded to the club on Sunday afternoons. A gymnastic class

<sup>120</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.2 (October, 1936), 11.

<sup>121</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 4, 1936, p.23.

<sup>122</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), 27.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.9 (May, 1937), 17.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.3 (November, 1937), 23.

under the control of *Rosh David Panovka*, was also set up for members of *Habonim*.<sup>125</sup> In December 1937, in addition to sending members to the National Camp at Lakeside,<sup>126</sup> *Natal Habonim* also held its first annual camp at Inyoni Rocks which was attended by several members of the Zionist Youth Society.<sup>127</sup>

Of serious consequence for *Habonim* was the decision of the Executive of the Jewish Club to discontinue allowing the Movement the use of Club premises, as a result of an increase in general Club activities.<sup>128</sup> From November 1937, therefore, *Habonim* found itself without a home. When meetings recommenced in 1938 the *gedudim* continued to meet regularly at various places, whilst its headquarters became the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, at 37 Silverton Road.<sup>129</sup> The problem of premises remained serious and three *gedudim* were forced to meet at the Hebrew School and the others on the Pavilion Grounds in Old Ford Road.<sup>130</sup> The leaders of *Habonim*, however, recognised that whilst the lack of a permanent home was a source of difficulty, their "greatest problem though was lack of officers and a reluctance on the part

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.6 (February, 1938), 25.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.5 (January, 1938), 23.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 12.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.6 (February, 1938), 23.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.7 (March, 1938), 32.

of some parents to enrol their children in *Habonim*."<sup>131</sup>  
 To offset parental disinterest a move was made in May  
 May 1937 to form a Lay Committee of Parents which it was  
 hoped, would actively participate in the organisation of  
 the Movement and would afford members an opportunity of  
 discussing with parents all problems affecting the  
 Movement.<sup>132</sup> From this Committee later emerged the  
 Friends of *Habonim*,<sup>133</sup> a body of interested parents,  
 which has continued to operate with varying degrees of  
 success up until the present day.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the leaders of  
*Habonim* and the Lay Committee, the search for suitable  
 premises proved fruitless and throughout 1939 *gedudim*  
 continued to meet under unfavourable circumstances in  
 various parts of the City.<sup>134</sup> The Movement nevertheless  
 continued to enjoy increased support from an evergrowing  
 number of young Jews.

Relations between *Habonim* and the other Zionist  
 youth body in Durban, the **Young Israel Society**, were  
 marked by a mutual cordiality and friendly rivalry,  
 exemplified by their combined **Junior Zionist Effort**,  
 initiated in September 1935. The young Zionists sought

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<sup>131</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1  
 (September, 1939), 67 and 69.

<sup>132</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.9 (May, 1937), 17.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.3 (November, 1937), 23.

<sup>134</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1  
 (September, 1939) 67 and 69.

to collectively raise £250 to be divided among the *Chalutz* farm, (a farm in the Transvaal where young people were trained prior to their immigration to agricultural settlements in Palestine) the *Keren Hayesod* and the Jewish National Fund.<sup>135</sup> This effort extended over six months and funds were raised through card parties.<sup>136</sup> rugby matches,<sup>137</sup> dances<sup>138</sup> and a bioscope evening.<sup>139</sup> The Effort culminated in a fete, held at the Jewish Club on March 8,<sup>140</sup> which proved to be an unqualified success and enabled the Young Israel Society and *Habonim* to exceed their target of £250. The two Zionist youth movements again worked in close co-operation in arranging suitable functions for Hebrew week, which was organised by the South African Zionist Youth Council throughout the Union, from January 30 - February 6, 1937, with a view to propagating the use of the Hebrew language amongst the Jewish community of South Africa.<sup>141</sup>

The Durban Young Israel Society having by the end of 1935 undergone a period of growth and consolidation,

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 90.

<sup>136</sup> *Hasholom*, XIII No.2 (October, 1935), 22.,  
*Ibid.*, XIII No.3 (November, 1935), 22.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.2 (October, 1935), 22.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.4 (December, 1935), 27.,  
*Ibid.*, XIII No.5 (January, 1936), 22.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.4 (December, 1935), 27.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.7 (March, 1936), 21.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.4 (December, 1936), 13.,  
*Ibid.*, XIV No.6 (February, 1937), 5.

took on a new direction in 1936, placing great emphasis on education and keeping all social entertainment to a minimum.

The Society's study circle resumed activities,<sup>142</sup> its luncheon club meetings were continued,<sup>143</sup> and an intensive programme of Hebrew and Zionist studies was begun.<sup>144</sup> The Society was fortunate to obtain the services of Mr S. Ernst shortly after he arrived in Durban to take up his post as headmaster of the *Talmud Torah*. Under his direction, classes were held every Sunday evening at the Jewish Club and every Wednesday evening at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>145</sup> Attendance at these classes grew rapidly and by September 1936, numbered more than fifty.<sup>146</sup> To help Mr Ernst the services of Miss B. Wolk, a teacher at the *Talmud Torah*, were enlisted to conduct some of the classes.<sup>147</sup> The Young Israel Society also inaugurated a Friday evening study circle and began Hebrew singing classes.<sup>148</sup> Apart from its intensive educational

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.7 (March, 1936), 23.

<sup>143</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 78.

<sup>144</sup> *Hasholom*, XIII No.11 (July, 1936), 26.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.2 (October, 1936), 12.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 78.

programme the Society also organised various functions to celebrate the Jewish festivals in an appropriate manner, such as a *Sukkot* dinner, held in the *Sukkah* of the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>149</sup> In conjunction with *Habonim* and the United *Talmud Torah* the Durban Young Israel Society held the first Communal *Seder*, in April 1936,<sup>150</sup> and conducted High Festival services for the youth of the community.<sup>151</sup>

Early in 1937 the Committee of the Young Israel Society devoted much time to considering the policy and future programme of the Society.<sup>152</sup> Ultimately it decided to reorganise itself and to change its name to the Durban Zionist Youth **Society**,<sup>153</sup> and to cater for youth over seventeen years of age.

The Durban Zionist Youth Society took up from where the Young Israel Society had **left off**. With the creation of the Zionist Youth **Society** however, it is possible to detect a shift in **emphasis** and direction, from that followed by the **Young Israel Society**. No longer was this Society **concerned** with the children of the community, this **category of Zionists** now being satisfactorily catered for by *Habonim*. Instead, its

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<sup>149</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.2 (October, 1936), 12.

<sup>150</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 24, 1936, p.39.

<sup>151</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.2 (October, 1936), 12.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), 13.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 12.

efforts now came to be totally directed towards those young adults of the community, not yet ready to take their place amongst the members of the Senior Zionist bodies and yet too old to be involved in *Habonim*. It in fact stood clearly as a bridge between *Habonim* on the one hand, and the Senior Zionist bodies on the other. No longer required to meet the needs of junior and senior members, as was the case with the Young Israel Society, the Durban Zionist Youth Society was able to direct its attention towards the needs of the youth eligible to enter its ranks and in directing all its energies to meeting their needs was able to attract a large number of the community's youth to its fold.

The Durban Zionist Youth Society focused its attention firstly on Zionist education and the study of Hebrew and, secondly, the encouragement of increased participation of Zionist youth in senior Zionist and communal work.

In pursuit of its first objective the Zionist and Hebrew classes inaugurated by the Young Israel Society were continued,<sup>154</sup> and a programme of events in connection with the Zionist Youth Council's Hebrew Week, in August 1938, were drawn up by the Society.<sup>155</sup> During 1938 a number of study groups were brought into existence

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<sup>154</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 93., *Hasholom*, XV No.8 (April, 1938), 21., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 67.

<sup>155</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.2 (October, 1938), 27.



to intensify the Jewish and Zionist knowledge of members,<sup>156</sup> and in 1939 a weekly Bible class was also started.<sup>157</sup>

In striving to involve its members more directly in the work of the senior communal bodies of Durban, the Society took a leading part in the annual sale of *Shekels*<sup>158</sup> and the clearance of Blue Boxes.<sup>159</sup> In 1937 and 1939 it arranged special youth drives on behalf of the Jewish National Fund<sup>160</sup> and in 1938 the first youth *Keren Hayesod* Campaign was held in Durban under the Society's auspices.<sup>161</sup> In conjunction with the Durban Jewish Club, with whom the Society enjoyed a close working relationship,<sup>162</sup> the Zionist Youth held their first ball in August 1938, from which the Jewish National Fund and the Durban United *Talmud Torah* were the principal beneficiaries.<sup>163</sup> In co-operation with the Durban Zionist Association the Youth Society arranged a function

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.8 (April, 1938), 21.

<sup>157</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 67.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 93., *Hasholom*, XV No.8 (April, 1938), 21., *Ibid.*, XVI No.7 (March, 1939), 9.

<sup>159</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 93.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Hasholom*, XVI No.11 (July, 1939), 23.

<sup>161</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.12 (August, 1938), 27.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.4 (December, 1938), 12., *Ibid.*, XVII No.3 (November, 1939), 8.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.2 (October, 1938), 27.

to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration,<sup>164</sup> and under the auspices of the Zionist Youth, the Rev. E.C. Wilkinson gave an address to the Jewish community on "Some Aspects of the Jewish Problem," in December 1938.<sup>165</sup> Members of the Zionist Youth also served on the senior Jewish National Fund Committee and on the Committee of the Durban Zionist Association.<sup>166</sup> At the 16th South African Zionist Conference, in Kimberley in 1937, the Durban Zionist Association was represented by Messrs S.A. Ogus and J. Goldberg,<sup>167</sup> who were also the delegates of the Zionist Youth Society at the 4th South African Zionist Youth Conference which was held prior to the main Conference.<sup>168</sup> In 1939 Miss R. Moss-Morris represented the Durban Zionist Youth Society at the 17th South African Zionist Conference,<sup>169</sup> and the 5th South African Zionist Youth Conference,<sup>170</sup> which were held in Bloemfontein in May of the same year.

Recognition of all festivals and religious holidays became a regular practice of the Society, which not only continued to have the annual Communal *Seder* held under

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<sup>164</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 12, 1937, p.25.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, December 9, 1938, p.10.

<sup>166</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 91 and 93.

<sup>167</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 6, 1937, p.8.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, May 26, 1939, p.21.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

its auspices, and those of *Habonim* and the United *Talmud Torah*,<sup>171</sup> but also suitably observed all other Jewish holidays.<sup>172</sup> The Society's annual programme of activities also always included some functions of a general nature as well as purely social functions.<sup>173</sup> During 1938 members of the Society formed a dramatic section and also started gym, tennis and table tennis sections.<sup>174</sup>

From a membership of 37 in July 1937 the ranks of the Society rapidly swelled in just over a year to 120,<sup>175</sup> at which number it remained fairly fixed.<sup>176</sup> As its numbers increased so the status of the Durban Zionist Youth Society was enhanced in the eyes of the Jewish community.<sup>177</sup> This was clearly reflected in the large attendance of representatives of various communal bodies at the Society's annual general meeting in

<sup>171</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 93., *The Zionist Record*, May 27, 1938, p.24., April 21, 1939, p.24.

<sup>172</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.2 (October, 1937), 27., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 75., *Hasholom*, XVI No.3 (November, 1938), 22., *Ibid.*, XVI No.5 (January, 1939), 17.

<sup>173</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 93., *Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 75., *Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 67.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 75.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 67.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 75.

February 1939.<sup>178</sup> At the meeting the retiring chairman, Mr S.A. Ogus, under whose direction the Society had made such rapid progress, stated that "the Society had fully established itself and is recognised as the official youth organisation of the community..." and that, "...a large section of the Jewish youth of Durban which had previously not associated itself with any institution is now being catered for socially and culturally by the Society."<sup>179</sup>

In 1939, in order to assist the Executive of the Society in preparing its cultural programme, and in matters of general policy, an advisory council of ex-committee members was formed, consisting of Messrs E. Schragenheim, J. Goldberg, S. Ernst, S.A. Ogus and P. Patz.<sup>180</sup> This committee rendered invaluable services to the Executive, which, on the basis of the Society's achievements, was encouraged to strive for the involvement of even greater numbers of Durban's senior youth in its activities.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.6 (February, 1939), 22.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 67.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER XIX

IN THE SERVICE OF  
THE COMMUNITY : 1930 - 1939

## DURBAN JEWISH BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

The changing conditions of the 30's placed a great burden on the facilities of the two charitable organisations concerned with Jewish welfare work in Durban, whilst at the same time they highlighted the important place which these societies occupied in the communal life of local Jewry.

The effects of the general economic depression which befell the Union in 1930 were keenly felt by the Durban Jewish Benevolent Society, which was approached by so many calls for relief that, within a few months, its coffers were almost entirely emptied. In order to continue with its work the Benevolent Society sought to acquire additional funds and, as a first step towards realising this objective, it embarked on an extensive membership drive. This was followed by the distribution of collection boxes to householders, and the creation of a sub-committee, charged with the responsibility of

clearing the boxes every three months.<sup>1</sup>

The gravity of the situation did not bring forth the support anticipated and this the Committee attributed, "to apathy and to indifference on the part of many to the work which was being accomplished by the Society."<sup>2</sup> By 1931 conditions had deteriorated to such an extent that the Benevolent Society was forced to make an urgent appeal for funds to ensure its continued survival.<sup>3</sup> As the world economic situation deteriorated still further, a special meeting of the Jewish Communal Council was held in June 1932, at which approval was granted to the Benevolent Society and the Jewish Ladies' Guild to launch a special fund-raising drive.<sup>4</sup> The Jewish community, moved by the gravity of the prevailing harsh circumstances, contributed about £800 to the fund, which involved donations from the Durban Jewish Club,<sup>5</sup> the Durban Hebrew Congregation and the *Chevra Kadisha*.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to answering the calls made by local Jewry for assistance, and in providing loans for Jewish residents of the town, the Benevolent Society also had to deal with the large number of young men who drifted

<sup>1</sup> *Hasholom*, VII No.5 (March, 1930), 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, VII No.8 (June, 1930), 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.7 (April, 1931), 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.11 (July, 1932), 14-15.

<sup>5</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 67.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.1 (September, 1933), 69.

into Durban in a vain search for employment. In almost every such case the Society provided the jobless Jewish strangers with a train ticket and a few shillings to help them to return to their home towns, or to continue their search in some other town or city.<sup>7</sup> So serious did this problem become, and so great was the amount of money which the Society had to divert from local relief work in order to assist these Jewish indigents that both the Benevolent Society and the Ladies' Guild took steps to rectify this situation. At the Tenth Congress of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in August 1933, at which as members of the Board both societies were represented, the Ladies' Guild called for statistics to be taken on the extreme poverty prevailing amongst Jewry in the Union, and for an investigation to be made of steps which would permanently relieve and reduce the distress. The Guild also called for the work of the Jewish charitable organisations operating in the larger centres of the Union to be co-ordinated. The Benevolent Society appealed to Congress to consider ways and means of overcoming the problems caused by unemployed Jewish youth travelling from town to town in search of employment.<sup>8</sup>

The combined emergency drive for funds and the relief work jointly undertaken by the Benevolent Society

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 67.

<sup>8</sup> *Hasholom*, X No.11 (July, 1933), 3 + 5.

and the Jewish Ladies' Guild, reinforced the spirit of co-operation which had always governed relations between these two bodies.<sup>9</sup> The cordial ties which the Benevolent Society shared with the Guild were highly valued by both organisations and were ultimately of the utmost benefit to the cause of Jewish welfare work in Durban,<sup>10</sup> for they prevented duplication and overlapping of activities.

By mid-1933 the demands on the Benevolent Society, in consequence of the depression, had eased somewhat,<sup>11</sup> and attention came to be directed to other avenues of welfare work. In the course of the year, in co-operation with the Guild, the Benevolent Society extended the scope of its activities by contributing financial assistance towards the upkeep of Jewish inmates at the Pietermaritzburg Mental Asylum.<sup>12</sup> At its annual general meeting in November 1934, the Society approved a number of changes to its Constitution and bye-laws. In terms of some of the changes the Society was empowered to grant loans to members of amounts up to £100, subject to

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.5 (January, 1934), 23.

<sup>10</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 13, 1931, p.14., *Hasholom*, IX No.9 (May, 1932), 25., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XI No.1 (September, 1933), 69., *Hasholom*, XI No.5 (January, 1934), 23., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 79, *Ibid.*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 85., *Ibid.*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 95., *Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 70.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.1 (September, 1939), 70.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 79.



certain conditions, and to appoint paid collectors to collect moneys due to it.<sup>13</sup>

With the reduction in calls made on its resources the Benevolent Society also continued its regular programme of activities, engaging in the frequent visiting of hospitals,<sup>14</sup> and, as was already customary, in the distribution of provisions for Passover to the needy.<sup>15</sup>

The changing tide of events in Germany during this decade, and the subsequent flight of countless members of Jewish refugees in search of physical security, resulted in a new field of relief work being undertaken by the Jewish Benevolent Society. Large numbers of these refugees passed through Durban many of whom were in transit *en route* to the Transvaal, whilst others were on their way to Kenya.<sup>16</sup> Their need for all possible assistance created a heavy burden for the Benevolent Society,<sup>17</sup> but one, which as in former times of crisis and pressure, it bore with vigour and with characteristic fortitude.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 85.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 95.

<sup>15</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 3, 1930, p.10., March 25, 1931, p.12., April 16, 1932, p.12., April 1, 1933, p.11., March 23, 1934, p.10., April 12, 1935, p.12., April 11, 1938, p.10., March 31, 1939, p.15.

<sup>16</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.9 (May, 1939, CNJ Supplement.

<sup>17</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 70.

## DURBAN JEWISH LADIES" GUILD

In consequence of the depression the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild was as hard pressed as the Jewish Benevolent Society to answer the innumerable calls made on its resources by the needy within the community.<sup>18</sup> The positive response to the joint appeal for funds made by the Guild and the Benevolent Society in 1932, enabled the Guild to answer the increasing number of calls made during 1933, by Jewish families who had fallen on hard times.<sup>19</sup> When these funds were exhausted, however, the prevailing adverse circumstances made it necessary for the Guild to dip into its reserve capital,<sup>20</sup> in order to continue its programme of relief work. By 1935, the calls on the Guild had declined considerably,<sup>21</sup> but coinciding with the change in economic conditions, a new avenue of welfare work opened for the Guild, with the arrival of large numbers of German Jewish refugees in Durban.

The tide of Jewish emigration from Germany, which had begun in 1933, increased enormously after the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935. Many of the German Jews who chose to settle in the Union entered

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 67.

<sup>19</sup> *Hasholom*, XI No.2 (October, 1933), 21.

<sup>20</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 77.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 83.

South Africa through Durban, where a group of the Guild's members, under Mrs P. Stein, awaited the arrival of each refugee ship, extending advice and financial aid wherever it was found to be necessary.<sup>22</sup> So many refugees in fact, came to pass through Durban that the Guild invited a representative of these German Jews, Mrs E. Duschnitz, onto its committee to serve in an advisory capacity, and as a link with the refugees.<sup>23</sup> Through Mrs P. Stein and Mrs M. Duchen the Guild was also represented on the Refugee Committee set up by the Council of Natal Jewry.<sup>24</sup>

The activities of the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild, extended, however, beyond the limits of relief work and included sick visiting and the distribution of flowers, fruit and reading matter to the Jewish patients of the local hospitals.<sup>25</sup> In 1938, under the direction of Mesdames M. Duchen and P. Stein, a Flower Fund was started, whereby members of the community were encouraged to make contributions to the Guild in *lieu* of sending flowers on Jewish festivals and other special occasions. The money collected in this manner provided the means of

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<sup>22</sup> *Durban Jewish Women's Guild, Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure 1953*, (Durban, 1953), p.18.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 93.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 67., *Ibid.*, XII No.1 (September, 1934), 77 and 79., *Ibid.*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 83 and 85., *Ibid.*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 73.

sending deserving people on holiday, and later was also used to provide extra comforts on the Jewish festivals.<sup>26</sup>

The Guild's interest and involvement in the activities of other communal bodies in Durban was unaffected by the many other calls with which it had to cope. Its traditional association with the Synagogues was reflected in the provision of Holy Vestments,<sup>27</sup> in the arrangement of the celebrations in connection with *Sukkot* and *Simchat Torah*,<sup>28</sup> and in the care which the women took in maintaining the *Sukkah* at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>29</sup> On the occasion of the Durban Hebrew Congregation's Golden Jubilee the Guild also provided the refreshments at the Children's Sports Day, held to commemorate the event.<sup>30</sup> In support of the United *Talmud Torah* with which it was affiliated, the Guild raised funds through a special sub-committee set up for that purpose.<sup>31</sup> It annually provided the refreshments at the *Chanukah* service held by the *Talmud*

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<sup>26</sup> *Durban Jewish Women's Guild, Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure 1953, p.9.*

<sup>27</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 73.*

<sup>28</sup> *Hasholom, X No.3 (November, 1932), 18., Ibid., XV No.2 (October, 1937), 26., Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 65.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid., X No.1 (September, 1932), 67.*

<sup>30</sup> From an original programme in the possession of Mrs L. Cohen, Durban.

<sup>31</sup> *Hasholom, IX No.7 (March, 1932), 21.*

*Torah* in conjunction with the St. Andrew's Street and Park Street Synagogues,<sup>32</sup> and assisted at the Hebrew Order of David's Picnic held in 1935, in aid of the *Talmud Torah*.<sup>33</sup> The Guild which maintained its own *Kosher* catering plant at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue also supervised the catering arrangements at the opening of the *Talmud Torah* premises, at 37 Silverton Road, in December 1936.<sup>34</sup> By helping to cater for the *Sukkot* function held in 1936, by the Durban Young Israel Society the Guild further demonstrated its interest in the youth of the community.<sup>35</sup>

The funds to enable the Guild to fulfill its many functions were principally derived from its share of the proceeds of the annual July Ball, with which it was intimately connected. This Ball continued to be one of the premier events of the Durban season and was the major

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, IX No.5 (January, 1932), 23., *The Zionist Record*, January 13, 1933, p.23., *Hasholom*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 26., *Ibid.*, XII No.5 (January, 1935), 26-27., *Ibid.*, XIII No.5 (January, 1936), 22.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, XII No.10 (June, 1935), 17.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.5 (January, 1937), 18.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.2 (October, 1936), 12.

fundraising project of the Jewish community.<sup>36</sup>

Within the wider community the Guild helped to raise funds for the local Indigent Women's Home,<sup>37</sup> held a combined function with the Durban Jewish Club in aid of *The Natal Mercury* Children's Camp Fund,<sup>38</sup> assisted in the 1934 Christmas Stamp Fund Collection<sup>39</sup> and contributed £27 16s to the King's Silver Jubilee T.B. Fund.<sup>40</sup> In June 1935, upon the opening of the Clarendon Home for Destitute Women in Durban, the Guild furnished three of the rooms in the home, at a cost of £52 10s,<sup>41</sup> in memory

<sup>36</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 9, 1930, p.15., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, VIII No.1 (September, 1930), 47., *The Natal Mercury*, July 8, 1931, p.6., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, IX No.1 (September, 1931), 59 and 23., *The Natal Mercury*, July 6, 1932, p.9., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, X No.1 (September, 1932), 39., *The Natal Mercury*, July 5, 1933, p.18., *Hasholom*, XI No.4 (December, 1933), 19., *The Natal Mercury*, July 11, 1934, p.5., *Hasholom*, XII No.4 (December, 1934), 4., *The Natal Mercury*, July 10, 1935, p.11., *Hasholom*, XIII No.2 (October, 1935), 11., *The Natal Mercury*, July 8, 1936, p.12., *Hasholom*, XIV No.3 (November, 1936), 9., *The Natal Mercury*, July 7, 1937, p.12., *Hasholom*, XV No.2 (October, 1937), 7., *The Natal Mercury*, July 8, 1938, p.5., *Ibid.*, July 5, 1939, p.21., *Hasholom*, XVII No.2 (October, 1939), 4.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XI No.10 (June, 1934), 26-27.

<sup>38</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 25, 1934, p.22., *Hasholom*, XII No.3 (November, 1934), 4.

<sup>39</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 83.

<sup>40</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 4, 1935, p.6., *Hasholom*, XII No.8 (April, 1935), 3.

<sup>41</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 25, 1935, p.9.

of Mrs Gertrude Kahn,<sup>42</sup> who gave years of devoted service to the Guild before her passing in 1932.<sup>43</sup>

In 1939, at the suggestion of Mrs S.J. Kaplan, the society was renamed the Durban Jewish Women's Guild.<sup>44</sup> The change in name, which conformed to current English usage, did not correspond, however, with an alteration in the basic pattern of Guild activities. In consequence of the establishment of a branch of the Union of Jewish Women,<sup>45</sup> the Guild was, however, able to free itself of many of its social duties and to focus its attention on benevolent work and the caring for the Congregation's Holy Vestments.

#### SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH ORPHANAGE (ARCADIA)

Alongside the welfare work undertaken by the Jewish Benevolent Society and the Jewish Women's Guild, the Jewish community of Durban also contributed financially to other agencies engaged in activities which fell outside the scope of the two principal communal Jewish welfare organisations in the City. Amongst these

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<sup>42</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 83.

<sup>43</sup>*Hasholom*, IX No.12 (August, 1932), 2.

<sup>44</sup>*Durban Jewish Women's Guild, Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure 1953*, p.16.

<sup>45</sup>See below p.385-389.

agencies was the local committee of the South African Jewish Orphanage which raised considerable sums for the Arcadia through canvasses,<sup>46</sup> the distribution of collection boxes<sup>47</sup> and an annual card and music afternoon.<sup>48</sup> Although the Durban committee's work on behalf of the Orphanage was little publicised, an indication of the extent of its efforts is reflected in the fact that for the year 1936-1937, it raised £603 4s 6d, and that its membership roll in Durban numbered 248.<sup>49</sup>

#### WITWATERSRAND JEWISH OLD AGE HOME

In 1933, during the Board of Deputies Conference in Durban, an attempt was made by Mr and Mrs Louis Cohen, of Johannesburg, to enlist the support of the Durban Jewish community for the Witwatersrand Jewish Aged Home, in Doornfontein, Johannesburg.<sup>50</sup> Whilst a local committee of the home was not established at the time,

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<sup>46</sup> *Hasholom*, VII No.4 (February, 1930), 14.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.5 (January, 1933), 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII No.8 (May, 1931, Club Opening Number), 5., *Ibid.*, IX No.7 (March, 1932), 15., *Ibid.*, XI No.6 (February, 1934), 21., *Ibid.*, XII No.6 (February, 1935), 21., *Ibid.*, XIV No.11 (July, 1937), 17., *Ibid.*, XV No.11 (July, 1938), 17., *Ibid.*, XVI No.10 (June, 1939), 9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.11 (July, 1937), 17.

<sup>50</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 5, 1933, p.7.



the sympathy of the community in the work of the Home was demonstrated by the financial contributions which were made by the members of the Jewish Benevolent Society.<sup>51</sup>

#### JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY

During 1934 an appeal for funds for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency was made in Durban by Mr Jacob Landau, the Founder and head of the Agency, and Col. H.J. Patterson, who had commanded the Jewish Legion in Palestine during World War I.<sup>52</sup> In the light of prevailing circumstances in Germany and the intensification of anti-Semitic activity in many parts of the world, the appeal on behalf of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, which sought to record and disseminate accurate information on Jewish activities world-wide, took on added significance. In their plea for financial assistance Mr Landau and Col. Patterson were supported by Mr Harold Woodson, the editor of *The Natal Advertiser*.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 13, 1931, p.14., *Hasholom*, XI No.5 (January, 1934), 23.

• <sup>52</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 28, 1934, p.21., October 3, 1934, p.24., October 4, 1934, p.17.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, October 4, 1934, p.17.

YIVO

Of considerable interest to Durban was the visit, in July 1936, of Dr I.N. Steinberg, a former Minister of Justice in Soviet Russia during 1917 and 1918, who came to South Africa as a representative of the Jewish Scientific Institute (Yivo). The Institute, which had been formed in Vilna, Poland, in 1925, collected statistics and other data relating to the economic, political, spiritual and social conditions of Jewry world-wide. It maintained a library, bibliographical office, museum and archives, and although it did not exist for that purpose, its scientific research was also used to counter anti-Semitism.<sup>54</sup> During his stay in Durban Dr Steinberg addressed a meeting at the Durban Jewish Club on July 6, and shortly thereafter a local committee was constituted, under the chairmanship of Mr M. Morrison, to secure support for Dr Steinberg's mission.<sup>55</sup>

ORT, OZE AND EMIGDIRECT

The continually worsening plight of European Jewry at this time gave added urgency to the work which was

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, July 2, 1936, p.19.

<sup>55</sup> *Hasholom*, XIII No.11 (July, 1936), 16-17.

being undertaken world-wide on behalf of the Ort, Oze and Emigdirect. In 1931 Mr S.Y. Jacobi, a member of the Executive Committee of the Central Jewish Relief Organisations, visited Durban in the course of a campaign for funds for Ort, Oze and Emigdirect.<sup>56</sup> A reception in Mr Jacobi's honour was held at the residence of Mr and Mrs A. Kaplan,<sup>57</sup> and under the chairmanship of Mr M. Freed a campaign on behalf of East European Jewry's Reconstruction was held thereafter, which yielded £726 18s 6d.<sup>58</sup>

Two years later a similar campaign was launched by Dr Leon Bramson, the Chairman of the United Committee of the Ort-Oze-Emigdirect, at an illustrated lecture, which was held at the Jewish Club on November 14, 1933.<sup>59</sup> Dr Bramson, who had first visited Durban in 1927, in the interest of Jewish Reconstruction,<sup>60</sup> was accorded an enthusiastic reception. The local campaign committee under Mr Marcus Stiller<sup>61</sup> succeeded in obtaining subscriptions which totalled over £800.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 20, 1931, p.18.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, May 5, 1931, p.8.

<sup>58</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.2 (October, 1931), 23.

<sup>59</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 14, 1933, p.8.

<sup>60</sup> See above pp.137-138.

<sup>61</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 17, 1933, p.12.,  
December 1, 1933, p.32.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1, 1933, p.32.

In the interest of Jewish Reconstruction a further successful campaign on behalf of Ort was launched at the Jewish Club by Dr A. Syngalowski on September 3, 1936.<sup>63</sup> By the time that the 1939 Ort-Oze Campaign was to be held in South Africa, events in Europe had brought the world almost to the brink of war, and the campaign was linked to an appeal on behalf of the refugees from Germany and Austria. The joint Emergency Appeal was launched in Durban at the Jewish Club, on April 16, by Lord Marley, the Chairman of the British Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Refugees, and Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords, and Lady Marley.<sup>64</sup> In the course of their visit to Durban Lady Marley made a separate appeal to the Jewish women of **the** City on behalf of the Fund,<sup>65</sup> and together with her husband attended a civic luncheon<sup>66</sup> and addressed a public meeting at the Pavillion.<sup>67</sup> Roused by the call of Lord and Lady Marley for assistance for Europe's Jewish refugees, a committee of prominent Jewish and Gentile residents of Durban was formed to conduct a further drive for funds.<sup>68</sup>

When war finally erupted in September 1939, many of

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, September 11, 1936, p.22.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, April 21, 1939, p.24.

<sup>65</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.9 (May, 1939), 5.

<sup>66</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 18, 1939, p.6.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, April 27, 1939, p.13.

those on whose behalf the Ort and its associated organisations had laboured, were trapped in the vortex of the conflict and, together with millions of others, became victims of World War II.

F.C. HOLLANDER LODGE NO XI OF THE HEBREW ORDER  
OF DAVID

Within the Jewish community other organisations were also to be found which, although not primarily welfare bodies, nevertheless included such work within the scope of their activities.

The F.C. Hollander Lodge No.XI of the Hebrew Order of David continued to fill a unique position in the communal life of Durban Jewry, guided at all times by the ideals of the Order, which had been primarily founded for mutual benefit and the extention of financial and medical aid to its members. Through the cultural and social activities which it organised, the lodge also succeeded in fostering closer ties amongst the members, who, in turn, participated in all aspects of communal life and in that way brought the Order's objective of uniting Jewry throughout South Africa a step closer to realisation.

Throughout this period the lodge took a keen interest in the affairs of the Durban Jewish community and, through involvement, identified itself with many of the

organisations, and the causes which they espoused.

At the inception of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* in June 1930, the lodge affiliated with the new body and was amongst the organisations which sat on the first *Talmud Torah* committee.<sup>69</sup> Thereafter the lodge maintained a keen interest in the education of the community's youth, supporting the *Talmud Torah* with the proceeds of a play, produced in conjunction with the Dramatic Section of the Jewish Club, in 1931,<sup>70</sup> and a variety concert held in 1932.<sup>71</sup> In 1935, under the auspices of the H.O.D. the first Communal Picnic, in aid of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, was held at the Coedmore Quarries.<sup>72</sup> This proved so popular that a similar picnic was held at the same site, for the benefit of the *Talmud Torah* some two years later.<sup>73</sup>

The lodge's interest in the youth extended to the youth movements of the community. During the Communal Picnic in 1935, the H.O.D. took the opportunity to present *Habonim* and the Durban Young Israel Society with

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<sup>69</sup> *Durban Hebrew Congregation Fiftieth Anniversary 1884-1934, 5644-5694*, (Durban, 1934), p.37.

<sup>70</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 2, 1931, p.16., *Hasholom*, IX No.3 (November, 1931), 21-22.

<sup>71</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 5, 1932, p.11.

<sup>72</sup> *Hasholom*, XII No.10 (June, 1935), 17.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.11 (July, 1937), 24., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 91 and 93.

the flags of their respective movements.<sup>74</sup> The Youth Movements in turn assisted in the running of the two communal picnics.<sup>75</sup> In 1937, the F.C. Hollander Lodge also presented the *Habonim* with 200 *Haggadot*, in memory of Wor. Bro. I. Ware, for use at the Communal *Seder*<sup>76</sup>.

Upon the arrival of Rabbi Freedman to take up his appointment as minister of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, the H.O.D. held a musicale in April 1937, at which it formally extended its personal message of welcome to the Rabbi and his wife.<sup>77</sup>

Outside of its immediate community the F.C. Hollander Lodge donated £30 to the Endowment Fund of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, to which it was affiliated, and was thereby inscribed in the Fund's Founders Roll.<sup>78</sup> It also became a subscriber to the Natal branch of the Friends of the Hebrew University.<sup>79</sup>

Within the lodge itself an event of considerable importance, in the light of the harsh economic climate of the time, was the creation of a loan fund in 1931, through the efforts of Wor. Bros. I. Ware. The fund,

<sup>74</sup> *Hasholom*, XII No.10 (June, 1935), 17.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, XIV No.11 (July, 1937), 24.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), 27., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 91 and 93.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 91 and 93.

<sup>78</sup> *Hasholom*, IX No.4 (December, 1931), 23.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.6 (February, 1938), 31.

which was kept independent of general lodge funds, was administered by a committee of three members who were elected annually and who were in large measure responsible for the collection of the fund's money from amongst the members. This fund granted loans to members to assist them in their businesses, and in consequence of the prevailing economic depression, the money from the fund was continually on loan.<sup>80</sup> After 1937 the loan fund was terminated and the money set aside for exceptional cases of distress.

In 1932 the lodge took the decision to change the location of its meetings. Until early in 1931 the lodge met at the *Park Gate Hall*,<sup>81</sup> thereafter the venue moved to *Franklin's Hall* in West Street, where the decision was taken to hold subsequent meetings at the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>82</sup> The lodge rooms were relocated at the Jewish Club in December 1932,<sup>83</sup> and as several members found it difficult to attend meetings at the Club, the lodge experienced a decline in attendance which gave rise to considerable concern.<sup>84</sup> In August 1935, the lodge

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.5 (January, 1933), 21.

<sup>81</sup> Last recorded meeting at this hall *Ibid.*, VIII No.5 (February, 1931), 24.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.3 (November, 1932), 19.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.5 (January, 1933), 21.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, X No.9 (May, 1933), 23.



moved its venue to the *Stuttaford's Chambers*<sup>85</sup> and this change to a more central and more easily accessible position was considered justified by the officers of the lodge, who recorded an immediate increase in attendances. The lodge then moved to the *Sons of England Hall*<sup>86</sup> and this remained the meeting place of the F.C. Hollander Lodge for a considerable time thereafter.

1935 Proved to be a year of severe financial crisis for the lodge which found itself indebted to the Grand Lodge to the extent of £135. Many members had allowed their subscriptions to fall into arrears and a new committee immediately set about restoring financial stability. In the interests of economy, changes in the method of supplying medical assistance were introduced and the number of the lodge's medical officers was reduced from four to one, who was elected annually by ballot.<sup>87</sup>

With anti-Semitic agitation having reached alarming proportions world-wide, the lodge felt a need to foster better relations with the Gentile community of Durban. Accordingly in 1936 it began a series of meetings

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<sup>85</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIII No.1 (September, 1935), 87.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 73 and 75.

<sup>87</sup> From the history issued by the Lodge on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee, 1975.

to which it invited representative members of the non-Jewish community to address the brethren. The first of these guests was Mr C. Kinsman, the President of the Sons of England,<sup>88</sup> who was followed over the next three years by numerous speakers,<sup>89</sup> including Mr P.W.J. Groenewald who, as the first Afrikaans speaker to address the lodge, attracted a large number of members to the address which he gave in February 1939.<sup>90</sup>

For the F.C. Hollander Lodge, 1938, was a year of considerable achievement. In the first instance the lodge was presented with the Shield of David by Grand Lodge, an award made as a mark of recognition for steady progress.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, in the course of the year a Cultural Committee was formed at the initiative of the President, Wor. Bro. Rev. N. Menachemson, for the purpose of teaching the members Jewish history and to discuss

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<sup>88</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIV No.1 (September, 1936), 73 and 75.

<sup>89</sup> Including the Rev. Perry, of the Florida Road Congregational Church, (*Hasholom*, XIV No.3 (November, 1936), 13.) Mr W.B. Shepstone, the Native Affairs Officer, (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 91 and 93) Mr A. Eaton M.P., Mr Morris-Broughton, Mr J.R. Sullivan, the Vice-Principal of the Natal Technical College, (*Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 73.) Mr O.K. Winterton, Mr D.G. Shepstone, the Chairman of the United Council of Social Agencies and the Rev. C.E. Wilkinson (*Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 65 and 67.).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 65.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.1 (September, 1938), 73.

contemporary events affecting Jews throughout the world.<sup>92</sup> The highlight of the year, however, was the celebrations held to mark the *barmitzvah* of the lodge. The celebrations in connection with this historic milestone, which were held on March 23, took the form of a special service at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, which was followed by a cold supper and musicale at the *Sons of England Hall*, the Durban headquarters of the Lodge.<sup>93</sup>

The gaiety that accompanied the *barmitzvah* celebrations did not blind the members of the lodge to the worsening plight of European Jewry. Upon the creation by the Order of a Cosmopolitan Philanthropy Fund, generous contributions were made in the name of the F.C. Hollander Lodge to the Fund, which sought to alleviate the plight of distressed Jewry, and which was used principally for the relief of Polish and German Jews.<sup>94</sup>

In December 1939, whilst the world was caught up in war the lodge began its annual distribution of Christmas comforts to patients of the King Edward VIII Non-European Hospital.<sup>95</sup> This project, inspired by Wor. Bro. A. Baranov, reflected a spirit of brotherhood and social consciousness amongst the lodge's 104 members<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Hasholom*, XIII No.8 (April, 1935), 27.

<sup>94</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 65 and 67.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 65 and 67.

at a time when much of Europe was embroiled in a conflict which had been fanned by hatred and greed.

#### UNION OF JEWISH WOMEN

Arising from a well attended inaugural meeting at the Jewish Club, on August 31, 1937, a branch of the Union of Jewish Women was created in Durban.<sup>97</sup> The Union's aim was to unite Jewish women and Jewish women's societies into one representative body and to speak with authority on behalf of Jewish women. It focused its attention on general social and welfare work within the Jewish community, on co-operating with women's bodies and deserving causes outside of the Jewish community, and on seeking ways to ameliorate the legal position of the Jewess within Jewish law.<sup>98</sup> Although it did not exist for the purpose of fundraising it nevertheless also raised considerable amounts for worthy causes both at home and abroad.

The Union's Durban branch was sponsored by the Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild.<sup>99</sup> Initially, however, there were individual members of the Guild who opposed the formation of a new women's society in Durban, as they

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<sup>97</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.3 (November, 1937), 10.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

felt it would rob the Guild of a certain amount of its work and prestige, would lead to the overlapping of activities, and that in due course the Chairlady of the Union would be the representative of Durban's Jewish women.<sup>100</sup> The Guild, together with the Durban Women's Zionist League and the Ladies' Committee of the Durban Jewish Club, nevertheless appointed representatives to the Union's first committee, which consisted of Mesdames M. Lewis, Chairman; V. Robinson, Vice-Chairman; A. Goldberg, Hon. Secretary; N. Meyerowitz, Hon. Treasurer; B.H. Bloom, S. Bloom, W. Cranko, I. Goldberg, A. Jacobson, C.P. Robinson, E. Sacks, M. Zulman, A.H. Freedman (ex-officio), Committee; and the following representatives of the Societies: Mesdames H. Moss-Morris (Chairman, Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild), P. Stein (Vice-Chairman, Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild), S. Torf (Chairman, Durban Women's Zionist League), M. Duchon (Vice-Chairman, Durban Women's Zionist League) L. Fobb (Chairman, Ladies' Committee Durban Jewish Club) S. Lazarus (Vice-Chairman, Ladies' Committee, Durban Jewish Club).<sup>101</sup>

The creation of a branch of the Union in Durban meant that the Guild relinquished many of its former social activities to the Union. These however, were

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<sup>100</sup> Minutes of First General Meeting of the Union of Jewish Women, Durban Branch. Held at 10.30 am on Tuesday, August 31st, 1937, at the Durban Jewish Club., p.1.

<sup>101</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.3 (November, 1937), 10.

activities which the Guild had been forced to assume in the absence of any other Jewish women's organisation. Once a branch of the Union had been established the Guild was, in fact, left free to pursue its primary objectives, of benevolent work and the care of the Synagogue Vestments, with an even greater measure of efficiency. At the same time, the Union's founding in Durban drew new blood into the ranks of women committed to service within the community, engaged Jewish women more directly in the activities of other women's groups and enabled the Jewish women to play an even greater part in Jewish community affairs.

Support for the Union of Jewish Women by the women of the community was reflected in the Durban branch's rapid growth to 170 members within four months of the branch's inception.<sup>102</sup> The spirit of co-operation between the Union and the other Jewish women's organisations in Durban, and its representation on the National Council of Women, the Council of Natal Jewry, the Guild and the Women's Zionist League, prevented a clashing or overlapping of activities and ensured the Union a place within the fabric of local community life.

During the relatively short space of time between its founding in Durban and the outbreak of the war, the Durban branch of the Union held a card evening in aid of

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 31.

the United *Talmud Torah* Building Fund,<sup>103</sup> and a similar function in aid of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.<sup>104</sup>

It also provided a platform for a number of speakers to address the women on a wide variety of topics.<sup>105</sup>

On behalf of the Jewish women of the City the Durban branch of the Union gave a tea party in June, 1938, in honour of Lady Duncan, the wife of the Governor General, Sir Patrick Duncan.<sup>106</sup>

In August 1939, the Union similarly entertained Lady Rama Rau, wife of the Agent General for India, who gave an address on "Women's Oegansisations in India."<sup>107</sup>

During the Joint Emergency Appeal on behalf of the refugees from Germany and Austria and Ort-Oze in 1939, the Union entertained Lady Marley, whose husband came to South Africa to

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.3 (November, 1937), 10.

<sup>104</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 11, 1938, p.21.

<sup>105</sup> Including Mrs M. Lewis, the President of the Durban branch, Mr Morris Franks, Rabbi A.H. Freedman, Dr N. Smith, chairman of the United *Talmud Torah*, (*Hasholom*, XV No.4 (December, 1937), 31.) Rabbi J. Zlotnik, the Director of Jewish Education, (*Ibid.*, XVI No.4 (December, 1938), 19., Mrs S.J. Kaplan, Mrs G. Trevor, Past President of the Union of Jewish Women of South Africa, and Miss L. Raywid, secretary of Social Services in Cape Town and Welfare Correspondent of the Union of Jewish Women of South Africa. (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 70.)

<sup>106</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 1, 1938, p.18.

<sup>107</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 70.

launch the appeal.<sup>108</sup>

Within the general community the Union of Jewish Women in Durban assisted in the drives for the Durban and District Community Chest<sup>109</sup> and participated in the annual sale of Christmas stamps.<sup>110</sup>

After only two years of activity the Durban branch of the Union, the newest of the Jewish communal organisations in Durban, had established itself firmly within the community,<sup>111</sup> a position which it strengthened by its fine contribution on behalf of Durban's Jewish women, to the war effort.

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<sup>108</sup>*The Zionist Record*, May 26, 1939, p.42.

<sup>109</sup>*Hasholom*, XV No.3 (November, 1937), 10.,  
*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1  
(September, 1939), 70.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 70.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*



## CHAPTER XX

A WORLD MOVING TOWARDS WAR : 1936 - 1939

All the social and political upheavals of the time were momentarily pushed aside during January 1936 as the attention of the world was riveted on Sandringham Palace where, only a few months after his Silver Jubilee, King George V suddenly lay ill.<sup>1</sup> As his health worsened, causing anxiety to all his subjects,<sup>2</sup> special prayers were offered at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue and at Synagogues and Churches throughout the Union.<sup>3</sup> His passing on January 20<sup>4</sup> plunged the entire Empire, including South Africa, into mourning.

In a broadcast service, attended by the Mayor, in St. Paul's Church, Durban paid tribute to the memory of the dead King. The Roman Catholic, Dutch Reform and Hebrew communities of the City paid tribute in Broadcast Services held at the Durban Studio.<sup>5</sup> Caught up in the

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<sup>1</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, January 18, 1936, p.14.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, January 20, 1936, p.11.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, January 21, 1936, p.13.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, January 22, 1936, pp. 13 and 15.

grief which followed the King's death, Durban Jewry, through the Council of Natal Jewry, in a telegram to Queen Mary and the Royal Family, recorded not only its sorrow but also its devotion to the Throne and loyalty to the Empire.<sup>6</sup> Whilst, on the orders of the Government, the 22nd January was observed as a day of mourning throughout the Union,<sup>7</sup> Durban Jewry gave expression to its sadness at a memorial service held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>8</sup> On January 28, the day of the King's funeral at Windsor, an inter-denominational civic memorial service was held in the Durban City Hall, during which the Rev. Menachemson read Psalm XLVI.<sup>9</sup>

In the succeeding months, against a background of shifting world affairs, the Empire looked forward with keen anticipation to the Coronation of Edward VIII. However in December 1936 the crisis caused by the King's private life came to dominate world attention.<sup>10</sup> With the King's abdication on December 10,<sup>11</sup> and his

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, 1936, p.13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, January 22, 1936, p.13.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, January 29, 1936, p.18.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, December 3, 1936, p.17., December 4, 1936, pp.17 and 10., December 5, 1936, pp.17 and 26., December 7, 1936, pp.12-13., December 8, 1936, pp.13, 18 and 21., December 9, 1936, pp.15 and 18., December 10, 1936, p.17.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, December 11, 1936, pp.17 also 10, 15, 22-24, 30., December 12, 1936, pp.9 and 17.

subsequent departure in exile from Britain to France,<sup>12</sup> preparations were begun for the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on May 12, 1937.

On the evening of May 7 a special Coronation Service was held during the Sabbath service, at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, at which Rabbi Freedman delivered an impressive sermon, in which Jewish loyalty to the throne was expressed.<sup>13</sup> The Rabbi also participated in the Civic Service of Thanksgiving held outside the City Hall on the morning of the Coronation.<sup>14</sup> That same night the Jewish community celebrated the Coronation at a ball at the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>15</sup> Unable to be present at the community's Coronation Ball was Mr F.C. Hollander, an honorary vice-president of the Jewish Club, who, together with Mrs Hollander, was a guest of a Coronation banquet in the Pietermaritzburg City Hall, given by the Administrator, Mr H. Gordon Watson and Mrs Gordon Watson.<sup>16</sup> The presentation of Coronation medals to Mr C.P. Robinson, Mr F.C. Hollander and Mr I. Geshen, the President of the Jewish Benevolent Society, was a source of satisfaction to the entire Jewish community.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, December 14, 1936, p.13.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, May 8, 1937, p.14.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, May 12, 1937, p.13.

<sup>15</sup>*Hasholom*, XIV No.9 (May, 1937), 3.

<sup>16</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 13, 1937, p.8., *Hasholom*, XV No.8 (April, 1938), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>17</sup>*Hasholom*, XIV No.11 (July, 1937), 13.

In the period between the death of one King and the Coronation of another, events of enormous consequence for local Jewry took place in South Africa. Beginning with the opening of the Parliamentary session in 1936 growing attention came to be paid by the Official Opposition (the National Party) to the issue of increased German-Jewish immigration to the Union.<sup>18</sup> Bitterness was also expressed by Nationalist speakers in Parliament over the boycott of German goods by the Jewish community. This boycott was regarded as injurious for the wool farmers who traded with Germany, and was widely seen as an expression of the Jewish community's desire to disturb South Africa's relations with a friendly country.<sup>19</sup>

The National Party's fixation over the Jewish Question has been traced by Gideon Shimoni to the deterioration in the relations between Malan and the Jews after the enactment of the *Immigration Quota Bill* in 1930, which worsened with the formation of the Purified National Party. At the time when the Greyshirts had emerged into prominence, Malan and his followers had still been part of Hertzog's National Party and had shown little support for the Greyshirt agitation against Jewish immigrants, believing that the *Quota Act* coped

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<sup>18</sup> *Union of South Africa. Debates of the House of Assembly, Fourth Session, Seventh Parliament, 24th January to 17th June, 1936. (Cape Town.) 11th February, 1936, cls 517-519 and 28th April, 1936, cls 2592-2593.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 7th May, 1936, cls 3211-3214.

adequately with checking Jewish immigration to the Union. With the fusion of Hertzog's and Smuts's parties, and the emergence of the Purified National Party as the Official Opposition, the Party, in seeking to win Afrikaner support, came to be increasingly vulnerable to the propaganda of the Greyshirts. The appeal which Greyshirt anti-Semitism had amongst the "poor White," essentially Afrikaner republican, element, led the Purified Nationalists to recognise the value of anti-Semitism as a political weapon.<sup>20</sup>

The re-emergence of the immigration issue was, as Shimoni has shown, the principal factor which facilitated the Greyshirt influence on Malan's Party. The *Quota Act* which Dr Malan had steered through Parliament when he was the Minister of the Interior had failed to place a limit on immigration from Germany. With Hitler's rise to power and subsequent anti-Semitic activity the number of Jews fleeing from Germany to South Africa rose sharply.<sup>21</sup> Greyshirt agitation against Jewish immigration was taken up by Dr Malan who, in June 1936, raised the issue of increased immigration from Germany in the House of Assembly.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967*, (Cape Town, 1980), p.115.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p.116.

<sup>22</sup>*Union of South Africa. Debates of the House of Assembly, Fourth Session, Seventh Parliament, 24th January to 17th June, 1936., 16th June, 1936, cls 6247-6253.*

In dealing with the matter in greater detail Dr Malan revealed that, whilst he disapproved of discrimination with regard to the European population of the country, he favoured such a policy in regard to admission of immigrants. Just as his *Immigration Quota Act* had been designed to admit into the country only those people who could "be assimilated by our people," and had thereby restricted Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, so Dr Malan now called for the Act to be changed in order to check the inflow of Jews from Germany.<sup>23</sup> In a lengthy reply to Dr Malan, Mr Alexander (the Member for Cape Town, Castle), one of the Jewish members of the House, questioned the National Party's leader's definition of assimilability. He went on to show how more than half of those who emigrated from Germany to the Union were not Jews and how, in fact, the Jews of Germany posed little danger to the country.<sup>24</sup> Agitation for a curb on Jewish immigration nevertheless persisted.

In 1936 the Jews of South Africa in fact numbered 90,645, and for all the fears expressed about their growing influence they constituted a mere 4.52 percent of the White population.<sup>25</sup> Over a period of ten years, from 1926, when it numbered 71,816, the Jewish community in the Union had grown, through natural increase and

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 17th June, 1936, cls 6284-6295.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, cls 6297-6301.

<sup>25</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.5 (January, 1942), 7.

immigration, by just 18,829.<sup>26</sup> In the same period the number of Jews in Natal rose from 3,277 to 3,736, an increase of only 459.<sup>27</sup> For the corresponding period the number of Jews resident in Durban rose from 2,418 in 1926<sup>28</sup> to 2,822 in 1936,<sup>29</sup> an increase of only 404. The Jewish residents of Durban in fact constituted only a small section of the residents of the City, who in 1936 numbered 88,062.<sup>30</sup>

Quite clearly, although a harbour city and therefore the gateway for many immigrants to South Africa, Durban failed to attract a large proportion of the Jewish immigrants who arrived in the Union between the years 1926-1936, the majority of whom were drawn to the larger Jewish communities in the Transvaal and the Cape. Nevertheless, because she was a principal port, Durban was exposed to a large number of immigrants as they passed through the City, and the Jewish community rendered all necessary assistance to its immigrant co-religionists.

Durban Jewry's first indirect exposure to the effects of the rise of Nazism on their German Jewish

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<sup>26</sup> *6th Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa.* Enumerated 5th May, 1936, Part 6, Religions. Government Printer, Pretoria, p.1.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>28</sup> *4th Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa.* Enumerated 4th May, 1926, Part 8, Religions. Government Printer, Pretoria, p.9.

<sup>29</sup> *6th Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa.* Part 6 Religions., p.23.

<sup>30</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.5 (January, 1942), 7.

bretheren occured in 1934, when the body of Miss Herta Von Son, a German Jewish refugee was found face downwards in Durban bay.<sup>31</sup> During the inquest into her death evidence was submitted that Miss Von Son had committed suicide while in a state of depression and that her mental state "was the direct result of the anti-Semitic persecution indulged in by the present German Government."<sup>32</sup> A noted concert pianiste in Hamburg, Miss Von Son had been deprived by Nazi law of all means of earning a livelihood and had left Germany to settle in South Africa where she had friends. Unable to become acclimatized to the country she had decided, after three months, to return to Hamburg and had for this reason come to Durban to embark on a boat. Realising the futility of returning to Germany Miss Von Son, according to the coroner's verdict, had caused her own death by intentional drowning, resulting from her distressed and depressed condition.<sup>33</sup>

With the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935<sup>34</sup> the rate of German Jewish immigration to South Africa increased to the point where sufficient numbers were passing through Durban to warrant organised

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<sup>31</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 5, 1934, p.18.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, November 14, 1934, p.28.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945*, (New York, 1975), p.63.



assistance on the part of the Jewish community of Durban. A special Durban committee to advise and help German immigrants was set up, under the chairmanship of Mr M. Stiller, and was assisted by various communal bodies.<sup>35</sup> Later this committee came to be led by Mr N. Hertz.<sup>36</sup> The Durban Jewish Ladies' Guild not only served on the Refugee Committee<sup>37</sup> but also met the ships arriving in Durban harbour, and helped the refugees through immigration control, and found accommodation, clothing, food, work and funds for those who chose to remain in the City.<sup>38</sup> The Durban Jewish Benevolent Society played its part in assisting the Jewish refugees, providing monthly assistance for many of those in transit.<sup>39</sup> This aspect of the Benevolent Society's work took on particular importance in 1939, when the Kenyan Government altered its regulations and many emigrants from Germany suddenly found themselves unable to land and were threatened with the prospect of being forced to return to Germany. Through the efforts of Mr I. Geshen, the President of the Benevolent Society, and Mr N. Hertz, the Chairman of the German Refugee Committee, the

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<sup>35</sup> *Hasholom*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>36</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 63.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XV No.1 (September, 1937), 93.

<sup>38</sup> *Durban Jewish Women's Guild Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure 1953*. (Durban, 1953), p.18.

<sup>39</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVII No.1 (September, 1939), 65.

necessary financial assistance was extended to the German emigrants so as to enable them to proceed to Kenya and to comply with its new regulations.<sup>40</sup> The Executive of the Durban Jewish Club made rooms in the Club building available for the holding of classes in English, and for those refugees in poor circumstances, special arrangements were made to ensure them the use of the Club.<sup>41</sup>

Towards the close of the 1936 Parliamentary Session the subject of immigration was again debated in the House of Assembly and members of the National Party used the opportunity to give expression to their hostility towards the Jews in South Africa. What also became increasingly evident was the fact that several of the anti-Semitic Shirt movements had merged with the Official Opposition. Although at that stage the Government refused to introduce new legislation to deal with immigration, finding itself hard pressed to withstand public pressure, which was fanned by the Opposition, it did announce that new rules were being passed under the existing Immigration Acts. One of the new rules which was set to take effect from November, 1936, provided for the lodgement of cash instead of guarantees before admission of immigrants. Fearful of being barred from

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<sup>40</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.9 (May, 1939), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>41</sup> Arnold Miller, *Durban Jewish Club A History issued on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee*, (Durban, May, 1956), p.40.

entering the country in consequence of this new rule, some 400 German immigrants chartered a special boat, the *Stuttgart*, to take them to South Africa before the end of October.<sup>42</sup> The arrival of the *Stuttgart* led to allegations of wide-scale immigration from Germany, which the South African Jewish Board of Deputies was wrongly accused of encouraging. It also sparked off intensified agitation by both the Opposition Press and by public personalities for tighter immigration restrictions.<sup>43</sup>

News of the *Stuttgart's* impending arrival in Cape Town unleashed a wave of protest from National Party supporters<sup>44</sup> and, at the same time, heralded a shift in National Party policy towards the Jews. Although at this stage the Nationalists neither attacked the Jews on racist grounds nor favoured discrimination against those Jews already resident in South Africa, as did the Greyshirts, they nevertheless had come to imbibe much Greyshirt propaganda. Not only did they now appear to become increasingly convinced that the Union was on the verge of being swamped by an unchecked wave of Jewish immigration, but they also came increasingly to believe that the Jews were a major stumbling block in respect of Afrikaner economic survival.<sup>45</sup> Increasingly, too, the

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<sup>42</sup>*Hasholom*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>43</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, December 18, 1936, p.29.

<sup>44</sup>Gideon Shimoni, pp.117-118.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p.118.

solution to the "poor White" problem came to be seen by Malan and his supporters in the solution of the so called Jewish problem.<sup>46</sup> Whilst prior to the storm caused by the *Stuttgart* Malan had emphatically denied any allegations that he favoured discrimination towards Jews already residing in the Union, his attitude came to be hardened to the extent that by the end of 1936 he was not only advocating a halt to all German Jewish immigration but was suggesting steps which involved unequal treatment for Jews already in the country. Such steps included the denial of citizenship to those who were defined by law as unassimilable and Government control over occupations carried on by those who were not Union citizens.<sup>47</sup>

With the opening of Parliament on January 8, 1937, the leader of the Opposition, Dr Malan, announced his intention of moving a motion dealing with Jewish immigration, which expressed the view of the House, "that it is of the utmost urgency that immediate steps be taken to prohibit any further influx of Jewish immigrants and, in particular of the so called German refugees, and that further restrictions should be imposed on aliens."<sup>48</sup>

Dr Malan's plan to present such a Bill to Parliament had been checked by the Government's announcement of its

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.119.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.119-120.

<sup>48</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 9, 1937, p.15.

intention to introduce legislation in the 1937 Parliamentary Session which would drastically cut all immigration other than that from other parts of the British Empire. This step resulted from pressure from the diplomatic corps abroad and from pressure at home that was stirred by the Nationalists.<sup>49</sup> It was seen by some as a sequel to the reshuffle within the Cabinet when Mr J.H. Hofmeyr, who, as Minister of the Interior, had stubbornly refused to introduce legislation of a discriminatory character, relinquished his portfolio.<sup>50</sup> The press in Durban, in contrast to its opposition to unchecked Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, emphasised the advantages which the Union stood to gain from admitting educated and cultured German immigrants into the country. It also expressed the fear that the proposed legislation would be used for discriminatory ends and for the stirring of anti-Semitic feeling.<sup>51</sup> Their fears were echoed by the Jewish Board of Deputies,<sup>52</sup> which made representations to the Government that no legislation should discriminate against Jews in particular.<sup>53</sup>

On June 11 leave was granted to Mr R. Stuttaford,

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<sup>49</sup>Gideon Shimoni, p.141.

<sup>50</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, December 9, 1936, p.14.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, December 18, 1936, p.29.

<sup>53</sup>*Hasholom*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), CNJ Supplement.

the Minister of the Interior, to introduce the first reading of the Government's *Alien Bill*.<sup>54</sup> The Bill provided for the repeal of the provisions of the 1930 *Quota Act* and the establishment of an Immigration Board to consider all applications for admission to the country, all applications having to be first made through authorities in the country which the applicant proposed to leave. In terms of the Act, admission of immigrants into the Union from countries outside the Empire was at the discretion of the Board, who would admit only those, whom in its opinion, were definitely needed by the country.<sup>55</sup>

The *Aliens Bill's* departure from the method of the *Quota Act* has been ascribed by Shimoni, to the influence of Smuts and Hofmeyr. As the Bill provided for a universal principle for the judgement of all applicants irrespective of their country of origin or ethnic group it provided less of an affront to Jewish dignity. Since it was ostensibly not directed against Jews in particular, although its purpose was known to be the limitation of German Jewish immigration, even the Jewish members of Parliament came to support it as a lesser of two evils.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Union of South Africa. Debates of the House of Assembly, Fifth Session, Seventh Parliament, 8th January to 17th May, 1937. XXVIII, Cape Town, 11th January, 1937, cl. 10.*

<sup>55</sup> Gideon Shimoni, pp.142-143., *Hasholom*, XIV No.8 (April, 1937), CNJ Supplement.

<sup>56</sup> Gideon Shimoni, pp.140-144.

The tone of the debates in Parliament during the different stages of the Bill reflected enormous hostility towards Jewry from within the ranks of the National Party, who refused to support it because, in their opinion, it did not go far enough in restricting the entry of Jews to the country. From the ranks of the Government's benches vigorous attempts were made to disprove allegations that the Bill was aimed at excluding Jewish immigrants. The Prime Minister's admission to the contrary, however, placed the Government's stand in a different perspective.<sup>57</sup>

The debates in the House of Assembly leading up to the passing of the *Immigration Amendment Act 1937* thrust the Jews of the Union into the limelight once again. Feelings were aroused against the Jewish community by the Greyshirts,<sup>58</sup> by members of the National Party,<sup>59</sup> and in particular by Dr Malan.<sup>60</sup> In response to the antagonism and bitterness displayed in certain quarters towards the Jews, the community answered in much the same tone as an article on the subject in the *Hasholom*, "To the pernicious

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<sup>57</sup> *Union of South Africa. Debates of the House of Assembly, Fifth Session, Seventh Parliament, 8th January to 17th May, 1937. 13th January, 1937, cls 104-141., 14th January, 1937, cls 143-189., 18th January, 1937, cls 257-334., 20th January, 1937, cls 392-440., 21st January, 1937, cls 441-559., 25th January, 1937, cls 560-570., 27th January, 1937, cls 703-742.*

<sup>58</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 27, 1937, p.19.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, August 19, 1937, p.17., December 1, 1937, p.19.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, July 30, 1937, p.17., November 4, 1937, p.18.

cry of "foreigner and stranger" we say South Africa is ours, ours no less than yours..."<sup>61</sup>

The stand adopted by Dr Malan and his supporters during the passage of the *Alien Bill* through Parliament revealed the hard line which the Party had adopted towards Jewry. Dr Malan not only openly admitted that he was advocating discrimination against Jewry, but moreover, insisted that until Jewish commercial involvement had been checked, and Afrikaners had gained a foothold in the commercial field, the problem of the poor Whites would remain unresolved.<sup>62</sup> Whilst, as Shimoni has shown, Malan did not adopt the racist terminology of the Greyshirts he did endorse their view of the Jew as a major source of the Afrikaner's troubles.<sup>63</sup> Despite their differences, negotiations were, nevertheless, entered into between the National Party and the Greyshirts in the Cape, in an effort to reach some degree of common ground. Although the Transvaal branch of the National Party did not follow suit its feelings about the Jewish Question were clearly expressed by its official disqualification of Jews from membership of the Party, a step which the Free State branch was not long in emulating.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.5 (January, 1938), 13.

<sup>62</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.121.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.122.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.122-123.



Apart from the disappointment which Jewry generally felt in the Government because of the *Immigration Amendment Act of 1937*, as General Hertzog prepared for the General Elections of 1938 he was faced by a growing wave of discontent, within Natal in particular, over what was widely regarded as his desire to weaken the country's ties with the Empire, and his tacit support for republicanism.<sup>65</sup>

In February 1938, Mr Abe Goldberg was nominated as the Dominion Party candidate for the forthcoming election in the Umlazi constituency.<sup>66</sup> In 1936 he had unsuccessfully contested the same seat on behalf of the Dominion Party, in the Provincial Council Elections, in which his co-religionist Mr F.C. Hollander had been successfully returned for the United South African National Party in Essenwood.<sup>67</sup> Mr Goldberg conducted a vigorous election campaign,<sup>68</sup> and on May 18 won election to Parliament by 771 votes.<sup>69</sup> For having the courage to stand as a candidate in the election, and for a Party opposed to the Government, at a time when Jew-baiting

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<sup>65</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 11, 1938, p.11., April 14, 1938, p.12.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, February 16, 1938, p.12.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, October 21, 1936, p.13.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, March 4, 1938, p.13., March 11, 1938, p.11., April 14, 1938, p.12., April 20, 1938, p.5., April 27, 1938, p.10., May 6, 1938, p.8., May 9, 1938, p.10., May 16, 1938, p.10., May 17, 1938, p.12.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, May 19, 1938, p.13.

was endemic in parts of Europe and not entirely unknown even in South Africa, earned Mr Goldberg considerable respect.<sup>70</sup>

The dissatisfaction of the voters of Durban with the policies of the United National Party, and their generally imperialist sentiment, was reflected in the crushing defeat which the Party suffered in Durban. Dominion Party candidates were returned in every seat that the Party contested, with the exception of Umbilo, where a Socialist candidate was successful. In other parts of the country, however, the Dominion Party candidates were soundly defeated and the United National Party was returned to power with an overwhelming majority. Although Malan's National Party increased its support sufficiently so as to gain 27 seats, the fact that the majority of voters had overwhelmingly rejected the National Party and its anti-Semitic platform, was a source of considerable satisfaction to the Jewish community.<sup>71</sup>

When the eighth Parliament of the Union assembled in Cape Town, amongst those absent from the House of Assembly was Mr C.P. Robinson, the former M.P. for Stamford Hill, who was known as the Father of the House. In November 1937, upon returning from Australia, where

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, April 23, 1938, p.12.

<sup>71</sup> The General Election results were 111 seats United Party, 27 National Party, 8 Dominion Party, 3 Labour Party, 1 Socialist Party. (*Ibid.*, May 21, 1938, p.15.)

he had represented the Union at the celebrations in connection with the 100th Anniversary of the founding of Australia,<sup>72</sup> Mr Robinson had decided, after more than 30 years of Parliamentary service, not to stand for re-election to the Assembly.<sup>73</sup> A few months after the General Election Mr C.P. Robinson passed away at his residence in Durban, at the age of 61.<sup>74</sup>

Fears for the retention of the British connection, which had been expressed in Natal during the election campaign, materialised shortly after the elections had been held, when on May 31, at Union Day celebrations around the country, *G-d Save The King* was not played and the Union Jack was not flown. About 1,700 people gathered in the Durban City Hall to protest against these developments, and **were addressed** by Mr Abe Goldberg MP.<sup>75</sup> Disagreement was expressed with the statement by the Cabinet that the country had no national anthem and that until one could be agreed upon both *G-d Save The King* and *Die Stem Van Suid Afrika* would be played. The meeting, furthermore, affirmed its determination to preserve *G-d Save The King* as a national anthem and protested at the failure to fly the Union Jack

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, September 1, 1937, p.11.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, November 6, 1937, p.24.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, October 5, 1938, p.13.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, June 9, 1938, p.12.

at Union Day parades.<sup>76</sup> On July 26 the Prime Minister asked the Union Government to place on record that *G-d Save The King* was no longer the country's national anthem, and that in fact South Africa had no official anthem. English speaking members of the United South African National Party were placated by the assurance that whenever *Die Stem Van Suid Afrika* was played *G-d Save The King* would also be played.<sup>77</sup> Members of the Dominion Party were, however, incensed by the Government's action, and in his maiden speech to Parliament Mr Goldberg deplored the steps taken to change the status of *G-d Save The King*.<sup>78</sup>

The municipal elections held in Durban in October 1938 also reflected a swing away from candidates sympathetic to the United National Party. Traditionally conducted along non-political lines the municipal elections of 1938 were particularly noteworthy for the decision of six Labour Party members to contest the election as representatives of their Party. All six Labour Party candidates were elected to the Council, where they formed the nucleus of a left wing group.<sup>79</sup> This election was also noteworthy from the point of view that from that date the Municipal area was

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, July 27, 1938, p.15.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, October 6, 1938, p.13.

redelimitated into eight wards, and as all the Councillors went out of office an entire Council had to be elected on October 5th. From that date the Council consisted of 24 Councillors made up of 3 Councillors from each ward. The Councillor who secured the largest number of voters in each ward held office for three years, the Councillor who obtained the next highest number of votes held office for two years and the Councillor with the third highest number of votes held office for one year.<sup>80</sup> Although, owing to a Council oversight, the elections were unavoidably held on *Yom Kippur*,<sup>81</sup> two Jewish candidates, nevertheless made themselves available for election. In Ward II Dr A. Broomberg stood as a Socialist, and in Ward VII Mr H. Saunders fought the election on a Labour Party ticket. Dr Broomberg was unsuccessful in his bid for public office but his Labour co-religionist was elected to the Council for one year.<sup>82</sup>

In 1939 the attention of South African Jewry was once again directed to Parliament where the National Party continued to wage its anti-Semitic campaign. On February 7 Mr Eric Louw, the Malanite M.P. for Beaufort West, was granted leave to introduce the *Aliens*

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<sup>80</sup> *City of Durban Mayor's Minute 1939.* Fleming Johnston, Mayor, (Durban, 1940), p.26.

<sup>81</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 13, 1938, p.16.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, October 6, 1938, p.13.

(Amendment) and Immigration Bill.<sup>83</sup> The Bill, unlike the Act of 1937, sought to explicitly exclude Jewish immigrants and Communists, whom the sponsor of the Bill sought to equate in the minds of the members of the House of Assembly.<sup>84</sup> After lengthy debate<sup>85</sup> this anti-Semitic Bill was defeated, and the motion that it be read "this day six months" was agreed to.<sup>86</sup> Notwithstanding Parliamentary rejection of the *Alien (Amendment) and Immigration Bill*, agitation against Jewish immigrants, and against German Jewish immigrants in particular, by the Official Opposition continued during the year in the House of Assembly.<sup>87</sup> Concern over the growth of anti-semitic feeling in the Union was expressed by the religious leaders of the South African Jewish community at a conference of the Jewish Minister's Association in Johannesburg,<sup>88</sup> and by Rabbi Freedman, of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, in addresses to various Christian bodies.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *Union of South Africa. Debates of the House of Assembly, Second Session, Eighth Parliament, 3rd February to 16th June, 1939.* XXXIII (Cape Town.) 7th February, 1939, cl 41.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 24th February, 1939, cls 825-849.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, cls 850-866., *Ibid.*, 11th March, 1939, cls 1949-1995., *Ibid.*, 14th April, 1939, cls 2888-2953.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV 14th April, 1939, cl 2954.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, cls 4787-4846.

<sup>88</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 28, 1939, p.17.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, March 6, 1939, p.13., August 25, 1939, p.14.

The verbal attacks on Jewry in South Africa, and the difficulties caused by the *Immigration Amendment Act* were in no way comparable to the virulent anti-Semitic campaign conducted in certain European countries against their Jewish citizens. As the Nazis reportedly tightened up anti-Jewish regulations in Germany,<sup>90</sup> a new wave of anti-Semitic excesses swept Poland in September 1937,<sup>91</sup> driving large numbers of Jewish refugees to France, where they were supported by Jewish charitable organisations.<sup>92</sup> The following year began with the introduction of repressive measures against the Jewish community of Roumania<sup>93</sup> and a short while later Nazi anti-Semitism spread to Austria, which was occupied by German troops and annexed to the Reich in March 1938.<sup>94</sup> The degradation to which German Jewry had been subjected was now experienced by the Jews of Austria<sup>95</sup> and a wave of suicides swept Vienna as the Nazi persecution was launched.<sup>96</sup> Jews fled from Austria in increasingly large numbers bound principally for South America, Canada,

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, July 7, 1936, p.13., August 23, 1937, p.9.

<sup>91</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 10, 1937, p.1., September 17, 1937, p.13.

<sup>92</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 1, 1937, p.9.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, January 6, 1938, p.13., January 14, 1938, p.11.

<sup>94</sup> Lucy S. Dawidowicz, p.95., See also *The Natal Mercury*, March 12, 1938, p.15.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, March 25, 1938, p.13.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, March 26, 1938, p.14., June 28, 1938, p.13., July 7, 1939, p.14.

Palestine and France.<sup>97</sup>

In response to an appeal made by Rabbi Dr J.H. Hertz, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, a service of prayer and intercession was held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue for the victims of Nazism on July 17, 1938. Similar services were held all over South Africa, and in synagogues throughout the British Empire. More than a 1000 people, including representatives of Christian denominations attended the service in Durban, and hundreds were turned away, from the crowded Synagogue, where Rabbi Freedman warned in his sermon, that after the Jews the Nazi hatred would be directed against the Christians.<sup>98</sup> The service was conducted by the Rev. Menachemson, assisted by the Revs. Rubin and Kuperberg, and was concluded with the rendering of 'Abide With Me' by Miss Rose Alper (Mrs H.L. Magid), accompanied by Mr D. Cohen on the organ, Miss Gitteson, violin, and Mr A. Roberts, cello.<sup>99</sup> Following an agreement which was reached between Chief Rabbi Dr Hertz and Dr Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury, special prayers for the Jewish people in Germany and Austria were said on the same day in Anglican Churches throughout the Empire. In Durban the service in St. James's Church was led by the Anglican Bishop of Natal, whilst churches

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, July 14, 1938, p.13.

<sup>98</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, July 18, 1938, p.2.

<sup>99</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 29, 1938, p.28.



of other denominations in the City held similar services.<sup>100</sup>

The problem of Jewish refugees had by mid-1938 become so acute that, at the invitation of President Roosevelt of the United States, representatives of 32 Governments attended a conference at Evian, in July, to deal with the refugee problem. The conference resulted in the establishment of a permanent Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees, but no country represented at the Conference was willing to admit unrestricted numbers of Jews. Palestine, the most obvious place to send refugees, was, at Britain's insistence, not discussed by the Conference. The Mandatory Government, in fact, severely restricted Jewish immigration after the Arab riots of 1936, and with the White Paper of 1939 Jewish immigration was practically altogether stopped.<sup>101</sup>

In the wake of the Evian Conference the Italian Government moved against the Jews of Italy, threatening them with persecution<sup>102</sup> and revoking the grant of Italian nationality made to foreign Jews after January 1, 1919.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 18, 1939, p.5.

<sup>101</sup>Walter Laquer, *A History of Zionism*, (New York, 1976), pp.507-509. See also *The Natal Mercury*, July 8, 1938, p.15., July 11, 1938, p.11., July 13, 1938, p.15.

<sup>102</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.506., *The Natal Mercury*, July 27, 1938, p.15.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, September 2, 1938, p.15.

Mindful of the excesses displayed by the Nazis towards the Jews of the Reich, Jews generally were deeply concerned for all peoples threatened by the spectre of Nazism. When Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, entered into negotiations with Hitler over the future of the Sudetenland, a meeting was held at Durban's South Beach, at which a call was made on Britain to support Czechoslovakia against German aggression. It was almost to be expected that members of the Jewish community, in their individual capacities, were amongst the speakers who addressed the meeting. Mr W.M. Stone, the acting Chairman of the International Peace Campaign and Mr A. Goldberg, M.P. for Umlazi, joined with other speakers in protesting against the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and a capitulation to Nazi blackmail, and joined in the call on the major powers to take determined action to check Fascist aggression.<sup>104</sup>

Following the Munich Agreement, whereby Czechoslovakia was forced to **accept** partition, there was a growing body of opinion within Germany that steps should be taken to regain the **country's** former colonies. The realisation that such **demands could** result in South Africa sharing a common **border with** a Nazi state in former German South West Africa, **aroused** public opinion against the cession of any **further** territory to

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, September 26, 1938, p.11.

Germany. In Durban Mr A. Goldberg M.P. sought to mobilise public opinion on the issue,<sup>105</sup> and at a meeting in the Durban City Hall an audience in excess of 2,000 people pledged to resist any return of South West Africa or Tanganyika to Germany.<sup>106</sup>

For the Jews of Germany and Austria, the assassination of Ernst Von Rath, a third Secretary in the German Embassy in Paris, by a seventeen year old Polish Jewish student, Hershl Grynszpan, on November 7, 1938,<sup>107</sup> resulted in a frenzied outburst of anti-Semitism. In just one night many synagogues were burnt, Jewish shops and property were damaged, and thousands of Jews were arrested.<sup>108</sup> The Nazi excesses during *Kristallnacht*, as the pogrom of November 10 was to become known, caused serious concern in London, and prompted the American President to recall his ambassador to Berlin for consultation. The Dutch Government, shocked by the course of events in Germany, approached the Governments of Great Britain, France, Denmark, Belgium and Switzerland to consider the possibility of giving assistance in the emigration of German Jews.<sup>109</sup>

The events of *Kristallnacht* added a sense of

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, October 11, 1938, pp.11 and 5.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, October 18, 1938, p.13.

<sup>107</sup> Lucy S. Dawidowicz, p.100.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.100-103.

<sup>109</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 16, 1938, pp.7 and 15.

urgency to the campaign on behalf of the distressed Jewish communities of Austria and Poland, which was launched in Durban on November 15 by Sir Wyndham Deedes.<sup>110</sup> Together with Prof. Norman Bentwich, a former Attorney General of Palestine and the Professor of International Relations at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Sir Wyndham Deedes, the Chief Secretary in Palestine during the Administration of Sir Herbert Samuel in 1921, had come to South Africa to inaugurate the campaign in the major centres of the country.<sup>111</sup> During his visit to Durban Sir Wyndham Deedes addressed members of the Jewish and Gentile communities, seeking monetary assistance to enable Jews from Germany, Austria and Poland to leave their homes for countries willing to admit them.<sup>112</sup>

A Christian Fund for Jewish and non-Aryan refugees was in fact launched in December 1938, by a number of prominent Christian residents of Natal, following the creation of a Christian Council in London, which sought to raise funds to alleviate the plight of Jews and other victims of Nazism.<sup>113</sup>

As the situation in Europe continued to deteriorate the South African Red Cross Society's President, Dr A.J.Orenstein, opened two appeals. The one was

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, November 15, 1938, p.12.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, October 15, 1938, p.17.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, November 16, 1938, p.11., November 17, 1938, p.24., *The Zionist Record*, November 18, 1938, p.36., *Hasholom*, XVI No.4 (December, 1938), 7.

<sup>113</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 10, 1938, p.15.

in respect of Spanish refugees in France, and the other in connection with assistance for Jewish refugees in various European countries.<sup>114</sup>

In April 1939 Lord Marley, Chairman of the British Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Refugees, and Lady Marley, visited Durban to launch their campaign on behalf of the refugees from Germany and Austria. Their campaign was officially launched at the Durban Jewish Club on April 16, and was most favourably received.<sup>115</sup> A separate appeal made to the Jewish women of the City by Lady Marley was met with equal generosity.<sup>116</sup> During a public meeting in the Beach Pavilion the distinguished visitors made another appeal for funds for the refugees, which was supported by the Mayor, Mr Fleming Johnston.<sup>117</sup> As a result of the visit of Lord and Lady Marley a public meeting was organised by the Mayoress, Mrs George Cyrus, and a further committee made up of Jewish and Gentile residents of Durban was appointed to conduct a separate drive for funds.<sup>118</sup>

The campaign on behalf of the victims of Nazism were conducted against the background of growing tensions in Europe. As fears of open hostilities became more

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, February 14, 1939, p.8.

<sup>115</sup> *Hasholom*, XVI No.8 (April, 1939), 16.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.9 (May, 1939), 5.

<sup>117</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 18, 1939, p.14.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, April 27, 1939, p.13.

real, voluntary male registration for National Service was instituted,<sup>119</sup> and women flocked to join the S.A. Women's National Service Legion and Air Guard.<sup>120</sup> The preparations for war were not without foundation, for with the German advance into Poland, Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, May 9, 1939, p.15.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, May 2, 1939, p.14.

<sup>121</sup>David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon*, (London, 1972), pp.763 and 765.

SECTION FOUR 1939 - 1945

CHAPTER XXI

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Great Britain's declaration of war against Germany on September 3, 1939, following the Nazi strike against Poland that was initiated **two days earlier**,<sup>1</sup> saw the coalition between Hertzog and Smuts split over the question of South Africa's attitude toward the Second World War. Hertzog **and his supporters** within the United Party favoured a **policy of neutrality**, believing that the war was between the European powers and that it did not affect South Africa. **Smuts**, on the other hand, insisted that it was in the Union's interest to enter the war as an ally of Britain.<sup>2</sup> The question of neutrality was

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<sup>1</sup>David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon* (London, 1972), pp.763 and 765.

<sup>2</sup>B.J.Liebenberg, "From the Statute of Westminster to the Republic of South Africa 1931-1961," in *500 Years A History of South Africa*, ed. C.F.J. Muller (Pretoria n.d.), p.373.

brought before the House of Assembly where it was defeated by 80 votes to 67.<sup>3</sup> Hertzog resigned as Prime Minister and together with his 30 former United Party supporters formed the Official Opposition. At the request of the Governor General, Sir Patrick Duncan, General Smuts formed a Government<sup>4</sup> in which were included members of the Labour and Dominion Parties. Smuts's first act as Prime Minister was to sign a proclamation on September 6, which severed relations with Germany and stated that for the purpose of all laws the Union was at war with Germany.<sup>5</sup>

Almost immediately a call was issued for volunteers for National Service<sup>6</sup> and the ready response from members of the local Jewish community was most gratifying.<sup>7</sup> Recruiting took place against the background of Poland's swift capitulation in the face of German and Russian advances,<sup>8</sup> and this prompted the young men of Durban to realise the urgency of bringing the

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<sup>3</sup>*Union of South Africa. House of Assembly Debates, Third Session, Eighth Parliament, XXXVI 2nd September-5th September, 1939, (Cape Town.) 4th September, 1939, cls 17-100.*

<sup>4</sup>*The Natal Mercury, September 6, 1939, p.11.*

<sup>5</sup>B.J. Liebenberg, p.373., On the Second World War see Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (London, 1970) and Peter Young, *World War, 1939-1945*, (London, 1966).

<sup>6</sup>*The Natal Mercury, September 6, 1939, p.6.*

<sup>7</sup>*Hasholom, XVII No.3 (October, 1939), 15., Ibid., XVII No.3 (November, 1939), 23.*

<sup>8</sup>Peter Young, pp.17-21.



Defence Force units up to full wartime strength.<sup>9</sup>

In April 1940, the news of the Nazi occupation of Norway and Denmark,<sup>10</sup> and the unsuccessful Allied landing in Norway,<sup>11</sup> was followed by the announcement of the Durban Jewish community's first casualty in Pilot Officer Albert Greenberg. He was killed on active service with the Royal Air Force, having shortly before his death been involved in reconnaissance work over the North Sea.<sup>12</sup>

The Jewish community of Durban followed the fortunes of its young men in uniform with interest and concern. It took pride in the public spiritedness of Corporal L. Fobb, a veteran of the Great War, who joined his sons Private H. Fobb and Private S. Fobb in the 1st Battalion of the Royal Durban Light Infantry.<sup>13</sup> It derived much satisfaction from the promotion of Sergeant Louis Ditz,<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, November 14, 1939, p.12.

<sup>10</sup>Peter Young, pp.41-44.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.44-46.

<sup>12</sup>*Hasholom*, XVII No.8 (April, 1940), 9.

<sup>13</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, April 16, 1940, p.11.

<sup>14</sup>Promoted to Cadet Officer (*Hasholom*, XVII No.11 (July, 1940), 17.) and subsequently to Lieutenant (*Ibid.*, XVIII No.9 (May, 1941), 17.)

Private Roy Fenhalls,<sup>15</sup> Sidney Spiro,<sup>16</sup> Max Moshal,<sup>17</sup>  
 Corporal Meyer Meyerowitz,<sup>18</sup> Petty Officer Harold Smith<sup>19</sup>  
 and R. Abrahams.<sup>20</sup> It lauded the public spiritedness  
 of Doctors I. Goldberg, M.W. Kaplan, B. Moshal, H. Saacks  
 and B.T. Bronstein, who, shortly after being called up<sup>21</sup>  
 proceeded North on active service,<sup>22</sup> where they were  
 later joined by Dr M.R. Gitlin.<sup>23</sup> It gave all possible  
 encouragement to Otto Ballin,<sup>24</sup> Josh Goldberg,<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Promoted to Sergeant (*Ibid.*, XVII No.2  
 (October, 1940), 16.)

<sup>16</sup>Promoted to Cadet Officer (*Ibid.*) and then to  
 2nd Lieutenant (*Ibid.*, XVIII No.6 (February, 1941),  
 16.) and Lieutenant (*Ibid.*, XIX No.2  
 (October, 1941), 16.)

<sup>17</sup>Promoted to Sergeant (*Ibid.*, XVIII No.4  
 (December, 1940), 20.)

<sup>18</sup>Promoted to Sergeant (*Ibid.*)

<sup>19</sup>Promoted to 2nd Lieutenant (*Ibid.*, 21.) then to  
 Commissioned Rank (*Ibid.*, XVIII No.9 (May, 1941),  
 10.) and finally to Lieutenant in the Royal Navy  
 (*The Zionist Record*, June 5, 1942, p.15.)

<sup>20</sup>Promoted to 2nd Lieutenant (*Hasholom*, XVIII No.10  
 (July, 1941), 17.)

<sup>21</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 6, 1940, p.11.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, November 16, 1940, p.18.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, January 26, 1942, p.12.

<sup>24</sup>*Hasholom*, XVII No.12 (August, 1940), 19.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

Paul Baum,<sup>26</sup> Manfred Beit,<sup>27</sup> Alex Levine,<sup>28</sup> Leon Lewis,<sup>29</sup> and Hans Liepman<sup>30</sup> on their departure for the war front. It also valued highly the example set by its religious and communal leaders, Rabbi A.H. Freedman and the Rev. N. Menachemson, both appointed Chaplains to the Forces,<sup>31</sup> the latter immediately proceeding to East Africa,<sup>32</sup> and Mr B.H. Bloom, the President of the Jewish Club and Major E. Henochsberg, the President of the CNJ who left Durban after enlisting for war service.<sup>33</sup>

The community also extended a warm welcome to all members of the Armed Forces including Private E. Lurie, Air Gunner E.L. Braham, Leslie Rubin, Jack Berman, Dennis Brown, Jack Driman, Alex Hendler, Jack Abelson, Lieutenant J. Harris,<sup>34</sup> Lance Corporal I.I. Sacks, Sergeant L.A. Alleson,<sup>35</sup> Lance Corporal Harry Berman,

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<sup>26</sup> Leon Feldberg (Editor) *Who's Who in South African Jewry 1967-68*, (Johannesburg, 1967), p.182.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.183.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.330.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.337.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.339.

<sup>31</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 5, 1940, p.20., September 20, 1940, p.6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, September 20, 1940, p.6.

<sup>33</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.2 (October, 1940), 16 and (*Ibid.*, XIX No.7 (March, 1942), 12.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.3 (November, 1940), 21.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.4 (December, 1940), 20.

Victor Lipinski, Irwin Greene, Philip Patz, Arthur Lewin<sup>36</sup> and Lieutenant A.K. Nyman,<sup>37</sup> who periodically came home to Durban on leave.

By August 1940, the South African soldiers were in the actual frontline in the war against the Italians on the South Abyssinian border.<sup>38</sup> The fighting between the British and the Italians in North Africa was closely followed within the Union,<sup>39</sup> where news of the contribution made by the Springboks to the defeat of the Italians at El Wak was received with considerable enthusiasm.<sup>40</sup> With the surrender of the Italians in Abyssinia,<sup>41</sup> the focus of the war in Africa shifted to North Africa where, after having made considerable gains in Libya,<sup>42</sup> the British were forced to evacuate their positions<sup>43</sup> in the face of an advance by Italian and German forces under the command of General Rommel.

The British and Allied troops were largely confined

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.5 (January, 1941), 16.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.10 (July, 1941), 17.

<sup>38</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, pp.374-375.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Young, pp.81-85.

<sup>40</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 19, 1940, p.15.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Young pp.89-90 and *The Natal Mercury*, May 22, 1941, p.9.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Young pp.83 and 85.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.105-107. See also *The Natal Mercury*, April 4, 1941, p.11., April 14, 1941, p.9., April 29, 1941, p.11., May 5, 1941, p.9., May 17, 1941, p.11., June 19, 1941, p.11.

to Egypt, which remained a focus of interest for South Africans because of the concentration of its troops in that area. The death of Captain S.B. Greenberg, the son of Mr and Mrs A.M. Greenberg, who was serving in the Royal Medical Corps in England, however, reminded the Jewish community of Durban of the continued fighting in Europe.<sup>44</sup>

During a lull in the fighting up North, Walter Fielding, Harold Jacobs, Jimmy Stodel, Barney Cohen, Bernard Lindsay<sup>45</sup> and Norman Rubin<sup>46</sup> were given leave to spend *Rosh Hashanah* with their families in Durban. Tension within the country, heightened by the course of the war generally, swelled the ranks of the armed forces. Amongst those who left Durban on active service was Sam Ernst, who was appointed a Chaplain to the Union Forces.<sup>47</sup>

The two South African divisions attached to the Allied Eighth Army in North Africa, acquitted themselves with distinction at the battles of Sidi Rezegh (18-23 November, 1941), Taib el Esem (22-26 November, 1941), Bardia and Sollum (16 December, 1941 - 17 January, 1942), in which the Axis

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<sup>44</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 19, 1941, p.11.

<sup>45</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.2 (October, 1941), 9.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 19.

forces were driven back into Libya.<sup>48</sup> Whilst reports on the fighting aroused keen interest,<sup>49</sup> it was the large lists of casualties and prisoners, resulting from the battles, that were most closely scanned as all sections of the Union's population anxiously awaited news of those stationed up North. With considerable regret the Jewish community of Durban learnt of the injuries sustained by Signaller Alexander Wartski,<sup>50</sup> of the accidental injuries sustained by Raoul Goldman<sup>51</sup> and of the capture of 2nd Lieutenant Fredrick Lapin<sup>52</sup> and Private Eleazar Hoddes.<sup>53</sup> It shared in the concern of the families of Signaller Philip Silbert,<sup>54</sup> Corporal

<sup>48</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, p.375.

<sup>49</sup> On the battles see H.J. Martin and Neil D. Orpen, *South African Forces World War II*, (Cape Town, 1979), Volume VII of *South Africa at War*, pp.96 124-125 and *The Natal Mercury*, November 20, 1941, p.11., November 21, 1941, p.11., November 24, 1941, p.9., November 25, 1941, p.9., November 26, 1941, p.11., November 27, 1941, p.11., November 28, 1941, p.11., December 3, 1941, p.11., December 6, 1941, p.11., December 9, 1941, p.9., December 11, 1941, p.11., December 19, 1941, p.13., December 25, 1941, p.9., December 27, 1941, p.9., January 3, 1942, p.9., January 19, 1942, p.9. On the fighting in North Africa see Warren Tute, *The North African War*, (London, 1976).

<sup>50</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 3, 1941, p.12.

<sup>51</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.5 (January, 1942), 16.

<sup>52</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 10, 1941, p.13.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, January 19, 1942, p.11.

<sup>54</sup> Reported missing (*Ibid.*, December 12, 1941, p.13.) He was captured at Sidi Rezegh by the Germans but managed to escape and rejoin his unit. (*Ibid.*, July 25, 1942, p.9.)

Samuel Stein,<sup>55</sup> Corporal John Hanreck<sup>56</sup> (who died in action)<sup>57</sup> and Signaller Ian Cohen<sup>58</sup> who were reported missing, and commiserated with the families of Corporal Israel Sacks<sup>59</sup> and Private William Hirschowitz,<sup>60</sup> who were lost in battle.

Later reports that filtered down from the Front indicated that Lance Corporal Lionel Lasker, who had been reportedly injured by enemy action, had in fact, sustained a knee injury<sup>61</sup> and that Sergeant Samuel Sang,<sup>62</sup> Lance Corporal Leslie Weinberg<sup>63</sup> and Private C. Strathborne<sup>64</sup> had been wounded in the course of duty. The death of Air Mechanic Heinz Lichtenstein, of the South African Air Force, who was lost on sea

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<sup>55</sup>Reported missing (*Ibid.*, December 12, 1941, p.17.) confirmed Prisoner of War (*Ibid.*, January 19, 1942, p.11.).

<sup>56</sup>Reported missing (*Ibid.*, December 24, 1941, p.13.) confirmed Prisoner of War (*Ibid.*, January 19, 1942, p.11.).

<sup>57</sup>*Hasholom*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 27.

<sup>58</sup>Reported missing (*The Zionist Record*, December 26, 1941, p.15.) confirmed Prisoner of War (*Ibid.*, February 20, 1942, p.19.).

<sup>59</sup>Killed at Bardia on December 17. (*The Natal Mercury*, January 5, 1942, p.7.).

<sup>60</sup>Killed at Bardia on December 17, (*Ibid.*, January 6, 1942, p.7.).

<sup>61</sup>*The Zionist Record*, February 6, 1942, p.18.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>63</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, February 11, 1942, p.11.

<sup>64</sup>*The Zionist Record*, February 20, 1942, p.19.

patrol,<sup>65</sup> once again brought home the tragedy of war to the Jewish community of Durban, who derived a sense of consolation and great pride in the mention of Captain Marcus Oshry in dispatches.<sup>66</sup>

Whilst Captain N. Menachemson,<sup>67</sup> Private Barney Gordon,<sup>68</sup> Captain M. Perlman,<sup>69</sup> Air Corporal Jack Fisher<sup>70</sup> and Captain W.A. Jacobs<sup>71</sup> were spending a few weeks leave in Durban, news was received of the intensification of the war effort in the East. One of the few South African airmen to fight against the Japanese was Pilot Selwyn Lurie of Durban. Having been seconded to the Royal Air Force, where he served with 135 Squadron, Pilot Lurie flew a Thunderbolt as a member of the Southern Burma Fighter Group.<sup>72</sup> Following the Japanese invasion of Malaya news was received that Major P.M. Bloom was amongst those missing<sup>73</sup> and that Stoker Sonny Geffen and

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<sup>65</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, March 9, 1942, p.7.

<sup>66</sup>*The Zionist Record*, March 27, 1942, p.15.

<sup>67</sup>*Hasholom*, XX No.8 (April, 1942), 16.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, XX No.9 (May, 1942), 10.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, XX No.10 (June, 1942), 17.

<sup>72</sup>*South African Jews in World War II*. Published by the South African Jewish board of Deputies (Johannesburg, 1950), p.93.

<sup>73</sup>*The Zionist Record*, April 24, 1942, p.19., he was later confirmed a Prisoner of War (*The Natal Mercury*, December 29, 1942, p.7.).



Stoker Harry Sevel were amongst the crew who were missing and presumed killed, following the sinking of *H.M.S. Dorsetshire*.<sup>74</sup>

Further reports from the North African battlefields added the names of Private Basil Levine,<sup>75</sup> Lance Corporal Boris Meyerowitz<sup>76</sup> and Private Leslie Gevisser<sup>77</sup> to those reported missing. They confirmed that Private Sydney Tayfield had been wounded,<sup>78</sup> and that Private Desmond Sebba had been injured,<sup>79</sup> and recorded that Bombadier Nevil Lazarus, formerly of Durban, had been killed.<sup>80</sup>

In May 1942 South African troops once again clashed with Rommel's forces in Libya.<sup>81</sup> The ultimate superiority of the Axis forces compelled the Allied

<sup>74</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 8, 1942, p.17.

<sup>75</sup> Reported missing (*The Natal Mercury*, June 19, 1942, p.9.) confirmed Prisoner of War (*Ibid.*, August 3, 1942, p.9.).

<sup>76</sup> Reported missing (*Ibid.*, June 19, 1942, p.9.) confirmed Prisoner of War (*The Zionist Record*, July 10, 1942, p.14.).

<sup>77</sup> Reported missing (*The Natal Mercury*, June 20, 1942, p.9.) confirmed Prisoner of War (*The Zionist Record*, July 10, 1942, p.15.).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, June 26, 1942, p.15.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 27, 1942, p.9.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Young, pp.191-195. See also *The Natal Mercury*, May 28, 1942, p.7., May 29, 1942, p.7., May 30, 1942, p.7., June 1, 1942, p.5., June 2, 1942, p.7., June 5, 1942, p.7., June 6, 1942, p.7., June 9, 1942, p.7., June 11, 1942, p.7., June 12, 1942, p.7., June 13, 1942, p.7.

Eighth Army to retreat to the Egyptian frontier, leaving the Allied forces at Gazala and Tobruk undefended. The First South African Division, under Major General Dan Pienaar, was forced to evacuate its position at Gazala and among those injured during its retreat was Edgar Isaacs, the Divisional Ammunition Officer,<sup>82</sup> who, nevertheless, continued to command his unit through to the battle of El Alamein.<sup>83</sup> The Allied forces at Tobruk, including the more than 10,000 Springboks, were ordered to defend their position, but, unable to resist the German attack, they surrendered on June 24.<sup>84</sup>

Among those from Durban who were reported missing after the fall of Tobruk, were Private Bernard Kosseff,<sup>85</sup> his brother Private Issy Kosseff,<sup>86</sup> Private Edgar Mayer,<sup>87</sup> Private Paul Nathan,<sup>88</sup> Signaller Arthur Brodie,<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, August 16, 1961, p.2.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, January 15, 1962, p.2.

<sup>84</sup> Peter Young, p.196. See also H.J. Martin and Neil D. Orpen, pp.148, 158-159.

<sup>85</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 8, 1942, p.19.

<sup>86</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 8.

<sup>87</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 3, 1942, p.19.

<sup>88</sup> Reported missing (*The Natal Mercury*, July 3, 1942, p.9.) confirmed Prisoner of War (*Ibid.*, September 15, 1942, p.9.).

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, July 7, 1942, p.9.

Corporal Montague Silverman,<sup>90</sup> Private N.J. Levy,<sup>91</sup>  
 Sergeant Ernest Eichelgreun,<sup>92</sup> Private Philip Freedman<sup>93</sup>  
 (whose death at Tobruk was confirmed some months later),<sup>94</sup>  
 his brother Private I. Freedman<sup>95</sup> and Private Pincus  
 Schultz.<sup>96</sup> Those who were reported missing believed  
 prisoners of war, included Private H. Abrahamson,<sup>97</sup> his  
 brother Private B. Abrahamson,<sup>98</sup> Private Monty Friedman,<sup>99</sup>  
 his brother Corporal Morris Friedman,<sup>100</sup> Signaller Albert  
 Abrahams,<sup>101</sup> Private Horace Levisohn,<sup>102</sup> Signaller

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, July 9, 1942, p.9.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, July 10, 1942, p.9.

<sup>92</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 10, 1942, p.14.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, January 29, 1943, p.17.

<sup>95</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1  
 (September, 1942), 8.

<sup>96</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 10, 1942, p.14.

<sup>97</sup> Reported missing (*The Natal Mercury*, July 13, 1942,  
 p.9.) confirmed Prisoner of War (*The Zionist  
 Record*, September 18, 1942, p.20.).

<sup>98</sup> Reported missing (*The Natal Mercury*, July 14, 1942,  
 p.9.) confirmed Prisoner of War (*The Zionist  
 Record*, September 18, 1942, p.20.).

<sup>99</sup> Reported missing (*The Natal Mercury*, July 16, 1942,  
 p.9.) confirmed Prisoner of War (*The Zionist  
 Record*, September 25, 1942, p.20.).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Reported missing (*The Zionist Record*,  
 July 17, 1942, p.17.) confirmed Prisoner of War  
 (*Ibid.*, September 4, 1942, p.17.).

<sup>102</sup> Reported missing (*The Natal Mercury*,  
 July 21, 1942, p.9.) confirmed Prisoner of War  
 (*The Zionist Record*, August 21, 1942, p.15.).

Esmond Jacobson,<sup>103</sup> Corporal Isaac Richter,<sup>104</sup> Signaller Philip Silbert,<sup>105</sup> his brother Private Neville Silbert,<sup>106</sup> Corporal Selwyn Tomson,<sup>107</sup> Corporal Raymond Driman,<sup>108</sup> Lance Corporal Reuben Budlender,<sup>109</sup> Private Emanuel Hackner,<sup>110</sup> Gunner Julius Victor<sup>111</sup> and Sergeant Lionel Alleson.<sup>112</sup> Among the many South Africans who died at Tobruk was Private Joseph Hoffenberg of Durban.<sup>113</sup>

As the Axis Army mounted an attack on Egypt,<sup>114</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Reported missing (*The Natal Mercury*, July 21, 1942, p.9.) confirmed Prisoner of War (*The Zionist Record*, September 25, 1942, p.15.).

<sup>104</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 24, 1942, p.9.

<sup>105</sup> Reported missing (*Ibid.*, July 25, 1942, p.9.) confirmed Prisoner of War by Vatican Radio (*The Zionist Record*, December 24, 1942, p.19.).

<sup>106</sup> Reported missing (*Ibid.*, July 31, 1942, p.16.) confirmed Prisoner of War by Vatican Radio (*Ibid.*, December 24, 1942, p.19.).

<sup>107</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 27, 1942, p.9.

<sup>108</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 31, 1942, p.16.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, August 7, 1942, p.18.

<sup>112</sup> He spent the last three years of hostilities as a prisoner of war in Italy and Germany. (*Hasholom*, [XLII No.6] (February, 1964), 15.

<sup>113</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 7, 1942, p.17.

<sup>114</sup> Peter Young, pp.195-200., *The Natal Mercury*, July 2, 1942, p.7., July 7, 1942, p.7., July 6, 1942, p.7., July 14, 1942, p.7., July 16, 1942, p.7., July 23, 1942, p.7., July 25, 1942, p.7., September 1, 1942, p.7., September 2, 1942, p.7., September 7, 1942, p.7., September 9, 1942, p.7.

news regarding the fate of South African soldiers continued to be made known. The Durban Jews included among those recorded missing were Gunner Michael Kaplan<sup>115</sup> (who escaped from Tobruk)<sup>116</sup> and Gunner Eric Rosenthal.<sup>117</sup> Those missing believed prisoner of war, included 2nd Lieutenant Julius Gurwitz,<sup>118</sup> Private Maurice Cinamon<sup>119</sup> and Private E. Telem,<sup>120</sup> and those known to have been taken prisoner of war included Private A. Wainman<sup>121</sup> and Gunner Hans Unger.<sup>122</sup>

Apart from the above mentioned, Durban Jewry's Roll of Honour, by September, 1942, included Sergeant B. Beck<sup>123</sup> and Bombadier N. Feldman<sup>124</sup> who were prisoners of war; Gunner M. Eliason, Lance Corporal G. Miller and Sergeant L. Meskin who were reported missing;<sup>125</sup> Private E. Chaikin and Private L. Daniels who were missing and believed to

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<sup>115</sup>*The Zionist Record*, August 14, 1942, p.17.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, September 1, 1942, p.19.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, August 14, 1942, p.17.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, September 4, 1942, p.17.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, August 28, 1942, p.15.

<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*, September 11, 1942, p.19.

<sup>123</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 8.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup>*Ibid.*

be prisoners of war;<sup>126</sup> and Sapper J. Arluck, Private L. Plen, Private M. Selby, Sapper H. Wenezky and Lance Corporal Lasker who were wounded or injured,<sup>127</sup> the last mentioned dying in action.<sup>128</sup>

Durban Jewry's fine record of service in the war was further enhanced with the conferring of the M.B.E. on First Class Warrant Officer Mark Leven Marcon, who courageously drove a loaded ammunition train away from a truck which had caught fire;<sup>129</sup> the promotion of Edgar Isaacs to the rank of Major,<sup>130</sup> and the presentation of a Military Medal to Private Montague Goldstein, for maintaining a vital telephone line during the fighting at Tobruk.<sup>131</sup>

As the Allied Forces, under General Montgomery, successfully moved against Rommel's troops driving him

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>128</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 27.

<sup>129</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 12, 1942, p.9.

<sup>130</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.2 (October, 1942), 9.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

out of Libya and much of Tunisia,<sup>132</sup> the news was received that Signaller Alexander Wartski had been accidentally injured,<sup>133</sup> Sergeant Joe Levy<sup>134</sup> and Corporal Hector Lazarus<sup>135</sup> had been wounded, and Private John Newmark had been taken prisoner in the fighting.<sup>136</sup> The reality of the war was brought home even more vividly to the public of Durban when ten South African soldiers who lost their lives, as a result of enemy action at sea, were buried with military honours at Stellawood Cemetery in December 1942. Private Isaac Stein a member of the "Q" Service Corps, and one of the ten victims of the enemy attack, was buried by the Jewish community in their portion of Stellawood.<sup>137</sup>

By 1943, the war in Africa was confined to Tunisia

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<sup>132</sup> Peter Young, pp.213-229. See also *The Natal Mercury*, October 26, 1942, p.7., October 29, 1942, p.7., November 2, 1942, p.7., November 4, 1942, p.7., November 5, 1942, p.7., November 6, 1942, p.7., November 7, 1942, p.7., November 9, 1942, p.7., November 10, 1942, p.7., November 11, 1942, p.7., November 12, 1942, p.7., November 13, 1942, p.7., November 16, 1942, p.7., November 18, 1942, p.7., November 19, 1942, p.7., November 21, 1942, p.7., November 25, 1942, p.5., November 26, 1942, p.5., December 5, 1942, p.7., December 7, 1942, p.7., December 10, 1942, p.7., December 14, 1942, p.5., December 18, 1942, p.7., December 28, 1942, p.5., January 18, 1943, p.5., January 27, 1943, p.8.

<sup>133</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.3 (November, 1942), 21.

<sup>134</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 6, 1942, p.9.

<sup>135</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 11, 1942, p.19.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, January 22, 1943, p.19.

<sup>137</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 7, 1942, p.9.

where Commonwealth Forces, aided by American troops, met with stiff opposition from the Axis defences which finally crumbled in May 1943, with the Allied capture of Tunis.<sup>138</sup> Many Allied soldiers fell in the fighting in Tunisia including Brigadier F.H. Kisch, the Chief Engineer of the Eighth Army, and former Chairman of the Palestine Executive of the World Zionist Organisation, who had forged a personal link with South African Jewry through his two fundraising visits to the Union.<sup>139</sup> The sadness felt by World Jewry in consequence of his passing was most intimately shared by the Jews of Durban, amongst whom the Brigadier's wife and one of their sons had taken up temporary residence on the outbreak of the war. At a well attended memorial meeting, held on May 9, the Jewish community of Durban paid personal tribute to the Brigadier.<sup>140</sup>

With all of Africa wrested from Axis control, the Allies turned their attention to Italy,<sup>141</sup> and by July 1943, they had completed the first stage of the invasion of Sicily.<sup>142</sup> Taking advantage of the unstable conditions within Italy preceding the Allied invasion,

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<sup>138</sup> Peter Young, pp.230-232.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, April 16, 1943, p.7.

<sup>140</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 21, 1943, p.17.

<sup>141</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 17, 1943, p.5.,  
May 26, 1943, p.5., May 27, 1943, p.5.,  
May 28, 1943, p.5., June 1, 1943, p.5.

<sup>142</sup> Peter Young, pp.282-285.



Corporal Louis Chait managed to gain repatriation from his prisoner of war camp.<sup>143</sup> Fifteen South African prisoners, including Private I. Kosseff and his brother Private B. Kosseff also succeeded in escaping from camps in Italy.<sup>144</sup>

The landing in Italy in September 1943, and the subsequent Allied advance through the country, brought South African troops, including Rolfe Futerman of the 27th Squadron, South African Air Force,<sup>145</sup> and Leslie Shagam, who was attached to the 2nd Squadron, 7th Wing South African Air Force,<sup>146</sup> into the European theatre of the war. As the combined Allied forces pushed forward from Southern Italy towards the Fascist dominated north of the country, the progress made was slow and costly. Among those reported missing, presumed killed, was Lieutenant Arthur Lewin, of the South African Air Force,<sup>147</sup> and Sergeant Major Hyman Jochelson was amongst the many soldiers who died on service.<sup>148</sup> Sapper Otto Weiss<sup>149</sup> and Trooper Maurice Sandler<sup>150</sup> were amongst the

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<sup>143</sup>*The Zionist Record*, May 7, 1943, p.16.

<sup>144</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, September 29, 1943, p.5.

<sup>145</sup>Leon Feldberg, p.247.

<sup>146</sup>*Hasholom*, XXXV No.2 (September, 1956), 5.

<sup>147</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 20, 1943, p.15.

<sup>148</sup>*Ibid.*, February 11, 1944, p.15.

<sup>149</sup>*Ibid.*, April 28, 1944, p.15.

<sup>150</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, June 30, 1944, p.6.

many Springboks wounded in the campaign. For valuable services Major Hyman Starfield was gazetted<sup>151</sup> and Corporal Hans Meidner was mentioned in dispatches.<sup>152</sup> Using the opportunity afforded by the fighting in Italy, where they had been interned as prisoners of war, Sergeant Harry Friedland,<sup>153</sup> Signaller Philip Silbert<sup>154</sup> and Private Neville Silbert<sup>155</sup> succeeded in escaping to Switzerland.

By the time that South African units entered Florence, in August 1944,<sup>156</sup> the first Allied bridgeheads had been gained in France,<sup>157</sup> and the Russians were smashing through the Nazi lines.<sup>158</sup> Equally favourable news of Allied advances continued to be received<sup>159</sup> as

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<sup>151</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 29, 1943, p.17.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, November 12, 1943, p.15.

<sup>153</sup> Escape reported (*Ibid.*, March 10, 1944, p.15.). Mentioned in dispatches (*The Natal Mercury*, March 25, 1944, p.9.).

<sup>154</sup> *The Zionist Record*, March 24, 1944, p.15.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Peter Young, pp.385-387. See also *The Natal Mercury*, August 5, 1944, p.7.

<sup>157</sup> Peter Young, pp.324-326. See also *The Natal Mercury*, June 7, 1944, p.5.

<sup>158</sup> Peter Young, pp.338-342. See also *The Natal Mercury*, July 28, 1944, p.5.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, August 5, 1944, p.7., August 24, 1944, p.5., August 26, 1944, p.7., September 4, 1944, p.5., September 5, 1944, p.5., September 15, 1944, p.5.

the battle for Italy proceeded.<sup>160</sup> By the end of 1944, the Soviet armies were on the road to Austria,<sup>161</sup> Greece had been liberated,<sup>162</sup> the war in the Phillipines had weakened the Japanese,<sup>163</sup> and Allied forces had reached the Rhine.<sup>164</sup> For Durban Jewry the glowing reports from the war fronts were clouded by the news of the death in a flying accident of Lieutenant Michael Duchon, of the South African Air Force,<sup>165</sup> and the inclusion of Corporal Montague Goldstein,<sup>166</sup> Trooper Hymie Miller<sup>167</sup> and Trooper Otto Victor<sup>168</sup> on the lists of those reported wounded or injured. Considerable pride was also taken by the community in the achievement of Major Philip Shiller, who was awarded a M.B.E.<sup>169</sup>

As the Allied armies closed in on Germany 50 former

<sup>160</sup> Peter Young pp.385-392. See also *The Natal Mercury*, September 6, 1944, p.5., September 19, 1944, p.5., September 20, 1944, p.5., October 21, 1944, p.9.

<sup>161</sup> Peter Young, p.399. See also *The Natal Mercury*, December 28, 1944, p.5.

<sup>162</sup> Peter Young, p.388. See also *The Natal Mercury*, November 2, 1944, p.5.

<sup>163</sup> Peter Young, pp.358-360. See also *The Natal Mercury*, October 27, 1944, p.5.

<sup>164</sup> Peter Young, pp.398-399. See also *The Natal Mercury*, November 21, 1944, p.5.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, October 13, 1944, p.6.

<sup>166</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 17, 1944, p.12.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, December 15, 1944, p.15.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, January 5, 1945, p.15.

prisoners of war, liberated by the advancing Allied forces, were repatriated. Amongst the first group of Durban prisoners to return home after their release by the Russians was Signaller Selwyn Abrahams.<sup>170</sup> In the weeks leading up to the fall of Berlin<sup>171</sup> the news of the release of Corporal Morris Friedman,<sup>172</sup> Private Monty Friedman<sup>173</sup> and Corporal S. Tomson<sup>174</sup> was received in Durban. Following the unconditional surrender of the Nazis<sup>175</sup> the lists of released prisoners swelled enormously, and included Private Matthew Kirson,<sup>176</sup> Gunner E. Telem,<sup>177</sup> Private Joseph Brookstone,<sup>178</sup> Corporal Abraham Wainman,<sup>179</sup> Lieutenant Fredrick Lapin,<sup>180</sup> Corporal John Samuel,<sup>181</sup> Private Leslie Gevisser<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 2, 1945, p.5.

<sup>171</sup> Peter Young, p.422. See also *The Natal Mercury*, May 3, 1945, p.5.

<sup>172</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 27, 1945, p.17.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 5, 1945, p.7.

<sup>176</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 25, 1945, p.19.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>178</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 1, 1945, p.7.

<sup>179</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 8m 1945, p.14.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, July 6, 1945, p.19.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

and Private Emanuel Hackner.<sup>183</sup>

The Durban Jewish Club and the newly established Natal branch of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League, which had been formed, under the chairmanship of Mr Josh Goldberg, to assist Jewish men and women returning from service, held a reception at the Jewish Club on July 3, 1945, in honour of the first contingent of former prisoners to return home. Across the Main Hall of the Club was stretched a giant streamer with the words "Welcome Home and Thank You," sentiments that were shared by the more than 400 people who attended the reception.<sup>184</sup>

By the Japanese surrender, on September 2, 1945, which brought the war to a successful conclusion, the detention of thousands of Allied prisoners of war in Asia, including that of Major Philip Bloom, also ended.<sup>185</sup>

As members of the Union forces were making their way homewards, the news media reported the mention of Lieutenant Eric Manne<sup>186</sup> and Warrant Officer Sonny Basckin<sup>187</sup> in dispatches. This served as a fitting final testimony, as it were, to the contribution made by the young Jewish men of Durban in the fight against

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.11 (July, 1945), 19, 21, 23.

<sup>185</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 28, 1945, p.18.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, June 29, 1945, p.17.

<sup>187</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.8 (April, 1946), 32.

Nazism, a fight in which many of Durban Jewry's sons who are not individually recorded here, had fought bravely, and in which Sergeant Oscar Berkowitz and Private Fred Ginsberg,<sup>188</sup> together with thousands of other servicemen, had given their lives.

Not to be outdone by their menfolk, the Jewish women of Durban responded equally enthusiastically when the call was issued for volunteers for war service. Large numbers of them linked up with various Women's Organisations in the City, and with the V.A.D. (Voluntary Ambulance Division)<sup>189</sup> in particular. Within months of the outbreak of hostilities, Mrs Mark Fielding rose within the ranks of the local Red Cross Society to the position of Assistant Quartermaster of a newly formed detachment. She was also one of the two women selected from Durban to undergo special training at the Military Hospital at Voortrekkerhoogte.<sup>190</sup> Together with Mrs M. Kaplan, Mrs Fielding won a silver medal in the Red Cross First Aid Examination<sup>191</sup> and the two women also obtained Instructors Certificates in the Air Raid Patrol and Gas Examinations.<sup>192</sup>

The children of the community made their personal

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 27.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.2 (October, 1939), 15.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.6 (February, 1940), 16.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.11 (July, 1940), 16.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.12 (August, 1940), 16.

contribution towards helping the men on the Front by participating in a knitting circle, convened by Mrs W. Cranko, which met during the school holidays.<sup>193</sup>

All sections of the Jewish community were thus directly involved in the war effort and in the struggle that was being waged against the Axis Powers, a struggle in which the lists of wounded, dead and honoured revealed the extent of the community's contribution.

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<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.10 (June, 1940), 7.

## CHAPTER XXII

CONTRIBUTING TO THE WAR EFFORT

Although only certain categories of people could enlist in the various branches of the Services, all sections of the Jewish community exhibited a keen desire to assist in the war effort. For many, the numerous war funds created a suitable avenue through which to give practical expression to this desire.

Within days of South Africa's entry into the war plans for a food scheme to aid the Allies were mooted by the Mayor of Johannesburg,<sup>1</sup> and were enthusiastically taken up by the Mayors of most of the country's major municipalities.<sup>2</sup> The basis of the South African Mayor's National Fund for the Allies was later broadened to include the purchase of **foodstuffs** for shipment to the Allies overseas, the **assistance** of servicemen and their dependants, and the **collection** and transfer of funds to the British Government for use at its discretion.<sup>3</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, September 20, 1939, p.11.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, September 27, 1939, p.13.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, October 31, 1939, p.12.



addition to making private contributions,<sup>4</sup> members of the Jewish community served on the organising committee that was responsible for staging a grand ball in aid of the Fund, in December 1939,<sup>5</sup> and also assisted at the Caledonian Market, from which the Fund greatly benefitted.<sup>6</sup> An influential committee, which included Mrs F.C. Hollander, staged a Pageant of Beauty at the *Caister Hotel*, in May 1940, from which the Mayor's Fund, the Red Cross Society and the Navy League were the beneficiaries.<sup>7</sup>

In response to a call for aid that was issued by the South African Women's National Service Legion, Mesdames H. Driman, M. Woolfson and C.P. Robinson and

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, November 10, 1939, p.10., November 16, 1939, p.15., November 20, 1939, p.12., December 4, 1939, p.12., December 7, 1939, p.19., December 14, 1939, p.23., January 17, 1940, p.17., January 19, 1940, p.7., January 26, 1940, p.8., February 2, 1940, p.16., February 8, 1940, p.7., February 13, 1940, p.16., February 27, 1940, p.9., March 5, 1940, p.13., March 8, 1940, p.9., March 13, 1940, p.15., March 28, 1940, p.22., March 30, 1940, p.14., April 9, 1940, p.14., April 27, 1940, p.7., May 8, 1940, p.16., May 10, 1940, p.14., May 18, 1940, p.7., May 21, 1940, p.12., May 22, 1940, p.6., May 23, 1940, p.16., May 24, 1940, p.11., May 27, 1940, p.7., May 29, 1940, p.8., June 4, 1940, p.13., June 8, 1940, p.13., June 12, 1940, p.8., June 13, 1940, p.8., June 27, 1940, p.8., July 4, 1940, p.16., July 5, 1940, p.19.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs N. Meyerowitz served as treasurer and Mesdames W. Levy, B. Levy and H. Hackner sat on the committee. (*Ibid.*, December 6, 1939, p.15.).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, April 30, 1940, p.7., May 2, 1940, p.13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, May 4, 1940, p.8.

Messrs M. Bloch & Co. donated crockery, cutlery and other necessary kitchenware required by the Legion.<sup>8</sup> Equally generous donations in kind were made by a number of Jewish individuals and business houses to the Committee of the French War Workers Fund, which sought to provide comforts for French soldiers on active service.<sup>9</sup> When the war spread to Finland, Scandanavians in Natal set up a Finnish Relief Fund to which Jewish residents of the City contributed generously.<sup>10</sup> At the same time members of the Jewish community responded with equal generosity to the appeal made on behalf of the St. Dunstan's Fund for blinded soldiers, sailors and airmen.<sup>11</sup> The South African Women's Auxilliary Services not only derived financial assistance from local Jewry,<sup>12</sup> but also enjoyed the assistance of a number of Jewish women in the various branches of its work.<sup>13</sup>

With the Nazi advances in Europe in 1940 funds were created in Durban for the relief of Norway,<sup>14</sup> the

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, October 9, 1939, p.5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, October 12, 1939, p.6., October 24, 1939, p.5., December 13, 1939, p.24.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, January 8, 1940, p.15., January 18, 1940, p.9., January 22, 1940, p.7., March 14, 1940, p.18.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, January 25, 1940, p.7., March 28, 1941, p.7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, February 22, 1940, p.17., January 11, 1941, p.8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, April 6, 1940, p.8., January 23, 1941, p.6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, April 17, 1940, p.9., June 13, 1940, p.20.

Netherlands<sup>15</sup> and Belgium,<sup>16</sup> all of which won the sympathy and support of members of the Jewish community. When Germany initiated its intensive assault on Great Britain a special fund was set up to provide planes for the Royal Air Force. The Speed the Aeroplanes Fund, which operated as a branch of the Mayor's Fund, aroused enormous enthusiasm among all classes of the population, who all shared a sense of admiration for the courage shown by the people of the United Kingdom during the Battle of Britain. Durban's Jewish citizens,<sup>17</sup> and their co-religionists in the Danhauser district,<sup>18</sup> were no less enthusiastic in their response to this worthy cause.

A number of Jewish men in Durban showed their support for the work being done by the YMCA and Toc H by contributing to their War Work Fund,<sup>19</sup> whilst fundraising efforts on behalf of the Red Cross Society inspired a

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, June 8, 1940, p.13., June 14, 1940, p.15.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, June 13, 1940, p.20., August 30, 1940, p.18.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, June 11, 1940, p.14., June 13, 1940, p.8., June 14, 1940, p.8., June 15, 1940, p.9., June 17, 1940, p.16., June 18, 1940, p.12., June 19, 1940, p.8., June 20, 1940, p.8., June 21, 1940, p.8., June 22, 1940, p.20., June 24, 1940, p.13., June 25, 1940, p.9., June 27, 1940, p.8., June 28, 1940, p.22., July 2, 1940, p.21., July 5, 1940, p.19., July 8, 1940, p.5., July 10, 1940, p.7., July 11, 1940, p.7., July 12, 1940, p.18.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, July 8, 1940, p.5.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, June 18, 1940, p.14., June 20, 1940, p.16., July 11, 1940, p.9.

number of the City's Jewish women to offer their assistance. A fortnightly Caledonian Market was held for the benefit of the Society during 1940 and members of the Jewish community served on the various stalls which made up the market.<sup>20</sup> In the following year the members and committee of the Durban Red Cross Caledonian Fund organised a Fete in the Durban City Hall, at which Mesdames V. Robinson and S. Moshal ran a grocery stall and Mrs F.C. Hollander supervised the luncheons.<sup>21</sup>

At a meeting of the national executive committee of the South African Mayor's National Fund, held in July 1940, the decision was taken, in view of the war having come nearer to the Union, to inaugurate a new fund, which incorporated the Mayor's Fund, and was known as the Governor General's National War Fund. This fund was devoted exclusively to assistance for soldiers on active service and their dependants.<sup>22</sup> At the head of the Fund was a National Committee, consisting of twelve members nominated by the Governor General and 22 members representing public bodies and prominent organisations. Durban Jewry derived considerable satisfaction from the

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<sup>20</sup> Mrs F.C. Hollander co-convened a miscellaneous stall at which Mrs F. Henochsberg was a helper. (*Ibid.*, June 22, 1940, p.7.), Mrs Victor Robinson convened a cake and sweet stall which was manned by a group of Jewish women. (*Ibid.*, September 21, 1940, p.7.).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, April 10, 1941, p.7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, July 3, 1940, p.14.

Governor General, Sir Patrick Duncan's nomination of Mr F.C. Hollander to the Committee.<sup>23</sup> Until the publication of donations to the Fund was discontinued by the Press, in consequence of the paper shortage, Jewish names were frequently to be found amongst those who gave

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, July 17, 1940, p.8.  
July 19, 1940, p.11.

the Fund their support.<sup>24</sup> Apart from regular donations the members of the Jewish community contributed in cash and kind to the Victory Sale, which was held in March 1941,<sup>25</sup> and supported the General Smuts 71st

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<sup>24</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 18, 1940, p.13., July 25, 1940, p.15., July 27, 1940, p.13., August 1, 1940, p.19., August 10, 1940, p.8., August 12, 1940, p.5., August 20, 1940, p.15., August 26, 1940, p.4., September 4, 1940, p.6., September 28, 1940, p.20., October 2, 1940, p.8., October 24, 1940, p.17., October 28, 1940, p.5., November 7, 1940, p.7., November 19, 1940, p.18., November 26, 1940, p.14., December 7, 1940, p.16., December 19, 1940, p.11., December 30, 1940, p.16., January 13, 1941, p.4., February 3, 1941, p.5., February 7, 1941, p.17., March 3, 1941, p.6., March 8, 1941, p.17., March 22, 1941, p.16., April 14, 1941, p.4., April 30, 1941, p.7., May 9, 1941, p.18., May 24, 1941, p.9., June 7, 1941, p.15., June 14, 1941, p.15., July 3, 1941, p.14., July 7, 1941, p.4., July 14, 1941, p.15., July 19, 1941, p.14., July 24, 1941, p.5., August 1, 1941, p.5., August 9, 1941, p.9., August 22, 1941, p.6., October 15, 1941, p.5., October 25, 1941, p.20., October 29, 1941, p.7., November 8, 1941, p.6., November 21, 1941, p.17., December 1, 1941, p.18., December 8, 1941, p.7., December 15, 1941, p.7., December 22, 1941, p.20., December 23, 1941, p.16., January 5, 1942, p.16., January 27, 1942, p.7., February 16, 1942, p.5., February 23, 1942, p.13., March 9, 1942, p.4., March 16, 1942, p.11., March 30, 1932, p.10., April 11, 1942, p.14., April 20, 1942, p.10., May 1, 1942, p.5., May 7, 1942, p.5., May 15, 1942, p.12., June 15, 1942, p.5., July 7, 1942, p.5., July 24, 1942, p.12., August 5, 1942, p.10., September 22, 1942, p.10., September 25, 1942, p.10., October 12, 1942, p.10., October 19, 1942, p.9., October 26, 1942, p.4., November 2, 1942, p.4., November 9, 1942, p.10., November 27, 1942, p.10., December 2, 1942, p.10., December 11, 1942, p.10., December 29, 1942, p.8., January 5, 1943, p.8., January 11, 1943, p.7., February 8, 1943, p.8., February 15, 1943, p.7., February 17, 1943, p.10., February 24, 1943, p.5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, March 14, 1941, p.16., March 27, 1941, p.21.

Birthday Gift Appeal,<sup>26</sup> which were held in aid of the Fund. Two members of the Jewish community, Mr Jack Adley and Captain P.H. Lazarus served on the Assistance Sub-Committee of the Durban branch of the Fund which dealt with all applications for grants, and decided on the size of the grant to be given in every individual case.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the Governor General's National War Fund members of the local Jewish community contributed to the Merchant Navy Fund,<sup>28</sup> which also benefitted from a fete at which Mrs A.J. Lindsay and Mrs W. Levy served tea.<sup>29</sup> A number of Jewish women in the City also gave a considerable amount of their time to assisting the Women's Committee of the Seamen's Institute in their work. Mrs Nathan Smith was the convener and secretary of the committee's knitting circle<sup>30</sup> and, together with Mesdames A. Deen and F.C. Hollander, assisted at the Institute's Fair for the Fighting Forces, held in September 1940.<sup>31</sup> Assisted by Miss Adeline Brewer, Mrs Smith also ran a stall at the fete organised by the

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, May 19, 1941, p.9., May 20, 1941, p.11., May 21, 1941, p.11., May 22, 1941, p.6., May 28, 1941, p.12., May 31, 1941, p.15.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, July 10, 1941, p.12.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, July 11, 1940, p.13.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, June 5, 1941, p.6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, August 7, 1940, p.7.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, September 4, 1940, p.8.

Institute's knitting circle to augment their funds.<sup>32</sup>  
 The building fund of the Seamen's Institute and the  
 Institute's Wharfside Refreshment Fund benefitted  
 considerably from the fairs that were held in their  
 interest, at which a number of Jewish women volunteered  
 their services.<sup>33</sup> Regular support was also shown by  
 the Jews of Durban for the war funds of the South African  
 Red Cross Society.<sup>34</sup>

To help the thousands of poor people in Britain,  
 who had suffered in consequence of the Nazi onslaught on  
 the country, the Lord Mayor of London opened a Mansion

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, October 30, 1940, p.6., November 7, 1940,  
 p.19.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, December 7, 1940, p.8., May 3, 1941,  
 p.7.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, August 12, 1940, p.4., February 13, 1941,  
 p.18., May 8, 1941, p.19., May 14, 1941, p.5.,  
 May 23, 1941, p.4., May 29, 1941, p.18.,  
 July 17, 1941, p.5., July 29, 1941, p.7.,  
 August 28, 1941, p.14., September 9, 1941, p.4.,  
 October 9, 1941, p.7., October 23, 1941, p.5.,  
 October 29, 1941, p.5., November 5, 1941, p.8.,  
 November 13, 1941, p.6., December 11, 1941, p.7.,  
 December 17, 1941, p.6., January 15, 1942, p.12.,  
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 February 16, 1942, p.4., March 9, 1942, p.13.,  
 March 13, 1942, p.5., April 6, 1942, p.4.,  
 April 21, 1942, p.10., April 27, 1942, p.10.,  
 May 15, 1942, p.10., May 18, 1942, p.5.,  
 May 19, 1942, p.5., May 25, 1942, p.10.,  
 June 2, 1942, p.3., June 8, 1942, p.9.,  
 June 16, 1942, p.5., July 13, 1942, p.4.,  
 July 27, 1942, p.10., August 7, 1942, p.12.,  
 September 11, 1942, p.11., September 26, 1942, p.9.,  
 September 28, 1942, p.4., October 19, 1942, p.10.,  
 November 2, 1942, p.4., December 9, 1942, p.10.,  
 December 22, 1942, p.5., January 29, 1943, p.9.  
 These lists were discontinued in 1943 owing to a  
 reduction in the size of newspapers, inconsequence  
 of the paper shortage.



House Fund, which was supported by communities throughout the Empire.<sup>35</sup> Donations to the fund were solicited from the residents of Durban during the last two weeks of September 1940, and the response of the Jewish community, as recorded in the press appeared no less generous than that of the other sections of the City's population.<sup>36</sup>

Local Jewry also extended its wholehearted support to the South African Gifts and Comforts Fund, which was established towards the end of 1940, under the chairmanship of Mrs Smuts for the benefit of the Forces,<sup>37</sup> and contributed to the funds of the Navy League Club<sup>38</sup> and the St. John's Ambulance Association.<sup>39</sup> With equal generosity, members of the community supported the Air

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, September 13, 1940, p.10.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, September 14, 1940, p.12.,  
September 16, 1940, p.5., September 17, 1940, p.5.,  
September 18, 1940, p.7., September 19, 1940, p.7.,  
September 20, 1940, p.7., September 24, 1940, p.5.,  
September 25, 1940, p.8., September 26, 1940, p.8.,  
September 27, 1940, p.10., September 28, 1940,  
p.14., September 30, 1940, p.5.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, November 14, 1940, p.19., June 12, 1941,  
p.11., June 13, 1941, p.12., June 14, 1941, p.13.,  
June 25, 1941, p.15., December 17, 1941, p.16.,  
June 15, 1942, p.10.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, December 21, 1940, p.16.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, January 15, 1941, p.9., January 18, 1941,  
p.8., January 25, 1941, p.20., February 3, 1941,  
p.14., February 15, 1941, p.9., February 24, 1941,  
p.4., May 14, 1941, p.8., August 4, 1941, p.7.,  
May 2, 1942, p.5., August 6, 1942, p.10.,  
November 5, 1942, p.10.

Raid Fund.<sup>40</sup> This was set up in February 1941 by the Durban branch of the Victoria League for the purchase of comforts, and clothing in particular, for those who had suffered through the Nazi bombing raids and for the civil defence workers who worked so courageously to help the victims.<sup>41</sup>

The arrival in Durban, from the Mediterranean, of a number of destitute British merchant seamen, who had been bombed and wrecked off Greece and Crete and were *en route* home, prompted the creation of a Crete Heroe's Appeal,<sup>42</sup> which aroused the sympathy of the Jewish,<sup>43</sup> and general community. Further concern for the men of the Merchant Navy was demonstrated by the support, in cash and kind, that was given to the British Empire Service League Mercantile Marine Distress Fund.<sup>44</sup>

The advances which the Nazi forces made into the Soviet Union, in September 1941, led to the creation in Durban of a Committee for Medical Aid for Russia, whose main aim was to raise funds to provide the Russians with medical supplies. The personnel of the Durban committee

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, February 27, 1941, p.20., March 5, 1941, p.13., March 7, 1941, p.7., March 18, 1941, p.12., March 28, 1941, p.8.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, February 18, 1941, p.6.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, June 26, 1941, p.15.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1, 1941, p.9.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, August 28, 1941, p.9.

of the fund included Mr J. Israel.<sup>45</sup> Local Jewry responded generously to the appeal,<sup>46</sup> the urgency of which was emphasised by a number of the City's leading doctors, including Dr Sophie Kaplan, Dr N. Smith and Dr S. Fine.<sup>47</sup>

In October 1941, world-wide abhorrence over the Nazi execution of French hostages, in reprisal for the murder of two German officers, generated overwhelming sympathy from prominent Jewish citizens of Durban for the struggle of the Free French, and for the fund that was created to support them.<sup>48</sup>

With the full support of General and Mrs Smuts, the Mayoress of Durban, Mrs Clare Ellis Brown, launched a "Tuck for Tommies" Fund in November 1941. Its purpose was to express, at Christmastide, the gratitude of the South African people to the men of the Imperial Forces serving in the Middle East who, for a variety of reasons, were unlikely to receive Christmas cheer from Great Britain. With typical generosity the residents of Durban contributed to this fund the Jewish community

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, September 23, 1941, p.10.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, October 6, 1941, p.12., October 15, 1941, p.10., October 16, 1941, p.12., October 18, 1941, p.13., October 20, 1941, p.7., October 21, 1941, p.5., October 22, 1941, p.5., October 23, 1941, p.18., October 24, 1941, p.17., October 25, 1941, p.20., November 1, 1941, p.15., November 28, 1941, p.8.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, October 15, 1941, p.10.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, October 24, 1941, p.17.

being no less generous than their fellow townsmen.<sup>49</sup>

At about the same time the Mayor of Johannesburg, in conjunction with other Mayors in the Union, launched a fund for a national tribute to Mrs Smuts in recognition of her devotion to the welfare of the Forces.<sup>50</sup> Together with thousands of other South Africans, Jews in Durban donated varying amounts to the tribute,<sup>51</sup> which took the form of a national donation to the Gifts and Comforts Fund on the occasion of Mrs Smuts's 71st birthday on December 22, 1941. A similar appeal, which met with an equally generous response,<sup>52</sup> was launched in the following year, on the occasion of Mrs Smuts's 72nd birthday.<sup>53</sup>

Early in 1942, a Free Danish Fighter Squadron Fund was established in Durban. The fund, which was world wide, aimed to collect the amount necessary for the purchase of a complete fighter squadron to be presented to the Royal Air Force to be flown by Danish pilots.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, November 11, 1941, p.9., November 13, 1941, p.12., November 14, 1941, p.6., November 15, 1941, p.8., November 17, 1941, p.14., November 19, 1941, p.16., November 20, 1941, p.18., November 22, 1941, p.17., November 26, 1941, p.14.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, November 21, 1941, p.12.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1, 1941, p.12., December 4, 1941, p.14., December 5, 1941, p.18., December 6, 1941, p.14., December 10, 1941, p.14., December 13, 1941, p.16., December 23, 1941, p.13.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, November 16, 1942, p.6., December 1, 1942, p.8., December 14, 1942, p.8.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, October 16, 1942, p.8.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, January 29, 1942, p.5.

It too enjoyed support from the Jewish residents of Durban<sup>55</sup> no less than from their Gentile counterparts.

An appeal from the Netherlands East Indies Red Cross Fund<sup>56</sup> also did not go unheeded by Durban Jewry. Neither were the calls by the South African Red Cross Society, for funds for food parcels for South African prisoners of war,<sup>57</sup> and the St. Dunstan's Fund for blinded soldiers<sup>58</sup> allowed to pass unsupported.

As the newspapers were forced to reduce their size, in consequence of a world wide paper shortage in 1943, no further lists of donations appeared in the local press. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the anonymity which now came to surround support for war fund drives, one can presume, on the basis of its generosity in the period until 1943, that Durban Jewry continued to actively support the numerous worthy causes that solicited funds in the City.

The contribution of individual members of the Jewish community to the war effort was not, however, limited to philanthropy, and many local Jews found other means in which to assist in the war effort.

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, February 16, 1942, p.4., March 20, 1942, p.5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, March 10, 1942, p.5.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, July 18, 1942, p.8., July 22, 1942, p.10., July 24, 1942, p.8., July 29, 1942, p.8., August 6, 1942, p.9., August 10, 1942, p.5., August 13, 1942, p.5., September 26, 1942, p.9., September 30, 1942, p.4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, November 2, 1942, p.4.

Miss Rose Alper (Mrs H.L. Magid), the celebrated Carla Rosa Opera singer, performed at a concert for the Red Cross Society;<sup>59</sup> at a show in aid of the Red Cross Appeal for Field Ambulances;<sup>60</sup> at a cabaret, co-convened by Mrs S.L. Driman, in aid of the R.N.V.R. and Natal Cadet Base Comforts Fund;<sup>61</sup> at a Persian Market in aid of the Red Cross;<sup>62</sup> and in a variety concert for the benefit of the Holland Week Clothing and Relief Fund.<sup>63</sup>

Together with Miss Joy Lewis, Miss Avril Kentridge participated in a Music Hall Parade in aid of the Royal Durban Light Infantry Comforts and Dependants Fund,<sup>64</sup> a Talent Parade in aid of the Victoria League Club for Servicemen;<sup>65</sup> a Cabaret, presented by the Ways and Means Committee of the South African Women's Auxilliary Services, in aid of comforts for fighting forces;<sup>66</sup> and a dance, held to raise funds for a mobile field hospital for the Red Cross.<sup>67</sup> Miss Kentridge and Miss Binkie Eagle appeared in a variety concert for the "Thumbs Up"

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, January 10, 1940, p.12.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, September 10, 1940, p.8.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, October 9, 1940, p.14.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, July 2, 1941, p.6.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, September 13, 1944, p.4.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, May 9, 1940, p.17.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, July 10, 1940, p.10.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, August 31, 1940, p.8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, October 28, 1940, p.15.

Victory Club, which provided entertainment for members of the fighting forces,<sup>68</sup> and Miss Kentridge also danced in a show in aid of Durban's Own Sailor Fund,<sup>69</sup> and in a Grand Variety Concert in aid of local Military Hospitals.<sup>70</sup> In July 1943, Avril Kentridge produced and appeared in a revue, at the City Hall, which featured Dorothy Avrich, Eve Gettleson, Myra Patz and Motla Sarkin, the proceeds of which went towards Medical Aid for China.<sup>71</sup> Together with Sheila Wartski and Ruby Leibowitz she also danced in a show presented by the Durban branch of the Prisoners of War Relatives Association in aid of the Prisoners of War Food Fund.<sup>72</sup>

Apart from the show in aid of the P.O.W. Food Fund, Sheila Wartski appeared in a Music Hall Parade in aid of the Royal Durban Light Infantry Comforts and Dependants Fund;<sup>73</sup> a Cavalcade presented by the Durban Bachelor Girl's Club in aid of War Funds;<sup>74</sup> a show presented by the same club in aid of the Natal Branch of the Malta Relief Fund and Springfield Occupational Therapy Hut;<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, July 31, 1941, p.11.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, June 24, 1942, p.6.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, August 3, 1942, p.6.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, July 10, 1943, p.6.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, October 16, 1943, p.6.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, May 9, 1940, p.17.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, November 7, 1940, p.9.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, September 29, 1942, p.5.

and at a grand ball in aid of Durban's Own Sailors Fund.<sup>76</sup> Together with Pauline Magid and Binkie Eagle she starred in a Children's Concert, which helped to raise funds for a Red Cross Ambulance.<sup>77</sup>

Mme Lily Dubois, a well known Durban singer, lent her services to a fete in aid of the St. John's Ambulance Association and the South African Red Cross Society,<sup>78</sup> at which Mrs H. Freeman ran a produce stall, Mrs E. Romaine and Mrs C. Romaine convened a flower stall, Miss S. Cowan convened the tombola and mystery stall and Mrs J. Kahn supervised the beer garden.<sup>79</sup> She also sang in the Metro Goldwyn Song and National Festival in aid of Durban's Own Sailors Fund.<sup>80</sup>

Other Jews, whose talents assisted in the war effort, included Rita Leibowitz, who danced at a concert in aid of the Red Cross Appeal for Field Ambulances<sup>81</sup> and at a grand ball in aid of Durban's Own Sailors Fund;<sup>82</sup> Cantor Albert Lubliner, of Johannesburg, who organised a celebrity concert in Durban, which raised £400 for the

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1, 1943, p.4.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, December 6, 1940, p.19.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, March 8, 1941, p.7.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, March 11, 1941, p.15.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, December 13, 1941, p.12.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, August 31, 1940, p.20.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1, 1943, p.4.



local branch of the St. Dunstan's Fund;<sup>83</sup> Pearl Katz who appeared in a concert, at the Rossburgh Hall, in aid of the Services Orphanage Fund;<sup>84</sup> and Sonny Tomson who performed in a show in aid of the Air Force Fund.<sup>85</sup>

The Jewish residents of Durban can clearly be seen to have sought through the channels available to them to contribute to the general war effort, and they thereby complimented the efforts of their men and women in uniform who served in the different branches of the Forces.

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<sup>83</sup>*The Zionist Record*, August 7, 1942, p.21.

<sup>84</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, December 1, 1943, p.4.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, June 26, 1945, p.4.

## CHAPTER XXIII

THE COMMUNALCONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR EFFORT

Whilst individuals within the community personally assisted the numerous war time activities, the Jewish community of Durban, through its various organisations, made its own particular contribution to the war effort.

In February 1940, the Durban Jewish Women's Guild joined with other women's groups in the City in staging a Caledonian Market, in aid of the South African Mayor's National Fund.<sup>1</sup> It also co-ordinated what proved to be the last annual July Ball in 1940,<sup>2</sup> whose total proceeds, which exceeded £1,400, were donated to the South African Red Cross Society and the Governor General's National War Fund.<sup>3</sup> The Guild associated itself with the work which was undertaken by the Victoria League, by participating in a bridge drive<sup>4</sup> and a fete<sup>5</sup> that were

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<sup>1</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, February 28, 1940, p.10.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, July 10, 1940, p.12.

<sup>3</sup>*Hasholom*, XVIII No.2 (October, 1940), 20.

<sup>4</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, September 26, 1940, p.6.

<sup>5</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 53.

organised by the League, and assisted by the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women it undertook the tea section of The Merchant Navy Fair.<sup>6</sup> It manned the cafe stall at the V for Victory National Council of Women's Victory Fete<sup>7</sup> and under the direction of Mrs A. Goldberg, the vice-chairlady of the Union of Jewish Women, the Guild ran a grocery stall at the Mission to Seamen's Fair, which was held in the City Hall in November 1941.<sup>8</sup>

A major feature of the Guild's war work was the Knitting Circle that was formed in the early part of the war by Mrs L. Hart, with the assistance of Mrs A. Brooks. This Knitting Circle was later augmented, with the help of Mrs B. Bloom and Mrs H. Lipinski, and two sections were formed, Berea and Beach. The Beach section was convened by Mesdames L. Hart and A. Brook whose workers met at the Jewish Club each Tuesday morning. Mrs Bloom convened the Berea section and her workers met each Tuesday morning at the home of Mrs H. Lipinski. The two sections worked as one body and through the Victoria League several hundred garments presented by the Knitting Circle were distributed. At the same time the Guild distributed many of the garments made by the Knitting Circle to the Jewish members of the fighting forces.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>*Hasholom*, XVIII No (May, 1941), 20.

<sup>7</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 15, 1941, p.6.

<sup>8</sup>*Hasholom*, XIX No.2 (October, 1941), 20.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, XVIII No.2 (October, 1940), 20.

By mid-1941, many of the completed articles made by the Knitting Circle were also being distributed through the South African Gifts and Comforts Fund, to which it was affiliated, and through the Seamen's Institute, whilst through the Victoria League, in London, baby clothes were distributed to air raid victims.<sup>10</sup> Even after the two branches of the Knitting Circle had combined, and were holding their weekly meetings at the Club,<sup>11</sup> the task of providing suitable woollen items for the Forces continued, lasting until the conclusion of the war.<sup>12</sup> The Knitting Circle also made a financial contribution to the South African Gifts and Comforts Fund, in honour of Mrs Smuts's 71st birthday. On the occasion of Ouma Smuts's visit to the Club, in September 1942, Mrs L. Hart, on behalf of the Knitting Circle, presented her with a parcel of goods for distribution.<sup>13</sup>

The Guild was represented on the Comfort's Section of the Durban Jewish Club<sup>14</sup> and its members worked in the Canteen maintained by the Club,<sup>15</sup> which it also supported

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<sup>10</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 27, 1941, p.19.

<sup>11</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.7 (March, 1942), 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 53.

<sup>13</sup> *Hasholom*, XXII No.4 (December, 1942), 25-26.

<sup>14</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47. On the Comfort's Section see below pp.472-485.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* On the Canteen see below pp.471-482.

with monetary assistance.<sup>16</sup> The Guild's members were also active in the Women's Auxilliary Services and the V.A.D.<sup>17</sup> In addition to their many other duties the Women's Guild undertook the weekly duty of visiting indisposed men and women of the forces in the local hospitals in Durban and at the Springfield Military Hospital.<sup>18</sup> Mrs C. Adley was, in fact, the first to undertake this work on behalf of the Guild.<sup>19</sup>

The members of the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women worked in close co-operation with the Jewish Women's Guild in the field of war work. They assisted the Guild's Knitting Circle,<sup>20</sup> combined with the Guild in running the tea section of the Merchant Navy Fair<sup>21</sup> and helped to organise the Guild's grocery stall at the Mission to Seamen's Fair.<sup>22</sup> The Union, in addition, however, pursued other avenues of work, which complimented that undertaken by the Guild.

In July 1940, the Union made application to the

<sup>16</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 15, 1947, p.6.

<sup>17</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 63., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 53.

<sup>19</sup> *Durban Jewish Women's Guild Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure 1953* (Durban, 1953), p.18.

<sup>20</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48.

<sup>21</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.9 (May, 1941), 20.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.2 (October, 1941), 20.

Jewish Club for permission to establish a canteen in the Club. As the Club authorities felt that it would be more practicable for a canteen to be placed under the direct control of its Executive, it was decided, in collaboration with the Union of Jewish Women, to form a Gifts and Comforts Section of the Club. A representative committee was duly appointed consisting of members of the Union and the Club's Governing Bodies, with Mrs V. Robinson and Mrs H. Lipinski, of the Union, as chairman and vice-chairman.<sup>23</sup> The Union remained closely associated with the canteen, assisting in its running<sup>24</sup> and financing.<sup>25</sup>

Notwithstanding its commitment to the Jewish Club canteen, the Durban branch of the Union assisted at the Caledonian Market, held in aid of the South African Mayor's National Fund<sup>26</sup> and distributed War Fund badges amongst the motor car owners of Durban, on behalf of the Governor General's National War Fund.<sup>27</sup> It contributed

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.3 (November, 1940), 16., *Ibid.*, XVIII No.2 (October, 1940), 19.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.9 (May, 1941), 20., *Ibid.*, XVIII No.11 (July, 1941), 20., *Ibid.*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 25., *Ibid.*, XXI No.8 (April, 1943), 23., *Ibid.*, XXII No.2 (October, 1943), 23.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.8 (April, 1943), 23., *Ibid.*, XXII No.2 (October, 1943), 23.

<sup>26</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 30, 1940, p.7., and *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48.

<sup>27</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.4 (December, 1940), 24.

generously towards the Seamen's Institute<sup>28</sup> and aided the local branch of the Red Cross Society with monetary assistance,<sup>29</sup> and by running a grocery stall at the Red Cross Fete.<sup>30</sup> It also collected funds towards meeting the cost of the two ambulances which the Union of Jewish Women of South Africa presented to the South African Red Cross Society.<sup>31</sup> The Durban branch of the Union contributed £130 to the Victoria League Gift and Comforts Fund<sup>32</sup> and ran a stall at the Grand Victory Fete, convened by the National Council of Women.<sup>33</sup> It also raised money for the special fitted stretcher ambulance that was presented to the Red Cross by the National Council of Women, to which it was affiliated,<sup>34</sup> and participated in the United Nations Fair for the Prisoner of War Food Fund.<sup>35</sup> On behalf of the Jewish community of the City the Union ran the highly successful Palestine Section of the Durban and Coast Thanksgiving Cavalcade in July and August 1944. Fully 230 persons, mostly women, assisted the Union in making the Palestine

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.12 (August, 1940), 18.

<sup>29</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48.

<sup>30</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 10, 1941, p.7.

<sup>31</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.8 (August, 1940), 18.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 25.

<sup>33</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 8, 1943, p.6.

<sup>34</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.8 (April, 1943), 23.

<sup>35</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 18, 1943, p.8.

Section of the Cavalcade a financial and social success.<sup>36</sup>  
 The Durban branch of the Union was also responsible for raising £50 towards the cost of furnishing the Synagogue, that was established for Jewish servicemen, at the Military Base at Voortrekkerhoogte near Pretoria.<sup>37</sup>

The war placed enormous difficulties on the Jewish Club whose strength was considerably depleted with the departure of many of its members on active service. It nevertheless made a contribution to the general war effort that was of singular importance. Through its various sections, many of which were unable to continue functioning for the duration of the war, the Club contributed significant sums to the various war charities. The Dramatic Section's production of *Judgement Day*, in November 1939,<sup>38</sup> benefitted the South African Mayor's National Fund by the amount of £122 15s 2d.<sup>39</sup> In all, the Club contributed more than £1,000 to this Fund.<sup>40</sup> Acting as the vehicle for Jewish contributions, the Club

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<sup>36</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 29 and 31.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 25.

<sup>38</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 24, 1939, p.19.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, December 7, 1939, p.19.

<sup>40</sup> Arnold Miller, *Durban Jewish Club. A History Issued on The Occasion Of Its Silver Jubilee*, (Durban, May, 1956), p.45.



donated £17,000 to the Governor General's War Fund,<sup>41</sup> and much smaller amounts to the St. Dunstan's Fund<sup>42</sup> and the Women's Civil Air Guard Six Stretcher A.R.P. Casualty Trailer Fund.<sup>43</sup> The Club's production of *Splinters* an all female revue, produced by Mr Sydney Smo, was presented on one night in aid of the Y.M.C.A. Canteen Fund, on the following night for the benefit of the Women's Auxilliary Services (Comforts Section) and on two occasions for the members of H.M. forces stationed in Durban.<sup>44</sup> The revue also toured the military camps and hospitals.<sup>45</sup> In addition to a monetary donation,<sup>46</sup> the Club presented the South African Gifts and Comforts Fund with half of the proceeds of the play *The Women*, which was staged in December 1941, under the direction of Mr Harold Freed.<sup>47</sup> An All Star Variety Show held at the Club<sup>48</sup> raised £49

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Hasholom*, XVII No.11 (July, 1940), 9., *Ibid.*, XVIII No.3 (November, 1940), 17., *The Natal Mercury*, July 25, 1940, p.15., July 27, 1940, p.13., August 20, 1940, p.15., October 25, 1941, p.20., October 29, 1941, p.7., November 21, 1941, p.17., December 1, 1941, p.18., December 2, 1942, p.10.,

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, January 25, 1940, p.7.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, February 8, 1940, p.7.

<sup>44</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.2 (October, 1940), 18.

<sup>45</sup> Arnold Miller, p.45.

<sup>46</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 14, 1940, p.19.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, December 6, 1941, p.7.

<sup>48</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.8 (April, 1941), 3.

for the Red Cross Society<sup>49</sup> and the proceeds of other Dramatic Section's productions benefitted the R.A.F. Benevolent Fund,<sup>50</sup> the Durban and Coast Thanksgiving Cavalcade<sup>51</sup> and the "Salute to Britain" Fund.<sup>52</sup> Competitions held by the Bowling Section raised funds for the South African Mayor's National Fund,<sup>53</sup> the Governor General's War Fund<sup>54</sup> and Our Own Sailor's Fund,<sup>55</sup> whilst the proceeds from a tennis tournament, held by the ladies of the Tennis Section, were presented to the Red Cross Society.<sup>56</sup>

The Club's major achievement during the war, however, lay in the establishment of its canteen, which brought great honour to the Institution and the Jewish community of the City. In July 1940 a deputation from the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women, led by Mrs V. Robinson, approached the Jewish Club for permission to establish an undenominational canteen for the Forces. The Club authorities agreed to allow the

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<sup>49</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 8, 1941, p.19.

<sup>50</sup>*Hasholom*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 11.

<sup>51</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 19, 1944, p.6.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, September 17, 1945, p.7., October 12, 1945, p.5.

<sup>53</sup>*Hasholom*, XVII No.4 (December, 1939), 19.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, XVIII No.2 (October, 1940), 18.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, XX No.8 (April, 1942), 15.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, XVIII No.9 (May, 1941), 18.

Union to use the Club tea room and kitchens, on condition that the laws of *kashrut* were observed and only a side entrance was used. On these terms the canteen opened its doors on August 20, 1940, operating from 9 am to 11 pm.<sup>57</sup>

Members of the Club generally were, however, desirous of extending the use of all the Club's facilities to the men and women in uniform. The Club authorities, therefore, believing that it would be more practicable for the canteen to be placed under the direct control of the Executive, held a further meeting with representatives of the Union of Jewish Women, at which it was decided, to form a Gift and Comforts Section of the Club in collaboration with the Union.<sup>58</sup> A committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Mrs V. Robinson, with Mrs H. Lipinski and Mr J. Goldman as Vice-Chairman, Mrs M. Cohen as Secretary, Mrs A. Lissack as Treasurer and Mr S. Moshal as Publicity Officer.<sup>59</sup>

Initially, the Club's canteen was poorly patronised as the existing canteens in the City were able to meet the needs of the servicemen in Durban, and the idea of discontinuing it was seriously considered. With the arrival in Durban, in December 1940, of the first convoy carrying troops to Egypt the picture, however, changed

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<sup>57</sup> Arnold Miller, p.41.

<sup>58</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.3 (November, 1940), 16.

<sup>59</sup> Arnold Miller, p.41.

entirely, as large numbers of servicemen visited the canteen, which served some 800 meals a day.<sup>60</sup> The sudden rush on the canteen highlighted many organisational weaknesses<sup>61</sup> which resulted in considerable reorganisation and the institution of regular daily work shifts.<sup>62</sup> At the same time it prepared the canteen workers for the increasingly large number of seamen and women who visited the Club during 1941, in consequence of the reshuffling of the military sea routes.

The additional demands on the canteen's facilities necessitated the expansion of the Club's catering plant and the recruitment of extra workers, many of whom were not members of the Club, and some of whom were not even Jewish. Expansion also meant increased expenditure and in March 1940, to offset increased costs and the monthly deficit which resulted from serving meals at a fraction of the cost, a drive for funds was launched by the Club.<sup>63</sup> The financial needs of the canteen were further met by private subscriptions, generous donations and the organisation of various fund raising functions by members of the Jewish community.<sup>64</sup>

The growing use of the canteen made necessary its

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<sup>60</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.5 (January, 1941), 18.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>63</sup> Arnold Miller, p.42.

<sup>64</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 10.

complete reorganisation, which took place at a general meeting in July 1941, at which Mrs V. Robinson was elected Hon. President of the canteen for the duration of the war. The work of the canteen was divided into sections, each with its own convener and supervisors. The Finance Control Committee was appointed to raise and control the funds of the canteen; the Transport Section took women home after the canteen had closed at night; the Outside Organisation Section took charge of the washing of dishes and the stock of the kitchen plant; and the Information Bureau initially not only provided information, but also served as a postal depot and sold stamps, toilet requisites, sweets, cigarettes, etc. It was responsible for the handing out of towels and soap for showers and the loan of sport equipment and also helped find accommodation for those who needed it.<sup>65</sup> The Executive Committee elected at the general meeting consisted of Mrs V. Robinson, Hon. President; Mr S. Moshal, Chairman; Mrs H. Lipinski and Mr M. Wolpert, Vice-Chairmen; Mrs I. Smith, Convener of Women's Workers; Mrs C. Davidson, Convener of Stores and Buying; Mesdames A. Lindsay, B. Levy and M. Freed, Co-Conveners of the Kitchen; Mrs J. Goldman, Convener of the Pantry; Messrs J. Goldman and H. Brown, Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Finance Control Committee; Mr L. Levy, Chairman of Propaganda;

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.6 (February, 1942), 15.

Mr B. Hyams, Chairman of Outside Organisation;  
 Mr J. Elias, Convener of the Information Bureau;  
 Mrs A. Stiller, Hon. Secretary, and the Executive  
 Officers of the Club.<sup>66</sup>

Succeeding months saw ever-increasing use being made of the canteen, which, by the year ending September 1941, had served 60,000 men,<sup>67</sup> the number of meals being served per month increasing from 5,000 in July 1941 to 10,000 in September of the same year.<sup>68</sup> In the face of such large numbers the canteen observance of *kashrut* was found by the canteen to be impractical and was abandoned.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to providing food and services, concerts were held whenever troops were in town and a Concert Party, under the direction of Mrs C. Fine, made regular visits to sick and wounded servicemen in the local and military hospitals.<sup>70</sup> A Sunshine Club organised by the Club and canteen, arranged motor trips round Durban for visiting soldiers<sup>71</sup> and the Club's recreational facilities were placed at the disposal of the Forces.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 9.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Arnold Miller, p.42.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* *Kashrut* was reintroduced in the Club in 1950. See below p.1094.

<sup>70</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 9.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.2 (October, 1941), 19.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 9.

To herald the New Year of 1942, the canteen gave a luncheon to all members of H.M. Forces on New Year's Day,<sup>73</sup> an event which was repeated annually thereafter with recurring success.<sup>74</sup>

1942, in fact proved to be the canteen's most busy year, although the relative inactivity with which the year began seemed to indicate that the contrary would be true.<sup>75</sup> After serving 9,000 men in February<sup>76</sup> the canteen staff had to cope with twice that number in the following month, 16,000 of whom were handled in a period of ten days.<sup>77</sup> With each successive month the number of people served rose steadily,<sup>78</sup> till in June this number reached 47,000,<sup>79</sup> and in the following month exceeded

<sup>73</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, December 30, 1941, p.8. 400 Servicemen and women attended (*Hasholom*, XIX No.6 (February, 1942), 15.).

<sup>74</sup>1,400 Members of the Forces attended the luncheon in 1943 (*Ibid.*, XXI No.5 (January, 1943), 22.) 936 were present at the luncheon in 1944 (*Ibid.*, XXII No.5 (January, 1944), 23.) and 308 members of the service attended the luncheon on New Years Day in 1945 (*Ibid.*, XXIII No.6 (February, 1945), 31.).

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, XIX No.7 (March, 1942), 15.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, XIX No.8 (April, 1942), 14.

<sup>78</sup>In April 1942 the number of men served was in excess of 17,000 (*Ibid.*, XX No.9 (May, 1942), 11.) in May 27,000 men were served, of whom 20,000 were dealt with in 12 days. (*Ibid.*, XX No.10 (June, 1942), 21.).

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, XX No.11 (July, 1942), 23.

53,000.<sup>80</sup> For the year ending October 31, the number of men served at the Jewish Club canteen was 307,480 as compared with 60,000 during the previous year.<sup>81</sup> As the figures quoted were only for meals and did not include those provided with light refreshments, it can be clearly understood that the number of men who were actually attended to by the canteen workers far exceeded the figures indicated.

Apart from the servicemen to whom it attended during April 1942, the canteen was also called upon to cater especially for 80 Jewish Czech volunteers, who arrived from Mauritius where they had been detained in an internment camp following their apprehension whilst seeking to enter Palestine illegally. After repeated appeals to be allowed to join the British Army, they had finally been given permission to join the Czech Forces in the Middle East. Whilst *en route* to their posts they spent two days in Durban where they were fed by the canteen and presented with gift parcels.<sup>82</sup>

In order to meet the additional calls that were being made on the facilities of the canteen, an appeal was issued for extra workers to augment the canteen's

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<sup>80</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 49.

<sup>81</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.3 (November, 1942), 8-9.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, XX No.9 (May, 1942), 11. See also *The Zionist Record*, May 15, 1942, p.11.



workforce,<sup>83</sup> which by August, numbered 350 women and 100 men.<sup>84</sup> The increasing numbers of men served also meant increased expenses for the Jewish Club, which were partly offset by donations in cash and kind from members of the local Jewish community, Gentile sympathisers and up-country friends.<sup>85</sup> By June 1942, the losses incurred by the Club were so great that they were almost beyond the capacity of the small Jewish community of Durban, and the Finance Control Committee made preparations for a further fundraising drive within the community.<sup>86</sup> At the same time, the price of meals in the canteen was increased from 9d to 1s to help offset monthly losses, which in June totalled £900 and in July were in excess of £1,000.<sup>87</sup> Notwithstanding the tariff increase, a meal at the canteen, which consisted of strong soup, braised steak and vegetables, or sausages, or a plate of cold meat and salads, fruit salad and ice-cream, a cup of tea or coffee and as much bread and

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<sup>83</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, June 18, 1942, p.6.

<sup>84</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 49.

<sup>85</sup>*Hasholom*, XIX No.8 (April, 1942), 14., *Ibid.*, XX No.9 (May, 1942), 11., *Ibid.*, XX No.10 (June, 1942), 21., *Ibid.*, XX No.11 (July, 1942), 23., *Ibid.*, XXI No.2 (October, 1942), 17 and 19., *Ibid.*, XXI No.3 (November, 1942), 26., *Ibid.*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 25., *Ibid.*, XXI No.5 (January, 1943), 22-23.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, XX No.11 (July, 1942), 25.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, XXI No.2 (October, 1942), 17.

butter as a person chose to eat,<sup>88</sup> was still sold at very much below cost.

From July 1942, an extra amenity offered by the canteen, which enjoyed enormous popularity, was the regular Sunday night concert, arranged by Mr and Mrs Dave Kentridge,<sup>89</sup> Mr Kentridge subsequently being appointed the Entertainment Officer of the canteen.<sup>90</sup>

For the canteen, one of the highlights of the year was the brief visit which Mrs Smuts made to the Club to see for herself the work being done there on behalf of all servicemen. At the same time advantage was taken of Mrs Smuts's visit to present her with a large pile of comforts for the Troops.<sup>91</sup>

During 1943, there was a gradual reduction in the number of men served at the canteen,<sup>92</sup> which, after the cessation of convoys through Durban in September,<sup>93</sup>

<sup>88</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 31.

<sup>89</sup> Arnold Miller, p.43.

<sup>90</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 49.

<sup>91</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 3, 1942, p.8.

<sup>92</sup> In January 30,000 men were served (*Hasholom*, XXI No.6 (February, 1943), 19), in February, 24,000 (*Ibid.*, XXI No.7 (March, 1943), 17.), in March, 24,227 (*Ibid.*, XXI No.8 April, 1943), 15.) in April, over 30,000 (*Ibid.*, XXI No.9 (May, 1943), 17.), in May, 26,000 (*Ibid.*, XXI No.10 (June, 1943), 19.) in June, 22,000 (*Ibid.*, XXI No.12 (August, 1943), 21.) in July, nearly 19,000 (*Ibid.*) in August, 16,189 (*Ibid.*, XXI No.2 (October, 1943), 21.) in September, 18,080 (*Ibid.*).

<sup>93</sup> Arnold Miller, p.43.

became dramatically pronounced.<sup>94</sup> Work at the canteen continued nevertheless, albeit at a somewhat slower pace, sustained by the continued generosity of the canteen's many friends.<sup>95</sup>

In the course of the year a revue *Tonic for the Blues*, produced by Avril Kentridge, was staged for the members of the Club on May 29, in aid of canteen funds, to mark the 52nd consecutive performance of the Canteen Entertainment Section.<sup>96</sup> At the annual general meeting of the canteen in August 1943, Mr Max Wolpert was elected chairman of the Section, in succession to Mr Sol Moshal, who, in recognition of his excellent services, was made an honorary president of the canteen.<sup>97</sup>

With the change in the war situation in 1944, traffic through the canteen diminished further,<sup>98</sup> and

<sup>94</sup>In October the number of men served dropped to 8,225 (*Hasholom*, XXII No.3 (November, 1943), 27.), in November 8,126 men were served (*Ibid.*, XXII No.5 (January, 1944), 23.) and in December 6,421 men were served (*Ibid.*, XXII No.6 (February, 1944), 29.).

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, XXI No.7 (March, 1943), 17., *Ibid.*, XXI No.8 (April, 1943), 15., *Ibid.*, XXI No.9 (May, 1943), 17., *Ibid.*, XXI No.10 (June, 1943), 19., *Ibid.*, XXII No.2 (October, 1943), 21-22., *Ibid.*, XXII No.5 (January, 1944), 23., *Ibid.*, XXII No.6 (February, 1944), 29.

<sup>96</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 20, 1943, p.4., and *Hasholom*, XXI No.10 (June, 1943), 19.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, XXII No.2 (October, 1943), 21.

<sup>98</sup>Arnold Miller, p.43., in February 8,808 men were served (*Hasholom*, XXII No.8 (April, 1944), 27.), in March, 5,245 men were served. (*Ibid.*, XXII No.10 (June, 1944), 37.), in April, 4,657 men were served (*Ibid.*).

there was talk of closing it down. In May, however, it was resolved to continue running the canteen until the cessation of hostilities,<sup>99</sup> and this decision was reaffirmed in December 1944.<sup>100</sup>

The Entertainment Section of the canteen continued to draw large crowds to its regular Sunday night concerts, which featured amongst its guests, Noel Coward and the celebrated pianiste Pnina Szaltzman.<sup>101</sup> As the Section had come to be recognised as a Military Entertainment Unit, the canteen was included on the circuit of all Union Defence Force Entertainment Units.<sup>102</sup>

By February 1945, the average number of men being served monthly had dropped to 3,500,<sup>103</sup> and at a special committee meeting it was **resolved** that as from March, the serving of hot meals **would be discontinued** and only light refreshments would be served.<sup>104</sup> Sunday night concerts continued to be **held** until July 1, when the final and 200th concert was staged, in the presence of an audience exceeding 1,200 people.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.6 (February, 1945), 31.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.8 (April, 1944), 27.

<sup>102</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 5.

<sup>103</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.6 (February, 1945), 31.

<sup>104</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 39.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

The Club canteen finally closed its doors, after nearly six years of service, at 6 pm on Sunday afternoon, September 2, 1945.<sup>106</sup> On the following day, a farewell party for the committee, workers, donors and official guests was held at the Jewish Club to mark the canteen's closing.<sup>107</sup> Final accounts showed that the canteen had cost the Durban Jewish community £21,738. It had served 743,000 full meals.<sup>108</sup>

Sometime later, a plaque, beautifully hand carved by Mrs Billie Blumenfeld,<sup>109</sup> was affixed to a wall in the foyer of the Durban Jewish Club. It bore the following inscription:

This Club and all its facilities were placed at the disposal of His Majesty's and Allied Forces as a Canteen during the years 1940-45 in which period over 2,000,000 members of the services made use of these premises.

The activities undertaken by the Section responsible for the canteen included the maintenance and distribution of gifts and comforts. This was carried out under the direction of Mesdames L. Hart, B.H. Bloom and L. Levey,<sup>110</sup> who directed many of the completed articles to the South

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<sup>106</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 31, 1945, p.6.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, September 4, 1945, p.5., *Hasholom*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 19.

<sup>108</sup>Arnold Miller, p.43.

<sup>109</sup>*Hasholom*, XXXIV No.8 (May, 1956), 24.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 9.

African troops in North Africa.<sup>111</sup> In February 1942, the Executive of the Jewish Club decided to send small parcels of comforts to the Jewish men and women of Natal who were serving up North.<sup>112</sup> The Gifts and Comforts Section was approached to undertake this work and immediately organised a special department, under the convenership of Mrs B. Levy.<sup>113</sup> Lists of all eligible servicemen and women were drawn up, and members of the community were urged to assist in making the lists complete.<sup>114</sup> The first batch of parcels, consisting of 1 lb prunes, 1 lb sweets, 1 handkerchief, 1 tin Nescafe, 1 toothbrush, 1 stick shaving soap, 1 tube toothpaste, notepaper, chewing gum and throat pastilles, were posted in March 1942. To offset the costs involved in packing and posting the parcels the sympathetic friends of the Gifts and Comforts Section were solicited for contributions.<sup>115</sup>

In preparation for the Passover holidays, in 1942, the Gifts and Comforts Section provided a parcel, consisting of 40 lbs *matzah*, 1 case wine, sweets, cigarettes and *haggadot*, to a number of troop ships passing through Durban. The cost of these parcels was borne by the Council of Natal Jewry. At its own expense the Canteen

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.2 (October, 1941), 19.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.7 (March, 1942), 5.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, XX No.8 (April, 1942), 14.

Committee sent parcels of *matzah*, sweets and wine to the hospitals in Durban which had Jewish convalescents.

*Matzah* was also supplied to any servicemen who requested the same when visiting the canteen during Passover.<sup>116</sup>

Further parcels were distributed through the Gifts and Comforts Section in the course of the year, the third set of parcels being dispatched in October.<sup>117</sup>

During 1943, no further parcels were sent to Natal Jewish troops up North as many of them were on the move, or had returned to the Union. However, in response to an appeal made by General Montgomery, a parcel of socks, provided by the Jewish Women's Guild Knitting Circle for distribution amongst the Jewish soldiers of Natal, and a parcel of cigarettes were sent to the Eighth Army, on whose behalf Montgomery sent a personal letter of thanks.<sup>118</sup>

For its part, the Zionist organisation in Durban, on the recommendation of Major Sam Ernst, entered into correspondence with a number of Jewish soldiers, to whom it forwarded Zionist literature for distribution amongst Jewish servicemen.<sup>119</sup> On *Rosh Hashonah* 1943 parcels

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.3 (November, 1942), 26.

<sup>118</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 35.

<sup>119</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Tuesday, 19th October, 1943, at the Zionist Youth *Maon.*, pp.1-2.

were also sent to the soldiers mentioned in Major Ernst's letter.<sup>120</sup> A request for Yiddish literature from a Polish soldier in the Oribi Hospital in Pietermaritzburg was also answered by local Zionists, from amongst whom offers were made to accommodate the Polish soldier, and three of his Polish co-religionists who were in the same hospital.<sup>121</sup>

The Zionist Youth Society, its own ranks depleted by the absence of members on active service,<sup>122</sup> made its own contribution to the war effort. It arranged a *Lag B'Omer* dance at the Jewish Club, on May 25, 1940, which was attended by members of the South African Air Force and Royal Durban Light Infantry, who were undergoing training in Pietermaritzburg.<sup>123</sup> A further 40 soldiers were entertained at a dance given by the Society some two months later.<sup>124</sup>

Like the individuals who constituted its membership, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, whose spiritual leaders Rabbi Freedman and the Rev. Menachemson were both

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>121</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Wednesday, 5th January, 1944, at the *Maon*, p.3.

<sup>122</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 51.

<sup>123</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.10 (June, 1940), 20.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.12 (August, 1940), 11.



appointed Chaplains,<sup>125</sup> sought to play its part in the war. This it did principally by arranging, or being associated with, special services which punctuated the five years of hostility.

The first of many intercessory services at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue was held on Friday evening, May 17, 1940,<sup>126</sup> to coincide with the United War Service of Intercession which was held that same weekend, under the auspices of the Student's Christian Association.<sup>127</sup> A further Intercessory Service was held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue on Sunday March 23, 1941, conducted by Rabbi Freedman,<sup>128</sup> who two months later, participated in a Civic Intercession Service that was held in the City Hall.<sup>129</sup> Following a Civic Intercession Service, held on June 15, 1941, the 726th anniversary of Magna Carta, wreaths, including some from members of the Jewish community, were laid at the statue of Queen Victoria in the City Gardens.<sup>130</sup>

In accordance with the wish expressed by the King, that the Sunday following the first anniversary of the outbreak of war be observed as a National Day of Prayer,

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<sup>125</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 5; 1940, p.20.,  
September 20, 1940, p.6.

<sup>126</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 17, 1940, p.9.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, May 18, 1940, p.11.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, March 22, 1941, p.10.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, May 17, 1941, p.13.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, June 16, 1941, p.4.

a special service was held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue on Sunday, September 8, 1940.<sup>131</sup> Thereafter it became customary to annually observe this anniversary with an appropriate Synagogue service.<sup>132</sup> At the same time Rabbi Freedman was invited on at least two occasions to participate in the Civic Services held to mark the occasion.<sup>133</sup>

Whilst commemorating the commencement of the war, the fallen of the Great War were not forgotten, and at the annual Civic Remembrance Sunday Service held on November 12, 1939,<sup>134</sup> and on November 14, 1943,<sup>135</sup> Rabbi Freedman participated on behalf of the Jewish community. In November 1944, a service in commemoration of Armistice Day was held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, at which an address was given by Captain L.R. Dison C.T.<sup>136</sup>

Visiting soldiers frequently attended services with

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, September 9, 1940, p.10.

<sup>132</sup> In 1941 a service was held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue on September 7, (*Ibid.*, September 6, 1941, p.9.). To mark the 4th anniversary in 1943 a similar service was held in the same synagogue. (*Ibid.*, September 2, 1943, p.4.). The service on September 3 1944, was held at the Park Street Synagogue (*Ibid.*, September 1, 1944, p.4.).

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, September 9, 1940, p.10., September 6, 1941, pp.9 and 15.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, November 13, 1939, p.10.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, November 15, 1943, p.6.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, November 10, 1944, p.4.

the Congregation, which made every effort to ensure that these soldiers were shown hospitality by the Jewish community, particularly over Sabbaths and Festivals.<sup>137</sup> At the same time services were infrequently held to which servicemen in particular were invited. At one such service held in June 1941, the sermon was preached by the Rev. E. Levinson, Senior Chaplain to the South African Jewish Forces.<sup>138</sup> A month later a service was held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue for Jews on military service, which was also attended by women on active service and in the various Auxiliary and Nursing Divisions in Durban.<sup>139</sup> All men and women of the Services, as well as those on part-time duty, were also invited to attend a special *Chanukah* Service, which was held in the Park Street Synagogue in December 1942.<sup>140</sup> In March 1944, a service of interest to servicemen was that held at the Park Street Synagogue, at which Captain C.L. Matz, the newly appointed Resident Chaplain for Durban, delivered the sermon.<sup>141</sup>

In the midst of the war the Goodwill Council called on all religious bodies to set aside February 15, 1942, as a day devoted to fostering goodwill among all sections

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<sup>137</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49.

<sup>138</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 13, 1941, pp.8 and 10.

<sup>139</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 8, 1941, p.18.

<sup>140</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 5, 1942, p.6.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, March 10, 1944, p.4.

of the community.<sup>142</sup> Accordingly, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation held a special Goodwill Service at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, at which a message from the Anglican Bishop of Natal, in which he sent his warm greetings to the Jewish community, was read by Rabbi Freedman.<sup>143</sup> At a similar service held in 1945 the address was delivered by Captain the Rev. I. Hickman C.F., Jewish Chaplain to Durban Fortress.<sup>144</sup>

As the people of Durban rejoiced at the signing of the Armistice which brought the war in Europe to an end,<sup>145</sup> services of thanksgiving were arranged at all places of worship, including the Park Street Synagogue.<sup>146</sup> On May 9, 1945, the City celebrated V.E. Day with troop parades, public demonstrations and a ceremony of remembrance at the Cenotaph<sup>147</sup> in which Mr J. Goldberg, the Chairman of the Natal branch of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League, laid a wreath.<sup>148</sup> In deference to the wish of the King, Sunday, May 13, was marked

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, February 14, 1942, p.12.

<sup>143</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 27, 1942, p.22., *Hasholom*, XIX No.6 (February, 1942), 5.

<sup>144</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 9, 1945, p.4.

<sup>145</sup> David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon* (London, 1972), p.787.

<sup>146</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 8, 1945, p.10., May 9, 1945, p.9.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, May 9, 1945, p.9.

<sup>148</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 33.

throughout the Empire by services of thanksgiving, a service also being held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>149</sup>

Japan's acceptance of the Allied terms of surrender on August 14, 1945,<sup>150</sup> resulted in an even greater outburst of excitement, marking, as it did, the end of the Second World War. Once again public demonstrations, troop parades and a remembrance ceremony at the Cenotaph characterised the celebrations in Durban.<sup>151</sup> Once more a wreath was placed on the Cenotaph on behalf of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League.<sup>152</sup> A grateful Jewish community filled the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue and gave its thanks at a Victory and Thanksgiving Service, which was held on Sunday, August 19.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 12, 1945, p.6.

<sup>150</sup>David Thomson, p.804.

<sup>151</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 15, 1945, p.8.

<sup>152</sup>*Hasholom*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 33.

<sup>153</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 17, 1945, p.6.

## CHAPTER XXIV

THE IMPACT OF THE  
HOLOCAUST ON DURBAN JEWRY

Although deeply caught up in all aspects of the general war effort, the Jews of Durban did not forget those of their co-religionists who, in consequence of the war, suffered displacement, poverty and annihilation.

In the weeks preceding the outbreak of hostilities, the Youth *Aliyah* authorities, charged with the task of evacuating as many children as possible from Nazi Germany, accelerated the tempo of their work in order to ship as many children as possible to Palestine. Circumstances were such that the necessary work was carried out without the organisation waiting until it actually had in hand the monies necessary to meet all its budgetary requirements, or to meet its guarantees to the Palestine Government to maintain and train the children under its auspices.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the Youth *Aliyah* organisation turned to world Jewry for assistance to enable it to fulfill its crucial function. A Youth *Aliyah* campaign was successfully launched in Durban by the organisation's

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<sup>1</sup>*Hasholom*, XVII No.2 (October, 1939), 4.

emissary Mrs Ilse Warburg, at a reception held at the Jewish Club on October 26, 1939.<sup>2</sup> The community's enthusiastic response to the campaign satisfied both Mrs Warburg and the local Youth *Aliyah* Committee, formed under the auspices of the Union of Jewish Women, and led by Mrs S.J. Kaplan.<sup>3</sup>

To clothe the children of Youth *Aliyah*, and more particularly the destitute refugees who, notwithstanding the White Paper, had found sanctuary in Palestine, an appeal for clothing was made by the Durban Women's Zionist League, which resulted in three huge parcels of garments being dispatched from Durban, during December 1939.<sup>4</sup> The Jewish women of the City also arranged amongst themselves to make suitable garments for shipment to Palestine. The task of purchasing and distributing materials for this project was undertaken on behalf of the League by Mrs Geshen and Mrs Israel.<sup>5</sup>

In March 1941 a further appeal for clothing was made to the Jewish community of Durban, by Mrs A.H. Freedman, and resulted in five bales of approximately 4,000 garments, being sent to Palestine

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<sup>2</sup> *The Zionist Record*, (November 3, 1939), p.19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Hasholom*, XVIII No.3 (November, 1939), 23.

<sup>4</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 5, 1940, p.14.

<sup>5</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48.

under the League's auspices.<sup>6</sup> The expenses in connection with shipping the parcels were partly defrayed by the proceeds of a jumble sale.<sup>7</sup> Thereafter the clothing drive, under the direction of Mrs Freedman, became an annual feature of the League's activities.<sup>8</sup>

In its work the League was assisted by its sister branches throughout the Union, who forwarded their clothing parcels to Durban where, under the direction of Mrs W. Fielding, the garments were packed and forwarded to Palestine.<sup>9</sup> In 1941, the South African Women's Zionist Council paid tribute to the work done by Mrs Fielding and her husband by inscribing their names in the Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund.<sup>10</sup> In the following year Sewing Circles around the country paid their own tribute to Mr and Mrs Fielding for their services in connection with the packing and distributing of parcels to Palestine, by similarly inscribing them in the Golden Book.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from assisting needy refugees, South African

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<sup>6</sup>*The Zionist Record*, March 28, 1941, p.21.

<sup>7</sup>*Hasholom*, XVIII No.9 (May, 1941), 20.

<sup>8</sup>*The Zionist Record*, February 6, 1942, p.21., February 26, 1942, p.21., *Hasholom*, XXI No.6 (February, 1943), 7., *The Zionist Record*, May 12, 1944, p.20.

<sup>9</sup>*Hasholom*, XVIII No.6 (December, 1940), 24.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 20.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, XX No.12 (August, 1942), 11.



women Zionists, through the Durban Women's Zionist League, also sent parcels of knitted socks and balaclava caps to Jewish units in Egypt.<sup>12</sup> At a function, held at the home of Mrs M. Freed, to raise funds with which to supply Palestinian soldiers with comforts,<sup>13</sup> £200 was raised<sup>14</sup> and a large number of parcels were subsequently dispatched. Comforts from the Durban Women's Zionist League reached Palestinian prisoners of war in North Africa<sup>15</sup> and were also received by many soldiers from Palestine stationed on the fighting fronts.<sup>16</sup>

Assisted by Mrs Imber, Mrs Fielding also forwarded parcels of garments to the Baby's Home in Palestine,<sup>17</sup> and clothes from all over the Union passed through Mrs Fielding's packing room throughout the war, *en route* to the Baby Home.<sup>18</sup>

Further assistance for the refugees in Palestine came from the United South African Jewish War Appeal, which was launched in Johannesburg on November 26, 1940, by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the

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<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, XVIII No.9 (May, 1941), 20.

<sup>13</sup>*The Zionist Record*, August 8, 1941, p.18.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>*Hasholom*, XIX No.7 (March, 1942), 16.

<sup>16</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 65., *The Zionist Record*, May 12, 1944, p.20.

<sup>17</sup>*Hasholom*, XIX No.7 (March, 1942), 16.

<sup>18</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 15.

South African Zionist Federation.<sup>19</sup> The portion of the proceeds from the Appeal which was allocated to the Board of Deputies, was earmarked to aid Jewish servicemen and their dependants in South Africa, in cases where no provision was made for them by the Governor General's National War Fund, and to assist Jewish refugees abroad. The portion which was allocated to the Zionist Federation was devoted to assisting the war effort in Palestine, to offering relief, and to giving aid to the dependants of Jewish soldiers there.<sup>20</sup>

A local committee of the Appeal was formed in Durban under the chairmanship of Mr E.S. Henochsberg K.C. with Mr Sasha Kahn as Hon. Treasurer and Miss R. Greene as Secretary.<sup>21</sup> The Appeal was launched in Durban by Mr Cecil Lyons, a member of the Executive of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and Dr Michael Traub, a noted publicist from Palestine, at an enthusiastic and well attended meeting, held at the Jewish Club on February 23, 1941.<sup>22</sup> Mr A. Goldberg M.P. of Durban, was in turn the guest of honour at a reception at the *Carlton Hotel* on March 3, 1941, at which the Johannesburg Women's Section of the United Appeal was opened.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 29, 1940, p.8.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Hasholom*, XVIII No.5 (January, 1941), 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.6 (February, 1941), 14.

<sup>22</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 28, 1941, p.7.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, March 7, 1941, p.11.

On October 18, 1942, at a meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, a Natal Provincial Committee of the War Appeal was established as follows; Mr I. Geshen and Rabbi A.H. Freedman, Honorary Presidents of the Natal Committee; Mr M. Woolfson, Chairman; Mr B. Levy and Mr I. Gevisser, Vice-Chairman; Mr A.J. Cohen and Mr I. Philips, Hon. Treasurers; Mr J. Sklarchik, Hon. Secretary; Messrs A. Gevisser, A. Kaplan, H. Patz, N. Hertz, I. Shagam, A. Frankel, L. Tannenbaum, S. Hackner, H.L. Magid and Mrs H. Moss-Morris, Executive Committee.

Mr I. Feinberg, Vice-Chairman for Pietermaritzburg; Messrs S.H. Caminsky and G. Benjamin, Pietermaritzburg delegates; Mr G. Fisch, Vice-Chairman for Vryheid; Messrs D. Cohen and M. Jacobson, Natal Midland Delegates.

The Provincial Committee also included Senator the Hon. F.C. Hollander, Messrs H. Moss-Morris, S. Moshal, M. Freed, H. Brown, W. Cranko, H. Zulman, I. Geshen, Major E.S. Henochsberg, and Mr A. Goldberg M.P., Executive Officers of the Council of Natal Jewry, who were all ex-officio members of the War Appeal Committee.<sup>24</sup>

On the National Committee of the Jewish War Appeal, the Natal representatives were Messrs I. Geshen, M. Woolfson, I. Philips, I. Gevisser, H.L. Magid and Mr I. Feinberg of Pietermaritzburg. An alternative to

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<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, October 23, 1942, p.19. Hollander's elevation to the Senate is recorded below p.512.

Mr Feinberg, if he was unable to be present was Mr G. Fisch of Vryheid.<sup>25</sup>

The National Committee, whose specific purpose was to decide on allocations from the Appeal, and also to conduct inquiries into matters related to the Appeal, met for the first time in Johannesburg on November 18, 1942, at which meeting Mr I. Geshen was elected a Vice-President of the Appeal.<sup>26</sup>

A collection on behalf of the Appeal was launched in Durban in November 1942,<sup>27</sup> and met with a response which exceeded all previous records, a feat attributed to the wonderful organisation of the Executive and members of the Committee, and the generosity of local contributors.<sup>28</sup>

A further campaign on behalf of the Appeal was launched at the Jewish Club on March 22, 1945, by Mr and Mrs L. Vromen, a Dutch Jewish couple who had survived the war, and Mr Harry Landau, the Chairman of the National Committee of the Jewish War Appeal.<sup>29</sup>

On June 3, 1945, in common with branches throughout the Union, the Natal Committee celebrated Jewish War Appeal "Rescue Day," by visiting Jewish householders to

<sup>25</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 23, 1942, p.19.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, November 27, 1942, p.15.

<sup>27</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.3 (November, 1942), 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.5 (February, 1943), 5 and 17.

<sup>29</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 3, 1945, p.18.

sell them War Appeal "licences," at 2/6 each.<sup>30</sup> The campaign in Durban met with enormous sympathy, no doubt, partly attributable to the overwhelming desire on the part of the community to extend its fullest support to the relief work being undertaken amongst the stricken Jewish communities of war-torn Europe. All branches of the local community excelled themselves in their fund raising efforts, the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women alone being responsible for raising the sum of £19,500.<sup>31</sup>

Alongside the work of the South African Jewish War Appeal on behalf of Europe's Jewish refugees, which included dispatching hundreds of parcels and bulk goods to Soviet Russia,<sup>32</sup> a special appeal committee on behalf of Soviet Jewry was set up in the Union in 1943. A campaign on behalf of Soviet Jewry's Appeal was inaugurated by Advocate E.M. Pincus, its Organising Secretary, at the Jewish Club on May 3.<sup>33</sup> A Durban Committee was set up, under the chairmanship of Dr N. Smith and the secretaryship of Mr M. Jacobson, which recorded good progress in its efforts.<sup>34</sup> Further contributions to the Fund were solicited in 1944 through

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, April 13, 1945, p.7.

<sup>31</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.7 (March, 1945), 1-2.

<sup>33</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 21, 1943, p.25.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, May 28, 1943, p.21.

*Hasholom*,<sup>35</sup> members of the Jewish community in Durban being asked to forward their donations direct to the Appeal's Johannesburg headquarters, the Durban committee apparently having been disbanded.

To further aid in the relief of refugees a Youth *Aliyah* campaign was held in the Union in 1944. In preparation for the campaign, Miss Marcia Gitlin visited Durban in February 1944, where she had a number of preparatory house meetings and addressed a meeting held under the auspices of the Women's Zionist League, the Union of Jewish Women, the Jewish Women's Guild and the Canteen Worker's Committee. She also attended a meeting at which the Durban Campaign Executive Committee consisting of Rabbi A.H. Freedman and Mr M. Morrison, Hon. President; Mr I. Geshen, Hon. Vice-President; Mr C. Sternberg, Chairman; Mrs A.H. Freedman and Mr B. Kirson, Vice-Chairmen; Mr H. Hart, Hon. Treasurer; Mr S.M. Berman, Hon. Secretary; Mr C.R. Fridjohn, Assistant Secretary and Mr L. Feitelberg, Publicity Officer, were elected.<sup>36</sup>

A Women's Committee was formed with Mrs A.H. Freedman as Chairlady.<sup>37</sup> At a mass meeting held at the Jewish Club on March 6, 1944 the Youth *Aliyah* campaign was launched in Durban by Dr Deborah Katzen of Johannesburg,

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<sup>35</sup>*Hasholom*, XXII No.6 (February, 1944), 5.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, XXII No.7 (March, 1944), 5.

<sup>37</sup>*The Zionist Record*, February 25, 1944, p.17.

who shared the platform with Rabbi A.H. Freedman and Mr Aaron Abrahamson, the Acting Secretary of the South African Zionist Federation.<sup>38</sup> The community responded generously to the appeal by Dr Katzen, who, before she returned to Johannesburg, addressed a women's meeting and a Rotary luncheon.<sup>39</sup>

For world Jewry, one of the most painful aspects of the World War was the wanton destruction of much of European Jewry,<sup>40</sup> whose annihilation by the Nazis, and their sympathisers, it was neither able to frustrate nor prevent.

The brutality with which the Nazi regime had persecuted Protestants, Catholics and Jews had been described in a White Paper published in London in October 1939.<sup>41</sup> It was only in 1941, however, that the plight of Jewry in Germany and Nazi Occupied countries came to receive wider attention in South Africa, as reports from Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Poland, Vichy France, Belgium and the Netherlands, describing the conditions of Jewry under

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, March 17, 1944, p.15.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> On the Holocaust see Leon Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate*, (Connecticut, 1971), Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, (New York, 1973), Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1939-1945*, (New York, 1975).

<sup>41</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 31, 1939, p.11.

Nazism, filtered through to the World Press.<sup>42</sup> Further reports published in 1942, described the murder and harassment of Jews in France,<sup>43</sup> the slaughter of countless thousands of Jews in Poland, Lithuania and occupied Russia,<sup>44</sup> the persecution of Jews in Hungary and Roumania,<sup>45</sup> the massacre of 7,200 Jews at Minsk<sup>46</sup> and the transportation of German Jews eastwards to their deaths.<sup>47</sup> By December 1942, the U.S. State Department was able to furnish a list of Jewish victims deported or "perished" since 1939 in Axis controlled Europe. It included Germany, 160,000; Austria, 60,000; Bohemia and Moravia, 65,000; Poland, 600,000; Netherlands, 120,000; Yugoslavia, 96,000; France 35,000; Rumania, 63,000 Bulgaria, 8,500; Slovakia, 70,000; and Latvia, 25,000 massacred and others enslaved or starving. In Greece it was reported that all Jews between the ages

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<sup>42</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.8 (April, 1941), 14., See also *The Natal Mercury*, January 31, 1941, p.11., October 30, 1941, p.12., November 24, 1941, p.10., November 18, 1941, p.14.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, May 20, 1942, p.4., August 5, 1942, p.7., August 31, 1942, p.8., September 2, 1942, p.9. See also Raul Hilberg, pp.389-421.

<sup>44</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 30, 1942, p.7., July 28, 1942, p.7., November 25, 1942, p.7. See also Raul Hilberg, pp.177-256.

<sup>45</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 28, 1942, p.7., See also Raul Hilberg, pp.289-290.

<sup>46</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 17, 1942, p.7., See also Raul Hilberg, pp.232-233.

<sup>47</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 12, 1942, p.9., See also Raul Hilberg pp.257-312.



of 18 and 48 years were enslaved and an unknown number were dead. The report estimated that roughly 2,000,000 Jews had perished and that 5,000,000 Jews were in danger of extermination at the hands of the Nazis and their allies.<sup>48</sup>

South African Jewry, overwhelmed by the magnitude of the persecutions, on the recommendation of the Jewish Board of Deputies, observed December 29, 1942, as a national day of mourning for the victims of Nazism. All Jewish business houses and offices closed at 3 pm and at 4.30 pm a service of intercession was held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>49</sup> The impressive service, conducted by Rabbi A.H. Freedman, included the reading of part of the Book of Lamentations and the recitation in unison of the *Kaddish*.<sup>50</sup> At 8.15 pm on the same night a public protest meeting was held at the Durban Jewish Club. Nearly 1,000 men and women attended the meeting, convened by the Council of Natal Jewry, at which messages were read from General Smuts,<sup>51</sup> his Cabinet colleagues, Col. C.F. Stallard and Dr Colin Steyn, and Senator F.C. Hollander.<sup>52</sup> Those who addressed the meeting included the Mayor of Durban Mr Rupert Ellis Brown;

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<sup>48</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 13, 1942, p.6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, December 29, 1942, p.7.

<sup>50</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.5 (February, 1943), 4-5.

<sup>51</sup> For his full message see *The Natal Mercury*, December 29, 1942, p.7.

<sup>52</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.5 (February, 1943), 4-5.

Rabbi A.H. Freedman, the Right Rev. L.N. Fisher, Anglican Bishop of Natal; Father Sheldon Kelly, who deputised for Bishop H. Delaille O.M.I., the Roman Catholic Vicar Apostolic of Natal; Senator Edgar Brookes and Mr A. Goldberg M.P.<sup>53</sup>

Reports of further atrocities continued to be received during 1943<sup>54</sup> together with accounts of medical and other experiments on inmates of concentration camps.<sup>55</sup> In December 1943, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies once again declared a national day of mourning, on which Jewish business houses and offices closed in the afternoon and a special service, conducted by Rabbi A.H. Freedman and the distinguished Rabbi I. Kossowsky of Johannesburg, who was on a visit to Durban, was held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>56</sup>

With the advances made by the Allied forces during 1944 and 1945, the full extent of the Nazi persecutions of Jews came to be revealed through the local press. The Red Army on capturing Vilna found only three Jewish survivors<sup>57</sup> and in Pinsk they found no Jews at all, the

<sup>53</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, December 30, 1942, p.8.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, February 15, 1943, p.6., April 10, 1943, p.6., May 31, 1943, p.5., August 6, 1943, p.5., October 5, 1943, p.6.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, June 16, 1943, p.6. See also Raul Hilberg, pp.600-609.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, December 8, 1943, p.7., December 17, 1943, p.6.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, July 7, 1944, p.5.

Nazis having murdered them all before the city fell.<sup>58</sup> When Lublin was liberated, only two Jews were found in the city, several thousand however having managed to hide in the nearby woods.<sup>59</sup> The liberation of the Latvian town of Rezekne revealed three survivors,<sup>60</sup> in Lodz, in Poland, the Russians found 5,000 survivors and in Warsaw 300 children were found to still be alive.<sup>61</sup> 45,000 Jews were found at the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen<sup>62</sup> and 6,000 more were fortunate to have survived till the liberation of Dachau.<sup>63</sup> For millions more, however, the liberation had come too late. In tribute to their memory the Jewish Board of Deputies declared March 14, 1945, a Day of Mourning,<sup>64</sup> the community's religious leaders proclaiming it a daylight fast.<sup>65</sup> A special memorial service was held in the afternoon at the Park Street Synagogue by the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, at which special prayers for Europe's martyred Jewry were offered.<sup>66</sup>

To help the members of the Jewish community to

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, July 28, 1944, p.3.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, August 18, 1944, p.5.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, November 10, 1944, p.6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, February 2, 1945, p.3.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, April 27, 1945, p.3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, May 11, 1945, p.3.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, March 2, 1945, p.19.

<sup>65</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 13, 1945, p.4.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, March 15, 1945, p.6.

trace their relatives in Europe, the Board of Deputies set up the Jewish Relatives Information Service, with branches in all four Provinces, the Durban committee working under the chairmanship of Mr M. Ehrlich.<sup>67</sup> Through the South African Red Cross Society lists of survivors were made available for the community's inspection at the offices of the Council of Natal Jewry, where individuals, seeking information about their relatives, were able to fill in the necessary enquiry forms.<sup>68</sup> Through the facilities provided by the United South African Jewish War Appeal, it was also made possible for the Jewish residents of Durban and the Union, to send parcels to their relatives in Russia, who had survived not only a terrible war, but also one of the most tragic periods in Jewish history.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Hasholom*, XXII No.11 (July, 1944), 19.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.7 (March, 1945), 11., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.11 (July, 1945), 17., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.12 (August, 1945), 15 and 21.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.7 (March, 1945), 1-2., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 45.

## CHAPTER XXV

ON THE HOME FRONT : 1939 - 1945

South Africa's entry into the war<sup>1</sup> led, not only to the involvement of the country in the international struggle against the Axis Powers, but also resulted in an intense political struggle within the Union.

Forced by his opposition to South Africa's participation in the war to resign as Prime Minister, Hertzog and his followers moved closer to Dr Malan, who had been equally in favour of keeping the country neutral. Negotiations between the two leaders and representatives of their two groups, held in Pretoria in November 1939, aimed at bringing about a union of the two parties, failed to achieve its desired object. Only after further negotiations in January 1940 was agreement finally reached. The new party which emerged was named the *Herenigde Nasionale Party of Volksparty*, and in deference to Hertzog, "who opposed support for a republic as a precondition for party membership, the new party's constitution guaranteed that party membership would not be refused to persons who were not convinced of the

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<sup>1</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, September 6, 1939, p.11.

desirability of a republic."<sup>2</sup> Although the supporters of Hertzog and Malan now sat together in Parliament and had a common caucus, there were serious differences which still divided them. Dissatisfaction from within the ranks of Malan's followers over Hertzog, reached a climax at the inaugural Free State Congress of the *Herenigde Nasionale Party of Volksparty*, at which Hertzog announced his resignation as leader of the Party and as a member.<sup>3</sup>

The *Herenigde Party* was no longer unified, some of Hertzog's followers remaining within the Party and others leaving to join the Afrikaner Party, led by N.C. Havenga. Oswald Pirow, Hertzog's former Minister of Defence, broke away to form the *Nuwe Orde*, which was sympathetic to Germany and its policy of National Socialism. Another group of considerable importance was the *Ossewa Brandwag*, which began as a cultural movement but gradually took on a more political tone, although from 1941, when it broke with Malan, its influence declined considerably. Its more extreme elements, the *Stormjaers*, were responsible for a number of acts of sabotage and treason, for which they were interned or

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<sup>2</sup>B.J. Liebenberg, "From the Statute of Westminster to the Republic of South Africa, 1931-1961," in *500 Years A History of South Africa*, ed. C.F.J. Muller (Pretoria, n.d.), pp.376-377.

<sup>3</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, November 7, 1940, p.11.

imprisoned.<sup>4</sup>

The opposition parties were thus bitterly divided at the time of the 1943 General Election, whilst Smuts went to the voters with considerable certainty of victory, particularly as the tide of the war had turned in favour of the Allies. General Smuts entered into an election agreement with the Dominion and Labour Parties, thereby ensuring that the parties within the coalition Government would not have to put up rival candidates in the same seats.<sup>5</sup> A similar election agreement was also arrived at by the Dominion and Labour Parties.<sup>6</sup>

Mr Abe Goldberg, the Dominion Party candidate in the Umlazi constituency was consequently only opposed by an Independent and a candidate from the *Herenigde Party*. He nevertheless conducted a vigorous campaign, in which he addressed a number of public meetings,<sup>7</sup> and warned against the threat of republicanism.<sup>8</sup> The voters of Umlazi returned Mr Goldberg to Parliament with a

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<sup>4</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, p.378. See also Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism The South African Experience 1910-1967*, (Cape Town, 1980), pp.126-136.

<sup>5</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 6, 1943, p.5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, June 11, 1943, p.4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, May 21, 1943, p.6., May 29, 1943, p.6., June 3, 1943, p.4., June 7, 1943, p.4., June 9, 1943, p.4., June 23, 1943, p.4., June 30, 1943, p.4., July 2, 1943, p.4., July 3, 1943, p.6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, May 24, 1943, p.6.

majority of 3,190, and the election results generally reflected overwhelming support for Smuts.<sup>9</sup> The opposition was reduced from 63 to 43 members, all of whom came from the ranks of the *Herenigde Party*, the other opposition parties, the Afrikaner Party and the *Nuwe Orde*, having been rejected by the voters.<sup>10</sup>

During the debate in Parliament on the *Diplomatic Immunities and Asiatic Land Tenure Amendment Bill* on April 10, 1944, members of the Opposition raised the question of immigration and used the opportunity to call for an end to all Jewish immigration into the country.<sup>11</sup> Mr E. Louw, the member for Beaufort West, sought to convince the House of the existence of a Jewish problem. Quoting from documents that were allegedly stolen from the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, he tried to attribute the problem to the country's Jewish population, whom he accused of encouraging and fostering immigration into the Union.<sup>12</sup> In the course of his speech he also called for a quota system for Jews in the country who wished to trade, or enter industries and professions.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, July 29, 1943, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, p.379.

<sup>11</sup> *Union of South Africa. Debates of the House of Assembly, First Session, Ninth Parliament, 6th March to 14th April, 1944, XLVIII (Cape Town), 10th April, 1944, cl 4734.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, cls 4737-4738.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, cl 4739.



Mr Louw's arguments were countered by Mr M. Alexander (Cape Town Castle),<sup>14</sup> Mr B. Friedman (Hillbrow)<sup>15</sup> and Mr Barlow (Hospital).<sup>16</sup> On the following day the campaign by members of the *Herenigde Party* against the Jews was continued by Col. Dohne (Frankfurt),<sup>17</sup> Mr Luttig (Calvinia)<sup>18</sup> Mr S.E. Warren (Swellendam)<sup>19</sup> and Lt. Col. Booysen (Namaqualand)<sup>20</sup> and spilled over to April 12, when it was again taken up by Mr. Louw.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, the debate in regard to the Bill on the agenda revealed that within the Coalition Government there were widely differing attitudes over the suggestion of the Minister of the Interior, Senator the Hon. C.F. Clarkson, that Indians be given a communal franchise in Durban, and over the question of the country's Indian population generally. In contrast to his colleagues in the Dominion Party, Mr Goldberg came out in support of the Minister of the Interior and called for the recognition of the Asiatic community as part of the permanent structure of South African society, whose

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, cls 4742-4745, 4758-4763, 4769-4773, 4779-4782.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, cls 4765-4769.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, cls 4738, 4776-4779, 4790-4791.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 11th April, 1944, cls 4860-4862.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, cls 4866-4868.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, cls 4869-4871.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, cls 4888-4890, 4893-4895.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 12th April, 1944, cls 4905-4907.

welfare was indivisible from that of other sections of the population.<sup>22</sup>

The support that General Smuts had in Parliament was equalled by that which he enjoyed in the Natal Provincial Council. This was evident at the Council's first war-time session, on November 13, 1939, at which the members pledged their support for the Prime Minister. Particular tribute was paid to Smuts by Mr F.C. Hollander M.E.C.<sup>23</sup> in what was to be one of the last occasions on which Mr Hollander was to sit in the Council. On November 14 Hollander resigned from the Provincial Council in order to regularise his candidature for the forthcoming Senate elections, for which he had agreed to accept nomination. Mr Hollander's resignation came at the end of 23 years service as a member of the Executive Committee, upon which he had served with only one break, the longest service then on record.<sup>24</sup> On the following day the Council unanimously adopted a resolution, moved by the Administrator Mr H. Gordon Watson, which recorded its appreciation of the outstanding services rendered to the Province by Mr Hollander whilst member for Essenwood, the first time that a member of the Council was so honoured by having a

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<sup>22</sup>*Union of South Africa. Debates of the House of Assembly, First Session, Ninth Parliament, 22nd January to 6th June, 1944. 10th April, 1944, cls 4782-4784.*

<sup>23</sup>*The Natal Mercury, November 14, 1939, p.11.*

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid., November 15, 1939, p.15.*

resolution of this nature placed on the Council's records.<sup>25</sup>

No ballot was necessary for Mr Hollander's election to the Senate,<sup>26</sup> and in commenting on Natal's new Senator. *The Natal Mercury* noted that, "few men have done more for Natal than Mr Hollander, and no living person more richly deserved the honour that has now come his way."<sup>27</sup> Upon his election to Parliament's Upper House, Senator Hollander resigned the chairmanship of the Hospital Board of the King Edward VIII Hospital, which passed a resolution of appreciation to him for his services to the institution.<sup>28</sup> Upon being made a Senator he also resigned as chairman of the Board of Addington Hospital, which he had occupied for eleven years, but the Provincial Executive Committee, upon receiving his letter of resignation, instead appointed him a life member of the Board.<sup>29</sup>

In his maiden speech to the Senate, delivered on January 25, 1940, Mr Hollander suggested to the Union Government that it take steps to introduce a system of hall-marking gold in this country.<sup>30</sup> As a former

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, November 16, 1939, p.20.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, November 18, 1939, p.18.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, December 8, 1939, p.16.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, December 16, 1939, p.11.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, January 26, 1940, p.21.

Provincial Councillor he later came out in the Senate in strong defence of the Provincial system.<sup>31</sup> Following the instruction of the *Asiatic Land Tenure Amendment Bill* in Parliament, a draft Occupation Control Ordinance was tabled in the Natal Provincial Council, to control Indian occupation of property acquired from Europeans. To bridge the differences between the two sections of the community affected by the whole question, Hollander suggested that all property transactions between Europeans and Asiatics be reported to the proposed Occupation Control Board at the time of the transaction, and not the transfer, and that this information appear in the monthly Provincial Gazette. In this way the public would know of all movements of property and any abuse of the system by either party would become manifest in a brief time and the abusers would reap their own retribution.<sup>32</sup>

Outside of the two Houses of Parliament Mr Rowley Arenstein, the secretary of the Durban branch of the Communist Party, and his wife, Jaqueline, together with other members of the Party, joined thousands of Durban's Indians in an illegal procession from Nicol Square to the Market Square, to express their opposition to the Government's policy on the question of the Indian

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, March 24, 1944, pp.5-6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, August 7, 1944, p.6.

community's property rights.<sup>33</sup>

The Council of Natal Jewry, the umbrella body of the Jewish community of the Province, carefully studied the question of the *Pegging Act* and its implication, and the agitation in Durban and Natal against the *Land Tenure Bill*. It ultimately decided that there was no need for the Jewish community, as a community, to make its opinions known or to take a stand, but it was felt desirable for individual Jews to have a fairly clear idea of what their attitude should be and the implications thereof. In this regard the Committee felt that it was incumbent upon all Jews to take a liberal view and act accordingly. It declared that all Jews should associate themselves with any movement calculated to assist in uplifting the Indians. It recommended further that Jews should assist towards enabling the Indian to receive the communal franchise and that Jews should be against compulsory zoning on principle. It was hoped that the Indians would voluntarily agree to live in certain areas, which should be provided for them. Jewish citizens, however, were entitled according to the Committee, to review the position if considerable advantage was taken by Indians of a more liberal attitude towards them.<sup>34</sup>

Along with the other processes of Government which

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, May 15, 1944, p.6., June 28, 1944, p.7.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes of Public Relations Committee Meeting No.14 Held at the residence of Mr and Mrs S. Moshal, 60 Sir Arthur Road, Durban, on Sunday, 18th June, 1944, at 8 pm., p.1.

continued unaffected by the war, was the Municipal Government of the City, in which the Jewish community continued to show a keen interest. In the municipal elections of October 1939, Councillor Harry Saunders was re-elected on a Labour Party ticket, to represent the voters of Ward VII.<sup>35</sup> Within the Durban Corporation Mr Harry Smith, a member of the Jewish community, who had played an important part in the construction of the Shongweni Dam, was appointed to the position of City and Water Engineer of Durban.<sup>36</sup>

In April 1942, in consequence of a vacancy in Ward 1, a by-election was called and in response to a numerously signed requisition,<sup>37</sup> Mr Julius Goldman, a prominent local businessman and the President of the Jewish Club, agreed to stand for election. By a slim majority of 9 votes Mr Goldman was elected to the City Council,<sup>38</sup> where he was appointed to the Council's Finance and Native Administration committees.<sup>39</sup>

The municipal election of 1943, found the retiring councillor in Ward IV opposed by the Labour Party, in the person of Dr J.M. Rogaly.<sup>40</sup> Dr Rogaly's election

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<sup>35</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 5, 1939, p.12.

<sup>36</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.2 (October, 1939), 14.

<sup>37</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 11, 1942, p.16.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, April 30, 1942, p.10.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, October 16, 1942, p.8.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, September 21, 1943, p.6.

manifesto called for the establishment of free T.B., V.D., and ante-natal clinics and dispensaries throughout the City, a vigorous programme of slum clearance and housing, and careful planning for the Ward.<sup>41</sup>

Notwithstanding his energetic campaign, which included four public meetings,<sup>42</sup> on polling day Dr Rogaly gained 262 votes less than his opponent, who was returned to the Council.<sup>43</sup> On meeting after the election, the City Council held its elections for the Council committees which resulted in Councillor J. Goldman being made chairman of the Finance Committee and a member of the General Purposes and Tender Board Committees, and Councillor H. Saunders being elected to the Works and Market Abattoirs Committees and the Sub-Committee on Building Plans.<sup>44</sup>

Councillors Goldman and Saunders were amongst the councillors whose terms of office ended in 1944,<sup>45</sup> and both offered themselves for re-election.<sup>46</sup> Councillor Saunders was returned to the Council by a small majority of 23, but Councillor Goldman was defeated by his opponent

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, September 22, 1943, p.6.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, September 28, 1943, p.4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, October 7, 1943, p.5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, October 15, 1943, p.6.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, September 6, 1943, p.6.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, September 19, 1944, p.6.

by 937 votes.<sup>47</sup> Councillor Saunders was subsequently elected to the Council's Works and Health Committees and the Building Plans and Indian Joint Advisory Sub-Committees.<sup>48</sup>

Undaunted by his earlier unsuccessful effort to gain election to the Council, Dr Rogaly again made himself available as a Labour Party candidate when a by-election was called in Ward IV in 1945. Dr Rogaly's opponent in the by-election was a fellow Jew, Mr M. Spanier Marson, who he defeated on election day by a majority of 491 votes.<sup>49</sup>

For all the hardships caused by the war, the social and cultural life of the City was not allowed to entirely disappear, although of necessity it was significantly curtailed. Invitations to those social functions that did take place, including the Mayoresses's At Home in 1939,<sup>50</sup> a civic reception to General Smuts,<sup>51</sup> and a Goodwill Tea in honour of Lady Duncan, the wife of the Governor General,<sup>52</sup> were therefore all the more eagerly sought after, and were all attended by members of the

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, October 5, 1944, p.5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, October 13, 1944, p.6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, May 3, 1945, p.6.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, October 11, 1939, p.7.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, June 6, 1940, pp.12-13.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, July 3, 1941, p.6.



Durban Jewish community.

For the Jewish residents of the City the Yiddish musical film, *Mamele*,<sup>53</sup> starring Molly Picon, and Hirschbein's folk classic, *Green Fields*,<sup>54</sup> provided temporary relief from all the pressures of war. Together with the wider community, the Jews of Durban also continued to patronise the symphony concerts, which remained one of the high points of the City's cultural life. In May 1940, Miss Rose Alper sang at the opening of the Municipal Orchestra's winter symphonic season.<sup>55</sup> Others who graced the stage of the City Hall during subsequent concerts included the violin virtuoso Bronislaw Huberman, the founder of the Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra,<sup>56</sup> and Pnina Saltzman, the 20 year old Palestinian pianiste, whose first performance in Durban in 1944 was described as "an artistic triumph."<sup>57</sup> After two further concerts at the City Hall<sup>58</sup> Miss Saltzman returned to Durban at the end of her tour of the Union to give a farewell concert,<sup>59</sup> which so impressed her audience that one critic described her as

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, February 7, 1940, p.12.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, July 15, 1940, p.10.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, May 17, 1940, p.13.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, May 22, 1940, pp.12 and 15.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, March 15, 1944, p.7.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, March 25, 1944, p.6., March 30, 1944, p.4.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, July 28, 1944, p.4.

"one of the greatest pianists of this generation."<sup>60</sup>

In 1945, she returned to the stage of the Durban City Hall to give three more equally well received concerts.<sup>61</sup>

Another leading soloist of the Palestinian Orchestra, who visited Durban during the war, was the 17 year old celebrity pianist Ella Goldstein.<sup>62</sup>

For all the distractions offered by the symphony seasons the people of Durban generally could only fully indulge their taste for the arts once the war had ended, peace had been restored, and an atmosphere of normalcy had returned to life in the City.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, August 8, 1944, p.6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, February 12, 1945, p.4., February 21, 1945, p.4., March 1, 1945, p.4.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, September 29, 1944, p.4., September 30, 1944, p.8.

## CHAPTER XXVI

DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE DURBANUNITED HEBREW CONGREGATION : 1939 - 1945

As a result of the war and its disruptive effect on Congregational life, many of the day to day problems which faced the Durban United Hebrew Congregation were shelved for the duration of the fighting.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the energies of the Congregation's Council were directed towards meeting the difficulties which arose in consequence of the war, and in seeking to maintain a religious life for the City's Jewish community.

Large numbers of the Congregation's members had volunteered for active service, and the Council decided that those members would have special privileges in respect of seats occupied by themselves and their wives, and that, for the period of the war, the Congregation's dues would not be levied.<sup>2</sup> This decision, coupled with the general effects of the war, left the Congregation's finances on an unsound footing. In the first year of the war the Congregations' annual revenue dropped by over

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<sup>1</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 45.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

£700, one half of this amount representing subscriptions of members on active service. There was also a drop in the revenue derived from voluntary offerings, due to the numerous calls made on members from various sources. A special general meeting was consequently held in July 1941, at which a resolution to increase subscriptions by twenty five percent was tabled and was defeated by only one vote.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to fulfilling the regular duties associated with his office, the Congregation's spiritual leader, Rabbi A.H. Freedman, volunteered for active service and was appointed Chaplain to the Forces on the reserve list of officers.<sup>4</sup> On numerous occasions he attended the various camps in Natal.<sup>5</sup> In 1941, upon his official appointment as part time Chaplain for the Durban area, Rabbi Freedman was given the rank of Captain.<sup>6</sup> Although his official duties in this capacity were restricted to Durban, he, nevertheless, continued visiting the military camps in Ladysmith and Pietermaritzburg.<sup>7</sup>

The Congregation's *chazan*, the Rev. Menachemson, also made himself available for military service, and

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49.

<sup>4</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 5, 1940, p.20.

<sup>5</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

upon his appointment as a Jewish Chaplain to the Union Forces he immediately left Durban to join the Expeditionary Forces in East Africa.<sup>8</sup> The Rev. Menachemson's departure had a disruptive effect on the Congregation, which he had served not only as a cantor but also as a *shochet*, *mohel* and teacher. Early in 1941 Cantor Adler, formerly of Johannesburg, took up office in place of the Rev. Menachemson<sup>9</sup> who, later that year, tendered his resignation to the Congregation, with which he had been intimately connected for twenty-one years.<sup>10</sup> Cantor Adler's association with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, however, was of brief duration and had terminated before the conclusion of hostilities.<sup>11</sup>

Of far reaching consequence for the Congregation was the decision taken by Rabbi Freedman, in 1943, to resign as minister of the Congregation. His decision, as recorded in statements in the *Hasholom*, came after a tenure of office of seven years, and was prompted by the belief that he had failed to arouse the Congregation

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<sup>8</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 20, 1940, p.6.

<sup>9</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 7, 1941, p.10., and *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49.

<sup>10</sup> *Durban Hebrew Congregation 1952 issued by the Durban United Hebrew Congregation*, (Durban, 1952), p.20.

<sup>11</sup> Last recorded service at which he participated was on the National Day of Prayer and Intercession in September, 1944. (*The Natal Mercury*, September 1, 1944, p.4.).

spiritually, and that his efforts on behalf of Jewish education and Jewish tradition had met with equal failure. As evidence for his belief he cited the poor attendance at Synagogue services, the scant support shown for the *Talmud Torah* and the general disregard of congregants for matters of faith. Coupled with this was his disapproval of the attitude shown by his community, and by communities generally in South Africa, towards their Rabbis.

Believing that a Rabbi should be a guide and mentor, he instead found his time and labours were taken up in the rendering of weddings and circumcisions, and attending *bar mitzvah* receptions and private family functions.

He found it difficult to put up with the private demands and the possessiveness of individuals who believed that they had a personal claim on him, and differed with many over his opinion that the Rabbi's first duty was to serve the community and not the individual. The Rabbi also held the view that the official relationship between the Rabbi and the Synagogue Executive should be closer and more intimate. He did not believe that a Rabbi should be made to feel that he was an employee who was paid for his services. He compared the position of a Rabbi in South Africa to that of a civil servant who had to carry out the policy laid down by somebody else and who, as a result, had small influence and circumscribed activities.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Hasholom*, XXII No.5 (January, 1944), 1-3., *Ibid.*, XXII No.6 (February, 1944), 1, 9-11.

Upon submitting his letter of resignation to the Council of the Congregation the Rabbi was approached on December 13, 1943, by a deputation, made up of representatives of the Congregation and Executive Officers of the Council of Natal Jewry, and was urged to reconsider his resignation. After having considered the matter carefully, the Rabbi intimated in a letter, which was written towards the end of December 1943, that it was impossible for him to reconsider his previous decision and that he intended to settle with his family in Palestine. He nevertheless offered to serve the Congregation in an honorary capacity in every possible way until such time as the Congregation could find a new incumbent to fill his post.<sup>13</sup> The Council of the Congregation reluctantly agreed to accept his resignation from the end of April 1944, when his term of office expired,<sup>14</sup> and also agreed to give him from that date six months leave of absence on full pay.<sup>15</sup>

Rabbi Freedman left for Palestine in July 1944. Prior to his departure an informal reception was held under the auspices of the Council of Natal Jewry. In recognition of their valuable and esteemed services to the Jewish community Rabbi and Mrs Freedman were inscribed in the Golden Book of the Jewish National

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.6 (February, 1944), 9 and 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

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For his congregants Rabbi Freedman's decision to resign and leave Durban caused much soul searching and serious introspection. The editorial columns of *Hasholom* declared that "the community had reaped the harvest of its own sowing"<sup>17</sup> and unquestioningly accepted the Rabbi's assessment of the Congregation's attitude toward their minister and faith to be an accurate one, and one in need of alteration.<sup>18</sup> In seeking to determine whether the Rabbi was justified in taking the extreme steps that he had, the editor of *Hasholom*, however, asked whether the Rabbi's resignation would, "convince the already sceptical, the indifferent and the wayward," or would not, "rather tend to shake even the faithful."<sup>19</sup>

As there was apparently little outward indication of a change in attitude or observance amongst the vast majority of the congregants, it would seem that the Rabbi's resignation in fact had little effect on their religious standards, although it probably caused them to re-examine their attitudes towards their spiritual leaders.

Among the small band of congregants committed to

<sup>16</sup>*The Zionist Record*, July 23, 1944, p.23.

<sup>17</sup>*Hasholom*, XXII No.5 (January, 1944), 1.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-3.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.



religious observance, the Rabbi's resignation and subsequent departure from Durban, coincided with the establishment, in 1944, of a *Machzikei Hadath* Society (A Society for the Strengthening of the Faith), the creation of which may indicate a desire to help rectify some of the conditions that had prompted the Rabbi's action. The Society, which was chaired by Mr S. Goldberg, set out its objects in its code of rules and regulations:

- a) To spread and foster a wider and more intimate knowledge and appreciation of Judaism and Judaic traditions, to strengthen its observance in the spirit of our holy *Torah*.
- b) The Society's functions shall be non political, but shall propagate by readings and lectures and by any other means the furtherance of and adherence to our Laws and high precepts.
- c) The Society shall strive to influence the youth and guide them on the lines of traditional Judaism, by organising for them from time to time debates and lectures.
- d) It shall be the aim of *Machzikei Hadath*, to influence the administration of the

Congregation to be guided by and adhere to the principles of orthodox and traditional Judaism in their execution of the congregational affairs.

- e) One of the paramount aims of the Society should be to induce every Jewish woman in this town to apply the laws of *Kashruth* in her house to awaken the slumbering Jewish conscience towards the observance of the holiness of *Shabbat* and the Jewish festivals, which are the main pillars of our religion, in public and domestic life, thus creating and sanctifying a Jewish atmosphere in the Jewish home.
- f) The Society shall exert all power to impress upon the parents - especially upon the Jewish mother - the sacred duties and responsibilities towards the religious education of their children.
- g) The principal object of this Society should be to propagate and strengthen traditional Judaism, aiming at *Shmirath Sabbat, Kashruth* and *Taharat Hamishpacha*.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.5 (January, 1945), 17 and 21.

On February 14, 1945 the Society held a general meeting at which it was reported that 75 members had been signed up without any canvassing having been undertaken.<sup>21</sup> At the meeting a programme of activities was arranged, including a series of lectures dealing with traditional Judaism, as well as a monthly *Oneg Shabbat*.<sup>22</sup> During the year the Society grew considerably, and reported progress in striving to achieve its objectives.<sup>23</sup> It rapidly faded however from the public eye, and no more is heard of the Society after 1945.

The demise of the *Machzikei Hadath* Society may possibly have resulted from the failure of its members to carry out their proposed programme of activities. It would seem, however, that it in fact fell victim to the conditions which had prompted the Rabbi to tender his resignation, and that its efforts were in fact ineffective and possibly incompatible with the needs and desires of those whom it wished to influence.

Rabbi Freedman's resignation also aroused considerable interest and sympathy in people in other parts of the Union, for his complaints regarding the members of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation were not peculiar to Durban, but were relevant to South African Jewry

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.7 (March, 1945), 15.

<sup>22</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 13, 1945, p.8.

<sup>23</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 38.

generally.<sup>24</sup>

In the absence of a Rabbi, the vacant pulpit at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue was infrequently occupied by guest preachers, including Captain C.L. Matz, the Resident Military Chaplain for Durban,<sup>25</sup> Rabbi I. Abrahams of the Gardens Synagogue in Cape Town,<sup>26</sup> Captain L.R. Dison of the Chaplaincy Force,<sup>27</sup> the Rev. M. Konvisser of Salisbury<sup>28</sup> and Captain Rev. I. Hickman, the Jewish Chaplain to Durban Fortress.<sup>29</sup>

Rabbi Freedman's resignation was followed by the departure of the Rev. D.B. Kuperberg, in whose honour a farewell was given at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue Chambers on March 15, 1944.<sup>30</sup> To fill the void in its religious leadership the Congregation consequently issued a call to the Rev. Feivel Metzger to accept the position of First Cantor. Upon accepting the Congregation's call Cantor Metzger delivered his valedictory sermon to his community in Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia, on July 21, 1944,<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>*The Zionist Record*, March 24, 1944, p.22.,  
March 31, 1944, p.19.

<sup>25</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, March 10, 1944, p.4.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, October 27, 1944, p.4., *The Zionist Record*, November 17, 1944, p.7.

<sup>27</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, November 10, 1944, p.4.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, February 2, 1945, p.4.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, February 9, 1945, p.4.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, March 3, 1944, p.10.

<sup>31</sup>*The Zionist Record*, August 11, 1944, p.10.

and on August 6, 1944, he conducted his first service at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>32</sup> He thereby began what was to prove to be a long and happy association with the Congregation, which was to extend over many years.

The question of finding a suitable incumbent to fill the vacant post of Rabbi was settled at the semi-annual general meeting of the Congregation in March 1945 when the chairman, Mr H.L. Magid, moved a resolution on behalf of the Council of the Congregation, authorising the Council to extend a call to Rabbi Freedman to fill the vacancy which had been caused by his resignation. The chairman, in moving the resolution, pointed out that a communal deputation of Durban Jewry had approached the Rabbi upon his return from Palestine with a view to his reconsidering his resignation, and referred to the sincerity of the Rabbi in his desire to return to the ministry. A letter was also read from Senator the Hon. F.C. Hollander which wholeheartedly and unreservedly supported the resolution.

After the resolution had been seconded, the Chairman announced that he wished to give the Rabbi an opportunity of making a statement to the meeting. Upon being admitted to the hall of the Jewish Club where the meeting was being held, Rabbi Freedman delivered a short address in which he referred to his work within the community and expressed his sincere desire to continue to serve the Jewish community of Durban.

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<sup>32</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 11, 1944, p.4.

Upon the Rabbi's departure the motion was debated at considerable length.<sup>33</sup> Those who were opposed to the Rabbi's reappointment cited the fact that, contrary to his statement made at the time of his resignation, that his action "was not occasioned by a desire for financial gain,"<sup>34</sup> or a wish to enter commerce, he had in fact, upon his return from Palestine, taken up a position in the financial world.<sup>35</sup> The meeting nevertheless decided by a substantial majority that the Council be authorised to extend a call to Rabbi Freedman.<sup>36</sup> Although the Congregation was apparently little different from what it had been at the time of his resignation the Rabbi accepted the call and once again assumed the mantle of spiritual leader of Durban Jewry.

In the midst of the disruption of Congregational affairs, caused by the appointment and resignation of officials, the Youth Services held for the children between the ages of five and fifteen years was one aspect of Congregational life that continued to flourish unaffected by the war, and gave cause for much satisfaction. These services, run in conjunction with the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, were held regularly on *Shabbat* mornings, after the morning services. They were

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<sup>33</sup>*The Zionist Record*, March 23, 1945, p.15.

<sup>34</sup>*Hasholom*, XXII No.6 (February, 1944), 9.

<sup>35</sup>From a personal interview with Mr Leslie Brewer, Durban, March 1980.

<sup>36</sup>*Hasholom*, XXIII No.8 (April, 1945), 13.

organised by a committee elected from amongst the children themselves, and drew regular attendances of a hundred or more.<sup>37</sup>

A decision of far reaching consequence was taken by the Congregation at its annual general meeting in 1944, when a majority of the members voted to discontinue the custom of *schnodering* at the Synagogues and cemetery.<sup>38</sup> This matter had been raised at the Congregation's annual general meeting in 1939, following the decision of the United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg to discontinue the practice of making ceremonious public offerings. At that time the newly elected Council of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation had agreed to review the situation.<sup>39</sup> In consequence of the Congregation's decision in 1944 to abolish *schnodering* a special general meeting was held on July 2, 1945, at which it was agreed to accept a revised scale of seat rentals, to offset the financial loss which was sustained following the decision

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<sup>37</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 1, 1939, p.12., December 22, 1939, p.14., *Hasholom*, XVII No.6 (February, 1940), 3-4., *The Zionist Record*, April 19, 1940, p.18., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49., *The Zionist Record*, February 27, 1942, p.23., *Hasholom*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 9 and 28., *The Natal Mercury*, November 10, 1944, p.4., February 2, 1945, p.4.

<sup>38</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 9.

<sup>39</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.2 (October, 1939), 15.

to discontinue the custom of offerings.<sup>40</sup>

Another unusual feature of the 1944 annual general meeting was that opportunity was taken at the meeting to confer the high and rare honour of membership of the Congregation on Mr Lionel Davis, in recognition of his services to the Congregation and the *Chevra Kadisha*.<sup>41</sup>

During the war it also became clearly apparent that the Congregation's two centrally located synagogues were incapable of accommodating, over the High Festival period, the growing Jewish community, which had come to be more widely spread outside the City centre. In 1942 extra services were held on *Yom Kippur* on the Berea and in the Beach area, and the success of these services raised the question of relocating at least one of the synagogues.<sup>42</sup> At the special general meeting in July 1945 the members were advised of the proposed purchase of a piece of land 2½ acres in extent, bounded by Essenwood, Silverton and Bellevue Roads, which had been selected for its suitability to meet the Congregation's needs by Messrs N. Meyerowitz, A.J. Cohen, S. Hackner, J. Miller and B. Fisher. The meeting appointed a sub-committee to conclude the purchase, which was completed on

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<sup>40</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 51.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>42</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.2 (October, 1942), 1-2.



July 4, 1945.<sup>43</sup> The land cost the Congregation £15,300.<sup>44</sup> In 1945 High Festival services, under the auspices of the Congregation, were held in the two synagogues, and for the first time also at the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>45</sup> The services at the Club were conducted by Mr S. Goldberg, Major S. Weinstein C.F. and Captain L. Dison C.F.<sup>46</sup>

The purchase of additional land for the Congregation, at a time when the war in the East had still to be brought to a conclusion, reflected the far sightedness of the Congregation and its leaders who, awaiting the return of peace, looked beyond the immediate post-war needs of the community and, in a spirit of quiet optimism, prepared for the Congregation's long term future development.

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<sup>43</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 51.

<sup>44</sup> *Durban Hebrew Congregation 1952 issued by the Durban United Hebrew Congregation*, p.23.

<sup>45</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 24, 1945, p.6.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, August 30, 1945, p.6.

## CHAPTER XXVII

THE CLUB UNDER WAR TIME PRESSURE

Almost inevitably the Second World War had a disruptive effect on the affairs of the Jewish Club. This was particularly so after the creation of the canteen and the resultant influx of visiting servicemen. Members however rallied in support of their Club, and thereby enabled the Club to continue functioning under the extreme pressures of the time.

Upon South Africa's entry into the war the Club Executive immediately cancelled a dance that was scheduled for that week.<sup>1</sup> The Executive, furthermore, agreed that all further functions of a jovial nature, including wedding receptions, should be abandoned for the duration of the war, except where they were provided for the benefit of the Forces or to assist war funds.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the condition of international affairs the different Sections initially continued to function

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<sup>1</sup>Arnold Miller, *Durban Jewish Club. A History issued on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee, May, 1956* (Durban, 1956), p.40.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p.45.

normally,<sup>3</sup> and on December 7, 1939, a banquet was even held at the Club to honour Mr F.C. Hollander upon his election to the Union Senate.<sup>4</sup> Prevailing world circumstances, however, were not long in effecting the activities of the Sectional Committees, and the first section to discontinue its activities, in consequence of the war, was the Dinner and Card Section, which had been revived early in 1939.<sup>5</sup> This was followed by the suspension of the Ladies' Section in 1940,<sup>6</sup> and the Luncheon Section not long thereafter.<sup>7</sup>

Within a matter of months the involvement of the Club members in general war effort was reflected in the internal affairs of the Jewish Club, with almost every section being seriously depleted. The absence of young men was keenly felt, particularly by the Entertainment,<sup>8</sup> and Dramatic Sections<sup>9</sup> which, together with other sections, were handicapped still further by many Club members joining up with local defence units

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<sup>3</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.3 (November, 1939), 26-27., *Ibid.*, XVII No.4 (December, 1939), 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.4 (December, 1939), 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.3 (November, 1939), 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.3 (November, 1940), 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.3 (November, 1940), 14.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.2 (August, 1940), 19.

and thereby, unavoidably having little time for Club work.<sup>10</sup>

In view of the Club's decision to suspend all entertainment functions, the Club's Culture Section was forced to enlarge its scope and to take on an even bigger role than previously in Club affairs.<sup>11</sup> Although weakened by the absence of some of its committee members on active service,<sup>12</sup> the Section held a varied programme of lectures during 1940,<sup>13</sup> and also initiated a Parliamentary Debating Section, which first met on April 14.<sup>14</sup> During its inaugural session Dr A. Broomberg acted as Speaker of the House and Mr W. Stone as Deputy **Speaker, whilst** the elections resulted in Dr T. Goldberg assuming the office of Prime Minister, Mr Leslie Rubin, Leader of the Opposition, Mr S.N. Tomkin, Clerk of the House and Mrs J. Abelson, Assistant Clerk of the House.<sup>15</sup> Owing to the departure from Durban on military service of a number of interested members, the Parliamentary Debating Section suspended

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<sup>10</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 37.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.5 (January, 1940), 18., *Ibid.*, XVII No.10 (June, 1940), 18., *Ibid.*, XVIII No.3 (November, 1940), 22.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.8 (April, 1940), 19.

<sup>15</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 41.

its activities, however, after only a few months.<sup>16</sup>

Not the least of the Club's difficulties in this period was financial. Revenue from membership depleted considerably in 1940, in consequence of the decision to remit the subscriptions of men on active service and their wives,<sup>17</sup> and to extend honorary membership to all men and women in uniform, who visited Durban.<sup>18</sup> In addition the turnover of the catering department dropped by £700 and that of the bar by £600, and the loss on one year's operation amounted to £500.<sup>19</sup>

To make up the loss of revenue normally received from functions, subscriptions and catering, and to ensure the continued existence of its canteen, the Club embarked on a drive for funds from amongst its members in 1941.<sup>20</sup> Although restricted from the full use of the Club's facilities, in consequence of the opening of the Club's amenities to all servicemen, members nevertheless rallied round in support of the Club, and generously contributed to the fund-raising efforts of the Executive.

Notwithstanding the imposition of a black-out in Durban in 1941, and the Club's serious financial straits

<sup>16</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.3 (November, 1940), 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.10 (June, 1940), 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 37.

<sup>19</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.4 (December, 1940), 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.9 (May, 1941), 10.

the different sectional committees valiantly sought to continue functioning as normally as possible. The Dramatic Section ingeniously circumvented the problem of the absence of male members on war duty by staging a play *The Women*, which had an all female cast. During its seven performances, in which time it was staged once for convalescent soldiers, three times for Club members and three times for war charities, and was seen by over 3,000 people, it was received with much acclaim.<sup>21</sup> Whilst the Culture,<sup>22</sup> Stage,<sup>23</sup> Squash,<sup>24</sup> Billiards,<sup>25</sup> Bowls,<sup>26</sup> Tennis,<sup>27</sup> Music,<sup>28</sup> Library,<sup>29</sup> Bar<sup>30</sup> and *Hasholom*<sup>31</sup> Sections remained active, the Entertainment Section found itself incapable of arranging regular functions and discontinued its activities.<sup>32</sup> Many of

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<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, XIX No.4 (December, 1941), 19.

<sup>22</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 43.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 43 and 47.

<sup>24</sup>*Hasholom*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 12.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49.

<sup>30</sup>*Hasholom*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 12.

<sup>31</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49.

<sup>32</sup>*Hasholom*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 11.

those formerly associated with the Entertainment Section subsequently came to be intimately connected with the weekly concerts which were held by the canteen for the Forces from July 1942.<sup>33</sup>

The pressures of the war came to be even more widely felt during 1942, when increasingly large numbers of servicemen visited the Club, which was almost entirely used as a canteen.<sup>34</sup> Although the number of facilities available to members decreased in consequence of the hospitality accorded to the visiting Forces, the membership of the Club, nevertheless, remained constant.<sup>35</sup>

In the light of the very real possibility of enemy action against Durban, the Executive arranged for the construction of an air raid shelter at a cost of £861, to provide for the safety of its members, staff and visitors. This step was considered particularly essential in view of the large number of canteen workers who were constantly on the Club premises.<sup>36</sup>

War time shortages in 1942 resulted in the alteration of the size of *Hasholom* to pocket-size,<sup>37</sup> and prevailing

<sup>33</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 63.

<sup>34</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.3 (November, 1942), 8.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 55.

circumstances forced the Dramatic Section to abandon any plans for the production of further full-length plays.<sup>38</sup> With the introduction of black-out regulations the ruling bodies of the Club decided that apart from the canteen the main section which should function was the Culture Section, which it was intended should serve as the cultural focus of Durban Jewry.<sup>39</sup> A special committee set up by the Culture Section, under the direction of Mr A. Miller, prepared a well received programme of lectures, which dealt with post-war problems as they would affect the world in general and Jews in particular.<sup>40</sup>

By the middle of the year complaints were being voiced that the Council and Executive Committee had almost ceased to function. In July 1942 it was in fact found necessary to reduce the quorum of the Executive from eight to five, and that of the Council from five to three.<sup>41</sup>

Although the activities of the Club continued to be curtailed for much of 1943 the Council, looking with farsighted optimism towards the end of the war, made application to the Durban Corporation for the vacant ground that adjoined the Club property.<sup>42</sup> Although the

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, XX No.12 (August, 1942), 21.

<sup>40</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 53.

<sup>41</sup> Arnold Miller, p.46.

<sup>42</sup> *Hasholom*, XXII No.3 (November, 1943), 21.



area in question was on loan to the military authorities, the Club wished to stake its claim for a lease on the area after the war, in order to extend its sporting facilities.<sup>43</sup> In the meantime, the Council approved the laying of a portion of a further green for additional bowling facilities,<sup>44</sup> and the Executive gave its consent to the creation of a junior tennis section for the children of members, and those attached to approved youth organisations.<sup>45</sup>

On July 8, 1943, the Club gave a wedding reception to its former Secretary Miss Mimi Smo, on the occasion of her marriage to Mr Harry Rose of Johannesburg. Miss Smo, who had assumed the office of Secretary upon the inception of the Club, was also the guest of honour at a soiree arranged by the Club authorities, at which tribute was paid to her for outstanding services and suitable presentations were made.<sup>46</sup>

With the lifting of black-out regulations in 1944, and the reduction in the number of troops passing through Durban, the Governing bodies revived some of the facilities that members had willingly been deprived of.<sup>47</sup> The first indication of the reversion to normal Club

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<sup>43</sup> Arnold Miller, p.46.

<sup>44</sup> *Hasholom*, XXII No.3 (November, 1943), 21.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.6 (February, 1943), 24.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.11 (July, 1943), 7 and 9.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.7 (March, 1944), 1-2.

activities was the staging of a soiree, with music provided by the Club Orchestra,<sup>48</sup> and this was followed not long afterwards by the Dramatic Section's staging of a full scale production.<sup>49</sup> Later in the year the ban on wedding receptions was removed, although they were limited to 200 persons and dancing remained prohibited, and the Club was again opened to members in the evenings.<sup>50</sup>

As attendances at the canteen steadily diminished the first of renovations arising out of the use of the Club as a canteen also had to be made in 1944, with the repainting of the hall and the re-upholstering of Club furniture.<sup>51</sup>

The highlight of the year's activities however, were the celebrations held to mark the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Circle, out of which the Club had developed. On November 20 a soiree was held, attended by about 500 people, many of whom were members of the original Circle. Addresses were given by the Chairman, Mr M. Solomon; the President, Mr H. Lipinski; Senator the Hon. F.C. Hollander, the Hon. President of the Club; Mr S. Moshal, an Hon. Vice-President of the Club and the first President of the Circle, who presented

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.8 (April, 1944), 19 and 17.

<sup>49</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 53.

<sup>50</sup> Arnold Miller, p.46.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47.

Mr M. Wolpert with a framed address, in appreciation of 25 years unbroken service to the Circle and Club; Mr Cecil Lyons, the representative of the President of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and himself an Hon. Vice-President of the Club; and the Mayor, Mr Rupert Ellis Brown. Apart from the speeches, the evening was marked by a musical recital by the David Cohen Trio and the rendition of three songs by Mrs Dorothy Avrich.<sup>52</sup> To mark the Silver Jubilee celebrations the Tennis and Bowling Sections held special sporting tournaments,<sup>53</sup> and the Club recorded the event by endowing a bed in the South African Jewish Orphanage in Johannesburg.<sup>54</sup>

The progress towards restoring normality to the Club continued in 1945. The Luncheon Section was resuscitated and commenced its activities in March with a luncheon to the Mayor, Mr Rupert Ellis Brown.<sup>55</sup> The Entertainment Section was revived after the cessation of Troop Concerts,<sup>56</sup> and in July 1945 the Club held its first social function since the outbreak of war when, in conjunction with the local branch of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League, it entertained Jewish

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<sup>52</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.4 (December, 1944), 3, 6, 12.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.11 (July, 1945), 29 and 31.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 23.

ex-prisoners of war and ex-Servicemen and women to a dance.<sup>57</sup> With the reversion to peace time activities the sporting sections enjoyed increased membership as former soldiers returned home and joined the Club,<sup>58</sup> and a Chess Section, chaired by Mr S. Goldberg, was also created.<sup>59</sup> The Library, which now too came to be increasingly more patronised, was bolstered in its activities by the presentation to the Club, by Mr M.K. Rosenbach, of a gift of £1,000, which was invested in a Trust Fund in memory of his late brother Abraham Kozinsky, the revenue therefrom being utilised for the purchase of books for the Club library.<sup>60</sup>

With the resumption of peace, the Council of the Club, in anticipation of the further development of the Institution, entered once again into negotiations with the Corporation over the vacant land that lay on the Club's western side.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 4, 1945, p.13.

<sup>58</sup>*Hasholom*, XXIII No.10 (June, 1945), 13.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 23.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, XXIII No.12 (August, 1945), 25.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 29.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

ZIONISM IN DURBAN DURING THE WAR YEARS

Notwithstanding prevailing war time circumstances, the Zionist movement in Durban enjoyed, on the whole, a period of growth and consolidation, which augured well for the cause that it espoused.

Having established a fine record in regard to fund raising, the Durban Zionist Association set about reorganising Zionist activity in the City by engaging in extensive Zionist cultural propaganda, particularly amongst the younger members of the community. It organised a series of drawing room meetings, all of which were well attended, and as a result of these meetings, a group was formed, which arranged to meet at regular intervals to discuss Zionist ideology and contemporary Jewish problems.<sup>1</sup> Amongst those who addressed the members of the Association were Mr Abe Herman, of the South African Zionist Federation;<sup>2</sup> Mr N. Kirschner, the Chairman of the Federation;<sup>3</sup> and Mr J. Daleski, a member of the Executive Council of the

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<sup>1</sup>*Hasholom*, XVIII No.6 (February, 1940), 21.

<sup>2</sup>*The Zionist Record*, December 1, 1939, p.12.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, December 22, 1939, p.14.

Federation, who spoke at the Association's annual general meeting.<sup>4</sup>

In co-operation with the other Zionist Societies in Durban the Zionist Association arranged a memorial evening in October 1941, to mark the passing of the American Zionist leader and Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis and Menachem Mendel Ussishkin, the President of the Directorate of the Jewish National Fund.<sup>5</sup> The Association also held suitable functions to commemorate the anniversaries of the Balfour Declaration,<sup>6</sup> the *Yahrtzeits* of Herzl and Bialik,<sup>7</sup> the 29th anniversary of the passing of the Yiddish writer, J.L. Peretz<sup>8</sup> and the death of Henrietta Szold, the founder of *Hadassah*.<sup>9</sup>

Within the wider Zionist context the Association was represented at the 18th South African Zionist Conference, held in the Town Hall, Bloemfontein, in May 1941,<sup>10</sup> and at the following Conference held in

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, April 12, 1940, p.26.

<sup>5</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 2.

<sup>6</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 6, 1942, p.8., *Hasholom*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 14.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.12 (August, 1943), 11., *Ibid.*, XXII No.11 (July, 1944), 11 and 13., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.12 (August, 1945), 25 and 27., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 14.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 14.

<sup>9</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 25, 1945, p.27.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, May 30, 1945, p.10-12.

Johannesburg in July 1943.<sup>11</sup>

In June 1943 the Durban Zionist Association was reorganised and reconstituted with most positive results, developing to a degree which it had never achieved before.<sup>12</sup> The Association's membership grew to 185 by September 1944,<sup>13</sup> and a year later it stood at 270.<sup>14</sup> Interest and support for Zionism was achieved by the Association's enthusiastic committee, through a programme

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, August 6, 1943, p.6., August 13, 1943, p.12.

<sup>12</sup> Report of Activities of Zionist Council for Natal Covering Period from 1st September, 1943 to 30th May, 1945, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 14.

<sup>14</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 59 and 69.

of lectures<sup>15</sup> and debates<sup>16</sup> and through the staging of functions to mark the Jewish festivals, whereby it was hoped to revive the spirit of the religious holidays and to stress the link with the Land of Israel.<sup>17</sup>

The Association furthermore began to issue a monthly newsletter, the *Zionist Digest*, which featured important news items of Zionist and general Jewish interest in short summaries.<sup>18</sup> Initially sent only to members of

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<sup>15</sup>Including a talk by Mr A. Neaman on "A Comparison of Jewish Colonisation in the Argentine and Palestine, (*Hasholom*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 14.) a speech by Mr H. Moss-Morris on "From Balfour to Biltmore, (*Ibid.*) and on his personal impressions after a visit to Palestine, (*The Zionist Record*, May 5, 1944, p.14.) an address by Mr B. Gering, Vice-Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation Executive on "The last Zionist Conference," (*Hasholom*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 14.) a talk by Mr G. Saron, General Secretary of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies on "A Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine and the Jews of the *Galuth*: Their Mutual Interaction," (*Ibid.*, XXIII No.11 (July, 1945, 34 and 37.) an address by Dr Wulf Sachs, the well known Johannesburg Zionist on "The Jews in the Present Political Situation," (*Ibid.*, XXIII No.12 (August, 1945), 19 and 21.) and a talk by Prof. S. Frankel, a member of the Zionist Executive on his impressions of Palestine. *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 27-28.)

<sup>16</sup>Including a debate on "The present state of Jewish Education is not in accordance with the Jewish needs of raising a nationally conscious generation, (*Hasholom*, XXIII No.10 (June, 1945), 45 and 44.)

<sup>17</sup>Including *Chanukah* functions, (*Ibid.*, XXII No.5 (January, 1944), 25 and 27., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.5 (January, 1945), 19 and 21)., *Purim* functions, (*Ibid.*, XXII No.7 (March, 1944), 31., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.7 (March, 1945), 31.) and a *Shavuot* function (*Ibid.*, XXII No.10 (June, 1944), 16 and 25.).

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 15.



local Zionist Societies, the *Zionist Digest* later came to be distributed to all members of the Durban Jewish community.<sup>19</sup> Under the Association's auspices Bible Study classes were held weekly to read and discuss sections of the Bible.<sup>20</sup> The Association gave its support to the efforts of the Zionist Youth,<sup>21</sup> and also worked in close co-operation with the Durban Women's Zionist League, which it assisted in obtaining subscriptions for the *Sefer Haya'eled*, *Safer Barmitzvah* and Golden Book of the *Keren Kayemet*.<sup>22</sup>

The sister organisation of the Durban Zionist Association, the Women's Zionist League, whilst fulfilling its part in general war work also maintained a full programme of Zionist activities. In March 1940 two new sewing groups were formed,<sup>23</sup> which, together with the five existing groups, continued throughout this period to make garments for shipment to Palestine.<sup>24</sup> The League made great progress with the distribution of

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<sup>19</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 59.

<sup>20</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 15.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 59.

<sup>22</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 15.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII No.8 (April, 1940), 22.

<sup>24</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48., *Hasholom*, XVIII No.4 (December, 1940), 24., *Ibid.*, XVIII No.6 (February, 1941), 18., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 65., *The Zionist Record*, May 12, 1944, p.20.

J.N.F. Blue Boxes amongst the members of the community<sup>25</sup> and also frequently conducted box clearances.<sup>26</sup> Its members organised the annual Balfour Day tree drives on behalf of the Fund,<sup>27</sup> and certain of the women, in their private capacities, held fund raising functions to assist the J.N.F. in its work.<sup>28</sup>

From within the ranks of the League were drawn the workers to conduct the women's section of the *Keren Hayesod* Campaigns<sup>29</sup> and the annual sale of *Shekels*,<sup>30</sup> and the League was also closely identified with the campaign on behalf of *Youth Aliyah*.<sup>31</sup> Representatives of the League participated in the biennial Conferences

<sup>25</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 51., *Hasholom*, XX No.11 (July, 1942), 22., *Ibid.*, XXI No.2 (October, 1942), 23-24., *The Zionist Record*, May 12, 1944, p.20., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 55.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 51., *Hasholom*, XIX No.4 (December, 1941), 20., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 65., *The Zionist Record*, May 12, 1944, 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, September 27, 1940, p.18., April 4, 1944, p.6.

<sup>29</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48., *Hasholom*, XX No.12 (August, 1942), 11., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 73.

<sup>30</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.8 (April, 1940), 22., *Ibid.*, XVIII No.8 (April, 1941), 20., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 65., *The Zionist Record*, May 12, 1944, p.20., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 55.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 69 and 71.

of the South African Zionist Federation,<sup>32</sup> and were present at the South African Women's Zionist Conferences which were held in 1941 and 1943.<sup>33</sup>

For the duration of the war the League succeeded in holding monthly functions at which various guests read a variety of papers on topics of general and Zionist interest.<sup>34</sup> With the imposition of black-out regulations and increased transport difficulties however, functions were no longer held in private homes and from 1943 were, instead, generally convened at the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>35</sup>

Notwithstanding the pressures of war and very probably as an indirect result of the difficulties which were brought to bear on world Jewry, the ranks of the League swelled in this period, and by 1945 exceeded 400.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 30, 1941, p.10., August 6, 1943, p.11.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, May 30, 1941, p.22., August 6, 1943, p.11.

<sup>34</sup> For details of functions see *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48., *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 51., *Hasholom*, XIX No.2 (October, 1941), 20., *Ibid.*, XIX No.4 (December, 1941), 20., *Ibid.*, XIX No.7 (March, 1942), 16., *Ibid.*, XX No.9 (May, 1942), 7-8., *Ibid.*, XX No.10 (June, 1942), 28., *The Zionist Record*, September 25, 1942, p.19., *Hasholom*, XXI No.2 (October, 1942), 23-24., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 65., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 69 and 71., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 55.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 65.

<sup>36</sup> Report of Activities of Zionist Council for Natal Covering Period from 1st September, 1943 to 30th May, 1945, p.1.

For the local branch of *Habonim* the war years proved to be enormously trying, as many of the Movement's senior members, including the *Bakoach*, Mr Sam Ernst, enlisted for active service and the Adult Lay Committee disbanded.<sup>37</sup> *Habonim* in Durban subsequently entered into a period of decline in terms of its numbers.

It was in this period, however, that the ideology of the Movement took a radical turn, no doubt in large measure due to prevailing world circumstances and to the upsurge in Zionist commitment amongst Jewry generally. Whereas before *Habonim* had come to be widely regarded as a Jewish scouting movement, certain young *madrichim*, of whom Leslie Shandel of Durban was the leader, now argued that more emphasis should be laid on Zionism, and in particular on *chalutzit*. The first *Chalutz* Group of South African *Habonim* was consequently formed in Durban in 1939 and similar groups were later established in Johannesburg and other centres in the Union.<sup>38</sup> The Durban *Chalutz* Group began to hold meetings on a regular basis, and at one such meeting it was addressed by Mr Abe Herman of the South African Zionist Federation.<sup>39</sup> In December 1939 a camp was held at Umgababa for about 150 *Bonim*, at which the presence of the *Chalutz* Group from

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<sup>37</sup> Moey Goldberg, "Development and Work of the Friends of *Habonim*," in *Habonim Twenty Fifth Anniversary, 1933-1958* (Durban, 1958), 12.

<sup>38</sup> *Habonim Twenty Fifth Anniversary 1933-1958*, p.6.

<sup>39</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 1, 1939, p.12.

Johannesburg led to intense discussions on details of *Habonim* ideology.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the absence of many of its leaders on war duty, the *gedudim* of *Habonim* nevertheless continued to meet regularly, and carried on with their routine work. Evidence of the Movement's determination to intensify its activities in spite of prevailing difficulties was reflected in the successful formation of an additional *chavurah* (senior group), and the conducting of a number of camps for the various *gedudim*.<sup>41</sup> *Habonim's* ability to continue operating in this period was largely attributable to its small band of keen and sincere *madrichim*. After Sam Ernst's departure in 1941, the Durban Movement was led for a few months by Jack Rubin who was, in turn, succeeded by Lionel Feitelberg, Louis Strous, Lexi Panovka and Paula Beinart,<sup>42</sup> all of whom received assistance from the Zionist Youth Society.<sup>43</sup>

With the gradual shift of world circumstances towards normalcy in 1945, Durban *Habonim* enjoyed a period of increased growth and activity, in consequence of the demobilisation of many of its leaders and the heightened interest amongst Jewish youth generally in matters

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<sup>40</sup> *Habonim Twenty Fifth Anniversary 1933-1958*, p.6.

<sup>41</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48.

<sup>42</sup> *Habonim Twenty Fifth Anniversary 1933-1958*, p.6.

<sup>43</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48.

Zionist. The total membership of the Movement in Durban rose to 120, divided between seven *gedudim* and *mashtelot*, which met regularly on Sunday mornings, and the three *chavurot*, which met each Friday night to discuss matters of Jewish, Zionist and general interest. In addition, during the course of the year, the Senior Section of the Movement was revived and general functions were arranged each Saturday night for the whole Movement.<sup>44</sup>

Notwithstanding the fighting abroad, the Durban Zionist Youth Society, like *Habonim*, sought, with some measure of initial success, to continue to provide an interesting and varied programme of activities for its members who were for the most part older than 17 years, and who were not catered for by *Habonim*. During the first year of the war the Society held a number of special functions to coincide with the Jewish festivals. These included a *Sukkot* supper<sup>45</sup> a *Chanukah* social<sup>46</sup> and a *Lag B'Omer* dance.<sup>47</sup> Under its aegis Mrs Ilse Warburg, who had come to Durban to launch the Youth *Aliyah* campaign,<sup>48</sup> Mr Abe Herman of the South African Zionist Federation,<sup>49</sup> and Dr Fischel of the Hebrew University of

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 67 and 69.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47.

<sup>46</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 22, 1939, p.14.

<sup>47</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.10 (June, 1940), 20.

<sup>48</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 3, 1939, p.19.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1, 1939, p.12.

Jerusalem,<sup>50</sup> were afforded the opportunity to meet with the Zionist youth of the community. A weekend camp over the Christmas holidays,<sup>51</sup> and the screening of three films about Palestine at the *20th Century Cinema*<sup>52</sup> were but two of the many highlights of a year of considerable activity in which the Society also took charge of the Youth Campaign of the *Keren Hayesod*,<sup>53</sup> introduced a weekly *minchah* service for the youth at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue<sup>54</sup> and contributed to the funds of the *Keren Kayemet*.<sup>55</sup>

With equal enthusiasm, the Society organised a programme of activities for 1941. This included an *Oneg Shabbat* in honour of Mr Norman Lourie, the Vice-Chairman of the Propaganda Department of the South African Zionist Federation and *Manhig* of *Habonim*;<sup>56</sup> a meeting with Rabbi Zlotnik, of the South African Board of Jewish Education;<sup>57</sup> and a function, held in conjunction with the Jewish Club, at which an address was

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<sup>50</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.8 (April, 1940), 22.

<sup>51</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 22, 1939, p.14.

<sup>52</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.9 (May, 1940), 24.

<sup>53</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 8, 1941, p.25.

<sup>57</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 19.

delivered by Rabbi M.C. Weiler, of Johannesburg.<sup>58</sup> At the same time the Society lent its active support to the annual sale of *Shekels*,<sup>59</sup> organised the youth section of the J.N.F. Campaign<sup>60</sup> and assisted in conducting the Balfour Day Tree Drive.<sup>61</sup> In May 1941 it was represented at both the 18th South African Zionist Conference and the 6th South African Zionist Youth Conference, which were held in Bloemfontein.<sup>62</sup>

Owing to war time conditions, however, a series of lectures on Jewish history inaugurated by the Society ran into difficulties, when the services of sufficient lecturers were found to be unobtainable.<sup>63</sup> Further problems were encountered by the Society's Committee as the number of its members on active service rose to 36, and the support and enthusiasm of remaining members declined considerably.<sup>64</sup>

Under these circumstances the move towards creating a more centralised youth organisation, which had first

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 51.

<sup>60</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 17, 1941, p.17.

<sup>61</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 51.

<sup>62</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 30, 1941, pp.10 and 29.

<sup>63</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 51.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*



been proposed by the Council of Natal Jewry in 1938,<sup>65</sup> now came to fruition with the inauguration, on March 1, 1942, of the Durban Zionist Youth Movement.<sup>66</sup> This new Movement incorporated the Zionist Youth Society and combined and co-ordinated the work of *Habonim* and all previously existing youth groups.<sup>67</sup> In view of prevailing circumstances and the difficulties which resulted, largely from the reduction through service abroad of a number of those able to lead the youth movements, the creation of the Durban Zionist Youth Movement would appear to have been a most timely act, and one whereby the survival of Zionist youth activity in Durban was ensured. The Movement's first Committee included L. Panovka and L. Strous (*Habonim* representatives), M. Richter and P. Beinart (*Chavurot* representatives), F. Goldberg (Secretary), C. Beck (Treasurer), D. Ogin, J. Kentridge, E. Richter, D. Woolfson, E. Manne and P. Berman.<sup>68</sup>

The Executive of the new Movement organised a highly successful *Lag B'Omer* camp fire at Sarnia in May 1942,<sup>69</sup> and a concert at the Jewish Club, at which the

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<sup>65</sup> *Hasholom*, XV No.6 (February, 1938), 23.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.7 (March, 1942), 16.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, XX No.10 (June, 1942), 11.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.7 (March, 1942), 16.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, XX No.10 (June, 1942), 17.

installation ceremony of the *Habonim* was performed.<sup>70</sup>

It also conducted the Youth *Keren Hayesod* Campaign which was inaugurated in July 1942.<sup>71</sup> Under the direction of Mrs Tattenbaum a choir was also formed<sup>72</sup> and on May 23, 1942, it featured in a programme broadcast from the Durban Broadcasting Studio.<sup>73</sup>

The highlight of the Movement's activities however, was the acquisition of a Youth *Maon*, which was intended to serve as a home for all Durban Jewish youth.<sup>74</sup> The acquisition of a *Maon* was largely due to the difficulties which arose from holding meetings at the Jewish Club, where the claims of the canteen placed a premium on all available accommodation.<sup>75</sup> The *Maon*, which was located in a double-storeyed shop in Plowright Lane, was partitioned downstairs into a library and two reading rooms and the upper storey was set aside for use as a hall.

The official opening of the Youth *Maon* took place in November 1942, with a function which took the form of a musical afternoon. Over 200 members of the Jewish community attended the ceremony which was

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, XX No.11 (July, 1942), 28.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, XX No.12 (August, 1942), 23-24.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.3 (November, 1942), 21.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, XX No.10 (June, 1942), 17.

<sup>74</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 69.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

presided over by Molly Richter, the chairman of the Movement, who presented a tree certificate to Mr and Mrs H. Zulman, in recognition of their generosity in helping to meet the costs of the furnishing. Rabbi Freedman affixed the *mezuzah* to the doorpost and delivered an appropriate address. Half of the rental of the Youth *Maon* was borne by the Council of Natal Jewry and the balance by various members of the Durban Jewish community, including *Messrs Lurie Bros.*, *Moshal Gevisser*, H. Zulman, M. Morrison, H. Brown, A. Kaplan, S. Feitelberg, S. Torf, N. Hertz and Dr N. Smith.<sup>76</sup>

The Youth *Maon* served as a venue for addresses by Dr A. Goldstein of Palestine,<sup>77</sup> Mr H. Levine of Palestine,<sup>78</sup> and Dr A. Samuelsdorff, an emissary for WIZO,<sup>79</sup> and for the dances and musical evenings, films and other social activities of the Youth Movement.<sup>80</sup>

In August 1943, the Youth *Maon* was moved to larger and more suitable premises<sup>81</sup> in *London Assurance House*, Smith Street, which came to be the centre of Zionist

<sup>76</sup>*The Zionist Record*, November 27, 1942, p.20.

<sup>77</sup>*Hasholom*, XXI No.5 (January, 1943), 7.

<sup>78</sup>*The Zionist Record*, March 12, 1943, p.18.

<sup>79</sup>*Hasholom*, XXI No.9 (May, 1943), 23.

<sup>80</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 67.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*

activity, and the venue for some of the functions held by the combined Zionist societies.<sup>82</sup> Members of the Zionist Youth Movement met at the *Maon* to hear talks by Mr N. Kirschner, the Chairman of the Zionist Federation; and Mr N. Lourie, the *Manhig* of *Habonim*, who launched the J.N.F. Campaign;<sup>83</sup> Dr Y. Kaufmann, the Director of the Cultural Department of the *Vaad Leumi* (National Council of Palestinian Jewry),<sup>84</sup> and Rabbi Prof. I. Abrahams of the Gardens Synagogue, Cape Town.<sup>85</sup>

Independent of the Durban Zionist Youth Movement was the Young WIZO Group, which was formed after a visit to Durban by Dr Anni Samuelsdorff who toured the Union on behalf of WIZO. At the Group's inaugural meeting held on April 3, 1943, a committee was elected, consisting of Miss R. Blumenfeld, Chairman; Misses E. Gitlin and C. Herman, Treasurers; Miss J. Moss-Morris, Secretary; Misses L. Panovka and D. Woolfson, Sewing Conveners; Misses H. Goldberg, M. Leibowitz, B. Jacobs, A. Rosenbach, E. Borkum and Mrs Segal, Entertainment Conveners; and Misses F. Goldberg, B. Gover and D. Elias, Cultural Conveners.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Hasholom*, XXII No.5 (January, 1944), 25., *Ibid.*, XXII No.7 (March, 1944), 31., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 17.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.2 (October, 1943), 13.

<sup>84</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 12, 1943, p.14.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, November 17, 1944, p.7.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, April 16, 1943, p.21.

The Durban Young WIZO chose to remain independent of the Durban Women's Zionist League,<sup>87</sup> whose members were mainly drawn from amongst the ranks of older married women, and in terms of the Constitution which the South African Women's Zionist Council drew up for the Young WIZO Groups, it catered for girls between the ages of 21 and 25 years.<sup>88</sup> The Durban Young WIZO adopted a three fold programme of activities, namely, to raise funds for the Henrietta Irwell Polytechnic in Haifa, to knit and sew garments for baby homes in Palestine and to provide cultural and educational activities for its members.<sup>89</sup>

Within a matter of months the Durban Young WIZO had held a number of well attended lectures, a dance and a film show, whilst its membership had risen to almost 50.<sup>90</sup> The momentum which was created at the Group's inception was in fact sustained for the duration of the war.<sup>91</sup> The Durban Young WIZO was, furthermore, represented at the 6th South African Women's Zionist Conference, held

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<sup>87</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.9 (May, 1943), 23.

<sup>88</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Monday, 15th November, 1943, at 5.p.m., at the Zionist Youth *Maon*, pp.3-4.

<sup>89</sup> *Hasholom*, XXII No.10 (June, 1944), 39.

<sup>90</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 68.

<sup>91</sup> For details of various social and cultural activities of the Group see *Hasholom*, XXIII No.2 (October, 1944), 31., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.9 (May, 1945), 36., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 55 and 57.

in Johannesburg in July 1943.<sup>92</sup> In conjunction with the Durban Zionist Youth Movement it conducted the 1943 J.N.F. Youth Campaign,<sup>93</sup> and the Youth Drive in connection with the 1944 *Keren Hayesod* Campaign.<sup>94</sup> On the occasion of Dr Weizmann's 70th birthday the Durban Young WIZO contributed £20 towards inscribing the Zionist leader's name in Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund.<sup>95</sup>

By 1945 the Group's numbers had stabilised at about 35,<sup>96</sup> and unlike its sister groups in many parts of the country it had come to be firmly established within the life of the Jewish community<sup>97</sup> and had gained affiliation to the South African Zionist Federation, and through the Federation to the Women's Zionist Council of South Africa.<sup>98</sup>

A step of far reaching consequence for the development of Zionism in Durban was the decision taken by local Zionist societies, in January 1943, to establish an office, under a full time clerical assistant, as a first step towards the setting up of a Natal office of

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<sup>92</sup>*The Zionist Record*, August 6, 1943, p.11.

<sup>93</sup>*Hasholom*, XXII No.10 (June, 1944), 39.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, XXIII No.9 (May, 1945), 36.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup>Report of Activities of Zionist Council for Natal Covering Period from 1st September, 1943 to 30th, May, 1945, p.1.

<sup>97</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 57.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*

the South African Zionist Federation.<sup>99</sup> In a report forwarded to the Federation in Johannesburg, Mr E. Schragenheim notified the Federation that he, together with Messrs H. Moss-Morris and A. Frankel had formed themselves into a temporary Executive in order to reorganise the Zionist Organisation in Durban.<sup>100</sup> Under the direction of those gentlemen the Natal office of the Federation was opened on February 1, 1943<sup>101</sup> at the Youth *Maon* in Plowright Lane. It was later relocated at *London Assurance House* which became the *Maon* of the Zionist organisation in Durban.<sup>102</sup> In the meantime negotiations towards the formation of a Zionist Council for Natal were begun.

The chair of the new Council was offered in the first instance to Mr M. Freed, who declined the honour. After lengthy discussions it was finally decided that a Council should be formed, comprising of representatives from all Zionist Societies and private individuals and an Executive which would be elected from the Council. On the recommendation of Rabbi Freedman the nucleus of

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<sup>99</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 15, 1943, p.15.

<sup>100</sup> Minutes of Meeting held at the Durban Zionist Youth *Maon* on Thursday, January 6th, 1943, p.1.

<sup>101</sup> Minutes of Meeting of all Zionist Societies, Held at the Durban Zionist Youth *Maon*, 5 Plowright Lane, on Monday afternoon, 22nd February, 1943, at 4,45 pm., p.1.

<sup>102</sup> From a personal interview with Mrs M. Broomberg, Durban, May, 1980.

the provisional Council was fixed at 5 men, 5 women and 3 youth.<sup>103</sup>

To assist local Zionists in their efforts to create a Zionist Council the South African Zionist Federation sent Mr Harry Levin, the well known Palestinian journalist and lecturer who was then in the Union, to Durban, to give advice and to offer guidance.<sup>104</sup>

A Provisional Zionist Council was formed, consisting of Messrs M. Freed, A. Frankel, A. Kaplan, H. Moss-Morris, E. Schragenheim of the Durban Zionist Association; Mesdames M. Fielding, I.V. Katz, I. Kaliski, H. Moss-Morris, S. Torf of the Durban Women's Zionist League; Miss L. Panovka and Messrs L. Shandel and M. Stein of the Durban Zionist Youth Movement; with Rabbi A.H. Freedman, Mr A. Goldberg M.P., Mr N. Hertz (as Chairman of the *Keren Hayesod* Campaign), Mrs A.H. Freedman and Mrs A. Broomberg (Chairlady of the Women's Zionist League) as ex-officio members.<sup>105</sup> To make the Council truly representative of Natal Zionists an invitation was also extended to the Jewish community

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<sup>103</sup>Minutes of Meeting of all Zionist Societies, Held at the Durban Zionist Youth *Maon*, 5 Plowright Lane, on Monday afternoon, 22nd February, 1943 at 4.45 pm, p.2.

<sup>104</sup>*The Zionist Record*, March 12, 1943, p.18.

<sup>105</sup>Minutes of Provisional Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the Durban Zionist Youth *Maon*, 5 Plowright Lane, on Tuesday, 30th March, 1943, at 5.15 pm., p.1.



of Pietermaritzburg to nominate a representative or representatives to the Council.<sup>106</sup> Elections for the Provisional Executive resulted in the appointment of Mr E. Schragenheim as Acting Chairman; Mrs H. Moss-Morris, Acting Vice-Chairlady; Mr A. Frankel, Hon. Secretary and Mr N. Hertz, Hon. Treasurer.<sup>107</sup> A sub-committee consisting of Rabbi Freedman, Mr H. Moss-Morris and Mr A. Frankel was elected to draw up a Constitution for the Council,<sup>108</sup> whose functions were defined by the Acting Chairman as:

- a) to further co-operation between the Zionist Societies, to stimulate their development and to spread Zionism generally in Natal
- b) to represent the South African Zionist Federation in Natal and
- c) to represent Natal Zionists in the South African Zionist Federation<sup>109</sup>

A Constitution for the Zionist Council for Natal was drafted and finally agreed upon by all affiliated bodies. Thereupon the Council was properly established

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* .

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

according to its Constitution in December, 1944. It consisted of Messrs A. Frankel, N. Hertz, H. Hadany and A. Kaplan representing the Durban Zionist Association; Mesdames A. Broomberg, M. Fielding, A. Goldberg and S. Torf representing the Durban Women's Zionist League; Misses P. Beinart, G. Aufrichtig, S. Hirschowitz and Mr B. Klug representing the Durban Zionist Youth Movement; with Messrs M. Freed, H. Moss-Morris, E. Schragenheim and Mrs H. Moss-Morris as co-opted members and Mr A. Goldberg M.P. an ex-officio member. Mr E. Schragenheim was elected Chairman and Mr N. Hertz, Treasurer.<sup>110</sup>

After the Durban Young WIZO had decided to remain independent of the Women's Zionist League and to become directly affiliated to the Zionist Federation, it was decided that it should have two representatives on the Council. Misses R. Blumenfeld and R. Woolfson were nominated by the Young WIZO as its representatives.<sup>111</sup>

The Council fulfilled an important role in Zionist activity in Natal and enhanced the stature of the Movement, attaining a measure of prestige accorded to no other communal body, with the exception of the Council of Natal Jewry, on whose domain, by virtue of its specific functions it had no cause to encroach, and on which its

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<sup>110</sup> Report of Activities of Zionist Council for Natal Covering Period From 1st September, 1943, to 30th May, 1945, p.1.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

constituent bodies continued to be represented. It maintained close contact with the Executive of the South African Zionist Federation in Johannesburg, and with other Provincial Councils, and this practice proved to be of mutual benefit.

The Zionist Council extended all possible assistance to local Zionist bodies, and it was no coincidence that the reorganisation and reconstruction of the Durban Zionist Association coincided with the establishment of the Zionist Council for Natal. The Council and its office also kept in close contact with Pietermaritzburg and communities in the outlying Natal country districts. It assisted the Pietermaritzburg Zionist Society in arranging a number of successful Zionist campaigns, and through the efforts of Council members an active Youth Group was established in the Capital. Further links were maintained by the Council with the Jewish communities outside Durban through the regular distribution of the *Zionist Digest*, which was issued monthly by the Durban Zionist Association.

A sub-committee of the Zionist Council for Natal effectively co-ordinated the work of the four local Zionist Societies and through its efforts many successful functions were held. The stimulation of Zionist activity in Durban was largely attributed by the Council to the work of this sub-committee.

The Council strove to maintain a harmonious working relationship with the Council of Natal Jewry. Under the

joint auspices of the two bodies a memorial meeting was held in May 1943, for the Zionist Leader and distinguished soldier, Brigadier F. Kisch, who died on active service;<sup>112</sup> the community was addressed by Dr I. Gruenbaum, a member of the World Executive of the Jewish Agency;<sup>113</sup> and a function was held to enable the Jews of Durban to join in the world wide celebrations to mark Dr C. Weizmann's 70th birthday.<sup>114</sup>

With Zionist support the Natal Technical College in Durban introduced into its curriculum a course of Hebrew, which was well attended. The Council also arranged for members of the Durban Zionist Association to conduct two Hebrew groups, which were run by the Durban Zionist Youth Movement.

In the field of fund-raising the Council played a prominent part in the launching and co-ordinating of all major Zionist campaigns undertaken in Natal. It also maintained a check on the progress of the annual *Shekel* campaigns, the Balfour Day Tree Drives, and the J.N.F. Blue Box collections, which were carried out by constituent bodies of the Council.

Undivided in its support for the World Zionist Organisation, the Council maintained a watchful eye over the activities of the small but active groups of

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<sup>112</sup>*The Zionist Record*, May 21, 1943, p.17.

<sup>113</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, September 11, 1943, p.6.

<sup>114</sup>*Hasholom*, XXIII No.4 (December, 1944), 33 and 35.

Revisionists which existed in Durban, and sought wherever possible to counter the influence of the supporters of the New Zionist Organisation.<sup>115</sup>

Two organisations closely connected with Palestine, and therefore with Zionist life in Durban, were the local branches of the Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Palestine Maritime League. Although initially not members of the Zionist Council, they, like all other Zionist bodies active in the City, were later accorded representation on the Council, which thereby came to embrace all branches of Zionist endeavour.

The Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem had, from the time of the inception of the Durban branch in 1935,<sup>116</sup> kept a very low profile within the community, its only outstanding achievement being a luncheon which it had held in conjunction with the Jewish Club in June 1938, to celebrate the 13th anniversary of the University's opening by Earl Balfour.<sup>117</sup> During the war years the tempo of its activity increased considerably and interest in the work of the Friends was sustained by visits of distinguished personalities on behalf of the University.

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<sup>115</sup>For a fuller account of all the Council's activities see Report of Activities of Zionist Council for Natal Covering Period from 1st September, 1943 to 30th May, 1945, pp.1-4. See also *The Zionist Record*, December 10, 1943, p.23.

<sup>116</sup>See above p.263.

<sup>117</sup>*The Zionist Record*, July 1, 1938, p.4., *Hasholom*, XV No.12 (August, 1938), 24.

Dr Walter Fischel of the Hebrew University's School of Oriental Studies arrived in Durban in March 1940,<sup>118</sup> on a tour through the Union primarily for the purpose of enrolling Friends of the University in the different centres of the country. During his visit to Durban Dr Fischel attended many private receptions, spoke at luncheons given by the Rotary Club and the Indian Orient Club, addressed public meetings arranged by the Jewish Club, the Union of Jewish Women and the Women's Zionist League, was guest of honour at a Club luncheon and at a meeting for the youth came into contact with the leaders of the Zionist Youth and *Habonim*.<sup>119</sup>

On his visit, Dr Fischel was accompanied by Dr Theo Ronsheim, the newly appointed permanent organising secretary to the South African Friends of the Hebrew University.<sup>120</sup> Upon emigrating from Germany in 1934 Dr Ronsheim had settled in Durban where, until he took up his post with the Friends, he was closely and actively associated with Zionist and communal work.<sup>121</sup> The welcome accorded him by his former community and friends in Durban, on the occasion of his return to the City in his new capacity, was therefore particularly warm.

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<sup>118</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 15, 1940, p.15.

<sup>119</sup> *The Zionist Record*, March 15, 1940, p.15.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1, 1940, p.17.

An indication of the heightened interest in the University within the Jewish community of Durban was reflected in the decision of the family of the late Marcus Stiller to establish a scholarship in his memory at the University, amounting to £500, to help provide support for needy students.<sup>122</sup>

In the following year Rabbi M.C. Weiler, the Chairman of the South African Friends of the Hebrew University, accompanied by Dr Ronsheim, paid a visit to Durban where he lectured on the Hebrew University. During Rabbi Weiler's stay in Durban, which was taken up with functions and lectures, the local Committee of the Friends was resuscitated with Prof. P. Stein as President; Mr M. Morrison, Vice-President; Mr E.S. Henochsberg, Vice-President; Rabbi A.H. Freedman, Chairman; Mr M. Gevisser, Vice-Chairman; Mr I. Phillips, Treasurer; Miss F. Goldberg, Hon. Secretary; Messrs A. Goldberg M.P., M. Freed, H. Moss-Morris, H. Zulman, N. Hertz, A. Kaplan, M. Goldberg, S. Torf, J. Nussbaum, Dr A. Broomberg, Mesdames P. Stein and A.H. Freedman and Miss M. Richter, Committee.<sup>123</sup>

In conjunction with the Culture Section of the Jewish Club, the Natal Friends of the Hebrew University held a meeting in December 1942, which was addressed by

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<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*, March 15, 1940, p.15.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, October 31, 1941, p.16.

Dr Eliezer Reiger, the University's Director of Education.<sup>124</sup> In June 1945 the members of the Natal branch of the Friends were afforded the opportunity to meet yet another member of the University's academic staff, in the person of Prof. L. Pecard, the Head of the Department of Geology, who visited Durban whilst *en route* to the Argentine.<sup>125</sup>

As the war drew to a close and the demand from special war appeals gradually diminished, so the Jewish community once again turned its attention to those causes, such as the Hebrew University, which had been largely neglected. In July 1945 a Vocal and Instrumental Recital, featuring Miss Rose Alper, Miss Eve Gittleson and Miss Adelaide Newman, was staged at the Jewish Club to raise badly needed funds for the University in Jerusalem.<sup>126</sup>

The Durban branch of the Palestine Maritime League was inaugurated on March 19, 1945, on the occasion of an address delivered by Lieutenant Commander R.S. Miller to a representative gathering of the community.<sup>127</sup> The League, which was formed in Palestine in 1937, with the principal object of fostering the Maritime development of the *Yishuv*, by 1945 had established branches in Great

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<sup>124</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.6 (February, 1943), 21-22.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.11 (July, 1945), 34.

<sup>126</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 23, 1945, p.8.

<sup>127</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 79.



Britain, Europe, the Americas and South Africa. The first South African branch was in fact established in 1938, and a second branch was formed shortly afterwards in Johannesburg.<sup>128</sup> During the few remaining months of the war the Palestine Maritime League in Durban worked to attract members to its ranks, and with the cessation of hostilities its efforts were intensified.

Local Zionists derived considerable encouragement in their work through the visits of Zionist leaders from abroad. Not only did many of these visitors bring with them first hand accounts of affairs in Palestine, but their presence stimulated interest in Zionist affairs, and in some measure offset the sense of isolation from the mainstream of Zionist activity, which the community in Durban no doubt sometimes felt. The first of such visitors in this period was Mr Robert Briscoe, the only Jewish member of the Dail and the chairman of the New Zionist Organisation in Eire, who came to Durban in November 1939 on behalf of the Organisation.<sup>129</sup> In December 1940, whilst passing through Durban, *en route* from Palestine on a fund raising mission to the United States, Chief Rabbi Dr Isaac Herzog preached from the pulpit of the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>130</sup> Some months later, on his way back to Palestine, Rabbi Herzog and his wife once again visited Durban, and took time to

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<sup>128</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 3 and 5.

<sup>129</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 13, 1939, p.11.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, December 20, 1940, p.13.

meet with prominent members of the local Jewish community.<sup>131</sup>

Mr Leib Jaffe, the Managing Director of the *Keren Hayesod* in Jerusalem, who had visited Durban in the company of Dr Nahum Sokolow in 1934,<sup>132</sup> after an interval of seven years paid a fleeting return visit to the City, whilst bound for Great Britain. Together with his travelling companions Mr and Mrs Theodor Kollek, Mr Jaffe had been invited by British Jewry to organise a campaign there. During the day that he spent in Durban, Mr Jaffe met with members of the community at the *Marine Hotel* and in the evening was entertained at the home of Rabbi and Mrs A.H. Freedman, where he conveyed greetings from *Eretz Israel*.<sup>133</sup>

A visit of equally brief duration was that of Dr Bernard Joseph, Political Secretary to the Jewish Agency who visited Durban in June 1941,<sup>134</sup> where he addressed a small but representative audience at the residence of Mr and Mrs M. Wolpert.<sup>135</sup>

The visit of Mr Isaac Gruenbaum, a member of the World Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, in

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, July 2, 1941, p.9.

<sup>132</sup> See above p.239.

<sup>133</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 10, 1941, p.6.

<sup>134</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 25, 1941, p.13.

<sup>135</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.11 (July, 1941), 13.

September 1943,<sup>136</sup> was followed some weeks later by that of Dr Yehuda Kaufmann, the Director of the Cultural Department of the *Vaad Leumi* (the National Council of Palestinian Jewry).<sup>137</sup> All the functions arranged in Dr Kaufmann's honour, including a meeting with the Zionist Youth Movement, a public lecture at the Jewish Club, and a number of drawing room meetings in private homes, were well attended, and his addresses deeply impressed his audiences.<sup>138</sup>

Further Zionist visitors to Durban were those who came in connection with fund raising projects, which, despite the demands during the war on the Jewish community's limited financial resources, continued to enjoy enormous support.

The 1940 *Keren Hayesod* campaign was launched at a banquet at the Jewish Club on May 21st, by Dr Michael Traub, a member of the Administration Committee of the Jewish Agency in Palestine and the former Director of the *Keren Hayesod* in Germany.<sup>139</sup> The successful inauguration of the campaign in Durban was followed by the launching of the Women's Campaign, at which Dr Traub was supported by Mrs K. Gluckmann and

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<sup>136</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, September 11, 1943, p.6.

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, October 26, 1943, p.4.

<sup>138</sup>*The Zionist Record*, November 12, 1943, p.14.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*, May 23, 1940, p.19.

Mrs E. Hayman of Johannesburg, and by a Youth Reception, addressed by Dr Traub.<sup>140</sup> During his brief stay in Durban Dr Traub also addressed a public meeting<sup>141</sup> and met with the German Jewish residents of the City.<sup>142</sup>

A campaign on behalf of the Jewish National Fund was held in Durban in September 1941, following a reception at the Jewish Club in honour of Dr Alexander Goldstein, who had first come to South Africa to raise funds in 1924,<sup>143</sup> and Mr Harry Levin, a former South African who was resident in Palestine.<sup>144</sup> All sections of the community were afforded an opportunity to meet with the visitors who attended a number of functions during the time that they spent in Durban.<sup>145</sup>

Dr Goldstein returned to the Union in 1942, in order to conduct the Victory *Keren Hayesod* Campaign. In launching this campaign in Boksburg, Benoni and Brakpan Dr Goldstein was supported by Mr A. Goldberg M.P. of Durban.<sup>146</sup> At the banquet to inaugurate the campaign in Durban the principal address was delivered by Dr Colin Steyn, the Union Minister of Justice, who

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, May 30, 1940, p.14.

<sup>141</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 24, 1940, p.5.

<sup>142</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.10 (June, 1940), 19-20.

<sup>143</sup> See above p.103.

<sup>144</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 12, 1941, p.11.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, and September 17, 1941, p.17.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, May 21, 1942, p.17.

declared that the Jewish claim to Palestine was unanswerable and that the Atlantic Charter could not be brought into operation until justice had been done to the Zionist cause.<sup>147</sup> His speech was followed by those of Dr Goldstein and Mr Gershon Agronsky, the Editor of *The Palestine Post*, who were members of the *Keren Hayesod* delegation. The enthusiastic response of the community to the campaign resulted in an unprecedented high level in the standard of its contributions.<sup>148</sup> The Youth Campaign was opened by Mr Agronsky and Dr Goldstein<sup>149</sup> and the Women's Campaign was launched at a function at which the guests of honour were Mr Agronsky and Dr Deborah Katzen of Johannesburg.<sup>150</sup> At the conclusion of the campaign Dr Goldstein returned to Durban once more before returning to Palestine and in a fortnight of intense Zionist activity addressed a number of meetings.<sup>151</sup>

The J.N.F. Land for Victory Campaign, held in Durban in August 1943, opened with a Youth Drive launched by Mr N. Kirschner, the Chairman of the Executive of the Zionist Federation and Mr N. Lourie, the *Manhig* of *Habonim*.<sup>152</sup> Mr N. Kirschner also spoke at the campaign's

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<sup>147</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 13, 1942, p.7.

<sup>148</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 17, 1942, p.6.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Hasholom*, XX No.12 (August, 1942), 11.

<sup>151</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 18, 1942, pp.9-10.

<sup>152</sup> *Hasholom*, XXII No.2 (October, 1943), 13.

inauguration at the Jewish Club, where the principal speaker was Senator the Hon. A.M. Conroy, the Union Minister of Lands and Irrigation.<sup>153</sup>

Mr Joshua Leibner of Ain Hashofet, Miss Nadia Zvi Yehuda of Nahalal in Palestine and Mr Israel Dunsky, the National Director of the *Keren Hayesod*, visited Durban in August 1944 to launch the Freedom *Keren Hayesod* Campaign at a reception at the Jewish Club. All sections of the community had the opportunity to meet with the visitors from Palestine and within a very short space of time the amount raised in the 1942 *Keren Hayesod* campaign had been surpassed.<sup>154</sup>

Fund raising took place against a background of steadily heightening tension in Palestine. Jabotinsky's decision, in 1940, to suspend activities against the British for the duration of the war precipitated a split in the ranks of the *Irgun* and resulted in the creation of *Lehi*, (The Fighters For the Freedom of Israel) headed by Abraham Stern. The Stern Gang refused to stop the fight against the Mandatory Government and continued to carry out acts of terror on a small scale. After the shooting of Stern in 1942, and the arrest of many of his followers, *Lehi* was relatively inactive<sup>155</sup> until the murder of Lord Moyne, the British Resident Minister in

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<sup>153</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 18, 1943, p.6.

<sup>154</sup>*The Zionist Record*, September 8, 1944, pp.7 and 19.

<sup>155</sup>On *Lehi* see Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, (New York), 1976, pp.376-378.

Egypt in 1944, by two *Lehi* fighters, again thrust the organisation into prominence.<sup>156</sup>

In early 1944 the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, under the command of Menachem Begin, resumed its attacks on the British, who had continued to enforce the White Paper Policy in Palestine, notwithstanding growing reports of the murder of millions of Europe's Jews by the Nazis. Frequent clashes between the British authorities and the *Irgun* occurred,<sup>157</sup> and more than 200 *Irgun* fighters were arrested by the British and placed in detention outside Palestine.<sup>158</sup>

World-wide Jewish opposition to the White Paper was shared by South African Jewry. On March 21, 1943, a Plebiscite of South African Jewry on Palestine was launched by the South African Zionist Federation, "to give clear and irrefutable proof that the Jewish masses stand foursquare behind Palestine, and to record the demands which every Jew and Jewess makes in regard to Palestine."<sup>159</sup> In connection with the Palestine Plebiscite a mass meeting was held under the auspices of the Natal Zionist Council in the *Theatre Royal*, on

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.542 and 556., *The Natal Mercury*, November 7, 1944, p.5., November 8, 1944, p.5. November 9, 1944, p.5., January 12, 1945, p.6.

<sup>157</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.556-558., *The Natal Mercury*, February 17, 1944, p.5., March 25, 1944, p.7., March 27, 1944, p.6., April 3, 1944, p.5., April 11, 1944, p.5., October 6, 1944, p.4.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, October 20, 1944, p.5.

<sup>159</sup> *The Zionist Record*, March 19, 1943, p.3.

March 21, 1943. In their addresses Dr N. Smith, Rabbi A.H. Freedman, Mr H. Moss-Morris and Mr J. Alexander, the Secretary of the South African Zionist Federation, called for the abrogation of the White Paper and the removal of its restrictions and the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth after the war.<sup>160</sup> Durban Jewry shared in the bitterness and disappointment which followed the enforcement of the White Paper ban on all further Jewish immigration after April 1944. It showed great understanding for the sense of frustration and helplessness which pervaded Palestinian Jewry who were prevented from aiding their needy co-religionists. Nevertheless, it officially came out strongly in opposition to the violence that erupted in Palestine, in consequence of Britain's Mandatory Policy.<sup>161</sup>

To keep South African Zionists abreast of developments in Palestine, and to maintain widescale support for the Zionist cause, the Zionist Federation held an Enlightenment Drive in October 1944. In connection with the Drive, Rabbi Prof. Israel Abrahams, of the Gardens Synagogue in Cape Town, visited Durban and Pietermaritzburg and addressed the communities of the two cities.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 22, 1943, p.6., *The Zionist Record*, March 26, 1943, p.5.

<sup>161</sup> *Hasholom*, XXII No.8 (April, 1944), 1-2.

<sup>162</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 17, 1944, p.7.



A further Enlightenment Drive, organised by the Information and Organisation Department of the Zionist Federation, was inaugurated at the *Metro Theatre*, Johannesburg, on April 15, 1945, by Mr H.M. Bloch and the Durban Zionist, Mr A. Goldberg M.P.<sup>163</sup> In Durban a mass meeting was held in the *Theatre Royal* on April 29, at which Rabbi Prof. L. Rabinowitz, the Chief Minister of the United Hebrew Congregation, in Johannesburg, delivered an address entitled "*On The Crossroads.*"<sup>164</sup>

Confidence in Palestine and in its future was reflected in the support shown Mr A. Kaplan and his Ussishkin Memorial Fund Sub-Committee, which was appointed by the Zionist Council for Natal to solicit contributions to help fulfil South African Jewry's undertaking to erect the Jewish National Assembly Building in Jerusalem.<sup>165</sup>

Large sums of money were also invested by local Jews in the Africa Palestine Utility Corporation Ltd. After a brief visit to Durban by Mr J. Gering of the Zionist Federation between £28-30,000 worth of shares in the Utility Corporation and about £10,000 in other Palestinian companies were taken up in Durban.<sup>166</sup> The

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, April 20, 1945, p.11.

<sup>164</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.10 (June, 1945), 46-48.

<sup>165</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 2, 1945, p.19.

<sup>166</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Natal Zionist Council, Held on Monday, 19th March, 1945, at 5 pm in the *Maon*, p.1.

final total of shares taken up in the Utility Corporation and other Palestinian companies by Durban Jewry reached almost £50,000.<sup>167</sup> Sufficient support for the Africa Palestine Utility Corporation Ltd., in fact entitled Durban shareholders to nominate two men for election to the Company's Board of Directors, and those nominated were Messrs I. Geshen and P. Frame.<sup>168</sup>

With the resumption of peace in Europe and the Far East the issue of Palestine came to attract even wider attention, and necessitated even greater moral and financial support from Jewry than that which had been displayed during World War II.

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<sup>167</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Natal Zionist Council, Held on Monday, 23rd April, 1945 at 5 pm at the Zionist Youth *Maon* , p.1.

<sup>168</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Natal Zionist Council, Held on Monday, 28th May, 1945 at 5 pm at the Zionist Youth *Maon* , p.1.

## CHAPTER XXIX

THE COUNCIL OF NATAL JEWRY : 1939 - 1945

The outbreak of war in Europe opened up additional avenues of work for the Council of Natal Jewry, which through a multifarious programme of activities, kept in touch with all aspects of community life.

The Council and its affiliated bodies gave unstinting support to the country's war effort, and took pride in the public spiritedness of the Jewish community's young men, who volunteered for service.<sup>1</sup>

The Statistical and Propaganda Sub-Committee of the Council fought rather successfully to counter any questioning of Jewish loyalty and patriotism.<sup>2</sup> The Council's German Refugee Sub-Committee continued to extend assistance to those Jews fortunate enough to have escaped Nazi Europe and to have found refuge in Durban.<sup>3</sup> The War Emergency Sub-Committee, as its name suggests,

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<sup>1</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 65.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Statistical Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be submitted to the Annual General Meeting of the Council, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Sunday, 17th March, 1940.

<sup>3</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 45.

dealt with any emergencies caused by the eruption of war,<sup>4</sup> and the Active Services Relief Committee assisted those on active service and their dependants.<sup>5</sup>

During 1941 and 1942 the number of Jewish refugees passing through Durban rose considerably, on account of the fighting in the Far East, and its resultant voluntary and forced evacuation of communities. To cater for the needs of these people, many of whom were destitute, a sub-committee was set up and, under the direction of Messrs N. Hertz, M. Freed and H. Zulman, all possible relief was extended by the community through the Council to these unfortunate people.<sup>6</sup>

The Council also took direct responsibility for launching and conducting the campaigns held in Natal in connection with the United South African Jewish War Appeal, which was launched by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the South African Zionist Federation in November, 1940. The drives on behalf of the Appeal, which were conducted in Natal under the Council's auspices, benefitted Jewish servicemen and their dependants in the Union, assisted Jewish refugees abroad and aided the war effort in Palestine and the

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> The South African Jewish Board of Deputies Report of the Executive Council for the period June 1st, 1940 to July 31st 1942. To be submitted to the Fourteenth Congress, at Johannesburg, August 2nd and 3rd, 1942, p.34.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 47.

dependants of Jewish soldiers living there.<sup>7</sup>

When the extent of Nazi anti-Semitism began to become known and the full horrors of Hitler's policy of Jewish extermination were first learnt, world Jewry united in mourning its martyred European co-religionists and to pray for the deliverance of those within the death camps. As the community's authoritative mouthpiece the Council organised the activities in Durban in connection with the Jewish National Day of Mourning for European Jewry, which were held in 1942,<sup>8</sup> 1943<sup>9</sup> and 1945.<sup>10</sup>

By 1944, the tide of the war had turned in favour of the Allies and a Soldier's Guidance Committee, later known as the Soldier's Assistance Committee, came to be set up under the chairmanship of Mr M. Freed. It dealt with the rehabilitation of and the dispensing of financial assistance to Jewish ex-servicemen and their dependants where necessary, and maintained a register to facilitate employment of returned soldiers.<sup>11</sup>

Under the auspices of the Council a branch of the Relatives Information Service, chaired by Mr M. Ehrlich, was also established in Durban in 1944. Lists of

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 47., *Ibid.*, XX No.1 (September, 1943), 55., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 45.

<sup>8</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, December 23, 1942, p.6.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, December 7, 1943, p.4.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, March 13, 1945, p.4.

<sup>11</sup>*Hasholom*, XXII No.11 (July, 1944), 19.

survivors were made available for inspection at the offices of the Council of Natal Jewry, where names of lost families were also recorded for transmission to the International Red Cross.<sup>12</sup>

The Council can thus be clearly seen to have in fact developed the necessary machinery to deal with the problems created by the war, problems which it had met with a great measure of efficiency.

Matters related to the war did not, however, overshadow the Council's routine work and it continued to fulfill a vital role within the local and wider Jewish community.

At the request of the Committee of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, the Council of Natal Jewry appointed a committee to enquire into Hebrew and religious education in Durban, especially as it affected or was affected by the Durban United *Talmud Torah*,<sup>13</sup> and its detailed report was published in November, 1939.<sup>14</sup>

The Council's *Meshullochim* Sub-Committee continued to control the collection and distribution of funds for

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<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, XXIII No.7 (March, 1945), 1-2.

<sup>13</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 45.

<sup>14</sup>See details of the report, pp.320-325 above.

the maintenance of religious institutions abroad,<sup>15</sup> and its Statistical or Propaganda Committee worked to stifle any manifestations of anti-Semitism.<sup>16</sup> In 1940 a Legal Sub-Committee was set up by the Council to deal with the problems arising out of legislation proposed by the Provisional Council and the Government,<sup>17</sup> such as the Provincial Education Ordinance, which dealt with religious instruction in schools.<sup>18</sup>

An undertaking by the Council of considerable significance was the survey which it conducted within the community in 1940. The importance of this survey lies in the fact that it recorded information about the community unobtainable from any other source and therefore affords us a unique, clear and detailed picture of the

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<sup>15</sup>The South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Report of the Executive Council for the period June 1st, 1397, to May 31st, 1940. To be submitted to the Thirteenth Congress, at Johannesburg, May 31st to June 2nd, 1940, p.54., *Ibid.*, for the period June 1st 1940 to July 31st 1942. To be submitted to the Fourteenth Congress, at Johannesburg, August 2nd and 3rd, 1942, p.35., *Ibid.*, for the period August, 1942 to May 1945. To be submitted to the Fifteenth Congress, at Johannesburg, May 24th to 27th, 1945, p.35.

<sup>16</sup>Report of the Statistical Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be submitted to the Annual General Meeting of the Council, at the Durban Jewish Club, on 17th March, 1940, p.1.

<sup>17</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 45.

<sup>18</sup>The South African Jewish Board of Deputies Report of the Executive Council for the period August 1942 to May 1945. To be submitted to the Fifteenth Congress, at Johannesburg. May 24th to 27th, 1945, p.35.

community at this time.

To obtain the necessary information enumerators called upon all the known Jewish families in the City and its suburbs. In order to include as many Jewish residents of Durban as possible, a list of families was compiled from the registers of the Council of Natal Jewry, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, the Durban Women's Zionist League, the Jewish Benevolent Society and the Hebrew Order of David. The number of Jews enumerated for the survey totalled 2,495 (1,280 males and 1215 females) and since the 1936 official census had indicated the Jewish population of Durban to be 2,776, and the number had clearly grown since that census, it was assumed that those Jews who were excluded from the Council's survey were those who were in no way connected with Jewish life or with any Jewish institutions. The survey was nevertheless, considered by the Council to be a true picture of the whole Durban Jewish population.<sup>19</sup>

When those families enumerated were broken into age groups it was revealed that there was a preponderance of the central ages.

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<sup>19</sup> Survey of Durban Jewry as taken by the Council of Natal Jewry, 1940, p.1. In the Archives of the Council of Natal Jewry.



0 - 9 years	-	316
10 - 19	-	407
20 - 29	-	395
30 - 39	-	494
40 - 49	-	376
50 - 59	-	262
60 - 69	-	181
70 - 79	-	55
80 - 89	-	9 <sup>20</sup>

Like a similar survey conducted amongst Johannesburg Jewry, the survey of the Jewish community of Durban did not follow the usual pattern in which the largest age group was that containing the youngest sections, with each successive section becoming smaller. This fact was attributed to the falling birth rate and almost total cessation of Jewish immigration to the Union.

A special abnormality in the age composition of Durban Jewry was the small number of people in the 20-29 age group, in relation to the age groups immediately above and below. This was in part explained by the tendency of some of the young men who, upon entering economic life, left Durban for larger cities and the possible tendency of certain women in this age group to leave for other centres where their prospects for marriage were brighter. The fact that a number of young men on active service belonging to this age group may not have been traced by the enumerators was also

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

considered partly accountable for this situation.<sup>21</sup>  
 What the compilers of the survey did not, apparently, consider was that those whom they were unable to trace when enumerating the members of the Jewish community because of their total uninvolvedness with organised Jewish life, might have been from amongst those who fell into this age group. The reluctance of certain of the young adults of the community to tangibly identify with communal life is still known to be a worrying phenomenon.

The survey revealed that the largest individual group was between the ages of 30-40, which constituted 21% of the total Jewish population. 40% of the total population were found to be under 30 years of age and 56% were over 30 years of age.<sup>22</sup>

Further data revealed by the survey indicated that 52% of the male population and 58% of the female population was born in South Africa. A breakdown of the total population into their place of birth revealed that:

55 % was South African born  
 14½% was British born  
 25 % was East European born  
 5½% was German born  
 2¾% was born in the British Commonwealth,  
 excluding South Africa.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

The greatest part of the Durban Jewish community was thus South African born. The largest group of those born in Eastern Europe were between the ages of 30 and 50, this being due to the large scale East European immigration to the Union in the earlier part of the century. Those who originated from Germany were generally part of the influx of German Jews after 1936.<sup>24</sup>

Of the population over 40 years of age

- 13% were born in South Africa
- 27% were British born
- 48% were East European born
- 8% were German born
- 4% were born in the British Commonwealth,  
excluding the Union.

Of the population between the ages of 30 and 40

- 60% were born in South Africa
- 9% were British born
- 20% were East European born
- 9% were German born
- 2% were born in the British Commonwealth,  
excluding the Union.

Of the population under 30 years of age

- 86% were born in South Africa
- 2% were British born
- 8% were East European born
- 3% were German born
- 1% were born in the British Commonwealth

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

excluding the Union.<sup>25</sup>

From the survey it becomes apparent that as the age group becomes younger a greater percentage of the community was found to be South African born, indicating that immigration by people under the age of 30 was scant indeed.

Of the total Jewish population of Durban 45% were born in other countries. Of those born in Eastern Europe the survey indicated the following years of residence in the Union.

1 - 6 years of residence	2%
6 - 10	8%
10 - 20	25%
20 - 30	26%
30 - 40	20%
40 years and over	19% <sup>26</sup>

From this table it can be seen that 65% of East European Jews had resided in South Africa for more than 20 years, whilst 39% had entered the Union before the First World War. The number of Jews from Eastern Europe who had entered the community in the 6 years preceding the survey was small indeed, principally as the result of the Union's strict immigration policy.

In contrast to the figures concerning East European Jewry the number of German Jews who had entered the

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

country from 1934 onwards was particularly high, as revealed by the following table.

1 - 6 years of residence	73 %
6 - 10 years	21 %
10 - 20 years	2½%
20 years and over	3½% <sup>27</sup>

Thus 94% of all German Jews in Durban had immigrated to South Africa from the time of Hitler's advent to power. Of the English born section of the Jewish population, which comprised 12% of the total community, 86% had been resident in the Union for more than 20 years.<sup>28</sup>

From all this data the assumption was made that immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe and from Britain and the Commonwealth had been very small indeed, the greater majority of immigrants being of German origin who had come to South Africa from 1930 onwards and in particular after 1934.<sup>29</sup>

The survey's findings also indicated the civil status of the Jewish population, which, when broken down, revealed that:

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Of the male population over the age of 19 years

- 62% were married
- 34% were never married
- 3% were widowed
- 1% were divorced

Of the female population over the age of 19 years

- 67% were married
- 21% were never married
- 11% were widowed
- 1% were divorced<sup>30</sup>

The community thus included a greater number of bachelors than spinsters, and this was found to be particularly true in the older groups. It was similarly observed that there were more widows than widowers. This was attributed to the fact that the average duration of life of males was shorter and that widowers tend to marry more frequently than widows.<sup>31</sup>

Of the total Jewish population of Durban the following information regarding their home language emerged from the findings of the survey.

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

75% claimed English as their home language  
6.3% claimed Yiddish as their home language  
6.5% claimed Yiddish and English as their home  
languages  
1.6% claimed German as their home language  
.25% claimed Hebrew and English as their home  
languages<sup>32</sup>

Among foreign born members of the community the survey uncovered the following information regarding their naturalisation:

60% of all foreign born residents were naturalised  
19.3% were unstated  
20.7% were not naturalised.

The bulk of those who indicated that they were not naturalised were mostly those of German birth, who were recently arrived in the country.<sup>33</sup>

When inquiring about the occupations followed by the members of the community the enumerators defined commerce as including all those engaged in clerical and administrative work in business, financiers, directors, salesmen, travellers and agents. Those under professions included accountants, lawyers, teachers and pharmacists and artisans included all those engaged in manual labour, mechanics, sheet metal workers and tailors.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

## Among the males aged 15-19 years

Scholars	141 in number comprised	71% of the total group
Students	16 in number comprised	9½% of the total group
Commerce	15 in number comprised	7% of the total group
Apprentices	5 in number comprised	.7% of the total group
Unstated	11 in number comprised	6.2% of the total group

## Among the females aged 15-19 years

Scholars	108 in number comprised	57% of the total group
Students	19 in number comprised	10% of the total group
Commerce	46 in number comprised	25.5% of the total group
Housewives	4 in number comprised	2.5% of the total group
Unspecified	9 in number comprised	5% of the total group <sup>34</sup>

In comparing the two tables the percentage of males in commerce is seen to be heavily outweighed by their female counterparts, whilst the percentage of male scholars is seen to be far greater than that of females. This was explained by the fact that many more young men than young women had joined the armed forces and by the possibility that more young girls than boys left school before matriculating and took up business careers at a younger age than boys.

	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Commerce	7%	25.5%
Scholars	71%	57% <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*



Among the adult male group i.e. over 19 years of age

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage of the total group</u>
Commerce	487	54.8
Tearoom Proprietors	22	2
Hotel Proprietors	18	2
Medical	33	3.7
Other Professions	89	10
Artisans	67	7.5
Civil Servants	11	1.2
Manufacturers	34	3.7
Students	14	1.6
Ministers	5	.5
Unstated	53	5.9
Retired or Independent	60	6.7

Among the adult female group i.e. over 19 years of age

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage of the total group</u>
Commerce	251	29
Professions	14	2
Housewives	518	59
Unstated	82	9.5
Retired	8	.5 <sup>36</sup>

Only 3 women gave nursing as their profession, a low figure peculiar to all Jewish communities.

Amongst those of both sexes over 19 years of age the dominant professional occupation was clearly commerce.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

Following upon the creation of a Vocational Guidance Bureau by the Board of Deputies in Johannesburg, and the establishment of a similar body in Cape Town the Council of Natal Jewry formed a special committee, under the chairmanship of Mr S. Moshal, for the purpose of assisting parents and children of school leaving age who wished to seek advice, assistance and guidance in vocational matters.<sup>38</sup> The members of the committee were Dr A. Broomberg, Messrs N.E. Abrahams, M. Freed, P. Frame, I. Geshen, H.M. Hart, A. Levine, M. Meyerowitz, H.A. Smith, H. Zulman and Rabbi A.H. Freedman.<sup>39</sup>

In 1942 the Statistical and Propaganda Committee of the Council was renamed the Public Relations Committee.<sup>40</sup> The Committee formed a number of sub-committees which dealt with various aspects of communal life.

A Spiritual Sub-Committee, which later became part of the Communal Relations Sub-Committee,<sup>41</sup> was created in August 1943, to encourage the reawakening of Jewish

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<sup>38</sup>*The Zionist Record*, February 28, 1941, p.13.

<sup>39</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 47.

<sup>40</sup>The South African Jewish Board of Deputies Report of the Executive Council for the period August 1942 to May, 1945. To be submitted to the Fifteenth Congress at Johannesburg, May 24th to 27th, 1945, p.35.

<sup>41</sup>Minutes of Public Relations Committee Meeting No.10, Held at the residence of Mr S. Moshal, 60 Sir Arthur Road, on Sunday, 10th October, 1943, at 8.15 pm., p.1.

life in Durban in particular and Natal in general.<sup>42</sup>

To increase synagogue attendance and to stimulate greater Jewish awareness a programme was drawn up by the sub-committee which called for a regular pastoral letter from the Rabbi, a series of sermons on the Bible, prayer book and ritual, and the enhancement of services by the introduction of a uniform prayer book, the frequent announcement of page numbers, prayers in English and the creation of a choir. Tentative plans were also laid for reaching the men, women and children of the community through the various organisations to which they would be affiliated, to encourage their greater attendance and increased participation in Synagogue services.<sup>43</sup> This programme was implemented by the Communal Relations Sub-Committee.<sup>44</sup>

An Economic Sub-Committee of the Public Relations Committee was inaugurated in September, 1943, chaired by Mr C. Sternberg, to prepare for the post-war economic problems, which it was realised would inevitably affect

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<sup>42</sup> Minutes of Spiritual Sub-Committee of the Public Relations Committee, Held at the offices of the C.N.J., 601 Payne's Building, West Street, Durban, on Tuesday, 31st August, 1943, at 5 pm., p.1.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.2-4.

<sup>44</sup> Minutes of Public Relations Committee Meeting No.10, Held at the residence of Mr S. Moshal, 60 Sir Arthur Road, on Sunday, 10th October, 1943, at 8.15 pm., pp.1-2.

local Jewry.<sup>45</sup>

The functions of the old Statistical Committee, as regards anti-Semitic propaganda and the promoting where possible of good relations between Jews and non-Jews were taken over by the Political Sub-Committee of the Public Relations Committee, which concentrated on actual happenings rather than theory.<sup>46</sup> It was principally concerned with the widescale distribution of literature which sought to counteract anti-Semitic influences and to put the Jews in a positive light.<sup>47</sup>

One of the matters which came before the Political Sub-Committee was the suggestion from the local Communist Party to Mr A. Goldberg M.P., that a joint committee be formed to fight anti-Semitism. In this particular case the Committee decided to drop the matter as the

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<sup>45</sup> Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Economic Committee of the Public Relations Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the offices of the Council, 601 Payne's Building, on Thursday, 9th September, 1943, p.1.

<sup>46</sup> Minutes of Public Relations Committee Meeting No.10, Held at the residence of Mr S. Moshal, 60 Sir Arthur Road, on Sunday, 10th October, 1943, at 8.15 pm., p.2.

<sup>47</sup> Minutes of Public Relations Committee Meeting No.18, Held at the residence of Mr and Mrs S. Moshal, 60 Sir Arthur Road on Tuesday, 5th October, 1944, at 8 pm, pp.1-2., and Minutes of the Public Relations Committee No.19, Held at the residence of Mr and Mrs S. Moshal, 60 Sir Arthur Road, Durban, on Sunday, 19th November, 1944, at 8.15 pm., pp.1-3.

suggestion had been made to an individual member of the Council and not to the Council of Natal Jewry itself.<sup>48</sup>

What did cause the Sub-Committee some concern, however, was the action of certain Jewish persons with leftist leanings who had convened a meeting to form a committee and organisation to combat anti-Semitism.<sup>49</sup> This Jewish People's Committee, in conjunction with the Communist Party, sent invitations to the President of the Council of Natal Jewry, the Union of Jewish Women, the Club Culture Section and the Hebrew Order of David to attend a meeting on February 22, 1944, to establish their proposed organisation. The Council's President, Mr I. Geshen, met with leading members of the Jewish People's Committee and explained that the Committee's platform was identical to that of the CNJ. The members of the Jewish People's Committee rejected this notion believing that they had contacts not available to the Council. Ultimately the Council of Natal Jewry decided not to recognise this Committee or to be represented at the meeting, and all its constituent members acted likewise.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Minutes of Public Relations Committee Meeting No.11, Held at the residence of Mr and Mrs S. Moshal, 60 Sir Arthur Road, Durban, on Sunday, 19th December, 1943, at 8.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Minutes of Public Relations Committee Meeting No.12, Held at the residence of Mr and Mrs S. Moshal, 60 Sir Arthur Road, Durban, on Sunday, 20th February, 1944, at 8 pm., pp.1 and 2.

In 1944 the Public Relation's Committee formed a sub-committee which was known as the Actions Committee. This sub-committee was created to put into effect the recommendations made by the main committee, after it had decided on policy matters.<sup>51</sup>

As the premier organisation of the Jewish community the Council had the honour of entertaining Rabbi Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, and the Rev. Yesorsky, Jewish Chaplain to the 2nd Division, during their visit to Durban.<sup>52</sup> In October 1941 it entertained Rabbi M.C. Weiler, the Chairman of the South African Friends of the Hebrew University.<sup>53</sup> The Council also convened a number of public meetings, including one on June 24, 1941, addressed by the Rev. A.W. Eaton, the Secretary of the Society of Jews and Christians, and Mr G. Saron, the General Secretary of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.<sup>54</sup> At subsequent meetings under its auspices the guest speakers included Mr G. Lazarus, the Chairman of the Board of Deputies,<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>The South African Jewish Board of Deputies Report of the Executive Council for the period August 1942 to May 1945. To be submitted to the Fifteenth Congress at Johannesburg, May 24th to 27th, 1945, p.35.

<sup>52</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 47.

<sup>53</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 31, 1941, p.16.

<sup>54</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, June 23, 1941, p.8., and *Hasholom*, XVIII No.11 (July, 1941), 15.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, XIX No.7 (March, 1942), 11.

and Messrs A. Goldberg M.P. and G. Saron.<sup>56</sup> In July 1944, upon the departure of Rabbi Freedman for Palestine, an informal reception was held under the Council's auspices,<sup>57</sup> and in July 1945 the Council held a banquet at the Jewish Club in honour of Mr B.A. Ettliger, the President of the Board of Deputies, and Mr S. Kuper, the Board's Chairman.<sup>58</sup> In conjunction with the Zionist Council it arranged a memorial meeting for Brigadier F. Kisch, who was killed in action,<sup>59</sup> it co-organised a meeting addressed by Mr Isaac Grunbaum, a member of the World Executive of the Jewish Agency in Palestine<sup>60</sup> and co-arranged a function to mark the 70th birthday of Dr C. Weizmann.<sup>61</sup>

In keeping with its mandate to serve and represent the Jewish residents of the entire Province of Natal, the Council maintained contact with country communities through an annual tour, first started in 1937, and generally conducted by the Rabbi and some senior members of the Council.<sup>62</sup> Further contact was kept with the Jews of the country districts through a pastoral letter

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.11 (July, 1945), 35.

<sup>57</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 23, 1944, p.23.

<sup>58</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.12 (August, 1945), 3.

<sup>59</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 21, 1943, p.17.

<sup>60</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 11, 1943, p.6.

<sup>61</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 15, 1944, p.20.

<sup>62</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 45., *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 47.

which Rabbi Freedman sent out prior to each Jewish festival,<sup>63</sup> and through an arrangement which the Council made with the Jewish Club to circulate *Hasholom* to non-members of the Club throughout Natal.<sup>64</sup>

With the imposition of black-out regulations and petrol restrictions contact with the far flung Jewish residents of the Province, although maintained throughout the war, were not to the entire satisfaction of the Council, which would have preferred even more frequent visits to the country districts by its representatives.<sup>65</sup>

In its capacity as the local committee of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the Council of Natal Jewry was represented at the Provincial Conference of the Cape Committee of the Jewish Board of Deputies in January 1940,<sup>66</sup> at several inter-Provincial Conferences of the Board held in Johannesburg<sup>67</sup> and at the three biennial Congresses which the Board held during the war.<sup>68</sup>

By 1944 the Council had come to realise that

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 45.

<sup>64</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.3 (November, 1940), 14., *Ibid.*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 10.

<sup>65</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 45.

<sup>66</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 12, 1940, p.11.

<sup>67</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 45., *Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 55.

<sup>68</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.10 (June, 1940), 17., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 65., *Hasholom*, XXIII No.10 (June, 1945), 7.



the scale and importance of its work necessitated the services of a full time Organising Secretary, to work with the voluntary officers and committee members.<sup>69</sup>

The Executive appointed Mr B. Suttner as the first incumbent to the post of General Organising Secretary,<sup>70</sup> and he took up his position in January 1945.<sup>71</sup>

When the tide of the war turned against the Axis Powers, and the war was being brought to a successful conclusion by the Allies, the flow of immigrants to the Union, which had ceased during the war, was resumed. To aid those Jews who were amongst the new arrivals in the country the Immigration Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, chaired by Mr N. Hertz, was revived,<sup>72</sup> and its steadily increasing workload indicated the return of a war weary world to a state of peace.

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.11 (July, 1944), 21.

<sup>70</sup> Minutes of Public Relations Committee Meeting No.18, Held at the residence of Mr and Mrs S. Moshal, 60 Sir Arthur Road on Thursday, 5th October, 1944 at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>71</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 43 and 45.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

## CHAPTER XXX

AROUND THE ORGANISATIONS : 1939 - 1945

## DURBAN UNITED TALMUD TORAH

The improvements effected in Jewish education in Durban from the time of Mr Ernst's arrival in the City were already clearly discernable by the time that war erupted. The annual general meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* held in November 1939, however, nevertheless revealed a disquieting state of affairs insofar as the general attitude of parents towards the Jewish upbringing of their children was concerned. Despite the efforts made by the Committee to popularise the *Talmud Torah* 150 children of school going age were still reported to be receiving no Jewish or religious education, a state of affairs attributed to parental inability to realise the importance of Jewish education. Amongst those who did send their children to the *Talmud Torah* many in fact discontinued their sons Jewish education after his *barmitzvah*, and with the absence of a ceremony corresponding to a *barmitzvah* for girls most parents completely neglected the Hebrew education of their daughters.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Hasholom*, XVII No.6 (February, 1940), 21.

An indication of the progress which was being made at the *Talmud Torah* was the Children's *Chanukah* Service, held in December, 1939, under the auspices of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* and the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue. For the first time the service was conducted in its entirety by the pupils, who had acquired the necessary skills to lead the service at the children's services held each *Shabbat* morning under the auspices of the *Talmud Torah* and the Congregation.<sup>2</sup>

Extensive propaganda prior to the commencement of the school term in 1940 ensured a satisfactory enrollment of pupils in the kindergarten and afternoon classes.<sup>3</sup> The provision of transport facilities by the school management was, however, the principal factor which contributed to the increase in the number of kindergarten pupils, the registration for 1940 being, in fact, the highest on record.<sup>4</sup> As the number of pupils in the kindergarten rose significantly after the authorities had provided transportation it would appear that the problem of the parents *vis-a-vis* the kindergarten lay not so much in parental disapproval of the school, but rather in the transportation of the children. Steady progress was also recorded in the afternoon

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<sup>2</sup>*The Zionist Record*, December 22, 1939, p.14.

<sup>3</sup>*Hasholom*, XVII No.6 (February, 1940), 21.

<sup>4</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48.

classes, where the scope of the work was greatly extended to cater for the more than 100 pupils who attended the *Talmud Torah*.<sup>5</sup> Satisfaction with the state of Hebrew education in Durban was expressed by Rabbi Zlotnik, the Director of the South African Board of Jewish Education, when he visited the City towards the end of October 1941, in order to inspect the kindergarten and to examine the classes of the *Talmud Torah*.<sup>6</sup>

In October, 1941 Mr Ernst was appointed a Chaplain to the Union Forces and left Durban,<sup>7</sup> Mr S. Stein being appointed the headmaster in his absence.<sup>8</sup> After serving in this capacity for a short while Mr Stein also joined up<sup>9</sup> and was replaced in mid 1942 by Mr Y. Marshak. The progress made by the *Talmud Torah* was, however, maintained and plans were in fact laid during Mr Ernst's absence for the establishment of a Standard 1 of a daily ordinary Government school at the *Talmud Torah*. The proposed extension of the *Talmud Torah* was seen as a first step towards the creation of a school catering for all standards up to and including matriculation. A fully

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 14, 1941, p.8.

<sup>7</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.3 (November, 1941), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held in the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 6th November, 1941 at 8.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue Chambers, on Thursday, 16th April, 1942, at 8 pm., p.1.

qualified teacher, Mrs Emmett, was engaged to teach all secular subjects taught in Government Schools<sup>10</sup> and the *Talmud Torah* was registered with the Natal Education Department as a day school.<sup>11</sup>

The creation of a day school offered distinct advantages unattainable through afternoon classes in that it combined Hebrew and Jewish education with secular subjects within the school system, thereby sparing the child the burden and inconvenience of afternoon classes at the end of a day of regular school activity. Through classes held within the framework of the school more time could furthermore be devoted to Jewish subjects than was possible in the afternoon classes.<sup>12</sup>

The Standard 1 class commenced at the beginning of 1943 school term, along with the kindergarten and afternoon classes which were unaffected by the developments within the Durban United *Talmud Torah*. At this stage, apart from Mr Marshak, the headmaster, the school staff consisted of Mrs Cotterell, Mrs B. Rubenstein, Mrs L. Bilchik, Mrs Emmett and Mr W. Stark who coached the boys for their *barmitzvah*.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue Chambers, on Thursday, 14th January, 1943, at 5.20 pm., p.1.

<sup>11</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.5 (January, 1943), 7., *Ibid.*, XXI (March, 1943), 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.7 (March, 1943), 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 61.

With considerable optimism the Committee of the *Talmud Torah* also made preparation for the setting up of a Standard II class in 1944.<sup>14</sup> This would seem to suggest that the Committee had sufficient reason to believe that support for the *Talmud Torah*, and the day school which it had initiated, would not only be sustained but was in fact growing. Such a situation indicated a marked difference from the parental apathy which had for so long formerly plagued the Committee in its work.

The Committee's decision to initiate the process towards creating a day school appears, however, to have been premature and untimely, more so since Mr Ernst was absent from Durban. During 1944 the school had a Standard II class but no Standard I as pupils had not come up from the kindergarten to enable such a class to be formed. With only four pupils in Standard II, following the departure of their teacher Mrs Emmett, this class was closed during 1944 and the pupils transferred to other schools.<sup>15</sup> A Standard I class was again organised in 1945, but with only five pupils Mr Marshak announced at the *Talmud Torah's* annual general meeting in October 1945, that this class was also to be

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Headmaster's Report Presented at the Fourteenth Annual General Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue Chambers, on Tuesday, 14th November, 1944, at 8 pm.

discontinued,<sup>16</sup> and plans for the creation of a day school were thus temporarily discarded.

Instead of moving forward, Hebrew education had actually suffered a severe set back in consequence of the war. Parental anxiety over general world news, problems of transport and a lack of qualified teachers all contributed to this state of affairs. With the suspension of the provision of transport facilities kindergarten attendance dropped in 1945 to 30 children, and afternoon classes were held for approximately 33 pupils. At least 250 eligible children were receiving no Hebrew or Jewish education, a situation which the *Talmud Torah* Committee acknowledged to be both retrogressive and undesirable.<sup>17</sup>

Unwilling to be daunted by the vicissitudes experienced by the *Talmud Torah*, the Committee rather applied itself to rectifying the condition of Jewish education in the City. In order to overcome the practical difficulties that stood in the way of children attending classes at Silverton Road an investigation into the advisability of opening a branch of the *Talmud Torah* in the Glenwood area was held.<sup>18</sup> A sufficient

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<sup>16</sup> Headmaster's Report Submitted to the Fifteenth Annual General Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Tuesday, 19th November, 1946, at 8 pm.

<sup>17</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 63 and 65.

<sup>18</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.9 (May, 1945), 34.

number of children enrolled in the Glenwood area to make such a scheme practical and the classes in Glenwood, held at the home of Mr A. Baranov, in Evans Road,<sup>19</sup> actually started with 20 pupils.<sup>20</sup> The fact that so many children were enrolled in the branch of the *Talmud Torah* in the Glenwood area would seem to indicate that the problem of transport was indeed a major problem for parents who, by virtue of the fact that they registered their children for classes, were clearly not opposed to their receiving some form of Jewish education.

The large attendance of parents and children at the school closing party in July 1945<sup>21</sup> would also seem to confirm that in the last months of the war, with the gradual reversion of life to its former condition, interest in matters such as the Jewish education of the children became more pronounced. This trend became even more clearly discernable in the post-war period.

#### HEBREW ORDER OF DAVID

In spite of the abnormal conditions created by the war, and the resultant difficulties therefrom, the

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<sup>19</sup> Headmaster's Report Submitted to the *Talmud Torah* Committee, 11th September, 1945.

<sup>20</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 63 and 65.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*



F.C. Hollander Lodge No.XI of the Hebrew Order of David maintained its programme of activities with a considerable degree of success.

Whilst the Order upheld the principle of mutual benefit amongst its members, and in great secrecy extended aid to those in need within its ranks,<sup>22</sup> it also maintained an active interest in every sphere of Jewish communal life.

The lodge remained affiliated to the Council of Natal Jewry, and continued to be represented on the Committee of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*.<sup>23</sup> Its members contributed to the funds of the *Talmud Torah*,<sup>24</sup> and raised £150 for the benefit of the 1939 Youth *Aliyah* Campaign.<sup>25</sup>

The policy of inviting Gentile speakers to address meetings was continued with remarkable success, although at the height of the war in 1942 and 1943 the number of

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47., *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49 and 51., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 65.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47., *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49 and 51., *Ibid.*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 67., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 63., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 67.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47.

<sup>25</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.7 (March, 1940), 19.

speakers to address the bretheren declined considerably.<sup>26</sup> Jewish speakers, too, were afforded the opportunity to address the bretheren of the lodge.<sup>27</sup> They included Mr Siegmund Lazarus, who before fleeing to South Africa had devoted over 50 years of his life to *B'nai Brith* and other Jewish activities in Germany, and who was subsequently honoured by being made an honorary member

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<sup>26</sup>In 1939-1940 the guest speakers included the Very Rev. Dr Sormany, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Durban; Mr D.G. Shepstone, Mr Duncan Burnside M.P., Mrs T.G. Merry, President of the Natal Branch of the South African Red Cross Society, (*Ibid.*, XVII No.7 (March, 1940), 19), Mr C.L. Brokensha and Mr J. Moran, President of the Irish Society. *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47.) In 1941 guests included Mr J.W. Godfrey, Mr Mauriee Webb, Mr Arthur Bentley and the Very Rev. Vernon Inman. (*Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49 and 51) Mr H.T. Wanless addressed the lodge in 1942. (*Ibid.*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 67.) Mr J.R. Sullivan and Senator the Hon. J. Smith spoke in 1943. (*Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 57) Mr E.R. Browne M.P.C. spoke in 1944 (*Ibid.*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 63.) and addresses were given by Mr G.H. Calpin, Mr T. McGleyden and Mr H. Freeman in 1945 (*Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 67.).

<sup>27</sup>Mr Leslie Rubin, President of the Durban Zionist Association and Mr A. Goldberg M.P. spoke in 1940 (*Ibid.*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47.) Rabbi A.H. Freedman, Dr A. Broomberg, Mr A. Levin and the Rev. Menachemson all gave addresses in 1942. (*Ibid.*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 67.) In 1943 the Lodge heard speeches by Mr S.M. Tomkin and Mr E. Schragenheim. (*Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 57.) Mr L.B. Feitelberg, Mr H.S. Bloom, Major S. Ernst, Mr G. Zybert and Mr D. Mierowsky addressed the lodge in 1944, (*Ibid.*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 63.), and Mr A. Goldberg M.P. and Mr L.B. Feitelberg were again invited to speak to the bretheren in 1945. (*Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 67.).

of the Lodge.<sup>28</sup>

During 1940 a committee known as the "Actions Committee" was formed for the purpose of arranging cultural programmes.<sup>29</sup> Largely through the efforts of this committee the cultural aspect of the Lodge's work was sustained throughout the war.<sup>30</sup>

The extraordinary conditions caused by the war resulted in a second degree raising ceremony of the Order being conducted for the first time in the history of the H.O.D. in 1940, by the bretheren of the Lodge.<sup>31</sup> For the first time too in the history of the F.C. Hollander Lodge, following a precedent established by the Grand Lodge, women were present at the ceremony of installation of officers in August 1941.<sup>32</sup>

In order to protect the interests of those members on active service, the Hebrew Order of David established a fund, known as the H.O.D. War Fund. The initiators of the Fund were determined that members engaged in the fighting abroad should be the Order's first charge, and that they should not have to seek any assistance at all

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47.)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49 and 51. In 1944 Wor. Bro. M. Ehrlich initiated a series of discussions on general Jewish affairs (*Ibid.*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 63.) and in 1945 Rabbi A.H. Freedman held a series of lectures and discussions on "Aspects of the Jewish Religion," which evoked keen interest among members. (*Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 67.).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49 and 51.

from the public. At the Congress of the Order in 1941 every Lodge, including the F.C. Hollander Lodge, pledged itself to support this effort.<sup>33</sup> With the intensification of South Africa's involvement in the war effort in 1942, the main task of the Committee of the F.C. Hollander Lodge was the inauguration and conducting of the Durban Lodge's campaign on behalf of the War Fund. A special sub-committee was in fact appointed to deal with this matter and by June 1942, at the close of the Lodge's financial year £375 of the Lodge's target of £500 had been raised and remitted to Grand Lodge.<sup>34</sup> The balance of the Lodge's target was dispatched to Johannesburg not very long afterwards.<sup>35</sup>

War time service resulted in many bretheren leaving Durban to serve abroad, whilst large numbers of those who remained at home volunteered for work with part time units. Attendance of bretheren at evening meetings was consequently found to be impossible. To overcome this problem the Committee decided to change the time of the meetings to Sunday afternoons, and this resulted in a considerable improvement in attendances.<sup>36</sup> The severity of war time circumstances made it impossible for an Installation Ceremony or change of officers to take

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 67.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 57.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 67.

place in 1942. With the permission of Grand Lodge existing officers remained in office for a further period of six months.<sup>37</sup>

With the lifting of black-out regulations and the easing of the war time restrictions in 1944, the lodge functioned more normally and with a renewed spirit of enthusiasm, which corresponded with the shifting of the war tide in favour of the Allies. Attendances at lodge meetings rose considerably and many new members including a number of ex-servicemen were initiated into its ranks.<sup>38</sup>

As the pressures of war subsided in 1945, the Grand Lodge inaugurated an Educational and Vocational Fund for the purpose of providing needy children of bretheren, both living and deceased, with necessary financial assistance, to enable them to continue their studies for training in their chosen careers. Although there was not an immediate need for such a fund in Durban, it was supported by local bretheren,<sup>39</sup> who also sought to play their part in the general work of rehabilitation and readjustment, following the end of the fighting in Europe and the East.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 67.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 63.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 65.

## UNION OF JEWISH WOMEN

The extensive demands made by the war on the Union of Jewish Women placed a severe strain on the resources of this newly created organisation. At the same time though it, "enabled it to prove its worth and to acquire for itself a status that did it great credit in spite of its youth."<sup>40</sup>

The Union's contribution to the war effort<sup>41</sup> had, in fact, by 1942 reached such proportions that almost all other activities were suspended as the women devoted their energies to running the canteen at the Jewish Club, which had been created under its auspices.<sup>42</sup> Even in the midst of its war-time work, however, the Union neither neglected its social commitments nor discontinued entirely its programme of cultural activities.

Within the wider community, the Union continued to work for the Durban branch of the Christmas Stamp Fund,<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.4 (December, 1941), 20.

<sup>41</sup> See above pp.466-469.

<sup>42</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 72.

<sup>43</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 8, 1939, p.6., *Hasholom*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 25., *Ibid.*, XXI No.8 (April, 1943), 23., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 1-2.

and organised an annual drive for the Durban and District Community Chest.<sup>44</sup> It raised money for the Coloured children at the Detention Barracks,<sup>45</sup> and affiliated itself to the South African Institute of Race Relations, committing itself, "to support any movement for the betterment of the underpaid, under-privileged and under educated Native in his desire and fight for more humane treatment."<sup>46</sup>

As part of its service to the Jewish community the Union formed the Committee for the 1939 Youth *Aliyah* Campaign,<sup>47</sup> contributed to the funds of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*,<sup>48</sup> and convened and raised over £19,000 in Durban for the South African Jewish War Appeal.<sup>49</sup> In conjunction with the Durban Women's Zionist League its members heard an address by Dr Fischel of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem,<sup>50</sup> and held functions at which the guests included Mrs F. Kisch, the wife of

<sup>44</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48., *Ibid.*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 72., *Hasholom*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 25., *Ibid.*, XXI No.8 (April, 1943), 23., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 1-2.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.8 (April, 1943), 23.

<sup>46</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 67.

<sup>47</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 3, 1939, p.19.

<sup>48</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.2 (October, 1941), 20., *Ibid.*, XXI No.8 (April, 1943), 23.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 1-2.

<sup>50</sup> *The Zionist Record*, March 15, 1940, p.15.

Brigadier Kisch, the distinguished Zionist leader and soldier, who had taken up temporary residence in the City;<sup>51</sup> Mr G. Saron, of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies;<sup>52</sup> Dr Ami Samuelsdorff of WIZO;<sup>53</sup> Miss Marcia Gitlin<sup>54</sup> and Rabbi Prof. I. Abrahams of Cape Town.<sup>55</sup> The Union's Durban branch continued to fulfill its pre-war commitments to the Hebrew University,<sup>56</sup> and raised additional funds to support the University's Parasitology Laboratory.<sup>57</sup> It made generous donations to the *Magen David Adom* in Palestine,<sup>58</sup> and also contributed to the funds of Ort-Oze.<sup>59</sup> In 1940 Mesdames M. Lewis, A. Goldberg and I. Goldberg represented the Durban branch at the first Triennial Conference of the Union of Jewish Women, which was opened

<sup>51</sup> *Hasholom*, XVIII No.11 (July, 1941), 20.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.9 (May, 1943), 21.

<sup>54</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 25, 1944, p.17.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, November 17, 1944, p.7.

<sup>56</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 22., *Hasholom*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 25., *Ibid.*, XXI No.8 (April, 1943), 23., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 1-2.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 1-2.

<sup>58</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 22., *Hasholom*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 25., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 1-2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.8 (April, 1943), 23.



on May 29 by Mrs T. Saphra, the Union's President.<sup>60</sup>

The restricted programme of cultural affairs organised by the Union consisted primarily of meetings addressed by a variety of speakers. They included Rabbi Zlotnik, the Director of South African Board of Jewish Education;<sup>61</sup> Miss Doris Davis, the Principal of the Open Air School for the Handicapped;<sup>62</sup> Mrs G. Trevor, Chairwoman of the National Council of Women of Johannesburg;<sup>63</sup> Dr Alan Taylor, the Superintendent of the McCord Zulu Hospital;<sup>64</sup> Mrs Kaufmann, a London Jewess who was interned in Nazi Germany and who gave a paper on her experiences;<sup>65</sup> Miss Middleton of Durban Girls' College;<sup>66</sup> Major H. Pollock, the head of the WAAS in Durban;<sup>67</sup> and Mrs Thorbecke, the wife of the late Netherlands Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to China.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>*The Zionist Record*, May 30, 1940, p.8., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 48.

<sup>61</sup>*Hasholom*, XIX No.2 (October, 1941), 20.

<sup>62</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 52.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>*Hasholom*, XXI No.8 (April, 1943), 23.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 67.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup>*Hasholom*, XXII No.2 (October, 1943), 23-24.

The Union's determination to retain as many aspects of its peace time pursuits as possible has to be seen however, against the background of its intense war work, which, whilst burdensome, also revealed its enormous capabilities, and its ability to adapt effectively to changing circumstances, undaunted by external pressures.

#### DURBAN JEWISH WOMEN'S GUILD

With the outbreak of war the members of the Women's Guild not only engaged in a programme of war work,<sup>69</sup> but also played their part in all branches of the Civil Services in the City.<sup>70</sup> In order to meet the peculiar needs of a sea port town, particularly in war time, the Guild formed a Hospitality Committee, convened by Mesdames M. Woolfson and S. Schultz.<sup>71</sup> At the same time it offered assistance to all Jewish passengers on the refugee ships that passed through Durban,<sup>72</sup> and it collaborated with the Refugee Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry in helping to meet the refugees various

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<sup>69</sup> See above pp.463-466.

<sup>70</sup> *Durban Jewish Women's Guild Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure 1953*, (Durban, 1953), p.18.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49.

needs.<sup>73</sup>

The numerous calls made on the Guild and the Jewish Benevolent Society at the beginning of the war proved to be so great that by April 1940 the available resources of the two societies were utterly exhausted.<sup>74</sup> As the proceeds of the annual July Ball, the two organisations principal source of funds, which was held for the last time in 1940, were devoted to the South African Mayor's National Fund, a large scale appeal to the local Jewish public was found to be necessary.<sup>75</sup> This appeal, a portion of which was set aside for the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, which had also been affected by financial hardship, was conducted under the joint chairmanship of Messrs J. Goldman and I. Geshen,<sup>76</sup> and met with a splendid response.<sup>77</sup>

The Guild concentrated its activities on caring for the poor and needy, conducted sick visiting, cared for the Holy Vestments of the Congregation, arranged *Sukkot* and *Simchat Torah* functions and ran the catering plant.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 63.

<sup>74</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.8 (April, 1940), 1-2.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 52.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.1 (September, 1940), 47., *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 49., *Ibid.*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 71., *Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 63., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 69., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 53.

Growing support for the Flower Fund, not only at *Rosh Hashonah* time but throughout the year, enabled the Guild to provide much needed holidays for women and children, particularly those who needed to leave Durban after an illness in order to recuperate.<sup>79</sup>

As had long been the case the Guild continued to collaborate on occasion in the work of the Jewish Benevolent Society, and also worked harmoniously with the Durban Women's Zionist League and the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women.<sup>80</sup>

By 1942 the number of calls made on the Guild had declined considerably.<sup>81</sup> Over the next two years the Committee took advantage of prevailing circumstances to build up a reserve of funds in order to prepare for the demands and responsibilities, which it was realised would follow upon the cessation of hostilities.<sup>82</sup>

From 1944 the number of calls made on the society began to grow, and expenditure for the year 1944-45 rose to probably the highest level on record. Innumerable and unforeseen calls came to be made on the Guild and from many of those appeals the repercussions

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 63., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 53.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 47., *Ibid.*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 71., *Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 63.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 71.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 63., *Ibid.*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 69.

of the war on the community began to be seen. As the war was moving to its conclusion and the members of the Forces made their way homewards, reductions in incomes, in consequence of the war, became noticeable, unemployment rose and the number of those disabled by injury or strained health from securing jobs increased dramatically.<sup>83</sup> The areas of activity for the Guild in the post-war period were thus clearly apparent by the time that the war ended in August 1945.

#### DURBAN JEWISH BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

Along with the Women's Guild the Jewish Benevolent Society had by April 1940 been entirely drained of funds, in consequence of the calls made on it by the needy of the community.<sup>84</sup> The generous manner in which the community answered the two societies appeal for assistance ensured the continuation of the Benevolent Society's work,<sup>85</sup> which received further funds through donations, subscriptions (13/- per annum) and collection boxes.<sup>86</sup>

The Benevolent Society provided the needy with cash, or food, or both, as the occasion demanded, and carried

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 53.

<sup>84</sup> *Hasholom*, XVII No.8 (April, 1940), 1-2.

<sup>85</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 52.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

out a regular programme of sick visiting.<sup>87</sup> For all its valuable work, however, the Society was still not supported by the community as a whole, both in terms of workers and members,<sup>88</sup> the community apparently taking the Society for granted. At its annual general meeting in 1943 the subscriptions were increased to £1 ls, for despite having had the fewest calls recorded in many years the total revenue was still not sufficient to cover the year's expenditure on relief and grants.<sup>89</sup>

In 1944 the financial position of the Society improved, as, together with the Durban Benevolent Society and the Durban and District Community Chest, the Jewish Benevolent Society was made a beneficiary of the Abraham Rush Charity Trust Fund.<sup>90</sup> Income from this Fund, founded on the assets of the late Mr Rush, were in terms of Mr Rush's will utilised for the poor of Durban, irrespective of class, colour and creed. The Fund's Trustees were the Sole Executor, Mr K. Acutt, and the President's of the Jewish Benevolent Society, the Durban Benevolent Society and the Chairman of the Community Chest.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX No.1 (September, 1941), 52., *Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 59., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 61.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.1 (September, 1942), 71 and 73.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.1 (September, 1943), 59.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.1 (September, 1944), 65 and 67.

<sup>91</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.5 (January, 1945), 11.

Whilst calls on the Jewish Benevolent Society remained few it consolidated its financial position in 1945,<sup>92</sup> as it prepared for the problems which it knew would come in the wake of peace.

#### DURBAN JEWISH COMMUNITY CHEST

At the Jewish Benevolent Society's annual general meeting in 1945 the suggestion was made that those institutions, whose revenues were likely to be adversely affected by the decision of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation to abolish offerings in the Synagogues and at the Cemetery,<sup>93</sup> should get together to discuss the matter.

On the initiative of the Benevolent Society a meeting was convened of representatives of the Jewish Benevolent Society, the Jewish Women's Guild, the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, the South African Jewish Orphanage (Durban branch), and the Witwatersrand Jewish Old Age Home (Durban committee). The Durban United Hebrew Congregation, which had also suffered a cut in revenue in consequence of the decision of its members, did not

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<sup>92</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 61.

<sup>93</sup> See above p.532.

attend the meeting as it had already arranged to make up its shortfall through an increase in subscriptions.<sup>94</sup>

The five institutions represented at the meeting wisely agreed that instead of making separate appeals to the public to meet the reductions in revenue, a combined appeal would be issued by them each year before the High Festivals. Thus, with the full approval and sanction of the Council of Natal Jewry, the Durban Jewish Community Chest was inaugurated. The creation of the Chest reflected an organised, effective and practical effort to overcome a particular problem, and the support accorded it by the C.N.J. ensured its acceptance by the community.

The Jewish Community Chest was designed to make good the amounts that were lost owing to the abolition of *schnodering*, and to, in fact, provide all the revenue required by these institutions. It thereby obviated the need for a *Kol Nidrei* appeal on behalf of the *Talmud Torah*, and the box collections on behalf of the organisations which made up the Chest, and streamlined local fundraising activity. The Chest did not, however, interfere with the annual subscriptions to the organisations concerned and these remained payable as hitherto.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 61 and 63.

<sup>95</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.12 (August, 1945), 6.



This development was welcomed by the *Hasholom*<sup>96</sup> which had formerly advocated the creation of such a Community Chest,<sup>97</sup> and by the community generally, which recognised the advantages of such a scheme.

The Durban Jewish Community Chest's first appeal was initiated in August 1945,<sup>98</sup> its inaugural committee consisting of Mr H. Zulman (the President of the Jewish Benevolent Society), Chairman; Mrs A.H. Freedman and Mr L. Tannenbaum, Vice-Chairman; Mr H. Cline, Treasurer; and Mr H. Berman, Hon. Secretary,<sup>99</sup> and the community's generous response fully justified the hopes of the Chest's creators.

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII No.5 (January, 1944), 19.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.12 (August, 1945), 6.

<sup>99</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 61 and 63.