

SECTION FIVE 1945 - 1955

## CHAPTER XXXI

DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE DURBANUNITED HEBREW CONGREGATION : 1945 - 1955

For the Durban United Hebrew Congregation the decade following the war was characterised by a spirit of unbounded optimism, which manifested itself in an expansion and intensification of congregational activity, which was encouraged by the Congregation's religious and lay leaders.

The already existing problem of inadequate accommodation within the two existing synagogues became even more acute with the return of servicemen from abroad, and the increase in the size of the community, largely brought about through post-war immigration. To overcome this problem, overflow services continued to be

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held over the High Holyday period at the Jewish Club,<sup>1</sup> but this was only a short term, and not an entirely satisfactory, arrangement.

Instead of immediately proceeding with its plans to erect a new and larger synagogue on its property on the Berea, the Congregation decided instead to first provide its children with a modern *Talmud Torah*, kindergarten and nursery school, on a portion of its land at the corner of Essenwood and Silverton Roads,<sup>2</sup> which was opened in September 1951.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter, the scheme for a new synagogue building was again delayed as the Congregation proceeded with the building of a nursery school and classrooms in Durban North, which was completed in 1953.<sup>4</sup>

In placing education before all else, the Congregation reaffirmed its traditional long-standing association with Jewish education in the City. It also revealed its clear understanding of the fact that the future of Judaism lay not so much in a large synagogue building, but rather in the provision of the best facilities to

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<sup>1</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hasholom Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 51., *The Natal Mercury*, September 14, 1946, p.10., August 29, 1947, p.8., September 15, 1948, p.10.

<sup>2</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 22, 1948, p.18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, September 21, 1951, p.8. See below pp.880-881.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, August 28, 1953, p.12. See below pp.886-887.

religious life in the City.<sup>23</sup>

Further evidence of the members increased interest in Congregational and religious affairs was to be found in the creation of the Womens Seatholder's Organisation in 1948. Agitation for the representation of women on the Synagogue Council can be traced back some ten years to 1938, when the Jewish Women's Guild, through Mrs H. Moss-Morris, had unsuccessfully initiated efforts in this direction.<sup>24</sup> The call of the Jewish Women's Guild had been echoed by the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women, which had pressed for women to be members as well as seatholders of the Synagogue with all the rights and privileges afforded members.<sup>25</sup> The cause for which the women had been working had also been taken up on their behalf by the Public Relations Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry.<sup>26</sup>

Early in 1948, a deputation from the Union of Jewish Women, consisting of Mesdames M. Moshal, V. Robinson and P. Stein, met the *Shul* Council and put their request for

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<sup>23</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 7., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 17., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 19., *Ibid.*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 40., *The Zionist Record*, April 17, 1953, p.24.

<sup>24</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 21.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 27.

<sup>26</sup> Minutes of Public Relation 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., 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.



membership and representation to those present. After the meeting, correspondence between the Council and the Union of Jewish Women led to a meeting of the women seatholders of the two Synagogues being convened by the United Hebrew Congregation on May 10, 1948, with Mr E.S. Henochsberg, chairman of the Council, in the chair.<sup>27</sup> At the meeting an organisation was formed and a committee of nine women, consisting of Mesdames S.J. Kaplan, L. Jacobson, L. Davis, B. Deift, P. Stein, J. Diamond, D. Driman, N. Smith and H. Silver was elected.<sup>28</sup> The committee met on June 15, elected its officers, Mesdames S.J. Kaplan (Chairman), L. Davis (Vice-Chairman) and L. Jacobson (Hon. Secretary), drew up a constitution, and called a general meeting of members on September 2, at which the constitution was ratified and a resolution was passed calling on the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, "to amend its Constitution in order to make provision for two or more women representatives to sit on the Synagogue Council with full voting powers, the representatives to be elected by the Committee of the Women's Organisation."<sup>29</sup>

At the annual general meeting of the Congregation, held on October 6, 1948, a resolution to this effect was

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<sup>27</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 21 and 23.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes of Inaugural Meeting of Women Seatholders of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 20th May, 1948, at 3.30 pm., p.1.

<sup>29</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 21 and 23.



moved by Mr H.L. Magid and, after being hotly debated, was carried with very few dissentients. The women seatholders were thereby granted two representatives on the Council of the Congregation.<sup>30</sup>

The aims and objects of the Women's Seatholders Organisation were:

- a) To provide adequate representation of women seatholders on the Council of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation.
- b) To take such steps from time to time as might be considered desirable in the interests of women congregants.
- c) To encourage observance of decorum in the Synagogue.
- d) To foster Judaism amongst the women and to encourage attendance at Synagogue.<sup>31</sup>

The Women's Seatholder's **Organisation** covered a wide range of communal activities. Its members undertook the necessary **cater**ing at *Brachot*, the Communal *Seder* and over *Sukkot*, and supervised the supply and quality of *matzot* provided for the community. A representative of the Organisation also served on the

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 37.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 23.

Congregation's *Shechitah* Board.<sup>32</sup>

It urged the women to attend *Shabbat* morning services,<sup>33</sup> co-operated with existing Jewish women's societies in arranging joint activities,<sup>34</sup> and organised its own educational programme.<sup>35</sup> Once it was firmly established, the Women's Seatholders Organisation was also entrusted by the Jewish Women's Guild with the care of the Holy Vestments.<sup>36</sup>

The High Holy Days of 1948 saw the inception of a new choir under the direction of Mr David Cohen. This amenity filled a long felt need, and it was hoped that regular choral services on Friday evenings throughout the year would result in increased attendance.<sup>37</sup>

In a series of letters in the Jewish press it was argued that a choir was in itself incapable of inducing people to attend services if the members of the Council failed to set an example by attending services themselves.<sup>38</sup> This criticism, whilst undefended, was countered by

<sup>32</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 67.

<sup>33</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 45., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.8 (April, 1953), 17.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.12 (August, 1955), 25.

<sup>36</sup> *Durban Jewish Women's Guild Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure 1953* (Durban, 1953), p.19.

<sup>37</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 37.

<sup>38</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 12, 1948, p.23., November 26, 1948, p.23.

references to the services which Council members rendered to the community as a whole<sup>39</sup> and so provided an insight into communal thinking, by revealing that communal service rather than religious commitment was the yardstick by which the Congregation generally judged the worth of its Council members.

Until his ministry in Durban ended with his departure in 1949, Rabbi A.H. Freedman continued to faithfully serve the community. He and his wife established a practice of periodically inviting members of the Congregation to visit their home,<sup>40</sup> and in this way came to know a large number of congregants on an informal basis. Those Jews scattered around Natal, whom he regarded as part of his flock, and who were unable to take up these invitations were, instead, visited by the Rabbi, in the course of his pastoral tours of the Province.<sup>41</sup> His address before *Yom Kippur*, which was broadcast annually from the Durban Studio, reached all the Jewish residents of Natal and reinforced the close ties which the Rabbi enjoyed with all the Jewish people in the area.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, November 19, 1948, p.23., December 3, 1948, p.23.

<sup>40</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.8 (April, 1946), 32., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.9 (May, 1946), 23.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.12 (August, 1947), 19., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 18.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 15 and 17., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 7., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 17.



Apart from his continued involvement in all branches of Jewish institutional life, the Rabbi participated in the annual Service of Remembrance in the City Hall in November 1947,<sup>43</sup> and addressed a meeting of the Sunday School Association and the Friends of the Sick Association.<sup>44</sup> As spiritual leader of the community Rabbi Freedman was invited to attend a Civic reception held in honour of the Governor General and Mrs Van Zyl in July 1946,<sup>45</sup> and during the next two years received eleven invitations from the Mayor to attend public functions held in honour of various visiting dignitaries.<sup>46</sup>

In both his personal and professional capacity, the Rabbi served in 1946, as a Member of the Executive of the National War Memorial Health Fund,<sup>47</sup> and for two years in succession was chosen as the Vice-President of the Fund's Natal Regional Committee.<sup>48</sup> He was elected to the Committee of the Children of Britain Fund set up to alleviate post-war hardships,<sup>49</sup> and was also a member

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 20.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 13.

<sup>45</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 5, 1946, p.6.

<sup>46</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 63.

<sup>47</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.6 (February, 1947), 14.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 12., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 63.

<sup>49</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 8, 1947, p.8.

of the Springfield Community Centre, the Community Services Committee of Rotary, the Executive Committee of the Food Parcels for Britain Fund and the United Nations Appeal for Children Committee.<sup>50</sup>

During this period, the Congregation, in common with other religious denominations, held an intercessory service for rain in January 1946, in compliance with a request from the Prime Minister.<sup>51</sup> Extraordinary services of a strictly Jewish nature included a service of prayer and intercession for the opening of the Gates of Palestine, in October, 1945,<sup>52</sup> a *Chanukah* military service, in conjunction with the Jewish Ex-Service League;<sup>53</sup> a memorial service for the late Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Dr J.H. Hertz,<sup>54</sup> who died on January 14, 1946;<sup>55</sup> a *Chanukah* and thanksgiving service on December 7, 1947, to mark the United Nations decision to partition Palestine,<sup>56</sup> and a service of dedication and thanksgiving upon the proclamation of the State of Israel in May, 1948.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 63.

<sup>51</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 9, 1946, p.8.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, October 17, 1945, p.6.

<sup>53</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 27.

<sup>54</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 25, 1946, p.22.

<sup>55</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 15, 1946, p.8.

<sup>56</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 9.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 11.

Following the establishment of the Jewish State, the Zionist Council for Natal in fact entered into negotiations with the Congregation to discuss the introduction into the Synagogue services of the *Sephardic* pronounciation of Hebrew, which had been adopted by the Israeli people.<sup>58</sup>

An event at this time which filled the Rabbi's congregation with much sadness was the passing, in 1948, of Mr Philip Wartski, the Grand Old Man of Durban Jewry, and a founder of the Congregation, who died at the age of 95 after a lifetime of communal service.<sup>59</sup>

The pulpit which he filled so competently was occasionally vacated by the Rabbi to afford visiting Rabbis an opportunity to address the Congregation. Foremost among these guest preachers were Rabbi Prof. L. Rabinowitz of Johannesburg;<sup>60</sup> Rabbi Prof. I. Abrahams of Cape Town;<sup>61</sup> Rabbi I. Kossowsky of Johannesburg<sup>62</sup> and Rabbi Dr H. Freedman, the Chief Rabbi of Australia.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Minutes of Special Meeting, Held between representatives of the Council of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and representatives of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, August 26th, 1948, at 5.15 pm., pp.1-2.

<sup>59</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 70.

<sup>60</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 5, 1945, p.6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, May 24, 1946, p.8.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, June 4, 1946, p.8.

<sup>63</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.9 (May, 1947), 17., *The Natal Mercury*, June 6, 1947, p.7.



A large number of congregants also filled the Park Street Synagogue to hear Cantor Simcha Kusevitsky, of the Park View Greenside Hebrew Congregation and formerly of the Great Synagogue, Duke's Place, London, when he conducted a Sabbath service during a visit to the City in July 1948.<sup>64</sup>

The Congregation over which Rabbi Freedman presided was neither insular in nature nor exclusivist in outlook and it retained at all times a close liason with kindred organisations. The Congregation was represented on the Council of Natal Jewry, with which it had occasion to work in close co-operation for the benefit of the community as a whole, as was the case, for example in 1952 when a Youth *Bayit* was set up on the Congregation's premises.<sup>65</sup> It had direct representation on the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and regularly sent delegates to the biennial Congresses of the Board.<sup>66</sup> By arrangement, the Congregation also kept in direct contact with the *Beth Din* in Johannesburg.<sup>67</sup> In August 1946, when a conference was held in Johannesburg

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, July 16, 1948, p.10., *Hasholom*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 15.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 40. See above p.636.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.12 (August, 1947), 9., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 11., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.10 (June, 1951), 17., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.10 (June, 1953), 15.

<sup>67</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 68.

to establish a Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations for South Africa, a delegation from Durban, consisting of Rabbi A.H. Freedman and Messrs S. Hackner and H.L. Magid, attended the proceedings and Mr Magid was elected a vice-chairman of the Provisional Governing Body.<sup>68</sup>

After twelve years of service to the Jewish community of Durban and Natal, Rabbi Freedman tendered his resignation in order to take up an appointment in the United States.<sup>69</sup> His Congregation, whilst not markedly different in terms of its level of religious commitment from that which it had been when first he had chosen to leave it in 1943,<sup>70</sup> was, nevertheless, mindful of the enormous efforts made by the Rabbi and his wife for the good of the community, and appreciative of the spiritual guidance which he had extended to his congregants.<sup>71</sup>

On May 15, 1949, a farewell function in the form of a social was held at the Jewish Club, and more than 500 people attended in order to bid farewell to the Rabbi and his family. Mr E.S. Henochsberg, the Chairman of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, presided, and presented the Rabbi with a cheque on behalf of the members of the Congregation. Mr H.L. Magid, the

<sup>68</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 9, 1946, p.13.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, November 26, 1948, p.23.

<sup>70</sup> See above p.522.

<sup>71</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.8 (April, 1949), 2-3.

President of the C.N.J., representing all organisations in Durban, gave the Rabbi a suitably engraved silver tea and coffee set and an illuminated address, signed by twenty organisations in Durban.<sup>72</sup>

In August 1949, the Congregation learnt that Rabbi Harris Swift of St. John's Wood Synagogue, in London, had accepted a call to become the minister of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation,<sup>73</sup> and it eagerly awaited his arrival and the arrival of his family early in 1950.<sup>74</sup> Notwithstanding the absence of a Rabbi over the High Holyday period, Synagogue attendance remained unaffected.<sup>75</sup> When the services of a Rabbi were required, as for example at the annual Service of Remembrance, in the City Hall, in November, 1949, Mr S. Ernst ably stepped into the breach.<sup>76</sup> On other occasions the Congregation called on a guest preacher such as Rabbi Moshe Swift, of the Berea Hebrew Congregation, Johannesburg, who officiated at a service in memory of the European martyrs in December 1949.<sup>77</sup> The absence of a Rabbi was, nevertheless, keenly felt at functions such as that held by the Congregation, in

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 15 and 17.

<sup>73</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 24, 1949, p.10.

<sup>74</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1949), 7.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 5, 1949, p.8.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, December 28, 1949, p.6.



conjunction with the C.N.J. and the Jewish Club, in August 1949, to mark the Golden Wedding Anniversary of Mr and Mrs F.C. Hollander, which was attended by the Mayor and other Civic dignitaries.<sup>78</sup>

In the months preceding the arrival of the Rabbi Elect, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation continued to receive glowing reports about Rabbi Swift, who was regarded as one of the leading personalities in the British Rabbinate.<sup>79</sup> The 44 year old Rabbi was born in Liverpool and educated in England and Europe. He was recognised as a rabbinical scholar of note and was known for his distinguished oratory in Yiddish and English.

During the war he had served as Hon. Chaplain to H.M. Forces, and had been responsible for forming most of the congregations in the reception areas when London was being evacuated during the air raids. After the liberation of Europe, he had been nominated by Chief Rabbi Herzog of Israel to organise the rescue and redemption of children who were being lost to Jewry through their adoption into Gentile homes. The Rabbi was also recognised as a dedicated communal worker who was especially interested in welfare organisations, education, youth activities and Zionist work.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.12 (August, 1949), 9.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.6 (February, 1950), 11 and 13.

<sup>80</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 2, 1949, p.18.



Whilst the Congregation waited for the Rabbi to take up his appointment the hope was expressed that he would,

not be disappointed when he gets to know his congregants. It is a fact that comparatively few Jews in Durban live strictly Jewish lives, observing all the laws, stipulations and precepts. Though we know there are difficulties in the way of full observance, we make no excuses. We state a fact, but we say also that in spite of a certain laxity, at heart the majority are good Jews, proud of their Jewish heritage and trying to model themselves on the noblest men of our People. There will then be fertile soil in which the Rabbi may work...In the larger community - we mean the Gentile - Rabbi Swift will find too, immense scope. Our Rabbi is often Jewry's representative in public affairs. We know that the Rabbi will prove a worthy representative.<sup>81</sup>

The small degree of total religious commitment, whilst not peculiar to Durban, was more marked insofar as that in Cape Town and Johannesburg, where many congregations were not committed to religious observance, there were congregations, too, whose membership was largely composed of observant families. In Durban where only one Orthodox Congregation existed no such diversity existed, and consequently the status quo persisted, reinforced by the widely held belief that communal involvement was in some measure a substitute for religious commitment.

Rabbi Swift, his wife and daughter were met at Port Elizabeth by the Chairman of the Congregation, Mr E.S. Henochsberg and Mrs Henochsberg. When their

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<sup>81</sup>*Hasholom*, XXVIII No.6 (February, 1950), 2-3.

ship docked in Durban, on March 7, 1950, they were welcomed by representatives of the Durban Jewish community.<sup>82</sup>

On Sunday, March 12, at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, the Rabbi was inducted into office by Mr Henochsberg, in his capacity as Chairman of the Synagogue Council. The service which, was fully choral, was conducted by Cantors F. Metzger and A.M. Kaplan, who were assisted by Rabbi Prof. L. Rabinowitz, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg; Rabbi Moshe Swift of the Berea Hebrew Congregation, Johannesburg, and the Rev. B.C. Kur of Vryheid.

Among those present at the service were the Administrator of Natal, Mr D.G. Shepstone and Mrs Shepstone; the Mayor and Mayoress of Durban, Councillor and Mrs K. Clarke; the Deputy Mayor and her husband, Councillor Mrs and Mr A.G. Maytom; the Archdeacon of Durban, the Rev. T.G. Inman; clerical representatives of other denominations; the Chairman of the Pietermaritzburg Hebrew Congregation and Mrs Caminsky; and representatives of all the communal organisations in Durban.

That evening a reception was held in the main hall of the Jewish Club, at which the members of the community were afforded an opportunity to meet the Rabbi and his

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<sup>82</sup>*The Zionist Record*, March 10, 1950, p.4.

family.<sup>83</sup> In the first few weeks following their arrival many functions were held in honour of the Rabbi and Mrs Swift, and they were thereby immediately absorbed into active participation in every aspect of communal life. On Friday, 17th March, the Rabbi and Mrs Swift attended an *Oneg Shabbat* arranged by the Congregation, in conjunction with the Youth Organisations, at the *Maon*.<sup>84</sup> A special children's service was held by the Durban Junior Hebrew Congregation at the Park Street Synagogue on Saturday 18th March,<sup>85</sup> and the Rabbi thereby made the acquaintance of the Congregation's younger members. An official reception was accorded the Rabbi and Mrs Swift by the Pietermaritzburg Hebrew Congregation, on the evening of March 26.<sup>86</sup>

Rabbi Swift, who cut a striking figure, and who was a preacher of great eloquence and conviction, during the period of his ministry in Durban brought honour to his office and the Congregation that he served. As forceful with the pen as with the written word, the Rabbi was the author of a booklet directed against Reform Judaism which

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<sup>83</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 17.

<sup>84</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 66. See below p.1004.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 14.



had taken root in the City shortly before his arrival.<sup>87</sup> His anthology of sermons, addresses and essays, published in 1954, under the title, *Because I Believe* was well received by Gentile and Jewish critics alike.<sup>88</sup>

The Rabbi involved himself in all aspects of Congregational life, but an area of religious observance that particularly aroused his interest was that overseen by the *Shechitah* Board. Through the Rabbi's personal efforts, and with his sanction, additional products were made available to the community for the Passover.<sup>89</sup> The Board itself undertook the regular visiting and inspection of bazaars, certain shops, the two *kosher* butcheries and the *Mnora Hotel*, which all came under its supervision.<sup>90</sup> With the assistance and close co-operation of the Rabbi the catering facilities of the Jewish Club were made *kosher* again in 1950, and only *kosher* catering was thereafter undertaken in the Club's kitchens.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Harris Swift, *Reform Judaism. Anarchy in Religion and a Danger to South African Jewry*, (Durban, 1951). In archives of the South African Zionist Federation (Natal).

<sup>88</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 30, 1954, p.6., *Hasholom*, XXXII No.11 (July, 1954), 25.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.7 (March, 1951), 47., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.8 (April, 1951), 39., *The Natal Mercury*, April 3, 1952, p.7.

<sup>90</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 57.

<sup>91</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 22. Observance of *Kashrut* had been discontinued at the Club during World War II. See above p.475.

Whilst his community might not have been noted for its level of Jewish observance, it could not be criticised for its poor attendance at Synagogue services and especially on Friday evenings. The increased attendances of both sexes were in part attributed to the stimulating sermons delivered by the Rabbi, as well as to the participation of a choir in the services.<sup>92</sup> In a survey carried out in the synagogues in the major centres of the Union in 1951, it was found that in proportion to Johannesburg and Cape Town attendance on the Saturday morning when the survey was conducted at the Durban synagogue was, in fact, much higher. At the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue a total of 178 (58 men, 74 women and 46 children) was recorded, and the number of people present at the Park Street Synagogue, where children's services were held, was 103 (54 boys, 47 girls and 2 women).<sup>93</sup>

The Rabbi's concern for his Congregation spilled over into a wider concern for the Jews of Natal, whom he regarded as part of his extended communal family. Through the pre-*Yom Kippur* radio broadcasts the Rabbi was able to annually address his far-flung community during the High Festival period,<sup>94</sup> and his frequent visits to

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<sup>92</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 67.

<sup>93</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 23, 1951, p.7.

<sup>94</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 3, 5, 7., *Ibid.*, XXX No.2 (October, 1951), 3 and 5, *Ibid.*, XXXII No.2 (October, 1953), 5-7.

Northern Natal, Zululand, Pietermaritzburg, the South Coast and East Griqualand made him even more widely known to the Jews of Natal.<sup>95</sup>

To the Jewish communities scattered around the Province, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation remained the Mother Congregation, and it was to the Congregation and its Rabbi that these communities looked for spiritual guidance and support, which was always readily forthcoming. Together with the Revs. F. Metzger and A.M. Kaplan and the choir of the Congregation, Rabbi Swift participated in the induction service of the Rev. J. Oleska of Pietermaritzburg in 1950.<sup>96</sup> In 1951, the Rabbi and Cantor Metzger again visited Pietermaritzburg in order to conduct a *Shabbat* service, and to participate in local communal activities.<sup>97</sup> In the following year, Cantor Metzger and the choir of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation were called upon to assist at the marriage of Miss Millicent Benjamin and Mr Gerald Sacks of Pietermaritzburg.<sup>98</sup>

Largely through the efforts of Rabbi Swift the Jews of Danhauser, in 1950, agreed to establish a

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 12., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 18., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.6 (February, 1951), 11., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.12 (August, 1951), 12., *Ibid.*, XXX No.11 (July, 1952), 37., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.7 (March, 1954), 33-34.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 12.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.4 (December, 1951), 31.

<sup>98</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 8, 1952, p.12.

Congregation, which was named the Northern Natal Hebrew Congregation.<sup>99</sup> In September 1951, the Rabbi visited Umtata to officiate at the opening of the new synagogue;<sup>100</sup> and upon the election of Dr S.M. Feinberg as the first Jewish Mayor of Margate, Rabbi Swift organised and participated in an interdenominational installation service, held in January 1953.<sup>101</sup> The support extended to the Jewish community of Vryheid was nowhere more clearly evident than in the participation by the Rabbi and the Congregation's leaders in the celebrations in connection with the Golden Jubilee of Vryheid's Hebrew Congregation in September 1954.<sup>102</sup>

As the Mother Congregation of Natal, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, in fact, initiated discussions with the Pietermaritzburg and Vryheid Congregations for the purpose of forming a Federation of Orthodox Congregations in Natal.<sup>103</sup> Whilst efforts were being continued to effect a Federation of Orthodox Congregations in Natal, a Conference of Orthodox Synagogues was held in August 1952, in Johannesburg, at which the guest of honour was Israel's Chief Rabbi Israel Halevi Herzog.

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<sup>99</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 21.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.2 (October, 1951), 14-15.

<sup>101</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 16, 1953, p.6.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, September 17, 1954, p.9.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, October 19, 1951, p.15.



The Durban United Hebrew Congregation, through its representative Rabbi Swift,<sup>104</sup> gave its wholehearted support and co-operation to the moves to create a National Conference of Orthodox Synagogues.<sup>105</sup>

Together with his wife, the Rabbi also identified closely with the work of almost every communal body, many of which they served with notable distinction. The Rabbi's unflagging commitment to Zionism led to his involvement in launching campaigns for funds for Israel in the Transvaal<sup>106</sup> and the Rhodesian Copper Belt,<sup>107</sup> which were far beyond the borders of Natal.

Rabbi Swift worked untiringly for the *Vaad Ha Yeshivot* in Israel, which honoured him by having a tractate of a reprint of the *Talmud* that was published in Israel dedicated to him.<sup>108</sup> In December 1952, Rabbi Swift was invited by Rabbi Isaac Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Israel, to undertake an extended tour of Europe and the Americas to raise funds on behalf of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate for the construction of a Rabbinical

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, August 15, 1952, p.7.

<sup>105</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 75.

<sup>106</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 6, 1953, p.13.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, December 2, 1955, p.23.

<sup>108</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 14th December, 1952, at 8 pm., p.4.

Supreme Court Building in Jerusalem.<sup>109</sup> The Rabbi left on his mission in February 1953, and returned some five months later after what had proved to be a most successful campaign. On July 23, 1953, the Congregation held a reception at the Jewish Club to welcome Rabbi and Mrs Swift on their return from abroad and to express their pride and satisfaction in the success of his mission, which had redounded to the credit of the whole community<sup>110</sup> and had earned him and the Congregation the gratitude of the Israeli Chief Rabbi.<sup>111</sup> In 1955, in the interests of the same project, Rabbi Swift was again granted leave by the Congregation to undertake a fund raising campaign in South America, where he also participated in a drive on behalf of the Jewish National Fund.<sup>112</sup>

In the field of public relations the Rabbi rendered service of inestimable value. In terms of the extent and scope of his work in this connection Rabbi Swift probably even surpassed the efforts of all his predecessors, and thereby enhanced still further the reputation of Jewry.

Like Rabbis before him Rabbi Swift participated in

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<sup>109</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 73.

<sup>110</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.12 (August, 1953), 5.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.11 (July, 1953), 20-21.

<sup>112</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 29, 1955, p.10., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 57.

the Service of Remembrance which was held each November in the City Hall.<sup>113</sup> When occasion demanded he also represented the Jewish community at Interdenominational Services, such as those held to coincide with the funeral of the late General Smuts;<sup>114</sup> to mark the Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Celebrations in 1952;<sup>115</sup> and the Durban Civic Centenary in 1954.<sup>116</sup> In May 1954 the Rabbi and the Rev. H.F. Yule officiated at a service at the Club House of the Durban Volunteer Life Saving Club, at which memorial plaques were re-dedicated to Ronald Selby and Brian van den Berg, who had lost their lives by shark attack in the surf.<sup>117</sup>

Under the Rabbi's direction services of a public nature were also held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue. These included a Civic Service attended by the Mayor and Mayoress in September, 1950;<sup>118</sup> a memorial service for the late King George VI in February, 1952;<sup>119</sup> a special service held on July 25, 1952, at the request of the Prime Minister to pray for all prisoners in the

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<sup>113</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 11, 1950, p.10., November 10, 1951, p.10., *Hasholom*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 23., *The Natal Mercury*, November 9, 1953, p.5., November 8, 1954, p.2.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, September 16, 1950, p.11.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, February 4, 1952, p.10.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, May 17, 1954, p.9.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, May 13, 1954, p.8.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, September 22, 1950, p.8.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, February 15, 1952, p.8.

Union;<sup>120</sup> a Thanksgiving Service for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II;<sup>121</sup> a Civic Centenary Service in June 1954;<sup>122</sup> and a special service to mark the Golden Jubilee of Rotary.<sup>123</sup>

The Rabbi was an ever popular speaker with Gentile audiences amongst whom he was held in the highest regard. Both eloquent, and at times controversial, the Rabbi, through his association with religious groups and organisations outside of those of his community, became a well known public figure in the City, whose opinion and views carried considerable weight and made him much respected and widely known.

A frequent guest speaker at the Toc H Lunch Forum,<sup>124</sup> he was also invited to address meetings of the Toc H Women's Section<sup>125</sup> and the Orient Club.<sup>126</sup> The Rabbi delivered a message in Hebrew at a Goodwill Week Meeting held under the auspices of the National Council of Women,<sup>127</sup> and gave an address at a Congress of the

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<sup>120</sup> Durban United Hebrew Congregation Seventeenth Annual Report to Members, 1952., p.5.

<sup>121</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 29, 1953, p.10.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, June 11, 1954, p.10.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, March 31, 1955, p.10.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, April 27, 1950, p.13., February 15, 1951, p.11., August 8, 1951, p.8.

<sup>125</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 16., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 29.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.5 (January, 1951), 10.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 29.



Federation of Women's Institutes of Natal, Zululand, East Griqualand, Pondoland and Transkei, which was held in September 1952.<sup>128</sup> Together with the President of the Council of Natal Jewry, the Rabbi was also made a member of the local Committee of the National War Health Foundation.<sup>129</sup> For her part Rabbi Swift's wife served as Vice-President and then as President of the Durban branch of the National Council of Women.<sup>130</sup>

A believer in inter-faith contact, Rabbi Swift lectured to the Association of Congregational Ministers,<sup>131</sup> the Association of Christian Ministers<sup>132</sup> and members of the Durban Spiritualist Church.<sup>133</sup> He also preached from the pulpit of the Congregational Church.<sup>134</sup> On the arrival of a visiting Islamic missionary Moulana Abdul Aleem Siddiqui Al Qaderi in Durban, Rabbi Swift joined the Mayor, Councillor P. Osborne, and the Rev. A.R.P. Evans at a reception in his honour where he gave an address of welcome.<sup>135</sup> He also gave a lecture on Judaism to the Muslim community under the

<sup>128</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 19, 1952, p.13.

<sup>129</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 18.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 28.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 16.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.6 (February, 1951), 11.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.11 (July, 1950), 9.

<sup>135</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 4, 1952, p.11.

auspices of the Arabic Study Circle.<sup>136</sup>

Firmly committed to the cause of racial harmony in the Union the Rabbi, together with Cantor Metzger and the choir of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, participated in an all race concert conducted by the Durban Y.M.C.A., in an effort to promote understanding and goodwill amongst all racial groups in the community.<sup>137</sup> Fearlessly the Rabbi also set himself up as a champion of civil liberty and, together with other prominent residents of Natal, expressed his opposition to the Government's plan to remove Coloured voters from the Common Roll<sup>138</sup> and to suppress the *Guardian* newspaper.<sup>139</sup> For his services to the Jewish and general community Rabbi Swift was honoured with the presentation of a Coronation Medal in 1953.<sup>140</sup>

The major preoccupation of the Congregation during Rabbi Swift's ministry was the proposed new synagogue. In March 1951, as the construction of the new *Talmud Torah* building was nearing completion and preparations were being made for its official opening, the Congregation turned its attention to the plans for the erection of a

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, March 17, 1954, p.8.

<sup>137</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 20, 1950, p.20.

<sup>138</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 7, 1951, p.9. See below pp.745-746.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, November 30, 1951, p.12. See below p.751.

<sup>140</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.4 (December, 1953), 21. See below p.776.

larger synagogue. The new synagogue was intended to remedy the problem of inadequate seating accommodation and to meet the future needs of the growing congregation. A Synagogue Fund Drive was inaugurated with a target of £75,000, which was to be spread over five years.<sup>141</sup>

Its President was Rabbi Swift with Mr C. Sternberg as Chairman; Messrs I. Geshen and A. Cohen, Vice-Chairman; Messrs H. Sacks and L. Brewer, Hon. Treasurers, Mr G. Hackner, Hon. Secretary; Mr C. Adley, Publicity Officer and Messrs C. Davidson, M. Freed, S. Moshal, M. Woolfson and H. Zulman, Committee.<sup>142</sup> At a meeting held on March 14, 1951, under the auspices of the Women's Organisation of Seatholders, and addressed by Rabbi Swift, Mr Sternberg and Mr L. Ditz, the Chairman of the Congregation,<sup>143</sup> a Ladies' Drive Committee was set up with Mrs C. Davidson as Chairlady; Mrs C. Sternberg, Vice-Chairlady; Mrs A. Stiller, Hon. Treasurer and Mrs A. Levitt, Hon. Secretary.<sup>144</sup>

The drive for funds met with enormous success, and after only one year sufficient money had been promised or donated to enable the Congregation to move ahead with its plans for the new synagogue.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>*The Zionist Record*, March 30, 1951, p.8.

<sup>142</sup>*Hasholom*, XXIX No.7 (March, 1951), 30.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>145</sup>*The Zionist Record*, May 9, 1952, p.14.

All this time with the synagogues incapable of accommodating new members, income from seat rentals remained almost stationary whilst expenditure rose, resulting in a call for increased seat rentals. As a counter measure to the proposed increase in seat rentals an amendment was put forward at the Congregation's Annual General Meeting in 1952 calling for the reintroduction of *schnodering*, a move which was widely considered to be retrogressive and was rejected in favour of increased subscriptions.<sup>146</sup>

As plans for the new synagogue were being formulated, there was a short-lived attempt by a very small section of the Congregation's members to create a rival Congregation. In April 1952, certain dissatisfied members of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation held a meeting at the *Mnora Hotel*, attended by some 40 people, and formed a new Congregation under the chairmanship of Dr Orden, with Mr U. Stein, as Vice-Chairman, Dr Sapir as Secretary and Mr C. Lachman as Treasurer.<sup>147</sup>

Although ostensibly created as an expression of opposition to the increase in seat rentals, adopted at the half-yearly annual general meeting held on April 21, 1952,<sup>148</sup> in discussions with members of the

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<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Minutes of 7th Council Meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held at the Synagogue Chambers St. Andrew's Street, on Monday, 5th May, 1952, p.3.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*



Council of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation it was revealed that there were in fact numerous grievances and complaints against the Council, officials and the Rabbi. Without qualifying their feelings, the members of the proposed new Berea Hebrew Congregation expressed dislike of the Rabbi and dissatisfaction with the Rev. Metzger, believing his services to be unnecessary and the expenses in connection with his employment to be unjustified. In what was a faint echo of the dissentients who had created the Durban New Hebrew Congregation in 1909, the members of the proposed new Congregation took strong exception to a reference to Eastern Jewry, which had been made at the Half Annual General Meeting, and took a very dim view of the Congregation's practice of holding services for adults in only one of the synagogues on *Shabbat* and certain Festivals. Those who advocated the establishment of a new Congregation expressed dissatisfaction with the form of the services in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue and expressed a desire to conduct their own services in the Park Street Synagogue.<sup>149</sup>

The Council of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation was determined not to allow a split in the Congregation. After preliminary negotiations, it prevailed upon the Committee of the proposed new Congregation to draw up a memorandum setting out its complaints or grievances for

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<sup>149</sup> Minutes of Special Council Meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held at the Synagogue Chambers, St. Andrew's Street, on Wednesday, 28th May, 1952, at 7.45 pm., pp.1-3.

submission to the Chairman of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation.<sup>150</sup>

The Council of Natal Jewry, meanwhile, offered its services as mediator to both bodies,<sup>151</sup> and successfully worked towards achieving a satisfactory compromise between the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and the new Congregation.<sup>152</sup> Even as negotiations were continuing, however, the Berea Hebrew Congregation made preparations to hold its own services during the forthcoming High Festivals at the *Caxton Hall*, Beach Grove.<sup>153</sup>

At a meeting arranged by the Council of Natal Jewry on July 3, 1952, to discuss the rift in the Durban United Hebrew Congregation the representatives present agreed on certain principles to overcome the difficulties that existed and that fell into two categories, namely:-

- a) The desire that Park St. Synagogue should at all times be open for services.
- b) That the Seatholders of Park St.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>151</sup> Minutes of 8th Council Meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held at the Synagogue Chambers, St. Andrew's Street, on Monday, 2nd June, 1952, at 7.45 pm., pp.2-3.

<sup>152</sup> See Minutes of Special Meeting of the Council of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held at the Synagogue Chambers, St. Andrew's Street, on Thursday, 12th June, 1952, at 5.15 pm., p.2.

<sup>153</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 25, 1952, p.8.

Synagogue should have a say in the election of their President and Vice-President and, through the creation of a Services Committee, in the nature of the services.<sup>154</sup>

These principles were recorded by Mr J.J. Friedman, the President of the C.N.J., in a letter dated July 4th, 1952, and accepted by the Council of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation which then called a Special General Meeting of its members on July 31, 1952, to obtain ratification of the Council's decision. The principles recorded in Mr Friedman's letter aroused considerable discussion at the meeting, and were finally accepted on the understanding that the Youth Services at the Park St. Synagogue would not in any way be jeopardised.<sup>155</sup>

Following the Special General Meeting, a sub-committee of each Congregation, together with representatives of the Jewish Education Council, met to discuss the implementation of the meetings' decision. After lengthy discussion over the question of adult services at Park St. Synagogue on *Shabbat* morning,

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<sup>154</sup> Minutes of 9th Council Meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held at the Synagogue Chambers, St. Andrew's Street, on Monday, 7th July, 1952, at 7.45 pm., p.1.

<sup>155</sup> Minutes of Special General Meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held on Thursday, the 31st July, 1952, at the Durban Jewish Club, at 7.45 pm., pp.1-2.

arrangements were made for these services to begin early enough to be concluded by 9,30 am., which was the time that the Youth Services ordinarily began, and on the second day of a festival it was agreed that one of the Synagogues would be made available to the youth.<sup>156</sup>

Agreement was also reached over the following amendments to the Constitution and Bye-Laws, which were to be moved at the Congregation's Annual General Meeting:-

- a) an amendment to Section 7(2) of the Constitution so that that sub-section would read

"A President and Vice-President of each Synagogue to be elected from the Seatholders of each Synagogue by such Seatholders"

- b) the insertion of a new Bye-Law to be numbered 30(c) to read as follows:-

"A Service Committee shall be appointed and shall consist of the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of each Synagogue, three Seatholders from each Synagogue and a Secretary.

At each Annual General Meeting

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<sup>156</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 4th September, 1952, at 8 pm., p.3.



the Seatholders of each Synagogue shall elect their representatives to such a committee and the members of the Congregation, irrespective of the Synagogue of which such members are Seatholders, shall elect the Secretary. The members of such Committee shall elect their own Chairman. The Bye-Laws applicable to the election of the Council shall, *mutatis mutandis* apply to the election of this Committee."<sup>157</sup>

Although the Congregation's Constitution required 30 days notice to be given on any alteration to the Constitution or Bye-Laws, in **view** of the fact that these alterations had been agreed to in principle at the Special General Meeting it was assumed that members would not insist upon the requisite notice being given, which would have entailed convening a new Meeting thereby resulting in unnecessary expense and delay.<sup>158</sup> At the Congregation's Annual General Meeting on October 9 the

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<sup>157</sup> Minutes of 11th Council Meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Cong. Held at the Synagogue Chambers, St. Andrew's Street, on Thursday, 17th September, 1952, at 7.45 pm., pp.1-2.

<sup>158</sup> From a letter from the Hon. Secretary of the Congregation, dated 15th September, 1952, in Minute Book of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation.

proposed amendments were approved,<sup>159</sup> and the schism within the Congregation was satisfactorily healed.

The Congregation's decision at the same Annual General Meeting to agree to an increase in seat rentals was most timely, preventing as it did a shortfall of several thousands of pounds. It in fact enabled the Congregation to convert an almost certain deficit of £3,000 into a nominal surplus of £100.<sup>160</sup>

Concern for and interest in the Congregation was reflected in a generous gift of £5,000 from Mr and Mrs M.K. Rosenbach. The money was earmarked by the donors for religious and educational purposes. A unique feature of the distribution was that in each Sabbatical year the number of educational awards was to be increased, and at *Simchat Torah* there was to be a special celebration at which a worthy member of the Congregation would be honoured. Simultaneously, Mr and Mrs Rosenbach donated £5,000 in a Trust Fund to the University of Natal, to establish at least two annual bursaries or scholarships for worthy students.<sup>161</sup>

The receipt of this gift from Mr and Mrs Rosenbach encouraged the Council to draw up a Deed for an Endowment Fund, as it was believed that there were many congregants who would like to set aside sums for the

<sup>159</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 44-46.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.12 (August, 1952), 18-19.

future welfare of the community. A splendid start was given to the Fund by donations of varying amounts from Mrs R. Greenstone, Mrs L. Davis and Family and Mr L. Leibowitz,<sup>162</sup> and thereafter the Fund grew rapidly.<sup>163</sup>

The Council of the Congregation meanwhile made good progress with regard to the preliminary work and the planning of the new synagogue, and Messrs C.R. Fridjhon and Mr S.N. Tomkin were appointed joint architects.<sup>164</sup> It was widely anticipated that the foundation stone would be laid in 1954,<sup>165</sup> an auspicious time by virtue of the fact that it was the year in which the Congregation celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue. The Jubilee was marked by a special service at the Synagogue on September 19, which was followed by a reception at the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>166</sup>

At the Congregation's annual general meeting in October 1954, however, representatives of the Durban

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<sup>162</sup>*Ibid.*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 44.

<sup>163</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 22, 1954, p.7.

<sup>164</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 75.

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup>*The Zionist Record*, October 15, 1954, p.9.

United Hebrew Schools<sup>167</sup> and the C.N.J. reminded the Congregation of the growing support within the community for developing the *Talmud Torah* by expanding the existing educational facilities, and pointed to the progress which was being made by *Habonim* through having a *Bayit* of its own. The Congregation was urged to reconsider its plans for the building of the proposed new synagogue for it was argued that if it was to be built on the property on the corner of Essenwood and Silverton Roads then youth activities would be curtailed and there would be no possibility of extending the existing school.<sup>168</sup>

The very fact that there should have been any debate at all over the building of the synagogue on land intended for that purpose is an indication of how interrelated the different Jewish organisations of the City really were. Those representing the schools and those who spoke on behalf of the youth movements were not opponents of the Congregation but, in fact, amongst its most devoted workers, who, far from wishing to weaken

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<sup>167</sup> The Durban United Hebrew Schools comprised the nursery school, which was opened in 1947, the kindergarten, and the Standard I class, which became the nucleus of the Jewish Day School, and which was opened in 1951. All the above educational facilities were housed in premises erected on the Congregation's property in Silverton Road. The Durban United Hebrew Schools also included the afternoon classes, and the branch class and nursery school in Durban North, as well as the branch classes in the Beach area, and in Westville, Escombe and Pinetown. For a full account see Chapter XXXV below.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, October 22, 1954, p.7.



religious life, at the same time were not keen to see the synagogue develop at the expense of other institutions.

In November 1954, the Council purchased an additional half acre of land adjacent to their existing property on Silverton and Essenwood Roads, at a cost of £4,000.00, which it was envisaged would provide additional playgrounds for the schools.<sup>169</sup> The Congregation nevertheless remained divided over the question of proceeding with the building of the synagogue, Rabbi Swift in fact coming out in favour of "a school before a *shul*."<sup>170</sup>

Meetings between representatives of the schools, the Synagogue Building Sub-Committee and the Council of Natal Jewry were held, and in March 1955, and thereafter the Building Sub-Committee submitted its report to the Congregation's Council. It recommended that the new synagogue should be sited at the corner of Essenwood and Silverton Roads. Having met with representatives of the schools, the Sub-Committee reported that the representatives of the schools were opposed to the building of the synagogue on the site in question. The schools' representatives believed that future expansion of the embryonic day school would be curtailed insofar as the construction of the synagogue would

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<sup>169</sup> Report of Synagogue/School Area Requirements Commission, Presented to the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, March, 1959, p.3.

<sup>170</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 3, 1954, p.9.

deprive the school of necessary playing grounds and that it would jeopardise all hopes of the existing school serving as a nucleus for a Jewish day school. Members of *Habonim* and other youth representatives expressed anxiety at the possibility of their being deprived of their *Bayit*, which stood on the land proposed for development.

The Sub-Committee countered the criticism of its proposals by pointing out that the Synagogue was to be sited so as to provide the maximum distance from the schools and to make available the maximum area of ground for the schools. At the same time additional land had been acquired to meet the needs of the schools. The Sub-Committee's plans, furthermore, allowed for the retention of the *Bayit* as a temporary measure and for as long as the Synagogue Council would permit the building to remain.

Seven reasons were advanced by the Sub-Committee for its recommendations. Firstly the ground was originally purchased and funds were obtained for the specified purpose of building a synagogue. Secondly, the Council, when it recognised the urgent necessity for development of schools and gave precedence to the creation of the schools in Silverton Road and Durban North, had provided in its blueprint, which had been accepted by the schools, for the synagogue. The Sub-Committee was of the opinion that particularly after the acquisition of additional land more than adequate

facilities existed for the present and immediate future requirements of the school. It in fact believed that once the land at the rear of the school building was levelled there would be ample playgrounds. In the fifth instance if the school expanded into a Jewish day school, as was anticipated, then, when the time arrived it would be in the interests of the envisaged day school if it were relocated all together a large piece of land and provided with necessary amenities and facilities. The Sub-Committee was of the opinion that the financial implications of such a school were in fact beyond the means of the community. In the final analysis, the Sub-Committee believed that the delay in erecting a new synagogue had a prejudicial effect on the Congregation, which was unable to offer seating accommodation to prospective members. From within the ranks of the Congregation's membership, calls had furthermore been issued for the erection of a new synagogue, which, in the light of the condition of the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue had an added sense of urgency. The Council of the Congregation accepted the report of its Building Sub-Committee and thereafter continued with its planning of the new synagogue.<sup>171</sup>

During all this time, the regularity of congregational life was punctuated by the visits of

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<sup>171</sup> Report of Synagogue/School Area Requirements Commission Presented, to the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, March 1959, pp.3-6.

distinguished personalities, all of whom preached to the Congregation. The first of these was Rabbi Israel Brodie, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of the British Commonwealth and Empire, who arrived in Durban on May 1, 1950.<sup>172</sup> During the week that the Chief Rabbi and his wife spent in Durban, they were guests of honour at a reception at the Jewish Club, were entertained by the Mayor at a Civic Cocktail Party, and met with all sections of the community. Chief Rabbi and Mrs Brodie also took time off to visit the Jewish communities of Pietermaritzburg and Vryheid.<sup>173</sup>

On August 22, 1952, the Congregation was privileged to be addressed by Rabbi Israel Halevi Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Israel.<sup>174</sup> Rabbi Herzog had come to the Union, "to help bring about a revival of religious observance among Jews in South Africa," and to attend the Conference of the Union of Orthodox **Congregations**.<sup>175</sup> More than 650 members of the community gathered at the Jewish Club to pay their respects to **the Chief Rabbi** during his visit to the City.<sup>176</sup>

To help commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies Dr A. Cohen, the

<sup>172</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 2, 1950, p.10.

<sup>173</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 9 and 11.

<sup>174</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 22, 1952, p.8.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, August 26, 1952, p.6.

<sup>176</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 40.



noted scholar and President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, toured the Union in July 1953, delivering the principal address at nationwide celebrations in connection with the Jubilee.<sup>177</sup> On the *Shabbat* that Dr Cohen spent whilst in Durban he delivered the sermon at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue.<sup>178</sup>

Special services held in the Congregation's Synagogues during this period included those arranged to mark anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel,<sup>179</sup> and the observance of Remembrance Day for the Martyrs of the European Holocaust.<sup>180</sup> A special service was also held in 1950 to mark the *yahrtzeits* of Theodor Herzl and C.H. Bialik,<sup>181</sup> and in 1952 a memorial service was held to mark the passing of Dr Ch. Weizmann.<sup>182</sup> On the 21st Anniversary of Natal *Habonim* in May 1954, a special service was held at the Park Street Synagogue,<sup>183</sup> and a special service was held later in the year to commemorate Founders' Week of the Union of Jewish Women.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.11 (July, 1953, 8-9.

<sup>178</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 10, 1953, p.10.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, April 20, 1950, p.8., May 11, 1951, p.8., May 7, 1954, p.10.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, December 19, 1950, p.7., April 30, 1954, p.10., April 15, 1955, p.10.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, July 7, 1950, p.8.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, November 11, 1952, p.8.

<sup>183</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.10 (June, 1954), 33.

<sup>184</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 57.

On February 22, 1953, at a service in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, held in conjunction with the Durban branch of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League, a plaque in memory of Natal Jews who lost their lives on Active Service during World War II was dedicated and unveiled. The service was led by Mr S. Ernst, Hon. Chaplain of the Durban branch of the League and was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor and Mrs P. Osborn; the Chief Magistrate of Durban and Mrs van der Poel; the Officer Commanding Natal Command and Mrs Daniel; representatives of all branches of the Forces; officers of the Royal Durban Light Infantry; and members of the M.O.T.H.S. and Red Cross. The honour of unveiling the plaque was given to Mr A.B. Klipin, National President of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League.<sup>185</sup>

For the Congregation and the community there was great sadness at the passing of Dr Arthur Lindsay, a former Hon. Treasurer of the Congregation;<sup>186</sup> Mr Lionel Davis, a former President of the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue and the *Chevra Kadisha* and an honorary life member of the Congregation;<sup>187</sup> Mr Harry Lipinski,

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<sup>185</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 23, 1953, p.10., *Hasholom*, XXXI No.7 (March, 1953), 37-38.

<sup>186</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 68.

<sup>187</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.2 (October, 1951), 23 and 25.

a Trustee of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation;<sup>188</sup>  
 Mr Mark Kozinsky Rosenbach, a former President of the  
 Park Street Synagogue;<sup>189</sup> Mr Ely Magid, a former Council  
 member of the Park Street Synagogue<sup>190</sup> and  
 Mr F.C. Hollander a former President of the Durban Hebrew  
 Congregation.<sup>191</sup>

The sadness resulting from these deaths was in some  
 measure counterbalanced by the joy which followed a unique  
 ceremony in April 1951 when two *Siphrei Torah*, presented  
 by Mr and Mrs I. Phillips and Mr S. Narko, were  
 consecrated with all due ceremonial.<sup>192</sup> Similar joy  
 resulted from the presentation of a *Sepher Torah* by  
 Mr and Mrs J. Glaser in December, 1952.<sup>193</sup> A most moving  
 event for the Congregation was the presentation by the  
 Rev. W. Duxbury of three portions of an early 16th Century  
*Sefer Torah*, rescued from Hebron at the time of the Arab  
 riots in 1929.<sup>194</sup>

All sections of the Jewish community gathered in the  
 main hall of the Jewish Club in August 1955 to pay tribute  
 to Cantor and Mrs Metzger on the occasion of their silver

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.10 (June, 1952), 6-7.

<sup>189</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 8, 1954, p.5.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, October 14, 1954, p.5.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, December 6, 1955, p.5.

<sup>192</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 27, 1951, p.13.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, January 9, 1953, p.6.

<sup>194</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.7 (March, 1952), 21.

wedding anniversary. The esteem in which the Rev. and Mrs Metzger were held was reflected in the numerous presentations, the lavish tributes, and the large crowd which characterised this happy event.<sup>195</sup> Considerable satisfaction was also felt when, in 1955, the *Tanach* Circle, which had been set up a year earlier under the direction of the Rev. A.M. Kaplan, celebrated a *Siyum Hatanach*.<sup>196</sup>

In November 1955 Rabbi Swift resigned as the minister of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and accepted a call from the Jewish community in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in the United States.<sup>197</sup> In reporting on Rabbi Swift's resignation one daily newspaper, referring to the Rabbi's many achievements, noted that, "He had contributed much towards better relations between Jew and Gentile and never has the name of the Jew stood so high in Natal as it does today through the Rabbi's influence."<sup>198</sup>

The Rabbi's decision to settle in the United States resulted in part from a tour which he had undertaken of that country in 1955, in the interests of the appeal on behalf of the Rabbinical Supreme Court Building in Jerusalem. Accompanied by his wife and daughter Josephine, he had taken the opportunity, whilst in

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<sup>195</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 19, 1955, p.17.

<sup>196</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.2 (October, 1955), 25.

<sup>197</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 12, 1955, p.9.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*.



America, to visit one of his married sons who lived near the Canadian border and together with his family the Rabbi had thereafter visited Vancouver. In Vancouver the Swifts had met Rabbi E.M. Levy who had ministered in Durban from 1924 until he had left for Australia in 1935, and had become acquainted with Rabbi Levy's family. Josephine Swift and Daniel Levy, one of Rabbi Levy's two sons, who had been born in Durban, had fallen in love and before the Swifts returned to the Union they had announced their engagement. With one of their sons and a daughter in the Americas, Rabbi and Mrs Swift decided to pull up their roots in South Africa and to live nearer their children, although two other married sons were intent on remaining in Durban.<sup>199</sup>

The marriage of the children of two of Durban's Rabbis was held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue on December 11, 1955.<sup>200</sup> It afforded Rabbi and Mrs E.M. Levy an opportunity to visit their former Congregation and to observe the changes that had taken place within the community and the City itself.<sup>201</sup>

On January 6, 1956, Rabbi Swift preached his valedictory sermon, in which he called on the Jewish community to have a truer appreciation of religion and

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<sup>199</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 18, 1955, p.13.

<sup>200</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 12, 1955, p.6.

<sup>201</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.4 (January, 1956), 12-13.

its values.<sup>202</sup> The last few weeks of Rabbi and Mrs Swift's stay in Durban were very crowded as public organisations competed for the opportunity to do them honour. In a matter of four days prior to the Jewish community's farewell function, the Rabbi addressed no fewer than 11 non-Jewish meetings.<sup>203</sup> Durban Jewry said its goodbye at a community function held under the joint auspices of the Congregation and the Council of Natal Jewry, at which messages of goodwill were received from the Administrator of Natal, Archbishop Hurley, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Durban; Bishop Inman, the Anglican Bishop of Natal; the Mayor and other notable citizens.<sup>204</sup>

Two days before the Rabbi's departure on January 12, 1956, in an unprecedented step, the daily morning newspaper bade the Rabbi farewell in a lengthy editorial, which described his departure as, "a loss not only to Jewry in this Province but also to the community as a whole."<sup>205</sup> This unique tribute was a measure of the affection and respect which the Rabbi had earned during his brief ministry in Durban.

For his Congregation's part the Rabbi's association with them had also been of immeasurable importance. At the community's farewell function Mr M. Cohen, the

<sup>202</sup>*The Natal Daily News*, January 9, 1956, p.3.

<sup>203</sup>*Hasholom*, XXXIV No.4 (January, 1956), 22.

<sup>204</sup>*The Zionist Record*, January 20, 1956, p.13.

<sup>205</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, January 10, 1956, p.8.

Chairman of the Congregation made reference to the Rabbi's valedictory sermon. He said that he felt that the questions which the Rabbi had posed, as to whether the Durban Jewish community revered the name of G-d more highly, regarded the *Torah* with added reverence, were more devout in their prayers, and warmer in their instinct to charity than prior to his arrival, could be answered in the affirmative.<sup>206</sup>

Whilst the emotion of the moment and the general tendency to laud those who resign from public office may have exaggerated the influence which the Rabbi had made on the religious life of his congregants, there was no doubt at all that he had served as an inspiring example and a worthy spokesman for Jewry and that he would be sorely missed.

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<sup>206</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.4 (January, 1956), 23.

## CHAPTER XXXII

REFORM JUDAISM TAKESROOT IN DURBAN : 1947 - 1955

The first steps, taken in 1947, towards the creation of a Reform Congregation in Durban heralded the end of the religious uniformity of Durban Jewry and the complete dominance of Orthodox Judaism in the City. Through the efforts of the community's leaders religious diversity was not, however, allowed to result in communal disunity, and unity without uniformity came to characterise the Jewish community of Durban.

The inception of the Reform Congregation actually dates from November 16, 1947, when a small group of people interested in Reform Judaism met at the home of Mr and Mrs Mervyn Gild, where they were addressed by Rabbi Dr M.C. Weiler, who had founded the Reform Movement in South Africa some fourteen years earlier. On his visit to Durban the Rabbi was accompanied by Mr I. Greenberg, the Vice-President of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism, and Mr H. Isaacs, the President of the Reform Congregation in Johannesburg. Many of those present at the meeting were in fact related to Mr Greenberg, including his brother Charles, and his nephews Theo. Greenberg, Cliff Rosenthal and



Mervyn Gild. Mr Isaacs' brother, Major Edgar Isaacs, also came to be closely associated with the Movement in Durban.<sup>1</sup>

A provisional committee was formed, consisting of Mr M. Gild, Chairman; Mr G. Jacob, Vice-Chairman; Mr P. Abro, Secretary; and Mr A. Levy, Treasurer. It immediately went ahead with plans for the creation of a branch of the Reform Movement in Durban even going so far as to choose a name for the Temple that it hoped one day to establish.<sup>2</sup>

Had it not been for the disruption of the war Reform Judaism would most probably have come to the City many years earlier. As it was, however, the pioneers of Reform in Durban were extremely fortunate, in that when they did decide to establish a Congregation they were not an isolated community, but had the support and enjoyed the assistance of other established Reform Congregations throughout the Union.<sup>3</sup> This therefore made it easier for them to persevere in the face of criticism and condemnation which they encountered from leaders of the existing Orthodox Congregation in the

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Richards "Durban Reform Congregation Plays an Important Role," in *South African Jewish Times*, April 2, 1971, p.37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.3 (November, 1948), 5.

City, and from individual members of the community.<sup>4</sup>

The inaugural meeting of the Durban Jewish Reform Congregation was held at the Jewish Club on May 10, 1948. After an address by Rabbi Weiler, the new Congregation adopted a Constitution, drawn up by Mr Roy Fenhalls, and elected a committee. The Committee consisted of Mr M.Gild, President; Mr G. Jacob, Vice-President; Mr A. Levy, Treasurer; Mr C.A. Rosenthal, Secretary; Mesdames C. Davidson, P. Abro, C. Fineberg and M. Gild and Messrs P. Abro, T. Greenberg, E. Leonard, J. Levy, J. Lewison, A. Bierman and Major E. Isaacs, Committee.<sup>5</sup>

The Congregation immediately sought affiliation with the South African Union of Progressive Judaism, and was in fact represented at the annual Council meeting of the Union in Cape Town in August, 1948, where Mr Gild was elected to the Union's Governing Body.<sup>6</sup> The Congregation also applied for, and was granted, affiliation to the Council of Natal Jewry.<sup>7</sup>

On the *Shabbat* evening preceding the High Holy Days in 1948, the Reform Congregation in Durban held its inaugural service at the *Caxton Hall*, in Beach Grove,

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<sup>4</sup> Isaac Richards, in *South African Jewish Times*, April 2, 1971, p.37., *Hasholom* XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 23.

<sup>5</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 18, 1948, p.17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, August 13, 1948, p.24.

<sup>7</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 15.

off Smith Street. Rabbi M.C. Weiler officiated at the service and was assisted by Mr S. Flaks, a lay reader of the Congregation. The historic *Shabbat* service commenced with the lighting of the candles, in candlesticks presented by Mrs Jack Saul of Johannesburg, and during the service two *Siphrei Torah*, which were presented by Mr M. Gild and Mr A. Levy, the President and Vice-President respectively, were dedicated. The choir was under the direction of its organist, Mr Newman, and was assisted in its formation by Mr Jerry Idelson, Hon. Director of Music of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism. The members of the choir were Miss P. Seligman, Mrs R. Goodman, Mr R. Lurie and Mr H. Steafel.

All the necessary arrangements for the High Festival services were carried out by the Rev. I. Richards, of the Reform Congregation in Johannesburg, who then returned to Temple Israel in Johannesburg, so as to enable Rabbi Weiler to be present at the *Rosh Hashonah* services in Durban. *Shabbat Shuvah* and *Yom Kippur* services were conducted at the *Carlton Hall* by Mr B. Stalson, the General Secretary of the Reform Congregation in Johannesburg.<sup>8</sup> The active interest which was shown by the Mother Congregation, and its direct involvement in these first services of the small Reform Congregation in Durban, no doubt went a long way

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.3 (November, 1948), 5.

to ensure the success which accompanied them.

In the following year the Congregation again held services for the High Holy Days and *Shabbat Shuvah* in the *Carton Hall*, which were conducted by the Rev. I. Richards, of Johannesburg.<sup>9</sup> The historical significance of these services was enhanced by the celebration of the Congregation's first *barmitzvah* on *Rosh Hashonah*, Saturday, September 24. The celebrant was Alan Gild, the son of the Congregation's President Mr M. Gild and Mrs Gild.<sup>10</sup>

In the months that followed the Congregation made great advances, beginning with the purchase of a property at 364 Ridge Road in December 1949,<sup>11</sup> on the recommendation of the building committee, of which Major E. Isaacs was the chairman.<sup>12</sup> In January 1950, the Congregation, as an established branch of the Reform Movement, was represented at the 3rd Biennial Conference of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism, held in Cape Town, and Mr M. Gild was elected to the National Executive.<sup>13</sup>

March 28, 1950, saw the inauguration of the Congregation's Sisterhood, at a meeting at the Jewish

<sup>9</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 23, 1949, p.21.

<sup>10</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 23, 1949, p.13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, March 23, 1951, p.13.

<sup>12</sup> Isaac Richards, in *South African Jewish Times*, April 2, 1971, p.37.

<sup>13</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 20, 1950, p.16.



Club addressed by Mrs Toby Fischgrund, the Chairman of the Sisterhood of the United Jewish Reform Congregation of Johannesburg and Mrs Ethel Smith, the Secretary. The first Executive of the Durban Sisterhood consisted of Mrs V. Friede, Chairman; Mrs M. Leonard, Vice-Chairman; Mrs S. Levy, Hon. Treasurer; Mrs B. Ahrenson, Hon. Secretary; Mrs F. Levy, Assistant Secretary; Mrs T. Gild, wife of the President, ex-officio; Mesdames Abrahamson, B. Bransky, E. Celine Goldberg, R. Greenberg, Hart, L. Leuw, R. Saul, N. Saul, Committee.<sup>14</sup>

The Sisterhood, whose primary purpose was to bind together the women members of the Congregation, saw not only to the needs of the Congregation in respect of catering, fundraising etc., but also ran a successful sewing section which sold many of the articles produced. Almost immediately the Sisterhood embarked on a programme of social welfare activity which included sick visiting<sup>15</sup> and also organised a number of successful cultural programmes through its Get-Together Club.<sup>16</sup> Within the wider community the Sisterhood extended assistance to the Zulu children of the Chesterville Nursery School and

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, April 7, 1950, p.4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, December 14, 1951, p.14.

<sup>16</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 59., *Ibid.*, XXXV No.1 (August, 1956), 67.

supported the ToCH T.B. Settlement at Botha's Hill.<sup>17</sup> It co-operated closely with the Union of Jewish Women<sup>18</sup> and the Durban Women's Zionist League,<sup>19</sup> and was also affiliated to the Jewish Women's Guild<sup>20</sup> and the Council of Natal Jewry.<sup>21</sup> The Sisterhood not only became highly respected amongst the Jewish women's organisations in Durban but, through its contact with Gentile societies, and by the nature of its work within the community at large, it made a significant contribution to public relations.

Following agreement by some twenty congregants to guarantee the salary of a Rabbi for one year<sup>22</sup> a call was issued to Rabbi Meyer Miller by the South African Union for Progressive Judaism. The Rabbi, a native of New York City, had, from the time of his graduation from the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, in 1936, served as spiritual leader of Greenwich Hebrew Institute in Connecticut, except for an interval from

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<sup>17</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 40.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.10 (June, 1952), 43.

<sup>19</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 11, 1952, p.12., *Hasholom*, XXXII No.5 (January, 1954), 18., *The Zionist Record*, January 13, 1956, p.15.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, December 14, 1951, p.14.

<sup>21</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry, To be Presented at the 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at 8 pm., p.9.

<sup>22</sup> Isaac Richards in *South African Jewish Times*, April 2, 1971, p.37.

1942 to 1946 when he saw active service as a chaplain in Europe and the East. During his ministry in Greenwich he had served both the Jewish and General community through his membership of a wide range of organisations and service bodies. His wife Mrs Shulamith Wittenberg-Miller was a Palestinian who had already established herself as an artist of note.<sup>23</sup>

Accompanied by their three children, the Millers arrived by air in Johannesburg on June 28, 1950. Prior to their departure for Durban, the Rabbi, together with Mr M. Gild, the President of the Durban Congregation, participated in a service of welcome at Temple Israel in Johannesburg on the Friday following the Rabbi's arrival.<sup>24</sup> On August 6, Rabbi Miller took part in a service held in connection with the opening of the Temple *Shalom* in Johannesburg.<sup>25</sup>

The Rabbi and his family arrived in Durban on August 8.<sup>26</sup> They were warmly welcomed at a communal function that same evening at the Jewish Club, at which speeches were delivered by Mr R. McGregor, the Consul for the United States; Mr J.J. Friedman, the President of the Council of Natal Jewry; Mr M. Gild, the President of the Reform Congregation, Mrs V. Friede,

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<sup>23</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.11 (July, 1950), 13.

<sup>24</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 7, 1950, p.8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, July 28, 1950, p.6.

<sup>26</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, August 8, 1950, p.3.

the President of Sisterhood and Mr M. Wolpert, on behalf of the President of the Jewish Club.<sup>27</sup>

The keynote of all the addresses was the hope that the spirit of unity always evidenced by Durban Jewry would in no way be impaired by the creation of the Reform Congregation and the arrival of a Rabbi. Rabbi Miller's arrival did, however, fill certain members of the Jewish community with some anxiety and trepidation, marking as it did, the definite emergence of a Reform group in the City. Some of the community were unwilling to divorce their spiritual attachments from their desire to serve the community at large and were enormously critical of Reform, rejecting its approach to Judaism out of a sense of commitment to the tenets of Orthodoxy. The Rabbi of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation Rabbi Swift made clear his disapproval of Reform,<sup>28</sup> and published a booklet in 1951 under the title, *Reform Judaism, Anarchy in Religion and a Danger to South African Jewry*.<sup>29</sup>

Durban Jewry generally, however, accepted the existence of Reform in the City with little outward manifestation of opposition. Social relationships with

<sup>27</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 18.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes of 3rd Council Meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue Chambers, on Monday, 4th December, 1950, at 7.45 pm., p.3.

<sup>29</sup> In the archives of the South African Zionist Federation (Natal).



members of the newly-founded community remained cordial, with members of the Reform Congregation continuing unhindered to play their part in communal life. The C.N.J. actively sought to check any manifestation of communal discord in consequence of the creation of a Reform Congregation, refusing to be prejudiced towards either of the two Congregations. At the same time, however, the Council had to bear in mind when making plans for the community as a whole that the vast majority of the members of the Jewish community of Natal subscribed to Orthodoxy.<sup>30</sup>

It is an interesting fact that, whereas the community generally was not noted for its strict adherence to Orthodox observance, it nevertheless did not overwhelmingly switch its religious allegiance. This may have been due to the fact that many of the members of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, although not totally committed to Orthodoxy, were either first or second generation South Africans, for whom the traditional form of worship was still an integral part of their conscious or even their sub-conscious. Furthermore, their failure to adhere to the totality of *Torah* laws was not necessarily an indication of their rejection of these laws, or an expression of dissatisfaction with these laws, but very possibly, a sign of their inability for practical or other reasons

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<sup>30</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 11, 1951, p.9.

to live according to the laws upheld by their Congregation. The fact that the community generally was not totally bound up with Orthodox living no doubt made it easier though for them to accept the creation of a Reform Congregation without any of the bitterness felt by those who, staunchly faithful in their observance, regarded Reform as a deviation from Judaism.

On Friday evening, August 25, 1950, Rabbi Miller officially began his duties with his new Congregation in Durban. That evening he participated, together with Rabbi Weiler, Mr V. Brasch, Vice-President of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism, and leading members of the Congregation in the consecration of a room in the house, standing on the Congregation's property, in Ridge Road, as a Prayer Room, and thereafter conducted a regular Sabbath eve service. The following morning the Congregation, held its first *Shabbat* morning service in its newly consecrated Prayer Room and also inaugurated its children's Sabbath services.<sup>31</sup>

The ceremony of the laying of the Foundation Stones of Temple David took place on Sunday afternoon August 27, in the presence of a distinguished gathering which included the Administrator of Natal, Mr D.G. Shepstone; the Mayor of Durban Councillor K.J. Clarke; Members of the City Council, Mr J.J. Friedman, President of the C.N.J.;

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<sup>31</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.2 (October, 1950), 16.

Mr J. Goldberg, Chairman of the Zionist Council; the Rev. V. Inman, the Venerable Archdeacon of Durban; the Rev. Hadley Parks of the Congregational Church; Mr Simon Roy, President of the Cape Town Jewish Reform Congregation; Mr S. Geffen, President of the United Jewish Reform Congregation of Johannesburg; Mrs S. F. Fischgrund, President of the Johannesburg Sisterhood, and Mr V.H. Brasch, Vice-President of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism. The Temple's Foundation Stones were laid by Rabbi Dr Weiler, Life President of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism, and Mr M. Gild, the President of the Congregation.<sup>32</sup> A weekend of intense activity for the Durban Jewish Reform Congregation reached its climax on Sunday morning, August 27, when Rabbi Weiler inducted Rabbi Miller into office, at a ceremony in the Scottish Masonic Temple.<sup>33</sup>

Only a week after the Foundation Stones were laid, the offices of the Congregation's Council and Executive had been moved to their permanent premises at the Temple David Centre, which was located at the back of the Temple proper.<sup>34</sup> Less than eight weeks after the foundations of the new Temple were poured, sufficient progress had been made in the construction of the building to enable

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<sup>32</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 28, 1950, p.11., *The Natal Daily News*, August 28, 1950, p.7.

<sup>33</sup>*Hasholom*, XXIX No.2 (October, 1950), 19.

<sup>34</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, September 1, 1950, p.8.

the Congregation to hold services in its new spiritual home. On September 9, the *Barmitzvah* of Gordon Seef was celebrated at the Temple David,<sup>35</sup> and on September 11, the Jewish New Year, 5711 was ushered in by a large Congregation at the Temple, which heard Rabbi Miller call in his sermon for a renewal for "Reverence for Life."<sup>36</sup>

The Temple David was dedicated on Friday evening, March 23, 1951, the honour of opening the Temple doors being given to Mr J. Heilbron, the Chairman of the Building Committee. The service, conducted by Rabbi M. Miller, Rabbi M.C. Weiler, Rabbi D. Sherman from Cape Town, and the Rev. I. Richards from Port Elizabeth, was attended by the Mayor of Durban, Councillor P. Osborn, and representatives of Jewish organisations in Durban led by Mr J.J. Friedman, the President of the C.N.J. After the service a large crowd attended a celebratory dinner at the *Athlone Hotel*, as the facilities at the Temple were not yet adequate for such a large undertaking.<sup>37</sup>

Among those present at the Dedication Ceremony and Service were representatives of the Reform Congregations of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria, Springs and Port Elizabeth, most of whom were delegates to the

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, September 2, 1950, p.15.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, September 12, 1950, p.13.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, March 23, 1951, p.13., March 26, 1951, p.10., *Hasholom*, XXIX No.8 (April, 1951), 20-21.



Conferences of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism, the South African Council for Progressive Jewish Education, the Central Ecclesiastical Board and the South African Union of Temple Sisterhoods, which were hosted by Temple David during that same weekend of March 23-25.

At the Conference of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism Mr M. Gild was elected the Provincial Vice-President for Natal and Mr A. Levy, the Vice-President of the Congregation, and Mr J. Heilbron were elected to the Governing Body. Mr H. Friede was elected Provincial Vice-President of the South African Council for Progressive Jewish Education and Rabbi Miller was chosen to serve on the Council. Mrs V. Friede the Chairman of the Sisterhood of Temple David was made a Vice-President of the South African Union of Temple Sisterhoods.<sup>38</sup> As it had been since its inception the Durban Reform Congregation was thus intimately involved in all national bodies concerned with the advancement of Progressive Judaism in South Africa.

The Reform Congregation, once established in Durban and permanently settled in its own Centre, enjoyed a period of growth and development. Rabbi Miller, the Congregation's soft spoken, bespectacled minister, through his communal involvement, earned the respect of the entire community, whilst his own congregants came to

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<sup>38</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 4, 1951, p.12.

love him for the spiritual leadership and gentle counsel that he gave them.

Not long after his arrival in 1950, the Rabbi began Hebrew and religion classes for the children of the Congregation. These classes were held at the Centre three times a week, the attendance of children from outlying districts being ensured by the arrangement of transportation by Mrs E. Leonard and Mrs V. Friede. By December 1950, the Rabbi was able to report that the children were able to perform the whole *Shabbat* service and had also staged a successful *Chanukah* concert,<sup>39</sup> which, in fact, became an annual feature of the school's calendar.<sup>40</sup>

With the opening of the school term in January 1952, the Temple David Hebrew and Religious Schools' classes not only continued to be held at the Temple David Centre on Monday and Wednesday afternoons and *Shabbat* mornings, but now also came to be conducted at a branch school in Durban North.<sup>41</sup> Through the courtesy of the Principal, the branch school of the Temple held lessons on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons in a classroom at the Durban North Primary School.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 13.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, XXX No.5 (January, 1952), 40., and *The Zionist Record*, January 9, 1953, p.17.

<sup>41</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 22, 1952, p.8.

<sup>42</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 64.

For the adult members of the Congregation the Rabbi arranged Hebrew classes,<sup>43</sup> a variety of lectures,<sup>44</sup> and a weekly Bible Reading Group, which met on Tuesdays from 5.15 to 6.15 pm.<sup>45</sup> A House Committee, assisted by the Sisterhood, organised numerous social functions including quizzes, film evenings, children's parties, *braaiivleis* and flannel dances.<sup>46</sup>

Under the Rabbi's direction Congregational life was intensified and enriched. In April 1951 the Rabbi led the first Congregational *Seder* at the Temple David Centre, which was attended by close on 100 participants.<sup>47</sup> The charge for admission to the *Seder* was 12/6 for adults and 7/6 for children,<sup>48</sup> and whilst succeeding years saw an increase in the tariff the Congregational *Seder* remained a popular annual institution.<sup>49</sup>

The *Shavuot* Eve Service on June 9, 1951 saw Leslye Abrahamson and Deborah Miller confirmed as the

<sup>43</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 13.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, and *The Natal Mercury*, June 18, 1951, p.8., *Hasholom*, XXX No.8 (April, 1952), 35.

<sup>45</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 64.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, and *The Natal Mercury*, October 31, 1953, p.8.

<sup>47</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 19.

<sup>48</sup> *Hasholom*, III No.13 (September, 1978), 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 40., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 67., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 59.

first *B'not Mitzvah* of the Congregation.<sup>50</sup> Thereafter it became customary for *Batmitzvah* services at the Temple to be held on *Shavuot*.<sup>51</sup> Services generally were held at the Temple on Sabbaths and Festivals, the service on *Shabbat* morning taking the form of a Youth Service. In 1951 it was estimated that attendance at the main services of the week on *Shabbat* Eve averaged about 60 people, with generally twice as many men present as women.<sup>52</sup> A feature of the religious services in Temple David, as in all Reform Congregations, was the choir and organ.<sup>53</sup> Under the direction of Mr W. Schnabel a Junior Choir was formed in 1952, as an offshoot of the Choir proper, and it participated in the weekly *Shabbat* morning services conducted by the youth.<sup>54</sup>

In 1952 the contentious matter of a burial ground for Reform Jews was settled by the allocation of a portion of the main Jewish Cemetery at Stellawood to the Reform Congregation. On April 20 this newly-acquired land was consecrated by Rabbi Miller in a ceremony to which the entire Jewish community was invited.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, June 8, 1951, p.15.

<sup>51</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 67.

<sup>52</sup>*The Zionist Record*, November 23, 1951, p.7.

<sup>53</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXI No.1 (September, 1952), 64.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, April 18, 1952, p.13.



Responsibility for the cemetery was assumed by the Congregation's own Burial Committee, which was formed early in 1949 with Mr E. Leonard as Chairman and Mr T. Greenberg as Vice-Chairman. Mr Greenberg subsequently served as Chairman for many years.<sup>56</sup> Until agreement had been reached with the Orthodox Congregation over the question of a burial ground Reform burials were conducted by the *Chevra Kadisha* and officials of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, in the recognised Orthodox manner, in terms of an agreement arrived at after negotiations between the Reform Congregation, the Council of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and the *Chevra Kadisha*.<sup>57</sup> When, in 1950, the question arose of extending the existing Jewish cemetery and discussions on the matter with Municipal officials had taken place,<sup>58</sup> the representatives of the Reform Congregation, the *Chevra Kadisha* and the Council of the Orthodox Congregation agreed that the most desirable arrangement was to allocate to the Reform Congregation a portion of the ground that was being

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<sup>56</sup> *Hasholom*, III No.13 (September, 1978), 1.

<sup>57</sup> Report of Meeting Held in Committee Room of the Durban Jewish Club, on Tuesday, 21st September, 1948, Commencing at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>58</sup> Minutes of 12th Council Meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue Chambers, on Monday, 4th September, 1950, at 7.45 pm., p.2.

applied for from the City Council.<sup>59</sup> The Durban United Hebrew Congregation meanwhile agreed that the existing position in regard to burials of Reform members would continue until the grant of the new site.<sup>60</sup> The funerals of those members of the Reform Congregation who wished to be cremated were arranged exclusively by the Reform's Burial Committee at the Crematorium at Stellawood,<sup>61</sup> as the Orthodox *Chevra Kadisha* would have no part in such rites. Upon the acquisition by the Reform of its own cemetery, a Prayer House was built through the efforts of Mr G. Saul, Mr J. Maehler and Mr B. Brazil<sup>62</sup> and a Wall of Remembrance was erected.<sup>63</sup>

With the introduction of late Friday night services once a month an *Oneg Shabbat* would be held after the service in the Temple Centre during which symposia, discussions and lectures took place.<sup>64</sup> This served to

<sup>59</sup> Minutes of 1st Council Meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue Chambers, on Monday, 23rd October, 1950, at 7.45 pm., p.1.

<sup>60</sup> Minutes of 2nd Council Meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue Chambers on Monday, 6th November, 1950, at 7.45 pm., p.1.

<sup>61</sup> See funeral notices of Gordon Rothschild Jacob (*The Natal Mercury*, July 25, 1951, p.13.), Henry Barney Lee (*Ibid.*, January 17, 1952, p.13.), Charles Godfrey Rosenstein (*Ibid.*, March 11, 1952, p.13.).

<sup>62</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 67.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 59.

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

increase attendances and to foster a closeness of spirit amongst the Congregants. The closeness generated by communal worship was sustained by the distribution of a monthly publication, the *Temple David Review*, in which news related to the Temple and its members was recorded.<sup>65</sup>

Within the Temple special services were held during the illness and on the death of King George VI,<sup>66</sup> and on June 25, 1954, a Civic *Shabbat* Service was held, attended by the Mayor Councillor Osborn and several City Councillors.<sup>67</sup> Memorial services were held to mark the death of Dr Weizmann,<sup>68</sup> and in connection with the Jewish Day of Mourning for the Victims of the Nazi Holocaust.<sup>69</sup> Among the guests who participated in the Congregation's Sabbath services were Mr Hyman, Minister Plenipotentiary for Israel,<sup>70</sup> and Col. Sir Louis Gluckman, the President of the Liberal Synagogue in London, and Lady Gluckman.<sup>71</sup>

As part of the nationwide South African Union for Progressive Judaism, the Durban Jewish Reform Congregation was

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 67.

<sup>66</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 25, 1951, p.10., February 15, 1952, p.8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, June 25, 1954, p.10., *The Zionist Record*, July 9, 1954, p.7.

<sup>68</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, November 10, 1952, p.6.

<sup>69</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 29, 1954, p.10.

<sup>70</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.12 (August, 1952), 38.

<sup>71</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 59.

represented by Rabbi Miller at the Union's Conference in Pretoria in June, 1952.<sup>72</sup> From November 27-29, 1953 the Congregation hosted the 10th National Conference of the Union,<sup>73</sup> which was opened by Councillor S.A. Robinson, the Deputy Mayor of Durban. The Congregation was greatly honoured by the election of Mr J. Heilbron, its Hon. Life President, as President of the South African for Progressive Judaism, whilst Mr M. Gild, the Congregation's Hon. Life President, was made a Vice-President of the Union. Mrs Thelma Gild was equally honoured by her election as President of the South African Union of Temple Sisterhoods.<sup>74</sup>

During his address to Conference Rabbi Weiler called for Jewry to expand its activities into the wider community.<sup>75</sup> As if in anticipation of this call the Durban Jewish Reform Congregation had in April 1953 collected £700 for the Toch T.B. Settlement at Botha's Hill. At a ceremony at the Temple David Centre, attended by the distinguished author Alan Paton, several City Councillors and Dr McKenzie, the Supervisor of the Settlement; Mr J. Heilbron, the President of the Congregation, presented the money to Padre E.W. Evans.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 4, 1952, p.14.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, November 27, 1953, p.10.

<sup>74</sup>*The Zionist Record*, January 13, 1954, p.13.

<sup>75</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, November 28, 1953, p.4.

<sup>76</sup>*Hasholom*, XXXI No.8 (April, 1953), 32.



In October 1953 the ward erected at the Settlement through the generosity of the members of Temple David was dedicated in the presence of a large number of congregants.<sup>77</sup> The Sisterhood maintained its interest in the Settlement by arranging for the distribution of gifts to all children in the hospital twice a year.<sup>78</sup>

At the Annual General Meeting of the Congregation, in August 1954, Rabbi Miller announced that, when his term of office expired in June 1955, he did not intend to renew his contract, but would return to the United States with his family.<sup>79</sup> This news was received with considerable regret, as both the Rabbi and his wife, who had come to be widely known through her exhibitions of her art,<sup>80</sup> had in the space of four years come to be loved by their Congregation and highly respected by the community. Considerable satisfaction was therefore felt when the Executive Committee of the Congregation was able to prevail upon the Rabbi to withdraw his decision not to renew his contract.<sup>81</sup>

With the question of its spiritual leadership satisfactorily settled, the Congregation confidently

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 35.

<sup>78</sup> Isaac Richards in *South African Jewish Times*, April 2, 1971, p.38.

<sup>79</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 13, 1954, p.15.

<sup>80</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 29., *The Natal Mercury*, November 9, 1951, p.14., *The Zionist Record*, December 14, 1951, p.14.

<sup>81</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.3 (November, 1954), 9.

looked ahead towards greater development and an intensification of its efforts in the interests of Reform Judaism.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

A DECADE OF  
ENORMOUS SIGNIFICANCE : 1945 - 1955

For Jewry in South Africa the ten years that followed the end of the war were characterised by events of enormous historical significance abroad, and important political developments at home, all of which had a profound effect on the community.

On the conclusion of hostilities in 1945, the Jews of Durban found themselves beset by many of the problems which faced a war ravaged world. Even as plans were being made to try former Nazi leaders at Nuremberg,<sup>1</sup> steps were taken to meet the prevailing post-war hardships. In support of the people of Great Britain who were severely hampered by food shortages and rationing, a fund was opened by the Mayor of Durban, Mr Rupert Ellis Brown, in September 1945.<sup>2</sup> Members of the Jewish community contributed generously to this

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<sup>1</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, August 30, 1945, p.7. See also *Ibid.*, September 24, 1945, p.6., September 25, 1945, p.8., September 29, 1945, p.7., October 3, 1945, p.8., October 4, 1945, p.8., October 17, 1945, p.8., November 2, 1945, p.8., November 17, 1945, p.10.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, September 14, 1945, p.7.

fund,<sup>3</sup> which also benefited from the proceeds of a play presented by the Dramatic Section of the Jewish Club.<sup>4</sup> An appeal on behalf of English school children who had, during the war, been deprived of toys, games and sports goods elicited a warm response from the Circle Tennis Club which contributed its accumulation of thirteen dozen balls, and later donated a further eleven dozen.<sup>5</sup>

Concern for those in the United Kingdom was coupled with growing anxiety over the problems of inadequate housing, food shortages and unemployment at home. Members of the Jewish community were urged to play their part in assisting the ex-servicemen<sup>6</sup> and other sections of the population, and they responded affirmatively to this call. Food was in particularly short supply during this period with meat supplies non-existent by the end of 1945.<sup>7</sup>

The Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women, in

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8., September 17, 1945, p.6., September 20, 1945, p.8., September 24, 1945, p.6., September 25, 1945, p.9., September 26, 1945, p.9., September 27, 1945, p.5., September 29, 1945, p.9., October 3, 1945, p.11., October 5, 1945, p.5., October 10, 1945, p.10., October 11, 1945, p.5., October 23, 1945, p.5., November 8, 1945, p.11.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, September 17, 1945, p.7., October 12, 1945, p.5.

<sup>5</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.7 (March, 1946), 41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945, 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 28, 1945, p.7., January 1, 1946, p.9., January 7, 1946, p.9., January 9, 1946, p.9., January 14, 1946, p.8., January 19, 1946, p.9.



an attempt to help alleviate malnutrition amongst Coloured and African children, set up a Soup Kitchen in September 1945, under the convenership of Mesdames B. Hyams and D. Driman.<sup>8</sup> The Soup Kitchen operated three days a week and functioned from an outhouse at the *Mayville Hotel*. In addition to feeding children the Kitchen cared for expectant mothers, elderly people and cases sent by various welfare societies,<sup>9</sup> and by January 1946, it was helping about 750 people a week.<sup>10</sup>

The food shortage was compounded by a drought throughout the country which prompted a nationwide observance of a day of humiliation and prayer for rain. Whilst members of the Baptist, Methodist and Congregational Churches held services in their respective places of worship, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation held a service at the Park St. Synagogue, on January 9, 1946.<sup>11</sup> The Union's wheat reserves continued to drop, however, and warnings of a critical food shortage in South Africa were sounded in the House of Commons in London.<sup>12</sup> The gravity of the situation was reflected in reports that the South African Government was considering

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<sup>8</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.12 (August, 1946), 13.

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

<sup>10</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 26, 1946, p.9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, January 9, 1946, p.8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, February 15, 1946, p.9.

the far reaching step of food rationing.<sup>13</sup> In appeals to the nation by the Prime Minister and other public figures the country was urged to conserve food and especially cereals. To these appeals was added the personal appeal of Rabbi A.H. Freedman, who called for economy at public functions when large amounts of food were generally wasted.<sup>14</sup>

Rabbi Freedman concerned himself with many aspects of post-war rehabilitation. He served on the committee of the "Children of Britain" Fund, which set up under the auspices of the Children's World Community Chest, to help relieve the post-war hardships that faced the people of the United Kingdom.<sup>15</sup> Later he came to be appointed to the Executive of the Mayor's Committee of the Parcels for Britain Fund, which worked for the same objective.<sup>16</sup>

Problems at home were compounded for the Jewish community, and for Jews generally, by the troubled state of affairs in Palestine. With millions of Europe's Jewry murdered and many left homeless, the call for the withdrawal of the White Paper and the admission of displaced Jews to Palestine came to be heard all over the world, Durban Jewry echoing this call.<sup>17</sup> The efforts of

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, February 19, 1946, p.9.

<sup>14</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.8 (April, 1946), 9.

<sup>15</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 8, 1947, p.8.

<sup>16</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.8 (April, 1948), 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 3-4.

Zionist leaders to bring about a change in the law was countered by Arab opposition to unrestricted Jewish immigration.<sup>18</sup> As preliminary attempts were made at finding an equitable solution, unrest and violence directed against the British swept Palestine.<sup>19</sup> In defiance of the Mandatory authorities illegal Jewish immigrants were smuggled into the country by the *Haganah*,<sup>20</sup> whilst the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* engaged in acts of aggression against British targets.<sup>21</sup>

As a joint British and American Commission on Palestine worked to arrive at a solution to the manifold problems posed by conflicting interests in Palestine, reports of Jewish underground activity against the British military continued to be received.<sup>22</sup> Publication of the Commission's Report in May 1946,<sup>23</sup> failed to satisfy the Jewish or Arab communities of Palestine and led to an intensification of *Irgun*

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<sup>18</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 25, 1945, p.7., October 2, 1945, p.7.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, (New York, 1976), p.566., *The Natal Mercury*, October 11, 1945, p.7., October 12, 1945, p.7., November 2, 1945, p.7., November 15, 1945, p.7., November 16, 1945, p.7., November 26, 1945, p.9.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.567-568., *The Natal Mercury*, December 27, 1945, p.7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, December 28, 1945, p.7., December 29, 1945, p.9., January 4, 1946, p.7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, January 21, 1946, p.7., January 22, 1946, p.8., February 27, 1946, p.9., March 7, 1946, p.11., April 4, 1946, p.9., April 27, 1946, p.11.

<sup>23</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.570-571., *The Natal Mercury*, May 1, 1946, p.9.

activity, culminating in an attack on the *King David Hotel*, which served as the Administrative Headquarters of the British Army.<sup>24</sup> The struggle waged by the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* against the British in fact prevailed until the United Nations decision, in November 1947, to partition Palestine.<sup>25</sup> Thereafter, it evolved into a struggle between the Jewish and Arab sections of the population,<sup>26</sup> which reached its climax with the proclamation of the State of Israel in May 1948.<sup>27</sup>

Political upheaval abroad was to some extent paralleled by political circumstances at home, which, during the corresponding period, went through a time of dramatic and equally far reaching consequence.

With the termination of hostilities in Europe, Col. C.F. Stallard, Union Minister of Mines and Leader of the Dominion Party, tendered his resignation from the Cabinet and withdrew his party from the national wartime

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<sup>24</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.571-572., *The Natal Mercury*, July 23, 1946, p.7.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.582., *The Natal Mercury*, November 26, 1947, p.1.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.582-584., *The Natal Mercury*, December 4, 1947, p.9., December 9, 1947, p.9., December 23, 1947, p.9., December 31, 1947, p.9., January 3, 1948, p.11., January 7, 1948, p.9., February 2, 1948, p.9., February 23, 1948, p.9., March 1, 1948, p.9., March 12, 1948, p.9., April 1, 1948, p.9., April 7, 1948, p.9., April 23, 1948, p.11., April 26, 1948, p.9., May 10, 1948, p.9.

<sup>27</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.585., *The Natal Mercury*, May 15, 1948, p.11.



coalition Government.<sup>28</sup> The Dominion Party's withdrawal from General Smuts's Government prompted Mr Abe Goldberg the M.P. for Umlazi to resign from the Party,<sup>29</sup> "because he could not any longer believe that he could serve South Africa during the exciting days ahead within the ranks of the Dominion Party."<sup>30</sup> At public meetings held in different halls throughout the constituency<sup>31</sup> Mr J.S. Marwick, M.P. for Pinetown, criticised Mr Goldberg for his action and for his having broken his pledge to oppose Indian penetration amongst the European and Native populations, in defiance of Party policy, and for having come out instead in support of extending the municipal franchise to Asiatics. The mood of Mr Goldberg's constituents was reflected in the motions of no confidence in him which were passed at each of the meetings.<sup>32</sup> Mr Goldberg wrote to Col. Stallard, the retiring leader of the Dominion Party, and in stating the reasons for his resignation expressed his intention to join the United Party.<sup>33</sup> At three public meetings,

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<sup>28</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.381., *The Natal Mercury*, November 22, 1945, p.5.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, November 23, 1945, p.5.

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

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, December 10, 1945, p.6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, December 13, 1945, p.10., December 18, 1945, p.10., December 19, 1945, p.12.

<sup>33</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, December 17, 1945, p.7.

held in January 1946,<sup>34</sup> Mr Goldberg addressed his constituents and sought to justify his actions, and on each occasion a motion was carried calling for him to resign from his seat.<sup>35</sup> In time, however, many of Mr Goldberg's erstwhile critics, as a result of the changing political circumstances in the country, followed him into the United Party.

The question of Indian land rights and representation, which had been very much in the forefront of the thoughts of Mr Goldberg's constituents, came before Parliament in March 1946, with the introduction of the *Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill*. The Bill, which sought on the one hand to curtail the rights of Indians to possess fixed property, at the same time sought to grant them a voice in political matters.<sup>36</sup> It was opposed by the Durban City Council, which was not satisfied with the delimitation of the areas exempted by the Bill and with the abolition of anti-Asiatic clauses in exempted areas. A special sub-committee, which included Councillor Dr J.M. Rogaly, was appointed to meet Municipal officials to work out an amended delimitation, which were in turn submitted to the Prime Minister, in Cape Town, by a special Council

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<sup>34</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, January 7, 1946, p.6.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, January 8, 1946, p.8., January 9, 1946, p.9.

<sup>36</sup>B.J. Liebenberg, p.381.

deputation.<sup>37</sup>

In the House of Assembly, Councillor Rogaly's co-religionist, Mr Abe Goldberg rejected Opposition suggestions that the Indian community were not part of the permanent population of the country. He defined the Bill as, "an attempt to reconcile a growing consciousness throughout the world of the need for a more enlightened attitude towards the non-European sections of any community, a need for reconciling with an appreciation that there is a difference, without any implications of superiority or inferiority between the culture and the outlook and the way of life of the Indian and the European."<sup>38</sup> Whilst dismissing suggestions that the Bill, which sought to preserve the European structure of South African society, was an insult to the Indian community, Mr Goldberg also attempted to placate Opposition disapproval of the Bill.<sup>39</sup> The Bill upon its enactment failed to satisfy either the Indian community or the Opposition.

The fear of Indian penetration was particularly widespread in Durban with its large Indian population and it became a major issue in the municipal by-election,

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<sup>37</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 22, 1946, p.9.

<sup>38</sup> *Union of South Africa. Debates of the House of Assembly, Third Session, Ninth Parliament, 2nd March to 4th May, 1946, LV (Cape Town), 27th March, 1946, cl.4421.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, cls 4415-4422.

fought in Ward VIII in February 1946,<sup>40</sup> in which the Labour Party's Jewish candidate, Capt. T. Perlman, failed to gain office.<sup>41</sup> The issue remained one of paramount concern to municipal voters. This was clearly reflected in a referendum held by the Durban City Council on February 28, 1947, following the announcement by the Administrator Mr D.E. Mitchell, of his intention to introduce an Ordinance giving Indians direct representation on municipal councils, in terms of which Durban was to have two Indian City Councillors.<sup>42</sup> In a 37 per cent poll the voters of Durban overwhelmingly rejected the Administrator's proposals by 15,066 votes to 1,639.<sup>43</sup>

All thought of contentious political issues were, however, momentarily pushed aside during July 1946, when the Governor General, the Rt. Hon. Gideon Brand van Zyl and Mrs van Zyl paid their first official visit to Durban. Among those who officially welcomed the Vice-regal party upon their arrival at the railway station were Senator the Hon. F.C. Hollander and Mrs Hollander.<sup>44</sup> Leading Durban citizens, including Senator and Mrs Hollander, Councillor Dr J.M. Rogaly and

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<sup>40</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, February 19, 1946, p.11.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, February 21, 1946, p.9.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, February 14, 1947, p.9.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, March 1, 1947, p.11.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, July 1, 1946, p.9.



Mrs Rogaly, Councillor H. Saunders and Rabbi and Mrs A.H. Freedman attended the Civic reception given by the Mayor and City Councillors of Durban.<sup>45</sup> For the first time in seven years garden parties were again held at King's House, on July 18 and July 23, 1946 and Mr and Mrs B. Geshen, Dr and Mrs M. Kaplan, Mrs S. Moshal, Miss J. Moshal, Mr and Mrs S. Kahn,<sup>46</sup> Senator and Mrs F.C. Hollander, Mr and Mrs H. Seligman, Mr and Mrs E.S. Henochsberg and Misses H. and D. Henochsberg<sup>47</sup> were presented to the Governor General and his wife.

The municipal election of 1946 was also followed with considerable interest by the Jewish community of Durban as two of its members stood for election in Ward IV. Dr J.M. Rogaly, the retiring Councillor, who had been elected on a Labour Party ticket, lost his Party's nomination and stood as an Independent against Mr M. Spanier Marson, who stood as a Ratepayer's candidate.<sup>48</sup> The four cornered contest in the Ward saw the official Labour candidate defeat his three independent rivals, Dr Rogaly receiving the fewest number of votes.<sup>49</sup> Only one Jew, Mr H. Saunders, now sat on the Council,

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, July 5, 1946, p.6.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, July 19, 1946, p.6.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, July 24, 1946, p.6.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, June 6, 1946, p.11., June 14, 1946, p.11.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, October 3, 1946, p.10.

and at the election of Council Committees he was made Vice-Chairman of the Markets and Abattoir Committee and was elected to the Electricity Committee and the Building Plans Sub-Committee.<sup>50</sup>

In welcoming the news of the Royal Family's departure on board *H.M.S. Vanguard*, on January 31, 1947, at the start of a proposed visit to the Union<sup>51</sup> South Africa warily watched developments on the Transvaal gold mines, where members had come out on strike. During the debate on the strike in the House of Assembly members of the *Herenigde* Party took the opportunity to attack the Jewish community, indicating that the war and its affects on the Jews had not altered the thinking of some of the Party's leaders. Lt. Col. W.A. Booysen (Member for Namaqualand) accused South African Jewry of inciting the African people and of rendering no services to the country.<sup>52</sup> Mr Goldberg responded to these attacks by pointing out the contradiction of members of the Opposition attacking Jews on the one hand whilst their Leader assured the Jews that they were now welcome in his Party, which he claimed was not anti-Semitic in policy.<sup>53</sup> The issue of the *Herenigde* Party's attitude

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, October 11, 1946, p.10.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, February 1, 1947, p.11.

<sup>52</sup> *Union of South Africa. Debates of the House of Assembly, Fourth Session, Ninth Parliament, 21st January to 5th June, 1947, LX (Cape Town), 13th February, 1947), cls. 12690-12691.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 14th February, 1947, cls. 12726-12731.

to Jewry was taken up by Mr Eric Louw (Beaufort West) who claimed that his party regarded the Jewish question as an economic issue, and incorrectly predicted, that in the interests of the country it would not allow Jewish immigration into the Union were it to come to power.<sup>54</sup>

By the time that King George VI; Queen Elizabeth and the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret arrived in Durban on March 20, 1947<sup>55</sup> the Rand Strike had officially ended<sup>56</sup> and the City could give its undivided attention to its distinguished guests. The whole City was *en fete* in anticipation of the Royal Visit and many of the principal buildings in Durban, including the Jewish Club, were specially decorated for the occasion.<sup>57</sup>

Upon their arrival in Durban the Royal Family were driven to the City Hall where the King was presented with an address of welcome. Among the prominent citizens presented to the visitors by Major Piet van der Bijl (the Minister for Native Affairs) were Senator and Mrs F.C. Hollander, and Mr A. Goldberg M.P. and Mrs Goldberg.<sup>58</sup> The first official duty to be performed by the King was the opening of the Gate of Memory at the Cenotaph where Mr Josh Goldberg, the Chairman of the

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, cls. 12731-12737.

<sup>55</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, March 20, 1947, p.3.

<sup>56</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 12, 1947, p.9.

<sup>57</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 13.

<sup>58</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, March 20, 1947, p.3.

Durban branch of Jewish Ex-Service League, was presented to the Royal Family,<sup>59</sup> and had the distinction of being singled out for conversation by the King.<sup>60</sup> Another Jewish ex-serviceman, Capt. Roy Fenhalls, had the honour of heading a contingent of Natal Mounted Rifles, who marched past the King at the conclusion of the Ceremony.<sup>61</sup> In their official capacities Mr H.L. Magid, the President of the Council of Natal Jewry<sup>62</sup> and Mr J.J. Friedman, the Vice-Chairman of the Jewish Ex-Service League,<sup>63</sup> attended an informal tea in the City Hall in honour of the Royal Family, which was held at the conclusion of the ceremony.

The programme of events in connection with the Royal Tour included a Civic Garden Party, attended by Mr P. Wartski,<sup>64</sup> and Mrs S.H. Jacobs and her daughter Sheila,<sup>65</sup> and a Race Meeting and luncheon, at the Greyville Race Course, at which the privilege of escorting the Princess Margaret into luncheon was accorded to Senator the Hon. F.C. Hollander.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>*Hasholom*, XXV No.8 (April, 1947), 37.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>62</sup>President's Report to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1947, p.1.

<sup>63</sup>*Hasholom*, XXV No.8 (April, 1947), 37.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.



Whilst memories of the Royal Visit were still fresh in the minds of the South African people, the King and Queen announced the engagement of their daughter the Princess Elizabeth to Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten.<sup>67</sup> Durban Jewry joined with all the people of the Empire in extending its congratulations to the Royal Family.<sup>68</sup>

The excitement in connection with the Royal Visit only momentarily eclipsed the many post-war difficulties that faced the South African Government. Discussion in Parliament on immigration and on ways in which to attract new settlers to the Union raised once again the issue of Jewish immigration and the allegation that Jews were swamping the Union and dominating the economy. Aggravated by a high level of unemployment in the country, such views were not without support,<sup>69</sup> and were countered by the Council of Natal Jewry<sup>70</sup> and by sympathetic citizens.<sup>71</sup>

The results of the 1946 Census in fact revealed that, whilst the total European population of the Union had increased in 10 years by 16.5%, the Jewish population had increased by 14.1%, from 90,645 in 1936 to 103,435

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<sup>67</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 10, 1947, p.9.

<sup>68</sup>*Hasholom*, XXV No.11 (July, 1947), 3.

<sup>69</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, March 12, 1947, p.13., March 18, 1947, p.14., March 24, 1947, p.7.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, March 14, 1947, p.14.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, March 21, 1947, p.7., March 27, 1947, p.12.

in 1946, and constituted 4.4% of the total European population,<sup>72</sup> a slight reduction on the 1936 total when it had made up 4.52% of the European population.<sup>73</sup> The number of Jews in Natal had risen from 3,736 in 1936 to 5,209 some ten years later<sup>74</sup> whilst the Jewish population of Durban, consisting of 2,158 males and 1,974 females<sup>75</sup> had grown from 2,822 in 1936<sup>76</sup> to 4,425 by 1946.<sup>77</sup> Notwithstanding the prevailing strained atmosphere in certain quarters towards Jewry, Councillor H. Saunders was once again elected to the City Council in October 1947.<sup>78</sup>

With speculation of a General Election in the air, the United Party came under increased attack in 1947 for post-war food shortages, inadequate housing and unemployment. In an effort to revitalise support for the Party in Durban a United Party week was held in the City from October 6-13, 1947. It featured a Beauty

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<sup>72</sup>*Hasholom*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 13.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, XIX No.5 (January, 1942), 7.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 13.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 27.

<sup>76</sup>*6th Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa*. Enumerated 5th May, 1946, Part 6, Religions (Government Printer, Pretoria), p.23.

<sup>77</sup>*Union of South Africa. Population Census 8th May, 1951.*, Part III Religions of the White Population of the Union of South Africa. (Government Printer, Pretoria), p.17.

<sup>78</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, October 2, 1947, p.9.

Parade and Children's Fancy Dress and Fair,<sup>79</sup> as well as a number of public meetings addressed by members from both Houses of Parliament, including Mr A. Goldberg M.P.<sup>80</sup> Support for Smuts, but dissatisfaction with the Party's attitudes, and particularly its neglect of Natal's problems until faced with the prospect of an election, aroused enormous discontent within the Province, which was a traditional United Party stronghold, and this was reflected in correspondence in the local press.<sup>81</sup>

Discontent within the United Party manifested itself in support for the Central Group, a new political party set up by the Rev. C.F. Miles Cadman M.P. (Independent, Durban North), a former Labourite, whose party whilst neither Republican nor anti-British was, "100 per cent against the stupid obstinacy, waste and incompetency of the present Government."<sup>82</sup> The political instability of the period was further reflected in attempts by the Deputy Mayor of Port Shepstone, Mr H.F. Allardice, to form another political party in Natal,<sup>83</sup> and in the decision of the Dominion Party to

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, October 1, 1947, p.8.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, October 8, 1947, p.8., October 9, 1947, p.8.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, October 4, 1947, p.10., October 7, 1947, p.6., October 10, 1947, p.8., October 11, 1947, p.9., October 13, 1947, p.5., October 14, 1947, p.8., October 15, 1947, p.7., October 16, 1947, p.8., October 17, 1947, p.7., October 20, 1947, p.8.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, October 18, 1947, p.11.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, October 20, 1947, p.9.



change its name to the South African Party, and to withhold its support for the United Party in the next General Election.<sup>84</sup> The Government's inability to check the rapidly increasing rise in the cost of living further fueled the fires of discontent amongst voters and led to allegations that the country's Jews were controlling the economy.<sup>85</sup>

Coming in the midst of growing criticism of the Government, the United Party's victory in the by-election in Langlaagte was particularly important. For Durban Jewry the election was of special interest in that the successful United Party candidate, Mr Albert Robinson,<sup>86</sup> was the son of the late Mr C.P. Robinson who had played a prominent part in Jewish communal life in Durban, and had himself sat for many years in the Union Parliament.

The visit to Durban of Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, in November 1947,<sup>87</sup> aroused enormous interest and provided a very welcome diversion for prevailing problems. During his brief stay in Durban Montgomery was made a Freeman of the City<sup>88</sup> and was the guest of honour at a Civic luncheon, which was also attended by the President of the C.N.J., and representatives of the

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, October 23, 1947, p.9.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, November 28, 1947, p.8., December 6, 1947, p.9.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, November 27, 1947, p.9.

<sup>87</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, November 25, 1947, p.1.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*



Jewish Ex-Service League and the Jewish Club Canteen.<sup>89</sup>

As preparations were being made in 1948 for the forthcoming General Election, Mr M. Spanier Marson was elected unopposed for Ward IV, to fill a vacancy on the City Council.<sup>90</sup> The following municipal election, in October 1948, again saw him returned unopposed to the City Council, as the representative of Ward IV.<sup>91</sup>

Competition meanwhile for nomination for the General Election was keen. In the Durban Musgrave Constituency ten aspirant candidates offered themselves for nomination, including Mr A. Goldberg, who was defeated in the closely fought contest.<sup>92</sup> On May 26, 1948 the country went to the polls and "few people in South Africa, even among the Nationalists expected a change in Government."<sup>93</sup> Dr Malan, the leader of the *Herenigde* Party and Mr Havenga, the leader of the Afrikaner Party, had reached an election agreement, and advocating a policy of enforced separate development they attacked the Smuts Government's race policy, as well as its immigration policy, its inability to solve the housing shortage and unemployment and its general

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<sup>89</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 13.

<sup>90</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 3, 1948, p.11.

<sup>91</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, September 20, 1948, p.2.

<sup>92</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 17, 1948, pp.11-12.

<sup>93</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, p.382.

administrative ineptitude.<sup>94</sup> Whilst for the most part the poll in Natal went overwhelmingly in favour of the United Party, the Party lost heavily in the other Provinces, Smuts himself losing his seat at Standerton.<sup>95</sup> The final election results were *Herenigde* Party 70 (previously 43), Afrikaner Party 9 (previously 0) United Party 65 (previously 89) and Labour Party 6 (previously 9).<sup>96</sup> The Malan-Havenga coalition thus emerged with a majority of five over the combined United Party, Labour Party and Native Representatives.<sup>97</sup>

Dr Malan's successes at the polls no doubt filled South African Jewry with a sense of great uneasiness for whilst General Smuts had long been regarded as a friend of the Jews, Dr Malan and his supporters were remembered for their efforts to check Jewish immigration into the Union and for their unwillingness to involve themselves in the war against Hitler. The public attitude of the country's Jews were succinctly expressed by *Hasholom* which noted that, "Whilst it is still early to foretell what the new Government will do, we must await definite pronouncements with regard to its policy. Jewry, being an integral section of the nation, accepts the verdict of the electorate. It wishes the new Government well

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 28, 1948, p.11.

<sup>96</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, p.382.

<sup>97</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 29, 1945, p.11.

and continues to place its faith in the traditional fair mindedness and sense of justice of the South African *volk*." <sup>98</sup> At the same time the Jewish community of Durban appears to have remained, like its predominantly English speaking fellow townsmen, loyal supporters of the Opposition.

The Jews of the Union were encouraged by Dr Malan's assurances to a deputation from the South African Jewish Board of Deputies that, "both he and his Government stood for a policy of non-discrimination against any section of the European population in South Africa," and that, "he looked forward to the time when there would be no further talk about the so called Jewish question in the life and politics of this country." <sup>99</sup>

Evidence of a desire on the part of Dr Malan to effect a reconciliation and reapproachment between his Party and the Jewish community was seen in the sympathetic attitude which the new Prime Minister adopted towards the Jews in their efforts to help the newly emergent State of Israel, and the assistance which the Government extended to the Jewish community, to enable it to aid its hard pressed co-religionists who were fighting for their country's independence. <sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.11 (July, 1948), 1-2.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>100</sup> Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience (1910-1967)*, (Cape Town, 1980), pp.207-208.

The *Herenigde Nasionale* Party dispelled the fears of many Jews still further when, not long after its success at the polls, it made an attempt, notwithstanding the views of certain diehards within its ranks, to incorporate into the Party a pro-Government Jewish movement which had already taken shape especially in Cape Town, Bloemfontein and Kimberley and was led by Mr J. Nossel of Claremont. Whilst in October 1948, Jews were still barred from membership of the Party in the Transvaal, Jews were already Party members in the Cape Province and during the General Election Jews in Cape Town, Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and other cities had actively supported the *Herenigde* and Afrikaner Party's candidates.<sup>101</sup> It was not until 1950 however, and the union of the *Herenigde* and Afrikaner Parties that the ban in the Transvaal on Jewish membership finally fell away.<sup>102</sup> The change in policy was a consequence of the Afrikaner Party having never barred membership to Jews, and in terms of the union of the two parties members of both parties were therefore automatically members of the new party. Coinciding with the emergence of this Jewish organisation there was an attempt by the Afrikaans press to dispel anti-Jewish feeling within the Party, and the almost total cessation

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<sup>101</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 8, 1948, p.12.

<sup>102</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.212.



of anti-Jewish propaganda.<sup>103</sup>

The shift in public attitude towards the Jews by Dr Malan and his Party appears, as Shimoni has suggested, to have been influenced by local political considerations and by confidence that the problem of Jewish immigration had been satisfactorily resolved by the creation of the State of Israel.<sup>104</sup>

The Prime Minister's admiration for the courage and achievements of the newly established Jewish State was apparently a significant factor in the revision of his attitude to Jewry, and this was subsequently reinforced by the visit that Dr Malan later paid to Israel in 1953. Amongst the Calvinist Afrikaners, whose faith was deeply rooted in the Bible, a corresponding sympathy and identification with Israel developed and consequently "the commendation of Israel as a model for the Afrikaner became commonplace."<sup>105</sup>

In consequence of Dr Malan's rejection of his former anti-Semitic policy the way was opened for dialogue between the Afrikaans and Jewish communities. From speeches delivered at Jewish gatherings by Afrikaner journalists and through articles in Afrikaner and Jewish newspapers and journals it emerged that,

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<sup>103</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 8, 1948, p.12.

<sup>104</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.213.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p.214.

The gravamen of the Afrikaner view-point was that historically the Jews had chosen to side with the domineering British against the dominated Afrikaners. They had blocked the Afrikaner economically and had refused or failed to understand that only the Nationalist Afrikaners and not the followers of Smuts were the authentic embodiment of Afrikaner identity and aspirations. Of all people the Jews, by virtue of their own values, should have understood this fact, for the Jew always preserved his own apartheid and maintained his own identity as a religious and national group. As a member of an oppressed people the Afrikaner had his back to the wall, and whosoever was not for him was against him. Hence he had reacted strongly to the Jew and many Afrikaners had even misguidedly adopted anti-semitism. Nevertheless, as a people rooted in Old Testament religion, the Afrikaner was not at heart anti-semitic, and now that he was at last coming into his own, a new leaf could be turned over in their relationship if only the Jew would, whilst preserving his identity as a *volksgroep* (national group), place South Africa first and understand the Afrikaner's legitimate aspirations.<sup>106</sup>

Jewry's response was succinctly summarised by a former Chairman of the Cape Council of the Jewish Board of Deputies, who asserted that it was the Jews who were the injured party, and denied that Jews had even been against the Afrikaner. As town dwellers engaged in commerce and trade the Jews were bound to be attracted to the English culture, the English furthermore enjoying a reputation throughout the Jewish world for tolerance and fair play. Since Jewry generally did not equate Nationalism with Afrikanerism it did not believe that in supporting General Smuts it had done anything

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.214-215.

anti-Afrikaans. In light of the extent of Fascism in Europe Jewry had categorised people as either pro or anti-Nazi and under these circumstances Jews had worked against Dr Malan's Party. Whilst the removal of the Jewish Question from public life, and the Government fair dealing with the Jews and its friendship with Israel did not mean that Jews necessarily came to support the National Party, it did mean, that they no longer judged political parties by their attitudes to the Jews, but rather by their policies for South Africa as a whole.<sup>107</sup>

The growing reproachment between Afrikaners and Jews, largely because of Afrikaner identification with Israel, whilst pleasing to the Jewish community also caused some consternation in Jewish circles, in consequence of the increasing number of references to Israel and Jewry as the epitome of *apartheid*. Whilst willing to concede that growing Afro-Asian diplomacy against South Africa and increased Soviet penetration of Nasser's Egypt did point to a common geopolitical interest between South Africa and Israel, which were frequently described as bulwarks against Communism in the south and north of the African continent, Jewry generally demurred at the thesis that Judaism and Israel were embodiments of the South African *apartheid* principle. Although it was true that Jews did strive to ensure their national and religious

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.216-217.

survival through separatism, the dissimilarity between them and the Afrikaners lay in the manner in which they sought to obtain their objective.<sup>108</sup> For all the *Herenigde* Party's efforts to placate the Jewish community, however, many Jews initially remained wary of the Party and its supporters, and relations between the Jewish community and the followers of Dr Malan whilst more cordial nevertheless remained, for the most part, cautious.

Within the ranks of the Government's opponents generally there was also a sense of uneasiness and misgiving which was not long in manifesting itself. After only a few weeks in office Dr Malan's Government sanctioned the release of Robey Leibbrandt and four other political prisoners who had been imprisoned on charges of high treason during the war. This step resulted in a flood of protest from Opposition spokesmen, who addressed public meetings throughout the country. In Durban between 7,000 and 8,000 people thronged Church Street and the Town Gardens to demonstrate their feelings, and unanimously called on the Government to resign.<sup>109</sup> Such activity on the part of the Government only served to strengthen still further the cause of the Opposition in Durban. A measure of the esteem in which General Smuts was held in Durban was reflected in the size of the crowd, which numbered some 10,000, that gathered at

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.217-219.

<sup>109</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 22, 1948, p.10.



the City Hall to hear him speak, during a one day visit which he paid to the City in July 1948.<sup>110</sup>

Following the General Election, the Senate was dissolved by Proclamation on July 9, 1948 and July 29 was fixed as the date for new elections for the Upper House. The United Party Caucus in Natal met in Pietermaritzburg on July 28 and chose its seven candidates. A surprise exclusion from those nominated for election by the Caucus was Mr F.C. Hollander, who was a member of the Fourth Union Senate from 1939 until its dissolution in 1948.<sup>111</sup> There was general disappointment in the rejection of Mr Hollander, who had rendered stalwart service to the Province over a period of many years,<sup>112</sup> and who, upon failing to gain nomination, withdrew completely from public life.

Before the year had ended Natal also began preparing for the Natal Provincial Elections which were held in March 1949.<sup>113</sup> Among those who offered themselves for selection to contest the seats being fought by the United Party in Umbilo and Umlazi were Mr A. Miller<sup>114</sup> and Mr M. Spanier Marson,<sup>115</sup> neither of whom was selected by

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<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, July 15, 1948, p.11.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, July 29, 1948, p.11.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, July 30, 1948, p.10., August 2, 1948, p.6., August 3, 1948, p.8.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, March 10, 1949, p.9.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, October 6, 1948, p.13.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, December 18, 1948, p.9.

the United Party's Provincial Executive.

In a year characterised by far reaching political developments in Palestine and at home, and by the Russian blockade of Berlin,<sup>116</sup> a Soviet backed attempt to overthrow the South Korean Government,<sup>117</sup> the Communist takeover of mainland China,<sup>118</sup> and continued unrest in the Dutch East Indies,<sup>119</sup> the celebration of the King and Queen's Silver Wedding Anniversary,<sup>120</sup> and the birth of Prince Charles<sup>121</sup> provided welcome distractions from world circumstances. The members of the Jewish community of Durban joined with the rest of the Empire in celebrating these Royal milestones and through the *Hasholom* extended its congratulations to King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on their Silver

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<sup>116</sup> David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon*, (London, 1972), p.842., *The Natal Mercury*, May 7, 1948, p.9., July 1, 1948, p.11., July 3, 1948, p.11., July 19, 1948, p.9., July 26, 1948, p.9., July 28, 1948, p.11., July 31, 1948, p.11., August 12, 1948, p.9., September 10, 1948, p.11., October 20, 1948, p.11., October 26, 1948, p.9., November 22, 1948, p.9., November 25, 1948, p.9., November 30, 1948, p.9.

<sup>117</sup> David Thomson, pp.844-846. *The Natal Mercury*, October 21, 1948, p.11.

<sup>118</sup> David Thomson, pp.843-844. *The Natal Mercury*, November 9, 1948, p.9., December 1, 1948, p.1.

<sup>119</sup> David Thomson, pp.864-865. *The Natal Mercury*, December 20, 1948, p.9., December 23, 1948, p.9.

<sup>120</sup> Louis Wulff, *Silver Wedding The Record of Twenty Five Royal Years*, (London, 1948)., *The Natal Mercury*, April 27, 1948, pp.9-10.

<sup>121</sup> Douglas Liversidge, *Prince Charles Monarch in the Making*, (London, 1975), p.3., *The Natal Mercury*, November 15, 1948, p.3.

Wedding.<sup>122</sup> The birth of a Royal prince to Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh was marked in Durban by a special session of the Durban City Council, and by a service in St. Paul's Church, attended by the Consular corps, the Mayor and City Councillors, including Councillors H. Saunders and M. Spanier Marson.<sup>123</sup> A source of great joy for Durban Jewry at this time was the selection of Mr Issie Bloomberg as one of the two weightlifters included in the South African team for the 14th Olympic Games, which were held in London in 1948.<sup>124</sup>

1949, The year in which the Government began its far reaching legislative programme, started in Durban with lamentable racial riots in which large numbers of Indian residents of the City were attacked by a group of African people, in what was essentially an outburst of pent-up emotions, sparked by an assault by an Indian on an African child at the Victoria Street bus rank.<sup>125</sup> Before the unrest had subsided, 53 people had been killed and more than 325 had been injured, whilst scores of people were left homeless and houses and shops were burned and goods looted.<sup>126</sup> The Riot Relief Fund opened by the Mayor won the support of all sections of

<sup>122</sup> *Hashalom*, XXVI No.8 (April, 1948), 3.

<sup>123</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 18, 1948, p.11.

<sup>124</sup> *Hashalom*, XXVI No.11 (July, 1948), 19.

<sup>125</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 14, 1949, p.9.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, January 15, 1949, p.9.

the population of Durban. Both the Council of Natal Jewry<sup>127</sup> and the Durban branch of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League contributed to the Fund,<sup>128</sup> whilst members of the community, joined in rendering personal assistance to the distressed.<sup>129</sup>

In deference to the wishes of Mr N.C. Havenga, Dr D.F. Malan did not immediately introduce his proposed Bills, whereby he hoped, in accordance with his electoral promises, to remove Native Representatives from the House of Assembly, to curtail the powers of the Native representatives in the Senate and to place the Coloured voters on a separate roll. Dr Havenga, the leader of the Afrikaner Party and Dr Malan's senior colleague in the Cabinet, opposed the legislation being put through Parliament by a Government which had only a narrow majority and which could not justly claim to represent adequately the will of the people in matters concerning the Entrenched Clauses in the *South African Act*.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, the legislation that the Prime Minister did bring before Parliament proved to be sufficiently contentious and it aroused the ire of the Government's

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<sup>127</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.6 (February, 1949), 5.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 27.

<sup>129</sup> Report Of The Executive Of The Council Of Natal Jewry, To Be Presented At The 18th Annual General Meeting Of The Council, To Be Held On 7th April, 1949, p.9.

<sup>130</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 8, 1948, p.9., December 13, 1948, p.9., January 15, 1949, p.9.



opponents, who gave full expression to their feelings.

As the champion of Afrikaner nationalism the Government's legislative programme on the one hand sought to lessen what it felt was the country's subordination to Great Britain whilst, at the same time, it sought to solve the colour question and other pressing issues. The English speaking section of the White population, of which the Jewish community was a part, generally showed little practical sympathy for Afrikaner aspirations and regarded their country's close ties with Great Britain as a check on their domination by the Afrikaans community. Opposition voters, moreover, regarded with extreme displeasure any attempt on the part of the Government to tamper with the Constitution and to curtail civil liberties, regarding them as essential features of the democratic system which had evolved on the model of the British system in South Africa and which they, as part of the privileged minority, were able to fully enjoy.

The Government's decision to steamroll the *South African Citizenship Bill* through Parliament, whereby British subject status for South Africans was abolished,<sup>131</sup> and British subjects no longer became Union nationals after two years but had to wait three more years for South African citizenship, was met with a storm of indignation from amongst the English speaking section of

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<sup>131</sup>B.J. Liebenberg, p.393.

the population.<sup>132</sup> A mass protest meeting was held in Cape Town,<sup>133</sup> where large groups of women gathered outside the Parliament building to register their opposition.<sup>134</sup> In Durban, 6,000 people assembled outside the City Hall to protest against the Bill.<sup>135</sup> Mr F.C. Hollander, who had been unable to accept an invitation to address the meeting, sent a message recording his own personal protest.<sup>136</sup> Notwithstanding nationwide opposition,<sup>137</sup> no concessions were made by the Government concerning the Bill,<sup>138</sup> which rapidly passed through all its stages and became law.<sup>139</sup>

Persistent statements in the House of Assembly from within the Government's ranks, expressing the opinion that the ultimate goal for South Africa was Republicanism, were met with resistance, particularly in Natal where, in Durban, thousands gathered in and

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<sup>132</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 10, 1949, p.10.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, June 13, 1949, p.7.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, June 16, 1949, p.9.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, June 15, 1949, p.11.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, June 17, 1949, p.10., June 18, 1949, p.12.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, June 21, 1949, p.10.

<sup>139</sup> *Union of South Africa. House of Assembly Debates, Second Session, Tenth Parliament, 2nd May to 3rd June, 1949, LVIII (Cape Town), 25th May, 1949, cl. 6495., Ibid., 6th June to 30th June, 1949, LXIX (Cape Town), 22nd June, 1949, cls. 8779-8823., 23rd June, 1949, cls. 8891-8953.*

around the City Hall on August 16, to pledge their allegiance to the Act of Union and their firm opposition to the creation of a Republic.<sup>140</sup> Insistent that the resolutions passed at the public meeting should be followed by some concrete action, Mr F.C. Hollander suggested a practical method for dealing with the situation. He suggested that Natal's United Party's 6 Senators, 10 M.P.'s and 22 members of the Provincial Council, as the duly elected representatives of an overwhelming majority of the people of Natal, should get together in some form of a congress or convention and devise ways and means of meeting the danger which he believed was looming ahead.<sup>141</sup>

Growing dissatisfaction amongst the country's non-White peoples over their political and economic disabilities increased steadily and was felt throughout the Union. In Durban members of the Natal Indian Congress defied the *Public Library Municipal By Law of 1937* by entering the European Library, in order to assert their belief that its facilities should be available to all races.<sup>142</sup> Little sympathy for the Indian Congress or its opposition to the segregation of facilities was shown by many readers of the City's morning newspaper,<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 17, 1949, p.9.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, August 19, 1949, p.10.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, March 14, 1950, p.9.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, March 11, 1950, p.9., March 20, 1950, p.5., March 21, 1950, p.5.

the exceptions being a Jewish couple, Mr and Mrs A. Alper,<sup>144</sup> who opposed the financing of amenities from rates whilst a section of the ratepayers was precluded from utilising such amenities.

Four Indian members of the Communist Party, together with their Jewish colleague Mr Rowley Arenstein, in defiance of a City Council By-Law which empowered the Mayor to prohibit public meetings, held a meeting in John Nicol Square on March 9 to test the by-law's validity. Charged in the Durban Magistrates Court the five defendants succeeded in establishing that the by-law was *ultra vires* and were found not guilty and discharged.<sup>145</sup> In an appeal brought before the Supreme Court against the magistrate's decision, the City Council succeeded in having the case sent for retrial,<sup>146</sup> but not before it had aroused considerable publicity.

Stirred to action by events around them the African National Congress declared May 1, 1950 "Freedom Day" and urged African people to stay away from work. At Sophiatown, Orlando and Alexandra around Johannesburg, and at places on the East Rand the day was marred by clashes with the police. In Durban the Indian Congress, Natal African organisations, and the Communist Party held a meeting at which resolutions were adopted condemning

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, March 16, 1950, p.7., March 22, 1950, p.6., April 11, 1950, p.7.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, April 15, 1950, p.13., April 29, 1950, p.9.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, August 31, 1950, p.11.



the Government's policies.<sup>147</sup>

Following close on the introduction of the *Group Areas Bill* in Parliament,<sup>148</sup> which, when it had passed all its stages in the Assembly and had become law, enforced residential *apartheid*,<sup>149</sup> the Minister of Justice introduced the *Unlawful Organisations Bill* in the House of Assembly.<sup>150</sup>

This Bill enabled Communist and certain other organisations to be declared unlawful by proclamation of the Governor General. It prohibited membership of an outlawed organisation and provided for the confiscation of its property and documents. Contravention of the law was made punishable by imprisonment or deportation. Upon an organisation being declared unlawful the Bill provided for the appointment, by the Minister of Justice, of a Liquidator who was responsible for compiling a list of the organisation's office bearers and members. The correspondence of those named could be intercepted in terms of the Bill, which also provided for the Minister to restrict the movement of those whom he suspected of wishing to further the aims

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, May 2, 1950, p.9.

<sup>148</sup> *Union of South Africa. House of Assembly Debates, Third Session, Tenth Parliament, 24th April to 26th May, 1950, LXXII (Cape Town) 24th April, 1950, cl. 4851.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 29th May to 24th June, 1950, LXXIII (Cape Town), 13th June, 1950, cls 8773-8838.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 24th April to 26th May, 1950, LXXII., 5th May, 1950, cls. 5767-5770.

of the unlawful organisation. Before a person's name was included on the list the Bill entitled him, however, to show why his name should not be included.<sup>151</sup>

Whilst South Africa was not the only country at this time to seek to curtail the influence of Communism,<sup>152</sup> the Bill which was introduced in the Union Parliament was the most far reaching, both in terms of its definition of Communism and in the absolute powers which it vested in a Minister to control the speeches and activities of individuals. General agreement with the basic aim of the Bill was widely coupled with a sense of apprehension amongst prominent residents of Durban, many of whom saw in it a further assault on individual liberty by a Government which, during its brief tenure of office had already made significant inroads on the personal freedom of the country's people.<sup>153</sup>

Following the report of a Select Committee on the *Unlawful Organisation's Bill*, the Minister of Justice submitted an amended Bill, the *Suppression of Communism Bill*, to the Assembly.<sup>154</sup> United Party opposition to the Bill in Parliament, because it usurped the function of the law Courts,<sup>155</sup> was matched by public protests

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 29th May to 24th June, 1950, LXXIII., 5th June, 1950, cls. 8014-8016.

<sup>152</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 1, 1950, p.9., May 3, 1950, p.9.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, May 8, 1950, p.10.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, June 6, 1950, p.9.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, June 7, 1950, p.9.

over the Bill's wide powers.<sup>156</sup> A march to the Parliament Building by hundreds of protesters was broken up by the police, who had learnt that such a march was being planned after a meeting called by the Democratic Action Committee. At the meeting, which was chaired by Mr Leslie Rubin, a former resident of Durban and the son of the late Rev. H. Rubin, an announcement that the proposed march had been abandoned had been ignored and had resulted in the subsequent police action.<sup>157</sup>

All efforts to halt the passage of the *Suppression of Communism Bill* through Parliament proved ineffective and within a short while it appeared on the Statute Books. Non-White opposition to the measures before Parliament resulted in a call for a day of protest and mourning on June 26, 1950,<sup>158</sup> which passed peacefully.<sup>159</sup> Little sympathy was shown by the City Council for its Indian employees who had absented themselves from work on Protest Day, and Councillor M. Spanier Marson gave his support to the dismissal of the Indian employees concerned.<sup>160</sup>

Within months of the law's enactment, the Minister of Justice, in terms of the powers vested in him by the

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, June 13, 1950, p.9., June 14, 1950, p.10., June 16, 1950, p.12.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, June 15, 1950, pp.9-10.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, June 12, 1950, p.9.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, June 27, 1950, p.10.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, July 4, 1950, p.9.

*Suppression of Communism Act*, served notices on former members of the Communist Party, with the offer to show why their names should not be included on the list of office bearers, officers, members or supporters of the Communist Party of South Africa. They included Mr Brian Bunting, Mr Moses Kotane, Mr Sam Kahn M.P., Mr Fred Carneson M.P.C., Mr I.O. Horvitch, Mr H.A. Naidoo, Mr Y.M. Dadoo, Mr D.J. du Plessis, Mr M. Marmel, Mr L. Bernstein, Mr A. Fischer and Mr I. Wolfson.<sup>161</sup> Almost simultaneously three Durban men were served with official letters alleging their connection with the former Communist Party of South Africa. They were Mr J.M. Singh, Mr D.A. Seedat and Mr Rowley Arenstein, a member of the City's Jewish community.<sup>162</sup>

For all the severity of the Government's legislation and the criticism of its policy, support for the *Herenigde* Party increased. The Party's position in Parliament improved considerably in 1950, when South West Africa started electing representatives to Parliament and it gained all six seats.<sup>163</sup> In 1951 the Government was further strengthened by the fusion of the *Herenigde* and the Afrikaner Parties to become known thereafter as the National Party.<sup>164</sup> The official

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, September 8, 1950, p.10.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, September 9, 1950, p.12.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, September 1, 1950, p.9.

<sup>164</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, p.383.



Opposition meanwhile, had begun to decline steadily in strength, weakened by the death of Jan Hofmeyr in December 1948,<sup>165</sup> and the inability of the Party's leader General Smuts to offer the electorate an effective alternative to Government policy.

Shortly after his 80th birthday in May 1950, General Smuts, the Leader of the Opposition, took ill<sup>166</sup> and the Jewish community of Durban joined with his admirers throughout the Union in praying for his recovery.<sup>167</sup> As his strength declined, General Smuts handed over the reigns of leadership of the United Party to Mr J.G.N. Strauss<sup>168</sup> and on September 11, as the Jewish citizens of the Union were observing their New Year, he passed peacefully away.<sup>169</sup> To coincide with his funeral service at the Braamfontein Crematorium over 20,000 residents of Durban gathered at Kingsmead to attend an Interdenominational Civic Memorial Service, at which Rabbi Harris Swift read a passage from the Old Testament scripture.<sup>170</sup> Durban Jewry shared fully in the nation's grief at the passing of South Africa's

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<sup>165</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, December 4, 1948, p.11.

<sup>166</sup>*The Natal Daily News*, May 29, 1950, p.1.

<sup>167</sup>*Hasholom*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 26.

<sup>168</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, June 15, 1950, p.9.

<sup>169</sup>*Ibid.*, September 12, 1950, p.9.

<sup>170</sup>*Ibid.*, September 16, 1950, p.11.

great world statesman and joined in the tributes that were paid to him,<sup>171</sup> whilst, through the Council of Natal Jewry, it extended condolences to Mrs Smuts and her family.<sup>172</sup>

The most contentious of all the *apartheid* measures introduced by Dr Malan's Government, and one which brought forth unparalleled expressions of protest was the *Representation of Non Europeans Bill*. In terms of the Bill the Government sought to remove the enfranchised Coloured voters from the ordinary voters roll and to place them on a separate voters roll so that they could elect their own representatives to Parliament. Once Malan and Havenga had agreed to the Coloureds being given four White representatives in the Assembly and one White representative in the Senate the Bill was published in a Gazette Extraordinary on February 13, 1951.<sup>173</sup>

Almost immediately a petition protesting against the removal of Coloured voters from the common roll was circulated by the Civil Rights League throughout the Union and was signed by thousands of signatories.<sup>174</sup> A group of leading Natal citizens, which included

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<sup>171</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.2 (October, 1950), 25., and Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual General Meeting of Members of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 18th September, 1950, at 7.45 pm., p.1.

<sup>172</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.2 (October, 1950), 15.

<sup>173</sup> *The Union of South Africa. Government Gazette Extraordinary*, CLXIII No.4542 (February 13, 1951), 4-16.

<sup>174</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 19 1951 p.9.

Rabbi Harris Swift, called on the people of the Province, to register their protest at the enactment of the Bill,<sup>175</sup> which was introduced in the Assembly on March 8.

Opposition circles regarded the Bill as an attack on the Union's Constitution by which, in terms of the *South African Act*, the right of Coloured voters were entrenched and could only be changed by a two third majority of both Houses of Parliament.<sup>176</sup> The Minister of the Interior, Dr T.E. Donges, rejected this viewpoint and questioned the validity of the *South African Act*, "which was an Act of a British Parliament and not an expression of the free will of the people."<sup>177</sup> Government spokesmen strove instead to prove that because of the Statute of Westminster and the *Status Act* the entrenched clauses of the *South Africa Act* were no longer binding and could be altered by a simple majority.<sup>178</sup>

For the first time in the history of the Natal Provincial Council a motion was introduced in the Council, condemning the Government's proposal to violate the Entrenched Clauses and reaffirming the Provinces' unswerving support for the Act of Union."<sup>179</sup>

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, March 7, 1951, p.9.

<sup>176</sup> *Union of South Africa. House of Assembly Debates, Fourth Sitting, Tenth Parliament, 19th January to 22nd March, 1951, LXXIV (Cape Town), 8th March, 1951, cls. 2585-2697.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 9th March, 1951, cls. 2765-2767.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, cls. 2722-2780.

<sup>179</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 12, 1951, p.9.

Mr F.C. Hollander, a former Senator and member of the Provincial Council Executive urged the Council to act guardedly in dealing with the contemplated resolution. He recalled how the Council's motion protesting against the draft *Flag Bill of 1927* had been sent back to the Administrator by the Senate and the House of Assembly, in terms of Section 87 of the *South Africa Act*, which did not make provision for the Council to make recommendations of such a nature to Parliament.<sup>180</sup> The Council nevertheless, with only two dissentients, adopted the motion affirming Natal's support for the Constitution.<sup>181</sup>

The people of Durban, including members of the Jewish community, gave expression to their feelings by supporting the creation of a local branch of the Civil Rights League,<sup>182</sup> and by gathering in their thousands at the City Hall to attend a meeting organised by the United Party.<sup>183</sup> Enormous support was also shown for the torchlight parade held by the War Veterans Action Committee on May 22, 1951. In Durban and at eleven centres around the country ex-servicemen and women and their supporters, "affirmed that they would not stand idly by while the freedom for which they had fought was

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<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, March 15, 1951, p.10.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, March 21, 1951, p.9.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, March 14, 1951, p.10.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, April 6, 1951, p.11.



torn from their grasp."<sup>184</sup> On the following day a contingent of ex-servicemen left for Cape Town, taking with them resolutions passed at meetings all along the route. Ex-servicemen from all parts of the Union converged on the Mother City, where over 10,000 torch bearers marched in procession to the House of Assembly in a vain attempt to present the resolutions to the Prime Minister.<sup>185</sup>

The loosely bound branches of the War Veterans' Action Committee had emerged in response to dissatisfaction amongst ex-servicemen over the Government's policies, culminating in its challenge to the Constitution. After their march in Cape Town and their unsuccessful attempt to influence the Prime Minister, the War Veterans' Action Committee decided to capitalise on the resurgence of democratic feeling in the country and to form a permanent organisation to resist Government policy. It called a National Convention which opened in Johannesburg on June 18, 1951, and from it emerged the War Veterans' Torch Commando which pledged itself:

- 1) To uphold the letter and spirit of the solemn compacts entered upon at the time

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<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, May 23, 1951, p.9.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, May 29, 1951, p.9.

of Union and the pledges in regard thereto since Union as obligations of trust and honour binding upon Parliament and the people.

- 2) To secure the repeal of any measures enacted in violation of such obligations.
- 3) To protect the freedom of the individual in worship, language and speech, and to ensure his right of free access to the Courts.
- 4) To eliminate all forms of totalatarianism whether fascist or communist.
- 5) To promote racial harmony in the Union.<sup>186</sup>

The Torch Commando, led by Group Captain "Sailor" Malan was outside the field of Party politics. It drew its members from all classes of people and though not exclusively an ex-service movement, it derived its strength from the spirit of those who had fought in the war.

With amazing rapidity the Torch Commando grew all over the country, charged with the enthusiasm of its founders. A devoted worker on behalf of the organisation in Durban was a member of the Jewish

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<sup>186</sup> Roger Brickhill, "The Kindling of a Flame," *Colony*, (May, 1952), p.4.

community, Mr Roy Fenhalls, who addressed public meetings on behalf of the Durban Coastal Region, which by September 1951 consisted of 24 branches.<sup>187</sup> At a conference of the Natal Coastal Regional Committee Mr Fenhalls was chosen as one of the Province's three delegates to the National Conference of the Commando.<sup>188</sup>

To mark the anniversary of El Alamein the Torch Commando arranged for a chain of bonfires to be lit all over the country on Alamein night, October 23, 1951, and for its members to observe the day with solemnity, with the accent on racial harmony and unity between the English and Afrikaans speaking communities.<sup>189</sup> These demonstrations were the first indication of the growing strength of the Torch Commando, and were in fact the biggest ever staged in the Union's history.<sup>190</sup> Fully 10,000 people attended a mass meeting held in Albert Park, and bonfires proclaiming the Commando's message burnt across the country.<sup>191</sup>

The Government's threat to suppress the *Guardian* newspaper, in terms of the *Suppression of Communism Act*, aroused a further outburst of opposition from prominent

<sup>187</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 19, 1951, p.9., September 27, 1951, p.11., October 30, 1951, p.8., November 16, 1951, p.10.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, October 8, 1951, p.11.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, October 22, 1951, p.9.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, October 24, 1951, p.9.

citizens concerned with the principles of the Rule of Law and the Freedom of the Press. The signatories to a manifesto sponsored by the Civil Rights League in Durban protesting against the suppression of the newspaper without allowing it recourse to the law included Mr Hector Hart and Rabbi Harris Swift.<sup>192</sup>

Support for the Torch Commando continued, meanwhile, to grow, and interest in the organisation was sustained by public meetings all around the country. In Westville a public meeting organised by Mr B. Feinberg, the Secretary of the local branch, was held in the Town Hall on December 7, 1951.<sup>193</sup> Mr Roy Fenhalls sacrificed his annual leave in December 1951 in order to deliver speeches on behalf of the Commando in the Government strongholds of Northern Natal,<sup>194</sup> and together with other spokesmen of the organisation Mr Fenhalls addressed public meetings in Glencoe<sup>195</sup> and Utrecht.<sup>196</sup>

On March 20, 1952 the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in Bloemfontein declared the *Separate Representation of Voters Act*, which the Government had piloted through Parliament with an ordinary majority to be, "invalid, null and void and of no legal force and

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<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, November 30, 1951, p.12.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1951, p.8.

<sup>194</sup> Roger Brickhill, p.5.

<sup>195</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 15, 1951, p.10.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, December 17, 1951, p.8.



effect."<sup>197</sup> The Prime Minister immediately announced his Government's intention to introduce legislation which would be retrospective to the date of the coming into operation of the Statute of Westminster in 1931, and which would place the sovereignty of Parliament above that of the Courts in constitutional matters.<sup>198</sup> At meetings held in Durban, and in towns and cities around the country the Government's intention to over-ride the Courts was bitterly denounced.<sup>199</sup> Fifteen professors and 57 lecturers of the University of Natal in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, including Prof. P. Stein, signed a petition calling on the Government to withdraw its proposed legislation.<sup>200</sup>

In Parliament Mr Strauss, speaking on the motion of the Minister of Finance (Mr N.C. Havenga) that the House go into committee of supply, called on the House to decline to go into committee until the Government undertook to accept the judgement of the Appeal Court and to abide by the Constitution of the country.<sup>201</sup> The ensuing debate revealed an undercurrent of anti-Semitic feeling within the Government ranks, with

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<sup>197</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, p.185.

<sup>198</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 22, 1952, p.11.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, March 24, 1952, pp.9-10.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, March 29, 1952, p.11.

<sup>201</sup> *Union of South Africa. House of Assembly Debates, Fifth Sitting, Tenth Parliament, 17th March to 19th May, 1952, LXXVIII (Cape Town), 15th April, 1952 cls. 3612-3613.*

unfounded criticism being directed against Jewish members of the House and the Jewish community for supposed verbal attacks against the Afrikaner people.<sup>202</sup>

Prompted by their common opposition the Torch Commando, the United Party and the Labour Party formed a United Front to fight the Government,<sup>203</sup> which meanwhile forced through Parliament the *High Court of Parliament Act*,<sup>204</sup> which was also invalidated by the Appeal Court.<sup>205</sup>

At this time of intense political activity, the Natal United Party Provincial Councillors, sensing the mood of the general population of the Province, called for a National Convention of South Africa's four Provinces, "to reaffirm the Unions Constitution and to entrench and protect the basic principles of the *South African Act*."<sup>206</sup>

At a crowded Torch Commando meeting in Durban North Mr Roy Fenhalls pledged his organisations support for the call by Natal's Provincial Councillors for a National

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, cls. 3679-3690.

<sup>203</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 17, 1952, p.9.

<sup>204</sup> *Union of South Africa. House of Assembly Debates, Fifth Sitting, Tenth Parliament, 12th May to 6th June, 1952, LXXIX (Cape Town), 29th May, 1952, cls. 6749-6753.*

<sup>205</sup> *The South African Law Reports with which are amalgamated The All South Africa Law Reports, IV, 1952, (Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban.) Minister of the Interior and Another v Harris and others, pp.764-797.*

<sup>206</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 3, 1952, p.9.

Convention.<sup>207</sup> On behalf of the Commando Mr Fenhalls also addressed meetings around Natal called by the United Front to arouse support for the proposed Convention.<sup>208</sup>

By 21 votes to 2 the Natal Provincial Council passed a resolution on June 4, 1952, demanding a National Convention.<sup>209</sup> With one voice the people of Natal took up the call of the Provincial Council. At an historic meeting, in front of the Durban Post Office, where the National Convention which had brought about the Union of South Africa had been held in 1909, 45,000 people adopted a resolution requesting Parliament to call a National Convention into being.<sup>210</sup>

The resolution adopted by the Natal Provincial Council was rejected by the Senate<sup>211</sup> and the Government,<sup>212</sup> and the Provincial Council responded by calling for a Provincial Convention of Natal's Senators, Parliamentary representatives and Provincial Councillors.<sup>213</sup> At a meeting of the Natal Council of the United Democratic Front, representing the United Party, the

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, May 6, 1952, p.10.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, May 19, 1952, p.8., May 20, 1952, p.8.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, June 5, 1952, p.9.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, June 7, 1952, pp.11-12.

<sup>211</sup> *Union of South Africa. Senate Debates, Fifth Session, Tenth Parliament, (Fifth Senate), 5th May to 25th June, 1952, (Cape Town), 13th June, 1952, cls. 4099-4137.*

<sup>212</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 19, 1952, p.9., June 23, 1952, p.9.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, June 20, 1952, p.11.

Labour Party, the Torch Commando and the Defenders of the Constitution, at which Mr Roy Fenhalls was one of the Commando's representatives it was decided to call a conference to implement the Provincial Council's resolution.<sup>214</sup> At a separate meeting of the leaders of the United Party in Natal, attended by Mr Arnold Miller, a motion to adopt the Provincial Council's resolution was unanimously accepted.<sup>215</sup>

The first session of the Natal Conference called for by the Provincial Council opened in Pietermaritzburg on August 25, 1952. Among the delegates present were Mr Roy Fenhalls of the Torch Commando and Mr Arnold Miller of the United Party.<sup>216</sup> The Conference decided to appoint a committee for the purpose of investigating and reporting on the best means to reaffirm the *South African Act*, to entrench its material provisions and to consider practical steps to preserve the existing measure of freedom and justice as provided in the democratic union of South Africa.<sup>217</sup>

As plans were being finalised for the Conference, the women of Durban, including representatives of the Opposition Parties, the Torch Commando and the trade unions, but principally members of widely varying

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<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, July 19, 1952, p.9.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, July 29, 1952, p.9.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, August 26, 1952, p.10.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, August 27, 1952, p.9.



women's organisations, joined together with the intention of organising a mass rally to protest against the actions of the Government. The local Women's Action Committee was led by Councillor Mrs Mary Asher and one of the joint secretaries was a Durban Jewess, Mrs Eileen Goldberg. The Committee's members also included Mesdames D. Abelson and B. Feinberg.<sup>218</sup> Over 2,500 women attended a mass meeting called by the Committee,<sup>219</sup> and volunteered for service with the United Democratic Front by forwarding their names to Mrs Betty Abelson, the Committee's Public Relations Officer.<sup>220</sup>

The non-White population meanwhile organised a defiance campaign against laws that they regarded as unjust, which resulted in clashes with the police and in considerable unrest.<sup>221</sup> Shortly before Parliament dissolved in preparation for the General Election of 1953 the Government enacted the *Criminal Law Amendment Act*,<sup>222</sup> which made passive resistance as a form of political protest a criminal offence, and the *Public*

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<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, July 19, 1952, p.9.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, August 15, 1952, p.10.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, August 21, 1952, p.10.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, August 5, 1952, pp.9-10., August 28, 1952, p.10., September 1, 1952, p.7., September 15, 1952, p.10., November 10, 1952, p.9., November 11, 1952, p.9. November 13, 1952, p.9.

<sup>222</sup> *Union of South Africa. House of Assembly Debates, Sixth Sitting, Tenth Parliament, 23rd January to 24th February, 1953, LXXXI (Cape Town), 29th January, 1953, cls. 272-273.*

*Safety Act*,<sup>223</sup> which empowered the Governor General by proclamation to declare a State of Emergency in the Union, if in his opinion public safety was threatened.

As the country approached the General Election the ranks of the United Democratic Front were racked by dissention. This was reflected in the decision of six of the eleven members of the Action Committee of the Natal Coastal Region of the Torch Commando, including Mr Roy Fenhalls, the vice-chairman, and Dr Barrow Bass, the hon. regional treasurer, to resign from their official positions, but not from the Commando.<sup>224</sup>

The United Party entered into an election agreement with the Labour Party<sup>225</sup> and set its electoral machinery into motion. Divisional committees were set up in Durban to nominate official candidates, Miss R. Cantor served on the Point branch divisional committee and her co-religionist Mr E. Berman sat on the committee in Durban North,<sup>226</sup> whilst Mr E.S. Henochsberg was elected the chairman of the Musgrave constituency election committee.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 26th January, 1953, cls. 62-72.,  
11th February, 1953, cls. 968-1062.,  
12th February, 1953, cls. 1062-1150.,  
13th February, 1953, cls. 1162-1210.,  
16th February, 1953, cls. 1218-1274.

<sup>224</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 8, 1952, p.9.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, November 20, 1952, p.9.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, November 27, 1952, p.10.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, February 6, 1953, p.12.

The General Election was held on April 15, 1953<sup>228</sup> and Dr Malan's National Party emerged with an increased majority, taking seven former United Party seats, including Langlaagte, which had been represented by Mr Albert Robinson,<sup>229</sup> and one Labour Party seat.<sup>230</sup>

The National Party victory in the General Election was followed by the demise of the Torch Commando, whose disintegration was dated by Mr Louis Kane Berman, its national chairman, to the day that the United Democratic Front was formed. After that date Mr Kane Berman believed that the infiltration of the Commando's highest councils by United Party personnel had begun.<sup>231</sup>

Following its electoral defeat, the United Party was further weakened by splits within the Party. Certain of its members, including some who belonged to the Jewish community of Durban, joined the Liberal Party, which was formed on May 10, 1953, having grown out of the South African Liberal Association, which had been formed in January of that year.<sup>232</sup> The Liberal Party pledged itself to uphold the dignity of all people irrespective of their colour, class or creed and to maintain the rule

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<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, April 16, 1953, p.9.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, April 17, 1953, p.11.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, June 15, 1954, p.1.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, May 8, 1953, p.12.

of law, and aimed for the extention of political rights, based on a common voters roll, to all South Africans.<sup>233</sup>

Among its first office bearers was Mr Leslie Rubin, who was elected national vice-chairman.<sup>234</sup> In 1954

Mr Rubin had the distinction of entering the Union Legislative as the Liberal Party's unopposed nominee for the position of Native's Representative in the Senate for Cape Eastern.<sup>235</sup> Closely associated with the

Liberal Party in Natal during its formative years were Prof. Leo Kuper, who was elected vice-chairman of the Party in Natal in 1954<sup>236</sup> and 1955<sup>237</sup> and the Provincial Chairman in 1956,<sup>238</sup> and Mr Leon Lewis.<sup>239</sup>

A second party to emerge almost simultaneously with the Liberal Party, in the wake of the United Party's defeat at the polls, was the Union Federal Party. Sponsored by leading Natal members of the Torch Commando and by sympathisers in the movement from the other Provinces, and led by Senator Heaton Nicolls of Natal, the Party advocated an eventual United States of Southern Africa, linked on federal lines, and believed

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, May 11, 1953, p.10.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 5, 1954, p.13.

<sup>236</sup> *Contact*, [monthly newsletter of the Liberal Party of South Africa] December, 1954, n.p.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, October, 1955, n.p.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, November, 1956, n.p.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, December, 1954, n.p. and January, 1956, n.p.



in granting extended powers to the Provinces within the Union.<sup>240</sup> The Party undertook to work in the event of a weakening of the Union's ties with the Crown, the setting aside of the Entrenched Clauses, the denial of the testing power of the Courts, the abolition of the Provincial Council System or the reduction of Provincial powers, or the abolition of the equal rights of both official languages, for the right of any Province of the Union to remain a part of the Commonwealth of Nations under the Crown.<sup>241</sup> The Party was in effect a last desperate attempt by a section of the English speaking population, principally in Natal, to counter the growing power of the National Party. Although it enjoyed some success in Natal, unlike the Liberal Party, it survived for only a few short years.

The United Party continued, meanwhile, to enjoy the support of the majority of opposition supporters, particularly in Natal, which remained a stronghold of the Party. Mr Alan Magid, the Jewish chairman of the Natal Coast Youth Council of the United Party, in an address to the Party's Natal Youth Congress in July 1953, strongly deplored the formation of the Liberal Party and the United Federal Party.<sup>242</sup>

Encouraged by its success in the General Election,

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<sup>240</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 11, 1953, p.9.

<sup>241</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>242</sup>*Ibid.*, July 13, 1953, p.10.

the Government once again tackled the question of removing Coloured voters from the common roll. A Bill to repeal Section 35 of the *South African Act*, which entrenched the franchise rights of Coloured voters, was submitted to a joint session of both Houses of Parliament in July 1953.<sup>243</sup> At the third reading of the Bill, however, the Government failed to gain the necessary two thirds majority to make the Bill effective.<sup>244</sup> It was similarly unsuccessful in 1954, when it was again unable to achieve the necessary two thirds majority.<sup>245</sup>

The United Party continued to be racked by discord within its ranks largely over dissatisfaction among certain members with Mr Strauss's leadership. Disgruntled members including Mr Frank Waring, M.P. for Orange Grove; Mr Bailey Bekker, the Party's Transvaal Chairman; Dr Abraham Jonker M.P. for Gardens;<sup>246</sup> Mr Blaar Coetzee M.P. for North Rand;<sup>247</sup> Dr Vernon Shearer M.P. for Durban Point and Mr C. Miles Warren M.P. for Kingwilliamstown formed an independent United Party group,<sup>248</sup> from which the

<sup>243</sup> B.J. Liebenberg, pp.385-386.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, p.386.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>246</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 21, 1953, p.9.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, September 23, 1953, p.9.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, January 29, 1954, p.1.

Conservative Party emerged.<sup>249</sup> When this Party disbanded its members either entered the ranks of the Government or returned to the Opposition fold.

Despite internal weaknesses, the Provincial Council elections in Natal saw the United Party sweep to victory, at the expense of its National Party and United Federal Party opponents.<sup>250</sup> In the Provincial Council elections in the Free State, the Cape Province and the Transvaal, however, the National Party consolidated its General Election successes<sup>251</sup> and took control of all the Provinces except Natal.<sup>252</sup>

Outside the mainstream of White politics the Congress of Democrats, often in co-operation with the African National Congress and the Natal Indian Congress, continued to express its opposition to Government policy. The Congress, which drew its support from extreme liberal elements, arranged a series of meetings across the Union in August 1954, to protest against the removal of African people in Western Areas near Johannesburg, in terms of the *Group Areas Act*. These meetings, including the one in Durban, at which the Rev. Trevor Huddleston was the speaker, were interrupted by the police who recorded the

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<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, October 5, 1954, p.3.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, June 17, 1954, p.1.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, August 19, 1954, p.1.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, August 20, 1954, p.1.

names of those who attended the meeting.<sup>253</sup> After the meeting in Durban, members of the C.I.D. raided a number of homes, including that of Mrs R.I. Arenstein.<sup>254</sup> The Arenstein home was again raided a month later by members of the C.I.D., acting under the *Suppression of Communism Act*, when a series of simultaneous raids were carried out on offices and private homes of people associated with the left wing newspaper *Advance*.<sup>255</sup>

An eventful chapter in the political history of the country ended with the resignation of Dr Malan in November 1954.<sup>256</sup> As the first leader of the National Party Government Dr Malan had laid the ground work for the *apartheid* policy, which was built upon by his successors. Without expressing an opinion on his political theories, with which few members of the community identified, and against which a considerable number felt a need to demonstrate their opposition, the *Hasholom*, on behalf of the Jewish community of Durban, paid tribute to him as a sincere son of South Africa and a friend of Israel.<sup>257</sup> South African Jewry thankfully acknowledged that during his administration the gradual process of accommodation between the Afrikaner and the

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<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, August 16, 1954, p.1.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, September 1, 1954, p.3.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, October 13, 1954, p.1.

<sup>257</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.3 (November, 1954), 2-3.



Jewish community had been inaugurated and the so called Jewish Question had been eliminated from South African politics..<sup>258</sup>

Dr Malan was succeeded as Prime Minister by Mr J.G. Strydom,<sup>259</sup> a champion of Afrikaner nationalism and an unashamed republican. Shortly after assuming office Mr Strydom, in an interview with the editor of the *South African Jewish Times*, gave his assurance that the Jews in the Union had no need to fear for their rights, and promised that those rights would remain unaffected by the establishment of a republic in South Africa.<sup>260</sup>

Mr Strydom was not long in taking up his predecessor's struggle to remove Coloured voters from the common roll. In order to end the Constitutional deadlock, the Government introduced a Bill in April 1955, which increased the size and altered the structure of the Senate, enabling the Government to thereby achieve a two thirds majority at a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament.<sup>261</sup> A nationwide outcry characterised by

<sup>258</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.208.

<sup>259</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 1, 1954, p.1.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, January 10, 1955, p.9.

<sup>261</sup> *Union of South Africa. House of Assembly Debates, Third Session, Eleventh Parliament, 21st March to 13th May, 1955, LXXXVIII (Cape Town), 11th May, 1955, cls. 5404-5447., 16th May to 23rd June, 1955, LXXXIX (Cape Town), 23rd May, 1955, cls. 6003-6094., 24th May, 1955, cls. 6094-6189., 25th May, 1955, cls. 6190-6285., 20th May, 1955, cls. 6285-6389., 27th May, 1955, cls. 6389-6656., 3rd June, 1955, cls. 6926-6986., 6th June, 1955, cls. 7062-7075., 8th June, 1955, cls. 7191-7195., 9th June, 1955, cls. 7305-7425.*

protest meetings<sup>262</sup> and the remobilisation of the Torch Commando<sup>263</sup> followed the publication of the Bill and its passage through Parliament. Professors and lecturers at the University of Natal in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, including K. Danziger, N. Hurwitz, Prof. P. Stein, J.J. Frankel and E. Rosenberg,<sup>264</sup> and at the University of Cape Town signed a declaration registering their personal protest. Speaking in the Durban Parliament Mr Abe Goldberg, a former M.P. for Durban Umlazi, voiced his personal disapproval of the Bill.<sup>265</sup>

Arising out of their opposition to the Bill, and its far reaching affect on the Constitution and the future of Parliamentary Government in South Africa, a group of six women in Johannesburg organised the Women's Defence of the Constitution League in order to give expression to their concern.<sup>266</sup> Support for the League grew rapidly around the country, indicating that the feelings of the League's founders were widely shared, and branch committees were rapidly formed and immediately set about collecting women's signatures to protest against the

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<sup>262</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 17, 1955, p.1., May 18, 1955, p.2., May 26, 1955, p.2., June 1, 1955, p.1., June 2, 1955, p.2., June 3, 1955, p.1., June 7, 1955, p.2.,

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, May 23, 1955, p.2.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, May 21, 1955, pp.1-2., May 28, 1955, p.2.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, May 24, 1955, p.2.

<sup>266</sup> Mirabel Rogers, *The Black Sash. The Story of the South African Women's Defence of the Constitution League*, (Johannesburg, 1956), p.14.

*Senate Bill.*<sup>267</sup> Once the Bill had been made law, convoys of women from all parts of the Union converged in Pretoria to present their petitions to the Prime Minister.<sup>268</sup>

The enactment of the Bill did not signal the end of the League's struggle. Instead, in order to focus attention on the *Senate Act* the members of the League, wearing black sashes as a sign of mourning, "for the death of the spirit of democracy," gathered in silent protest whenever a member of the Cabinet appeared anywhere in public.

The League, which was dubbed the "Black Sash" only formed itself into a properly constituted body in Durban in September 1955, on which occasion Mrs A. Goldberg was elected treasurer.<sup>269</sup> In common with branches around the country, the Durban branch strove to keep alive the spirit and message of the Constitution. In November, 1955, as the Electoral Colleges of the four Provinces and South West Africa, gathered to elect Senators to the newly reconstituted Upper House, the women of the "Black Sash" held vigils in the four Provincial capitals and elsewhere in the Union<sup>270</sup> to give expression to their disapproval of the Act, which

<sup>267</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 9, 1955, p.9.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, June 24, 1955, p.2.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, September 9, 1955, p.9.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, November 26, 1955, p.1.

enabled the National Party to dominate the Senate and thereby empowered it to block all legislation.

In this period, dominated as it was by national politics, municipal government, although somewhat overshadowed, was not entirely neglected. Durban Jewry's interest in local government stemmed principally from the participation of members of the community in municipal affairs. In 1950, Councillor H. Saunders, who had represented Ward VII for a period of twelve years, was defeated in the municipal election<sup>271</sup> and retired from public life. The sole Jew on the City Council was now Councillor M. Spanier Marson, who in October 1951, was returned unopposed as the representative for Ward IV.<sup>272</sup> In 1954, for the first time, except for a period during the war when all municipal elections were suspended, there was no municipal contest in Durban, and Councillor Spanier Marson, together with all other candidates, was returned unopposed to office.<sup>273</sup>

Councillor Spanier Marson's re-election coincided with the resignation of Mr H.A. Smith, Durban's Jewish City and Water Engineer who, during his 34 years of service with the Corporation, had been responsible for many of the City's major public works and services.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, October 5, 1950, p.9.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, September 18, 1951, p.11., October 4, 1951, p.9.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, October 6, 1954, p.9.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, September 18, 1954, p.9.



Sadly only nineteen days after his retirement from the senior post that he had held for fifteen years, Mr Smith passed away, at the age of 60 years.<sup>275</sup>

National politics aside, general life in Durban was also punctuated in this period by events of local and national importance, all of which were suitably commemorated by the City's residents, including members of the Jewish community.

In March 1949, the Natal University College was, by an Act of Parliament, accorded full University status.<sup>276</sup> When the Bill to establish the University of Natal went before the Assembly in 1948, the Jewish residents of the City joined their fellow townsmen in contributing to a University Department Fund, and thereby shared in the University's establishment.<sup>277</sup> To mark the University College's accession to full University status, the Mayor of Durban, Councillor L. Boyd, and the City Council held a reception and ball in the Durban City Hall, which was attended by Councillor M. Spanier Marson.<sup>278</sup>

The first graduation ceremony of the University of Natal was held in April 1949, and among the graduates to be capped were Mr Abel Torf LLB.,

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<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, October 11, 1954, p.7.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, March 16, 1949, p.10.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, February 7, 1948, p.12., August 14, 1948, p.12.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, March 16, 1949, p.12.

Mr Hilliard Edelstein B.Sc (Engineering),  
Mr Mervyn Jaspan B.A., Mrs Joy Edelstein B.A. (Social  
Science), Miss Esther Narco B.A. (Social Science), and  
Mr Lionel Woolfson B.Comm. Mr Harold Lange was awarded  
the degree of B.Sc.Hons. in *absentia* at the same  
ceremony.<sup>279</sup>

The Centenary of the arrival of the Byrne Settlers  
in Natal in 1849, was observed in Durban by three days  
of festivities, which included a float procession,  
cavalcade of dancing a Civic prayer service, Civic  
reception and the laying of the commemoration stone of  
the Old House Museum.<sup>280</sup> The Jewish City Councillors  
together with the Mayor and their colleagues on the  
Council attended the reception and ball held at the City  
Hall in honour of the occasion, which was graced by the  
presence of the Administrator of Natal Dr D.G. Shepstone  
and Mrs Shepstone.<sup>281</sup>

The celebration of the centenary of the establishment  
of New Germany was followed with even closer interest by  
the Jewish community of Durban, which numbered  
Jonas Bergtheil, the founder of the township, amongst  
its early pioneers.<sup>282</sup> On the anniversary of the

<sup>279</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 31.

<sup>280</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 28, 1949, p.11.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, May 31, 1949, p.8.

<sup>282</sup> On Bergtheil, see S.G. Cohen, *A History of the Jews of Durban 1825-1918*, Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban, 1977), pp.29-41.

township's founding in March 1948, a letter of congratulations was sent by the Council of Natal Jewry to the New Germany Health Committee, conveying the Jewish community's good wishes.<sup>283</sup> The main ceremony in connection with New Germany's centenary was, however, only held in July 1949, when Mrs A.B. Laserson of Durban, the only living descendant of Mr Bergtheil, unveiled a monument to the memory of the first 34 settlers and their families.<sup>284</sup> Notably absent from the celebrations were official representatives of the Jewish community or Jewish religious leaders, the religious affiliation of New Germany's founder being given scant recognition.

All the people of South Africa were swept up in the celebrations in honour of the *Voortrekkers*, which culminated on December 16, 1949, with the dedication of the *Voortrekker* Monument in Pretoria.<sup>285</sup> Durban Jewry, through the editorial columns of the *Hasholom* joined in paying tribute to these early pioneers. At the same time it recalled the services rendered to the country by the pioneers of all races. In particular it made mention of the Jewish mathematicians who had helped make possible the Portuguese voyages of discovery, the crypto Jews who had settled in the Cape in the service of

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<sup>283</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.9 (May, 1948), 7.

<sup>284</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 1, 1949, p.10.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, December 17, 1949, pp.11-13.

the Dutch East India Company, and the many other Jews who had made their contribution to the upbuilding of South Africa.<sup>286</sup>

With an even greater measure of interest than would normally have been the case the Jews of Durban followed the progress of Fred Allen's All Black Tour of South Africa, which took place between May and September 1949.<sup>287</sup> Their personal interest in the tour stemmed from the selection of Cecil Moss as captain of the Natal team<sup>288</sup> and Moss's inclusion in the Springbok team for all four test matches,<sup>289</sup> in three of which he was the vice-captain.<sup>290</sup>

With a similar measure of personal interest Durban Jewry followed the fortunes of its international weightlifter Issy Bloomberg as he competed in the South African Amateur weight lifting championships and Empire Games trials, held in Pretoria in October 1949.<sup>291</sup> The community took pride in his selection for inclusion in the South African team which competed in the Empire Games in Auckland, New Zealand, in February 1950.<sup>292</sup>

<sup>286</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 2.

<sup>287</sup> D.H. Craven, *Springbok Annals. International Tours to and from South Africa 1891-1958*, (Johannesburg n.d.), p.274.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, p.276.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.278, 280, 282.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.280, 282.

<sup>291</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 3, 1949, p.11.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, December 6, 1949, p.9.



In September 1951, all the peoples of the Commonwealth learnt with concern of the illness of King George VI,<sup>293</sup> and closely followed reports of his lung operation and slow recovery.<sup>294</sup> In common with other religious denominations in the City the Durban Jewish Reform Congregation held prayers for the King's speedy and complete recovery.<sup>295</sup>

With great pleasure the news was received of the proposed visit to Natal of the King, Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret where it was planned that the King would spend a recuperative holiday at Botha House, at Szela, on the Natal South Coast.<sup>296</sup> With memories of the Royal Visit of 1947 still vivid in the minds of the people of South Africa, excitement mounted with the announcement of the King's proposed arrival in the Union on March 26.<sup>297</sup>

For the first three days of February 1952 the attention of the people of Durban was focused not on the forthcoming visit of the King but on the celebrations that were held in connection with the 300th anniversary of the arrival at the Cape of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652.

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<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, September 17, 1951, p.9.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, September 22, 1951, p.11., September 24, 1951, p.9., September 25, 1951, p.9., September 27, 1951, p.9., September 28, 1951, p.11., September 29, 1951, p.11.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, September 25, 1951, p.10.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, January 8, 1952, p.9.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, 1952, p.9.

The programme of the Van Riebeeck Festival was drawn up by a committee, which included Mr J.J. Friedman, the President of the Council of Natal Jewry, and Mrs A. Broomberg, who was the Council's representative on the Entertainment Committee, on which she served as hon. secretary.<sup>298</sup> Among the highlights of the festival was a float procession through the City in which one of the floats was sponsored by the Council of Natal Jewry, on behalf of the Jewish community of Natal. As the parade was held on a Saturday, however, the Council, in deference to the laws of the Sabbath, did not provide personnel for manning the float.<sup>299</sup> On Sunday, February 3, an Interdenominational Civic Service of Thanksgiving was held in the City Hall and was attended by the Council of Natal Jewry's President<sup>300</sup> and by Rabbi Harris Swift, who participated in the service.<sup>301</sup>

The sudden death of King George VI on February 6, 1952<sup>302</sup> marred the celebrations of the Van Riebeeck Tercentenary and plunged the entire Commonwealth into mourning. On receipt of the news of the King's passing, churches throughout Durban were

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<sup>298</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 7th February, 1952, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 4, 1952, p.10.

<sup>302</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, February 6, 1952, p.1.

opened for individual prayers and special services were arranged in the evening at St. Paul's Anglican Church, the Central Methodist Church and the Park Street Synagogue.<sup>303</sup> On Friday evening, February 8, and again during services on the following day, memorial prayers for the late King were offered at Temple David.<sup>304</sup> To coincide with the King's funeral at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, on February 15, a Civic Memorial Service was held in the City Hall conducted by the Mayor's Chaplain, assisted by ministers of other Christian denominations and the Jewish community.<sup>305</sup> The Jews of Durban also mourned their King at separate memorial services held that same evening in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue and the Temple David.<sup>306</sup>

Preparations for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, the late King's successor, were clouded by the passing of Queen Mary, the consort of King George V and grandmother of the reigning Queen, on March 24, 1953.<sup>307</sup> Once again the nations of the Commonwealth joined in mourning a royal personage and at the Civic Interdenominational Service held in Durban the Jewish community was

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<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 7, 1952, p.2.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, February 13, 1952, p.10.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, March 25, 1953, p.9.

represented by the Rev. F. Metzger, who assisted at the service.<sup>308</sup>

The mourning for the late Queen Mary was suspended for the Coronation which took place at Westminster Abbey on June 2, 1953, and which was marked in Durban by a day of celebrations.<sup>309</sup> The Jewish community of the City, through the *Hasholom*, took the opportunity to reaffirm its loyalty to the Crown,<sup>310</sup> and gathered at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue on May 29 for a special prayer and thanksgiving service.<sup>311</sup> In the absence of Rabbi Swift, the senior minister of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, the Rev. F. Metzger participated in the Interdenominational Service held to mark the Queen's Coronation.<sup>312</sup> The night prior to the Coronation ceremony found many members of the Jewish community at a celebratory ball at the Jewish Club, which was specially decorated for the occasion.<sup>313</sup> In his capacity as President of the Council of Natal Jewry, Mr A. Levine, and Mrs Levine, attended the Coronation banquet given by

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<sup>308</sup>*The Natal Daily News*, March 31, 1953, p.1.

<sup>309</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, June 1, 1953, p.6.

<sup>310</sup>*Hasholom*, XXXI No.9 (May, 1953), 2.

<sup>311</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 29, 1953, p.10.

<sup>312</sup>Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry, To Be Presented at the 23rd Annual General Meeting, To Be Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 1st April, 1954, at 8 pm., p.9.

<sup>313</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, June 2, 1953, p.12.



the Deputy Administrator of Natal in Pietermaritzburg.<sup>314</sup> Among the Queen's subjects in Natal who were awarded the Coronation Medal were Mr F.C. Hollander,<sup>315</sup> Rabbi Harris Swift<sup>316</sup> and Mrs Esther Hart M.B.E.,<sup>317</sup> all of whom were prominent members of Durban's Jewish community.

For three months, from May to August 1954, the City of Durban held celebrations, in which the Jewish population enthusiastically participated, to mark its Civic Centenary. As the programme of festivities was preparing to commence the Jewish community recalled some of the outstanding Jewish personalities who had contributed to the development of the City,<sup>318</sup> and who had thereby helped to make the celebrations possible. The opening of the Civic Centenary Celebrations was marked by a Gala Invitation Concert in the City Hall, which featured the Jewish operatic soprano Rose Alper.<sup>319</sup> On May 15, the day on which Durban was proclaimed a borough in 1854, a ceremonial council meeting was held at the City Hall at which former City Councillors were

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<sup>314</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry, To Be Presented at the 23rd Annual General Meeting, To Be Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 1st April, 1954, at 8 pm., p.8.

<sup>315</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 31, 1953, p.7.

<sup>316</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.4 (December, 1953), 21.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.6 (February, 1954), 17.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.9 (May, 1954), 2-3.

<sup>319</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 13, 1954, p.8.

presented with scrolls as a tribute to the services which they had rendered to the City in the past. Amongst the ex-City Councillors so honoured were three members of the Jewish community, Mr F.C. Hollander (a past Mayor), Mr J. Goldman and Mr H. Saunders.<sup>320</sup> A large number of people also attended the Interdenominational Civic Centenary Service, held on May 16, in which Rabbi Harris Swift participated on behalf of the Jews of Durban.<sup>321</sup> Other features of the celebrations included an exhibition of National Folk Dancing in which Israel was represented by members of *Habonim*;<sup>322</sup> a number of special feature concerts, in the first of which Dorothy Avrich was one of the participants;<sup>323</sup> a special Centenary Service at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue attended by the Mayor, Councillor P. Osborn<sup>324</sup> and other prominent citizens;<sup>325</sup> a presentation of the play *The Gentle Rain*, by Durban playwright Noel Langley, at the Durban Jewish Club<sup>326</sup> and a music festival, with soloists Harold Rubens on the piano and Stefan Deak on the violin.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>320</sup>*Hasholom*, XXXII No.10 (June, 1954), 21.

<sup>321</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 17, 1954, p.9.

<sup>322</sup>*Hasholom*, XXXII No.10 (June, 1954), 5.

<sup>323</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 22, 1954, p.8.

<sup>324</sup>*Ibid.*, June 14, 1954, p.9.

<sup>325</sup>*The Zionist Record*, June 25, 1954, p.8.

<sup>326</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 6, 1954, p.3., *Hasholom*, XXXII No.11 (July, 1954), 17, 19, 21.

<sup>327</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 19, 1954, p.8.

The finest testimony to the contribution of local Jews towards the upbuilding of the City and Country was reflected in the City Council's decision to offer the Freedom of the City to Mr F.C. Hollander, in June, 1955,<sup>328</sup> for his outstanding services to the City and the public generally over a long period,<sup>329</sup> and in the appointment, that same month, of Mr E.S. Henochsberg as a Judge in the Natal Supreme Court.<sup>330</sup>

Arrangements were made for Mr Hollander, who was indisposed, to receive the Freedom of Durban by proxy on December 5, 1955.<sup>331</sup> Before his wife could accept the illuminated scroll on his behalf, however, Mr Hollander passed away on December 3, at the age of 81 years,<sup>332</sup> greatly honoured by his country and community, which he had served so tirelessly. His passing was noted with great regret,<sup>333</sup> and his funeral, which was proceeded by a service at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, was attended by the Administrator of Natal, Mr D.G. Shepstone; the Mayor of Durban, Mr G. Vernon Essery; and the Town Clerk, as well as by large numbers of his co-religionists,

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<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, June 21, 1955, p.9.

<sup>329</sup> Minutes of the City Council of the City of Durban. Minutes of Proceedings. At a Meeting of the City Council of Durban held in the Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings on 20th June, 1955, p.641.

<sup>330</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 23, 1955, p.2.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, December 3, 1955, p.2.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1955, pp.1-2.

<sup>333</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, December 5, 1955, p.8.,  
*The Natal Mercury*, December 6, 1955, p.10.

amongst whom he had always been a towering figure.<sup>334</sup>  
 Hollander's place in the history of the Durban Jewry still remains unrivalled, no other single personality having emerged since his death to match him in terms of his outstanding contribution to all levels of Government and to the local and Jewish communities.

In a brief informal ceremony, on March 6, 1956, at the home of Mrs F.C. Hollander, the Mayor presented Mr Hollander's widow with the casket and scroll by which her husband was to have received the Freedom of the City of Durban. Although he died before receiving the scroll, Mr Hollander was in fact a Freeman from September 6, the day on which the City Council decided to confer the honour on him, until the date of his death.<sup>335</sup>

For Durban Jewry, as indeed for all citizens of the Union, the decade following the war had been one fraught with economic hardships and marked by significant and far reaching political developments. The General Election of 1948, which was to be a watershed in the history of South Africa, found the country governed by a Party not renowned for its sympathy for Jews, and one feared by many English speaking South Africans for its republicanist outlook and Afrikaner character. Although concern over possible anti-Semitic activity on the part of the Government proved to be groundless, as part of

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<sup>334</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, December 7, 1955, p.13.

<sup>335</sup>*Ibid.*, March 7, 1955, p.3.



the English speaking section of the country's White population Durban Jewry, like its English speaking Gentile neighbours on the whole, remained wary of the Government. Many of its number were in fact amongst those involved at this time in the various parties and organisations opposed to the Government. The diversity of their involvement, however, makes it impossible to generalise about the community's political views, although there were few amongst them who displayed any sympathy for the National Party.

The Jews of Durban nevertheless, through their work at all levels of Government with groups concerned with the country's well-being, as well as through their involvement in events of local or national significance, continued to exhibit great loyalty to the Union and to the Crown.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

THE COUNCIL OF NATAL JEWRY : 1945 - 1955

Just as the Council of Natal Jewry had adapted itself to meet the wartime needs of the Jewish community of Natal, so too, with the return of peace in 1945, the Council adapted itself to the changed circumstances of the time. Whilst the Council effectively dealt with the immediate long term problems that resulted from the war, it also embarked on ambitious new schemes which were of long term and far reaching importance for the community.

In the post-war decade, as new organisations were admitted into its ranks<sup>1</sup> and its various sub-committees

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<sup>1</sup>Including the Durban branch of the United Zionist Revisionist Party (*Hasholom*, XXVI No.6 (February, 1948), 7.), the Durban Jewish Reform Congregation (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 15.), the Durban Young Israel Society (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 17.), the Pietermaritzburg Branch of the Union of Jewish Women and Durban *Mizrachi* (Report of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.10.), the Durban Women's *Mizrachi* Organisation and the Sisterhood of the Durban Jewish Reform Congregation. (Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.10.).

assumed additional responsibilities, so the Council of Natal Jewry grew in stature and importance. In keeping with the ideals of its founders, the Council continued to deal with matters which were of common interest to the community as a whole. Its constituent bodies, however, remained independent and free from Council interference, save insofar as such interference was necessary in the interests of the whole community. Just as each affiliated body remained autonomous in its own sphere, so too the C.N.J. remained supreme in decisions which it made constitutionally for the entire community.

The success of the Council largely depended on the continued united and close knit nature of the

community,<sup>2</sup> and the Council therefore opposed, with the utmost vigour, any attempt to disrupt this communal unity. With the growth of the Jewish community of Durban and the emergence in this period of new organisations, differences between individual organisations, such as the Reform and Orthodox Congregations, did emerge.<sup>3</sup> These differences, however, were not allowed to interfere

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<sup>2</sup> A unity which the Council contributed to by maintaining a close working relationship with the Zionist Council for Natal, in conjunction with which the C.N.J. held a Protest Meeting in July 1946 (*The Natal Mercury*, July 6, 1946, p.9.), organised a function addressed by Rabbi Kopul Rosen (*Hasholom*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 17.), arranged functions for *Yom Haatzmaut* (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 15.), held a tea in honour of Mr and Mrs M. Sharett, during their visit in June 1950 (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 16.) and in 1955 held a farewell for Harry and Dora Moss-Morris, prior to their *aliyah*. (*Ibid.*, XXXIV No.3 (December, 1955), 12.). From 1953, when the Zionist Council amended its Constitution the President of the Council of Natal Jewry attended, by invitation, all meetings of the Zionist Council, whilst the Chairman of the Zionist Council, by invitation, attended all meetings of the Full Council and of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. (Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 16th April, 1953, at 8 pm., p.18.). The Council also co-operated closely with all other communal bodies and in August 1949, for example, together with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and the Durban Jewish Club the Council sponsored a luncheon to Mr and Mrs F.C. Hollander, on the occasion of their Golden Wedding. (*Hasholom*, XXVII No.12 (August, 1949), 9.). In August 1950 the Council joined the Jewish Reform Congregation and the Jewish Club in welcoming Rabbi Meyer Miller to Durban. (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 18.).

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the 20th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at the Durban Jewish Club, at 8 pm., pp.5-6.



with the smooth running of the Council, which at all times sought to remain impartial and to work for the collective good of Durban Jewry as a whole.<sup>4</sup> The community for its part, not only accepted but encouraged the Council in its efforts to create a compact integrated community.<sup>5</sup> Owing to the Council's ability to preserve the unity of the Jewish community, it enjoyed considerable respect from the general community, which rightly regarded it as the representative body of the Jewish

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<sup>4</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at **the** 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at 8 pm., p.18.

<sup>5</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.8 (April, 1954), 1.

community, and its leader as the community's head.<sup>6</sup>

Early in 1946, the Council's Secretary,

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<sup>6</sup> Consequently the Council was accorded representation on the National War Memorial Health Foundation, (*Ibid.*, XXV No.6 (February, 1947), 14., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 18.) and the Elizabeth Home for the Aged. (*Ibid.*, XXV No.12 (August, 1947), 11.). In the name of Durban Jewry the Council sent its congratulations to the Consul for the Netherlands on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Queen Wilhelmina in August 1948, (Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on the 7th April, 1949, p.9.) it contributed to the Mayor's Relief Fund, set up after the anti-Indian riots of 1949, (*Ibid.*) condoled with his family on the death of Field Marshal Smuts (*Hasholom*, XXIX No.2 (October, 1950), 15.) and sponsored a float in the Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival in February, 1952 (*Ibid.*, XXX No.5 (January, 1952), 26.). In his official capacity the Council's President was invited to a reception at the Royal Danish Consulate to celebrate the 75th birthday of King Christian X in September 1945, (*The Natal Mercury*, September 27, 1945, p.5.), attended an informal tea in honour of the Royal Family in March 1947, (President's Report to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1947, p.1.) was invited to a civic luncheon in honour of Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery on November 25, 1947, (*Hasholom*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 13.) was invited by the Mayor to join the final tram drive through Durban, (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.12 (August, 1949), 9.) attended the Governor General's Garden Party in 1951 (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.11 (July, 1951), 17.) was invited to the Civic Ball of 1952 (Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held on Thursday, 3rd July, 1952 at the Durban Jewish Club at 5.15 pm., p.3.) and attended the Coronation banquet given by the Deputy Administrator of Natal in Pietermaritzburg in 1953. (Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 23rd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 1st April, 1954, at 8 pm., p.8.).

Mr B. Suttner, tendered his resignation<sup>7</sup> and was succeeded by Mr S.W. Sulski, the former Secretary of the Communal Relations Committee of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.<sup>8</sup> At about the same time, owing to inadequate accommodation, the C.N.J. removed its offices from 601 *Payne's Buildings*, West Street, to the first floor *Holt's Buildings*, 350 Smith Street,<sup>9</sup> which served as temporary premises until May 1947, when the Council was able to secure offices at 65/68 *Trust Buildings* in Gardiner Street.<sup>10</sup> At the beginning of 1952, Mr Sulski was succeeded as Secretary by Mr D. Spector,<sup>11</sup> and under his direction the offices of the Council were moved, on May 1, 1953, to new premises at *Pioneer Arcade*, 72 Berea Road.<sup>12</sup> Portion of the premises leased by the Council was sublet to the Zionist Council for Natal, the Durban Jewish Women's Guild and the South African Jewish

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<sup>7</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday Evening, the 7th March, 1946, at 8 pm., p.2.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, Old Fort Road, Durban, on Thursday, 15th August, 1946, at 8 pm., p.1.

<sup>9</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.10 (June, 1946), 21.

<sup>10</sup> President's Report to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1947, p.9.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Full Council of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Wednesday, 30th January, 1952, at 8 pm., p.1.

<sup>12</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 58.

Appeal. This centralisation of the offices of the different Jewish bodies of the City lent itself to a greater degree of communal co-ordination and efficiency. In addition to the office accommodation the new premises included a hall, the *Maon*, capable of seating about 100 people, which was suitable for film shows, minor meetings and committee meetings.<sup>13</sup>

With demobilisation and the return of servicemen from abroad, the work of the Council's Soldier's Assistance Committee increased and, under the chairmanship of Mr M. Freed, functioned extremely well. Apart from extending loans and offering advice, the Committee sought to assist discharged soldiers by placing them in employment.<sup>14</sup> To keep Jewish employers mindful of their obligations to the returned soldiers the Council's President, Mr I. Geshen, held a private luncheon for several leading businessmen in 1946, and used the opportunity to prevail upon businessmen to assist ex-servicemen in whichever way that they possibly could.<sup>15</sup>

The integration of former soldiers into the community took place slowly. Whilst the number of applications made to the Committee had, by 1947, already started to decline, the Committee, which was now chaired

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<sup>13</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 29, 1953, p.13.

<sup>14</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.12 (August, 1945), 2.

<sup>15</sup> President's Report Submitted at the 15th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 4th April, 1946, at 8 pm., p.5.



by Mr L.S. Ditz, was still kept active.<sup>16</sup> Applications for assistance continued to be received during 1947 and 1948, and in all cases investigations were made, and where appropriate, assistance was rendered. The Committee, however, began to feel that its work of rehabilitation was no longer necessary and that its primary function should continue to be to assist returned soldiers in an advisory capacity.<sup>17</sup>

During 1948, the Committee acted on its belief and terminated its work. The final reports showed that 202 ex-servicemen and their families had been assisted and that the pledge given by the Council to volunteers had been fully honoured.<sup>18</sup> Continued calls on the Committee nevertheless made it necessary for the Committee to continue functioning.<sup>19</sup> Seven years after the conclusion of the war the Committee was still in existence, and although principally concerned with the collection of outstanding loans, it also, when necessary

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<sup>16</sup> President's Report to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1947, p.8.

<sup>17</sup> Council of Natal Jewry Report of the Executive 1947-1948, p.6.

<sup>18</sup> Report of the Executive, to be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.8.

<sup>19</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.9, and Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at 8 pm., p.14.

continued to extend assistance.<sup>20</sup> A decade after the return of peace to Europe there was still a need for the Soldiers' Assistance Committee to operate as its assistance continued to be sought by those few servicemen who found difficulty establishing themselves in professions.<sup>21</sup>

The work of the Soldiers' Assistance Committee was complemented by that of the Welfare Committee, which was set up in October 1949, with Mr M. Freed as chairman.<sup>22</sup> Its primary concern throughout this period was in assisting people to find employment, to complete applications for naturalisation, to apply for pensions and restitution for losses incurred as a result of Nazi persecution. The work carried out by the Welfare Committee lay specifically outside the terms of reference of existing committees or other organisations concerned with welfare work.<sup>23</sup> Through the efforts of the Council of Natal Jewry a single Jewish welfare association was

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<sup>20</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.18.

<sup>21</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.7.

<sup>22</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.10.

<sup>23</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 52.

established in Durban in this period,<sup>24</sup> but this in no way minimised the work of the Council's Welfare Committee, which continued with its multifarious duties.

The volume of work of the Council's Immigration Committee also increased substantially after the fall of the Axis Powers. In co-operation with the Union of Jewish Women, the Jewish Benevolent Society and the Jewish Women's Guild, the Immigration Committee, chaired by Mr N. Hertz, extended assistance to Jewish refugees who passed through Durban *en route* to Palestine and other destinations.<sup>25</sup> It also helped Jewish immigrants who came to settle in South Africa or to be united with their families in other parts of the Union.<sup>26</sup>

From 1947, a further increase in the number of calls made on the Committee was recorded,<sup>27</sup> and the Rev. F. Metzger was appointed to act as assistant to the Immigration Officer Mr N. Hertz.<sup>28</sup> Among the many ships met by the members of the Immigration Committee was the *S.S. Misr*, which arrived in Durban in March 1947, on its way to Australia. Apart from extending hospitality to

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<sup>24</sup> See below pp.1059-1065.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday Evening, the 7th March, 1946, at 8 pm., p.2.

<sup>26</sup> President's Report to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1947, p.8.

<sup>27</sup> Council of Natal Jewry Report of the Executive 1947-1948, p.5.

<sup>28</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 8.



the 51 Jews on board ship, the Committee, realising that these people would be spending *Pesach* at sea, provided *matzot*, wine and *haggadot* to enable them to observe the festival.<sup>29</sup>

The arrival of the Panamanian passenger vessel *S.S. Captain Markos* in Durban in February 1949, with more than 500 Jews bound for Palestine and Europe amongst her passengers,<sup>30</sup> saw the entire Jewish community rally to the aid of the Immigration Committee. While the ship still lay in midstream, members of the community, including Rabbi A.H. Freedman, went out in a launch to meet the travellers.<sup>31</sup> In order to prevent any of the ship's passengers from seeking to remain in the Union, no one was allowed to leave the vessel,<sup>32</sup> which, instead, was visited by Immigration Committee workers. They took on board the many parcels of food, clothing, toys, books and toiletries which had been prepared by a special committee a few days before the ship's arrival.<sup>33</sup> The special committee led by Mr N. Hertz, included Mr M. Freed, who was in charge of stores, Mrs I.J. Greenberg, who organised a women's committee which took responsibility for clothing, and Mr H. Hadany,

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.8 (April, 1947), 21.

<sup>30</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 23, 1949, p.10.

<sup>31</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, February 23, 1949, p.3.

<sup>32</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 23, 1949, p.10.

<sup>33</sup> *The Zionist Record*, March 4, 1949, p.4.



who collected toys and books in German, Hebrew and English.<sup>34</sup> The visit of the *Captain Markos* highlighted the importance of the Immigration Committee in organising the community to deal with an event of this nature, which was totally beyond the power or scope of any one individual.<sup>35</sup>

The cessation of the flow of immigrants into South Africa after 1949, corresponded with a falling off in the activities of the Committee. It nevertheless continued to function, assisting new immigrants to comply with the necessary formalities on landing in Durban,<sup>36</sup> and aiding those Jews passing through the port.<sup>37</sup> The sterling work carried out by the Immigration Committee also came in time to be known beyond the confines of the Jewish community. There were even occasions when the Immigration Authorities referred cases to the Committee and when non-Jews applied for, and obtained,

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<sup>34</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.7 (March, 1949), 13.

<sup>35</sup> Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.8.

<sup>36</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at 8 pm., p.14.

<sup>37</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 59., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 59., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 59., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 55.

assistance from Mr Hertz.<sup>38</sup>

The movement of refugees through Durban brought home in some measure to the Jewish community the extent of the dislocation and suffering endured by European Jewry during the war. This awareness took on an even greater personal dimension when the South African Jewish War Appeal assumed the heartrending task of assisting Jews in the Union to trace missing relatives. Lists of survivors of the concentration camps, and those who had been found alive in Nazi occupied Europe, were made available at the offices of the Council of Natal Jewry;<sup>39</sup> and through the War Appeal food and clothing parcels were distributed by members of the community to their relatives in Europe.<sup>40</sup>

The plight of the displaced persons in camps around the European continent aroused practical sympathy amongst South African Jewry for the Jewish War Appeal, which focused its attention on ameliorating the position of those who had survived the Nazi Holocaust and were, for the most part, awaiting admission to Palestine. In April 1946, a Clothing Drive was held in Durban to collect garments for dispatch to the American Joint

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<sup>38</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at 8 pm., p.14.

<sup>39</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 36 and 40., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 17., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.8 (April, 1946), 42.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 5.

Distribution Committee in Amsterdam, for distribution amongst the inmates of the Displaced Persons Camps.<sup>41</sup> The drive coincided with the visit of Dr Joseph Schwartz, a director of the American Joint Distribution Committee and Organiser for Displaced Persons in Europe, who came to South Africa to publicise the importance of the War Appeal's work. At a meeting at the Jewish Club, presided over by Mr M. Woolfson, the chairman of the local Appeal Committee, Dr Schwartz addressed a representative gathering of Durban Jewry.<sup>42</sup> The community took particular pride in the fact that Mr Harry Rubin, formerly of Durban, was selected by the Jewish War Appeal as South Africa's representative to work with Dr Schwartz and the American Joint Distribution Committee.<sup>43</sup> Similar satisfaction was felt in 1947, when Miss Lucy Hoddes, who had been associated with the Jewish War Appeal in Durban, was appointed to the staff of the Joint Distribution Committee.<sup>44</sup>

In November 1946, the South African Jewish War Appeal launched its third drive for funds. The campaign in Durban, chaired by Mr I. Geshen,<sup>45</sup> was inaugurated by Lieut. Col. Judah Nadich, senior Jewish

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.7 (March, 1946), 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.8 (April, 1946), 27 and 29.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.9 (May, 1946), 15.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 5.

<sup>45</sup> President's Report to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1947, p.6.



chaplain to the American forces in Western Europe and advisor to General Eisenhower on Jewish affairs in the European theatre of operations.<sup>46</sup> A separate women's campaign was simultaneously launched, under the auspices of the Union of Jewish Women, after a meeting addressed by Lieut. Col. Nadich.<sup>47</sup> Chaired by Mrs M. Lewis, the women's campaign formed various committees to help increase the total money collected, and to extend practical assistance. Under the direction of Mrs S. Hackner a Layette Section was set up to help provide clothing for the infants born in the Displaced Persons camps. Mesdames J.M. Gevisser and S.J. Kaplan convened a Linen Section, which sought to help couples who were starting up homes again after a long separation, by supplying them with the basic necessities of household linens. Mesdames C. Sternberg and J. Greenberg took charge of the collection boxes, Mrs A. Saville supervised the Clothes Section and Mrs H. Freed assumed responsibility for collecting money from amongst the children of the community who wished to assist the Appeal.<sup>48</sup>

After its successful launching, the campaign in Durban went into recess during the summer holidays. It was resumed early in 1947,<sup>49</sup> when it was also extended

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<sup>46</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, November 27, 1946, p.4.

<sup>47</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.4 (December, 1946), 25.

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

<sup>49</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 14, 1947, p.10.



to the country districts where it met with equally generous support.<sup>50</sup> The Women's Committee held a linen drive in March 1947,<sup>51</sup> and also organised two successful clothing drives during the year, as a result of which 62 cases of clothing, boots and shoes were shipped overseas, including two cases of complete baby layettes. One hundred blankets, donated by Mr P. Frame, were also dispatched for distribution abroad.<sup>52</sup> Further funds for the Appeal were derived from a fete, held in October 1947, at the farm of Mr and Mrs A. Beare.<sup>53</sup>

In November, 1947, the community was addressed by Mrs Minnie Levitas who had been associated with the work of the Jewish War Appeal in Europe.<sup>54</sup> Her appeal on behalf of the displaced Jews of Europe roused the community to even greater effort on behalf of the War Appeal, and as a result of her visit a number of new committees were formed. A Youth Section of the Appeal, open to all those over the age of fourteen years, was set up under the convenership of Mr L. Lewis and Miss A. Katz, with Messrs B. Levitt and K. Levy as treasurers and Mr N. Stark and Miss S. Orlin

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<sup>50</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 5., Council of Natal Jewry Report of the Executive 1947-1948, p.4.

<sup>51</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 24.

<sup>52</sup> Council of Natal Jewry Report of the Executive 1947-1948, p.4.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.3 (November, 1947), 21.

as secretaries.<sup>55</sup> Members were sub-divided according to their age groups, and like the adult sections, the Youth Section was divided into committees and a number of sub-committees which contributed to a greater measure of efficiency.<sup>56</sup> A Young Married Section, convened by Mrs C. Feinberg,<sup>57</sup> and a Fete Committee, formed by the Women's Section, and convened by Mesdames C. Davidson and S. Kahn,<sup>58</sup> were further evidence of the positive effect of Mrs Levitas's visit to Durban.

At a meeting convened during the Biennial Congress of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in August 1947, the decision was taken, in view of the termination of the war, to change the name of the South African Jewish War Appeal to the South African Jewish Appeal.<sup>59</sup> The change in name became effective at the beginning of 1948,<sup>60</sup> and in no way interfered with the nature of the Appeal or its activities.

As the Women's Section went ahead with its preparations for its fete, fund raising activities continued unabated.

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 33.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

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

<sup>59</sup> The South African Board of Deputies, Report of the Executive Council for the period August, 1947, to May, 1949. To be submitted to the Seventeenth Biennial Congress, in Johannesburg, May 28th to 31st, 1949, p.5.

<sup>60</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.6 (February, 1948), 7.

The Youth Section held a successful concert in February 1948, at the Durban Jewish Club,<sup>61</sup> whilst other Sections held a bring and buy sale, film evenings, bridge drives<sup>62</sup> and a cabaret.<sup>63</sup> The climax of months of hard work by all branches of the South African Jewish Appeal was the fete for the relief and reconstruction of Jewish victims of the war held at the Durban Jewish Club.<sup>64</sup> The fete was followed by a cabaret attended by 600 people, including the Mayor of Durban, Councillor Leo Boyd, and Mrs Boyd, and in all, more than £3,000 was raised for the Appeal.<sup>65</sup> The Fete was wound up with a grand all day function at Beare's Farm on July 11, which was also judged to be an unqualified success.<sup>66</sup> Further funds for the Jewish Appeal were raised at a Novelty Mock Trial and Court of Injustice held at the Jewish Club on August 7, 1948.<sup>67</sup>

Together with Messrs E. Schragenheim, H. Moss-Morris and N. Hertz, who represented the Zionist Council for Natal, Messrs H.L. Magid, A. Goldberg and Rabbi A.H. Freedman, on behalf of the C.N.J., attended

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<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, XXVI No.7 (March, 1948), 21.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, XXVI No.8 (April, 1948), 38.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, XXVI No.9 (May, 1948), 3.

<sup>64</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, June 3, 1948, p.13.

<sup>65</sup>*Hasholom*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 14, 17, 17.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 25 and 27.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 20-21.

a National Conference called by the South African Zionist Federation, in Johannesburg, in May 1948.<sup>68</sup> After protracted negotiations between the Zionist Federation, the South African Jewish Appeal and the Board of Deputies, the decision was taken, in view of the fighting in Israel, to organise a united fund raising effort. As a result of these negotiations the Israeli United Appeal (I.U.A.) was formed, in which the participants were the Zionist Federation, and the South African Jewish Appeal, who agreed to share the proceeds in the ratio of 70% to 30%.<sup>69</sup>

The South African Jewish Appeal National Conference was held in Johannesburg in September 1948, and Messrs H.L. Magid, I. Geshen, M. Lewis and C. Davidson were appointed to the National Committee of the Appeal.<sup>70</sup> Messrs H. Caminsky, G. Cohen, I. Fisch, B. Shotland, M. Woolfson, H. Zulman and Rabbi Freedman were appointed to the Appeal's National Council.<sup>71</sup> The Jewish Appeal decided to spend a portion of its share of the I.U.A. in helping to relieve the housing shortage in Israel, and

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<sup>68</sup> Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.2.

<sup>69</sup> The South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Report of the Executive Council for the period August, 1947 to May, 1949. To be submitted to the Seventeenth Biennial Congress in Johannesburg, May 28th to 31st, 1949, p.5.

<sup>70</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 8, 1948, p.6.

<sup>71</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 15.



plans were made for a major project at Ashkelon and a minor one near Jerusalem.<sup>72</sup> The first campaign on behalf of the Israeli United Appeal was held in Durban in November 1948, its committee being made up of representatives of the Council of Natal Jewry and the Zionist Council for Natal.<sup>73</sup>

The community's duty to support causes abroad corresponded with its responsibility towards its own institutions. Durban Jewry, mindful of this responsibility, accordingly, gave its support to the appeal for funds for the Council of Natal Jewry and on behalf of the Board of Deputies, which was made late in 1945, a similar appeal having been made some four years previously. The drive for funds was conducted by a special committee chaired by Mr I. Phillips, and largely through his efforts a sum in excess of £148,000 was raised from the Jews of Natal.<sup>74</sup> The completion of the drive was taken in hand by the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry, which experienced considerable difficulty

<sup>72</sup>The South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Report of the Executive Council for the period June, 1949 to May, 1951. To be submitted to the Eighteenth Biennial Congress, in Johannesburg, May 31st to June 3rd, 1951, p.4.

<sup>73</sup>Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.2. For further account of activities of I.U.A., see under succeeding chapters on Zionism.

<sup>74</sup>President's Report. Submitted at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 4th April, 1946, at 8 pm., p.11.

in obtaining sufficient canvassers to assist in the Drive, and the Executive was forced to call on the Council to assist in concluding the campaign.<sup>75</sup>

In November 1947, Dr N. Smith, the Treasurer of the C.N.J., was asked to prepare recommendations in connection with the campaign for funds for the Board of Deputies and the Council of Natal Jewry, which it was anticipated, would be opened in Durban at the beginning of March 1948.<sup>76</sup> In December 1947, in consequence of the unrest in Palestine, the Council's President, Mr H.L. Magid, attended a meeting convened by the Zionist Federation at which a special Emergency Fund for Palestine was inaugurated. Upon the President's return to Durban, and after consultation with the Zionist Council for Natal, the Emergency Fund was launched in Durban,<sup>77</sup> and the Board of Deputies and C.N.J.'s campaign was consequently postponed for a few months.<sup>78</sup>

The campaign for funds for the Board and the Council was inaugurated in Natal at a public meeting on June 15, 1948, at which Mr S.M. Kuper, the Chairman of the Board of Deputies, and Mr A. Ovedoff, the campaign

<sup>75</sup> President's Report to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1947, p.5.

<sup>76</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 13.

<sup>77</sup> Council of Natal Jewry Report of the Executive 1947-1948, pp.1-2.

<sup>78</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.6 (February, 1948), 7.

organiser of the Board, addressed the community.<sup>79</sup> The campaign, chaired by Mr B.H. Bloom, the Council's Hon. Treasurer, made good progress in Durban, although the usual difficulty of obtaining canvassers was experienced. It was finally suspended whilst still incomplete, on account of the inauguration of the drive for the Israeli United Appeal.<sup>80</sup>

The multiplicity of campaigns, and the lack of effective co-ordination of fundraising within the South African Jewish community, caused the C.N.J. and other Provincial Committees, similarly restricted in terms of the numbers of donors and canvassers available for campaigns, to press for a solution to the problem. Discussions were held between the Board of Deputies and the South African Zionist Federation, and there was general consensus that South African Jewry had to consider its own needs and had to achieve a balance between these needs and overseas obligations. General support for a unification of campaigns was widespread amongst communal bodies and was supported by the C.N.J., which had long pressed for such a step,<sup>81</sup> and had laid the groundwork for such a scheme in Natal.

At a meeting of the Full Council held on

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.10 (July, 1948), 3.

<sup>80</sup> Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on the 7th April, 1949, p.3.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

November 1948, the decision was made to deduct 10 per cent from all campaigns for overseas funds for use for local needs.<sup>82</sup> The money deducted, which was to be administered by the C.N.J.,<sup>83</sup> was intended to cover the needs of the Council as well as Natal's contribution to the Board of Deputies, the Board of Jewish Education and the Jewish Community Chest and thereafter to meet the demands of other suitable organisations in Natal.<sup>84</sup> It was hoped that this decision would soon bring about the unification of campaigns. In May 1949, the Full Council decided that Natal should have one combined campaign for local and overseas needs and that an agreed amount would be deducted for the needs of Natal Jewry.<sup>85</sup>

Unanimity on the necessity for a unified campaign for local needs was reached at the Biennial Congress of the Board in May 1949, where it was also decided that the Zionist Federation should be asked to agree to a unified campaign for overseas appeals.<sup>86</sup> A meeting of the Board and its Provincial Committee was held in July, attended by Messrs H.L. Magid and J.J. Friedman, to begin

<sup>82</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 15.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Reports of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on the 7th April, 1949, p.3.

<sup>85</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 11.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 13.



the organisation of a fundraising campaign for local needs.<sup>87</sup> At the inter-Provincial Conference of the Board, held the following month, it was resolved to launch a unified campaign on behalf of the Jewish national bodies in South Africa, which would be held biennially and would alternate with a campaign for overseas appeals.<sup>88</sup> Thus came into being the United Communal Fund for South African Jewry (the U.C.F.). When the Fund was launched it was decided that the following bodies would be the beneficiaries, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the South African Board of Jewish Education, the Cape Board of Jewish Education, the Union of Jewish Women of Southern Africa, (for administrative purposes) and the Country Communities Committee of the Board of Deputies (set up to provide for the religious and educational needs of the Country Communities). The Yiddish Cultural Foundation and the South African Ort-Oze were later added to the list of beneficiaries.<sup>89</sup>

The first U.C.F. campaign was launched in November 1949, and was inaugurated in Natal at a reception held in honour of Chief Rabbi Dr L. Rabinowitz, the President of the Transvaal Section

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 13.

<sup>88</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.13.

<sup>89</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 13.

of the Fund, and Dr H. Sonnanbend, the Vice-Chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.<sup>90</sup> The Natal committee of the campaign was chaired by Mr M. Woolfson, and in addition to the men's section a special women's fundraising section was organised under the chairmanship of Mrs M. Moshal, with Mesdames C. Davidson and P. Abro as co-conveners of the functions section.<sup>91</sup>

Following its successful launching in Durban, the campaign was carried, in 1950, to the other Jewish communities of Natal. It was conducted in Danhauser,<sup>92</sup> Vryheid,<sup>93</sup> and Pietermaritzburg,<sup>94</sup> where it met with a response equally enthusiastic to that accorded it in Durban.

The Women's Campaign rendered invaluable assistance to the campaign in canvassing the community, and at a meeting at the Jewish Club, addressed by Mrs Helen Kehr of Johannesburg, the women reaffirmed their support for the U.C.F.<sup>95</sup> The campaign also enjoyed the support of the youth, many of whom made their contribution through the Natal Jewish Youth Fund. The Fund, made up from contributions of young people in junior positions

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 and 13.

<sup>91</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 65.

<sup>92</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.6 (February, 1950), 22.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.7 (March, 1950), 33.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 24, 1950, p.20.

of employment or contributions from personal allowances, had been formed in 1948, and had, in fact, contributed to many worthy Jewish causes.<sup>96</sup>

The campaign in Natal met with enormous success, as was the case throughout the Union, and Natal was in fact the first Province to reach its quota.<sup>97</sup> The Natal drive ended with a Gala Ball at the Jewish Club on May 17, 1950, held under the direction of the women's fundraising section,<sup>98</sup> which proved to be a fitting climax to the U.C.F.'s inaugural campaign.

Incorporated into the U.C.F. campaign in Durban, but at the same time not part of the U.C.F., was the campaign for the Durban Jewish Community Chest. The Chest had, from the time of its inception in 1945, conducted its own annual drive for its beneficiary institutions.<sup>99</sup> These drives had, however, encountered problems in terms of obtaining sufficient canvassers and supporters, mainly because there were always so many

<sup>96</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 26. On the Fund, see below p.1001.

<sup>97</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 64.

<sup>98</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 35.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.12 (August, 1946), 6., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 59., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65., Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.7., Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.9.

campaigns afoot at the same time. In 1947<sup>100</sup> and 1948<sup>101</sup> the campaign quotas were, in fact, not realised and allocations had to be reduced accordingly. As the principal source of revenue for its beneficiaries, to which were later also added the *Meshullochim* Fund of the Council of Natal Jewry and the Jewish Education Council,<sup>102</sup> the Community Chest occupied a vital place in ensuring the continued existence of the community's charitable, educational and cultural bodies. Its incorporation into the U.C.F. campaign was therefore a practical and necessary step if the problems which had hindered it in the past were to be successfully overcome. At the same time, the Chest, which regulated fundraising for the local needs of Durban Jewry, notwithstanding the practical difficulties with which it had to cope, was in many ways a model for the U.C.F. which had similarly been created to obviate the need for a multiplicity of campaigns. By its inclusion in the collection for the U.C.F. the Community Chest did not, however, disappear, "for it catered for the needs of local institutions and had a

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<sup>100</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65.

<sup>101</sup> Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.7.

<sup>102</sup> Council of Natal Jewry Report of the Executive 1947-1948, p.5. On the Jewish Education Council, see below pp.819-850.



function outside that of the U.C.F."<sup>103</sup> On the resignation of Mr H. Zulman in 1949, the Chest came under the chairmanship of Mr I. Shagam.<sup>104</sup> The Community Chest remained responsible for the allocation of funds, which it received through the joint campaign with the U.C.F., amongst its local beneficiaries, who received no funds from the national campaign. In 1951, the Temple David Hebrew School was admitted as a member of the Community Chest,<sup>105</sup> and funds were allocated to it in a manner similar to that in which the Union for Progressive Jewish Education received an allocation from the U.C.F.<sup>106</sup>

The second campaign for the U.C.F. was launched in Durban by Mr E. Horwitz, Chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and Mr F. Landau, the Board's Vice-Chairman, at a reception held at the Jewish Club on September 23, 1951.<sup>107</sup> The campaign got off to a good start with donors increasing their contributions

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<sup>103</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at 8 pm., p.14.

<sup>104</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 11.

<sup>105</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 5th July, 1951, at 8 pm., pp.1-2.

<sup>106</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.18.

<sup>107</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 5, 1951, p.9.

by an average of approximately 27 per cent.<sup>108</sup> It was hampered, however, by a shortage of canvassers,<sup>109</sup> a perennial and widespread problem, and consequently the campaign could not be completed in Durban by the end of 1951, as had been intended.<sup>110</sup>

The campaign was launched in Pietermaritzburg on March 2, 1952, by the Council's President, Mr J.J. Friedman, Mr N. Phillips, the Chairman of the Public Relations Committee of the Board of Deputies, and Mr M. Woolfson, the Chairman of the U.C.F. Committee for Natal.<sup>111</sup> Thereafter visits were made in the interests of the Fund to the Jewish communities of Northern Natal, Zululand, the North and South Coasts and East Griqualand.<sup>112</sup>

Unlike the rest of the Union, Natal did not hold a separate women's campaign. Instead, the ladies, under the chairmanship of Mrs M. Moshal, assisted in canvassing the community. The extent of their success was shown by the fact that in Natal the ladies collected one sixth of the total amount collected by the ladies throughout

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<sup>108</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.2 (October, 1951), 14.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.4 (December, 1951), 26.

<sup>110</sup> Reports of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting to be held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.16.

<sup>111</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.7 (March, 1952), 33.

<sup>112</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.17.

the Union.<sup>113</sup> Under the direction of Mesdames C. Davidson and H.G. Friede a very successful function, in aid of the campaign, was held at the Jewish Club on 19th April, 1952.<sup>114</sup>

The 1951-1952 U.C.F. campaign was concluded by September, 1952,<sup>115</sup> and notwithstanding the fact that the amount collected was slightly below the target aimed at, sufficient funds had been raised to ensure that the C.N.J. was able to meet its commitments in full.<sup>116</sup>

After having conducted two campaigns, Mr M. Woolfson retired from the Chair and was succeeded by Mr I. Shagam.<sup>117</sup> Under his direction the third U.C.F. campaign was launched by Councillor H. Miller, the Mayor of Johannesburg and the Chairman of the Fund, and Mr N. Phillips, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Deputies, on September 28, 1953.<sup>118</sup> Less than six weeks after the

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<sup>113</sup> Reports of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 16th April, 1953, at 8 pm., p.16.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 40-41.

<sup>116</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 16th April, 1953, at 8 pm., p.16.

<sup>117</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 23rd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 1st April, 1954, at 8 pm., p.14.

<sup>118</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.2 (October, 1953), 21, 22, 23, 25, 26.

commencement of the drive a sum of £26,000, more than half the £42,000 target figure for Natal had been collected.<sup>119</sup>

The Women's Committee, convened by Mesdames J.J. Friedman and A. Levine, assisted the campaign by canvassing 276 prospective donors and raising over £2,000. Notably absent from the campaign, however, were the fundraising functions organised by the women, the Function's Convener having been forced to resign her post early in the campaign.<sup>120</sup>

Mr Shagam brought the campaign to a successful conclusion early in 1955, and his treasurer, Mr J. Greene, undertook the chair of the 1955-1957 campaign.<sup>121</sup> The 4th U.C.F. campaign was launched in October 1955, with an increased target to meet the growing needs of the community's local organisations which fell under the Durban Jewish Community Chest.<sup>122</sup> Only weeks after its launching, the campaign was interrupted by the need to set up an emergency appeal for Israel. The U.C.F. consequently went into recess and its workers threw their energies wholeheartedly into

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 41.

<sup>120</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 23rd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 1st April, 1954, at 8 pm., p.14.

<sup>121</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.12 (August, 1955), 24.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (October, 1955), 27.



the emergency appeal.<sup>123</sup> By the end of 1955, however, the U.C.F. Committee was ready to continue its campaign which it had anticipated would be resumed in February 1956.<sup>124</sup>

One of the beneficiaries of the Community Chest, which benefitted from the joint campaign with the U.C.F., was the *Meshullochim* Sub-Committee. Owing to a multiplicity of appeals during the first months of the war the annual appeal on behalf of the religious institutions in Palestine, supported by the community through the Committee, was deferred until the end of 1945. Notwithstanding the economic conditions in Palestine and the growing demand for additional aid, only £500 could be remitted for distribution.<sup>125</sup> The Council was of the opinion that a far larger sum should be sent annually,<sup>126</sup> and to ensure the availability of necessary funds and to facilitate the collection of these funds the *Meshullochim* Committee was made a beneficiary of the Community Chest,<sup>127</sup> thereby obviating the need for a special annual appeal. The Committee's

<sup>123</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 25th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 5th April, 1956, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>124</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.3 (December, 1955), 27.

<sup>125</sup> President's Report Submitted at the Annual General Meeting, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 4th April, 1946, at 8 pm., p.13.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> President's Report to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1947, p.7.

principal task was now the distribution of money allocated to it by the Jewish Community Chest.<sup>128</sup> In 1950, there was a move to dissolve the *Meshullochim* Committee and to have the Hon. Treasurer, in consultation with the Orthodox Rabbi, arrange the allocations to the various institutions in Israel.<sup>129</sup> Nothing came of this plan, however, and the committee continued to function,<sup>130</sup> and to distribute the £750 which it received annually from the Community Chest.<sup>131</sup>

Little publicised, but of great importance, was the work undertaken by the Council's Public Relations Committee. This Committee kept in close contact with the Board of Deputies and took necessary action when discrimination and prejudice was shown towards members of the Jewish community. At the same time it strove

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<sup>128</sup> Council of Natal Jewry Report of the Executive 1947-1948, p.6., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 69.

<sup>129</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club on the 30th March, 1950 at 8 pm., p.9.

<sup>130</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.18., Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 16th April, 1953, at 8 pm., p.17.

<sup>131</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 23rd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 1st April, 1954, at 8 pm., p.15.

to foster cordial relations between the Jews and their Gentile neighbours and encouraged members of the Jewish community to take their proper place in the communal, cultural, spiritual and political life of the country as a whole.<sup>132</sup>

During the troubled post-war period in Palestine, the Public Relations Committee arranged for letters and articles in the daily press to be suitably answered, and urged the community to show restraint in rushing to print and generally prolonging a correspondence with little positive benefit. The policy advocated by the Committee in respect of anti-Semitism remained one of communal restraint. The community generally adhered to the call that all manifestations of anti-Semitism be brought to the Committee's attention rather than tackled independently. The community's acceptance of such a policy strengthened the authority with which the C.N.J. spoke and added weight to the Council's efforts in this regard.<sup>133</sup>

The Public Relations Committee also kept a close check on political trends in South Africa, but it made

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<sup>132</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.9.

<sup>133</sup> President's Report of the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1947, pp.5-6.



no incursion into the field of party politics.<sup>134</sup> It in fact upheld the official policy of the Board, which was that Jews, as individuals, were free to express any political opinion though the Board itself took no part in politics.<sup>135</sup>

In the interests of good neighbourliness the Committee co-operated with other organisations in establishing a Goodwill Council,<sup>136</sup> which sought to foster group relations. It also distributed pamphlets to all Sunday schools and lay school teachers which were entitled *Your Neighbour Celebrates the Jewish Holidays*. These pamphlets, which were obtained from the Anti-Defamation League of *B'nai B'rith* in the United States of America, were written for Gentile children, with a view to giving them some knowledge of the significance of the Jewish Holy Days.<sup>137</sup>

To keep the members of the Jewish community better

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<sup>134</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at 8 pm., p.10.

<sup>135</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.11.

<sup>136</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 13., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.7 (March, 1948), 6., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 59.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 59., and Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.9.



informed, the Public Relations Committee, in conjunction with the Culture Section of the Jewish Club, inaugurated a series of lectures on current affairs. Among those who participated in the series of lectures in 1947 were Mr L.A. Pincus, the eminent Zionist leader; Mr H. Sonnanbend, of the Board of Deputies; Mr Morris Broughton, the editor of *The Natal Daily News* and Mr A. Goldberg.<sup>138</sup> Over the next two years other speakers who participated in the programme included Mr Alan Paton, the author and humanist,<sup>139</sup> Dr the Hon. Henry Gluckman M.P.,<sup>140</sup> Sir John Dawson Tyson<sup>141</sup> and Mrs Bertha Solomon M.P.<sup>142</sup>

The Committee was also responsible for obtaining from *America Eternal Light* records, which were recordings of weekly broadcasts of the American Jewish Theological Seminary.<sup>143</sup> These records were made available principally to Jewish societies and groups, and were

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.7.

<sup>140</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.9.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 17.

<sup>143</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 59.

widely used by the community's women's societies.<sup>144</sup>

Within the wide scope of its activities the Public Relations Committee, on behalf of the Jewish community, sent a letter of congratulations to the New Germany Health Committee on the celebration of the Centenary of the establishment of the township by the Jewish pioneer Jonas Bergtheil,<sup>145</sup> and investigated incidents of school teachers setting examinations during Jewish holidays.<sup>146</sup>

In the post-war period there were few open manifestations of anti-Semitism in Natal, apart from some objectionable stickers that appeared in public places,<sup>147</sup> some pamphlets emanating from the Swedish anti-Semite Arberg and from R.K. Rudman of Natal, and the occasional newspaper editorial, article or letter.<sup>148</sup> In all cases, objectionable material was forwarded by the Committee to the Board of Deputies in Johannesburg, for submission to the Minister of Justice.<sup>149</sup> The work of

<sup>144</sup> Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.7.

<sup>145</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.9 (May, 1948), 7., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.11 (July, 1948), 15.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 11 and 13.

<sup>147</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.11.

<sup>148</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 16th April, 1953, at 8 pm., p.12.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

the Committee was consequently of a positive nature. Its main business was that of interpreting the Jew to the non-Jew and of spreading goodwill amongst all sections of the community.<sup>150</sup>

The Public Relations Committee shared its work with those organisations and individuals within the community who were in contact with the Gentile community and who helped strengthen the ties between the Jewish community and its non-Jewish neighbours. Foremost amongst those partners in the work of the Committee were the branches of the Union of Jewish Women in Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Vryheid,<sup>151</sup> the Sisterhood of Temple David,<sup>152</sup> Rabbi H. Swift,<sup>153</sup> the Rev. B.C. Kur of Vryheid,<sup>154</sup> Rabbi M. Miller<sup>155</sup> and the Rev. J. Oleska of

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<sup>150</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 55.

<sup>151</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at 8 pm., p.10.

<sup>152</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 23rd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 1st April, 1954, at 8 pm., p.9.

<sup>153</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at 8 pm., p.10.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.12.

Pietermaritzburg.<sup>156</sup>

An important and far reaching post-war development within the Council of Natal Jewry, and one recommended some years earlier, in 1939, by the Commission of Enquiry into the aims, objects and achievements of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, lay in the creation of the Jewish Education Council, whereby an attempt was made to revive the cultural life of the Jewish community. Owing to war-time conditions and the disruption of the cultural programmes of the Jewish Club and other bodies interested in Jewish education and culture, the cultural life of Durban Jewry was, upon the conclusion of hostilities, at a very low ebb.

In November, 1945 Mr H.L. Magid, the Council's President, reported that, following upon the recognition within the community of the need to form a Board of Hebrew Education, a meeting had been held of representatives of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and the Council of Natal Jewry. At this meeting the discussion had centred on the question of engaging a suitable person as Director of Education in Durban who would have full responsibility for the *Talmud Torah* as headmaster, would conduct a certain amount of teaching, be responsible for adult, adolescent and juvenile Hebrew education, advancement of Jewish culture, Youth services etc. It

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*



was decided that the meeting should approach Mr Sam Ernst the Headmaster of the *Talmud Torah* in connection with this position, and Mr Ernst indicated that he was agreeable to the suggestions made.<sup>157</sup>

The Executive Committee of the Council gave the scheme its approval and tentative arrangements were made to engage Mr Ernst as Director of the Board. The intention was that he would be engaged by the Board and would be accountable to the Board, which would in turn be accountable to the Council of Natal Jewry, the *Talmud Torah*, and the Durban United Hebrew Congregation. The C.N.J. and its partners in this scheme reached agreement concerning Mr Ernst's salary and the financing of the Board.<sup>158</sup> From 1947, when an annual grant came to be received from the Jewish Community Chest, the C.N.J. and the Durban United Hebrew Congregation discontinued their grants-in-aid.<sup>159</sup>

It was agreed that the Board would be formed by an electoral college, made up of one representative

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<sup>157</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 29th November, 1945, at 8 pm., p.1.

<sup>158</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 13th December, 1945, at 8 pm., p.1.

<sup>159</sup> Report of the Jewish Education Council to the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1948, p.1.

nominated by each of the nine constituent bodies of the Education Council interested in Jewish education and culture, such as the Durban Jewish Club, Zionist Societies, the Hebrew Order of David and the Union of Jewish Women. The College would elect seven members of the Board from lists of names of suitable persons which would be submitted by each of the constituent bodies.<sup>160</sup> After lengthy discussion in the Electoral College, which had to meet twice before coming to its final decision, the first Board, consisting of Messrs J.J. Friedman, A. Levine, O. Ballin, H. Hadany, E. Schragenheim, F. Rogoff and Mrs S. Bilchik, was chosen.<sup>161</sup> The procedure for electing the members of the Board was followed thereafter at intervals of two years.

On April 1, 1946 the Board held its first meeting under the chairmanship of Mr I. Geshen, who had just retired from the position of President of the C.N.J. At its inaugural meeting the Board decided that Mr O. Ballin should be the chairman, and that Mr A. Levine should be the hon. secretary. It was furthermore agreed that Mr Ernst, in his capacity as Director of Education,

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<sup>160</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 13th December, 1945, at 8 pm., p.2.

<sup>161</sup> Minutes of Special Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Tuesday, 2nd April, 1946, at 5.15 pm., p.1.

should attend all meetings with full rights, and that Rabbi A.H. Freedman should be an ex-officio member.<sup>162</sup>

At its second meeting, on April 30, 1946, discussions concerning the Board's aims and possible scope of activities were held. The name Jewish Education Council was also adopted at the meeting, as it was agreed that the Council should concern itself with Jewish education in the widest sense, in Durban in particular, and Natal in general.

Mr I. Geshen, in his valedictory presidential address to the C.N.J., expressed the view, upheld by the Education Council, that the purpose of Jewish education was to equip the individual with the necessary knowledge and experience in order to enable him to live the fullest possible life as a Jew, and to make the best contribution possible to the life of his time.<sup>163</sup>

The Education Council recognised that the training of the young was mainly the function of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*. At the same time it showed concern over the fact that only a small percentage of the youth made their way into youth movements and youth groups. The need to make headway among Jewish groups and youth societies was thus recognised as a duty of the new

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<sup>162</sup>The Jewish Education Council of Natal. Report of A. Levine, 12th January, 1951. In archives of the C.N.J.

<sup>163</sup>President's Report submitted at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 4th April, 1946, at 8 pm., p.8.

Education Council.<sup>164</sup>

The Council also acknowledged that educational efforts had in the past been directed principally at the youth, whereas in fact, the adult community were also in need of the necessary stimulation to learn and to share intelligently in Jewish responsibility.<sup>165</sup> In respect of adult education the Council decided that, as far as possible, it would work through existing organisations and would stimulate and guide the Jewish cultural activities, but that if necessary it would initiate and carry through new projects.<sup>166</sup> In the two years following its inception the Education Council made considerable progress and the advances recorded in Jewish education and culture in the City and Province as a direct result of its influence and efforts were considerable.

For the benefit of the general community a number of lectures and functions were sponsored by the Education Council during the two years after its formation, many of which were held in conjunction with the Culture Section of the Jewish Club, with whom the Council had worked in closest harmony. The list of visiting lecturers invited to address the community under the Education

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<sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>166</sup>The Jewish Education Council of Natal. Report of A. Levine, 12th January, 1951. In archives of the C.N.J.



Council's auspices, included Prof. Salo Baron of Columbia University,<sup>167</sup> Dr Cecil Roth, Dr E. Simon, the Director of Education under the *Vaad Leumi*, Rabbi J. Zlotnik, Mr E. Bernstein,<sup>168</sup> Rabbi Dr H. Freedman the Chief Rabbi of Australia,<sup>169</sup> Rabbi Prof. I. Abrahams,<sup>170</sup> Mr S.A. Rochlin,<sup>171</sup> Rabbi Dr Rappaport, Dr A. Broomberg and Dr Shatzky.<sup>172</sup>

An evening of readings from Jewish literature,<sup>173</sup> a series of lectures on Jewish rebels<sup>174</sup> and modern Jewish thinkers,<sup>175</sup> an evening of music arranged by Cantor Metzger,<sup>176</sup> a debate on the value of Hebrew,<sup>177</sup> a dramatic presentation of a scene from Stefan Zweig's *Jeremiah*<sup>178</sup> and a Jonas Bergtheil function, on the

<sup>167</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.11 (July, 1946), 32., *The Natal Mercury*, July 30, 1946, p.6.

<sup>168</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 57.

<sup>169</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.11 (July, 1947), 27.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 29.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 8.

<sup>172</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 70.

<sup>173</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.9 (May, 1947), 35.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 27.

<sup>175</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 59.

<sup>176</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.12 (August, 1947), 33.

<sup>177</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 57.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

occasion of New Germany's centenary in May 1948,<sup>179</sup> were amongst other functions arranged by the Council.

Together with the Culture Section of the Jewish Club the Education Council also arranged suitable functions to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.<sup>180</sup>

The Yiddish speaking section of the community was not neglected by the Education Council and the Club, which arranged a Sholem Aleichem Memorial Evening, a lecture on S. Anski and Sholem Asch, an evening of readings from the works of Sholem Aleichem and Peretz,<sup>181</sup> and a Bialik evening.<sup>182</sup> On behalf of the Council Mr F. Rogoff attended the Yiddish Culture Conference held in Johannesburg in 1947,<sup>183</sup> and together with Dr B. Moshal, the Culture Section's Chairman, Mr Rogoff was instrumental in creating a Yiddish Sub-Section of the Culture Section of the Jewish Club.<sup>184</sup>

Under the direction of the Council's Education Officer, Mr S. Ernst, three Hebrew classes for adults were inaugurated and were well supported, especially by the women for whose benefit two of the classes, a

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1949), 70.

<sup>180</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.9 (May, 1947), 28-29., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 61.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 57.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 70.

<sup>183</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 5.

<sup>184</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 61.

beginners and an advanced class, met in the mornings.<sup>185</sup>

Recognising the value and importance of communal celebrations of festivals as a vehicle for transmitting an awareness of the holiday, and a familiarity with its ritual, the Education Council, in conjunction with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, took the lead in reviving the communal *Seder*, which was attended in 1947 by almost 400 people.<sup>186</sup> Plans for a similar communal *Seder* in 1948 had to be abandoned, following an outbreak of infantile paralysis.<sup>187</sup>

Considerable time was also devoted by the Council to the question of establishing a branch of the South African Jewish Historical and Sociological Society in Durban. After the Education Council's decision not to form a new Society, but to encourage work of the required nature by a few individuals, a small sub-committee under Mr M. Lewis, was set up to collect historical data of the early Jewish history of Natal.<sup>188</sup>

The members of the Council interested themselves in the library of the Jewish Club and Mr Ernst accepted the chairmanship of this Section. Efforts were also made by

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 59., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 61., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 70.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 59.

<sup>187</sup> Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.6.

<sup>188</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 57.

the Education Council to encourage members of the community to become subscribers to the Jewish Publication Society of America.<sup>189</sup>

In May 1948, a conference of the South African Board of Jewish Education was held in Johannesburg and Messrs S. Ernst and S. Schragenheim attended the Conference as representatives of the Jewish Education Council.<sup>190</sup>

From the outset the Council recognised the importance of its work amongst the youth, whom it divided into two groups, post-*Barmitzvah* and pre-*Barmitzvah*.

Several meetings were held with representatives of affiliated and unaffiliated post-*Barmitzvah* youth, and with representatives of the Durban Jewish Club and the Public Relations Committee of the C.N.J. Together with representatives of the *Talmud Torah* Committee, representatives of the Jewish Education Council attended a meeting of the Council of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation. Agreement was reached at the meeting that the two main needs of the youth were leaders and a suitable meeting place.<sup>191</sup>

To meet the first need the Education Council, through Mr Ernst, organised a Youth Leadership Course in

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<sup>189</sup> Report of the Jewish Education Council to the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1948, p.2.

<sup>190</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1948), 9.

<sup>191</sup> Report of the Jewish Education Council to the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1948, p.2.



April, 1948 at which lectures were given in Jewish history and allied topics, and psychology.<sup>192</sup> The course extended over a period of three months and was so well received that a further course was offered at the end of 1948.<sup>193</sup> Mr Ernst also organised and directed a study group in Jewish history for the youth.<sup>194</sup> In addition every encouragement was given to the Zionist and other youth groups, and members of the Education Council frequently delivered lectures to the members of the youth societies.<sup>195</sup>

The Education Council found that on the question of suitable accommodation it initially made little progress. It succeeded in persuading the C.N.J. and the various Zionist societies to provide the money necessary for the reconditioning of the *Maon*, which was however, not a long term answer to the problem.<sup>196</sup> Discussions were also held with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation which was urged to proceed with a building scheme, either on its newly acquired property at the corner of Essenwood and Silverton Roads, or on the site of the

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<sup>192</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.8 (April, 1948), 6.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 15., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.5 (January, 1949), 11.

<sup>194</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 61.

<sup>195</sup> Report of the Jewish Education Council to the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 19, 48, p.3.

<sup>196</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 14.

*Talmud Torah*. Encouraged by the Education Council, the Jewish Club introduced a scheme for junior membership, which failed, however, to induce as large a number of young people as had been hoped to join the Club.<sup>197</sup>

For the younger children Mr Ernst reorganised the Sabbath Youth Service. These services, organised in co-operation with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, were held regularly each *Shabbat* morning under Mr Ernst's direction at the Park Street Synagogue. They attracted an average attendance of 100, and the young people conducted a major part of the service themselves.<sup>198</sup>

Through the agitation of the Education Council, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation agreed to introduce the institution of the *Batmitzvah* ceremony on *Shavuot* in 1947.<sup>199</sup> This innovation was so well received that the Congregation agreed to make it a regular feature of Orthodox Jewish life in the City.<sup>200</sup>

Furthermore the Education Council sought to assist communities outside Durban, and on several occasions

<sup>197</sup> Report of the Jewish Education Council to the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1948, p.3.

<sup>198</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 57 and 59., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 61., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 70.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 59., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 61.

<sup>200</sup> Report of the Jewish Education Council to the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1948, p.3.

arrangements were made to enable visiting lecturers to deliver addresses in Pietermaritzburg. The Council also assisted in arranging Hebrew classes for Jewish students at Natal University College in Pietermaritzburg, and suitable books on the subject were placed in the University College's Library.<sup>201</sup> The Council, however, realised that its efforts in regard to the outlying communities were inadequate, yet it was incapable of distributing its limited resources on a more equitable basis.

For all the shortcomings of the Council its achievements were, nevertheless, vast in scope and of immeasurable importance, in terms of the quality of Jewish life of the community in Durban in particular, and the Province in general. In October 1948, the activities of the Education Council were extended, when, at a meeting with the Public Relations Committee of the C.N.J., the Education Council agreed to undertake the organisational work done by the Communal Relations Committees of the Board in other Provinces.<sup>202</sup>

In January 1949, the Education Council applied for affiliation to the Durban Council for Adult Education, a Government sponsored body which dealt with adult education in all its phases.<sup>203</sup> A month later it was

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<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.3 (November, 1948), 13.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII No.5 (January, 1949), 11.

represented by Mr S. Weinstein, of Johannesburg, at the National Youth Conference at Pretoria, held under the auspices of the Division of Adult Education of the Union Education Department.<sup>204</sup> Arising out of the Conference, the Minister of Education agreed to the formation of a National Youth Council, to which the Jewish Education Council applied for affiliation.<sup>205</sup>

The Council's programme aimed at the adult section of the community, included a programme of lectures and Yiddish evenings,<sup>206</sup> the continuation of its adult Hebrew classes and the communal *Seder*.<sup>207</sup> From the Cape Board of Jewish Education the Education Council obtained a number of pamphlets on *Purim*,<sup>208</sup> *Pesach*,<sup>209</sup> and *Rosh Hashonah*.<sup>210</sup> These pamphlets were sent by the Durban United Hebrew Congregation to its members, and the C.N.J. distributed them to the remainder of the Jewish

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<sup>204</sup> Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.5.

<sup>205</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.12 (August, 1949), 11.

<sup>206</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.7.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>208</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.6 (February, 1949), 4.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.8 (April, 1949), 5.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 9.



community of Natal, the costs being borne by the C.N.J. and the Congregation.<sup>211</sup>

The highlight of the Council's activities in 1949, was probably the organisation of a successful Book Week, which ran from May 22-26, and was officially opened by the Mayor, Councillor L. Boyd.<sup>212</sup> The Book Week was organised by a sub-committee, consisting of Mr O. Ballin, Dr Oppenheim and Mr S. Ernst, assisted by Dr H. Abt, Chief Cultural Officer of the Board of Deputies. During Book Week special lectures were given by Mrs O. Ballin and Dr H. Abt.<sup>213</sup>

At the same time as the Education Council continued to support the Youth Services and *Batmitzvah* ceremonies, arranged in conjunction with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation,<sup>214</sup> it continued to run its youth leadership courses.<sup>215</sup> During 1949, the Council received permission to circularise all Natal schools and information was obtained which was of assistance to

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<sup>211</sup> Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.6.

<sup>212</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 23, 1949, p.6.

<sup>213</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 70.

<sup>214</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.7.

<sup>215</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 13., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 11., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 11.

the Council in considering how it could assist pupils.<sup>216</sup>

In its capacity as the Communal Relations Committee of the C.N.J. the Education Council sponsored a memorial meeting on the Day of Mourning for European Jewry, in December 1949, which was addressed by Rabbi M. Swift of Johannesburg.<sup>217</sup>

Through its chairman, Mr A. Levine, the Education Council also drew up a memorandum on the needs of the country communities and families in relation to the educational, cultural and spiritual assistance which could be rendered them. In this memorandum, which was presented at the Provincial Conference of the C.N.J., held in Pietermaritzburg, in February 1950, the religious leaders of the larger communities were urged to pay regular visits to the Jewish families in the districts, and country families were advised to associate themselves with such communities by becoming members so that they could form part of established communities. In the cultural field Mr Levine advocated lecturers to speak to audiences at drawing room meetings. He stressed the educational needs of the children, and suggested the establishment of hostels, the employment of travelling

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<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 13., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 70.

<sup>217</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.5 (January, 1950), 33.

teachers and the holding of intensive vacation classes.<sup>218</sup>

Although practical problems made the implimentation of all the proposals in Mr Levine's memorandum impossible, compilation of the memorandum itself reflected the seriousness with which the Education Council took on the duties of the Communal Relations Committee. A positive result of the memorandum was the circular that the Council sent to the community outside Durban, with a view to arranging an intensive course in Hebrew for those children who did not have the facilities for obtaining Hebrew tuition during school periods. The Council's plan was for the children to be given courses during the July and December vacations in Durban, under highly qualified teachers, and for those courses to be followed up by correspondence during school periods. Unfortunately the response to the circular was poor and the scheme had to be abandoned.<sup>219</sup>

Arising out of a decision taken at its 17th Biennial Congress in May, 1949, the Board of Deputies set up a special Country Communities Committee to cater for the needs of scattered Jewish families in the country. Provincial Committees of the Board were instructed to consider this matter from a Provincial angle which the C.N.J. did at its Provincial Conference in Pietermaritzburg

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<sup>218</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>219</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 11.

in February 1950. The matter was also fully discussed by the Jewish Education Council which held consultations on the matter with the communities of Vryheid, Pietermaritzburg and Northern Natal.<sup>220</sup>

Concurrently with these discussions the Jewish Education Council was in contact with the South African Board of Jewish Education in regard to the establishment of a Regional Committee of the Board of Education in Natal. Mr P. Porter, Vice-Chairman of the South African Board of Jewish Education, paid a visit to Durban in June 1950, and at a meeting with the Education Council it was decided that the Council would agree to act as the Natal Regional Committee of the South African Board of Jewish Education.<sup>221</sup> Dr B. Moshal was subsequently appointed a Vice-President of the Board of Jewish Education and Messrs A. Levine and O. Ballin were appointed to the Board's Executive.<sup>222</sup>

As a result of these developments the Jewish Education Council was reconstituted. In addition to its past activities on behalf of the adults and youth of the community, the Council embraced the functions of the Country Communities of the C.N.J., into which was incorporated the Communal Relations work previously undertaken by the Council, and the Natal Regional

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<sup>220</sup> Memorandum on Reconstitution of the Jewish Education Council 3rd August, 1950, p.1.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 17.



Committee of the South African Board of Jewish Education, in which capacity it undertook the functions of the South African Board of Jewish Education in relation to Hebrew education in Natal.<sup>223</sup>

As a result of the extension of the scope of the Council it was found necessary to appoint a Regional Director of the South African Board of Jewish Education for Natal. Mr S. Ernst who had been the Education Officer of the Education Council since its inception, and the Headmaster of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, was appointed to this position. Mr Ernst's duties as Regional Director included the provision and the supervision of Hebrew education for the children in Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Vryheid, and in those areas of Natal where no Hebrew classes were conducted; the continuation of his activities as Cultural Officer of the C.N.J.; the regular visiting of Pietermaritzburg and Vryheid in order to assist the teachers of these communities; the delivery of lectures of a cultural and educational nature to the adults of these two principal country communities in Natal; the regular visiting of scattered families throughout Northern Natal and the South Coast, and the co-ordination of pastoral tours to the scattered families, in co-operation with the Rabbi of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and the ministers

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<sup>223</sup>Memorandum on Reconstitution of the Jewish Education Council 3rd August, 1950, p.1.

of the Vryheid and Pietermaritzburg Congregations.<sup>224</sup>

Owing to difficulties in obtaining suitable staff to assist him at the local Hebrew School Mr Ernst was not immediately able to carry out his duties as Regional Director.<sup>225</sup> Mr Ernst, nevertheless, shortly after his appointment, managed to undertake a visit to Danhauser and Margate, where he sought to ascertain the cultural and religious needs of these communities. Arising from this visit, arrangements were made to hold a meeting with the people of Danhauser and district with a view to organising a Northern Districts Hebrew Congregation. Plans were also made with the Jewish residents of Margate for them to bring their children, who were receiving no Hebrew education, to Durban two or three times a month and for Mr Ernst to visit Margate at least once a month.<sup>226</sup>

The additional expenses connected with the restructuring of the Jewish Education Council were largely defrayed by the U.C.F. Two thirds of the salary of the Regional Director were however, paid by the South African Board of Jewish Education, and the money allocated from the U.C.F. was therefore adequate to meet the financial requirements of the Jewish

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<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.

<sup>225</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 10.

<sup>226</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 16.

Education Council.<sup>227</sup>

The reconstitution of the Jewish Education Council was rightly regarded as a major advance for Jewish Education in the Province. With the Education Council's reconstitution and the appointment of a Director, the Council had theoretically taken all the steps necessary to place Hebrew education in Durban and in the other communities in Natal on a sound basis. The Council was now able to be in contact with almost every Jewish family in Natal and to make the necessary arrangements for the Jewish children of the Province to receive some form of Hebrew education. From a religious and spiritual point of view the new developments meant that scattered families would be served by the visits of the Rabbi of Durban and the Ministers of the Country communities.

By the work which the Jewish Education Council had assumed, it was hoped that all Jews of the Province would be made to feel part and parcel of the Jewish community and that they would be inspired to work together for the welfare of all the Jews of Natal.<sup>228</sup>

In view of extended activities of the Jewish Education Council, it was decided to co-opt two representatives each from Pietermaritzburg and Vryheid in order that Natal should be fully represented. The

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<sup>227</sup> Memorandum on Reconstitution of the Jewish Education Council 3rd August, 1950, p.3.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

ministers of the Vryheid and Pietermaritzburg Hebrew Congregations were invited to attend all meetings. In order to give the new members an opportunity to attend some of the Council's meetings it was decided that three or four meetings per year would be held at towns outside of Durban.<sup>229</sup>

The Council's acceptance of additional responsibilities corresponded with an increase in the organisation's workload. During 1952 it was consequently found necessary to divide the work of the Education Council which functioned as two separate committees, the one dealing with cultural work and Communal Relations, the other with the work of the Regional Committee and of the Country Communities Committee.<sup>230</sup>

In respect of its activities for the adult section of the community, the Council, following its reconstitution, continued to work in close co-operation with the Yiddish Culture Section of the Jewish Club,<sup>231</sup> arranged the distribution of pamphlets on the Jewish

<sup>229</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.11 (July, 1950), 7., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 16.

<sup>230</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 23rd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 1st April, 1954, at 8 pm., p.13.

<sup>231</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 58., Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, p.12.



holidays amongst the community<sup>232</sup> and organised adult Hebrew classes.<sup>233</sup> It also remained closely associated with the communal *Seder*, which, in this period, came under the direct auspices of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation.<sup>234</sup>

The programme of lectures arranged periodically from the time of the Council's inception continued uninterrupted.<sup>235</sup> The scope of adult education was, however, widened in 1953 with the inauguration of People's College on February 25, with a series of seven lectures on "Jewish History from the Destruction of the

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<sup>232</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.11 (July, 1951), 17., Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.14., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 60.

<sup>233</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.13.

<sup>234</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 58., Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.12.

<sup>235</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 59., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 58. Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.11.

Second Commonwealth to the Shift of the Jewish Centre to Europe."<sup>236</sup> People's College was a concentrated series of lectures which ran over a period of weeks and was closely modelled on a similarly named programme which was run by the Board of Deputies in Johannesburg. The course was arranged and sponsored in Durban by the Jewish Education Council and the Zionist Council for Natal.<sup>237</sup> It attracted large audiences to its subsequent series, which was an indication of the interest which the College aroused in the community,<sup>238</sup> and was evidence of a void which had formerly existed in the cultural life of Durban Jewry.

From 1952 the day of mourning for the Jewish victims of Nazism was fixed for the 27th *Nissan*. The Jewish Education Council, in conjunction with the C.N.J., undertook the organisation of the commemorative function held annually at the Jewish Club to mark the occasion.<sup>239</sup>

Among the highlights of the Council's cultural

<sup>236</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.4 (December, 1952), 36., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.7 (March, 1953), 8, 9, 10, 11, 15., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.9 (May, 1953), 8, 9, 11.

<sup>237</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 1, 1953, p.19.

<sup>238</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.12 (August, 1953), 15-17., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.7 (March, 1954), 34., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.9 (May, 1954), 5 and 44., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.2 (October, 1954), 17., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.12 (August, 1955), 24., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (October, 1955), 24-25.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 40., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 60., *Hasholom*, XXXII No.9 (May, 1954), 38-39., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.9 (May, 1955), 19.

activities in this period was a Jewish Music Festival, which consisted of three concerts. Under the direction of Mr Edward Dunn, the Durban Municipal Orchestra gave a concert of Jewish music, at the City Hall, on November 7, 1950, at which Mr J. Shulman played the Bloch Violin Concerto and the vocalist was Mrs Dorothy Avrich.<sup>240</sup> On November 14, an evening of Synagogal and Jewish folk music was held at the Jewish Club, when Cantor Backon of Johannesburg and Mrs Rose Magid rendered Yiddish and Hebrew folk songs. On the 21st a musicale at the Jewish Club was broadcast by the South African Broadcasting Corporation. On this occasion the vocalist was Mrs Rose Magid. The festival was organised by a sub-committee, headed by Mr O. Ballin, with Mr D. Cohen as Technical Advisor.<sup>241</sup>

In 1953, the Council sponsored an exhibition of paintings by the Israeli artist Shmuel Shlesinger, which was held in the hall of the *Maon* from September 14-23.<sup>242</sup> In co-operation with the Durban Zionist Association the Council also sponsored an exhibition of paintings by the Israeli artist Itzhak Frenkel, which was opened on February 16, 1954, at the *Maon* by Clr. A.S. Robinson,

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<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 15.

<sup>241</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at 8 pm., p.12.

<sup>242</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 15, 1953, p.5.

the Deputy Mayor of Durban.<sup>243</sup>

On May 1, 1954 an exhibition of Jewish ritual art and ceremonial silver was opened at the Jewish Club.<sup>244</sup> The exhibition, which was brought to Durban by Dr H. Abt, Cultural Organiser of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, included a collection of ceremonial silver that had belonged to Jews in Europe before it was looted by the Nazis and later recovered by the Americans.<sup>245</sup> Through the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Inc. the South African Jewish Board of Deputies had received a portion of the recovered silver which was distributed by the American military authorities to Jewish communities in Israel and the Diaspora.<sup>246</sup> The Board of Deputies subsequently divided the ceremonial silver between Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban as the nucleus of proposed Jewish museums in these centres. The Jewish Education Council accepted the responsibility for looking after the objects of ceremonial art given to Durban, and these were housed and displayed in the Jewish Club library.<sup>247</sup>

Together with the Culture Section of the Durban Jewish Club, the Education Council also presented the

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, February 17, 1954, p.6., *Hasholom*, XXXII No.7 (March, 1954), 39.

<sup>244</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 1, 1954, p.2.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

<sup>246</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.8 (April, 1954), 8-9.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.4 (January, 1956), 14, 15, 27.



celebrated Yiddish actor Jacob Mansdorf and the cast of the South African Yiddish Folk Theatre in a production of *Tevye the Milkman* by Sholem Aleichem, which was staged at the Jewish Club on July 24, 1954.<sup>248</sup>

The Jewish Education Council remained keenly interested in all youth activities and followed closely the efforts on behalf of the youth made by the Council of Natal Jewry. Through its Regional Director and Cultural Officer, Mr Ernst, the Council, gave practical help to organised youth groups.<sup>249</sup> In 1951 a further successful youth leadership course was arranged by the Council.<sup>250</sup>

The Youth services organised by the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, under Mr Ernst's direction, enjoyed increased popularity, and in 1950 children's services were held for the first time over the High Festivals and *Sukkot*.<sup>251</sup> Thereafter they continued to regularly attract large numbers of young people to weekly religious

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<sup>248</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 15, 1954, p.8.

<sup>249</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1954), 59.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 61.

<sup>251</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 18.

services.<sup>252</sup> At the same time the Education Council continued to assist the Durban United Hebrew Congregation in organising the annual *Batmitzvah* ceremonies, which had been introduced through the Council's agitation.<sup>253</sup>

At the Natal branch of the Country Communities Committee of the Board of Deputies, the Education Council sought to strengthen the ties which it had already established with the scattered Jewish communities of Natal. It continued to send representatives on frequent visits to the communities of Northern Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Zululand and Margate.<sup>254</sup> Regular calls were also made on these communities by Rabbi Swift, who undertook annual pastoral tours of the Province,<sup>255</sup> and by Mr Ernst, in his capacity as Cultural Officer of the Education Council and the Regional Director of

<sup>252</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 61., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 58., Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.13.

<sup>253</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 61., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 60., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 59.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, and Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.12.

Jewish Education.<sup>256</sup> Whenever possible, arrangements were made for visiting lecturers to Durban to also visit the communities in Pietermaritzburg and Vryheid and to speak to them on matters of Jewish interest.<sup>257</sup> In 1954 the Vryheid Hebrew Congregation celebrated its Golden Jubilee and representatives of the Council of Natal Jewry, the Jewish Education Council, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and the *Chevra Kadisha* of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation attended the celebrations to mark the anniversary.<sup>258</sup>

Contact was also maintained between the Jewish communities of Natal through the annual Provincial Conferences of the C.N.J., which were held alternatively in Vryheid and Pietermaritzburg.<sup>259</sup> Held outside Durban to encourage greater involvement by the country communities in the activities of the C.N.J., these conferences were plagued by frequent inattendance of representatives from the rural communities.<sup>260</sup> In 1955 no Provincial Conference was held but contact between Durban and the country communities was maintained by

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 61., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 60.

<sup>258</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 17, 1954, p.9.

<sup>259</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.7 (March, 1951), 10, 12, 13., *Ibid.*, XXX No.7 (March, 1952), 28, 29, 31., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.7 (March, 1953), 40-42., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.8 (April, 1954), 14.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

the Jewish Education Council.<sup>261</sup>

On undertaking the work of the Country Communities Committee the Education Council made efforts to find a travelling teacher or minister for the Northern Natal areas. At the same time it made arrangements with the Jewish community of Margate for at least some Hebrew education to be given to the children in that town.<sup>262</sup> Early in 1952, the Education Council arranged for the Rev. A. Kaplan, of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, to pay monthly visits to the Ladysmith/Estcourt area for the purpose of giving Hebrew instruction to Jewish children in that district.<sup>263</sup> Owing to the departure of some of the children of the area, the Rev. Kaplan's classes had to be discontinued late in 1953.<sup>264</sup> Through the efforts of the Education Council alternative arrangements were made for fifteen children of the country communities to receive the correspondence course in Jewish history and customs issued by the Country Communities Committee of the Board of Deputies.<sup>265</sup> The

<sup>261</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.6.

<sup>262</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 61.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 61.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 60.

<sup>265</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.12.



Council also sponsored lessons, held under the auspices of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation in Escombe and Westville, and at Kearsney College and Highbury School.<sup>266</sup>

The duties of the Education Council, in terms of its role as the Regional Committee of the South African Board of Jewish Education, included the regular representation of the Council at Conferences of the Board. In May 1951, the Education Council was represented at Conference by Dr B. Moshal, Mrs I. Moshal and Mr I. Geshen.<sup>267</sup> In 1953, Mr O. Ballin represented the C.N.J. and the Education Council at preliminary consultations on National Hebrew Education,<sup>268</sup> and in May 1954, the Durban delegation to the Semi-Jubilee Education Conference of the Board of Education was made up of Messrs A. Stiller, I. Geshen and S. Ernst.<sup>269</sup>

The Council was successful in the representations which it made in 1951 to the Natal Education Department for the inclusion of Hebrew as a subject for the Junior Certificate and Matriculation examinations in the

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<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.14.

<sup>268</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.7 (March, 1953), 39.

<sup>269</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.13.

Province.<sup>270</sup> It also enjoyed considerable support from the principals of Natal schools, who were asked to compile lists of all their Jewish pupils, to enable the Council to submit statistical data to the community.<sup>271</sup> The census of the pupils was completed in 1952, and fully analysed by Mr S. Ernst. The results revealed that, whilst only a small percentage of Jewish children in Durban received no Hebrew education, in the country districts the position was not as satisfactory.<sup>272</sup> The future advancement of Hebrew education in Durban was a matter of great concern for the Education Council, which in 1954 set up a committee to consider the establishment of a Jewish day school in the City.<sup>273</sup>

From its rather vague beginnings in 1945, the Jewish Education Council had developed, within a decade, into an important arm of the Council of Natal Jewry. Born out of a need to fill the cultural void that existed within the community at the end of the Second World War, it came, in the course of the first ten years of its existence, to effectively meet the fast changing

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<sup>270</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 60.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 50.

<sup>272</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 16th April, 1953, at 8 pm., p.15.

<sup>273</sup> Zionist Council Meeting, Held at the *Maon* on Monday, 29th December, 1954 at 8 pm., p.2., see below p.892.

needs of Durban Jewry, and through its adaptability ensured for itself a central place in communal life. Its multifaceted activities brought it into contact with all sections of the Jewish community of Natal wherever they happened to live, strengthened the bonds between Natal Jewry, and involved it in joint activities with constituent members of the C.N.J., such as the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and the Jewish Club as well as the Zionist Council, thereby enabling it to foster the already harmonious spirit which characterised communal life in Durban and Natal.

The interest of the Jewish Education Council in the community's youth reflected the concern which the C.N.J. felt for this section of the community, and which had manifested itself almost immediately after the war had ended.

In August 1945 the C.N.J. convened a meeting to which representatives from various institutions were invited to meet representatives from already existing youth organisations. Invitations were also extended to certain youths who were not attached to any organisation. The meeting was well attended and was characterised by full and frank discussions. Resulting from the meeting, representations were made to the Jewish Club and the Durban United Hebrew Congregation putting forward certain recommendations for the better organising of the Jewish youth in the City. It was also agreed that every endeavour should be made to enrol and interest a large

number of youth in Durban who were unaffiliated, and there was general agreement that expert youth leadership was required in the City.<sup>274</sup> The C.N.J. looked to the newly created Board of Education to help it serve the youth in the best possible manner.

Whilst formulating a policy in regard to the youth, the Council of Natal Jewry extended financial aid to the youth movements and assisted in whatever other way it was able.<sup>275</sup> At the same time it associated itself with the work done for the youth by the Public Relations Committee of the C.N.J., the Jewish Education Council and the Jewish Club.<sup>276</sup> At the instigation of the Jewish Education Council the Durban Jewish Club agreed to allow for youth membership of the Club, which failed however in itself to attract large numbers of unaffiliated youth.<sup>277</sup> This was possibly due to the fact that the Club continued to cater for its older members who made up the bulk of its membership. Through Mr Ernst, the Education Officer of the Education Council, a youth

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<sup>274</sup> President's Report submitted at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 4th April, 1946, at 8 pm., p.9.

<sup>275</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 6th March, 1947, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>276</sup> Council of Natal Jewry Report of the Executive 1947-1948, p.6.

<sup>277</sup> Report of the Jewish Education Council to the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1948, p.13.



leadership course for members of the youth movements were first held in 1948 and a study group in Jewish history was also created.<sup>278</sup>

Concern as to what could be done for the youth, and in particular how large numbers of those unaffiliated people could be drawn into Jewish affairs and communal life, prompted the C.N.J. to set up a Commission of Enquiry early in 1951, to investigate the whole matter. The Commission consisted of Mr S. Moshal, Chairman; Mr E.S. Henochsberg, Vice-Chairman; Messrs I. Geshen, A. Levine, H.L. Magid and Dr B. Moshal. Mr S. Ernst acted in an advisory capacity to the Commission and Mr S.W. Sulski acted as Secretary. The terms of reference of the Commission were:

- a) To enquire into and report on the position of Jewish youth in Durban.
- b) To enquire into and report on methods of intergrating the youth into the communal life of the community.
- c) To enquire into and report on the facilities now available for the youth and the provision of additional facilities.
- d) To enquire into and report on the

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<sup>278</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 61.

financial implications involved.

An invitation was extended to all interested parties to submit evidence for the Commission, either in writing or verbally, and all organisations in Natal were circularised with a view to obtaining their official opinions.<sup>279</sup>

In addition to receiving evidence from the Durban community, the Commission sought information in regard to youth activity in other parts of the Union, as well as in Great Britain and the United States. At the request of the Commission, Prof. P. Stein, who visited the United States on an academic mission, investigated the position of the Jewish youth in America.<sup>280</sup>

The Commission held a large number of meetings at which a considerable amount of oral and documentary evidence was received and considered. Much time and consideration was devoted by the members of the Commission to the drafting of the final report, which was submitted to the Executive Committee Meeting of the Council in December 1951.<sup>281</sup>

In its report the Commission suggested that the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the youth was that of the whole community and not of any one section, and that there should, therefore, be a unified effort for

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<sup>279</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.7 (March, 1951), 6.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 8.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.2 (October, 1951), 14.

the education and religious training of the youth. It questioned the need for two separate schools for children of Orthodox and Reform backgrounds and recommended that Hebrew education be brought under one authority.

It furthermore recommended that every Jewish organisation should accept as part of its objective the necessity for a Jew to have 1) an understanding of Judaism, 2) an understanding of his obligations and responsibilities as a citizen of the country in which he lives, 3) a love for Israel and an appreciation of its problems.

On this basis the Commission made a number of practical recommendations which were as follows: That there be a unified effort for the religious education of the youth in order to preserve the "oneness" of the community; the community be encouraged to observe a minimum of religious tradition or ritual in the home; classes on Judaism be organised for young mothers; every home be encouraged to have a modern edition of the Bible, prayer books and books of Jewish interest and a subscription with a Jewish newspaper and the Board of Deputies monthly journal, *Jewish Affairs*; that sermons should deal more frequently with the application of Jewish tenets to modern circumstances; the rabbis should establish personal contact with congregants and particularly with newly married couples and parents of young children; the aim of a Jewish day school be kept continually before the community; the establishment of

a Jewish hostel in Durban be considered; post-*Barmitzvah* studies be encouraged and some ceremony evolved to celebrate the attainment of the age of eighteen years; the community be encouraged to establish scholarships for Hebrew, history and literature; adults should take a greater interest in children's services; the sermons at such services be sincere and modern; junior congregations be encouraged and Bible classes be held during week-ends for children from 13 to 18 years of age.

Dealing with the *Habonim* movement, the Commission said that it should receive every encouragement and that the Friends of *Habonim* should be reorganised and should supervise the work of the movement.<sup>282</sup>

The *Hasholom*, in commenting on the Commission's report observed that, "there is nothing revolutionary in the recommendations but they are characterised by sound common sense and an appreciation of the situation as it really is."<sup>283</sup> The editorial, noting that over 50% of the young women in the age group 19-25 had, according to the report, received no Hebrew education or religious training, emphatically endorsed the Commission's recommendations dealing with education amongst the adults, and particularly the mothers, whom it noted were responsible for transmitting Jewish values to the

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<sup>282</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 15, 1952, p.7.

<sup>283</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.5 (January, 1952), 1.



children.<sup>284</sup>

Recording that Durban Jewry was one of the best organised in the country, the editor of *The Zionist Record* showed little surprise at the C.N.J. having taken the initiative to investigate the problems of the Jewish youth. In congratulating the Council on the enterprise that it had shown, the editor, in discussing the recommendation that the spiritual welfare of the youth must become the responsibility of the whole community, stated that, "This object is of course cherished by all, but only to the extent of it allowing for a variety of views. We must assume for a long time there will be different shades of opinion amongst Jewry and it would be wrong to impose a single pattern upon all and sundry."<sup>285</sup>

At a meeting of the Full Council of the C.N.J., held at the Jewish Club, on January 30, 1952, the Report of the Youth Commission was discussed and its recommendations were adopted with certain minor amendments.<sup>286</sup>

Definite steps were immediately taken by the community to implement the recommendations set out in the report. A Standing Youth Sub-Committee, consisting

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 15, 1952, p.2.

<sup>286</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., pp.6-7.

of representatives of the C.N.J. and various other organisations interested in youth work, was formed,<sup>287</sup> and met for the first time in March 1952.<sup>288</sup>

One of its major concerns was the progress and development of the youth organisations of the City. Consequently, the Sub-Committee lost no time in arranging for the old house in Silverton Road, on the property of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, to be converted into a suitable *Bayit*, or meeting place for the youth.<sup>289</sup> On the basis of the report of the Commission of Enquiry, the Friends of *Habonim* was reconstituted in 1952,<sup>290</sup> and strove to serve the movement in the manner recommended in the report.

In an effort to attract young people to the Synagogue, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation took up the suggestion of the Commission of Enquiry, and instituted youth membership for those between the ages of 16 and 25 years. Provision was made by the Congregation for the youth to conduct a *Shabbat* evening service, and

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<sup>287</sup> Consisting of Mr L. Isaacs (Temple David), Mr J. Goldberg (Zionist Council for Natal), Mr H. Friedland (Durban United Hebrew Schools), Dr N. Smith (Durban United Hebrew Congregation), Mr A. Rogoff (*Habonim*), Mr S. Frame (Natal Zionist Youth Executive) Messrs P. Patz, A. Levine, H.G. Friede (C.N.J.), Mr O. Ballin (Jewish Education Council), Mr A. Magid (Young Israel Society, Mr H. Freed (Durban Jewish Club.) *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 39.

<sup>290</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 74.

for a dinner and *Oneg Shabbat* to be held for the youth after the service.<sup>291</sup>

Within a few months representatives of the C.N.J., the Jewish Education Council, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, the Durban United Hebrew Schools and Temple David met to attempt to evolve a unified system for Hebrew education and religious training of youth.<sup>292</sup> After lengthy negotiations, the Temple David agreed not to establish any nursery schools, and children affiliated to the Temple who wished to take Hebrew for the Junior Certificate or Matriculation Examinations were offered the facilities of the Durban United Hebrew Schools.<sup>293</sup> Although this agreement fell away with the creation of a nursery school by the Reform Congregation in 1957,<sup>294</sup> the fact that representatives of the different communal institutions, with their rival values and attitudes,

<sup>291</sup>*The Zionist Record*, March 21, 1952, p.10.

<sup>292</sup>*Hasholom*, XXX No.12 (August, 1952), 37. The Durban United Hebrew Schools incorporated the Sharona Nursery School, kindergarten and Standard I class which were housed in the school building which had been opened on the property of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation in Silverton Road, in 1951; the afternoon classes; the nursery school and afternoon classes in Durban North; and the branch schools in the Beach area and in Escombe, Westville and Pinetown. For a full account of the Durban United Hebrew School's activities in this period see Chapter 35 below.

<sup>293</sup>Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.13.

<sup>294</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, May 13, 1957, p.13.



were willing to sit together and to place the principle of communal unity before their private interests, testifies to the success of the C.N.J.'s efforts to uphold the unity of the community even at the expense of diversity and variety.

In co-operation with the Johannesburg office of the Ort-Oze the Standing Youth Sub-Committee also arranged for some twenty three school leavers to undergo Vocational Guidance tests.<sup>295</sup>

The Standing Youth Sub-Committee, which concerned itself with the well being of University students, welcomed the visit to South Africa in 1953, of Rabbi Louis Milgrom a Hillel Foundation Director from America, who came to the Union at the invitation of the Board of Deputies, to conduct a survey of University youth. During his stay in Durban Rabbi Milgrom addressed the community,<sup>296</sup> and also called a meeting of Durban Jewish students at the *Maon*, which was attended by about forty students of both the University and Technical College and their guests.<sup>297</sup> The Rabbi's purpose in holding the meeting was to inaugurate a Students' Jewish Association (S.J.A.) at the Natal University, which would be an educational and social forum for the Jewish

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<sup>295</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 16th April, 1953, at 8 pm., p.16.

<sup>296</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.12 (August, 1953), 22-23.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.2 (October, 1953), 19.



students, along the lines of the Hillel Foundation.

Three weeks later at the Youth *Bayit* in Silverton Road a meeting was called by Mr Montague Legator for the furtherance of the Rabbi's suggestion. Almost 20 students attended this meeting where, after detailed and protracted discussion, it was decided that a S.J.A. should be formed. A council of five, consisting of Mr Monty Mart, Mr Ronnie Finkelstein, Mr Graham Abrahams, Mr Harry Strous and Mr Montague Legator, was appointed, and was directed to hold a further meeting and to draft a constitution.

At the constituent meeting Mr Gordon Alexander, president of the Students' Representative Council, who was invited as an advisor, approved of the draft constitution, which was adapted by a unanimous decision. Elections for the S.J.A. committee were held and Mr M. Legator was voted Chairman, Mr G. Abrahams, Vice-Chairman; and Mr B. Imber, Secretary. The Students' Representative Council of the University gave the Association probationary recognition, and Prof. L. Kuper, of the Sociology Department of the University, accepted the office of honorary President.

It was initially decided that meetings would be held every fortnight on Friday evenings. After the modest attendance at the first formal meeting of the S.J.A., on September 4 at the Youth *Bayit*, it was resolved, "that future meetings would be held at the University Buildings (City) and on Wednesday evenings at

8 pm."<sup>298</sup>

The Youth Sub-Committee closely followed the progress of the S.J.A. Its chairman, together with the chairman of the Jewish Education Council, the Regional Director of Education, and the Secretaries of the C.N.J. and the Zionist Council for Natal, on which bodies the Association was accorded representation, were invited to form a Standing Commission for the purpose of advising and guiding students to report on their activities.<sup>299</sup> The S.J.A. arranged a number of successful and varied functions,<sup>300</sup> and the climax of its achievements in this period was the convening of the 3rd Annual Conference of the South African Federation of Students Jewish and Zionist Associations, which was officially opened on July 14, 1955.<sup>301</sup>

In compliance with the recommendations of the Commission of Enquiry, the Youth Sub-Committee also gave consideration to the needs of visiting Jewish students, and lists were prepared and hospitality sought through

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 and 26.

<sup>299</sup> Zionist Council Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, on Monday, 20th September, 1954, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>300</sup> Including lectures by Mr E. Puterman on "The Paint Industry," Mr D. Fourie on "The History of Anti-Semitism" and Dr Yourgrau on "Language, Feeling and Reason," a photographic exhibition, a lecture by Mr G. de Haas, educational officer of the J.N.F. (*Hasholom*, XXXIII No.7 (March, 1955), 22.), and a symposium on education in South Africa (*Ibid.*, XXXIII No.11 (July, 1955), 29.).

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.12 (August, 1955), 23.

various organisations.<sup>302</sup> A special sub-committee of the C.N.J. enquired into the question of accommodation and found that there was insufficient justification for a specifically Jewish students' hostel.<sup>303</sup> The leaders of the youth organisations and the Standing Youth Sub-Committee also held the opinion that Natal Jewry did not warrant the full-time services of a professional youth leader.<sup>304</sup>

The Council of Natal Jewry gave further practical assistance to the youth through the bursaries which it was empowered to administer. In 1947 the C.N.J. and the Rabbi were appointed Trustees to carry out the provisions in the will of the late Henry Denton.<sup>305</sup> The fund provided for the granting of scholarships for higher education for boys, but the conditions laid down were such that it was impossible to give effect to the Testator's intentions.<sup>306</sup> Advertisements were published inviting applications for bursaries under the will, but with no

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.4 (December, 1953), 35.

<sup>303</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 23rd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 1st April, 1954, at 8 pm., p.12.

<sup>304</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.3 (November, 1954), 6.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.9 (May, 1947), 6.

<sup>306</sup> Council of Natal Jewry. Report of the Executive 1947-1948, p.6.

result.<sup>307</sup> In 1951 the *Standard Bank of S.A. Ltd.*, the Executors in the Estate, supported by the C.N.J. and Rabbi Swift, made application for a variation of the terms of the will, and in particular, the stipulation that the total income of the family of any boy and his parents who wished to take up a scholarship had to not exceed £400 a year. It was submitted to the Court that it was impossible to find an eligible Jewish boy in the circumstances specified<sup>308</sup> and with the Court's permission the terms of the will were varied. Bursaries up to £300 per annum, tenable for three years, were made available to Jewish persons who were below the age of 25 years, were born, or had resided, in Natal for a period of not less than ten years, and wanted a University education, and whose parents were unable to meet the costs of a University education.<sup>309</sup> The first two bursaries from this fund were awarded in 1952,<sup>310</sup> and a further bursary

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<sup>307</sup> Report of the Executive, to be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be held on 7th April, 1949, p.9., Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.10.

<sup>308</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 7, 1951, p.11.

<sup>309</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.9.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*



was made available in 1953.<sup>311</sup> The £30,000 invested in the Trust earned a low rate of interest and consequently the Trustees found it impossible to grant further bursaries than those already held. As stocks matured however, the capital was reinvested at higher rates of interest in the hope that this would make more bursaries available.<sup>312</sup>

Further funds were assured the Council by the late Levin Joel, in whose will a large sum of money was donated in certain shares to beneficiaries in Trust. On the termination of the Trust Mr Joel had instructed that the money was to be divided between certain other beneficiaries and the C.N.J., which was to distribute the money which it would receive among Jewish educational and charitable institutions in the City.<sup>313</sup>

The C.N.J. was greatly troubled by the fact that the Council sometimes received applications for assistance for educational purposes which it had to refuse because they did not comply with the conditions attached to existing bursaries or because of lack of funds. It

<sup>311</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 16th April, 1953, at 8 pm., p.8.

<sup>312</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm. p.7.

<sup>313</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.9.

accordingly decided to make provision for these cases and resolved to create an Educational Trust.<sup>314</sup> As a first step towards creating such a Trust, the Council, in co-operation with a number of other organisations, assisted a *Habonim* leader to attend a special course in Israel in December 1950.<sup>315</sup>

The Deed of Trust of the C.N.J. Educational Trust was approved by the Full Council in August 1952, and Messrs E.S. Henochsberg, H.L. Magid and S. Moshal, Past Presidents of the C.N.J., Mr J.J. Friedman, as President of the Council; Mr A. Levine, as Vice-President; Mr M. Woolfson, as Hon. Treasurer; and Dr B. Moshal, as Chairman of the Jewish Educational Council, were made the first trustees of the Trust.<sup>316</sup> The initial contribution to the Fund was made by the C.N.J. and it was anticipated that donations and legacies from organisations and members of the community would boost the Trust's Funds, and in this regard the Durban branch of the Jewish ex-Service League took the lead.<sup>317</sup>

The Council gave no publicity to the Fund, neither

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 61.

<sup>316</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 4th September, 1952, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>317</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.9.

did it solicit donations, believing that the Trust's purpose would be a sufficient recommendation. The Trust in fact received scant support, and its funds were insufficient to be of assistance to any member of the community.<sup>318</sup> By April 1955, the capital sum of the Trust stood at a mere £125,<sup>319</sup> but it was significantly increased by a donation of £100 from the F.C. Hollander Lodge No.XI of the Hebrew Order of David, to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Order.<sup>320</sup>

All committees of the Council of Natal Jewry made periodic use of the Legal Committee, which rendered all necessary assistance whenever it was called upon to do so.<sup>321</sup>

As the Regional Committee of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the C.N.J. successfully undertook the work of the Board in all its aspects in Natal, and the closest possible collaboration took place between the Board and the Council. In July 1953 the

<sup>318</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 23rd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 1st April, 1954, at 8 pm., p.7.

<sup>319</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.7.

<sup>320</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 28.

<sup>321</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 59., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 59., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 55., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 52.



Board of Deputies celebrated its Golden Jubilee and Natal shared a special interest in the celebrations, by virtue of the fact that from the time that the Board was inaugurated in 1903, until it amalgamated with the Cape Board of Deputies in 1912, it was known as the Jewish Board of Deputies for the Transvaal and Natal, in that Natal had immediately recognised the worth of the Board and had affiliated itself to it. More than 400 people attended the reception held at the Jewish Club to mark the Board's 50th anniversary, the principal speaker being Dr A. Cohen, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.<sup>322</sup>

At all times the Council kept in close contact with the Board and its Executive Officers. The bond between the Board and its regional committee in Natal was further reinforced by periodic visits by leaders of the Board, including Mr G. Saron, the General Secretary;<sup>323</sup> Dr H. Sonnanbend, the Vice-Chairman of the Board;<sup>324</sup> Mr A.B. Klipin, Hon. Treasurer of the Board;<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.11 (July, 1953), 8-9.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.6 (February, 1947), 21-22.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 12.

<sup>325</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.1.



Rabbi M.C. Weiler and Mr Burski, members of the Executive Council;<sup>326</sup> Mrs M. Adler, a member of the Executive Council;<sup>327</sup> and Messrs A. Ovedoff and L. Melamed.<sup>328</sup>

Through the Inter-Provincial Conferences that were held annually,<sup>329</sup> and the Biennial Congress of the

- <sup>326</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Monday, 16th April, 1951, at 8 pm., p.2.
- <sup>327</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.4.
- <sup>328</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 16th April, 1953, at 8 pm., p.3.
- <sup>329</sup> President's Report to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry 1947, p.3., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 59., *Hasholom*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 13., Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.2., *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 17., Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., p.4., *Hasholom*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 39., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 57., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 54., Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., pp.3-5., Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 25th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 5th April, 1956, at 8 pm., p.2.

Board,<sup>330</sup> the C.N.J. participated in the decision making of the Board of Deputies, and was afforded a platform from which to articulate the attitudes and wishes of Natal Jewry.

In 1946 Mr H.L. Magid represented the Council at the inaugural meeting of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, formed to co-ordinate the activities of Orthodox Congregations in South Africa, and at a meeting was elected a Vice-President of the Union.<sup>331</sup> Four

<sup>330</sup> At the 16th Biennial Congress, in August 1947, the C.N.J. was represented by Messrs H.L. Magid, R. Abrahams, J.J. Friedman, I. Geshen, S. Moshal, Mr and Mrs A. Goldberg, Mrs I. Goldberg and Mr W. Sulski (Council of Natal Jewry, Report of the Executive 1947-1948, p.2.). At the 17th Biennial Congress, in May 1949, the Council's representatives were Messrs H.L. Magid, J.J. Friedman, S. Moshal, A. Goldberg, I. Geshen, G. Cohen, S.W. Sulski, Mesdames A. Broomberg, C. Fridjhon and Miss K. Beinart (*Hasholom*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 11.). At the 18th Congress, in June 1951, the Council was represented by Messrs J.J. Friedman, E.S. Henochsberg, B. Lazarus, S. Moshal, H.L. Magid, C. Sternberg, M. Woolfson, S. Sulski and Dr B. Moshal. (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.10 (June, 1951), 17.). At the Golden Jubilee Congress, in May/June 1953, the Council's representatives were Messrs A. Levine, H. Moss-Morris, E.S. Henochsberg, H.L. Magid, I.J. Greenberg, M. Woolfson, I.L. Swift, J.J. Friedman, D. Spector and Dr N. Smith. (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 57.). At the 20th Congress in September 1955, the Council's representatives were Dr B. Moshal, Messrs L. Ditz, A. Levine, M. Woolfson, I.J. Greenberg, H.L. Magid, D. Spector and Mrs M. Moshal. (Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 25th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 5th April, 1956, at 8 pm., p.2.).

<sup>331</sup> President's Report to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, 1947, p.4.

years later Mr Magid had the honour to be chosen as part of the South African delegation to the first Commonwealth Conference of Jewish Representative Bodies, which was held in London.<sup>332</sup> The object of the Conference was to discuss matters of common interest and to explore the possibilities of establishing a co-ordinating Board which would represent World Jewry in the Diaspora at the United Nations Organisation.<sup>333</sup>

As it had done from the time of its inception the Council of Natal Jewry, in the ten years following the end of World War II revealed that it was able to effectively meet the needs of the community that it represented, and that it enjoyed support from Natal Jewry necessary for it to pursue its objectives. Through its many committees the C.N.J. touched on many aspects of the lives of the Jews of Natal and, through the additional responsibilities that it assumed in this period, it testified to its ability to cope effectively with prevailing circumstances, and proved that the key place which it occupied in the communal life of Natal Jewry had been rightfully earned. As the Regional Committee of the Board of Deputies it served as a link between the Board and the Jews of Natal, and in carrying out policies of the Board it kept Natal Jewry in line

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<sup>332</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 16.

<sup>333</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 20th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 5th April, 1956, at 8 pm., p.2.

with their co-religionists in the rest of the country.



## CHAPTER XXXV

PROGRESS IN HEBREWEDUCATION : 1945 - 1955

In the post-war period the question of Jewish education became very much a communal rather than an institutional concern, with the Council of Natal Jewry and the Durban United Hebrew Congregation having a direct influence on the course and development of the *Talmud Torah*.

The end of the fighting in Europe and the East corresponded with an upsurge in interest in communal affairs which did not take long manifesting itself in respect of education. In November 1945, representatives of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and the Council of Natal Jewry reached agreement on the need to establish a Board of Education, and to appoint a Director of Education in Durban, who would serve as both headmaster and teacher within the *Talmud Torah* and who would, at the same time, assume responsibility for adult education within the community.<sup>1</sup> The creation of such a Board had been recommended by the Commission which had been set up in

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 29th November, 1945, at 8 pm., p.1.

1939 to enquire into the aims, objects and achievements of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*,<sup>2</sup> and delay in the implementation of this recommendation had been solely due to the outbreak of World War II.

Mr Ernst, the headmaster of the *Talmud Torah*, was engaged as Director of Education by the Board,<sup>3</sup> which was renamed the Jewish Education Council.<sup>4</sup> He thereby assumed responsibility for the Hebrew education, not only of his pupils at the *Talmud Torah*, but also for the Jewish youth of the Province as well.<sup>5</sup> The selection of Mr Ernst was a most sensible and obvious choice in that there was no one else in Durban more eminently suited for the post than he was. Evidence of the esteem in which Mr Ernst was held by the community was reflected in the large attendance at the Jewish Club on January 20, 1946, when the *Talmud Torah* gave an official reception to welcome him on his return from active service

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<sup>2</sup>See above p.321.

<sup>3</sup>Minutes of Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 29th November, 1945, at 8 pm., p.1.

<sup>4</sup>The Jewish Education Council of Natal. Report of A. Levine, 12th January, 1951. In archives of the Council of Natal Jewry.

<sup>5</sup>As the Director of Education of the Jewish Education Council Mr Ernst conducted inspections of the Hebrew classes in Pietermaritzburg (*Hasholom*, XXVII No.12 (August, 1949), 19.) and when, in 1950 Maritzburg had no minister, Mr Ernst travelled to the City every Sunday in order to teach Hebrew (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 15.).

<sup>6</sup>  
abroad.

With Mr Ernst again at the helm, Jewish education in the City was placed on a sound footing once more and plans were made for the extension of existing facilities. In January 1947, a nursery school was opened, with a maximum enrolment of 30 children,<sup>7</sup> at the *Talmud Torah* premises, at 37 Silverton Road, which in the mornings also served as the venue for the kindergarten conducted by Mrs Cotterell. Mr Ernst named the nursery school Sharona, because of the name's association with Palestine, and more especially the Sharon Valley, and because it sounded attractive.<sup>8</sup> Miss Pessa Karpelovsky of Johannesburg was engaged by Mr Ernst to run the new school and, together with her assistant Miss Doreen Levy, she sought to create a nursery school environment for her little pupils. Certain of the rooms in the house which served as the school building were adapted to meet the needs of the two nursery groups, one for children from three to four years of age, and the other for children aged four to five years.

From its inception the nursery school was well supported, which led the staff to believe that there was a growing awareness of things Jewish amongst the parents.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.6 (February, 1946), 23.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of Second Committee Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue Chambers, on Tuesday, 28th January, 1947, at 7.45 pm., p.1.

<sup>8</sup> From a personal interview with Mr Sam Ernst, May, 1980.



The informal teaching methods not yet supported by the Education authorities, but extensively employed in the already established Tree Tops Nursery School, which was also in Silverton Road, were accepted without question by the parents. Miss Karpelovsky's primary task was to introduce the children to matters Jewish and to instill in them a consciousness of their Jewishness. Familiarity with the Hebrew language was fostered by the singing of Hebrew songs, many of which were written by Miss Karpelovsky who adapted the works of classical composers for this purpose.<sup>9</sup> In consequence of her marriage and subsequent departure for Pietermaritzburg in 1948, Miss Karpelovsky's association with the school was only of brief duration. In that time she nevertheless laid the groundwork for the school's future development.

The development of the facilities of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* was followed by the restructuring of the *Talmud Torah* Committee. At the Annual General Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* in 1948, the constitution was amended to provide for the Committee to consist of elected members, and not representatives of outside organisations as had formerly been the case. This development was the result of the irregular attendance of organisational representatives at *Talmud Torah* meetings. Any institution or society affiliated

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<sup>9</sup> From a personal interview with Mrs Pessa Weinberg (nee Karpelovsky) of Pietermaritzburg, June, 1980.



to the Council of Natal Jewry which wished to was allowed to have a representative on the *Talmud Torah* Committee, but this was no longer an automatic procedure. Although an autonomous body, the *Talmud Torah's* special relationship with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation was preserved and the constitution provided for one of the three Trustees to be appointed by the Council of the Congregation.<sup>10</sup>

The reorganisation of the *Talmud Torah* Committee was followed in 1950, by the decision to change the name of the Durban United *Talmud Torah* to the Durban United Hebrew Schools, the 1948 constitution having provided for both names. The new designation was generally felt to be a more accurate reflection of the expanding educational facilities which fell under the organisation's auspices.<sup>11</sup>

Progress in the field of Jewish education in Durban was, however, severely hampered by the limitations of the *Talmud Torah's* existing premises which were hopelessly inadequate. The school building was neither light nor airy and when it rained it was necessary to hold classes on the back verandah.<sup>12</sup> The Council of the Durban

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<sup>10</sup> Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 25th November, 1948, pp.2-4.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of the Twentieth Annual General Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Wednesday, 22nd November, 1950, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>12</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 21.

United Hebrew Congregation recognised the *Talmud Torah's* urgent need for suitable educational facilities and it recommended to its members that priority be given to the building of premises to house the nursery school and *Talmud Torah* on its land at the corner of Silverton and Essenwood Roads. Although this meant that the Congregation's plans for the development of a new synagogue on part of this site had to be temporarily set aside, the Congregation's awareness of the need for Jewish education, and its appreciation of the practical problems facing those responsible for education, prompted it to approve of this building scheme at its Annual General Meeting in October 1948.<sup>13</sup> A drive for funds was inaugurated<sup>14</sup> and construction work began shortly thereafter.

Whilst building operations were in progress Jewish education in Durban was making significant strides. The nursery school was forced through its restricted facilities to limit its numbers and there was generally a long waiting list of pupils seeking admission.<sup>15</sup> The kindergarten continued to cater for Classes 1 and 2, and in 1950, the decision was taken to extend the day classes

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<sup>13</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 22, 1948, p.18.

<sup>14</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 16.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 21., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 69.

from 1951, to include Standard I,<sup>16</sup> and to thereby create the nucleus of a Jewish Day School. The syllabus followed at the kindergarten was that of the Natal Department of Education, with the addition of Hebrew as one of the subjects.<sup>17</sup> The afternoon classes run by the *Talmud Torah* increased in popularity and in 1950 its roll stood at 135 pupils which was the highest number on record.<sup>18</sup> The classes were divided into eight standards and lessons were held in Hebrew language up to matriculation level, as well as in all aspects of Judaism, Jewish history and Jewish current events. Special classes also existed for the preparation of *Barmitzvah* boys and *Batmitzvah* girls.<sup>19</sup>

The syllabus followed at the afternoon classes was that laid down by the South African Board of Jewish Education. From 1949, when Rabbi Zlotnik, the Board's Director, left the Union to settle in Israel,<sup>20</sup> his successor Mr Isaac Goss took up the Rabbi's practice of making periodic visits to Durban.<sup>21</sup> In this way the progress of the classes was monitored by the Board of

<sup>16</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 62.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 69.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 62-63.

<sup>20</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.8 (April, 1949), 25.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 11., *The Zionist Record*, November 3, 1950, p.11., June 26, 1953, p.12., June 2, 1954, p.17.

Jewish Education and the high standards which it set were maintained. When, in 1950, the Jewish Education Council resolved to act as the Regional Committee of the South African Board of Jewish Education for Natal, Mr Ernst was appointed the Regional Director.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the afternoon classes conducted at the *Talmud Torah*, branch classes were started in Durban North early in 1949,<sup>23</sup> where a Durban North Sectional Committee of the Durban United Hebrew Schools was formed, with men's and women's committees, chaired respectively by Mr and Mrs H. Friedland,<sup>24</sup> and in the Beach area in 1950.<sup>25</sup> The rapid increase in the size of the Jewish population of Durban North led to the realisation that in time it would become necessary to make provision for a synagogue and classrooms in the area.<sup>26</sup> Under the direction of Mr M. Ehrlich, the Chairman of the Committee of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, a nursery school and afternoon classes were in fact started in Durban North in 1950.<sup>27</sup> Until the construction work on the new

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, May 26, 1950, p.19.

<sup>23</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 21.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of the Ninth Committee Meeting of the Durban United *Talmud Torah*, Held at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue Chambers, on Thursday, 24th August, 1950, at 7.45 pm., p.1.

<sup>25</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 69.

<sup>26</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.11 (July, 1950), 20-21.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 25.



*Talmud Torah* was completed and plans could be made to erect permanent buildings in Durban North, the schools in that suburb were temporarily housed in St. Andrew's Drive.<sup>28</sup> The nursery school, named Ilana, which was supervised by Mrs Rhoda Abrahams, had thirty seven children on its roll within only a few months of its opening, whilst two afternoon classes functioned in Durban North, run by members of the staff of the Silverton Road school.<sup>29</sup> Parental interest in the new nursery schools was reflected in the creation of Parent-Teachers Associations, which worked in close harmony with the controlling Committee.<sup>30</sup>

The new central premises of the Durban United Hebrew Schools, which embraced Sharona Nursery School, the Kindergarten and Standard I and the Afternoon classes, were completed in 1951. The building, which was located at 75 Silverton Road, consisted of a double unit nursery school in front with a double storey building behind it which housed the kindergarten on the ground floor and Standard I and afternoon classes upstairs. In planning the building provision had been made for the future expansion of the school. Extra classrooms were provided and foundations were laid for one additional floor to take further classrooms if, and when, such classrooms

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<sup>28</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 62.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

were required.

The official opening of the school building was held on September 9, 1951 and was performed by Mr L. Ditz, the Chairman of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, to which the school was indebted for its development. After a dedication prayer had been pronounced by Rabbi Harris Swift three bronze tables were unveiled. One, bearing the names of the Committee of the Congregation, was unveiled by Mr I. Geshen, the Vice-Chairman of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation. The second tablet, with the names of the Committee of the Durban United Hebrew Schools, was unveiled by the Committee's Chairman, Mr M. Ehrlich. The third tablet, commemorating the late Samuel Walter Brewer and his wife Bertha, in whose memory a wing of the nursery school had been contributed by their children, Mr Leslie Brewer and Mrs Nathan Smith, was unveiled by Mr Leslie Brewer.<sup>31</sup>

Whilst it was Mr Ernst's contention that the education offered at the schools was not sectarian and his hope was that the community as a whole would make full use of the schools,<sup>32</sup> numerous signs point to the school's Orthodox bias. The location of the school building, the circumstances leading up to its creation and the school's close association with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, as reflected in its representation

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<sup>31</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 21, 1951, p.8.  
*Hasholom*, XXX No.2 (October, 1951), 16-17.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.12 (August, 1951), 1.

on the Congregation's Council and the participation of Rabbi Swift and the Revs. Metzger and Kaplan in the school's opening ceremony, left little doubt whatsoever that the school was essentially sectarian, even if the education that it offered was not intended to be so.

The school's urge to serve the community as a whole rather than just the Orthodox community, notwithstanding its dependence on the Orthodox Congregation, or the fact that its pupils were largely drawn from those families affiliated to the Orthodox Synagogue, reflected the dominant communal thinking of the time which was the urge to preserve the unity of the community. In respect of education this line of thought was reinforced by the findings of the Commission of Enquiry into the whole question of the youth, which was set up by the C.N.J. in 1951, and which recommended that Hebrew education in Durban be brought under one authority.<sup>33</sup> It was also a policy which was very much in keeping with that of the South African Board of Jewish Education, which based Jewish education on 'broadly national traditional lines,' whereby pupils were exposed to a modicum of observance, and knowledge of basic texts, concepts and rituals of Orthodox Judaism and an identification with the Jewish national revival as epitomised by the Zionist movement, and Israel was fostered. It was a policy which signified a tolerant and uncoersive attitude towards the question

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<sup>33</sup> See above p.854.

of actual observance and thereby reflected recognition of the rather lax mode of observance in most pupils' homes.<sup>34</sup>

In Durban the impulse towards establishing a broad-based communal school, capable of attracting support from all sections of the community was also motivated by practical considerations such as the size of the community as a whole and the enormous costs which such a project entailed. The Reform Congregation, dissatisfied with the Orthodox bias of the school's traditional Jewish policy, however, opposed any suggestion that its Hebrew and Religious School should merge with the Durban United Hebrew Schools, believing that the community was better served by several religious schools.<sup>35</sup> After lengthy negotiations, involving the C.N.J., the Jewish Education Council, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, the Durban United Hebrew Schools and the Temple David, an arrangement was arrived at in terms of which the Reform Congregation agreed not to establish any nursery schools, and the facilities of the Durban United Hebrew Schools were made available to those members of Reform whose children wished to take Hebrew

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<sup>34</sup> Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience (1910-1967)*. (Cape Town, 1980), pp.253-254.

<sup>35</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.2 (October, 1951), 33.



for the Junior Certificate or Matriculation Examinations.<sup>36</sup> Although a nursery school was subsequently opened at Temple David,<sup>37</sup> the children of Reform families who wished to pursue their Hebrew studies up to Matriculation level, nevertheless continued to study at the classes of the Durban United Hebrew Schools. Notwithstanding its sectarian sympathies Mr Ernst's hope of seeing his school serve the entire community was thus, in fact, realised.

The new school premises in Silverton Road facilitated the further growth and development of Jewish education in the City. With each passing year the number of children attending the Sharona nursery school, kindergarten, Standard I and afternoon classes increased,<sup>38</sup> the afternoon classes, however, remaining the mainstay of the Durban United Hebrew Schools.<sup>39</sup> In 1953 the Nursery School started to receive a Provincial subsidy<sup>40</sup> and this development not only meant considerable financial assistance, but reflected the Education Department's

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<sup>36</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.13.

<sup>37</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 13, 1947, p.13.

<sup>38</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 62-63., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 77., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 65., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 55.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 77.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

recognition of the worth of the school. Amongst the senior pupils of the school, and former pupils, an interesting development was the creation of a Youth Debating Forum, which met once a month under the auspices of the Durban United Hebrew Schools, for the purpose of discussing any Jewish matters concerning youth.<sup>41</sup>

The admission of additional pupils to the schools placed a great strain on the staff of the schools, which, in common with schools around the Union, was feeling the effects of a shortage of qualified teachers. The Durban United Hebrew Schools were, therefore, all the more fortunate to obtain the services of Mr Max Clapper, the former principal of the Salisbury Hebrew School in Southern Rhodesia, who took up the position of Senior Teacher at the beginning of 1952.<sup>42</sup> Mr Clapper's appointment not only relieved Mr Ernst of some of his teaching duties but also gave him more time to fulfil his duties as Regional Director of Hebrew Education. Fortunately for the Durban United Hebrew Schools the Revs. Metzger and Kaplan also gave of their time to assist in conducting classes,<sup>43</sup> and in this way the problems experienced by other schools in consequence of

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 77., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 65.

<sup>42</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.6 (February, 1952), 10 and 13.

<sup>43</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 63.

staff shortages, was circumvented.

To satisfy the growing demand for Hebrew education from the widely distributed Jewish community, the Durban United Hebrew Schools, with the financial support of the Jewish Education Council,<sup>44</sup> set up branch schools in Westville,<sup>45</sup> Escombe<sup>46</sup> and Pinetown.<sup>47</sup> It was at its branch school in Durban North, however, that the most far reaching developments were recorded.

Once the new school building in Silverton Road was completed the Durban United Hebrew Congregation embarked on a concerted drive for funds in order to proceed with its plans to erect a new Synagogue. Owing to the rapid increase in the size of the Jewish community of Durban North and the establishment of a nursery school and afternoon classes in the area, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation allowed itself to be prevailed upon by the Committee of the United Hebrew Schools. It consequently deferred its building plans once more so as to enable a school building, which could be adapted for religious services to be erected in Durban North.

A plot of land, 1¼ acres in extent, was acquired at 70, Hoylake Drive, and before the end of 1952, building operations had commenced. The ceremonial roof wetting

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 59.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 63.

<sup>46</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, January 21, 1954, p.10.

<sup>47</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 26, 1954, p.11.

took place on January 27, 1953<sup>48</sup> and the building, which consisted of two classrooms for the afternoon classes and a nursery school, the main rooms of which had been so constructed that they could be opened out to form a small hall for communal gatherings or religious services, was officially opened on August 23, 1953. The honour of affixing the *mezuzzah* was accorded to Mr Jack Rubin, the Chairman of the *Chevra Kadisha*, in recognition of the generous support which the *Chevra Kadisha* had, over the years, extended to the Hebrew Schools. The formal opening of the school was performed by Mr H.L. Friedland, the Chairman of the Management Committee of the Ilana Nursery School who, together with his wife, had worked untiringly in the interests of the new school.<sup>49</sup>

The momentum in respect of Jewish education, which had been generated by the opening of the two school buildings was sustained by talk of establishing a Jewish day school in Durban. At the opening of the Ilana Nursery School Mr Ernst had made an impassioned plea for such a school,<sup>50</sup> and his desire to achieve this ideal was shared by increasingly large numbers of members of the community. For the exponents of the Jewish day school system in South Africa the decision of the 10th National Education Conference of the South African Board of Jewish

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, February 13, 1953, p.15.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, August 28, 1953, pp.12-13.

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



Education in May 1954, to establish a Hebrew high school on the Rand and to extend the Hebrew day school system throughout the Union<sup>51</sup> was a major achievement, which had repercussions throughout the country.

Interest in the concept of a Jewish Day School now came to be shared by many Jews not directly involved in education, but who were nevertheless concerned about the future of the community's youth. This was clearly evident at the Natal Zionist Conference, in July 1954, where a resolution was adopted which approved in principle the establishment of a Jewish day school in Durban.<sup>52</sup>

At the same time, with increased awareness of Jewish day schools generally, came increased interest in the schools of the Durban United Hebrew Schools. This heightened interest manifested itself in an intensification of the activities of the Parent-Teachers Associations.<sup>53</sup>

With public opinion in Durban moving along the lines of a Jewish day school and the possibility of extending the scope of the existing school beyond

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, June 4, 1954, p.5.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, July 9, 1954, p.19.

<sup>53</sup> Including charity work, (*Hasholom*, XXXIII No.2 (October, 1954), 15., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.4 (December, 1954), 5 and 7.) a symposium on "The hospital, the child and the parent," (*Ibid.*, XXXIII No.3 (November, 1954), 9.) quiz evenings, (*Ibid.*, XXXIII No.4 (December, 1954), 25.) *braaiivleis*, (*Ibid.*, XXXIII No.5 (January, 1955), 19.) and a symposium on "The Jewish child in his environment," (*Ibid.*, XXXIII No.8 (April, 1955), 28.)

Standard I, a call was made at the Annual General Meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, in October 1954, for the Congregation to reconsider its decision to erect a synagogue next to the School.<sup>54</sup> The spokesmen for the schools effectively argued that the construction of a synagogue would hamper the future development of a day school and would deprive the Nursery School of necessary play ground areas.<sup>55</sup> The Congregation's plans for the synagogue it proposed to erect on the land in Silverton and Essenwood Roads, adjoining the school building, had however, by this time reached an advanced stage. The question of relocating the synagogue divided the Congregation's members, with Rabbi Swift championing the cause of the school.<sup>56</sup> Representatives of the Durban United Hebrew Schools, the Synagogue Building Sub-Committee and the Council of Natal Jewry met to discuss the matter fully. After having heard evidence from the School's representative the Synagogue Building Sub-Committee, much to the chagrin of the Durban United Hebrew Schools, recommended, in March 1955, that planning for the new Synagogue on the proposed site be continued. In the opinion of the Building Sub-Committee more than adequate facilities existed for the immediate needs of

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<sup>54</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 22, 1954, p.7.

<sup>55</sup> Report of the Synagogue/School Area Requirements Commission. Presented to the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, March, 1959, p.4.

<sup>56</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 3, 1954, p.9.

the schools, whilst the Congregation's acquisition of an additional half acre of ground adjacent to the school meant that facilities for future expansion were also made available. The Sub-Committee was furthermore of the opinion that if the school did expand into a day school, along the lines suggested by the Durban United Hebrew Schools, then it would be in the school's interest to acquire a larger site on which to develop. At the same time, the Sub-Committee was conscious of the urgent need for additional seating accommodation for its members and of the fact that the delay in erecting the new synagogue on the land, which had been intended for that purpose, was seriously prejudicing the Congregation, and in effect Orthodox Judaism, by the Congregation's inability to offer seating to prospective members of the growing community. Once the report of the Synagogue Building Sub-Committee was accepted by the Council of the Congregation, which thereafter continued with its plans for the new synagogue, the Durban United Hebrew Schools could only express its disagreement with the Council's decision, which it did, in a letter to the Congregation.<sup>57</sup>

The question of creating a Jewish day school in Durban continued to occupy a prominent place in the minds of the community. Those who championed the cause of the

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<sup>57</sup> Report of Synagogue/School Area Requirements Commission. Presented to the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, March, 1959, pp.3-6.



Jewish day school pointed out the advantages which were to be accrued from having Hebrew lessons and Jewish studies integrated into the general school syllabus, as opposed to such classes being held after normal school hours when children were often tired or preoccupied with other extra mural activities. Those most critical of the day school scheme argued that such schools inhibited children from mixing freely with their Gentile neighbours. This argument was countered by the observation that in Government schools Jewish children were equally marked out as different by their absence from prayer services, their non-attendance on Jewish holidays and their enforced attendance at afternoon Hebrew classes.<sup>58</sup>

The thinking of the community in respect of a Jewish day school was stimulated and influenced through the visits to Durban, in 1955, of Mr Nahum Levin, of the Jewish Agency; Mr I. Goss, the Director of the South African Board of Jewish Education and Mr Gershon de Haas, of the Jewish National Fund, all of whom championed the cause of the day school.<sup>59</sup> Mr Ernst, the Regional Director of Hebrew Education and Headmaster of the Durban United Hebrew Schools, spared himself no efforts in his attempt to win support for the creation of a day school. Whenever the opportunity arose he made himself available

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<sup>58</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.6 (February, 1955), 9-10.

<sup>59</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 26, 1955, p.15.



to address organisations and interested groups on the subject.<sup>60</sup>

The whole question of establishing a Jewish day school in Durban was, however, hedged around with uncertainties because of finance, the school's balance sheet reflecting substantial deficits.<sup>61</sup> The continued running of the school was largely dependant on the support which the schools received from the Durban Jewish Community Chest, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and the *Chevra Kadisha*. It was clearly evident that any expansion programme within the schools would require the support of the whole community, rather than a few organisations.<sup>62</sup>

Notwithstanding the practical problems, a meeting was held under the convenership of Mr S. Ernst, attended by representatives of the Jewish Education Council, the Zionist Council for Natal, the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and the Durban United Hebrew Schools. Discussion centred on the need for and the possibility of establishing a Jewish day school in Durban and all the problems connected with such a scheme were carefully studied.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.11 (July, 1955), 15.

<sup>61</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 3, 1954, p.9.,  
*Hasholom*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 29.

<sup>62</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 3, 1954, p.9.

<sup>63</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 24th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 21st April, 1955, at 8 pm., p.13.

Discussions about the school's future development took place at a time when preparations were being made to mark the Silver Jubilee of the founding of the *Talmud Torah* and Kindergarten, which had been set up in a house at 204 Musgrave Road in 1930.<sup>64</sup> During the week 8th/13th August, 1955, many functions were held to mark this important occasion. At the Sharona and Ilana Nursery Schools there were exhibitions of work, demonstrations of children's activities, film shows and tree plantings, all of which were attended by interested parents. On August 10, the School Committee held a reception for the community at the Jewish Club and the culminating function was a concert, staged by pupils of the school on August 13th. A School Magazine, which featured contributions from the pupils of the afternoon classes, was also specially published for the occasion.<sup>65</sup>

A fitting honour for the Durban United Hebrew Schools in its Silver Jubilee year was its success in the *Degel Yerushalayim* Competition, organised by the Jewish National Fund Department of the South African Zionist Federation. In the face of competition from 100 other Hebrew schools throughout Southern Africa the pupils of the Durban United Hebrew Schools won the highly coveted

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<sup>64</sup> See above p.189.

<sup>65</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 16, 1955, p.12., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 55.

*Degel Yerushalayim.*<sup>66</sup>

In a period of only ten years dramatic advances had been made in respect of Jewish education in Durban. Disrupted by the long years of war, Jewish education had not only been revived, but had witnessed something of a renaissance with the development of two Nursery Schools, the creation of a Standard I class and the growth of the afternoon classes. The unsuitable school premises at 37, Silverton Road, had given way to an imposing school building and nursery school at 75, Silverton Road, and an equally fine nursery school to cater for the community of Durban North. Parental apathy in respect of their children's Hebrew education had been replaced by active Parent-Teachers Associations, and there was widespread support for extending the existing school beyond the Standard I level. At the end of 1955 the total enrolment of pupils in the different branches of the Durban United Hebrew Schools totalled 395, 43 of whom made up the three classes of the morning school, and there were 22 full or part-time teachers, of whom 11 were full-time nursery school teachers.<sup>67</sup>

The changed circumstances of Jewish education in Durban, were in large measure the personal achievement of Mr Sam Ernst, who, as Headmaster and Regional Director of Hebrew Education, had worked with a single-mindedness

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 55., and *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 26.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 29-30.

of purpose to foster Hebrew education in the City. His task was no doubt made somewhat easier by the increased awareness amongst parents of the desirability of providing their children, with at the very least, a rudimentary knowledge of the Hebrew language and Jewish laws and customs and by the heightened interest shown by South African Jewry generally in Jewish education. Hebrew education in Durban owed a considerable debt of gratitude too to the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, which had the foresight to provide the necessary school buildings and, which, together with its Burial Society, remained amongst the school's most important sources of financial support.



## CHAPTER XXXVI

DURBAN JEWRY AND ITSNATIONAL HOMELAND : 1945 - 1955

By the end of World War II the Zionist Movement no longer had need to seek to justify its cause with religious, philosophic or idealistic argument. The tragedy of the Nazi Holocaust, and the incarceration of thousands of Europe's displaced Jews, had clearly brought home to Jewry world wide the urgent need for a Jewish State.

All over the world, including Durban, Jewry of all shades of opinion called with increased urgency for the repeal of the White Paper of 1939, which had all but closed Palestine to Jewish immigration.<sup>1</sup> Zionist demands for unrestricted Jewish immigration to Palestine, ran contrary, however, to Arab ambitions in the area.<sup>2</sup> In an ineffective attempt to satisfy both parties the British Government decided to admit 1,500 homeless Jews a month into Palestine, whilst maintaining, with only

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<sup>1</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 3-4., *The Zionist Record*, October 19, 1945, p.12.

<sup>2</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 25, 1945, p.7., October 2, 1945, p.7.

slight changes, the ban on Jewish land purchases.<sup>3</sup>

Disappointment with the British Government's proposals were expressed in Durban by the Jewish community, and by Senator the Hon. E.H. Brooks, the chairman of the South African Pro-Palestine Parliamentary Committee,<sup>4</sup> who was one of the many influential Christians to champion the Jewish cause.

As tensions ran high in Palestine, the Jewish population organised a nation-wide strike on October 8, 1945 to protest against Britain's restrictions on Jewish immigration.<sup>5</sup> In a demonstration of solidarity with the *Yishuv*, and in response to a call by the Ecclesiastical authorities, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the South African Zionist Federation, Jewry around the Union observed October 18 as a day of Prayer and Intercession for the opening of the Gates of Palestine. A well attended service was held on that day in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue, at which, in the absence of Rabbi A.H. Freedman, the sermon was delivered by Captain L. Dison C.F.<sup>6</sup>

In an effort to aid the victims of Nazi persecution, Britain and the United States agreed to set up a

<sup>3</sup> Solomon Grayzel, *A History of the Jews From the Babylonian Exile to the Present 5728-1968*, (New York, 1968), p.680.

<sup>4</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, September 29, 1945, p.8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, October 8, 1945, p.7., October 9, 1945, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 26, 1945, p.22.

Commission to enquire into the position of European Jewry and to review the situation in Palestine.<sup>7</sup> Coming after long standing pledges by the British Labour Party that it would abrogate the White Paper of 1939 and allow unrestricted Jewish immigration, the announcement of the Anglo-American Commission by Mr Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, was met with unrest in Palestine<sup>8</sup> where the White Paper restrictions remained in force. World Jewry was also dissatisfied with the Anglo-American policy, and the feelings of the Union's Jewish community were expressed in statements by the South African Zionist Federation<sup>9</sup> and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.<sup>10</sup>

The Commission heard evidence from many different parties, including Mr S.M. Kuper, the Chairman of the Board of Deputies, and Mr B. Gering, the Chairman of the Federation.<sup>11</sup> They presented two memorando drawn up by their respective organisations which have been described as, "the most extensive and lucid public statements ever formulated in affirmation of the Zionist

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<sup>7</sup>Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York, 1976), p.570., *The Natal Mercury*, November 14, 1945, p.22.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, November 15, 1945, p.7., November 16, 1945, p.7.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, November 15, 1945, p.7.

<sup>10</sup>*Hasholom*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 17.

<sup>11</sup>President's Report Submitted at the Annual General Meeting, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 4th April, 1946, at 8 pm., p.3.

character of the [South African] community."<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, the *Haganah*, the Jewish National Defence Organisation, continued with its efforts to smuggle illegal immigrants from Europe into Palestine,<sup>13</sup> and the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* intensified its activities against the British.<sup>14</sup> The deterioration of the Palestine situation was attributed by the pro-British local press, "to organised incitement in both America and Europe," and Jewry was strongly condemned for the manner in which it had responded to the Joint Commission.<sup>15</sup> To offset the negative effects of such editorial comment the C.N.J. formed a sub-committee, consisting of Messrs A. Goldberg, L.S. Ditz and Prof. P. Stein, which collaborated with local Zionist leaders and wrote authoritative replies to any leaders

<sup>12</sup> Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967*, (Cape Town, 1980), p.197.

<sup>13</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.567-568., *The Natal Mercury*, November 24, 1945, p.11., *The Zionist Record*, November 30, 1945, p.5., *The Natal Mercury*, December 27, 1945, p.7., January 19, 1946, p.9. On the illegal immigration see Ehud Avriel, *Open The Gates* (London, 1975).

<sup>14</sup> Solomon Grayzel, p.682., *The Natal Mercury*, December 28, 1945, p.7., December 29, 1945, p.9., December 31, 1945, p.7., January 4, 1946, p.7., January 21, 1946, p.7., January 22, 1946, p.8., February 27, 1946, p.9., March 7, 1946, p.11., April 4, 1946, p.9., April 27, 1946, p.11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, January 7, 1946, p.6.



which appeared in the newspapers.<sup>16</sup> Spokesmen for the local Zionist movement also took every opportunity to address meetings of influential Gentile audiences, in order to make Jewry's standpoint in respect of Palestine more widely known and understood.<sup>17</sup>

On May 1, 1946 the Anglo-American Commission on Palestine issued a unanimous report in which it made ten recommendations. Chief amongst these was the statement that 100,000 Jews were to be permitted to enter Palestine in 1946, if possible, and that existing land transfer regulations were to be replaced.<sup>18</sup> The Report suggested that until the hostility between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine disappeared the mandate should be continued by the British pending the execution of a trusteeship agreement under the United Nations.<sup>19</sup>

In Britain the Report was received with uneasiness, in view of the heavy commitments which its implementation would entail,<sup>20</sup> whilst the Arab world was quick to reject

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, the 4th October, 1945, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>17</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 12, 1946, p.6.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.570-571., *The Natal Mercury*, May 1, 1946, pp.9-10.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.571., *The Natal Mercury*, May 1, 1946, p.9.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.571., *The Natal Mercury*, May 2, 1946, p.9.

all its recommendations.<sup>21</sup> In Palestine a large scale action by the Jewish Underground expressed the general feelings of the Jewish population over a continued British mandate. On June 16, eight bridges spanning the River Jordan were destroyed,<sup>22</sup> and this was followed by an intensification of activity directed against the British.<sup>23</sup> The British army in Palestine retaliated on Saturday, June 29, by rounding up hundreds of Jews throughout the country, including members of the Zionist executive, and temporarily occupying the Jewish Agency offices.<sup>24</sup>

World Jewry watched the British action in Palestine with disbelief, angered by the disregard shown for the Jewish Sabbath and unwilling to accept that the British Government was enforcing policies which it had pledged itself to change.<sup>25</sup> The South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the South African Zionist Federation called on the members of the Jewish community to close their businesses and offices on Thursday, July 4, at 1 pm. and to join in a mass demonstration to protest against the

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<sup>21</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.571., *The Natal Mercury*, May 4, 1946, p.11., May 10, 1946, p.9.

<sup>22</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.572., *The Natal Mercury*, June 18, 1946, p.7.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, June 19, 1946, p.9., June 22, 1946, p.12.

<sup>24</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.572., *The Natal Mercury*, July 1, 1946, p.7.

<sup>25</sup>*Hasholom*, XXIV No.11 (July, 1946), 1-2.

action of the British Government in Palestine.<sup>26</sup> In Durban the Council of Natal Jewry and the Zionist Council for Natal, clearly unwilling to allow their support for the *Yishuv* to be interpreted as a sign of their disloyalty to the Union, postponed the demonstration in the City till Sunday, July 7, so as to enable members of the community to participate in the Civic Welcome to the Governor General, which was held on July 4.<sup>27</sup> A crowd of almost 1,000 people gathered for the demonstration at the Jewish Club, which was addressed by Rabbi A.H. Freedman, Senator S.J. Smith, the Mayor of Durban, Mr I. Maisels, the Vice-Chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and Mr J.R. Sullivan M.P.<sup>28</sup>

Correspondence in the daily press at this time came in consequence of the English nature of most of Durban's White residents, to reflect a growing hostility towards Jewry,<sup>29</sup> which increased in tempo when, on July 22, 1946, the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* blew up five storeys of the *King David Hotel* in Jerusalem, which were being used as British Army and Administrative Headquarters.<sup>30</sup> The

<sup>26</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.197., *The Zionist Record*, July 2, 1946, p.3.

<sup>27</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 4, 1946, p.9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, July 8, 1946, p.8., *Hasholom*, XXIV No.11 (July, 1946), 23, 25, 27, 28.

<sup>29</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 4, 1946, p.8., July 10, 1946, p.8., July 13, 1946, p.10., July 19, 1946, p.8.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.572., *The Natal Mercury*, July 2 July 23, 1946, p.7.

South African Zionist Federation was quick to identify itself with the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Council in their expression of condemnation at these events.<sup>31</sup>

Mr E. Schragenheim, the Chairman of the Zionist Council for Natal, also made very clear his organisation's opposition to the activities of the

*Irgun*.<sup>32</sup> The genuine displeasure with which the Jewish community of Durban generally viewed the struggle of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* and its official traditional antipathy to Revisionism was clearly borne out by the decision of the C.N.J. not to allow the United Zionist Revisionist Party to conduct a campaign for funds in Natal, "because of the Council's refusal to support a campaign which had for its objects the use of force..."<sup>33</sup>

As efforts were being made by the British Government to find an acceptable solution to the Palestine question,<sup>34</sup> camps were set up by the British authorities in Cyprus to house the Jewish refugees who were caught seeking illegal entry into Palestine.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, July 25, 1946, p.10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, July 27, 1946, p.12.

<sup>33</sup> Minutes of Special Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Wednesday, 7th August, 1946, at 5.15 pm., pp.1-2.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.572-573., *The Natal Mercury*, August 1, 1946, p.9., August 2, 1946, p.9., September 9, 1946, p.7., September 12, 1946, p.9., September 13, 1946, p.9., September 21, 1946, p.11.

<sup>35</sup> Solomon Grayzel, p.683., *The Natal Mercury*, August 8, 1946, p.9.



Within Palestine itself the struggle of the Jewish underground reportedly continued unabated,<sup>36</sup> fanned by the British policy of deporting illegal immigrants to Cyprus.<sup>37</sup>

Against the background of unrest in Palestine the 22nd Congress of the World Zionist Organisation and the Jewish Agency, met in Basle, Switzerland, in December, 1946.<sup>38</sup> It was a dramatic Congress marked by Chaim Weizmann's failure to gain re-election as President, largely because of his pro-British reputation.<sup>39</sup> Delegates to the Congress were elected by *Shekel* holders world wide, including South Africa, where elections had been held on June 9, 1946.<sup>40</sup> The campaign in Durban was characterised by fervent pre-election activity by the different political parties, with addresses by Rabbi A.M. Gervis and Mr J. Blumenthal, on behalf of the Revisionist Party;<sup>41</sup> Mr Israel Dunsky, on behalf of

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, August 3, 1946, p.11., August 14, 1946, p.9., August 22, 1946, p.9., September 11, 1946, p.9., September 14, 1946, p.11., September 24, 1946, p.9., October 23, 1946, p.9., October 31, 1946, p.9., November 5, 1946, p.9., December 6, 1946, p.9.

<sup>37</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.568., *The Natal Mercury*, August 8, 1946, p.9., August 14, 1946, p.9., September 4, 1946, p.9., November 27, 1946, p.9.

<sup>38</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.574-576., *The Natal Mercury*, December 10, 1946, p.9.

<sup>39</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.576.

<sup>40</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.195., *The Natal Mercury*, June 18, 1946, p.9.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, May 20, 1946, p.8.

the United Zionist Party;<sup>42</sup> Dr Ellen Hellman for the Zionist Socialists<sup>43</sup> and Rabbi I. Kossowsky in the interests of the *Mizrachi*.<sup>44</sup> Opinion was divided amongst Durban Zionists as to the advisability of conducting such elections along political lines. Some believed it to be unnecessary and favoured instead the selection of delegates on merit, and others argued that it was the only democratic way of selecting a truly representative delegation.<sup>45</sup> The fact that in Durban the pre-election meetings were all arranged under the auspices of the Durban Zionist Association helped to avoid the bitter party strife which occurred in other centres.<sup>46</sup> In Durban the Congress Election results were *Mizrachi* 38, United Zionist Party 222, Revisionists 152, and Socialists 167,<sup>47</sup> and followed closely the voting pattern recorded for the whole of the country.<sup>48</sup>

The continually worsening situation in Palestine meanwhile had, by 1947, placed the country on a virtual

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, June 3, 1946, p.6.

<sup>43</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 38.

<sup>44</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 6, 1946, p.7.

<sup>45</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.10 (June, 1946), 1-2., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.11 (July, 1946), 31-32.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 38.

<sup>47</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 14, 1946, p.23.

<sup>48</sup> The United Zionist Party polled 10,411 votes, the Revisionists 9127, the Socialists 7827 and *Mizrachi* 1511 (Gideon Shimoni, p.195.).

war footing,<sup>49</sup> and tension ran high with the kidnapping of a British soldier, as a hostage for an *Irgun* fighter, Dov Gruner, who was under sentence of death.<sup>50</sup> As Britain prepared for a showdown in Palestine, *The Natal Mercury* published a sharply worded editorial, in which it questioned the extent of Jewish opposition to the activities of the *Irgun* and queried the loyalty of the Jewish community.<sup>51</sup> Britain's decision to refer the Palestine Question to the United Nations<sup>52</sup> and her long expected counter offensive against the *Irgun* in Palestine, which began shortly thereafter, on March 3,<sup>53</sup> gave Mr E. Schragenheim, the Zionist Council's chairman, an opportunity to clarify the stand of South African Jewry, when he issued a statement published by the Zionist Federation. The Federation, after condemning the proclamation of martial law in parts of Palestine, went on to allege, in the name of the Union's Jewish community, that the British measures in Palestine were the root cause of the prevailing situation. Whilst it supported the *Yishuv* in its resistance to the policy of the British Administration the Federation, nevertheless, condemned the bloodshed which was caused by "small

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<sup>49</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, January 4, 1947, p.11.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, January 27, 1947, p.7.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, February 6, 1947, p.8.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, February 19, 1947, p.9., Walter Laqueur, p.577.

<sup>53</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, March 3, 1947, p.9.

dissentient groups" of the *Yishuv*.<sup>54</sup>

Public opinion in Durban came to be more hardened, however, when, following the execution of Dov Gruner, Yehiel Drezner, Eliezer Kashani and Mordechai Alkachi in Acre gaol on April 16, 1947,<sup>55</sup> *Irgun* activity against the British intensified.<sup>56</sup> Great bitterness was also aroused by the rally organised by the United Zionist Revisionist Party in Johannesburg to mourn the four executed *Irgun* fighters, which was attended by more than 2,500 Jews.<sup>57</sup> This mood of discontent amongst the general populace over the course of events in Palestine was reflected in extensive public criticism of the Prime Minister, General Smuts, and Mr J.H. Hofmeyr, the Minister of Finance, who both championed the cause of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.<sup>58</sup>

The restraint which had characterised the response of the predominantly English speaking White population of Durban towards events in Palestine spilled over into anger and outrage when, after the execution of

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, March 13, 1947, p.10.

<sup>55</sup> Jan Gitlin, *The Conquest of Acre Fortress*, (Tel Aviv, 1962), pp.98-99., *The Natal Mercury*, April 17, 1947, p.9.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, April 23, 1947, p.9., April 26, 1947, p.11., May 28, 1947, p.9.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, April 29, 1947, p.10., April 30, 1947, p.8.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, June 5, 1947, p.8., June 6, 1947, p.7., June 25, 1947, p.7., July 11, 1947, p.12., August 5, 1947, p.8., August 13, 1947, p.8.



Absolom Haviv, Jacob Weiss and Meir Natar in July 1947,<sup>59</sup> two British intelligence sergeants were hanged in revenge by the *Irgun*, who then placed booby traps on their dead bodies.<sup>60</sup> Jewish expressions of sympathy, voiced at the 16th Congress of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies,<sup>61</sup> were dismissed as irrelevant by *The Natal Mercury* which was uncompromising in its support for Britain's stand in Palestine. In urging that no reprisals should be made on Jews generally, the newspaper suggested instead that, "the best thing is to allow the Jews to wallow in their own shame."<sup>62</sup> The editor of *The Natal Daily News* took a more balanced view, and, in expressing his horror and revulsion at the murders, emphasised the difference between those responsible and the Jewish people generally, and sought to understand what prompted Jews "to go against the spirit and tradition of their faith and to turn to murder and terror."<sup>63</sup>

Public feeling in Durban ran high, and calls were made to boycott Jewish owned stores in the belief that South African Jewry was in some way helping to fund the *Irgun* from money raised for Zionist causes in the

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<sup>59</sup> Jan Gitlin, pp.163-166., *The Natal Mercury*, July 29, 1947, p.9.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1, 1947, p.9.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, August 2, 1947, p.12.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>63</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, August 2, 1947, p.12.

Union.<sup>64</sup> In the tense atmosphere which prevailed suspicion was aroused by a private meeting of the F.C. Hollander Lodge No. XI of the Hebrew Order of David, which was held at the *Balalaika Club*, in Field Street, on Sunday evening, August 3. The meeting, which was attended by Mr Michael Comay, the representative of the South African Zionist Federation with the Jewish Agency in Palestine, who, during his visit to Durban had already clearly outlined the stand of the Jewish Agency in regard to *Irgun* activity in a written reply to *The Natal Mercury*,<sup>65</sup> was simply a function in honour of delegates from the Order's Grand Lodge.<sup>66</sup> So great was the uneasiness which prevailed in Durban, however, that during the night of August 4 a policeman was reported to have visited the Jewish Club to ensure that all was in order.<sup>67</sup>

Whilst the United Nations Palestine Commission was preparing its recommendations the British authorities in Palestine continued their relentless drive on the Jewish underground.<sup>68</sup> The country meanwhile remained torn by dissent, with clashes between Jews and Arabs<sup>69</sup> and

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<sup>64</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 2, 1947, p.15., August 4, 1947, p.7., August 5, 1947, p.8., August 6, 1947, pp.8 and 11, August 8, 1947, p.6..

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, August 4, 1947, p.11.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, August 5, 1947, p.9.

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

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, August 13, 1947, p.9., August 25, 1947, p.9.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, August 15, 1947, p.9., August 16, 1947, p.11.

widescale demonstrations of sympathy for the passengers of the *Haganah* ship *Exodus*,<sup>70</sup> who, after being intercepted by the British, were forcibly returned to Germany, where many of its passengers were detained in former Nazi concentration camps.<sup>71</sup> The Report of the United Nation Commission was published in Geneva on August 29, 1947.<sup>72</sup> It unanimously recommended that Britain's mandate should be terminated at the earliest possible date and proposed that the country be partitioned.<sup>73</sup> Together with the Commission's other proposals these recommendations were submitted to the General Assembly for approval.

Arab rejection of the United Nations Report<sup>74</sup> made it evident that following Britain's termination of the Mandate there would be a struggle for power in Palestine. In preparation for such an event, representatives of the United Zionist Revisionists toured the Union and appealed to Jews to join the Jewish Army of Liberation.

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, August 22, 1947, p.9., August 26, 1947, p.9.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, September 9, 1947, pp.9-10. For a full account see Ruth Gruber, *Destination Palestine The Story of the Haganah Ship Exodus 1947*, (New York, 1948).

<sup>72</sup> On the Report and the activities of the Commission see Walter Laqueur, pp.579-580., *The Natal Mercury*, August 30, 1947, p.11.

<sup>73</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.580., *The Natal Mercury*, September 1, 1947, p.9.

<sup>74</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.581-583., *The Natal Mercury*, October 4, 1947, p.11., October 10, 1947, p.9.

Such a call was made to Durban Jewry at a meeting at the Jewish Club on November 9, addressed by Mr Ivan M. Greenberg, Chairman of the United Zionist Revisionist Party of Great Britain, and Dr I. Lifshitz, a South African doctor who had been working in the Displaced Persons Camps in Europe.<sup>75</sup>

At an historic session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on Saturday night, November 29, 1947, the partition of Palestine was approved by 33 votes to 13 with 10 abstentions and 1 absence.<sup>76</sup> The South African Government's vote at the United Nations session in favour of partition was greatly appreciated by the Union's Jewish community, whose thanks were recorded in a letter which the South African Jewish Board of Deputies sent to the Prime Minister General Smuts.<sup>77</sup> Not all voters in Durban were as pleased with the Government's action, however, and they made clear their objections in letters to the press.<sup>78</sup>

Durban Jewry shared in the world wide Jewish rejoicing at the decision of the United Nations, which was regarded as a fulfilment of the Balfour Declaration, and it pledged its continued support and assistance for

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, November 10, 1947, p.11.

<sup>76</sup> Walter Laqueur, p.582., *The Natal Mercury*, December 1, 1947, p.9.

<sup>77</sup> Council of Natal Jewry, Report of the Executive 1947-1948, p.1.

<sup>78</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 2, 1947, p.7., December 8, 1947, p.6., December 10, 1947, p.7.



the Jews of the *Yishuv*.<sup>79</sup> Under the auspices of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, the South African Jewish Ex-Service League and the Durban United *Talmud Torah* a *Chanukah* and Thanksgiving Service was held in the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue on December 7.<sup>80</sup> The same afternoon the members of the Zionist Youth Movement and *Habonim* held an informal party at the *Maon* to celebrate the decision of the United Nations.<sup>81</sup> On December 14 the Durban Jewish community met at the Jewish Club, under the auspices of the Zionist Council for Natal and the C.N.J., for a programme of speeches and music to show their appreciation of the United Nations decision to grant statehood to the Jewish people.<sup>82</sup>

In Palestine Jewish rejoicing was clouded by the outbreak of fierce fighting between Arab and Jews which was particularly fierce in Jerusalem,<sup>83</sup> Tel Aviv<sup>84</sup> and Haifa,<sup>85</sup> and which, in one month, reportedly cost the

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<sup>79</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 1-2.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.5 (January, 1948), 35.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>83</sup> Solomon Grayzel, p.684., *The Natal Daily News*, December 2, 1947, p.1., December 9, 1947, p.9.

<sup>84</sup> Solomon Grayzel, p.684., *The Natal Mercury*, December 4, 1947, p.9., December 9, 1947, p.9., December 15, 1947, p.9., December 23, 1947, p.9.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, December 12, 1947, p.11., December 31, 1947, p.9.

lives of 260 persons, and left 204 wounded.<sup>86</sup> News of the unrest in Palestine, coupled with predictions of Arab superiority in the event of a future war, caused a feeling of despair amongst a section of the Jewish community. These people were strongly taken to task by Rabbi Freedman who urged them to have faith in G-d and to stand by their people in Palestine.<sup>87</sup>

This undercurrent of despair was overshadowed by a determination within the community to assist their co-religionists in Palestine, for Jewry was quick to realise that the existing trouble was only a foretaste of what lay ahead for the new Jewish State. In December 1947, a meeting was convened by the South African Zionist Federation in Johannesburg, attended by Mr H.L. Magid, the President of the C.N.J. and by representatives of the Zionist Council for Natal, at which the Palestine Special Emergency Fund was inaugurated for the support of the *Haganah*.<sup>88</sup> On December 18 a meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry was arranged, attended by the Zionist Council for Natal, at which *Haganah's* need for defence equipment was stressed. The meeting, which included representatives of the United Zionist Revisionist Party in Durban, unanimously agreed that the pressing needs of the *Haganah* warranted the delay

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, December 24, 1947, p.9.

<sup>87</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.5 (January, 1948), 13.

<sup>88</sup> Council of Natal Jewry, Report of the Executive 1947-1948, p.1.

of the C.N.J.'s fundraising drive and that a campaign on behalf of the fund would be made in Natal for the sole benefit of the *Haganah*. It was also decided, no doubt in view of the delicate situation, that there would be no banquets or other publicity connected with the campaign.<sup>89</sup> The unanimity that surrounded the creation of the fund is evidence of the extent of the support which Zionism now enjoyed in Durban and was also characteristic of Jewry elsewhere in the Union.<sup>90</sup> The campaign was immediately inaugurated under the direction of a committee consisting of Mr S. Moshal,<sup>91</sup> Chairman; Mr M. Woolfson, Vice-Chairman; Mr H. Zulman, Hon. Treasurer; Mr H. Moss-Morris, Hon. Secretary; Rabbi A.H. Freedman, Messrs A. Goldberg M.P., S. Hackner, A. Kaplan, A. Levine, H.L. Magid, E. Schragenheim, Dr N. Smith and Miss R. Rabinowitz, Committee.<sup>92</sup> The fund got off to an enthusiastic start in Durban,<sup>93</sup> and shortly after its inception it was inaugurated in Pietermaritzburg and Northern Natal with equally

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<sup>89</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Full Council of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 18th December, 1947, at 8 pm., p.2.

<sup>90</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.198.

<sup>91</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Full Council of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 18th December, 1947, at 8 pm., p.2.

<sup>92</sup> Council of Natal Jewry, Report of the Executive 1947-1948, pp.1-2.

<sup>93</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.5 (January, 1948), 7.

satisfying results.<sup>94</sup> The Palestine Special Emergency Fund was the most concentrated campaign ever held up to that time in Natal, and it was estimated that about 90% of the possible donors in the Province were approached for a contribution.<sup>95</sup> By mid-February 1948 the campaign in Natal had raised £95,000 and the hope was expressed that the additional money needed to take the total to £100,000 would be found.<sup>96</sup>

In the months immediately preceding the emergency of the Jewish State, which were characterised by a fierce struggle between the *Haganah* and the Arabs for strategical superiority,<sup>97</sup> the Jewish women of Durban intensified their efforts on behalf of the *Yishuv*. On February 17, 1948 Mr N. Abrahamson of the South African

<sup>94</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 5th February, 1948, at 8 pm., p.2.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the Zionist Youth *Maon*, on Monday, 16th February, 1948, at 5.15 pm., p.2.

<sup>97</sup> Walter Laqueur, pp.582-583., *The Natal Mercury*, January 3, 1948, p.11., January 5, 1948, p.7., January 7, 1948, p.9., January 15, 1948, p.9., January 17, 1948, p.11., January 20, 1948, p.9., January 22, 1948, p.9., February 2, 1948, p.9., February 18, 1948, p.11., February 21, 1948, p.11., February 23, 1948, p.9., March 1, 1948, p.9., March 6, 1948, p.11., March 12, 1948, p.11., March 23, 1948, p.11., March 29, 1948, p.9., April 1, 1948, p.9., April 2, 1948, p.10., April 7, 1948, p.9., April 9, 1948, p.11., April 10, 1948, p.11., April 23, 1948, p.11., April 26, 1948, p.9., April 28, 1948, p.11., April 29, 1948, p.9., April 30, 1948, p.11., May 1, 1948, p.11., May 10, 1948, p.9.



Zionist Federation addressed a gathering of women under the combined auspices of the Union of Jewish Women and the Durban Women's Zionist League, at the Jewish Club. Mr Abrahamson stressed the need for immediate assistance both with funds and knitted comforts for the men and women of Palestine, and persuaded the women to purchase an air ambulance in their name at a cost of £1,000. Shares for the ambulance were printed and were sold amongst the women at a cost of £1, each.<sup>98</sup> Under the auspices of the Women's Zionist League a Comforts for the *Haganah* section was also formed, convened by Mrs E. Deift, and thousands of socks and comforts were knitted and sent to Palestine for distribution.<sup>99</sup>

In March 1948 a WIZO Emergency Campaign was launched in Durban by Miss Toni Hauser, General Secretary of the Palestine WIZO, Advocate Saada Gluckman of Jerusalem and Mrs Katie Gluckman of Johannesburg, at a mass meeting presided over by Rabbi A.H. Freedman. The Durban Women's Zionist League pledged its full support to the fund which was for care of the wounded, the creation of emergency hospitals, the provision of food for the soldiers of the *Haganah* and the establishment of kindergartens and mothercraft centres for the children, and particularly those of evacuees.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.7 (March, 1948), 19.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 37.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.8 (April, 1948), 37.

The British Mandate ended in Palestine at midnight on May 14, 1948<sup>101</sup> and one minute later the State of Israel was born, the State's proclamation coinciding with an invasion of the country by Egyptian troops.<sup>102</sup> In an expression of thanksgiving the Durban United Hebrew Congregation held a special service of prayer and dedication at the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue on Sunday, 16th May.<sup>103</sup>

For the Jewish community of Durban the emergence of a Jewish State brought their loyalty to South Africa into question, as letters in the press queried the relationship of Diaspora Jewry to Israel.<sup>104</sup> For Jewry in South Africa the creation of an independent Jewish homeland raised no conflict, however, in respect of their loyalty to the Union. Whilst continuing to manifest little desire to settle in the newly established State, the South African Jewish community nevertheless remained unwavering in its support for, and identification with, Israel, which was viewed as a compliment to the fine lifestyle afforded them by the Union. The *defacto* recognition accorded to Israel by the South African Prime

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<sup>101</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.586., *The Natal Mercury*, May 14, 1948, p.11.

<sup>102</sup>Walter Laqueur, p.586., *The Natal Mercury*, May 15, 1948, p.11.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, May 18, 1948, p.9.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, May 19, 1948, p.7., May 20, 1948, p.14., May 21, 1948, p.8., June 2, 1948, p.14., June 5, 1948, p.9., June 9, 1948, p.13.

Minister General Smuts on the eve of the Union's General Election,<sup>105</sup> was also sharply criticised in the local press by voters, who regarded it as a ploy to catch the Jewish vote.<sup>106</sup> *The Natal Mercury* felt it to have been a breach of Commonwealth unity, insofar as Britain and the Commonwealth had not decided on a joint course of action in respect of recognition of the new State.<sup>107</sup> The defeat that Smuts suffered in the General Election was according to the editor of *The Natal Mercury*, in part contributed to by the effect which his announcement, that the Union would recognise the State of Israel, had had on the floating Afrikaner vote.<sup>108</sup> Such an opinion had little basis, however, in fact for the Afrikaans press had welcomed the recognition of the Jewish State, and the *Herenigde* Party had itself undertaken, if elected to power, to grant recognition to Israel.<sup>109</sup>

The sympathy shown by Dr Malan and the *Herenigde* Party for Israel, and the growing respect which Israel gained amongst Afrikaners, in fact, minimised the effect of those who questioned the dual loyalty which most Jews felt for South Africa and Israel, and contributed greatly

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, May 25, 1948, p.9.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, May 26, 1948, p.14., May 27, 1948, p.10., May 29, 1948, p.9., May 31, 1948, p.6., June 4, 1948, p.8.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, May 27, 1948, p.10.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, May 28, 1948, p.10.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, June 7, 1948, p.7.

to a reconciliation between the Jewish community and Afrikaner Nationalists.<sup>110</sup>

The war which heralded the birth of the Jewish State, was followed with concern by World Jewry. They shared in the pain of the surrender of the Old City of Jerusalem,<sup>111</sup> and the joy which came from the victories scored by Israel's army in the Negev and Galilee,<sup>112</sup> and they rejoiced in the Israel-Egyptian Armistice, signed on Rhodes on February 24, 1949.<sup>113</sup>

The South African Government, sensing the concern of the Union's Jewish population, and realising the community's desire to help Israel, permitted the country's Jews to give practical support to the struggling Jewish State, and closed its eyes to the despatch of Jewish volunteers to aid in the fighting.<sup>114</sup> As the Zionist Council for Natal officially played no part in recruiting volunteers for the *Haganah*,<sup>115</sup> those young members of the Durban Jewish community who were keen to aid Israel's

<sup>110</sup> Gideon Shimoni, pp.207-215.

<sup>111</sup> Solomon Grayzel, p.686., *The Natal Mercury*, May 29, 1948, p.13.

<sup>112</sup> David Ben Gurion, "From the Founding of Petah Tikva to the Present Day," in *The Jews in their Land*, David Ben Gurion (editor), (London, 1966), pp.340-341., *The Natal Mercury*, October 8, 1948, p.11., December 24, 1948, p.9., December 30, 1948, p.9.

<sup>113</sup> David Ben Gurion, p.342., *The Natal Mercury*, February 25, 1949, p.9.

<sup>114</sup> Gideon Shimoni, pp.207-208.

<sup>115</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 18, 1948, p.9.



armed forces made alternative arrangements to realise their ambition. Through the South African League for the *Haganah* volunteers were sent to Israel to participate in *Mahal* (Volunteers from Abroad) which had been formed by the Israel Defence Force.<sup>116</sup> Included on the Committee of the League which chose suitable candidates was Mr Philip Patz of Durban.<sup>117</sup> Together with Philip Patz, Gerald Stark, Maurice Kahn, Edward Sieradzki, Harold Hanreck, Vivienne Rubin, Sybil Sedovsky, Benny Klug and Dodke Strous proceeded to Israel,<sup>118</sup> where they joined volunteers from other Diaspora Jewish communities who had come forward to serve in *Mahal*. The contribution made by the South African *Mahal* volunteers in respect of the formation and operation of the Israeli Air Force came to be acknowledged as the Union Jewry's major qualitative contribution to the Israeli war effort.<sup>119</sup> Those that shared in this achievement included Rolfe Futerman,<sup>120</sup> Dr Sydney Cohen,<sup>121</sup> and Leslie Shagam<sup>122</sup> who flew in Israel's small fighter

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<sup>116</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.200.

<sup>117</sup> *Hasholom* [XXXIX No.6] (February, 1961), 11.

<sup>118</sup> From a personal interview with Mr Dodke Strous, December, 1980.

<sup>119</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.200.

<sup>120</sup> "Who's Who in South African Jewry," in *South African Jewry 1967-1968*, ed., Leon Feldberg, (Johannesburg, 1967), p.247.

<sup>121</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.201.

<sup>122</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXV No.2 (September, 1956), 5-6.

plane squadron, and Lily Barlin and Evelyn Bernstein whose two year period of *Mahal* service was also spent in the Air Force.<sup>123</sup> The volunteers from abroad not only filled combatant roles but many, like Dr Cyril Kaplan, served the State in a non-combatant capacity.<sup>124</sup> Among former Durban residents who had settled in Israel, Neville Silbert and Leslie Shandel, of *Kibbutz* Kfar Blum, saw active service in Israel's infant army.

The interest with which Durban Jewry had followed the course of events as they unfolded in Palestine, and the concern which it had at all times felt for the *Yishuv* in no way diminished with the State of Israel's establishment. The War of Independence in fact galvanised the community's support for Israel and its solidarity with the country's people. Durban Jewry, like Diaspora communities everywhere, felt a close bond with Israel which was revealed in the sympathy and support continually shown towards the State.

With Israel very much a focus of communal interest, capable of uniting all sections and classes of the community, historic events in the life of the country took on a special importance for Jews outside Israel, making them far more than Israeli national events. In this way the sense of unity which Diaspora Jewry felt with the people of Israel was strengthened and reinforced.

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<sup>123</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 29, 1951, p.12.

<sup>124</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, February 16, 1949, p.11.

Following the first Israeli General Election, in which Ben Gurion's *Mapai* (Labour) Party secured 46 out of 120 seats,<sup>125</sup> Israel's first Parliament was opened on February 14, 1949.<sup>126</sup> On Sunday, February 13, a celebration was held at the Jewish Club, under the joint auspices of the Zionist Council for Natal and the Council of Natal Jewry, to mark the occasion. It included a ceremony in which the flag of Israel was planted among the flags of other nations and speeches by Rabbi A.H. Freedman and Mr Colin Legum of Johannesburg.<sup>127</sup>

On May 4, 1949, celebrations were held in Israel and the Diaspora to mark Israel's first year of Statehood, a year which had been fraught with momentous struggles and considerable achievement. The celebrations in Durban took the form of a meeting at the Jewish Club under the auspices of the Zionist Council and the Council of Natal Jewry, which was addressed by Mr Justice Herbstein, Mr G. Saron, General Secretary of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and Mr A. Goldberg.<sup>128</sup> The Durban Women's Zionist League held its own function to suitably commemorate the occasion.<sup>129</sup> The annual

<sup>125</sup> David Ben Gurion, p.345., *The Natal Mercury*, February 5, 1949, p.9.

<sup>126</sup> David Ben Gurion, p.346., *The Natal Mercury*, February 14, 1949, p.9.

<sup>127</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 25, 1949, p.21.

<sup>128</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 26 and 28.

<sup>129</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 24, 1949, p.16.

celebrations in connection with *Yom Haatzmaut* thereafter became a highlight of the Zionist calendar and a major communal undertaking.<sup>130</sup> The large crowds who were drawn to these celebrations reflected the strong Zionist sentiment of the Durban Jewish community.

The 75th birthday celebrations of Dr Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first President, included a banquet in London at which, although the President was unavoidably absent, distinguished guests from all over the world, including General Smuts, gathered to pay Dr Weizmann honour.<sup>131</sup> The Zionist Council for Natal and the Durban Jewish Club held a combined function on December 13, 1949, to pay tribute to Dr Weizmann on the occasion of his birthday, at which the guest speaker was Mr B. Gering, the Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation.<sup>132</sup> Through the good offices of Mr Harry Moss-Morris the Jewish Club's library received at about the time of the celebrations a copy of Dr Weizmann's book *Trial and Error*, which was personally inscribed by the President.<sup>133</sup>

Dr Weizmann's death some three years later, on

<sup>130</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 15., *The Zionist Record*, May 18, 1951, p.13., *Hasholom*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 40., *The Zionist Record*, April 24, 1953, p.12., May 21, 1954, p.5., May 6, 1955, p.7.

<sup>131</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 3.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 9.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.



November 9, 1952,<sup>134</sup> filled Jewry everywhere with a deep sense of personal loss. As tributes were paid to him in the local press<sup>135</sup> the Jewish community of Durban mourned his passing. The Jewish Club hurriedly cancelled the presentation of a play scheduled to open on November 10,<sup>136</sup> thereby typifying the sorrow which had overtaken the community. In conjunction with the Zionist Council and the C.N.J. memorial services were held at the Temple David<sup>137</sup> and the St. Andrew's Street Synagogue<sup>138</sup> on November 11, the day on which the President was buried in the garden of his home at Rehovoth.<sup>139</sup> As a mark of respect, Jewish business houses throughout Durban closed on the afternoon of the funeral.<sup>140</sup> A month later to mark his *Shloshim* the Zionist Council held a function at the Jewish Club dedicated to Weizmann's memory.<sup>141</sup> Together with prayers and Scriptural readings the programme included a message from Mr J.J. Friedman, the President of the C.N.J.,

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<sup>134</sup>David Ben Gurion, p.348., *The Natal Mercury*, November 10, 1952, p.9.

<sup>135</sup>*The Natal Daily News*, November 10, 1952, p.6.,  
*The Natal Mercury*, November 12, 1952, p.8.

<sup>136</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, November 10, 1952, p.7.

<sup>137</sup>*The Zionist Record*, November 21, 1952, p.10.

<sup>138</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, November 12, 1952, p.10.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup>*Ibid.*, November 11, 1952, p.8.

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*, December 8, 1952, p.8.

an address on "Weizmann the Scientist" by Dr H. Coblans, the Librarian of the University of Natal, and a talk by the veteran Zionist leader Mr N. Kirschner of Johannesburg, to whom Weizmann had been personally known.<sup>142</sup>

The Durban Jewish community's sense of involvement in Israel was strengthened by the visits of prominent personalities to the City. These visits not only enabled the community to keep abreast of events in Israel at first hand, but also reinforced the bonds which the community felt with Israel and bridged the geographical separation that divided the community from its co-religionists in Israel. Foremost amongst those who paid brief visits to Durban were Mr Aryeh Ben Eliezer, a Member of the Opposition in the *Knesset*;<sup>143</sup> Mr Moshe Sharett, the Foreign Minister of Israel who came to Durban in June 1950;<sup>144</sup> Mr Bert Locker, Chairman of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem;<sup>145</sup> Dr S. Lowy, of the J.N.F. Headquarters in Jerusalem<sup>146</sup> and Menachem Begin, the leader of the Opposition in the *Knesset* and former

<sup>142</sup> From the official programme in the Archives of the Zionist Council for Natal.

<sup>143</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 40-41.

<sup>144</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 2, 1950, p.10., *Hasholom*, XXIX No.10 (June, 1950), 19 and 21.

<sup>145</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Monday, 19th March, 1951, at the *Maon* at 8 pm., pp.1 and 3.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

head of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, who visited Durban in November, 1953.<sup>147</sup>

At the same time, visits to Israel by local leaders and by members of the community added to the Jewish community's general understanding of Israel's problems and revealed the extent of the country's achievements in many diverse fields. On occasion visitors from abroad went to Israel not only to learn but also to teach, as was the case, in October 1953, when a conference was held in Jerusalem in order to advise Ben Gurion on economic matters. It was attended by delegates from all Western countries, and South Africa's three man delegation included Mr Sol Moshal of Durban, who, upon his return to the Union, addressed the community on his visit at a meeting at the Jewish Club.<sup>148</sup>

The emergence of the State of Israel was followed within a year of its establishment by a clamp on Zionist activity in Hungary, Roumania, Poland and Czechoslovakia.<sup>149</sup> The strain in relations between Israel and the countries of Eastern Europe worsened with the opening of the treason trial in Prague of Rudoff Slansky, former vice-premier and

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<sup>147</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, November 16, 1953, p.2., *The Zionist Record*, November 27, 1953, p.13.

<sup>148</sup>*Hasholom*, XXXII No.4 (December, 1953), 13-15.

<sup>149</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, March 24, 1949, p.9.

former Secretary General of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and thirteen other defendants, eleven of whom were Jews who had held high public office. The accused were charged with being Zionist agents who had been associated with the American Joint Distribution Committee and who had sought to spy on Czechoslovakia.<sup>150</sup> Nine of the Jews and two of their Gentile co-accused were sentenced to death, and the remaining three Jews received life sentences.<sup>151</sup>

These trials highlighted a new direction for anti-Semitic agitation, which, although masked as anti-Zionism, was in fact the same thing. They also clearly revealed Communist intolerance of the Zionist Movement, which united Jewry worldwide in a supranational bond which was irreconcilable with the tenets of Communism. Israel's existence, however, ensured that wherever Jews were subject to persecution they could look to the Government of the Jewish State to take up their cause, as was indeed the case in this instance. The *Knesset* voiced the indignation of world Jewry at such activity and called for Jews who wished to leave the countries under Communist rule, in order to settle in Israel, to be permitted to do so.<sup>152</sup> The South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the South African Zionist

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<sup>150</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 28, 1952, p.4.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1952, p.3.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*



Federation issued their own resolution of protest in the name of South African Jewry, in which the allegations made against the State of Israel, the Zionist Movement and the American Joint Distribution Committee were firmly rejected.<sup>153</sup>

The attacks on Israel by Communist countries continued, however, with Poland accusing the Israeli Legation in Warsaw of activities of an espionage character. It was alleged that Israel claimed to make representations on behalf of Poland's Jewish citizens, and promoted the growth of Zionist organisations and thereby encouraged Polish Jews to immigrate to Israel.<sup>154</sup>

The Communist campaign against Jews reached a climax in the Soviet Union where nine Jewish doctors were put on trial in January, 1953, accused of causing the death of Andrei Zhdanov a former close colleague of Stalin, through incorrect medical treatment,<sup>155</sup> and culminated in the Soviet decision to sever diplomatic relations with the Jewish State.<sup>156</sup> Following the release of the accused doctors, largely in response to world wide agitation led by Israel and world Jewry,<sup>157</sup>

<sup>153</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.5 (January, 1953), 33.

<sup>154</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 22, 1952, p.11.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, January 15, 1953, p.9., On the Doctors' Plot see Howard Morley Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History*, (New York, 1958), pp.545-546.

<sup>156</sup> David Ben Gurion, pp.348-349., *The Natal Mercury*, February 13, 1953, p.11.

<sup>157</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 10, 1953, p.1.

Russia and Israel resumed diplomatic relations.<sup>158</sup>

South African Jewry, with its strong Zionist sympathy, was enormously grateful for the fact that the Union Government, in contrast with the Communist nations, had at all time shown itself to be sympathetic to the cause of a Jewish State. It took particular delight in the friendly ties which characterised the Union Government's relationship with the State of Israel.

When, in December 1949, the United Nation's Special Political Committee voted by 35 votes to 13 with 11 abstentions to place Jerusalem under an international regime governed by the United Nations,<sup>159</sup> contrary to the wishes of both Israel and Trans-Jordan, South African Jewry welcomed its Government's decision to support Israel at the United Nations. The Secretary of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies conveyed the thanks of the Union's Jewish community in a letter to the Prime Minister Dr D.F. Malan, whose Government had instructed the South African delegation at the United Nations to vote against the proposal to internationalise Jerusalem.<sup>160</sup>

With considerable pleasure too the Jewish community welcomed the opening of the Israeli Consulate in Johannesburg and the establishment of an air service to

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<sup>158</sup> David Ben Gurion, p.349., *The Natal Mercury*, July 21, 1953, p.11.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, December 9, 1949, p.9.

<sup>160</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 2-3.

Israel, and it encouraged the development of economic and other ties between South Africa and Israel.<sup>161</sup>

The bonds between Israel and the Union were further strengthened, in 1953, by the visit which Dr Malan paid to the Jewish State whilst on his way home from the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.<sup>162</sup> Some time after Dr Malan's return to the Union, Mr C.J. Claasen, who had accompanied the Prime Minister on his trip to Israel, addressed Durban Jewry about their visit, at a meeting of the Jewish Club arranged by the Zionist Council for Natal.<sup>163</sup>

Through the good offices of the South African Government, the Jewish community was called to give practical expression to its support for Israel by the transference of funds, raised within the community, to Israel.

Only weeks after the conclusion of World War II the biennial campaign in the interests of the Jewish National Fund was launched in Durban. The *Keren Kayemet's* "Land for Liberation" Campaign opened with a mass meeting on October 8, 1945, addressed by Rabbi Prof. L. Rabinowitz, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg, and Mr Moshe Baumgarten, J.N.F. delegate

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<sup>161</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 19th Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club on the 30th March, 1950, at 8 pm., p.1.

<sup>162</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 16, 1953, p.10.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, September 7, 1953, p.8.

from Israel. It was followed by a youth rally held at the *Maon*.<sup>164</sup> To coincide with the campaign's inauguration the Durban Women's Zionist League organised a J.N.F. Drive which included a fete, children's concert, cookery demonstration and soiree.<sup>165</sup>

In the following year the last *Keren Hayesod* campaign was held in the Union. It was inaugurated in Durban on April 23 by Prof. Selig Brodetsky, a member of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. In a break with precedence the Women's Campaign canvass took place simultaneously with the men's.<sup>166</sup> During his visit to Durban Prof. Brodestsky also addressed a public meeting,<sup>167</sup> as well as special meetings of the Durban Women's Zionist League and the Youth.<sup>168</sup>

To assist those who had been made homeless and destitute by the Second World War and who wished to settle in Palestine a *Youth Aliyah* Campaign was held in South Africa in 1947. Miss Sylvia Neulander and Dr Deborah Katzen launched the campaign in Durban on June 3, at a reception at the Jewish Club. The Durban Women's Zionist League and the Union of Jewish Women

<sup>164</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 19, 1945, p.12.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, November 2, 1945, p.14.

<sup>166</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.9 (May, 1946), 17, 19, 21, 23.

<sup>167</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 17, 1946, p.23.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, May 3, 1946, p.25.



co-operated with the Youth *Aliyah* Committee, which was chaired by Mr L. Brewer, in all activities connected with the Campaign.<sup>169</sup>

In October 1947, the final biennial J.N.F. Campaign was held in South Africa. It was formally launched in Durban at a cocktail party given by the Campaign Committee to Mr Harry Levin, J.N.F. delegate from Palestine, and Mrs Kate Gluckmann, Chairman of the J.N.F. Committee of South Africa, at the Durban Jewish Club on October 12. Two days later the main meeting of the campaign was held at the Jewish Club. Besides the visiting speakers Rabbi A.H. Freedman also addressed the gathering, which filled the main hall to capacity.<sup>170</sup> The campaign met with outstanding success, no doubt as a result of circumstances in Palestine, and within the fortnight following its inauguration the record total of the 1945 campaign had been eclipsed.<sup>171</sup> The campaign was brought to a close in December 1947, by Mr David Dainow, a J.N.F. delegate from Jerusalem, who devoted his time in Durban to calling upon the members of the community who had not yet contributed to the campaign.<sup>172</sup>

The fighting in Israel, which followed the

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<sup>169</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 15 and 17.

<sup>170</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 7, 1947, p.43.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, October 24, 1947, p.11.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1947, p.11., December 26, 1947, p.13.

proclamation of the State, led the South African Zionist Federation and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies to organise a united fund raising effort for the causes which the Union's Jewish community supported abroad. In May 1948, the Zionist Federation called a National Conference in Johannesburg, which was attended by Messrs E. Schragenheim, H. Moss-Morris and N. Hertz on behalf of the Zionist Council for Natal, and Messrs H.L. Magid, A. Goldberg and Rabbi A.H. Freedman on behalf of the Council of Natal Jewry.<sup>173</sup> After lengthy consultation the Israeli United Appeal (the I.U.A.) was established, in which the Zionist Federation and the South African Jewish Appeal agreed to share the proceeds of the Appeal in the ratio of 70% to 30%.<sup>174</sup>

In July 1948 Rabbi Kopul Rosen of London addressed Durban Jewry on behalf of the Israeli United Appeal,<sup>175</sup> and a month later Rabbi Prof. L. Rabinowitz of Johannesburg spoke to the women of the community about the Appeal.<sup>176</sup> In line with Jewish women's organisations throughout the country, the decision was

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<sup>173</sup> Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on 7th April, 1949, p.2.

<sup>174</sup> The South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Report of the Executive Committee for the period August, 1947 to May, 1949. To be submitted to the Seventeenth Biennial Congress, in Johannesburg, May 28th to 31st, 1949, p.5. On the I.U.A. see Gideon Shimoni, pp.238-239.

<sup>175</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 30, 1948, p.10.

<sup>176</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 4-5.

taken in Durban that all fund raising efforts for the *Yishuv* and the displaced Jews of Europe which were normally undertaken by the Durban Women's Zionist League and the South African Jewish Appeal, under the aegis of the local branch of the Union of Jewish Women, would be combined under the name of the Israeli United Appeal (Women's Section).<sup>177</sup> With great enthusiasm the women set about establishing a Committee and embarked on a programme of fund raising functions for the Appeal.<sup>178</sup>

At a joint meeting of the C.N.J.'s Full Council and the Full Zionist Council, which was also attended by a number of invitees, it was unanimously decided to form a United Israeli Campaign Committee for Natal. Elections were held for the officers of the Committee and Rabbi A.H. Freedman was elected Hon. President; Messrs S. Moshal, H. Moss-Morris, A. Kaplan, H.L. Magid, E. Schragenheim, Hon. Vice-Presidents; Mr I. Geshen, Chairman; (Messrs A.J. Cohen and B.H. Bloom as alternate); Messrs M. Woolfson, M. Wolpert, H. Zulman, Vice-Chairman, Messrs S. Hackner, M. Gild, H. Hart and A. Levy, Hon. Treasurers; Messrs B. Meyerowitz and B. Shotland, Hon. Secretaries; Messrs W. Stone, J. Green, H. Levy as Publicity Officers.<sup>179</sup>

The Natal Committee of the I.U.A. opened its

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

<sup>178</sup> See below pp.967-968.

<sup>179</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 17.

campaign in Durban on November 11, 1948, with a banquet at the Jewish Club, at which the principal guests were Mr B. Gering, the Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation, and Mr Leo Tager, the Chairman of the National Executive of the I.U.A. The enthusiasm engendered by the occasion reflected the excitement and enthusiasm which the State of Israel evoked in the community.<sup>180</sup> Interest in the campaign was sustained by the visits made to Durban on behalf of the Appeal by Advocate H.M. Bloch who addressed the community on November, 14,<sup>181</sup> and Rabbi Prof. L. Rabinowitz and Mr M. Spitz, who spoke at a function in March, 1949.<sup>182</sup>

The I.U.A. Campaign was held biennially, alternating each year with the United Communal Fund (the U.C.F.) which was created in 1949, under the direction of the Board of Deputies to meet the local needs of the South African Jewish community.<sup>183</sup> In 1950, the I.U.A. Campaign was opened in Durban by Dr Nahum Goldmann, the distinguished Zionist leader, and Mr S.M. Kuper, the Vice-Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation.<sup>184</sup> Two years later the Appeal was inaugurated by

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<sup>180</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 19, 1948, p.17.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, December 3, 1948, p.17.

<sup>182</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.8 (April, 1949), 11 and 13.

<sup>183</sup> Report of the Executive. To be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Council of Natal Jewry, to be held on the 7th April, 1949, p.3.

<sup>184</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 25, 1950, p.9.



Dr Emmanuel Neumann, the Chairman of the Economic Section of the Jewish Agency.<sup>185</sup> In 1954, Mr Joseph Sapir, Israel's Minister of Transport, came to Durban to launch the I.U.A. Campaign.<sup>186</sup> The 1954 campaign was notable for the new organisation that was evolved to streamline the work of the I.U.A. Committee. Instead of leaving the task of organising and canvassing to a small committee it was decided instead to have one executive president to co-ordinate and direct the campaign without canvassing, and with him a number of working chairmen.

Twelve chairmen were elected, each one responsible for a section of the community and with his own committee of canvassers with whom he kept in close contact. In this way the amount of work falling on any one individual was reduced whilst at the same time many more workers were involved in the conducting of the campaign.<sup>187</sup>

Apart from funds raised through the I.U.A. the South African Government also allowed funds for other causes to be forwarded to Israel. In 1952, for example, following severe floods in Israel, the Durban Women's Zionist League organised a local voluntary drive for a Relief Fund for the flood victims.<sup>188</sup> From approximately 110

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, August 29, 1952, p.4.

<sup>186</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 20, 1954, p.2.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, September 13, 1954, p.11.

<sup>188</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Thursday, 14th February, 1952, at the *Maon* at 8 pm., p.2.

donors the sum of £1,619 was collected in Durban and a further £126 was raised for the fund in the rest of Natal.<sup>189</sup>

Further financial assistance for Israel from South Africa was derived from the portion of the I.U.A. allocated to the South African Jewish Appeal. In 1951 the South African Jewish Appeal decided to spend part of its proceeds from the I.U.A. building up the town of Ashkelon, in order to help relieve Israel's housing shortage.<sup>190</sup>

The *Afridar Housing Corp. Ltd.* was set up in conjunction with the Government of Israel, with Mr Max Spitz as its first Managing Director. During this initial period South African town planners prepared the master plan of Ashkelon and the first houses and major capital works were constructed.<sup>191</sup> A local Municipal Council was established and South Africa's representative Dr H. Sonnanbend, who was in charge of

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<sup>189</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on the 17th March, 1952, at the *Maon* at 8 pm., p.1.

<sup>190</sup> The South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Report of the Executive Council for the period June, 1949 to May, 1951, to be submitted to the Eighteenth Biennial Congress, in Johannesburg, May 31st to June 3rd, 1951, p.4.

<sup>191</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXVI No.1 (September, 1957), 56.

the whole scheme, was appointed Chairman.<sup>192</sup> Under his direction the first residents of the housing project were settled in their new homes.<sup>193</sup>

From its inception the Durban Jewish community took great interest in this scheme, and more particularly from May, 1955 when Mr Selwyn Lurie of Durban was appointed by the Ashkelon Council in Johannesburg (which comprised representatives of the South African Jewish Appeal and the South African Zionist Federation) to serve as Auditor and Controller General of the *Afridar Housing Corp. Ltd.*, and the *Afrihon Co. Ltd.*, the latter set up to concentrate on industrial development.<sup>194</sup>

World Jewry's concern for Israel came to be even more pronounced when, in 1954, increased tension between Israel and her neighbours led to clashes between Israel and Jordan.<sup>195</sup> This concern grew in July 1954, when Great Britain announced her intention to quit her 70 year base in the Suez,<sup>196</sup> and increased further with the British decision to lift its arms ban on Egypt<sup>197</sup> and

<sup>192</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 16th April, 1953 at 8 pm., p.2.

<sup>193</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXVI No.1 (September, 1957), 56.

<sup>194</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.9 (May, 1955), 21.

<sup>195</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, March 19, 1954, p.11., April 5, 1954, p.1., May 10, 1954, p.2.

<sup>196</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 19, 1954, p.1.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, September 3, 1954, p.24.

the rise in arm shipments to Egypt from the United States.<sup>198</sup> In October 1954 an Israeli vessel *Bat Galim* was seized in the Suez Canal,<sup>199</sup> and Israel rejected Egypt's right of visitation, search or seizure of ships passing through the Canal, insisting on her right to bring cargoes freely in and out of her ports.<sup>200</sup> The tense situation was aggravated by the arrest of 60 Jews in Egypt<sup>201</sup> and an outbreak of an anti-Jewish campaign,<sup>202</sup> which culminated in the execution of Dr Mussa L. Marzouk and Samuel Assai on charges of espionage.<sup>203</sup> On instructions from the South African Zionist Federation the Zionist Council for Natal arranged with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and the Durban Jewish Reform Congregation for memorial prayers to be offered for the two Jews executed by the Egyptians.<sup>204</sup>

For the State of Israel 1955 was characterised by a deterioration in the border situation with Egypt, which resulted in increased and prolonged clashes between members of the Israel Defence Force and Egyptian

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, September 10, 1954, p.1.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, October 8, 1954, p.1.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, October 22, 1954, p.1.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, October 1, 1954, p.6.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, October 27, 1954, p.3.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, February 4, 1955, p.1.

<sup>204</sup> 16th Actions Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Wednesday, 9th February, 1955, at 5.15 pm., p.2.



Commandos.<sup>205</sup> In view of the deterioration in the situation in Middle East war between Israel and her Arab neighbours appeared imminent. To help Israel to prepare to meet this threat the South African Zionist Federation, at a meeting on November 5/6, decided to set up an Emergency Fund.<sup>206</sup> Representatives of the Council of Natal Jewry and the Zionist Council for Natal hurriedly met and decided to launch the Emergency Campaign in Durban without delay.<sup>207</sup> Several speakers at the meeting emphasised the impossibility of running the Appeal concurrently with the U.C.F. campaign which was then in progress. It was generally agreed, however, that the Emergency Appeal could be conducted within a matter of a few weeks and that the threads of the U.C.F. could be picked up again afterwards. A mass meeting of

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<sup>205</sup> Solomon Grayzel, p.695., *The Natal Mercury*, March 2, 1955, p.1., March 3, 1955, p.1., March 4, 1955, p.1., March 5, 1955, p.9., March 7, 1955, p.1., March 26, 1955, p.9., March 28, 1955, p.7., *The Zionist Record*, April 6, 1955, p.1., June 24, 1955, p.2., *The Natal Mercury*, August 29, 1955, p.1., August 30, 1955, p.1., August 31, 1955, p.1., September 2, 1955, p.1., September 9, 1955, p.1., September 12, 1955, p.1., October 12, 1955, p.1., October 15, 1955, p.9., October 29, 1955, p.1., October 26, 1955, p.11., October 31, 1955, p.1., November 1, 1955, pp.1-2., November 3, 1955, p.9., November 4, 1955, p.1., November 5, 1955, p.1., November 7, 1955, p.1., November 9, 1955, p.1., November 11, 1955, p.1., November 17, 1955, p.1., November 24, 1955, p.1., November 30, 1955, p.1.

<sup>206</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 11, 1955, p.1.

<sup>207</sup> Zionist Council for Natal Meeting, Held at the Maon, on Monday, 21st November, 1955, at 8.00 pm., p.1.

the community attended by 700 people was held on November 27 at the Jewish Club. It was addressed by Rabbi J. Kahaneman the Ponivez Rav, who was visiting the Union from Israel, and Mr Israel Dunskey, the Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation.<sup>208</sup> The community demonstrated its deep concern for Israel by contributing generously to the Fund. Within a week an amount of nearly £80,000 had been collected and in Vryheid the amount of £6,000 had been raised. Mr A. Beare, the Chairman of the Emergency Campaign had also visited Pietermaritzburg where a further £2,000 had been contributed.<sup>209</sup>

A Special Youth Meeting in connection with the campaign was held at the Jewish Club on December 5th, 1955. A number of young people volunteered to canvass the youth of Durban<sup>210</sup> and a special Youth Committee was set up for this purpose.<sup>211</sup> Many of the community's young men also volunteered to go to Israel in the event of an emergency in the country, and names of those who made inquiries were noted by the Natal Zionist Council so that they could be contacted if necessary.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 28, 1955, p.9.,  
*Hasholom*, XXXIV No.3 (December, 1955), 15.

<sup>209</sup> Minutes of the 49th Actions Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the Maon on Wednesday, 7th December, 1955, at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.3 (December, 1955), 36.

<sup>212</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 1, 1955, p.3.

The Emergency Campaign proved to be an unqualified success and was finalised by the end of January, 1956.<sup>213</sup> The Committee of the Emergency Campaign published a list of contributors to its Appeal shortly thereafter and this step, whilst criticised by some as attempted blackmail,<sup>214</sup> was warmly commended and heartily supported by many others.<sup>215</sup>

To keep the community informed about the situation in the Middle East, which remained extremely tense,<sup>216</sup> a member of the *Knesset* and Vice-Chairman of the *Herut* Party, Mr Yaakov Meridor visited the Union on a lecture tour. He addressed meetings of the United Zionist Revisionist Party around the country, the meeting in Durban taking place on December 19, 1955.<sup>217</sup>

In this epoch making period in Jewish history, which was climaxed by the declaration of Israel's independence, Zionism in Durban as elsewhere in the Union "reached the hegemony over the life of the Jewish community."<sup>218</sup>

<sup>213</sup> Minutes of the 51st Actions Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon* on Wednesday, 25th January, 1956, at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>214</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.6 (March, 1956), 19.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.7 (April, 1956), 18-19.

<sup>216</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 14, 1955, p.2., December 16, 1955, p.1., December 17, 1955, p.9., December 19, 1955, p.1., December 29, 1955, p.1., December 30, 1955, p.1.

<sup>217</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, December 20, 1955, p.11., *The Zionist Record*, January 6, 1956, p.11.

<sup>218</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.197.

Together with its co-religionists world wide Durban Jewry shared the aspirations and anguish of the *Yishuv*, and its sympathy and support manifested itself in an outpouring of moral and financial assistance. As part of a White community which was predominantly English speaking and which retained close ties with Great Britain the Jews of Durban were however, quick to distinguish between their support for the Jewish Agency and their official disapproval of the activities of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* which had aroused great bitterness among sections of the Gentile population and the press.

Following its successful establishment, the State of Israel remained a focus for Zionist activity and Jewish solidarity the world over. Durban Jewry was party to this unique relationship, sharing with their fellow Jews in South Africa an unswerving loyalty to the State, which in no way minimised their loyalty to the Union. The intensity that characterised South African Zionism reflected itself in Durban and was no where more apparent than in the support extended to fundraising drives, the attendance recorded at activities in some way connected to Israel, and the keen concern with which events in the Middle East generally came to be closely followed.



## CHAPTER XXXVII

ZIONIST ACTIVITYIN DURBAN : 1945 - 1955

The establishment of the State of Israel, and the long struggle which had preceded it, had not only greatly united Jewry world-wide but had stimulated Zionist activity in communities across the globe. In Durban this was reflected in the growth of local Zionist bodies, and in a heightened interest generally in matters Zionist amongst the Jews in Durban.

The organisation of the Israeli United Appeal, as well as the co-ordination of the work of the Zionist Societies and Parties and of matters of general Zionist endeavour in Durban, was carried out by the Zionist Council for Natal.

The Zionist Council, which kept in close touch with, and acted for, the South African Zionist Federation, represented, in the Zionist sense, the Natal community. Through the Council, representatives were sent to the Biennial Conferences of the South African Zionist Federation<sup>1</sup> and participated in the South African Zionist

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<sup>1</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 9, 1945, p.9., *Hasholom*, XXV No.11 (July, 1947), 1-3., *The Zionist Record*, September 6, 1949, p.9., July 18, 1952, pp.5 and 16., July 16, 1954, pp.5 and 10.

Council meetings.<sup>2</sup>

From 1939, when the Zionist Federation had reverted to party political divisions,<sup>3</sup> principally because the political parties on the Federation had insisted that party list elections be held for the forthcoming World Zionist Congress, the Zionist Council for Natal had been amongst those organisations and individuals which had opposed this development. At the South African Zionist Council meeting held in Johannesburg, in March 1950, Natal became the first Province to advocate representation on a non-party basis. No Party members from Durban were even nominated to attend this meeting, and a very strong and full non-party delegation was chosen instead.<sup>4</sup>

Zionists in Natal were overwhelmingly opposed to party politics in local Zionist affairs, believing like many South African Zionists that Zionism was best served by a non-political system. Their commitment to best man representation was reflected in the Constitution which was adopted by the Zionist Council for Natal at the first Natal Zionist Conference, in June 1948, and which, by special dispensation of the 1947 South African Zionist

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, May 12, 1950, pp.4-5., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 67., *The Zionist Record*, February 8, 1952, pp.4-5.

<sup>3</sup> Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism. The South African Experience (1910-1967)*, (Cape Town, 1980), p.187.

<sup>4</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 73.

Conference, was not based on a party basis.<sup>5</sup> In accordance with this Constitution the Natal Zionist Council consisted of an Executive Body, and a Council made up of representatives of affiliated societies and parties and co-opted members.<sup>6</sup>

Within the community the upsurge in Zionist activity, which coincided with the formative years of the State of Israel, was clearly mirrored in the growth of the Zionist Council in this period. At the end of 1947 Miss Rose Rabinowitz of Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, was appointed to the post of Organiser-Secretary to the Natal Zionist Council,<sup>7</sup> the increased work load of the Council meriting such an appointment. Miss Rabinowitz served the Zionist Council in this capacity for a year before departing for Cape Town,<sup>8</sup> from where she subsequently returned to Durban, married Mr R. Silbert, and continued to serve the Zionist cause.<sup>9</sup> Miss Rabinowitz was succeeded by Mr E.M. Rosy, who took up his appointment

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<sup>5</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.9 (May, 1948), 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71.

<sup>7</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 12, 1947, p.10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, January 7, 1949, p.16.

<sup>9</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 73., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 67., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1952), 68., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 70.

in January 1949.<sup>10</sup> Mr Rosy's association with the Council terminated in May 1955,<sup>11</sup> and his position was filled shortly thereafter by Mr I. Fisher.<sup>12</sup>

In May 1953 the Zionist Council moved its offices from *London Assurance House* to *Pioneer Arcade* in Berea Road.<sup>13</sup> The new premises (called the *Maon*) were shared with the Council of Natal Jewry, the Durban Jewish Women's Guild and the South African Jewish Appeal. They not only boasted adequate office accommodation, but also included a hall suitable for small meetings, film shows and temporary exhibitions. The fact that the communal offices were all centralised was of great benefit in co-ordinating communal activity and made for greater efficiency.

The increase in interest in Zionist affairs also manifested itself in the activities of the Zionist Council's constituent organisations and in unsuccessful attempts to set up a Durban North Zionist Society, in

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<sup>10</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Thursday, 20th January, 1949 at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of the 26th Actions Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Wednesday, 25th May, 1955 at 5.15 pm., p.2.

<sup>12</sup> Report of the Zionist Council for Natal. To be submitted at the Fifth Natal Zionist Conference, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club on 26/27 May, 1956, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 29, 1953, p.13.



1953,<sup>14</sup> and to form a South Coast group in March 1956.<sup>15</sup>

The Zionist Council meanwhile, following its adoption of a Constitution at its first Natal Zionist Conference in June 1948,<sup>16</sup> came to be able to fulfill its role within the Jewish community, as was evident from reports submitted at successive biennial Natal Zionist Conferences.<sup>17</sup> The Council's vision of its role was wide in its conception and its Zionist work consequently overflowed into matters of local interest.

Arising out of the discussion at the 1st Natal Zionist Conference on more intensive study of Hebrew, with stress on the *Sephardi* pronunciation adopted by the State of Israel,<sup>18</sup> Messrs E. Schragenheim, H. Hadany and Mrs M. Broomberg met a delegation of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation to discuss the introduction of *Sephardi* pronunciation in Durban synagogue services.<sup>19</sup> The Congregation agreed to the gradual introduction of

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of Zionist Council Meeting, Held at the St Andrew's Street Synagogue Office, on Monday, 21st September, 1953, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of the 56th Action's Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Wednesday, 14th March, 1956 at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>16</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 25, 1948, p.10.

<sup>17</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 1-2., *The Zionist Record*, August 15, 1952, p.20., July 9, 1954, p.19.

<sup>18</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.9 (May, 1948), 5.

<sup>19</sup> Minutes of Special Executive Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, Friday, 13th August, 1948, at 1 pm., p.1.

the *Sephardi* pronunciation into the services,<sup>20</sup> but progress in this regard was very slow.<sup>21</sup>

At the Fourth Natal Zionist Conference a session was devoted to Jewish and Hebrew Education,<sup>22</sup> and a resolution was subsequently passed calling on the Zionist Council to approach the necessary authorities to investigate the practicability of establishing a Jewish Day School in Durban.<sup>23</sup> Following upon the adoption of the resolution a committee was formed by the Jewish Education Council and other interested bodies to consider the possibility of establishing a Jewish Day School. Mr S. Ernst, the Regional Director of Hebrew Education, undertook a canvass of the parents of prospective pupils of the school to learn their views,<sup>24</sup> and a large number intimated support for such a scheme.

In the field of adult education the Zionist Council, in conjunction with the Jewish Education Council co-sponsored the lectures that were given under the

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Thursday, 28th September, 1948 at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Sunday, 8th October, 1950 at the Durban Jewish Club at 8 pm., p.5.

<sup>22</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 9, 1954, p.19.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of the First Full Council Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Monday, 19th July, 1954, at 8.00 pm., p.2.

<sup>24</sup> Zionist Council Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, on Monday, 29th November, 1954 at 8.00 pm., p.2.

auspices of People's College, which were inaugurated in 1953.<sup>25</sup> It also concerned itself with keeping the community informed on all aspects of Zionism and Zionist work, and to this end numerous successful talks were held under its direction.<sup>26</sup>

In 1953 Mr M.K. Rosenbach made a contribution to the Zionist Council to establish a fund, income from which was to be devoted to perpetuating the memory of Dr C. Weizmann.<sup>27</sup> An annual memorial lecture was consequently started by the Council, the first such

<sup>25</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 1, 1953, p.19.

<sup>26</sup> Including talks by Major M. Comay (*Hasholom*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 33-34.) Mr L. Rybko, official lecturer and propagandist of the South African Zionist Federation, (*The Zionist Record*, November 28, 1947, p.20.) Mr B. Gering, Chairman of the Zionist Federation, (*Hasholom*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 19-20.) Sergeant C. Clark, a former British Sergeant in Palestine (*The Zionist Record*, April 2, 1948, p.7.) Rabbi S. Rappaport, (*The Natal Mercury*, April 15, 1948), p.7.) Dr J.G. McDonald, a member of the Anglo American Palestine Commission 1945-1946, (*Hasholom*, XXVI No.9 (May, 1948), 7.) Prof. W. Laudermilk, author of the Jordan Valley Authority Plan for Irrigation of Palestine (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.6 (February, 1950), 19.) Mr M. Grossman, Director of Economic Affairs of the Jewish Agency (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 73.) Prof Halken of the Hebrew University (*Hasholom*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 3 and 5.) Dr J. Vainstein, Deputy Director of Immigration of the Jewish Agency (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX (September, 1951), 67.) Mr A. Avisar, Director of Education of the Jewish National Fund and Zionist Federation (*The Zionist Record*, July 17, 1953, p.15.) Mr E. Eylon, Consul General for Israel, (*Ibid.*) and Dr M. Natas, Cultural Officer of the Zionist Federation (*Ibid.*, April 29, 1955, p.10.)

<sup>27</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 65.



lecture being delivered by Rabbi Dr S. Rappaport, in November 1953, on "Weizmann the Man and Weizmann the Statesman."<sup>28</sup> In 1954 Mr S. Berg, the representative in South Africa of the J.N.F. Charitable Trust, delivered the Memorial Lecture,<sup>29</sup> which in January 1956 was given by Messrs A. Goldberg, I. Fisher and Dr O. Ballin.<sup>30</sup>

Within the wider Jewish community the Zionist Council assumed responsibility in conjunction with the Council of Natal Jewry, for organising suitable celebrations to annually commemorate Israel's Independence Day.<sup>31</sup> In 1952 the Zionist Council also joined the C.N.J. in arranging a memorial function for the martyrs of the Nazi Holocaust.<sup>32</sup> Numerous other functions were held as well under the Council's auspices,<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 68.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 60.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXV No.1 (September, 1956), 68.

<sup>31</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 20, 1949, p.17., May 5, 1950, p.6., May 18, 1951, p.13., *Hasholom*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 40., *The Zionist Record*, April 24, 1953, p.12., May 21, 1954, p.5., May 6, 1955, p.7.

<sup>32</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 68.

<sup>33</sup> Including a *Chanukah* function in November 1945, (*Hasholom*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 39-40.) a film evening in October 1949, (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 41.) a function to welcome Mr A. Levine, the President of the C.N.J. and Mr J. Goldberg, the Chairman of the Zionist Council from a visit to Israel (*Ibid.*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 21.) and a farewell reception to Mr Hyman, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary for Israel and Mrs Hyman (*Ibid.*, XXXIII No.4 December, 1954, p.16.).



foremost amongst them being a function to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the World Zionist Organisation, in August, 1947;<sup>34</sup> a celebration to mark the Golden Jubilee of the South African Zionist Federation in December 1948;<sup>35</sup> a farewell to Mr E. Schragenheim, the first Chairman of the Zionist Council, prior to his *aliyah*, in March 1948;<sup>36</sup> and a farewell to Mr and Mrs H. Moss-Morris, before they left the Union to live in Israel in December, 1955.<sup>37</sup>

In May 1953 the Council took over responsibility for publishing the *Zionist Digest*, which had for many years been issued by the Durban Zionist Association, but had by this time come to be the forum for all Zionist societies in Natal.<sup>38</sup>

During June 1955 the Zionist Council also set about trying to form a permanent choir, and although preliminary meetings were held for this purpose<sup>39</sup> the proposed choir failed to materialise.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 15.

<sup>35</sup> *The Zionist Record*, January 7, 1949, p.16.

<sup>36</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.8 (April, 1949), 25.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.3 (December, 1955), 12.

<sup>38</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 65.

<sup>39</sup> Minutes of the 28th Actions Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Wednesday, 8th June, 1955 at 5.15 pm., p.1., Minutes of the 32nd Actions Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Wednesday, 6th July, 1955, at 5.15 pm., p.1.

With the creation of the State of Israel a new avenue of work opened up for the Council, namely the promotion of *aliyah*. Although members of the Youth Movements<sup>40</sup> and leading local Zionist personalities<sup>41</sup> chose to settle in Israel in this period, in Durban, as in the rest of the country, *aliyah* did not become a prerequisite for being a Zionist. Members of the Council and the Zionist Federation generally continued to give expression to their Zionism through their work on behalf of the Zionist Movement and the financial assistance which they extended to the State of Israel.

As the umbrella body of Zionist activity in the City, and in the absence of an active branch of the Israel Maritime League, the Zionist Council made arrangements to entertain the captain and crew of the *SS Haifa*, the first Israeli ship to dock in Durban harbour.<sup>42</sup> The ship docked on April 24, 1953, and was welcomed by a large section of the Jewish community who had gathered on the quayside.<sup>43</sup> Similar hospitality was extended to the captain and crew of the *MS Etrog*, the flagship of the

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<sup>40</sup> See below p.997.

<sup>41</sup> Like Mr E. Schragenheim (*Hasholom*, XXVII No.8 (April, 1949), 25.) and Mr and Mrs H. Moss-Morris (*Ibid.*, XXXIV No.3 (December, 1955), 12.).

<sup>42</sup> Minutes of the 24th Executive Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on the 7th May, 1953 at the Communal Offices at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>43</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 25, 1953, p.11.

Israel Zim Lines, which called at Durban on December 5, 1954,<sup>44</sup> and the frigate, the *Misgav*, the first Israeli warship to enter Durban, which visited the City in March, 1955.<sup>45</sup>

In August, 1955 the Council mounted an Israeli Trade Exhibition at the *Maon*, which was brought to Durban by Mr H. Voremberg, the Vice-Consul for Trade at the Israeli Consulate General in Johannesburg, and was opened by the Mayor of Durban, Councillor R.A. Carte.<sup>46</sup>

Gentile goodwill towards Israel was cultivated by the Council, which, in 1955, participated in a programme, which was arranged by the Y.M.C.A., entitled "This is my Country."<sup>47</sup>

Whilst centred in Durban and principally concerned with Zionist activity in the City, the Council also maintained regular contact with Pietermaritzburg and other communities scattered throughout Natal,<sup>48</sup> thereby justifying its role as the Natal Committee of the South African Zionist Federation. Representatives of the Zionist groups in Pietermaritzburg, Vryheid and Danhauser

<sup>44</sup> Zionist Council Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, on Monday, 29th November, 1954, at 8 pm., p.1.

<sup>45</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.8 (April, 1955), 17.

<sup>46</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 26, 1955, p.11.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, August 25, 1955, p.4.

<sup>48</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 14., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 67., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (Septmeber, 1952), 69.

were furthermore represented on the Council and attended its meetings.<sup>49</sup>

The leadership of the Zionist Council continued to be drawn principally from the ranks of the Durban Zionist Association, the men's Zionist Society. The Durban Zionist Association was un-aligned to any political party and in fact afforded a platform to all parties, provided the Association appointed a chairman and questions were allowed from the audience.<sup>50</sup> In accordance with this policy, during the elections which preceded the 22nd World Zionist Congress, which was held in Basle, in December 1946, the Association lent its platform to representatives of the United Zionist Party, the Zionist Socialists, the United Zionist Revisionists and the *Mizrachi*. In this way it succeeded in preventing a great deal of the political animosity which occurred elsewhere in the Union.<sup>51</sup> In November, 1947 Mr Ivan Greenberg, formerly of the *Jewish Chronicle*, toured South Africa on behalf of the Revisionists and also spoke from the Association's platform.<sup>52</sup>

Although its membership was restricted to men only

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 67., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 65.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 72.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 38.

<sup>52</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 72.



the Association co-operated closely with the Durban Women's Zionist League<sup>53</sup> and with the Zionist youth,<sup>54</sup> and took a leading part in various Zionist campaigns and major Zionist activities organised by the Zionist Council.<sup>55</sup>

The increasingly important part which Zionism came to occupy amongst Jews all over the world following the end of World War II naturally was not without affect on the Movement in Durban as well, and was reflected in the growth and activities of the Association.<sup>56</sup> From a membership of roughly 270 in September 1945 the ranks of the Association swelled to over 300 a year later,<sup>57</sup> maintaining the trend which had become increasingly apparent at the end of the war and these numbers were sustained over the next few years.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 38., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 69.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 78., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 71.

<sup>55</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 38., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 78., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 75., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 68.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 59 and 69.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 36.

<sup>58</sup> In 1947 the membership stood at 312, in 1948 it was 309 and in 1949 it was 300. (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71.

The Association gave expression to its concern for Israel in a variety of ways, notably through its efforts to promote understanding of the country and its problems through talks and film shows. It also encouraged members of the community to visit the newly established State, and in 1949 even organised a tour to Palestine<sup>59</sup> which was so well received that it was repeated in 1951.<sup>60</sup> The Association furthermore made a conscious effort, whenever possible, to promote the sale of Israeli goods in the Union.<sup>61</sup>

As in previous years the Zionist Association's activities continued to revolve principally around

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 75.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 70-71.

lectures<sup>62</sup> and functions<sup>63</sup> held under its auspices, or in

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<sup>62</sup> Including lectures by Dr Alexander Rosenfeld, Director of *Habrith Haivrit Haolamit* (Hebrew World Union), (*The Zionist Record*, December 14, 1945, p.21.) Mr Edgar Bernstein, (*Hasholom*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 36.) Mr B. Gering, Vice-Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1947), 27 and 29) Mr W. Rybko, official lecturer and propagandist of the Zionist Federation, (*The Zionist Record*, November 28, 1947, p.20.) the Rev. Mr Coleman, (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 78) Mr A. Smith, Major Louis Shapiro from Haifa, Mr Leslie Shagam from Israel and Rabbi L. Rabinowitz of Johannesburg (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 75.) Judge Giladi from Israel, Rabbi H. Swift, Rabbi M. Miller, Mr F.T. Rothschild, Mr J. Compton, Mrs M. Adler, Sister Kisch, Dr Pauline Klenerman, Mr L. Caminsky and Mr Z. Infeld (*Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 68.) Mr S. Ernst (*Hasholom*, XXX No.12 (August, 1952), 11.) Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz (*Ibid.*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 35.) and Dr Frankel of the Hebrew University (*The Zionist Record*, June 26, 1953, p.12.).

<sup>63</sup> Including a symposium in December 1945 on "How I Face the Jewish Problem," (*Hasholom*, XXIV No.2 (August, 1946), 33-34) an 'At Home' to welcome back members of the Association who had visited Palestine, (*Ibid.*, XXIV No.2 (August, 1946), 33-34.) a Herzl Bialik evening in 1946, (*Ibid.*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 38.), a Round Table Talk on matters relating to Zionism, (*Ibid.*, XXV No.6 (February, 1947), 22.) a Brain Trust evening (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 72.) an evening of Hebrew music, (*Ibid.*) a Quiz Evening, (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 78.) a Debate (*Ibid.*) a welcome to members who had visited Palestine in 1949, (*Ibid.*) a film Show (*Ibid.*) a performance by the musician Joseph Goland (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 68.) a Herzl, Bialik, Jabotinsky Memorial Evening in July 1952 (*Hasholom*, XXX No.12 (August, 1952), 9.) an Israeli Square Dance, Living Newspaper and Debate in 1953, (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 69.) an art exhibition of the work of I. Frenkel (*The Natal Mercury*, March 2, 1954, p.8.) and a Book Review Evening in August, 1955. (*The Zionist Record*, August 19, 1955, p.17.)

conjunction with other Zionist or communal bodies. The Association also continued to issue the *Zionist Digest*,<sup>64</sup> but in May 1953 publication of the *Zionist Digest* was taken over by the Zionist Council, in view of the fact that it was no longer solely a newsletter of the Association, but had come to be the forum for reports on all aspects of Zionist activity in the City.<sup>65</sup>

In 1948, the Association lost its Hon-President Mr Moses Morrison, who died after a lifetime of service to the Zionist Movement.<sup>66</sup> In order to perpetuate his memory the Association decided to establish an annual lecture, and the first Morrison Memorial Lecture was given by Mr H. Moss-Morris, on July 5, 1949, on "Life and its Complexities."<sup>67</sup> Thereafter it became an annual feature on the Association's calendar and an important

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<sup>64</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 38., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 72., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 75.) *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951.), 68., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 71.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 69.

<sup>66</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.11 (July, 1948), 11.

<sup>67</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 78.



event in the cultural life of the community.<sup>68</sup>

Following the departure on *aliyah* in March 1949, of Mr E. Schragenheim, a Committee member of the Association and the first President of the Zionist Council,<sup>69</sup> the Association established an annual essay competition that was named after him. The first competition, divided into senior and junior sections, was publicised throughout Natal, but in spite of the promise of attractive prizes it drew no entries.<sup>70</sup> In 1950 the competition aroused an equally poor response<sup>71</sup> and so, in the following year, it was changed into a bursary for a pupil who had passed Standard VI, and who wished to study Hebrew for matriculation, and its first recipient was Ruth Ballin.<sup>72</sup>

In May 1950 the Association inaugurated a

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<sup>68</sup> In 1950 Dr H. Sonnanbend of the Board of Deputies spoke on "The Future of Zionism Outside Israel." (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 75.) In 1951 Mr C. Gershater, Editor of *The Zionist Record*, spoke on "American Jewry and Israel" (*Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 68.) In 1952 Mr I. Schen, Cultural Officer of the Federation, spoke on "Whither Israel" (*Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 69.) In 1953 Mr S.M. Kuper Q.C. of the Zionist Federation, spoke on "Present Economic Development in Israel." (*Hasholom*, XXXI No.11 (July, 1953), 5.) In 1954 Dr Sidney Kark spoke on "Impressions of Israel's Health Services," (*Ibid.*, XXXII No.12 (August, 1954), 11-13.) and in 1955 Mr S. Ernst spoke on "The Challenge of Jewish Education." (*Ibid.*, XXXIII No.11 (July, 1955), 15.)

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.8 (April, 1949), 25.

<sup>70</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 78.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 75.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 68.

monthly luncheon Club to provide a suitable platform for informal reports and discussions on Zionist and Jewish topics. It was held at the *Maon*, which was centrally situated, and one of its first guests was Mr H.L. Magid, a member of the I.U.A. delegation invited by the Israeli Government to visit Israel, who spoke on his impressions.<sup>73</sup> The Association established a tradition of inviting members of the community and other Durban residents to the chair at Lunch Forums, and in this way involved a wide spectrum of people in Zionist affairs.<sup>74</sup> Although the relocation of the *Maon* in 1953 proved of benefit to the cause of Zionism as a whole it adversely affected the lunch forum, because it was no longer held at a centrally located venue. The forum nevertheless continued to meet and to be addressed by a variety of speakers.<sup>75</sup>

An important branch of the Association's activity was the Hebrew Speaking Circle which was held in conjunction with the Jewish Education Council. It afforded members of the Jewish community an opportunity to learn the Hebrew language,<sup>76</sup> and provided a venue for

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 75.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 68.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 69.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 59., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 61., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 70., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 66 and 75., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 60.

all those who wished to use the language, which was the *lingua franca* of the newly established Jewish State. Meetings of the Circle centred around addresses by visiting speakers.<sup>77</sup> A highlight of the Circle's activities was a full scale concert, which it staged in 1952, in collaboration with the Jewish Education Council, at which Mr Meier Margolit and Mrs Dorothy Avrigh sang in Hebrew and Yiddish.<sup>78</sup>

In October 1955 a meeting of interested parties was held to discuss the formation of a branch of the *Histadrut Ivrit* in Durban,<sup>79</sup> which in itself was an indication of the strides which the Hebrew Speaking Circle had made in the City. At the meeting it was decided to circularise the entire community and to inform

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<sup>77</sup> Including Mr W. Rybko, official lecturer and propagandist of the South African Zionist Federation (*The Zionist Record*, November 28, 1947, p.20.) Mr Y. Gaulan, the Israeli Consul General (Minutes of Executive Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal. Held on Monday, 28th August, 1950 at the Durban Jewish Club at 8 pm., p.1.) Dr S. Lowy of J.N.F. Headquarters in Jerusalem, (Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Monday, 19th March, 1951 at the *Maon*, at 8 pm., p.3.) Dr Benzion Shein and Mr Batritzky, secretary of the *Histadrut Ivrit* (*The Zionist Record*, August 31, 1951, p.12.). Mr Levi Shalit, a survivor of the Shavel Ghetto (*Ibid.*, February 22, 1952, p.15.) Mr I. Goss of the South African Jewish Board of Education, (*Ibid.*, June 2, 1954, p.17.) Dr M. Natas, the Cultural Officer of the South African Zionist Federation, (*Ibid.*, April 29, 1955, p.10.)

<sup>78</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 71.

<sup>79</sup> Minutes of the 45th Actions Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Wednesday, 27th October, 1955 at 5.15 pm., p.1.



them of a function, which was held at the *Maon* on November 7.<sup>80</sup> Those present at the function approved the establishment of a branch of the *Histadrut Ivrit*, elected Mr H. Hadany as chairman and Rabbi M. Miller as vice-chairman, and arranged to hold their first function to coincide with *Chanukah*.<sup>81</sup>

The work undertaken by the Durban Zionist Association was complemented by that of the Women's Zionist League, which was the largest of all the local Zionist societies and, like its brother organisation, was unaligned to any political party. In the period immediately prior to the establishment of the State of Israel and in the early years of Israel's independence the League's membership rose dramatically from 412 in 1947,<sup>82</sup> to over 570 some four years later.<sup>83</sup> This was no doubt, in part, attributable to the historic importance of the times and the general desire of world Jewry to share in the upbuilding of the Jewish State. It also testified however, to the competent manner in which the League conducted its affairs, and reflected its acceptability amongst a wide section of eligible members of the

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<sup>80</sup> Minutes of the 46th Actions Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Wednesday, 2nd November, 1955 at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>81</sup> Minutes of the 47th Actions Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Wednesday, 16th November, 1955 at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>82</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 73.



community who entered its ranks.

The backbone of the League remained its sewing groups which doubled in number from seven at the end of the war to fourteen by mid-1950.<sup>84</sup> These groups met each Wednesday morning to make garments for WIZO, to engage in fund raising, to participate in education activities and to engage in other aspects of Zionist work in the City. The sewing groups owed much of their success to the manner in which they combined social intercourse and Zionist work, which was no doubt attractive to the women of the community, and to their Conveners, whose driving force resulted in the enlargement of the groups, increased attendances, and a greater output of garments.<sup>85</sup>

At a special general meeting of the League, held late in 1949 it was unanimously resolved to decentralise the League and to reorganise it into branches, the sewing groups having served as the forerunners of this development.<sup>86</sup> It was initially decided to form four branches, covering the various suburbs, the Beach and City Branch, Durban North Branch, Berea Branch and Glenwood Branch, and once these had been formed elections were organised and executive officers and branch

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 76.

<sup>86</sup> Minutes of Special General Meeting and Combined Sewing Groups Meeting of the Durban Women's Zionist League, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Wednesday, 23rd November, 1949, p.1.

committees were appointed.<sup>87</sup>

The various sewing groups were integrated into the branch committees, which continued the work formerly undertaken by the sewing groups.<sup>88</sup> The division of the League into branches was aimed at extending its activities and at bringing into its orbit untried workers, who it was hoped would bring new vigour and vitality into the organisation.<sup>89</sup> Despite the fact that several months had to be devoted to the work of reorganisation and training of personnel, activities of the League were in no way hampered and the League's objectives were apparently realised.<sup>90</sup> The number of branches grew rapidly until 1951 when they numbered twelve<sup>91</sup> and over the next two years two of the branches disbanded<sup>92</sup> and a new one was created in 1954.<sup>93</sup>

In the turbulent years leading up to the proclamation of the Jewish State the Durban Women's Zionist League devoted considerable energy towards assisting the *Yishuv*. It organised the women's section of the 1946 *Keren*

<sup>87</sup> *The Zionist Record*, March 3, 1950, p.10.

<sup>88</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 77.

<sup>89</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 21, 1950, p.20.

<sup>90</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 77.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 70.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 67.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 73.

*Hayes'od* Campaign<sup>94</sup> and in conjunction with the Union of Jewish Women it arranged, in 1948, for the purchase of an air ambulance in the name of Durban's Jewish women.<sup>95</sup> Also under the auspices of the League the WIZO Emergency Campaign was launched in Durban, in March 1948, by Miss Toni Hauser, General Secretary of Palestine WIZO; Advocate Saadia Gluckman of Jerusalem and Mrs Katie Gluckmann of Johannesburg.<sup>96</sup> The League's support for *Haganah* was demonstrated in the Comforts Fund, which it formed in 1948, and in the parcels of knitted garments and clothing, which it sent for the members to Palestine.<sup>97</sup>

The despatch of clothing, collected from all parts of the Union, to Palestine for the general Jewish population was continued after World War II by Mrs M. Fielding and her helpers from the League.<sup>98</sup> When the packing of used clothing became a department of the South African Zionist Federation, and no longer came under the League, Mrs Fielding, nevertheless, continued

<sup>94</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.9 (May, 1946), 23.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.7 (March, 1948), 19.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.8 (April, 1948), 37.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 37., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 69.

<sup>98</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 25., *Ibid.*, XXV No.4 (December, 1946), 17., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 31., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 69., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 76.

to direct this activity.<sup>99</sup> A permanent clothing depot was, in fact, opened in Durban in 1950 at the premises of *M. Gild & Co.*<sup>100</sup> for the receipt of second hand garments. Under the aegis of the South African Jewish Appeal a clothing drive was held annually by the League and large consignments were forwarded to Israel to clothe the newcomers in the immigrant camps.<sup>101</sup>

Through the South African Jewish Appeal<sup>102</sup> and the campaign of 1947 on behalf of Youth *Aliyah*<sup>103</sup> the League also extended considerable assistance to the displaced Jews of Europe, who were for the most part awaiting admission to Palestine.

With the declaration of Israel's independence in 1948 fund raising to support the new State came to occupy a major portion of the League's activities. Upon the agreement of the South African Zionist Federation and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in 1948, to establish the I.U.A., the Durban Women's Zionist League and the South African Jewish Appeal, which was conducted

<sup>99</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 15, 1950, p.9.

<sup>100</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (Septmeber, 1951), 70.

<sup>101</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 15, 1950, p.9., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 70., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 67., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 73., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 60.

<sup>102</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 35.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 5 and 17.



in Durban by the Union of Jewish Women, in line with women's organisations around the Union combined their fund raising efforts for the *Y'ishuv* and the Displaced Persons under the I.U.A. (Women's Section.).<sup>104</sup> The local Committee was drawn from members of the two women's organisations and consisted of Mesdames A. Fridjohn and K. Kalf, Joint Chairmen; E. Greenberg and A. Lewis, Joint Vice-Chairmen; M. Broomberg and A. Savell, Joint Hon. Secretaries and R. Norris, Hon. Treasurer.<sup>105</sup>

The creation of the I.U.A. (Women's Section) in Durban was followed by a meeting in August 1948, addressed by Rabbi Dr L. Rabinowitz of Johannesburg,<sup>106</sup> and immediately thereafter the different sewing groups of the League embarked on a variety of fund raising projects.<sup>107</sup> In June 1949 the I.U.A. Women's Campaign was formally inaugurated by Mrs Zipporah Rubens of Palestine, the wife of Mr Alec Rubens, a former resident of Durban.<sup>108</sup> Fund raising by the women of Durban on

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 41-42.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 20, 1948, p.4.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, October 1, 1948, p.17., December 31, 1948, p.13., *Hasholom*, XXVII No.8 (April, 1949), 35., *The Zionist Record*, May 6, 1949, p.21., May 27, 1949, p.23.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1, 1949, p.21.

behalf of the I.U.A. was intensified in consequence of Mrs Ruben's visit,<sup>109</sup> and following the decision of the South African Women's Zionist Council, in December 1949, to make the I.U.A. Women's Section its fund raising department<sup>110</sup> the different branches and sewing groups of the League worked with added vigour to raise funds.<sup>111</sup> Highlights of their fund raising efforts included a ball at the Durban City Hall, in August 1950, at which 97 debutantes were presented to Mr E.D. Goitein, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Israel, and Mrs Goitein and Mr Y. Gaulan, Consul of Israel, and Mrs Gaulan;<sup>112</sup> a mass rally in October 1950, addressed by Mrs Kate Gluckmann of Johannesburg;<sup>113</sup> and a fete, held in November 1950 at the Jewish Club.<sup>114</sup>

The efforts of the Jewish women of Durban on behalf of the I.U.A. resulted in Durban exceeding its 1950 quota.<sup>115</sup> Fund raising was not, however, allowed to slacken in consequence of this achievement but continued

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<sup>109</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 33., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.12 (August, 1949), 27., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 74., *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 46.

<sup>110</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 9, 1949, p.19.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21, 1950, p.20., August 18, 1950, p.8., September 29, 1950, p.7., November 10, 1950, p.8.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, September 1, 1950, p.8.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, November 3, 1950, p.8.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1, 1950, p.8.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, April 6, 1951, p.18.

with increased enthusiasm in 1951,<sup>116</sup> culminating in the I.U.A. Fete held in December, 1951, where the League was assisted by the members of the Union of Jewish Women and the Reform Sisterhood.<sup>117</sup> Notwithstanding the efforts of the local I.U.A. Women's Committee Durban was, owing to unavoidable circumstances, not able to reach its quota in 1951.<sup>118</sup> With renewed determination the women applied themselves to the task of raising funds,<sup>119</sup> their principal project being a gala ball in August 1952, honoured by the presence of Mr C. Hyman, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary for Israel, and Mrs Hyman.<sup>120</sup>

In 1952 Women's I.U.A. Campaign was launched in Durban in October by Mrs S. Friedman, the Chairman of the Women's National I.U.A. Campaign,<sup>121</sup> and met with considerable success. From 1953 the practical work of fund raising was no longer conducted under the overall term of I.U.A. and emphasis was instead placed in different periods on *Youth Aliyah*, J.N.F. and Wizo.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, June 22, 1951, p.12., September, 1951, p.17.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, January 11, 1952, p.12.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, March 28, 1952, p.19.

<sup>119</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.8 (April, 1952), 34.

<sup>120</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 5, 1952, p.16.

<sup>121</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.2 (October, 1952), 41.

<sup>122</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 67.

The wisdom of this new policy was shortly brought into question, however, and in 1954 a further Women's I.U.A. Campaign was launched in Durban by Mrs Rosa Ginossar.<sup>123</sup>

Even as the members of the League were involved in the work of the various I.U.A. campaigns their traditional support for the Jewish National Fund remained unflagging, as they continued to supervise the clearance of blue boxes, to conduct the annual sale of trees and to encourage inscriptions in the *Sefer Hayerled*, *Barmitzvah* and Golden Book of the Fund.<sup>124</sup> Throughout this period the League persevered in its fund raising efforts on behalf of the J.N.F. and amongst its most notable achievements was a women's drive, held in October 1945 to coincide with the biennial campaign on behalf of the Fund;<sup>125</sup> a J.N.F. week held from November 11-17, 1946;<sup>126</sup> a banquet, arranged in conjunction with the Durban Zionist Association and the Zionist Council for Natal, in July 1951, and attended by

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 60.

<sup>124</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 25., *Ibid.*, XXV No.4 (December, 1946), 17., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 31., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 27, 1948), 69., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 76-77., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 77., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 69., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 67., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 60.

<sup>125</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 5, 1945, p.23., *Hasholom*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 35-36.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.4 (December, 1946), 11 and 13.



Dr Abba Hillel Silver and Mrs Silver to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Fund;<sup>127</sup> a presentation ball held in July 1953 to aid in the reclamation of the Huleh Valley;<sup>128</sup> a benefit recital by world famous harmonica player Larry Adler in 1953;<sup>129</sup> a banquet, in February 1954, in honour of Mr Edwin Samuel, the son of Viscount Samuel and the principal of the Institute of public administration in Israel, who visited the Union on an information tour on behalf of the J.N.F.;<sup>130</sup> a benefit recital by the mezzo soprano Jenni Tourel in July 1954;<sup>131</sup> and a benefit concert by Louis Kentner, the celebrated Hungarian pianist and the brother-in-law of Yehudi Menuhin.<sup>132</sup>

With equal dedication the League devoted itself to the cause of WIZO, a major fund raising drive being undertaken in the City in 1946 to mark the Organisation's 25th Anniversary.<sup>133</sup> When, in 1949, WIZO institutions in Israel were faced with a shortage of blankets and

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<sup>127</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 6, 1951, p.8., July 20, 1951, p.9.

<sup>128</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.12 (August, 1953), 25.

<sup>129</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 31, 1953, p.14., August 6, 1953, p.10.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, February 23, 1954, p.3., *Hasholom*, XXXII No.7 (March, 1954), 29.

<sup>131</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, July 14, 1954, p.7.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, June 9, 1955, pp.4 and 8.

<sup>133</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.6 (February, 1946), 38., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.7 (March, 1946), 32.

linen, a Union wide drive was undertaken to assist the organisation, the local convener being Mrs R. Levy.<sup>134</sup> The Jewish women of South Africa adopted as their specific WIZO project the Mothercraft Training Centre in Tel Aviv, and in the interests of the Centre and of WIZO generally, Sister E. Kisch, the Matron of the Centre, visited the Union in 1951. The women of Durban responded magnificently to her call for continued support by spontaneously inaugurating a "Sister Kisch Fund," to provide equipment for the Mothercraft Training Centre.<sup>135</sup> Through the efforts of Mr A. Savell, the husband of the Chairman of the League, 100 cots were donated to the Centre in 1953, by leading furniture dealers in Durban and Pietermaritzburg,<sup>136</sup> to coincide with the Centre's opening.<sup>137</sup> Funds for the continued support of the Centre and for the many other projects maintained by WIZO were principally derived from the annual WIZO fete, which was first held in 1952.<sup>138</sup> Although the fete was organised each year by the Women's Zionist League all Jewish women's organisations ran individual stalls, thereby making it a communal rather than a specific

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<sup>134</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 76.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 70.

<sup>136</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 27, 1953, p.15.

<sup>137</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1955), 67.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Natal Mercury*, December 10, 1953, p.6., *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.4 (December, 1954), 15., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.4 (January, 1956), 24-25.

the sole preoccupation of the affiliated Zionist women of Durban. Along with fund raising the League bore responsibility for the annual distribution and sale of *shekels*,<sup>145</sup> the increased number of *shekels* sold in the post-war period reflecting the growing desire of Durban Jewry to identify with the work of the World Zionist Organisation.<sup>146</sup>

A major portion of the League's efforts were devoted to the cultural and educational advancement of its members, and in particular in the fields of Zionism and Judaism. With the end of World War II the void in the area of adult education was partially filled by the Durban Women's Zionist League which, together with the Union of Jewish Women, arranged for Rabbi A.H. Freedman to hold regular adult education classes for its members.<sup>147</sup> The Rabbi also conducted public speaking classes for the

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<sup>145</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 25., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 31., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 69., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 77., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 67., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 68., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 68., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 60.

<sup>146</sup> In 1950 1,788 *shekels* were sold (*Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 68.) and in 1951 1,763 *shekels* were sold. (*Ibid.*). In 1952 1,763 *shekels* were purchased in Durban (Minutes of the Zionist Council Meeting held on Monday, 20th October, 1952 at the Maon at 8 pm., p.1.) and the number of *shekels* sold in 1953 rose to 1,956, (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 68.) this number dropping slightly in the following year to 1,825.. (*Ibid.*).

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 55.

women and Mesdames Savell and Frankel of the League served as the secretaries of these classes.<sup>148</sup>

At regular monthly meetings of all the members of the League a varied programme of lectures, symposia and social functions was presented,<sup>149</sup> not infrequently in conjunction with the members of the Union of Jewish Women.<sup>150</sup> In this way knowledge about Israel and related issues amongst the women was heightened to the benefit of the League and the Zionist movement as a whole. Among the many outstanding functions organised

<sup>148</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 23.

<sup>149</sup> For details of monthly functions see *Ibid.*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 38., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.8 (April, 1946), 40., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.12 (August, 1946), 32 and 37., *Ibid.*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 41., *Ibid.*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 46., *Ibid.*, XXV No.12 (August, 1947), 3., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 15., *Ibid.*, 37., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 37., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 69., *Hasholom*, XXVII No.3 (November, 1948), 4., *Ibid.*, 41., *The Zionist Record*, April 1, 1949, p.21., June 17, 1949, p.20., October 7, 1949, p.12., November 4, 1949, p.13., May 26, 1950, p.15., August 4, 1950, p.8., December 15, 1950, p.9., May 25, 1951, p.16., September 21, 1951, p.17., August 8, 1952, p.16., September 12, 1952, p.17., July 17, 1953, p.15., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 73., *The Zionist Record*, April 29, 1955, p.10., *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.11 (July, 1955), 26-27., *The Zionist Record*, August 19, 1955, p.15., December 9, 1955, p.15.

<sup>150</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 23., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.10 (June, 1946), 38., *Ibid.*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 35., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.9 (May, 1948), 17., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 76., *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 45., *The Natal Mercury*, August 6, 1952, p.12., *Hasholom*, XXXI No.12 (August, 1953), 7., *Ibid.*, 31., *The Zionist Record*, July 30, 1954, p.13.



by the League was a celebration to mark the 13th anniversary of the League's founding in December 1946;<sup>151</sup> a function in August 1950, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of WIZO;<sup>152</sup> and a function held, in March 1955, to observe the 21st anniversary of the League's establishment.<sup>153</sup>

The League concerned itself with the advancement of Zionism in Natal and in particular amongst the Jewish women of the Province and to this end it assisted in the creation of a Women's Zionist Society in Vryheid in 1949.<sup>154</sup> Thereafter it maintained frequent contact with Vryheid and with Women Zionists of Pietermaritzburg.<sup>155</sup> As the principal Women's Zionist body in Natal, the League sent delegates to the biennial Conferences of the South African Women's Zionist Council, which were held in Johannesburg,<sup>156</sup> and to the Conferences of the South

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<sup>151</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.4 (December, 1946), 17 and 19.

<sup>152</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 25, 1950, p.7.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, April 15, 1955, p.11.

<sup>154</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71.

<sup>155</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.11 (July, 1949), 19., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71., *The Zionist Record*, September 21, 1951, p.17., December 21, 1951, p.15., March 28, 1952, p.19., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 68., *The Zionist Record*, November 7, 1952, p.15., January 13, 1956, p.15.

<sup>156</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 25., *Ibid.*, XXV No.12 (August, 1947), 39., *The Zionist Record*, September 16, 1949, p.20., July 25, 1949, 1952, pp. 7 and 13., *Hasholom*, XXXII No.11 (July, 1954), 5.

African Zionist Federation,<sup>157</sup> and participated in the Biennial Conferences of the Zionist Council for Natal.<sup>158</sup> Together with the Young WIZO the League held elections in June 1946 to elect delegates to the World WIZO Conference,<sup>159</sup> and in 1951 Mrs M. Fielding represented the League at the 12th World WIZO Conference in Israel.<sup>160</sup> To give its members even greater representation on national decision making bodies the League affiliated itself, in 1951, to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies<sup>161</sup> and was represented by Mrs H. Moss-Morris at the Board's Jubilee Congress in 1953.<sup>162</sup>

The League can thus be seen to have fulfilled an important role in Zionist life in the City, both as a vehicle for fund raising and for the dissemination of Zionist thought. Its large membership testified to its appeal to the women of the community and its expansion into other cities in the Province indicated the wide acceptance of its objectives. At the same time its

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<sup>157</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 9, 1945, p.9., *Hasholom*, XXV No.11 (July, 1947), 1-3., *The Zionist Record*, September 16, 1949, p.9., July 18, 1952, pp.5 and 16., July 16, 1954, pp.5 and 10.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, June 25, 1948, p.10., *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 1-2., *The Zionist Record*, August 15, 1952, p.20., July 9, 1954, p.19.

<sup>159</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 6, 1946, p.8.

<sup>160</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 7.

<sup>161</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 9.

<sup>162</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 67.

strength was a reflection of the strong Zionist sentiment within the community as a whole, which persisted after the euphoria which followed the establishment of the State of Israel.

Independent of the League, but motivated by a mutually shared desire to assist the Jewish residents of Palestine, was the Society for Bread for the Needy of Palestine, a small women's group, formed in the closing weeks of the Second World War, to raise funds for food for the *Yishuv*.<sup>163</sup> Apart from forwarding food parcels to Israel,<sup>164</sup> the Society raised about £600 per annum from membership fees and card parties,<sup>165</sup> which was distributed, through the *Meshullochim* Committee of the C.N.J., amongst religious institutions in Israel.<sup>166</sup>

The Society's principal workers included Mrs S. Lowenstein, its first Chairlady; Mrs S. Greenspan, the first Vice-Chairlady; and Mrs A.M. Kaplan, who gave many years of service as Hon. Secretary.<sup>167</sup> Upon the

<sup>163</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 2nd August, 1945 at 8 pm., p.4.

<sup>164</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 43.

<sup>165</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday 4th September, 1952 at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>166</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 16th April, 1955 at 8 pm., p.17.

<sup>167</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 43.



arrival of Rabbi and Mrs Swift in Durban, in 1950, the Society held a reception to welcome them and appointed Mrs Swift as their Hon. President.<sup>168</sup> The close ties that existed between the Society and the Orthodox Congregation, from which the Society exclusively drew its membership, were thereby cemented.

Until it was disbanded early in 1957,<sup>169</sup> when the need for such an organisation had considerably diminished, the Society for Bread for the Needy of Palestine, notwithstanding its sectarian nature, maintained cordial relations with all the existing major Jewish women's organisations in the City, and in particular with the Women's Zionist League, which it assisted annually at the WIZO Fete.<sup>170</sup>

Whilst the Zionist Council for Natal laid stress on the activities of Zionist societies of a non-party nature, the decision of the Nineteenth South African Zionist Conference, in July 1943, to allow for direct representation of political parties on the South African Zionist Federation<sup>171</sup> was gradually followed by the emergence of branches of the different Zionist parties

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 37.

<sup>169</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 7th February, 1957, at 8 pm., p.7.

<sup>170</sup> See *Hasholom*, XXXII No.5 (January, 1954), 18., *The Zionist Record*, January 13, 1956, p.15.

<sup>171</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.193.



in Durban. Durban was, however, traditionally non-political in Zionist matters and this policy was reflected in the overwhelming support given the non-partisan United Zionist Party, in the elections for the 1946 World Zionist Congress.<sup>172</sup> These elections were of particular importance for Zionism in the Union insofar as that, following the decision of the 19th South African Zionist Conference, they determined the composition of the Federation's Executive.<sup>173</sup> Unlike the overall election results, in which the United Zionist Party polled the highest number of votes, followed by the United Zionist Revisionist Party, the Zionist Socialist Party and lastly the *Mizrachi*,<sup>174</sup> in Durban the Revisionists, who had never attained the degree of popularity which they enjoyed elsewhere in the Union, polled fewer votes than the Socialist Party and had to be content with third place on the list.<sup>175</sup>

A further concession to the non-political nature of Zionism in Durban was the dispensation granted to the Zionist Council for Natal to draw up a Constitution which was not based on a party basis.<sup>176</sup> As all political parties with active branches in Durban were, in terms of

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<sup>172</sup>*The Zionist Record*, June 14, 1946, p.23.

<sup>173</sup>Gideon Shimoni, p.194.

<sup>174</sup>*Ibid.*, p.195.

<sup>175</sup>*The Zionist Record*, June 14, 1946, p.23.

<sup>176</sup>*Hasholom*, XXVI No.9 (May, 1948), 5.

the Constitution, accorded equal representation on the Council of the Zionist Council, the Province was largely spared political conflict. Except at election times and when matters of principle were at stake all Zionists in Durban irrespective of party political affiliation, put the advancement of Zionism generally before partisan interests.

The general opposition of Durban Zionists to political parties was reinforced on May 4, 1952, when, in elections to determine the nature and composition of the South African Zionist Federation, the unaligned Association of South African Zionists Non-Party, with Lionel Hodes as its sole candidate gained 240 votes, thereby heading the list in Durban. The Zionist Socialist Party polled 196 votes, the United Zionist Party gained 142 votes, the United Zionist Revisionist Party 116 votes, the *Mizrachi* 104 votes and the Independent Zionist Revisionists 3 votes.<sup>177</sup> Whilst Durban remained consistent to the non-party line, the Association of South African Zionists gaining the most support in the City, in the Union as a whole the non-politicised United Zionist Party an essentially non-party group which wished to gain a two third majority necessary to restore the Federation's non-party

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<sup>177</sup> *The Zionist Record Special Election Supplement*, May 5, 1952, p.2.

Constitution, gained the highest number of votes.<sup>178</sup>

Among those Durban Zionists who aligned themselves with one or other of the parties, and who were included in the party lists for the election, were Messrs I. Geshen and A. Goldberg, who appeared on the list of the United Zionist Party; Mr S. Goldberg, Mrs G. Smith and Rabbi H. Swift, who were on the list of *Mizrachi-Hapoel Hamizrachi*; Mr A. Miller, who was on the list of the United Zionist Revisionist Party; and Mrs R. Silbert, who was included on the list of the Zionist Socialist Party.<sup>179</sup>

Of all the political parties represented on the Natal Zionist Council the most active was probably the *Mizrachi*. The Durban branch of the Party was set up in 1947, following a visit to the City by Rabbi H. Freedman, the Chief Rabbi of Australia, who visited the Union on a *Mizrachi* propaganda tour. A local committee was formed during his visit, consisting of Mr W. Smith, Chairman; Mr S. Goldberg, Vice-Chairman; Mr S. Hackner, Treasurer; Rev. A M. Kaplan, Hon. Secretary; Messrs M. Abelman, J. Ehrlich, D. Harris, J. Puterman, J. Rubin, D.B. Wesseik, Rev. F. Metzger, Committee.<sup>180</sup> Unlike two

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<sup>178</sup> Nationwide the United Zionist Party gained 8,218 votes, the Zionist Socialist Party 6,486 votes, the United Zionist Revisionist Party 6,023 votes, the Association of South African Zionists 5,190 votes, *Mizrachi* 2,902 votes and Independent Zionist Revisionists 192 votes (Gideon Shimoni, p.244.)

<sup>179</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 9, 1952, p.7.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, October 24, 1947, p.18.

earlier unsuccessful attempts to set up a branch of the *Mizrachi* Party in Durban in 1931<sup>181</sup> and 1938,<sup>182</sup>

Rabbi Freedman's efforts met with considerable success, possibly due to the changed circumstances in which Zionism was operating and the wide vision which the Party's leaders adopted in Durban.

After an interval of some months the inaugural meeting of the *Mizrachi* Organisation in Durban was held at the residence of Mr and Mrs W. Stark, in mid-1948, at which those present were addressed by Rabbi M. Kossowsky and Mr A. Smith, the leaders of the Movement in Johannesburg.<sup>183</sup> Under the direction of Mr D.B. Wesseik, who had assumed the office of chairman, the Durban *Mizrachi's* inaugural public function was held on September 5, 1948 when Rabbi B. Rabinowitz, the Vice-Chairman of the Organisation in South Africa and the spiritual leader of the Kensington Hebrew Congregation, addressed a meeting at the Jewish Club.<sup>184</sup> Thereafter the Party held regular and varied functions for the benefit of its members and the community at large.

The *Mizrachi* in Durban did not principally concern itself with politics but rather with propagating the

<sup>181</sup> *Hasholom*, XIX No.4 (December, 1931), 5. See above p.236.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI No.2 (October, 1938), 17. See above p.342.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.3 (November, 1948), 28.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*



fundamental principles of its ideology. It sought to raise the level of religious commitment within the community and through the Zionist Council and the C.N.J. endeavoured to influence the community to improve Jewish religious education in the City. Through its many functions it also attempted to foster greater social contact amongst those who were sympathetic to its objectives.<sup>185</sup>

Many of the functions arranged by the *Mizrachi* were held to coincide with the Jewish holidays, and were intended to create a greater awareness within the community of its religious heritage.<sup>186</sup> Others, such as debates<sup>187</sup> and dances,<sup>188</sup> served to attract a wider circle of people to the Party's functions. In April 1952 the local *Mizrachi* branch held a celebration, attended by Rabbi Bezalel Cohen, the director of *Mizrachi* Education in Israel and Rabbi Wynberg of Muizenberg in the Cape, to celebrate the 50th Anniversary

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<sup>185</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 75.

<sup>186</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.3 (November, 1948), 28., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 41., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 37., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 76., *The Zionist Record*, April 6, 1951, p.21., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 69., *The Zionist Record*, November 30, 1951, p.12.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, December 17, 1948, p.10., *Hasholom*, XXVII No.3 (November, 1948), 28.

<sup>188</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 6, 1951, p.21.

of the establishment of the World *Mizrachi* Movement.<sup>189</sup> Numerous guest speakers also addressed public meetings in Durban under the *Mizrachi's* auspices including Rabbis I. Kossowsky, B. Rabinowitz and Singer of Johannesburg,<sup>190</sup> and Major Maurice Joffee, the Director of External Relations of the World *Mizrachi* Movement.<sup>191</sup> In 1953 the Durban *Mizrachi* had the honour of entertaining the President of World *Mizrachi* and Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi I. Herzog, during his visit to the City.<sup>192</sup>

The Party was fortunate to come to enjoy the patronage and support of Rabbi Harris Swift, who after his arrival in the City participated regularly in its programmes and attracted additional members to its ranks.<sup>193</sup> On the recommendation of the Rabbi a *Tanach* Study Circle was formed in 1954 under the *Mizrachi's* auspices.<sup>194</sup> This was a significant development in the area of adult Jewish education in the City, and as it was held in conjunction with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation it served to foster the close ties which already existed between the Congregation and the Party, which shared a common interest in respect of advancing

<sup>189</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 75.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 76.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 74.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 75.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 69.

<sup>194</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 28, 1954, p.6.

knowledge of the Jewish faith amongst the members of the community. Following the publication of Rabbi Swift's book *Because I Believe*, the *Mizrachi* gave expression to the Congregation's pride in the Rabbi's literary achievement by holding a function in his honour in July 1954.<sup>195</sup>

Rabbi Swift's enthusiasm for the *Mizrachi* Movement was shared by his wife, largely through whose efforts Mrs M. Kossowsky of Johannesburg visited Durban, in mid-1950, to inaugurate a branch of the Women's *Mizrachi* in Durban. Mrs Swift was made Hon. President of the Women's branch and its first committee included Mrs S. Lowenstein, Chairman; Mrs D.B. Wesseik, Vice-Chairman; Mrs H. Greenspan, Hon. Treasurer; Mrs A.M.Kaplan, Hon. Secretary; Mesdames Ehrlich, Kahn, Geshen, Meikle, Metzger and Stark, Committee.<sup>196</sup> The Women's *Mizrachi* shared many of its key workers with the Society for Bread for the Needy of Palestine and the two groups observed a harmonious working relationship.

Like its men's society the Women's *Mizrachi* was not political, and in fact did not act as a political body. It was principally concerned with raising funds for institutions supported by the Women's *Mizrachi* in Israel

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<sup>195</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.12 (August, 1954), 15.

<sup>196</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 18, 1950, p.15.

and to this end held a number of fund raising functions.<sup>197</sup> Under the direction of Mrs Grace Smith, who assumed the leadership of the organisation in September 1950,<sup>198</sup> attention was also given to cultural work, the festivals being suitably commemorated by talks on their significance.<sup>199</sup>

The Women's *Mizrachi* worked closely with the men's branch, and its members not only participated in many of the functions arranged by the Party, but also oversaw the catering and other technical arrangements.<sup>200</sup> Although much of its work remained unpublicised Women's *Mizrachi* in Durban quietly persisted in its philanthropic work and in advancing the cause that it represented.

Notwithstanding the overwhelming support traditionally shown by Durban Jewry for the World Zionist Organisation, and in particular after the creation of the New Zionist Organisation by Vladimir Jabotinsky in 1935, Revisionism was not without its supporters in Durban.

<sup>197</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 70., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 74., *The Zionist Record*, June 26, 1953, p.13.

<sup>198</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 70.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Zionist Record*, September 26, 1952, p.13., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 74.

<sup>200</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 37., *The Zionist Record*, April 6, 1951, p.21., May 28, 1954, p.6.



In the face of Britain's unpopular policy in Palestine the Party in fact came to be looked upon with a greater measure of sympathy than it had formerly enjoyed.

In 1947 the New Zionist Organisation was dissolved and the Revisionists returned to the Zionist Organisation, a move which coincided in December 1947, with the successful application of the branch of the United Zionist Revisionist Party in Durban for admission as a member of the Council of Natal Jewry.<sup>201</sup> The Durban branch of the Party, although formed in 1941,<sup>202</sup> really only came into its own in 1947, and in 1947 it took its place on the Council of the Zionist Council for Natal in accordance with the Council's Constitution.<sup>203</sup> Whilst it was political in character, the Durban branch of the United Zionist Revisionist Party encouraged its members to throw their weight into local communal activities and into work of a general Zionist nature.<sup>204</sup> Amongst its stalwarts, who included Messrs H. Levy, A. Cohen, I. Miller and K. Nathan, Mr Levy was a member

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<sup>201</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.5 (January, 1948), 7.

<sup>202</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 71.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 76.

of the Jewish Club Executive,<sup>205</sup> and Mr Miller was appointed the Hon. Secretary of the 1952-1953 I.U.A. Campaign.<sup>206</sup>

Party work was not, however, entirely neglected and several functions were held annually at which visiting Revisionist personalities addressed Party members and sympathisers. Among those who were brought to Durban in the interests of the Party were Mr J. Daleski, the Chairman of the South African Zionist Revisionist Party, who gave two lectures in December 1949,<sup>207</sup> Mr Aryeh Ben Eliezer, a member of the Israeli *Knesset*, and Mr Meir Grossman, a member of the Jewish Agency and a leading member of the World Revisionist Party, who visited Durban in 1950.<sup>208</sup> Mr Harry Hurwitz, the Secretary of the United Zionist Revisionist Party of South Africa, spoke about Jabotinsky at a Herzl, Bialik, Jabotinsky Commemorative Evening, held in conjunction with the Durban Zionist Association in July 1952,<sup>209</sup> and Mr K. Gross, a member of the Party's national

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<sup>205</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 23., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 29., *Ibid.*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 27., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 21., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 9., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.3 (November, 1954), 27., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 22.

<sup>206</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 76.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.12 (August, 1952), 9.

executive, and Mr I. Liebermann, of Israeli *Betar*, addressed the Durban branch during 1953.<sup>210</sup> The visit of Menachem Begin, the Leader of the Opposition and head of the *Herut* Party, in November 1953,<sup>211</sup> aroused enormous interest within the Jewish community of Durban. Hundreds of people were unable to gain admission to the mass meeting which he addressed at the Jewish Club where, "he was given one of the most rousing receptions of his South African tour."<sup>212</sup> The warm welcome extended to Begin did not reflect a major swing in Zionist loyalties in Durban away from other Parties and towards Revisionism, but rather typified the respect and sympathy which a large segment of South African Jewry felt for the man and his cause, and the curiosity and interest which his presence aroused.

Begin also had many critics, amongst whom was the Editor of *The Zionist Record* who attacked the former *Irgun* leader in a strongly worded editorial.<sup>213</sup> Incensed by this action on the part of the editor of a newspaper which was the official organ of the Zionist Federation, of which the Revisionist Party was a member, the Revisionists demanded the editor's resignation. When this was not forthcoming the Revisionist Party

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<sup>210</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 71.

<sup>211</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, November 16, 1953, p.2.

<sup>212</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 27, 1953, p.13.

<sup>213</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.245.

withdrew its representatives from all the committees of the Federation. In accordance with this directive the Durban branch of the Party withdrew from the Zionist Council for Natal and only six months later, in June 1954, once the matter had been resolved between the Revisionist Party and the Zionist Federation, did the Durban branch rejoin the Zionist Council.<sup>214</sup>

In December 1955, as tension between Israel and her Arab neighbours threatened to erupt into open war, the Durban branch of the Revisionist Party held a meeting at which Mr Yaakov Meridor, the Vice-Chairman of the *Herut* Party in Israel and a member of the *Knesset* spoke on the crisis in the Middle East. He assured his audience of Israel's military superiority and fighting capability and predicted, with considerable foresight, that in the event of a war the Israeli army could reach the Suez Canal in 96 hours.<sup>215</sup>

Although the *Mizrachi* and the Revisionists were the only two parties which had active branches in Durban they were not the only political parties represented on the Zionist Council for Natal. In addition to their two representatives on the Council, in 1949 the United Zionist Party and the Zionist Socialist Party, which had polled the highest and second highest number of votes respectively in the 1946 elections, for the 1946 World

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<sup>214</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 69.

<sup>215</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, December 20, 1955, p.11.



Zionist Congress,<sup>216</sup> although inactive, enjoyed equal representation.<sup>217</sup>

The United Zionist Party had been formed in 1946 to unite those who were opposed to party politics in Zionism.<sup>218</sup> Whilst by its very nature it was not active as a political party in Durban, it continued to be represented on the Council throughout this period,<sup>219</sup> although by 1952, when elections were held to determine the Constitution of the Zionist Federation, the Party was no longer the sole representative of non-party Zionists.<sup>220</sup>

Those who championed the non-party cause and who wished to participate as such in the election in 1952 aligned themselves with Lionel Hodes, who stood as the only candidate for the Association of South African Zionists. In the short time available before the elections an Action Committee which included many leading local Zionists was brought into being in Durban, with Mr A. Kaplan, Chairman; Mrs M. Rothschild, Hon.

<sup>216</sup>*The Zionist Record*, June 14, 1946, p.23.

<sup>217</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71.

<sup>218</sup>Gideon Shimoni, p.194.

<sup>219</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 67., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 65., Report of the Zionist Council for Natal. To be submitted to the 5th Natal Provincial Zionist Conference, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club on 26/27 May, 1956, pp.6-7.

<sup>220</sup>See Gideon Shimoni, pp.241-244.

Secretary and Treasurer, Messrs L. Brewer, M. Fielding, M. Freed, J. Goldberg, H. Hadany, M. Rothschild and Mesdames A. Kaplan, M. Fielding, H. Moss-Morris, I. Shagam and H. Taylor, Committee. This committee undertook a lightning campaign of the community and in the election the South African Zionists gained the highest number of votes in Durban, polling 37% of all the votes cast in the City.<sup>221</sup> Together with the United Zionist Party, and equally inactive as a party after the election, the Association of South African Zionists nevertheless continued to be represented on the Zionist Council for Natal.<sup>222</sup>

The 1952 election had in accordance with the Council's Constitution also witnessed the emergence of the Zionist Socialist Party as the second largest group in the Province,<sup>223</sup> notwithstanding the fact that it had no organisation in Natal and no representation on the Zionist Council for Natal. In 1948 when the Zionist Council for Natal had acquired a Constitution it had granted the Zionist Socialist Party two seats on the

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<sup>221</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 74.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 65., Report of the Zionist Council for Natal. To be submitted to the 5th Natal Provincial Zionist Conference, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club on 26/27 May, 1956, pp.6-7.

<sup>223</sup> *The Zionist Record Special Election Supplement*, May 5, 1952, p.2.

Council.<sup>224</sup> The Party's representation on the Council had been discontinued, however, shortly thereafter. Although the Party was reorganised in the wake of its electoral victory in 1952, and a committee consisting of *Chaver* S. Frame, Chairman; *Chaver* C. Woolfson, Treasurer; *Chavera* J. Woolfson, Secretary and *Chaverim* Silbert and Beinart, was elected,<sup>225</sup> it apparently did not seek representation on the Zionist Council. Zionist Socialism, although not officially represented was nevertheless well supported on the Council by the representatives of the Zionist youth, some of whom made up the Zionist Socialist Party's local committee, and whose sympathies, for the most part, lay overwhelmingly in its direction.

The Zionist Youth organisations in Durban, and indeed the position of the youth of the community generally, came to attract much interest within the community in the post-war period. This concern for the youth manifested itself in a number of ways, the most significant being in the creation by the Council of Natal Jewry, in 1951, of a Commission of Enquiry into the whole question of the youth.<sup>226</sup> The Zionist Council, which shared in the general communal concern for the well being of the youth, and several of its affiliated societies

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<sup>224</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 74.

<sup>226</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.7 (March, 1951), 6.



gave evidence before the Commission,<sup>227</sup> which submitted its report to the Executive Committee Meeting of the C.N.J. in December, 1951.<sup>228</sup> The Report, which was adopted at a full meeting of the C.N.J. in January 1952,<sup>229</sup> gave full support to the Zionist youth movements and recommended possible ways of assisting these organisations. These as well as all other recommendations in the Report were investigated by a Standing Youth Sub-Committee of the C.N.J., which included representatives of the Zionist Council, the Youth Movements and all other organisations concerned with youth, and was chaired by Mr A. Levine, the Chairman of the Zionist Council.<sup>230</sup> In this, as in general in all matters affecting the community as a whole, communal advancement was placed before sectarian interests. Consequently, one finds the Natal Committee of the Board of Deputies and the representative body of the Zionist Federation in Natal working closely together with the Youth Movements and other interested parties, which were generally represented on both the Zionist Council for Natal and the C.N.J. In sharp

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<sup>227</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 69.

<sup>228</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.2 (October, 1951), 14.

<sup>229</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952 at 8 pm., pp.6-7.

<sup>230</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 69.



contradiction the Zionist Youth Movements in Johannesburg came out in strong opposition towards the Board of Deputies upon its creation of a Youth Department, which they viewed as a potential source for a conflict of interests.<sup>231</sup>

As was the case in other parts of the Union, the events leading up to the creation of the State of Israel had made a profound impression on the thinking of the Jewish youth of Durban and in particular on those affiliated to the Zionist Youth Movements. Caught up in the wave of idealism which had fired the imagination of Jewish youth everywhere at this historic time in their people's history, some of the senior members of the Durban Zionist Youth Movement, who were for the most part leaders, or former leaders of *Habonim*, inspired by the challenge of *chalutzik aliyah*, left South Africa to live in Palestine. Included among the 42 *olim* who made up the first large group of *chalutzim* to leave the Union immediately after World War II were Rona Moss-Morris, Fanny Goldberg, Dot Ogin, Leslie Shandel, Neville Silbert and Hymie Stein of Durban,<sup>232</sup> indicating that in respect of Zionist activity and commitment the youth of Durban were not out of step with their contemporaries in other parts of the country.

The emphasis which the Durban Zionist Youth

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<sup>231</sup>Gideon Shimoni, p.265.

<sup>232</sup>*The Zionist Record*, September 14, 1945, p.26.

Movement laid on *chalutzit* was, in fact, sharply criticised by certain of the leaders of the community in Durban, who felt that members were being taught to regard the Jewish position in South Africa as black and without future.<sup>233</sup> The criticism of the Durban Zionist Youth Movement was rejected by the Movement's senior members and was regarded as unjustified by the Movement's sympathisers among the adult Zionist bodies. The differing views over the question of *chalutzik aliyah* highlighted, to some extent, the different approaches to Zionism within the community. On the one hand the youth movements, and those sympathetic to their stand, saw Zionism as a positive expression of the Jewish desire to resettle and rebuild the Jewish homeland. For their part their critics were on the whole prepared to limit their vision of Zionism to fundraising and to helping to develop a homeland for the Jews as a security for themselves and a shelter for those who were in need of a country, or a refuge from persecution.

The Durban Zionist Youth Movement, whilst remaining faithful to its conception of Zionism, also sought to provide for the cultural and social needs of its members. Regular debates, discussions and lectures arranged by the Movement focused primarily on Jewish and Zionist topics and thereby helped to broaden the understanding of its members in these areas, whilst regular monthly dances

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<sup>233</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 39.

provided an important outlet for social intercourse.<sup>234</sup> The Movement also worked closely with the other Zionist youth groups in the City, holding joint activities with both the Young WIZO<sup>235</sup> and *Habonim*<sup>236</sup> and in this way fostered close relations between the Zionist youth of the community.

In March 1947 the Zionist Youth Movement combined for a trial period with the Jewish Youth Group,<sup>237</sup> which was a study circle which met regularly with Mr S. Ernst, under the auspices of the Jewish Education Council, to learn Jewish history. This step, which culminated in the amalgamation of the two bodies, resulted in a strengthened Zionist Youth Movement which now catered for the needs of a wider cross section of the youth.<sup>238</sup>

Almost simultaneously with these developments the Jewish Education Council secured funds from the C.N.J. and from various Zionist bodies to recondition the Youth *Maon*.<sup>239</sup> Members of the adult community as a whole, either through the two principle communal bodies, the C.N.J. and the Zionist Council or in their individual

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<sup>234</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 64.

<sup>235</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 28, 1947, p.20.

<sup>236</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.5 (January, 1948), 35.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 14.

<sup>238</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 64.

<sup>239</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 14.

capacity,<sup>240</sup> generally exhibited a keen interest in the Youth Movement and its progress, regarding it as a strong bulwark against assimilation, as much as a forum for the fostering of Zionism, and they therefore helped it whenever possible.

The first few months of 1948 saw the Movement continue with its programme of social and cultural activities, which were coupled with involvement in the work of the South African Jewish Appeal.<sup>241</sup> The highlight of the year's activities, however, was the convening of a Zionist Conference for Natal youth during May 1948, which was attended by delegates from the different youth movements in Durban, Vryheid and Pietermaritzburg, and by representatives of leading communal organisations in Durban.<sup>242</sup> The fact that the Zionist Youth Movement arranged the Conference testified to the pre-eminent place which it enjoyed amongst the youth organisations, and revealed the broadminded vision of its leaders who were concerned with youth matters in Natal as a whole rather than simply within the ranks of their own Movement. The official opening of the

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<sup>240</sup> For example in March 1947 Mesdames F. Sacks and N. Chanani convened a card afternoon at the Durban Jewish Club to help the youth to defray part of the expenses incurred in renovating the *Maon*. (*Ibid.*, XXV No.8 (April, 1947), 35.)

<sup>241</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65.

<sup>242</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.9 (May, 1948), 6.



Conference was performed by Mr E. Schragenheim, the Chairman of the Zionist Council for Natal, and the guest of honour was Mr A. Abrahamson, a representative of the South African Zionist Youth Council. At the conclusion of the Conference Mr Abrahamson addressed a mass meeting of Durban Jewry, on "The Present Position of Zionism," under the auspices of the Zionist Youth Movement.<sup>243</sup>

One of the most significant results of the Conference was the creation of the Natal Jewish Youth Fund, a single fund for all Jewish appeals amongst the youth. The Zionist Youth Movement, the Youth Section of the South African Jewish Appeal and *Habonim* combined their fund raising efforts and set up a committee composed of representatives of all three groups to direct the Fund.<sup>244</sup> The Fund continued to function for quite some time and distributed considerable sums of money to a variety of Jewish causes, the senior Zionist Youth Movement members continuing to play an important role in its activities.<sup>245</sup>

For all the prevailing interest in Zionism the Durban Zionist Youth Movement failed, however, to retain the interest and involvement of its members, whose numbers declined from 74 in 1947, to 50 a year later.<sup>246</sup> In an

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<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 8.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 26.

<sup>246</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71.

attempt to bolster its numbers and to widen the scope of its membership, the Durban Zionist Youth Movement amalgamated with the Youth Section of the South Africa Jewish Appeal, in August 1948, assumed the name the Durban Young Israel Society, and elected Simcha Frame as its chairman.<sup>247</sup> This development resulted in the ranks of the organisation swelling to 60 by March 1949,<sup>248</sup> and reaching 104 some four months later.<sup>249</sup> The progress of the Young Israel Society was largely brought about by the enthusiasm of the Society's leadership who, after the inactivity which characterised the first few months of the Society's existence, embarked on an intensive membership drive and on the Society's full and varied programme of activities.<sup>250</sup>

Under the direction of Miss Kay Beinart, who assumed the leadership of the Society upon the resignation of Mr Frame, in April 1949,<sup>251</sup> the Society established a regular pattern of activities. This consisted of

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<sup>247</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Tuesday, 28th September, 1948, at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>248</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Thursday, 18th March, 1949, at 5.15 pm., at the *Maon*, p.1.

<sup>249</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71.

<sup>250</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 37.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.8 (April, 1949), 29.

weekly Sunday functions which included talks,<sup>252</sup> a varied programme of social activities,<sup>253</sup> table tennis games every Tuesday and Thursday evenings, under the direction of the Society's Table Tennis Section,<sup>254</sup> and regular Wednesday evening lectures, which were held in conjunction with the Jewish Education Council,<sup>255</sup> which also arranged an annual series of Youth leadership courses, primarily for the benefit of the Society's leaders.<sup>256</sup> The success of its first weekend camp, which it ran in August 1949,<sup>257</sup> prompted the Society to

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 37., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 47.

<sup>253</sup> Including dances, (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 31., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 33., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 80., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 79.) musical evenings, (*Hasholom*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 35., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 47., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 79.) scavenger hunts, (*Hasholom*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 35.) and film evenings, (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 47.).

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 37., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 31., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 47., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.5 (January, 1950), 33., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80.

<sup>255</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 47., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 61., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 60., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 66., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 61.

<sup>257</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 35.

organise a similar camp a year later,<sup>258</sup> which enjoyed equal success. Through the efforts of Ron and Eric Azizolahoff the Society also produced a monthly magazine which maintained a consistently high journalistic standard.<sup>259</sup>

The Young Israel Society worked in close harmony with *Habonim* and in conjunction with its senior members it held a third night *Seder* in 1949.<sup>260</sup> The success of this function ensured that it was repeated thereafter with equally satisfying results.<sup>261</sup> The two organisations combined to hold an *Oneg Shabbat* in honour of Rabbi and Mrs Swift,<sup>262</sup> and some months later held a similar function for Chief Rabbi I. Brodie, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of the British Commonwealth and Empire.<sup>263</sup> Together with *Habonim*, the Young Israel Society also held an *Oneg Shabbat*, in 1951, in honour of Dr and Mrs S. Lowry of the J.N.F. Headquarters

<sup>258</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80.

<sup>259</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 28, 1950, p.13., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80.

<sup>260</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 37.

<sup>261</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 79., *Hasholom*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 9., *Ibid.*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 40.

<sup>262</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 79.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*



in Jerusalem.<sup>264</sup>

Within the wider Jewish community the Young Israel Society helped at the Communal *Seder*,<sup>265</sup> contributed to the I.U.A.,<sup>266</sup> assisted at the Book Week Exhibition held by the Jewish Education Council in 1949,<sup>267</sup> participated in the *Yom Haatzmaut* celebrations in 1950<sup>268</sup> and undertook the Tree drives and *Shekel* Day collections in conjunction with the Durban Women's Zionist League.<sup>269</sup>

Although in February 1951 the Society experienced a change in leadership, with the election of Mr Bernhard Lazarus as its chairman,<sup>270</sup> little else was affected by this development and the Society's programme of activities continued uninterrupted. Apart from two successful third night *Seders*, under joint auspices with *Habonim*,<sup>271</sup> and a *Purim* function held in April 1951

<sup>264</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Monday, 19th March, 1951, at the *Maon*, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>265</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 33., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 79.

<sup>266</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 33.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 31.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 15.

<sup>269</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Thursday, 16th June, 1949, at the *Maon*, at 5.15 pm., p.2., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 77.

<sup>270</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Monday, 19th March, 1951, at the *Maon*, at 8 pm., p.5.

<sup>271</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 9., *Ibid.*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 40.

together with *Habonim* and *Mizrachi*,<sup>272</sup> the Society arranged a series of lectures to enable members to hear the views of the different South African political parties,<sup>273</sup> and heard an address by Mr A. Markowitz, the novelist and Secretary of the South African Ort-Oze, in Johannesburg.<sup>274</sup>

The Young Israel Society's major achievement in this period was the creation of the Natal Zionist Youth Executive, in conjunction with *Habonim*, in August 1951. The object of this Executive was to stimulate Zionist activity among Jewish youth and to co-ordinate the activity of the Zionist Youth Organisations.<sup>275</sup>

At its inaugural meeting, which was attended by Mr J. Goldberg, the Chairman of the Natal Zionist Council; Mr E.M. Rosy, the Secretary of the Council, and Mr M. Meyers, the Secretary of the South African Zionist Youth Council, a Committee was elected, consisting of Mr Simcha Frame, Chairman; Mr Havis Stein, Vice-Chairman; Miss Shirley Abrahamson, Secretary and Treasurer; Mr Alan Benn, Natal Jewish Youth Fund Representative; Mr Yehudah Frame, *Habonim* Representative

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<sup>272</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 6, 1951, p.21.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, June 15, 1951, p.17., *The Natal Mercury*, June 19, 1951, p.10., *The Zionist Record*, June 29, 1951, p.7.

<sup>274</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.12 (August, 1952), 36.

<sup>275</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Thursday, 20th September, 1951, at the *Maon*, at 8 pm., p.1.

and Messrs Bernhard Lazarus and Alan Magid, Members.<sup>276</sup>

The inaugural meeting also drew up a provisional constitution in which the Executive's aims were recorded as follows:

- a) To imbue Jewish youth of Natal with a devotion to their Jewish heritage and particularly a love for the Jewish religion and Hebrew language
- b) To stimulate them to an active and practical participation in Zionism making them nationally conscious with the object of assisting in every aspect in the upbuilding of the State of Israel.
- c) To make them realise their responsibilities as citizens of South Africa.
- d) To foster *Chalutziut* and *Aliyah*.
- e) To encourage every member of the Zionist Youth to study Hebrew and to assist in providing facilities for Hebrew classes wherever possible.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> *The Zionist Record South African Menorah Section*, October 26, 1951, p.2.

<sup>277</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.2 (October, 1951), 43.

The Natal Zionist Youth Executive embarked on a programme of activities, and among its earliest achievements was the resuscitation of the Pietermaritzburg Zionist Youth Society.<sup>278</sup> The Executive also took over the administration of the Natal Jewish Youth Fund and made contributions in the name of the youth which it represented to the I.U.A. and the U.C.F.<sup>279</sup> Under the Executive's auspices Hebrew classes were started for the youth,<sup>280</sup> and a correspondence scheme was set up whereby it was hoped to maintain contact with Jewish youth in Israel.<sup>281</sup> The Executive enjoyed representation on the Zionist Council for Natal,<sup>282</sup> and served, together with representatives of the Young Israel Society and *Habonim*, on the Standing Youth Sub-Committee of the C.N.J.<sup>283</sup>

The Executive's achievements in a wide variety of

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<sup>278</sup> *The Zionist Record South African Menorah Section*, October 26, 1951, p.3.

<sup>279</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 69.

<sup>280</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on the 17th March, 1952, at the *Maon*, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>281</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Monday, 15th September, 1952, at the *Maon*, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>282</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 69.

<sup>283</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 3rd April, 1952, at 8 pm., pp.6-7.



fields, and the effective manner in which it had stimulated co-operation amongst the Zionist Youth, made its demise in late 1952 all the more unfortunate. This state of affairs was brought about by a decline in support for the Young Israel Society, which was aggravated by an inability to find someone to lead the organisation.<sup>284</sup> The young adults for whom the Society sought to cater vacillated in their commitment to Jewish organisations of any kind, often placing pressures of work above communal loyalties. With the need to satisfy the divergent interests of this section of the community the Young Israel Society was forced to diversify its interests and energies, often to the detriment of the movement and with little benefit in terms of numbers or commitment on the part of those within its ranks. Many of those who grew up in Durban and were eligible to enter the ranks of the Young Israel Society, upon completing their schooling, left at this stage for academic or social reasons and settled in other parts of the Union. The Young Israel Society was therefore heavily dependant on a committed core of workers capable of arousing enthusiasm among their peers for its survival, and when this factor was absent the Society and the Executive in turn were incapable of continuing.

One body of opinion held that if the particular age

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<sup>284</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Monday, 15th September, 1952, at the *Maon*, at 8 pm., p.3.

group with which the Young Israel Society worked was organised by political parties then they would possibly continue functioning,<sup>285</sup> a view which, in the traditionally non-political Zionist Council for Natal, found little sympathy or support. In November 1952 the Zionist Council was officially informed that the Young Israel Society was defunct,<sup>286</sup> and although the Council, through the Standing Youth Sub-Committee approached Mr Ernst to reorganise it, the Society failed to be revived.<sup>287</sup>

By 1945 only two of the Young WIZO groups formed during the visit of Dr Anni Samuelsdorff to the Union in 1943, namely Durban and Port Elizabeth, were still functioning with any degree of success.<sup>288</sup> The progress of the Young WIZO in Durban was, however, fraught with problems the most important of which was the gradual decline in membership, brought about by members leaving Durban to settle elsewhere.<sup>289</sup> During 1946 the Young WIZO, nonetheless, still managed to hold nineteen functions, of which seventeen were of a cultural nature, to raise funds for the South African Jewish War Appeal, the

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<sup>285</sup> Minutes of the Zionist Council Meeting, Held on Monday, October 20, 1952, at the *Maon*, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>286</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Monday 24th November, 1952, at the *Maon*, at 8 pm., p.2.

<sup>287</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 65.

<sup>288</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 9, 1945, p.9.

<sup>289</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.9 (May, 1946), 27.

Henrietta Irwell Trade School and WIZO, and to make garments for shipment to Palestine.<sup>290</sup> In the following year much of the society's work fell into abeyance as members of Young WIZO group took extended holidays and moved to other parts of the Union. Undeterred the committee held a highly successful musical afternoon,<sup>291</sup> and were heartened by the attendance and the encouragement offered by the representatives of the Durban Women's Zionist League who attended the function.<sup>292</sup>

In conjunction with the Durban Zionist Youth Movement the Young WIZO held a function addressed by Miss Sallie Kussell, the Secretary of the Union of Jewish Women of South Africa,<sup>293</sup> and organised an *Oneg Shabbat*, in honour of Mr W. Rybko, the official lecturer and propagandist of the South African Zionist Federation.<sup>294</sup> This co-operation between the two groups paved the way for the Young WIZO's eventual absorption into the Zionist Youth Movement, which was completed by May 1948.<sup>295</sup> The ranks of the Zionist Youth Movement were thereby consolidated and upon its amalgamation with the Youth

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<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 37.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.8 (April, 1947), 37-38.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.11 (July, 1947), 37.

<sup>294</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 28, 1947, p.20.

<sup>295</sup> Minutes of Adjourned Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Tuesday, 25th May, 1948, at the *Maon*, at 5.15 pm., p.1.



Section of the South African Jewish Appeal in August 1948 and the creation of the Young Israel Society,<sup>296</sup> it became, for a short while, the home of all young adults who wished to be committed to a Zionist organisation.

The changing fortunes of the other Zionist youth societies in Durban contrasted with the continued growth and development of *Habonim* in this period. Not only did membership of the Movement grow from 120 in 1947<sup>297</sup> to nearly 250 by 1955<sup>298</sup> but from 1951, in addition to the meetings that were held at the *Maon* and at the *Talmud Torah* premises at 37 Silverton Road,<sup>299</sup> meetings for the *Shtilim* age group (under 12 years of age) also came to be held in Durban North.<sup>300</sup> Through the efforts of the *madrichim* from Durban a branch of the Movement was also successfully established in Vryheid in 1948,<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Tuesday, 28th September, 1948, at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>297</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 71.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 61.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80.

<sup>300</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Wednesday, 25th April, 1951, at the Durban Jewish Club at 8.15 pm., p.2.

<sup>301</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 27, 1948, p.14., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 71.



and another branch was formed in Pietermaritzburg in 1950<sup>302</sup> which, owing to a shortage of leaders enjoyed, however, only mixed success.<sup>303</sup>

The steady rise in the fortunes of *Habonim* was in part attributable to the dedication and commitment of the Movement's *madrachim*, who were all members who had reached the senior *Shomrim* age group.<sup>304</sup> Inspired by the events surrounding the creation of the State of Israel, and fired with the idealism of youth, these *madrachim* voluntarily devoted their time to running the different groups. The Durban Movement also had the good fortune to have strong and inspiring persons to fill the most senior post of *bakoach* (chairman). They included Paula Beinart, Moss Kolnik, Sonia Strous, Chookie Woolfson, Havis Stein, Gerald Beinart, Alec Rogoff, Kenny Beck and Judy Stone.<sup>305</sup>

Unlike the leaders of the Durban Zionist Youth Movement, or its successor the Young Israel Society, the *madrachim* of *Habonim* only worked with youth of the community up to the age of approximately 17 years.<sup>306</sup>

<sup>302</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 14., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 72., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 73-74., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 61.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80.

<sup>305</sup> *Habonim Twenty Fifth Anniversary 1933-1958*, (Durban, 1958), pp.7-9.

<sup>306</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 69.

Consequently they had a far greater range of people to work amongst than an organisation which catered specifically for young adults. As most of their members were, furthermore, of school going age the *Habonim madrichim* were also not faced with the problem of members leaving Durban, which was a perennial difficulty with which the other youth societies had to cope.

Along with the support of its members and leaders *Habonim* enjoyed the growing support of the adult community, which increasingly came to recognise the Movement as the principal Zionist youth body in the City. After the Young Israel Society had ceased to function in 1952 the work of *Habonim* amongst the youth took on additional importance within the community, which accordingly lavished its attention and enthusiasm on the Movement. *Habonim* capitalised on the support which it enjoyed by working within the community and by playing its part in communal life.

Indicative of the interest shown by the adult section of the community in the welfare of *Habonim* was the regular attendance of the rabbis and other leading personalities at the Movement's annual *kinnus* (conference), which was held for the first time in April 1950,<sup>307</sup> and was organised annually thereafter.<sup>308</sup> The most

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<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80.

<sup>308</sup> *The Zionist Record South African Menorah Section*, April 27, 1951, p.2., May 30, 1952, p.7., May 1, 1953, p.7., April 30, 1954, p.2.

striking expression of this communal concern for *Habonim*, however, was reflected in the efforts made to secure a permanent home for the Movement. Following upon the recommendation of the Youth Commission in 1951 that the youth, and more particularly that *Habonim*, should have a permanent home, an old house on the premises of the new Hebrew school building, at 75 Silverton Road, was made available by the Durban United Hebrew Congregation as a *bayit* for *Habonim* and other youth and repaired at a cost of £1,000 by the C.N.J.<sup>309</sup> It was officially opened by Mr J. Goldberg, the chairman of the Zionist Council for Natal, on February 17, 1953.<sup>310</sup>

For its part, *Habonim* annually participated in the Communal *Seder*<sup>311</sup> and regularly assisted in the *Yom Haatzmaut* celebrations.<sup>312</sup> It co-operated with the Durban Women's Zionist League, the Jewish War Appeal and the J.N.F. in staging a Cavalcade on the farm of Mr and Mrs A. Beare, in October 1947,<sup>313</sup> and in

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<sup>309</sup>*Hasholom*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 40.

<sup>310</sup>*The Zionist Record*, February 27, 1953, p.13.

<sup>311</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 72., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 73., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 71., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 71., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 61.

<sup>312</sup>*The Zionist Record*, May 5, 1950, p.6., April 24, 1953, p.12., May 21, 1954, p.5., May 6, 1955, p.7.

<sup>313</sup>*Hasholom*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 35 and 37.

conjunction with the Durban Women's Zionist League *Habonim* celebrated Jewish Child's Day, which was intended as an annual event to commemorate the Jewish children who died during World War II, and to express solidarity with the youth of Israel.<sup>314</sup> It also frequently participated in services at the Synagogues of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, and on occasion attended services at Temple David.<sup>315</sup> On behalf of the local Jewish community a *Habonim* dance group participated in a tableau of Folk Dances of the Nations, which formed part of the celebrations in honour of Durban's Civic Centenary in 1954,<sup>316</sup> and took part in a programme on Israel, presented by the Y.M.C.A. in 1955.<sup>317</sup>

An important contributory factor to the progress of *Habonim* was the crystalisation of increasing parent support into a vigorous body, the Natal *Habonim* Lay Committee.<sup>318</sup> Revived after the Second World War,

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<sup>314</sup> *The Zionist Record*, March 24, 1950, p.5., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 71., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 73., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 61.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 72., Minutes of the Zionist Council Meeting, Held on Monday, October 20, 1952, at the *Maon*, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>316</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.10 (June, 1954), 5.

<sup>317</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 25, 1955, p.4.

<sup>318</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 70.



under the chairmanship of Mr Moey Goldberg,<sup>319</sup> the Lay Committee, sensing a desire within the community to give practical assistance to the Movement in its work, decided to enrol Friends of *Habonim*. An annual subscription of 12/- was fixed to cover normal running expenses and to provide a small fund from which the Movement could draw for its requirements.<sup>320</sup> Whilst the Friends assisted the Movement with the considerable organisation work behind many of its major functions, its principal aim lay in seeking to make the parents more aware of what *Habonim* was doing amongst the youth. To this end it arranged Parent's Evenings,<sup>321</sup> at which displays of the Movement's activities were given and joint discussions were conducted.<sup>322</sup> The Friends of *Habonim* was reconstituted in 1952,<sup>323</sup> and for the next two years it conducted a strong membership drive, under the direction of Mr Len Tannenbaum.<sup>324</sup>

*Habonim's* distinct advantage over other Zionist

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<sup>319</sup> Moey Goldberg, "Development and Work of the Friends of *Habonim*," in *Habonim Twenty Fifty Anniversary 1933-1958*, p.12.

<sup>320</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.3 (November, 1946), 30.

<sup>321</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 61., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 70.

<sup>322</sup> Moey Goldberg, "Development and Work of the Friends of *Habonim*," p.12.

<sup>323</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 74.

<sup>324</sup> Moey Goldberg, p.12.

youth bodies in Durban was its ability to devote its efforts and direct its energies principally towards its Zionist and Jewish objectives. In contrast, the Durban Zionist Youth Movement and Young Israel Society, which sought to cater for a specific category of people who fell into a particular age group, had to combine Zionist work with a programme of social activities.

In 1946, as *Habonim* in Durban was celebrating the 13th anniversary of its founding the editor of *Hasholom* accurately summarised the aims and achievements of the Movement when he noted that;

*Habonim* provides an opportunity for the Jewish child to practice in some measure a Jewish form of living about which he otherwise only learns - and that very rarely - from books. By means of specially devised meetings, plays and games, camping and outdoor life *Habonim* brings to bear environmental influences which effect the total personality development of the Jewish child. In addition to training its members for effective citizenship it encourages and fosters positive attitudes towards Jewish life and Jewish religious values. It is but natural that the idea of our National Renaissance should form the backbone of all cultural activity in *Habonim* and that *Chalutzit* should become the ideal of those who desire to live a wholesome Jewish life.<sup>325</sup>

The National Homeland and its development certainly loomed large in the minds of the Movement's members, who were not slow to rise to the challenge of *chalutzik aliyah*, which was upheld as the climax of a members *Habonim* career. Within weeks of the conclusion of the

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<sup>325</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 1.

Second World War a group of local *Habonim* leaders were in fact amongst those who left for Palestine through the Durban Zionist Youth Movement.<sup>326</sup> In the historic period preceding the establishment of a Jewish State enthusiasm remained high. Durban *Habonim* prided itself on the fact that during 1947 and 1948 several of its members left the Union on *aliyah*, whilst others went on *hachsharah* (training) at the Movement's *Hachsharah* Farm in the Transvaal<sup>327</sup> prior to their departure for Israel. The establishment, in 1950, of *Kibbutz* Tzora, which was the first *kibbutz* of South African *Habonim* to be set up in Israel, aroused a fresh interest among members in *chalutzit*. To mark the opening of the *kibbutz* a Tzora weekend was held in Durban,<sup>328</sup> to coincide with the Movement's Tzora Month, during which time reports on the *kibbutz* were widely published and funds were raised for its development.<sup>329</sup> In January 1951 Clara Wittenstein left Durban for *hachsharah*, prior to her *aliyah* to the *kibbutz*,<sup>330</sup> and some months later she was followed by

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<sup>326</sup> See above p.997.

<sup>327</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 71.

<sup>328</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Sunday, 8th October, 1950 at the Durban Jewish Club, at 8 pm., p.2.

<sup>329</sup> *The Zionist Record*, October 27, 1950, p.7.

<sup>330</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 72.

Chookie and Joey Woolfson.<sup>331</sup> A further group of *Habonim olim*, including Massey Hicks of Durban, left for the *kibbutz* on the completion of their *hachsharah* in 1953.<sup>332</sup>

Personal links between Durban *Habonim* and Israel were further strengthened by the participation of local *madrachim* in the post-matric study course for *madrachim* from the Diaspora, in which six months were spent studying in Jerusalem and a further six months were spent on a *kibbutz*. Among the *madrachim* sent by *Habonim* to participate in this course in 1949-1950 was Hillary Koz, of Durban.<sup>333</sup> In the following year Chaim Segal represented Durban in the course,<sup>334</sup> which was attended by Gabriel Koz in 1952,<sup>335</sup> and Judy Stone in 1954.<sup>336</sup> The participants all brought back to the local Movement the knowledge which they had acquired and the benefit which they had gained from their first hand experience of life on *kibbutz*. Study courses of a shorter duration were attended by Gerald Beinart,<sup>337</sup> Alec Rogoff,

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<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 31, 1953, p.9.

<sup>333</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 12-13.

<sup>334</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 73.

<sup>336</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.8 (April, 1955), 24.

<sup>337</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Sunday, 8th October, 1950, at the Durban Jewish Club at 8 pm., p.2.



Kenny Beck and David Geshen,<sup>338</sup> from which the Movement also derived considerable benefit.

Among the many activities arranged by the Movement for its members which reflected *Habonim's* focus on Israel were the celebrations held annually for the youth to mark *Yom Ha atzmaut*.<sup>339</sup>

The Movement's ideals were transmitted to its members through a gradual process of education which involved lectures and a wide variety of functions.<sup>340</sup> One of the most important channels of education in *Habonim* lay in local and national camps. Owing to the war, local camps had been suspended because of a shortage of officers. These however, were revived in December 1947 when Mr and Mrs S. Ernst led a camp at Beare's Farm.<sup>341</sup> National *Habonim* educational activities, such as seminars held in Johannesburg each July and the camps held in East London each December,

<sup>338</sup> Minutes of the Zionist Council Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, on Monday, 20th December, 1954, at 5.15 pm., p.2.

<sup>339</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 72., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 73., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 71.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 61., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 70., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 72., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 73., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 71., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 71., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 61.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 70.

were also well patronised by Durban members and the knowledge and spirit gained from them greatly aided the spirit of the Durban Movement.<sup>342</sup>

The involvement of the Durban *Habonim* in the National Movement's activities gave it an advantage over the other Zionist youth bodies in Durban, which had to work in isolation and without the support of a national body. The close bond between Durban and the other branches of the *Habonim* movement were reinforced by the National seminars that were held in Durban in 1954<sup>343</sup> and 1955,<sup>344</sup> by Durban's involvement in the national celebrations held in July 1951 to mark the 20th anniversary of *Habonim* South Africa,<sup>345</sup> and by its participation in the 10th Biennial *Moatzah* (Conference) of the Movement some months later.<sup>346</sup>

Although part of a nation wide body the Durban branch of *Habonim* did not hold itself aloof from the other Zionist groups operating in the City. Together with the Durban Zionist Youth Movement it held a joint function in December 1947, to commemorate the United

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80.

<sup>343</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.11 (July, 1954), 7.

<sup>344</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 61.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 72.

<sup>346</sup> *The Zionist Record South African Menorah Section*, September, 28, 1951, p.2.

Nation's decision to create a Jewish State.<sup>347</sup> In 1948 it joined with the Zionist Youth Movement and the Youth Section of the South African Jewish Appeal in forming the Natal Jewish Youth Fund.<sup>348</sup> Following the success of its first Third Night *Seder*, in 1947, in which a specially prepared *Haggadah* was used to convey the spirit in which the *Yishuv* celebrated the Festival,<sup>349</sup> the Third Night *Seder* came to be held annually thereafter, in conjunction with the Zionist Youth Movement<sup>350</sup> and later the Young Israel Society.<sup>351</sup> In co-operation with the Young Israel Society, *Habonim* held *Ongei Shabbat* in honour of Rabbi Swift, Chief Rabbi I. Brodie of Great Britain<sup>352</sup> and Dr and Mrs S. Lowy, of the J.N.F. Headquarters in Jerusalem,<sup>353</sup> and held a combined function, which was addressed by Mr A. Markowitz, the Secretary of the South African Ort-Oze.<sup>354</sup> In

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<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, January 9, 1948, p.29.

<sup>348</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 8.

<sup>349</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 61.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 70.

<sup>351</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 37., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 72., *Hasholom*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 40.

<sup>352</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 80.

<sup>353</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Monday, 19th March, 1951, at the Maon, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>354</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.12 (August, 1952), 36.



March 1951 the two youth groups combined with the *Mizrachi* to hold a successful *Purim* function.<sup>355</sup> In August 1951 *Habonim* was also party to the creation of the Natal Zionist Youth Executive.<sup>356</sup> Following its demise *Habonim* resuscitated the Executive in April 1955, with the support of the Students' Jewish Association of Natal University,<sup>357</sup> but it too was of short duration and was discontinued a year after its inception owing to the difficulty of co-ordinating youth work and the fact that there was little for it to do to justify its existence.<sup>358</sup>

In 1954 the Durban branch of *Habonim* celebrated its 21st anniversary by holding a special *Habonim* service at the Park Street Synagogue and a banquet at the Jewish Club.<sup>359</sup> In observing this historic milestone the founders of the Movement in Durban, who were amongst those who participated in the celebrations, had cause to reflect with considerable pride on the advances which *Habonim* had made in the City. Having been set up in the face of considerable opposition *Habonim* had grown, in number and stature, to the point where 21 years after its

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<sup>355</sup> *The Zionist Record*, April 6, 1951, p.21.

<sup>356</sup> *The Zionist Record South African Menorah Section*, October 26, 1951, p.2.

<sup>357</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Monday, April 25, 1955 at 8 pm., p.4.

<sup>358</sup> Minutes of the Zionist Council Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, on Monday, 16th April, 1956, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>359</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.10 (June, 1954), 33.



establishment it had become the sole Zionist youth body in the City and a powerful and positive force amongst the community's youth.

The post-war period, with its increased interest in matters Zionist, prompted a resurgence of activity amongst a number of small essentially Zionist organisations which existed in the City, and inspired the creation of even more such bodies. All these varied groups faced the common problem of attracting workers and supporters to their ranks, and the extent to which they succeeded in remaining active within the community testified to the enthusiasm and devotion of their honorary officers and to the loyalty of their members, as well as the popularity of their cause.

Created in the closing stages of the Second World War,<sup>360</sup> the Durban branch of the Palestine Maritime League, under its chairman, Dr I. Goldberg, concentrated its efforts largely on building up its membership roll. To this end it held a public meeting, at the Jewish Club in December 1945, at which the guest speaker was Mr M. Rivlin, the Organising Secretary for Palestine of the Maritime League,<sup>361</sup> and on May 23, 1946, in celebration of Maritime Day, it held a function which was addressed by Rabbi Prof. I. Abrahams of Cape Town and

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<sup>360</sup> See above p.573.

<sup>361</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, December 11, 1945, p.6.

Rabbi A.H. Freedman.<sup>362</sup> The League also extended hospitality to the crew of the fishing trawler the *Drom Afrika*, which visited the port in May 1947.<sup>363</sup>

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Chairman and his Treasurer/Secretary Mr R. Landeker, by mid-1949 the League had no active committee in Durban and efforts to create such a committee met with no success.<sup>364</sup> A public meeting held by the League in March 1950 failed to stimulate interest in the League within the community<sup>365</sup> and efforts to persuade *Habonim* to form a Sea Scouts Movement, which it was anticipated would serve as a catalyst for reviving the League, also failed to materialise.<sup>366</sup> In February 1954 Dr Goldberg consequently closed the League's banking account in Durban and transferred the money to the head office of the League in Cape Town.<sup>367</sup> The League's demise in Durban

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, May 15, 1946, p.8., *Hasholom*, XXIV No.11 (July, 1946), 33-34.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 35.

<sup>364</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Monday, 18th July, 1949, at 5 pm., p.1.

<sup>365</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Monday, 13th March, 1950, at the residence of Mr J. Goldberg, 313 Clark Road, at 8 pm., p.2.

<sup>366</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Thursday, 14th February, 1952 at the *Maon*, at 8 pm., p.5.

<sup>367</sup> Minutes of the Full Zionist Council for Natal Meeting, Held on Monday, 15th February, 1954, at the Durban Jewish Club, at 8.15 pm., p.3.

appears to have been caused by the branches inability to attract members to its rank or to stimulate communal interest in its cause. It was no doubt also aggravated by the infrequency of the visits made by Israeli ships to Durban harbour. Hopes for the re-establishment of the League in Durban were not, however, entirely abandoned and in June 1954 Mr Stein, the National Organising Secretary, visited Durban for that purpose<sup>368</sup> but with little apparent effect.

During the time that the League was dormant its work in respect of entertaining the crewmen of Israeli ships visiting Durban was undertaken by the Zionist Council for Natal. The Council extended hospitality to the captains and crews of the *S.S. Haifa*, which, in April 1953, was the first Israeli ship to dock in Durban,<sup>369</sup> the *M.S. Etrog*, the flagship of the Israeli Zim Lines, which called at Durban in December 1954, and the Israeli warship *Misgav*, which visited the City in March 1955.<sup>370</sup>

With Palestine very much a focus of Jewish attention, great interest was shown by the community in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Not more than a few weeks after the World War had been successfully concluded Prof. L.A. Mayer, the Rector of the University, and

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<sup>368</sup> Minutes of the Zionist Council Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, on Monday, 26th May, 1954, at 8.00 pm., p.3.

<sup>369</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 65.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 60.



Dr D.W. Senator, the Administrator of the University, accompanied by Mr L. Marks, the Vice-Chairman of the South African Friends of the Hebrew University, visited Durban in the course of a fund raising tour around the Union. On November 6, 1945 a reception in their honour was arranged by the Durban Friends of the Hebrew University at the Jewish Club,<sup>371</sup> where their appeal met with a heartening response.

During the reception it was announced that Mr M.K. Rosenbach had trebled the contribution which he had made at the inauguration of the drive,<sup>372</sup> and that he had created two Deeds of Trust totalling £40,000 for the benefit of the University. One trust for the sum of £25,000 was called the Kozenitski-Rosenbach Educational Trust, the income from which was to be applied for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a Chair in the Faculty of Science at the University. The second Trust, for the sum of £15,000, was called the Kozenitski-Rosenbach Family Scholarship Trust. It was to be applied in establishing and maintaining scholarships to be awarded to necessitous Jewish students from any part of the world who desired to attend the University and to further their studies in the Faculty of Science.<sup>373</sup> The full significance of this generous gift by Mr M.K. Rosenbach

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<sup>371</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, November 7, 1945, p.10.

<sup>372</sup>*The Zionist Record*, November 23, 1945, p.12.

<sup>373</sup>*Ibid.*, May 3, 1946, p.10.



lay in the fact that, at the time that it was made, it was the largest individual endowment ever received by the University from a living donor.<sup>374</sup>

Not content to rest on his laurels, in the following year Mr Rosenbach created a further Trust Fund for the sum of £15,000. This was specifically for the benefit of *yeshivot* in Palestine and for the religious advancement of *Ashkenazi* Jews as well as for charitable and religious institutions and for *Hachnasath Kalah*.<sup>375</sup>

At the reception to Prof. Mayer and Dr Senator a group of donors, Mr H. Brown, Mr A.J. Cohen, Mr P. Frame, the Hart Family, Mrs C. Hart and Rosa, Mr S. Hackner, Mr A. Kaplan, Messrs Moshal and Gevisser, Mr I. Philips, Dr N. Smith, Mr C. Sternberg, Mr R. Shapiro, the Stiller Family, Mr M. Woolfson and Mr H. Zulman,<sup>376</sup> undertook to establish a Chair of Modern Jewish History, which was to be named in memory of Cecil Lyons who had served both the Durban and South African Jewish community with distinction. A sum of £10,000 was subscribed and the amounts promised were made payable over a period of ten years.<sup>377</sup>

In 1947 a further drive for funds for the University

<sup>374</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 4.

<sup>375</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 14, 1946, p.16.

<sup>376</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.7 (March, 1952), 35.

<sup>377</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 23, 1945, p.12., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1954), 71.

was held in the Union. It was launched by Sir Leon Simon, the Chairman of the Executive Council of the Hebrew University and the representative in Palestine of its Board of Governors. Together with Lady Simon, Sir Leon visited the major centres of South Africa including Durban where two receptions were held in their honour on November 27 and November 29.<sup>378</sup> To assist in the task of fund raising a local drive committee was formed, consisting of Rabbi A.H. Freedman, Hon. President; Acting Judge E.S. Henochsberg, Mr S. Moshal and Prof. P. Stein, Hon. Vice-Presidents; Mr A. Stiller, Chairman; Mr M.K. Rosenbach, Vice-Chairman; Mr E.M. Isaacs, Hon. Treasurer; Messrs J. Diamond, M. Solomon, A. Carter, N. Abrahams, Committee. Under this Committee's direction a number of functions were held at the Jewish Club and at the homes of Mr and Mrs M. Freed, Dr and Mrs N. Smith and Mr and Mrs S. Moshal.<sup>379</sup>

Apart from the funds raised by the Committee the Hebrew University also received a substantial sum of money, in July 1948, in terms of the will of Mr M. Morrison, a stalwart of the Durban branch of the Friends. Mr Morrison left a quarter of the residue in his estate after bequests to the University, and instructed in his will that on the death of his wife her share of the residue of the estate was also to go to the University.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 4, 5, 7.

<sup>379</sup> *The Zionist Record*, December 5, 1947, p.17.

<sup>380</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 10, 1948, p.11.

Shortly after the fund raising drive of 1947 the Durban branch of the Friends of the Hebrew University ceased to be active no doubt due to a lack of outside stimulation or a specific purpose such as fund raising. The community's interest in the University, however, nevertheless persisted. The Union of Jewish Women in Durban, and its sister branches around South Africa, took a particular interest in the Parasitology Laboratory of the Hebrew University and were so successful in raising funds for a wing of the Student Hostel at the University that they were asked to support the whole Hostel.<sup>381</sup> Following a function at the Jewish Club, in July 1950, which was held under the auspices of the Friends and the Club's Culture Section, at which Prof. C.F. van Niekerk Fourie, of the Faculty of Commerce at the University of the Orange Free State, and a member of the South African Regional Planning Committee, gave his impressions of his visit to Israel,<sup>382</sup> an unsuccessful attempt was made to revive the Society's activities in Durban.<sup>383</sup>

On the initiative of the Zionist Council for Natal the Friends was successfully resuscitated in Durban early

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<sup>381</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65.

<sup>382</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 7.

<sup>383</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on Wednesday, 26th July, 1950, at 5.15 pm., at the *Maon*, p.1.

in 1952<sup>384</sup> and a Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Mr H.L. Magid.<sup>385</sup> The Committee's primary task was to enrol members who showed their interest in the University by paying an annual membership fee. Whilst campaigns on behalf of the University were carried out with its assistance, the Friends did not conduct any campaign of their own for funds.<sup>386</sup> The Friend's Committee also worked towards re-establishing the Cecil Lyons Chair on a proper footing, and its efforts to re-interest subscribers met with considerable success.<sup>387</sup> Evidence of the renewed interest in Durban in the Hebrew University was reflected in 1952, in the will of Mr Victor Barwin, who left his entire estate, valued at over £16,000, to the University.<sup>388</sup>

During March 1952 the Friends welcomed Dr Ernest Simon, Head of the Department of Education at the Hebrew University, who addressed the community under the auspices of the People's College and spoke at an *Oneg Shabbat* of the Youth Congregation of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation. Dr Simon also addressed a gathering

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<sup>384</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 69.

<sup>385</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.7 (March, 1952), 35.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 71.

<sup>388</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 21, 1952, p.18.



of those interested in the University at the home of Dr and Mrs A. Broomberg on March 15, 1952.<sup>389</sup> A little more than a year later Prof. Saul Adler of the Hebrew University's Medical School visited Durban where he addressed a public meeting at the Jewish Club on the work of the University.<sup>390</sup>

In 1954 Mr Magid resigned as chairman of the Friends<sup>391</sup> and without someone to lead it the Society again went into a period of inactivity which was reversed only in May 1955, when Dr J.J. Frankel accepted the chair.<sup>392</sup> Evidence of the Society's revitalisation was the Einstein Memorial Lecture, addressed by Dr W. Yourgrau which was held under joint auspices with the S.J.A. of Natal University.<sup>393</sup> Dr Frankel resigned as chairman in September 1955<sup>394</sup> and with his resignation the work of the Friends of the Hebrew University in

<sup>389</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.7 (March, 1952), 19 and 21., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 72.

<sup>390</sup> Minutes of the 32nd Executive Committee Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, on Thursday, 9th July, 1953, at 8.15 pm., p.2.

<sup>391</sup> Minutes of the 3rd Actions Committee Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, on Wednesday, 28th July, 1954, at 5.15 pm., p.2.

<sup>392</sup> Minutes of the 24th Actions Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, on Thursday, 12th May, 1955, at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>393</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.11 (July, 1955), 29.

<sup>394</sup> The Zionist Council for Natal Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, on Monday, 19th September, 1955, at 8.00 pm., p.3.

Durban was once again temporarily suspended, demonstrating once more the branch's dependence on its chairman and committee.

The heightened interest of the Jewish community of Durban in the Institutes of higher learning in Israel was not confined solely to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and in 1954 steps were taken to set up a Durban branch of the Friends of the Technion, the Israeli Institute of Technology which had been established in 1924.

In February 1954 Mrs Grace Smith reported to the Zionist Council for Natal that she had been requested to form a Durban branch of the South African Technion Society, in order to obtain subscriptions and bursaries. Whilst fully sympathetic to the cause which Mrs Smith was fostering the Council called on her to tackle the matter in a constitutional manner and to convene a meeting at which the Society could be formally launched.<sup>395</sup>

An informal gathering of interested supporters was consequently held at the home of Dr and Mrs Smith on November 23, 1954. Mr S.J. Birn, a prominent London business man and an ardent Jewish communal worker, gave an address on the part played by the Technion in the development of Israel and strongly advocated the immediate formation of a Friends of the Technion Society

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<sup>395</sup> Minutes of the Full Zionist Council for Natal Meeting, Held on Monday, 15th February, 1954, at the Durban Jewish Club at 8.15 pm., pp.2-3.

in Durban.<sup>396</sup>

A Durban branch of the South African Technion Society was, in fact, formed on May 9, 1955 after a meeting convened by Mrs Smith at the Jewish Club, at which Mr R. Kaplansky, who was a graduate, and whose father was a governor of the Technion for many years, gave a short address. A provisional committee was elected consisting of Mrs N. Smith, Chairman; Mr N. Essakow, Treasurer; Mr M. Ostroff, Secretary; Dr J.J. Frankel, Messrs B. Lazarus, S. Frame, M. Mymin, S. Tomkin, R. Kaplansky, Committee,<sup>397</sup> and Messrs M. Cramer, L. Michelow and M. Meyerowitz were later co-opted to the Committee.<sup>398</sup> In the months following its inception the Committee concentrated its efforts on publicising the work of the Technion and in increasing the number of the Institutes Friends in Durban.

The important part played by *Magen David Adom* (the Jewish equivalent of the Red Cross Society) in the State of Israel's struggle for survival led to a heightened awareness of the organisation's vital work, and prompted Diaspora communities to create branches of the M.D.A. in order to assist it in its work.

Under the auspices of the Union of Jewish Women a

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<sup>396</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.4 (December, 1954), 9 and 11.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.10 (June, 1955), 29.

<sup>398</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 63.

branch of the *Magen David Adom* was formed in Durban, in July 1948.<sup>399</sup> Its first committee included Mesdames N. Smith, Chairman; S. Moshal, Treasurer, S. Narco, Secretary; G. Abel, H. Abrahams, J. Addleson, M. Aufrichtig, G. Baynash, Z. Bloch, H. Brazil, L. Burstein, M. Byala, N. Chanani, J. Chanani, M.P. Deift, R.S. Driman, J. Eagle, R. Fiddel, C. Feinberg, M. Friedman, B. Galgut, J. Green, M. Gitlin, A. Goldberg, I. Hackner, A. Kaplan, M. Kaplan, R. Kaplan, J. Kentridge, L. Leibowitz, L. Lowenstein, M. Perling, N.A. Peltz, F. Rogoff, J. Rubin, F. Samuel, J. Schaffer, R. Silberman, B. Spilka, J. Solomon, H. Sudar, I. Tannenbaum, A. Woolfson, L. Wolfowitz, Committee.<sup>400</sup>

A membership drive was immediately launched and recorded very satisfactory progress.<sup>401</sup> At the same time the Jewish doctors, dentists and chemists of the City undertook to donate an ambulance to the M.D.A. in Israel and formed themselves into a special group, with Dr Pauline Klenerman as organising secretary.<sup>402</sup> The response on the part of those concerned with this project, which was undertaken against a background of continued fighting in the Middle East, was enormously

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<sup>399</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 16, 1948, p.15.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, September 17, 1948, p.14.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*



satisfying and £1,200 was subscribed for the ambulance.<sup>403</sup>

The local branch of the M.D.A. was extremely active,<sup>404</sup> and the organisation on behalf of which it worked, providing as it did medical aid to refugees and all the necessary medical services required by the State of Israel,<sup>405</sup> enjoyed considerable support in Durban. By June 1951 the membership of the Durban branch in fact totalled 750.<sup>406</sup> Much of the success which *Magen David Adom* achieved in Durban was due to the indefatigable efforts of the branch's chairman, Mrs Smith, and her enthusiastic and hard working committee.

In 1951 Mrs Smith attended the Biennial Conference of M.D.A. in Johannesburg, at which Durban was appointed the Regional Centre for Natal.<sup>407</sup> In keeping with its newly acquired status the Durban branch considered ways in which to expand its activities. Plans were even mooted for the creation of a junior section of the M.D.A., in order to make the youth more conscious of the work of the Society.<sup>408</sup>

At the beginning of 1952 a cocktail party was held to welcome Dr H.W. Gordon, the National Chairman of

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, March 4, 1949, p.13.

<sup>404</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 19.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 21.

<sup>406</sup> *The Zionist Record*, June 15, 1951, p.17.

<sup>407</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.11 (July, 1951), 31.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

M.D.A.,<sup>409</sup> who was one of the representatives from the organisation's headquarters in Johannesburg who periodically visited Durban in the interests of M.D.A.<sup>410</sup> Arising out of Dr Gordon's visit the existing Committee was enlarged by the creation of a men's committee whose first members included Rabbi H. Swift, Drs. I. Gordon, S. Kark, J. Addelson, M. Berkowitz, G. Abel, H.R. Goldberg, Messrs L. Brewer, H. Kaplan, Isaacs and L. Tannenbaum.<sup>411</sup> The men's and women's committees combined their efforts in the interests of their cause and came to serve together on one committee. Prospects for the further expansion of the society in Durban appeared particularly bright in 1952 when, as a result of a successful social afternoon at the residence of Mrs M. Ehrlich and another meeting at the residence of Mrs H. Saacks, preparations were made for the creation of a branch of M.D.A. in Durban North.<sup>412</sup> These plans, however, failed to come

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<sup>409</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 1, 1952, p.14.

<sup>410</sup> Others included Mr Twersky, National Secretary of M.D.A. in South Africa, who visited Durban in April, 1949, (*Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 19.) Dr N. Pencharz, a member of the National Committee, who came on a visit in 1951, (*The Zionist Record*, February 1, 1952, p.14.), Miss Rosenberg, Hon. Secretary of the Johannesburg branch of M.D.A. (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 73.) and Mr H. Goldfain, a member of the National Executive who attended the Natal Regional Centre's Annual General Meeting in 1955, (*Hasholom*, XXXIII No.10 (June, 1955), 27.).

<sup>411</sup> *The Zionist Record*, February 1, 1952, p.14.

<sup>412</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 73.

to fruition owing to a number of practical difficulties.

The Regional Centre was principally concerned with fundraising for *Magen David Adom* and for its special projects in Israel, and in propagating the work of the organisation. The Centre's main source of revenue came from subscriptions, although it also benefitted considerably from donations and from functions organised by the Committee to augment its income.<sup>413</sup> A highlight of the Region's fund raising efforts was an outstanding Cabaret Ball held in June 1954 at the *Cosmo Club*, the entire proceeds of which went towards the creation in Israel of a building to house the Marcus Fractionation

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<sup>413</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.11 (July, 1951), 31., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 73., *Hasholom*, XXXII No.8 (April, 1954), 22. Among the fund raising functions arranged by the Committee were a *Chanukah* Concert in December, 1948, (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.6 (February, 1949), 31.) a dance at the *Cosmo Club*, in 1952, (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 73.) a premiere of the Jewish film "The Living Orphan" at the *Planet Cinema*, Umbilo, in November, 1952 (*Ibid.*, XXXII No.8 (April, 1954), 22.) a card evening in May 1953, at the home of Mr and Mrs S. Harris, (*Ibid.*, XXXI No.10 (June, 1953), 26.), a card afternoon at the residence of Mrs G. Smith and jumble sales at the homes of Committee Members, (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1953), 79.) and a card evening in 1955 at the *Mnora Hotel*, (*Hasholom*, XXXIII No.5 (January, 1955), 36.) whose proprietors, Mr and Mrs M. Kerzner and Mr and Mrs A. Wolman were amongst the Society's major supporters. They not only made the facilities of their hotel available to M.D.A., but together with their receptionist Miss A. Stock, they also assisted in collecting substantial amounts of money from their guests, (*Ibid.*, XXXII No.8 (April, 1954), 22., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 63.).



and Plasma Drying Plant.<sup>414</sup>

Within the community the Durban branch of the M.D.A. took steps to acquaint people with the rudiments of first aid, by conducting classes in co-operation with the Red Cross Society<sup>415</sup> and it assumed responsibility for manning first aid posts at Jewish functions<sup>416</sup> and for distributing first aid boxes amongst the various communal organisations.<sup>417</sup> The women members, in what was really an extension of their work on behalf of Israel, assisted annually at the WIZO Fete convened by the Durban Women's Zionist League.<sup>418</sup>

In 1955 the Natal Regional Centre organised a cocktail party to suitably mark the 25th anniversary of *Magen David Adom* in Israel.<sup>419</sup> This was an achievement which for over seven years Durban, through the efforts of a band of dedicated workers, had been identified with and it was a cause which continued to enjoy the support of the entire community.

Through the efforts of the M.D.A. the Jewish doctors

<sup>414</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.11 (July, 1954), 13.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.11 (July, 1951), 31., *The Zionist Record*, February 1, 1952, p.14.

<sup>416</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 73.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 75.

<sup>418</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.5 (January, 1954), 18., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 75., *The Zionist Record*, January 13, 1956, p.15.

<sup>419</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.1 (October, 1955), 26.



of Durban first manifested an interest in Israel when, together with the Jewish dentists and pharmacists of the city, they undertook in 1948, to raise funds for the purchase of an ambulance for the M.D.A. in Israel.<sup>420</sup> This spontaneous expression on the part of the Jewish members of the medical fraternity of Durban to assist in some tangible way in building up Israel's medical services, laid the foundation for the creation of the Medical Committee for Israel, which was formed under the chairmanship of Dr N. Smith in 1952. This Committee, which came under the supervision of the Zionist Council for Natal, sought to interest doctors in medical problems in Israel and handled all applications for nursing recruits.<sup>421</sup>

On the recommendation of the Medical Committee, Dr S. Kark, the officer in charge of Government community and health centres in Durban, and Dr I. Gordon, the Government pathologist in Durban, were included amongst the fifteen delegates chosen in the Union to participate in the Second World Congress of Jewish Physicians, which was held in Jerusalem in August, 1952.<sup>422</sup> As a result of the stimulation of interest among the medical profession in Durban several other Durban doctors, namely

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<sup>420</sup>*The Zionist Record*, September 17, 1948, p.14., March 6, 1949, p.13.

<sup>421</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 69.

<sup>422</sup>*Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 65.

Dr N. Smith, I. Goldberg, C. Kaplan<sup>423</sup> and Pauline Klenerman<sup>424</sup> attended the Congress as observers.

Together with Dr J. Penn, the plastic surgeon, and Dr H. Bentel, the anaesthetist, from Johannesburg, Doctors Kark and Gordon formed a medical team which, besides attending the Congress, worked in hospitals, lectured at the Hebrew University, organised seminars for post-graduates and carried out a survey on certain aspects of medicine, the results of which were presented at the Congress.<sup>425</sup>

As a result of Dr Kark's participation in the Congress at which he presented the findings of his survey of Israel's medical services, the Israeli Government invited him and his wife Dr Emily Kark, who assisted him in his work in Durban, to spend a year in Israel, in order to serve in an advisory capacity to the Minister of Health and to teach at the Hadassah Medical School of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.<sup>426</sup> The Union Government agreed to their secondment and during the period which they spent in Israel the Karks organised and set up a number of community health centres, one of which served Ashkelon, the city which was a specifically

<sup>423</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 18, 1952, p.18.

<sup>424</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, October 2, 1952, p.12.

<sup>425</sup> *The Zionist Record*, July 18, 1952, p.18.

<sup>426</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.6 (February, 1953), 29.

South African Jewish Appeal project.<sup>427</sup>

The Medical Committee took great pride in the positive contribution that its members made to Israel. In addition to the work performed by the Karks one of the Committee's most prominent members, Prof. I. Gordon, was largely responsible for the creation of the Leopold Greenberg Institute of Forensic Medicine.<sup>428</sup> Although relatively few in number, the members of the Committee could justifiably claim to have shared in the upbuilding of Israel's medical services.

In 1950, once the struggle of the immediate post-independence period had passed, and the State felt itself to be securely established, preparations were made for the staging of the 3rd World *Maccabiah*. In Durban, where the *Maccabi* Committee had disbanded after the 2nd *Maccabiah* in 1935 and had not been revived, largely in consequence of the outbreak of World War II, the developments in Israel prompted efforts to reorganise the local Committee.

To help arouse interest in the *Maccabi* movement Mr Maurice Smith, who had participated with enormous success in the 1935 *Maccabiah*, addressed a meeting of Jewish sportsmen at the *Maon*, in March 1950.<sup>429</sup> This was followed almost immediately by the decision to form

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<sup>427</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 61.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>429</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 23.

a committee in connection with the forthcoming *Maccabi* Games in Israel. Mr Harry Carter was elected Chairman; Mr Dave Panovka, Vice-Chairman; Miss Patricia Wacks, Secretary, Mr Edwin Levey, Joint Secretary; Mr Monty Franks, Organising Secretary; Messrs Max Sandler, Maurice Smith, Joe Coll, Miss R. Wesseik and Mrs Lazarus, Management Committee. Mr Cecil Nathan of Pietermaritzburg was made responsible for combing the country districts of Natal for competitors for the Trials which were held in Johannesburg.<sup>430</sup> Among those sent from Natal for the Trials were, Swimming: E. Beare and J. Kozinsky; Athletics: N.F. Luke; Fencing: C. Lentin and A. Oshry; Weight Lifting: R. Beare, I. Bloomberg, R. Cranko and B. Sinclair; Tennis: Miss A. Morris, Miss R. Wesseik, Mrs E.G. Marcus, B. Shagam and G. Lazarus; Hurdles: N. Lubie.<sup>431</sup> The only Natal sportsman to gain selection for the South African team to the *Maccabiah* was Issy Bloomberg, the South African and Empire Champion Weight Lifter, who won the title in his division, much to the delight of his community.<sup>432</sup>

Once the Games in Israel had ended the *Maccabi* Committee was disbanded and it was not reorganised until preparations began in earnest for the 1953 *Maccabiah*.

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<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 15.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.11 (July, 1950), 1-2., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 26.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.2 (October, 1950), 43.



The inaugural meeting of the Natal Committee of the *Maccabi* Council was held on March 12, 1953 at the residence of Major E.B. Isaacs.<sup>433</sup> A strong committee was formed under the chairmanship of the soccer referee Harry Canarick, whilst Bella Schmahmann undertook the secretaryship and Jack Kaplan was elected Treasurer. The Committee comprised H.L. Foreman (bowls), A. Schaffer (tennis), Major E.B. Isaacs and L. Jackson (swimming, boxing, athletics), B. Shagam, J. Celine, M. Franks and A. Richman (Membership Drive sub-committee).<sup>434</sup> At a later stage the Committee was enlarged to include two representatives from Pietermaritzburg, Mr C. Nathan and Mr G. Benjamin.<sup>435</sup> The Committee set about enrolling members and organised selections within the different types of sport that were included in the *Maccabiah's* programme.<sup>436</sup> At the national trials, held in Johannesburg, D. Beagle was chosen for the South African soccer team and N. Lubie was selected for the 110 and 200 metre hurdles.<sup>437</sup> The inclusion of a third Natal sportsman, the weight lifter

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<sup>433</sup> Minutes of the 20th Executive Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held on the 5th March, 1953, at the *Maon*, at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>434</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.8 (April, 1953), 35.

<sup>435</sup> Minutes of the Zionist Council Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, 17th August, 1953, at 8 pm., p.3.

<sup>436</sup> Minutes of the Zionist Council Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, 18th May, 1953, at 8 pm., p.4.

<sup>437</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 7, 1953, p.18.

B. Sinclair, was made conditional upon sufficient funds becoming available,<sup>438</sup> and the Natal Committee ensured his inclusion in the team.<sup>439</sup>

As part of the National *Maccabi* Association, which operated as a special department of the South African Zionist Federation, the Natal Committee did not immediately cease functioning once the 4th *Maccabiah* had ended. This was in large measure due to the dedication of the committee's leaders and was not unentirely the result of increased interest in sport amongst young Jews generally in South Africa. This heightened interest in sport within the Jewish community was fostered by the *Maccabi* Council, which brought large numbers of Jewish sportsmen into the Zionist orbit.<sup>440</sup>

The Natal Committee in fact played an important part in organising the details of the programme of the Israeli Soccer Team which visited Durban in April, 1954.<sup>441</sup> A crowd estimated at more than 15,000 gathered at Kingsmead on Saturday, April 17, to watch Israel and Natal play to a one all draw.<sup>442</sup> Not only was the Jewish community thrilled at the sight of a soccer team with a

<sup>438</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.12 (August, 1953), 21.

<sup>439</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 69.

<sup>440</sup> Gideon Shimoni, p.253.

<sup>441</sup> Minutes of the Full Zionist Council Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, on Wednesday, 20th July, 1954, at 5.15 pm., p.3.

<sup>442</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 19, 1954, p.11.

Star of David on its jersey, representing the State of Israel,<sup>443</sup> but it took particular pride in the inclusion in the Natal team of Harry Miller, who played centre half.<sup>444</sup>

The Durban *Maccabi* Committee promoted sport amongst Jews at a local level by organising a Bowls Tournament in July, 1954,<sup>445</sup> and also made all the arrangements in connection with the visit of the Israeli Table Tennis Team to Durban, during May and June, 1955.<sup>446</sup> The Table Tennis Test between Israel and South Africa saw a number of South African Jews playing in the Union's team, including M. Shotland of Durban, who enjoyed mixed success in his matches against members of the powerful Israeli team.<sup>447</sup>

Within the short space of five years the Durban *Maccabi* Committee had clearly not only succeeded in securing representation in teams selected to represent South Africa at the *Maccabiah*s held in this period, but had also come to be an important factor in respect of organising local Jewish sportsmen and in fostering

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<sup>443</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.9 (May, 1954), 20-21.

<sup>444</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, April 16, 1954, p.15.

<sup>445</sup> The Minutes of the 3rd Actions Committee Meeting, Held at the *Maon*, on Wednesday, 20th July, 1954, at 5.15 pm., p.3.

<sup>446</sup> The Minutes of the 26th Actions Committee Meeting of the Zionist Council for Natal, Held at the *Maon*, On Wednesday, 18th May, 1955, at 5.15 pm., p.1.

<sup>447</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, June 1, 1955, p.2., June 2, 1955, p.17.



sporting ties between the Union and Israel.

The many changes through which the Zionist Movement passed in this period, in consequence of prevailing historic circumstances, can be seen to have filtered through to the local Zionist societies in Durban. The former indifference and apathy towards the Durban Zionist Association gave way to extensive activity and increased involvement, whilst amongst the women and the youth it proved to be a period of consolidation and significant development. Heightened organised political activity, despite the attitude of the Zionist Council, and the emergence of societies connected to the Universities, the *Magan David Adom*, the Medical Committee and the *Maccabi* Movement, all afforded clear evidence of the upsurge in Zionist interest. At the same time members of the community were now afforded an opportunity to give expression to their Zionist sentiments through any one of a variety of channels.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE  
FIELD OF JEWISH WELFARE : 1945 - 1955

The course which Jewish welfare work took in Durban in the post-war decade not only reflected an adaptability on the part of the community's two welfare agencies to meet changing circumstances, but also a sincere wish to sublimate all other considerations out of an earnest desire to advance the cause for which they worked.

## DURBAN JEWISH WOMEN'S GUILD

Immediate post-war problems and long term economic difficulties placed a great burden on the resources of the Guild, which had to help meet the needs of a steadily growing Jewish population that was spared none of the hardships experienced by many of the Union's other citizens.<sup>1</sup> In order to be of assistance to its clients

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<sup>1</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 61., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 63., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 72., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 65., *Hasholom*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 47., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 63.

the Guild was dependent on funds which were derived principally from membership subscriptions, donations, bequests, and an annual grant from the Durban Jewish Community Chest.<sup>2</sup> This obviated the need for fund raising on the part of the Guild, and allowed it to direct all its attention and energies to its work. When, in 1952, prevailing economic instability forced the Guild to draw on its reserves, to the extent of £677, the decision was reluctantly taken to raise subscriptions from 13/- to 21/- per annum.<sup>3</sup> At all times, however, the Guild's policy was to keep its subscriptions as low as possible, so as to ensure that it remained within the means of every woman to become a subscribing member.<sup>4</sup> The soundness of this policy was borne out by the fact that the Guild, with a membership which exceeded 630,<sup>5</sup> was in fact the largest Jewish women's organisation in the City.

At the conclusion of the War the Guild's various Sections were namely Welfare, Sick Visiting, the Flower Fund, Synagogue Vestments, Crockery Plant, Hospitality Committee, and the Knitting Circle.<sup>6</sup> Of these Sections,

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 63.

<sup>3</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 39.

<sup>4</sup> *Durban Jewish Women's Guild Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure 1953* (Durban, 1953), p.18.

<sup>5</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 63.

<sup>6</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.5 (January, 1946), 29.

which embraced the full scope of the Guild's activities, the Knitting Circle was discontinued shortly after hostilities had ended. The Guild subsequently decided that the money which the Circle still had remaining in the bank, and which had been intended to benefit those in the services, should be devoted to that end. It therefore created a bursary for a university student who was either an ex-serviceman or woman, the money being handed over to the South African Jewish Ex-Service League for administration.<sup>7</sup>

At about the same time a new Section evolved, out of a call made in October, 1945 by Mrs A.H. Freedman, upon her retirement as President, in which she urged that a fund be established to endow brides and to supplement their trousseaus.<sup>8</sup> As a result the *Hachnasath Kalah* fund was formed in 1946. It was maintained by the parents of brides and bridegrooms, who were encouraged by the Guild to mark the marriage of their children by contributing in cash and kind to the Fund.<sup>9</sup>

The creation of the Women's Seatholders Organisation, in 1948, which came about largely through the agitation initiated by the Guild,<sup>10</sup> led to the Guild handing over

<sup>7</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 61.

<sup>8</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.5 (January, 1946), 29.

<sup>9</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 61.

<sup>10</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 27. See above p.637.

to the Women's Seatholders responsibility for the catering which it had formerly undertaken with the Union of Jewish Women, in connection with the *brocha* after the annual *Batmitzvah* services.<sup>11</sup> In 1952 the Guild somewhat reluctantly surrendered the care of the Synagogue Vestments, for which it had always been responsible, to the Women's Seatholders Organisation.<sup>12</sup> In so doing it ended its intimate association with the Hebrew Congregation, and came to be solely a welfare body concerned primarily with assisting the needy and caring for the sick and elderly of the community.

Evidence of the Guild's increasingly active involvement in the sphere of benevolent work was reflected in the formation in 1951 of an After Care Section with Mesdames F. Metzger and L. Fobb as its first conveners.<sup>13</sup> Members of this Section visited convalescents in their homes after their discharge from hospital, and also befriended elderly and lonely members of the Jewish community who were taken out for drives.<sup>14</sup> Growing interest on the part of the Guild in the more

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<sup>11</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 67.

<sup>12</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 39.

<sup>13</sup> *Durban Jewish Women's Guild Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure* 1953, p.18.

<sup>14</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 65.



senior members of the community led to the founding in 1952, by Mrs L. Jacobs, of the Golden Age Club.<sup>15</sup> Under the Club's auspices lonely and particularly elderly, people met once a month to spend a social afternoon in congenial company<sup>16</sup> where they were provided with tea and cakes by the Guild, whose members helped to transport those who wished to attend the Club. After a few months the Golden Age Club was taken over by the Union of Jewish Women,<sup>17</sup> which was more suited to run such a project.

Within the broad view of the scope of its work the Women's Guild, together with the Jewish Benevolent Society, gave financial assistance to the Pietermaritzburg Congregation's Hebrew Burial Board, in order to assist it to carry out regular visits to Jewish patients at the Fort Napier Mental Home and to distribute comforts and gifts amongst them.<sup>18</sup> On occasion members of the Guild joined in the visits that were made to the Institution.<sup>19</sup> The Guild also associated itself with the work of the *Chevra Kadisha* of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation and from amongst its ranks women came forward to assist

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<sup>15</sup> *Durban Jewish Women's Guild Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure 1953*, p.19.

<sup>16</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 47.

<sup>17</sup> *Durban Jewish Women's Guild Souvenir Golden Jubilee Brochure 1953*, p.19.

<sup>18</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.6 (February, 1947), 14.

<sup>19</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 63.

in the final rites associated with the dead.<sup>20</sup>

The Guild was represented on the Council of the Natal Jewry, the Union of Jewish Women and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies,<sup>21</sup> at whose Biennial Congress its delegates were always present,<sup>22</sup> and also enjoyed representation on the Child Welfare Society, the National Council of Women and the Social Services.<sup>23</sup> The first Jewish Welfare Conference held in Johannesburg in 1951 was also attended by a delegation from the Guild, consisting of Mesdames L. Jacobs and M. Moshal.<sup>24</sup> The extent of the Guild's activities made it necessary for it to find permanent office accommodation and when the communal offices were established in *Pioneer Arcade*, in Berea Road, a portion of the premises was sub-let to the Guild by the C.N.J.<sup>25</sup>

On October 26, 1953 the Guild observed a milestone in its history when it celebrated its Golden Jubilee. To mark the occasion a reception was held at the Jewish

<sup>20</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.5 (January, 1946), 29., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 61., *Hasholom*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 39.

<sup>21</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 47.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 11., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.10 (June, 1951), 17.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 47.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 38.

<sup>25</sup> *The Zionist Record*, May 29, 1953, p.13.

Club at which the guest of honour was the Rev. A. Levy of Port Elizabeth, who, in 1903, during his ministry in Durban, had encouraged the women of the community to form the Jewish Ladies Helping Hand Society, from which the Guild had developed.<sup>26</sup> A highlight of the celebrations was a tableau in which, against a background of 50 burning candles, the seven hon. life members of the Guild, Mesdames N. Leonard, G. Hirschfield, E. Hart, V. Robinson, L. Fobb, D. Moss-Morris and L. Davis each lit a candle of a giant *menorah* and Mrs L. Jacobs, a trustee, lit a memorial candle. A brochure recording the establishment and growth of the Guild was also produced to coincide with the celebrations.<sup>27</sup>

The Jubilee celebrations were an opportune time for the Guild to reflect on its achievements and on its distinguished record of service to the community. Ever faithful to the ideals of its founders it had dispensed assistance to the needy, cared for the Holy Vestments of the Synagogue, and had furthermore, during the time when it was the only organised women's society in Durban, undertaken numerous other projects both within the Jewish community, and the wider community of which the Jews were only a part. The diverse activities which the Guild had been forced to undertake had, nevertheless, never led it

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<sup>26</sup> See S.G. Cohen, *A History of the Jews of Durban 1825-1918*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation (University of Natal, Durban, 1977), pp.283-284.

<sup>27</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 11.

to be distracted from the cause for which it had been formed and which, by 1953, had come to be its sole area of activity.

#### DURBAN JEWISH BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

In its usual unobtrusive manner, and with a great measure of secrecy and discretion, the Jewish Benevolent Society carried out its programme of welfare work amongst those who fell victim to the economic hardships which followed the end of World War II. Most of the Society's work remained, of necessity, unpublicised, but it was common knowledge that once the necessary interviews and investigations had been conducted, and the Committee's findings had been assessed, that no worthy cases were ever denied help and advice.<sup>28</sup>

In the area of relief assistance one of the Society's major achievements in this period was the bringing into effect of a Loan Fund. A special meeting to discuss the advisability of such a scheme was held by the Benevolent Society, early in 1951, in response to growing agitation amongst its members for the creation of such a fund.<sup>29</sup> Arising from this meeting the decision was

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<sup>28</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 62., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 60.

<sup>29</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 9.



taken at the Society's annual general meeting that same year to establish such a fund. Among the more important provisos connected with the granting of loans were that:

- 1) The Loan Committee was empowered to arrange the terms of repayment of loans and to charge interest thereon, but that it had the discretion to waive interest according to circumstances.
- 2) No one loan to one person was to exceed £1,000.
- 3) The maximum period for repayment was to be 3 years.<sup>30</sup>

The fund was administered entirely independently of the other work of the Society by a committee consisting of Messrs H. Zulman, Chairman; I.B. Shagam, Hon. Treasurer; I. Geshen and the President of the Benevolent Society, ex-officio.<sup>31</sup> It came to play an increasingly important role in the activities of the Society, and amply justified the pleas that had preceded its establishment.<sup>32</sup>

The Loan Fund and the other branches of the Society's

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.4 (December, 1951), 33.

<sup>31</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 62.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 60.

work were financed from the resources of the Society. These were derived from the annual subscriptions of £1 ls per annum<sup>33</sup> which were paid by the Society's more than 680 members,<sup>34</sup> from bequests, such as those made in terms of the will of the late Moses Morrison of Escombe,<sup>35</sup> and from the Society's allocation from the Durban Jewish Community Chest.<sup>36</sup>

Another important aspect of the Benevolent Society's work was sick visiting, which was carried out continuously by members of the Committee who regularly visited the Addington and other hospitals in Durban.<sup>37</sup> The Society also kept in close contact with the Burial Board of the Pietermaritzburg Hebrew Congregation which regularly visited the Jewish patients in the Fort Napier Mental Home and the Mental Institution at Howick. It not only donated funds for the provision of comforts for these patients,<sup>38</sup> but, infrequently, members of the Benevolent

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 63.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 60.

<sup>35</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, August 10, 1948, p.11.

<sup>36</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 63., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 61.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 63., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 62., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 60.

<sup>38</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.6 (February, 1947), 14.

Society joined in the visits to these institutions.<sup>39</sup>

The Society kept in contact with Jewish Benevolent Societies in other centres in the Union and collaborated closely with the Durban Jewish Women's Guild, with whom it worked in the greatest harmony. The high degree of co-operation that existed between the executive officers of the two committees ensured that overlapping of activities was kept to a minimum.<sup>40</sup>

#### THE DURBAN JEWISH WELFARE ASSOCIATION

The similarity in the work being carried out by the Jewish Benevolent Society and the Durban Jewish Women's Guild led to a growing desire on the part of members of both Societies for an amalgamation of their respective organisations so that complete co-ordination could be achieved. Both parties recognised the advantages to be accrued from such a development, which would not only eliminate duplication but would also allow for many facets of welfare work such as rehabilitation, vocational guidance, provision of employment and accommodation, which were carried out by various bodies, to be

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.12 (August, 1949), 19., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 62., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 61.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 63., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 62., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 61.

effectively co-ordinated.

The first steps towards the creation of a single welfare organisation for the community came about on the initiative of the Council of Natal Jewry and its President, Mr J.J. Friedman. Under their direction a combined meeting of the Durban Jewish Women's Guild, the Durban Jewish Benevolent Society and the Hon. Officers of the C.N.J. was held on February 28, 1952, at which it was resolved, "to recommend in principle that it is considered desirable that a welfare institution be formed, incorporating the Durban Jewish Women's Guild and the Durban Jewish Benevolent Society, which body would strive for the carrying out of all Jewish social welfare work in Durban."<sup>41</sup>

Further meetings followed and the committees of the two societies, after consultation with their respective members and at joint sessions, "unanimously decided in principle that it was in the interests of the Community that the two organisations should be amalgamated and that a Welfare Organisation should be formed."<sup>42</sup> A sub-committee, under the chairmanship of Mr I. Geshen,

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<sup>41</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held on Thursday, 6th March, 1952, at the Durban Jewish Club, at 8 pm., p.1.

<sup>42</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry, Held on Thursday, 5th June, 1952, at the Durban Jewish Club, at 8 pm., pp.1-2.



was appointed to deal with the matter.<sup>43</sup> By common agreement it was decided that amalgamation would not take place until the Durban Jewish Women's Guild had celebrated its Golden Jubilee, in the latter part of the year.<sup>44</sup>

Amalgamation was, in fact, only achieved in 1955 during which time an ad hoc committee of members of the Committees of the two societies, together with Messrs J.J. Friedman and H.L. Magid held several meetings to discuss a draft Constitution for the proposed new organisation.<sup>45</sup>

On Wednesday evening October 26, 1955 at the Durban Jewish Club, under the chairmanship of Dr B. Moshal, the President of the Council of Natal Jewry, more than 100 members of the Benevolent Society and the Women's Guild unanimously agreed to the amalgamation of their two respective societies and approved the Constitution of the newly formed Durban Jewish Welfare Association. Among those who addressed the historic meeting were Mr B. Barnett, President of the Benevolent Society; Mrs I. Kaplan, Vice-President of the Guild; Mr H.L. Magid, Mr I. Geshen, Rabbi H. Swift, Rabbi M. Miller, Dr F. Sichel of the Witwatersrand Jewish Welfare Council,

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<sup>43</sup> Report of the Executive of the Council of Natal Jewry. To be Presented at the 22nd Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Durban Jewish Club, on Thursday, 16th April, 1953, at 8 pm., p.7.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 60.

and Mrs M. Moshal.<sup>46</sup> The election of office bearers of the Welfare Association, conducted according to the new Constitution, resulted as follows: Mr I. Geshen, President; Mr B. Barnett and Mrs C. Beare, Vice-Presidents; Mr F. Lapin, Hon. Treasurer; Mrs E. Stange, Hon. Secretary; Mr H. Zulman and Mrs M. Moshal, Trustees; Mesdames L. Byala, B. Deift, R. Diamond, I. Kaplan, F. Metzger, A. Savell, A. Silver, G. Hackner and S. Schultz and Messrs A. Beare, A. Baranov, L. Fobb, H. Kaplan, A. Levine, R. Silbert, H. Silver, H.L. Magid, L. Eibowitz and O. Lurie, Committee.

In addition Messrs A. Berman, B. Fisher and Dr M. Byala were elected as Honorary Vice-Presidents of the Association, and they were accorded a place on the Council together with the Hon. Life Members, who included Mesdames L. Davis, L. Fobb, G. Hirschfield, L. Jacobs, A. Leonard, H. Moss-Morris, V. Robinson, P. Stein and the Rev. A. Levy.<sup>47</sup> The Association's Council thus included the Hon. Life Members, Hon. Vice-Presidents and Executive Officers of the Durban Jewish Benevolent Society and the Durban Jewish Women's Guild.

The creation of the Welfare Association engendered great enthusiasm within the community and initial

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<sup>46</sup> *The Zionist Record*, November 25, 1955, p.17.

<sup>47</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 30.

membership of the Association was in the neighbourhood of 900.<sup>48</sup> The offices of the Women's Guild in *Pioneer Arcade* were made the headquarters of the Association and the C.N.J. placed its offices at the disposal of the Association for the purpose of meetings and a certain amount of clerical work.<sup>49</sup> As did its predecessors the Welfare Association received the major part of its finances from the Durban Jewish Community Chest,<sup>50</sup> and revenue from this source was augmented by the income derived from subscriptions, bequests and donations.

The decision of the Durban Jewish Benevolent Society and the Durban Jewish Women's Guild to give up their independent status in order to better serve the community was regarded as a great step forward, promising, as it did, "a conservation of energy, economy on administration, more thorough investigation and treatment through the services of a trained social worker-secretary, and greater efficiency to the mutual benefit of all."<sup>51</sup>

In light of the acclaim with which the creation of the Jewish Welfare Association was welcomed it is somewhat strange that it was only after the Benevolent Society had been functioning for 57 years and the Guild for just 5 years less, that the amalgamation should

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

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, [XXXVI No.11] (July, 1958), 19.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 7-8.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

finally have been achieved.

The reason for the protracted existence of two separate welfare bodies would seem to have lain in the nature of the work which they respectively performed. Whilst the Benevolent Society began as a men's welfare organisation and remained constantly faithful to that objective, the Guild, as has already been noted, transcended its responsibilities towards the needy by also engaging in a variety of activities which, owing to the absence of any other suitable organisation, it felt responsible to undertake on behalf of the Jewish community, and more especially its women.

Consequently the Guild assumed numerous social and philanthropic duties, in addition to its work on behalf of the poor and in connection with the Hebrew Congregation. For as long as these manifold tasks were part of its work programme the Guild was in no position to combine with the Benevolent Society, for it in fact followed a path which was very different to that pursued by the men.

Once, however, the Union of Jewish Women had been established in Durban and had taken on the social activities previously carried out by the Guild, and the Women's Seatholder's Organisation had relieved the Guild of its work load in respect of the Congregation then, as had been anticipated by the founders of the Jewish Ladies' Helping Hand Society, from which the Guild had developed, the work of the Guild came to be focused entirely on



welfare. At that stage the work of the Guild and the Benevolent Society did come to overlap somewhat and amalgamation then became the logical objective of those concerned with the advancement of welfare services within the Jewish community.

The part played by the Council of Natal Jewry in bringing about the creation of the Welfare Association should also not be minimised. The establishment of the Durban Jewish Welfare Association was very much in keeping with the thinking of the C.N.J. which favoured consolidation of available resources, in this as in all other areas of communal endeavour, in the interests of the community as a whole. It was the C.N.J. which initiated the negotiations that resulted in the amalgamation of the Benevolent Society and the Guild, and the organised and responsible manner in which its objective was attained testified to the effectiveness of the Council in co-ordinating and directing communal affairs.

The newly created Jewish Welfare Association offered the Jewish community a more modern and effective way in which to deal with the complex and increasing numbers of cases requiring assistance, and the Association proved itself to be a valuable and important facet of communal life.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

THE DURBANJEWISH CLUB : 1945 - 1955

In the decade which followed the conclusion of World War II the Jewish Club strove to satisfy the needs of its members and of the community. Whilst its efforts in this direction were not without success they were fraught with numerous difficulties.

By the end of 1945 almost all sectional and sporting activities, disrupted in consequence of the war, had been revived to a greater or lesser extent and were all functioning effectively.<sup>1</sup> The discharge of most of the Union's soldiers during 1946 swelled the ranks of the various sections, and this was manifested in the increased activity within the Entertainment and Dramatic Sections,<sup>2</sup> and the renewed interest shown in Billiards.<sup>3</sup> For a few short months a Dinner and Cards and a Physical Culture

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<sup>1</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 19, 21, 23, 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXV No.1 (September, 1946), 39.

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

Section enjoyed considerable support<sup>4</sup> and a Bridge Section, inaugurated in April 1946, met with immediate success.<sup>5</sup> Membership of the Squash<sup>6</sup> and Tennis Sections<sup>7</sup> grew dramatically and the increase in the size of the Bowling Section, as reflected in the appointment of a groundsman and full time Green Ranger<sup>8</sup> and the efforts to resuscitate the women's section of the Circle Bowling Club, made it evident that more greens would have to be built in the future.<sup>9</sup>

In October 1945 the Club had made application to the City Council for a lease of the land on the west of its premises, which included Nathaniel Isaacs Road, for the extension of its sporting facilities. The growth of the sporting sections added a sense of urgency to the protracted negotiations which were conducted between the Club and the City Council. In 1947 agreement was finally reached and the Club was granted a lease on the ground for a period of ten years, subject to certain conditions. In the event of the leased land being used for any

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<sup>4</sup> Revived in 1946, (*Hasholom*, XXV No.3 (November, 1946), 29.) they had ceased to function by the end of 1947. (*Ibid.*, XXVI No.3 (November, 1947), 5.).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.9 (May, 1946), 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXV No.1 (September, 1946), 39.

<sup>7</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.3 (November, 1946), 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXV No.1 (September, 1946), 35.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.1 (September, 1945), 35-36.

purpose other than for that for which it had been granted the City Council reserved the right to repossess the land. The Club, furthermore, agreed that if the whole area was no longer used for sporting purposes then there would be a moral obligation on it to relinquish even its existing sporting facilities.<sup>10</sup> At the successful conclusion of these negotiations the Jewish Club paid tribute to the sub-committee which had dealt with this matter, comprising of Mr A. Stiller, the Chairman of the Executive; the Hon. Officers and Mr L.T. Levey and the delegation which had waited on the City Council consisting of Mr S. Moshal, Spokesman; Messrs A. Stiller, L.S. Ditz, L.T. Levey, M. Wolpert and H. Brown.<sup>11</sup>

To formulate a long term general policy for the Club's future needs and expansion a special sub-committee was set up with Mr C. Sternberg as Convener; and Messrs E.S. Henochsberg, S. Moshal, L.S. Ditz, M. Wolpert, A. Stiller, H.D. Freed, L.T. Levey, A. Miller and J.A. Bierman, with power to co-opt. Messrs C.R. Fridjhon, S.N. Tomkin and R. Oppenheim, in their capacity as architects, were appointed as technical advisors to the sub-committee and were charged with the task of drawing up draft plans for new sporting fields and possible

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<sup>10</sup> Arnold Miller, *Durban Jewish Club A History On the Occasion of its Silver Jubilee*, May, 1956, (Durban, 1956), p.50.

<sup>11</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.3 (November, 1947), 11.



improvements to the premises as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

The Governing Bodies recognised that the developments which they were considering, both imminent and prospective, would entail the raising of substantial funds. They therefore called on the community to ensure that the means essential for these undertakings were available.<sup>13</sup>

The question of finance had already, in 1946, come to be a major preoccupation of the Club's officers. Rising expenses brought about by the effects of the post-war depression, the costs of renovating the building after its long period of service as a canteen, and the increased rates level after a revaluation of the land on which it stood, had led to the Club anticipating a budgetary deficit in the region of £2,000. For the first time since its inception the Club was reluctantly forced to increase its subscriptions by one guinea per head, bringing the rates to £4 4. 0. for men and £3 3. 0. for women.<sup>14</sup>

As the construction of the four new tennis courts and two new bowling greens proceeded on the land acquired from the City Council,<sup>15</sup> the Club's Governing Bodies were faced with the prospect of finding £6,000 to pay for the laying of these facilities, and the erection

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.8 (April, 1946), 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 55 and 57.

of fences, the grassing of banks and the installation of retaining walls. To this was added the need to find a further £10,000-£11,000 to cover the costs in respect of alterations to the Club's building, repairs and replenishments, due in large measure to the extensive use made of the premises during the war. An extensive campaign was therefore undertaken to enrol Foundation Members.<sup>16</sup>

The problem of inadequate finance led to subscriptions paid by single men, and men whose wives were not members, being raised in 1949 by £1 1s per annum, but this did not go far towards alleviating the Club's financial obligations.<sup>17</sup> A voluntary levy of one guinea per member, accepted at the annual general meeting that same year, was also incapable of rectifying the Club's adverse financial status.<sup>18</sup> Learning of the Club's financial difficulties one of its members, Mr P. Frame, offered to lend the Council the sum of £7,500, free of interest for two years, a gesture which was much appreciated and greatly lauded.<sup>19</sup>

Notwithstanding the financial hardships which faced the Club, development of the Club's sporting facilities proceeded uninterrupted. For a short time a flourishing

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<sup>16</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 5.

<sup>17</sup> Arnold Miller, p.51.

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

<sup>19</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 1-2.

Table Tennis Section, chaired by Mr E.B. Levy, functioned at the Club and enjoyed considerable support.<sup>20</sup> In February 1949 the newly laid tennis courts were officially handed over to the Tennis Section and from April of that year were in intermittent use. At the outset the Courts did not pass muster, owing to a deficiency in their composition, but this problem was soon adequately overcome.<sup>21</sup> By the end of 1949 one of the new bowling greens was also fit for use,<sup>22</sup> and in the following year the second of the two new bowling greens was handed over by the Contractor.<sup>23</sup> Additions were also made to the Bowling and Tennis pavillions to provide much needed facilities.<sup>24</sup>

A milestone in the history of the Jewish Club was reached in December, 1949, when the Council and Executive approved the principle of embarking on a scheme for a country club and golf course.<sup>25</sup> A desire within the ranks of the Club's membership to set up a Golf Section had manifested itself in 1946, when, upon returning from active service, Jewish sportsmen had still

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<sup>20</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 55.

<sup>21</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.8 (April, 1949), 38., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 63.

<sup>22</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 15.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 22.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Arnold Miller, p.52.

found themselves to be discriminated against by many golf clubs in Durban.

In November 1946 the Chairman of the Jewish Club, Mr L. Levey, had convened a meeting of those interested in forming a Jewish golf club. Among those present had been Mr Hayman Levy who, at the meeting had been appointed secretary of an informal committee which had subsequently carried out unsuccessful negotiations for a piece of ground at Atholl Heights. Together with Mr V. Lipinski, Mr Levy had then formed an independent committee to look elsewhere for ground.

During January 1948 Mr Levy's committee had joined up with a committee, under the chairmanship of Mr L.S. Ditz, which had been set up some months earlier in order to investigate alternative sites for the Club's sporting facilities. For almost two years the search for a suitable site had continued and in that time the golfers had, largely through Mr Levy's efforts, sought to raise the necessary funds to establish a golf club. By August 1949, when ground, some 370 acres in extent in the New Germany area, had become available to the Club for the sum of £25,000, of which £12,000 was available on bond, the golfers had collected pledges to the value of £10,000, payable over a period of five years and within months this figure had reached £18,000.

On December 12, 1949, the Council and the Executive of the Club resolved to be associated with the efforts to create a golf course and country club. In view of the



fact that the funds promised by the golfers by way of pledges would not accumulate for some years and would be specifically required for the development of the golf course, the Club undertook to find the £13,000 necessary to acquire the land, on which an option was secured until March 1951.

The task of raising the necessary funds was spearheaded by Mr S. Moshal and was immensely eased by the donation of £10,000 made by Mr Hirsch Hillman, the first President of the Jewish Institute and the first Hon. President of the Club, in memory of his son David. The balance of the money needed was raised by means of seven loans of £500 each, free of interest for five years, which were lent by Messrs A. Beare, A.J. Cohen, S. Moshal, C. Sternberg, M. Wolpert, M. Woolfson and H. Zulman.<sup>26</sup>

On March 12, 1951 a special general meeting of Club members authorised the Council to exercise its option to purchase the land. In thanking Mr Hillman for his generous gift the meeting unanimously agreed that the property should be named David Hillman Park. It was resolved that once the Club had acquired the land an area, some 200 acres in extent, would be leased for a golf course, subject to certain terms and conditions that would ensure that the Country Club was safeguarded for the benefit of the Jewish community.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.54-56.

<sup>27</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.7 (March, 1951), 17.

It was subsequently agreed that the Country Club would remain the property of the Jewish Club; that the Committee of the Country Club would include persons appointed by the Council of the Jewish Club; that the Council of the Jewish Club would have the final and absolute decision in respect of policy and capital expenditure and that every member of the Jewish Club would have the right to become a member of the Country Club.<sup>28</sup>

The inaugural meeting of the Circle Country Club was held on April 18, 1951, at which the first Management Committee consisting of Mr H. Levy, Chairman; Messrs D. Basckin, V. Lipinski, J. Coll, R. Goldberg, H. Mymin, H. Polack, H. Cohen, M. Frank, B. Meyerowitz, H. Friedland, W. Berman, D. Solomon, Dr S. Fine, Mesdames R. Goldberg and V. Lipinski was elected.<sup>29</sup> Mr Levy served as chairman of the Country Club until 1955, when, upon his retirement, he was elected the Club's first Hon. President.<sup>30</sup> The Circle Country Club became a fully constituted body at its first annual general meeting, held on September 20, 1951, when its draft constitution was passed with certain amendments. Opportunity was also taken of the occasion to elect Mr H. Hillman, honorary life patron, and Mr S. Moshal

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>30</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 75.

an honorary life member.<sup>31</sup> The dream of the golfing enthusiasts within the community was thus brought a step closer to realisation, whilst the rest of the community looked forward to the establishment of recreational facilities on the portion of David Hillman Park which was not to be used as a golf course.<sup>32</sup>

Construction of the golf course began on September 3, 1951<sup>33</sup> and a year later the entire course had been laid out, a dam to ensure the regular supply of water for the maintenance of the greens had been erected, and a tarred road to the Club had been constructed.<sup>34</sup> The enormous costs in connection with the purchasing of equipment, the employment and organising of a labour force and the construction of the course were in large measure offset by the funds pledged by those who enrolled as foundation members and who, in March 1953, numbered 311.<sup>35</sup> The conversion of existing buildings into a suitable club house was achieved through the generosity of Mr P. Frame, who made available a loan of £8,000 free of interest for two years for this purpose.<sup>36</sup>

Once construction of the golf course was completed

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<sup>31</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.2 (October, 1951), 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 57.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 44.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

a special meeting of the Circle Country Club was held by the Management Committee on November 9, 1953, with the object of forming a Golf Section and electing a golf committee who would undertake the drafting of rules and regulations of the Section and would arrange for play on the course. Mr H. Mymin was unanimously elected Captain, Mr H. Freed, Vice-Captain; and Messrs A. Abrahams, E. Braham, J. Droyman, M.C. Freed, R. Goldberg, J. Goldreich, D.M. Solomon and Dr J. Klaff, Committee.<sup>37</sup>

A Circle Ladies' Golf Section was inaugurated on December 3, 1953 and Mrs Z. Goldberg was elected Captain; Mrs D. Hellman, Secretary; Mrs J. Kaye, Hon. Treasurer; Mesdames E. Ditz, I. Mymin, S. Lipinski, Committee.<sup>38</sup>

The Committee having decided that the course was ready for play made available the first eighteen holes on December 12, 1953, and during the first four weeks of play 280 members and 130 visitors made use of the course.<sup>39</sup> The first competition was held on the course on February 7, 1954,<sup>40</sup> and some two months later the Circle Country Club opened its doors to general membership.<sup>41</sup>

Ambitious plans were contemplated for the extension of the amenities of David Hillman Park and particularly insofar as the youth of the community was concerned.

<sup>37</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 35.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.7 (March, 1954), 31.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.6 (February, 1954), 29 and 32.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.8 (April, 1954), 4-5.



Members of *Habonim* in fact used the property for camping and various other types of Movement activity.<sup>42</sup>

Whilst discussions over the future development of David Hillman Park continued, the Club authorities, hoping to offset the heavy financial burden which the Club had had to shoulder in establishing the amenity, entered into negotiations with private enterprise for the leasing of approximately 120 acres for afforestation and a further ten acres for the cultivation of bananas.<sup>43</sup>

Alongside the development of the Circle Country Club progress was simultaneously recorded in many other areas of sporting activity by the different sections of the Jewish Club. Within the Bowls Section the women adopted their own set of bye-laws, in November 1950, and formed themselves into an autonomous section of the Circle Bowling Club.<sup>44</sup> The women bowlers derived considerable satisfaction from Mrs J. Sklarchik's success in winning the 1949 Harriet Mitchell Singles Handicap, which was open to lady members of all Durban and District Clubs.<sup>45</sup> They also took great pride in the victory achieved by Mesdames E. Greenberg, B. Abro, S. Sternberg and S. Levy who, in 1951, won their section in the Natal Bowling Championships.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Arnold Miller, p.57.

<sup>43</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 23-24.

<sup>44</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 56.

<sup>45</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 21.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.10 (June, 1951), 31.

In 1954 the whole community joined the Bowling Club in welcoming the news that Mrs Vera Friede had won the Natal Singles Championships and was also the winner in the Pairs and Rinks Sections.<sup>47</sup> In the following year it shared in the Bowling Club's pride in Mrs Friede's election as a member of the Natal Women's Bowling Association.<sup>48</sup> Considerable satisfaction was also felt over the part played by Mr A. Foreman in arranging the catering for the 1950 South African Bowling Tournament; and in his subsequent election to the Executive of the Natal Bowling Association.<sup>49</sup> In April 1955 when the South African Bowls Tournament was again held in Durban Mr I. Smith was in charge of catering arrangements<sup>50</sup> and Mr Foreman was chairman of the Tournament Committee.<sup>51</sup> That same year Mr Foreman was elected President of the Natal Bowling Association.<sup>52</sup> Developments within the Circle Bowling Club were reflected in the official opening of two new greens, in October 1952,<sup>53</sup> and the opening of a new pavillion by Mr M. Solomon, the President of the Jewish

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<sup>47</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 47.

<sup>48</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.9 (May, 1955), 32.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 29.

<sup>50</sup> Arnold Miller, p.62.

<sup>51</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.7 (March, 1955), 30.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.10 (June, 1955), 36.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 38.

Club, in July, 1954.<sup>54</sup>

The members of the Circle Squash Rackets Club, through their significant achievements on the squash courts, also added lustre to the name of the Jewish Club. In 1950 Mr Jack Kaplan was selected to represent Natal in the Inter-Provincial matches in Johannesburg. In the same year his team mates, Messrs Brian Shagam and Wally Stiller were the winner and runner up respectively in the Natal Plate Competition.<sup>55</sup> A year later Jack Kaplan was not only chosen to captain the Natal Squash Team,<sup>56</sup> but was also the winner of the Natal Open Squash Championships.<sup>57</sup> When in 1955 the Natal Squash Rackets Association nominated three Natal players for the South African Squash Trials for selection for the Springbok team to meet a touring British team, two of the Natal players, Jack Kaplan and Brian Shagam, were from Circle.<sup>58</sup> With the pre-eminent place which it had secured in squash circles it was hardly surprising that in 1955 the Circle won the Durban Squash League Championships.<sup>59</sup>

No less notable than the achievements recorded by other sporting sections was the Circle Tennis Teams

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.11 (July, 1954), 31.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 29.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.11 (July, 1951), 40.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.12 (August, 1951), 39.

<sup>58</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 73.

<sup>59</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.2 (October, 1955), 29.

success in winning the Sachs Trophy in 1951 and 1955 by beating teams from Balfour Park, Jewish Guild and Wingate Club.<sup>60</sup>

The stature of the small but extremely active Billiards Section was greatly enhanced with the election in January 1955 of Mr D. Faiga, as Vice-Chairman of the Durban and District Amateur Snooker and Billiards League.<sup>61</sup>

In more sedate fashion the reputation of the Club was further heightened in 1954 when Miss Valerie von Reiche, a member of the Chess Section which had been disbanded in 1947,<sup>62</sup> and only re-established in 1952,<sup>63</sup> won the Championship Crown.<sup>64</sup>

The development of the Club in respect of its sporting facilities and the creation of the David Hillman Park was an outstanding feature of the Club's history in this period. Progress in this direction was, however, viewed with a mingled sense of pride and disappointment. Whilst sport had long been a feature of Club activity, the focus of Club life had always been the cultural and social activities, for which the Club had principally been created, and which until the war years had largely remained its *raison d'etre*. The work of the Culture

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIX No.12 (August, 1951), 33., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (October, 1955), 32.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.7 (March, 1955), 35.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.3 (November, 1947), 17.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 15.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.4 (December, 1954), 33.



Section was, in fact, generally regarded as the feature which in many respects distinguished it from other Clubs in the City with equally fine sporting facilities.<sup>65</sup> Consequently when in the post-war period a reduction in the activities of these sections and a weakening of the centrality of the Club in the lives of many of its members became apparent it aroused considerable consternation.

The cultural activities of the Club, after having been virtually terminated by the creation of the canteen and the absence of members on active service abroad, could not, with the cessation of the war, be immediately restored to their former level of vitality. When in fact, in 1946, efforts were made to resuscitate cultural affairs within the Club, the pivotal place once occupied by the Club in providing cultural stimulation for its members and the Jewish community had come to be effectively filled by the Jewish Education Council. As a result, the Club's cultural work did not have the same important role to fulfill as had been the case prior to the creation of the Education Council. Nevertheless it still had a particular part to play in the community's cultural life.

The Club's Culture Section and the Education Council maintained a close spirit of consultation and harmony. Many of the functions arranged by the Education Council were held at the Jewish Club, and very often these were

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.5 (January, 1947), 1-2.

in fact arranged under joint auspices with the Culture Section, and less frequently in co-operation with the C.N.J.<sup>66</sup> Although this arrangement prevented unnecessary duplication of activities it tended to subordinate the role of the Club's Culture Section, often reducing it to what appeared to be a mere venue from which the Education Council and other organisations could effectively operate.<sup>67</sup>

In 1947 a call was made in the *Hasholom* to restore the Culture Section to the pre-eminent position which it had once enjoyed in Club life and which had enabled it to be a moral force within the community.<sup>68</sup> At the Section's annual general meeting in February of that year one of its stalwarts, Dr B. Moshal, was unanimously appointed Chairman, and under his direction the Section was effectively re-organised.<sup>69</sup> Whilst links with the Jewish Education Council and the C.N.J. were retained, and lectures continued to be arranged in co-operation with them<sup>70</sup> a programme of separate activities was also undertaken. This included readings,<sup>71</sup> and a debate that

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<sup>66</sup> Arnold Miller, p.48.

<sup>67</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 1-3.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.5 (January, 1947), 1-2.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 27.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.9 (May, 1947), 35., *Ibid.*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 27., *Ibid.*, XXV No.12 (August, 1947), 33., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 29 and 31. *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 25 and 27.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.9 (May, 1947), 35.

was held against the International Club.<sup>72</sup> Although extremely well received they were insufficient in themselves to silence the critics of the Section who wished to see the Culture Section reassert itself and devise its own programme of lectures independent of the Jewish Education Council.<sup>73</sup>

The importance of the Culture Section's work lay not, however, in convening lectures but rather in areas of cultural activity, not directly within the scope of the activities of the Jewish Education Council. A most significant development within the Culture Section was the meeting held on September 2, 1947, to which Dr Moshal invited all those interested in forming a Yiddish speaking group, and which resulted in the inauguration of a Yiddish sub-section of the Culture Section. Mr B. Luksenberg was elected its first Chairman; Mrs F. Rogoff, Secretary; Miss R. Blumenfeld, Messrs Ehrlich (Senior), Altshuler, F. Rogoff, Edelman and P. Deift, Committee; Dr B. Moshal and Mrs I.V. Katz were appointed to the Committee as representatives of the Culture Section.<sup>74</sup> The Yiddish Section held its inaugural function on November 11, 1947, in the form of a Yiddish

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 31.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 1-3.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 31.

music and drama evening, which was well attended by the community.<sup>75</sup> From 1949 the Yiddish Culture Section came under the chairmanship of Mr F. Rogoff,<sup>76</sup> and mainly due to his personal initiative and drive the Section enjoyed considerable success.<sup>77</sup> The Yiddish Culture Section from 1950 no longer formed part of the Culture Section and although a separate Section in its own right it nevertheless co-operated closely with the Culture Section and the Jewish Education Council.<sup>78</sup>

The Yiddish Culture Section organised a full and varied programme of activities.<sup>79</sup> The highlights of its functions included a concert by the eminent Yiddish actress Nusia Gold in 1950;<sup>80</sup> a Yiddish concert featuring

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 25.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 19., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 27., *Ibid.*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 23., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 19., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 8., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.3 (November, 1954), 23., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 21.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.8 (April, 1951), 39.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 53., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 59., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 59., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 51., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 47., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 47., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 43., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 65.

<sup>80</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 45.



Cantor S. Mandel, which was held in 1952;<sup>81</sup> an evening to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Yiddish writer and thinker I.L. Peretz, also held in 1952;<sup>82</sup> a presentation of the play *Tevie der Milcheker* by Sholom Aleichem, presented by *Jacob Mansdorf & Co.* in 1954,<sup>83</sup> and a concert starring one of the founders of the *Habimah Co.*, Chayelev Gruber, who was on a short visit to South Africa from Israel during 1955.<sup>84</sup>

Whilst the rehabilitation of the Culture Section was widely regarded in Club circles as the most heartening achievement of 1947,<sup>85</sup> consternation was still felt over the disinterest shown by the community in the Club's valuable collection of Judaica and in the inactivity of the Library Section generally.<sup>86</sup>

The library, which also came under the scope of the Culture Section's activities,<sup>87</sup> was assigned a special committee to deal with its reorganisation.<sup>88</sup> It was not until 1949, however, that a special sub-committee was formed to catalogue the books and a further sub-committee

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 15.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 26.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.10 (June, 1954), 25.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.3 (December, 1955), 29.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.3 (November, 1947), 1-2.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 1-3.

<sup>87</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 48.

<sup>88</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.3 (November, 1947), 31.

set up to acquire new books to augment the Club's collection.<sup>89</sup> Interest in the Library was greatly aroused by the successful Book Week, held by the Culture Section in co-operation with the Jewish Education Council, in May 1949,<sup>90</sup> in which the major part of the exhibits were drawn from the Club library.<sup>91</sup>

Notwithstanding attempts to popularise this aspect of Club life, it was not until 1954 that some measure of success in this regard was clearly noticeable. This change in the fortunes of the library was brought about by the creation, in that year, of a Library Committee, chaired by Mr H. Moss-Morris. This sub-section not only completed the task of reclassifying all the books but also formed a sub-committee to supervise the purchasing of new books.<sup>92</sup> Extensive efforts were also made to publicise the library and proof of success in this area was evident from the need for the Library to arrange to open not only on Sunday afternoons but also on Thursday afternoons to cope with the rise in the number of borrowers.<sup>93</sup> The fluctuating fortunes of the library proved that the success which a section of the Club attained was in many

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<sup>89</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 59.

<sup>90</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, May 23, 1949, p.6.

<sup>91</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 59.

<sup>92</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.7 (March, 1954), 35.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.10 (June, 1954), 25.

respects largely dependant on the enthusiasm and effort of its respective committee and on its ability to arouse the interest of the members of the Club.

With the resuscitation of the Debating Section, under the direction of the Culture Section, in 1949, renewed interest was also shown in the activities of the Section generally.<sup>94</sup> Discontinued during 1950, debating was revived the following year, with Mrs B. Schmahmann as Chairman.<sup>95</sup> Considerable satisfaction was expressed at the Club's annual general meeting in 1952 over the popularity of the activities of the Culture Section, which was a marked contrast to the feelings articulated in former years.<sup>96</sup> Support for the Debating Section was, however, inconsistent and it was generally regretted that the Section did not receive the support it deserved or its efforts merited.<sup>97</sup>

In view of the work of the Jewish Education Council it was not surprising that the support for the Culture Section, when compared with the pre-war period, had diminished considerably. No longer did the Section enjoy the pre-eminence which it had once held in the area of culture within the Jewish community. With changed time and circumstances the needs of members had altered too,

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<sup>94</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 59.

<sup>95</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 23.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.4 (December, 1952), 7.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.5 (January, 1955), 9.



and yet the fact that the Section continued to function demonstrated that it still had a part to play in Jewish cultural life, a part which had to be adapted to changed circumstances, but a valuable part nonetheless. In place of the former emphasis on lectures the Section now placed importance on the work of the Yiddish Section, the library facilities and the provision of a platform for debates, all of which were areas of activity not really within the ambit of the work of the Jewish Education Council, but important facets of cultural endeavour nevertheless.

The vacillating fortunes of the Culture Section was endemic of the inconsistent interest generally shown by the members towards their Club. With the end of the war an appeal was made by Mr L. Levey, the Club's chairman, for the young men and women who had been engaged in the branches of the Services to take their share in running the Club and to invigorate it with their youthful enthusiasm and driving force.<sup>98</sup> Few new workers, however, came forward to offer their assistance.<sup>99</sup> This lethargy on the part of the younger members to take up their part in running the Club was also coupled with the growing realisation that whilst members generally enjoyed the facilities of the sporting section, attended dances, lectures and plays they no longer regarded the Club as

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 21.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.3 (November, 1946), 1-2., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 1-2.



their second home.<sup>100</sup>

The decline in the pre-eminence once enjoyed by the Club amongst its members was not attributable to any one factor but appears to have been the result of changing circumstances. In the first instance the apparent unwillingness of the young members to take up running of the Club stemmed from the disruption caused by the war. Those young men and women who would normally have been gaining the necessary experience to run the different sections were on duty abroad, leaving the older members with the task of maintaining the Club.<sup>101</sup>

The older members of the Club were the stalwarts, the men and women who with youthful optimism and farsighted vision had set up the Circle, from which the Club had developed, and who, from the time of the Circle's inception, had held the reins of office. Despite statements by the Governing Bodies to the contrary there was a feeling among the younger members that the older members were reluctant to surrender control of the institution which they had built up<sup>102</sup> and this was resented by the younger people.<sup>103</sup>

Whatever truth lay in the allegations against the older members the fact remained that whilst they had once

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 1-2.

<sup>101</sup> Arnold Miller, p.48.

<sup>102</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 21.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 1-2.

been the youthful leaders of an organisation which was central to the needs of the community they were, by the end of the war, no longer young and their Club no longer enjoyed the status that it once had.

Although social barriers remained, Jews were after the war also more readily able to find sporting companions, intellectual and social stimulation, and recreational pleasure outside the Club precincts. The Club, therefore, had to compete for support with other organisations which offered similar facilities. The younger generation, having little or no recollection of the effort expended in setting up the Club did not, therefore, automatically share the commitment and loyalty to the Club which was displayed by the older members.

In 1949 when support for the Club had diminished to such an extent that weekly Club nights had been discontinued,<sup>104</sup> efforts were directed towards trying to recapture the former Club spirit.<sup>105</sup> As a first step a special Hospitality Committee was formed in May, 1950, with Mr P. Abro, Chairman; Mr D.M. Driman, Vice-Chairman; and a Women's Section with Mrs D.M. Driman, Chairman; Mrs A. Abro, Vice-Chairman; Mrs E. Cohen, Hon. Secretary.<sup>106</sup> The Committee's main purpose was to popularise the Club and in pursuit of their objective the members of the

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-7.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>106</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 59.

Committee endeavoured to make Club functions sociable and enjoyable and sought to help members feel at home in their own Club.

To mark the anniversary of the Club's opening the Committee, largely through Mr Abro's efforts, inaugurated a scheme to suitably commemorate the event. Club Day, as it came to be known, at the suggestion of Mr N.E. Abrahams, the Club's President, was planned as an annual activity to be held as close as possible to May 4, the date of the Club's opening.<sup>107</sup> The first Club Day was held on Sunday, June 11, 1950 and involved all sections of the Club.<sup>108</sup> It proved to be the most outstanding function held at the Club for many years.<sup>109</sup> Thereafter it remained a highlight of the Club's calendar.<sup>110</sup> In 1952 it was the climax of the celebrations held in connection with the 21st anniversary of the Club's opening.<sup>111</sup>

The Hospitality Committee also held numerous other

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<sup>107</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 11.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-13.

<sup>109</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 59.

<sup>110</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.9 (May, 1951), 13., *Ibid.*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 6., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.10 (June, 1953), 29., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.9 (May, 1954), 27., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.9 (May, 1955), 20.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 6.

functions,<sup>112</sup> arranged social evenings for new members;<sup>113</sup> and sent a letter of welcome from the Committee to all new members detailing all the facilities that the Club offered.<sup>114</sup> Members of the Committee also acted as hosts and hostesses on the night of the annual Club soiree, which traditionally marked the start of the year's activities, and at all Club functions as well as at weekly Club nights, which were soon revived.<sup>115</sup> By 1954 when the Hospitality Committee discontinued its work, interest if not enthusiasm for the Club had, to some extent, been aroused, although the problem of insufficient support from young people persisted.<sup>116</sup>

Notwithstanding the difficulties encountered in

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<sup>112</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 59., *Hasholom*, XXX No.4 (December, 1951), 5., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 21.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.4 (December, 1951), 5., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 50.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 50.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, *Hasholom*, XXXI No.2 (October, 1952), 4., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 50.

<sup>116</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.3 (November, 1954), 3.



regard to sectional activity nor the problems in respect of membership involvement and leadership, membership rose annually,<sup>117</sup> largely due to the growth of the sporting sections, and the Club continued to serve the community in a manner as unique as the institution itself.

Unlike any other Club in Durban the Jewish Club did not see itself as being run only for the exclusive benefit of its members and it concerned itself with the Jewish community of Durban as a whole. The Club remained the focal point of Jewish communal life, the place where in times of national sadness or joy Durban Jewry gathered to give public expression to its feelings. It also continued to serve as the forum for a wide range of activities, held under the auspices of different communal organisations, and as the venue for innumerable private functions and receptions. Even after 1948, when its Constitution was amended and, largely influenced by the fact that it occupied publicly owned ground on lease, the clause restricting its membership to persons of the Jewish faith was deleted, the Club's aims and objects

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<sup>117</sup> In 1945 membership stood at 1051., (*Ibid.*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 19.). This increased to 1110 in 1946, (*Ibid.*, XXV No.3 (November, 1946), 27.) 1142 in 1947, (*Ibid.*, XXVI No.3 (November, 1947), 13.) 1218 in 1948, (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.3 (November, 1948), 21.) 1308 in 1949, (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 19.) 1523 in 1950, (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 25.) 1951 in 1950, (*Ibid.*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 21.) 1550 in 1952, (*Ibid.*, XXX No.3 (November, 1952), 17.) 1552 in 1953, (*Ibid.*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 7.) 1559 in 1954, (*Ibid.*, XXXIII No.3 (November, 1954), 23.) 1672 in 1955., (*Ibid.*, XXXIV No.3 (November, 1955), 20.).

remained unaltered.<sup>118</sup>

For the benefit of the community the Jewish Club, in 1947, began to serve meals at reasonable tariffs.<sup>119</sup> It was hoped that the newly furnished tearoom would attract a large clientele, but it in fact soon became apparent that the Club could not compete successfully with the established restaurants and grill rooms in the City.<sup>120</sup>

In respect of catering for functions held on its premises the Club encountered innumerable difficulties when, in 1947, it attempted to revert to *Kosher* catering which had discontinued after the opening of the canteen. Primarily it proved to be impossible to secure sufficient quantities of *Kosher* meat,<sup>121</sup> but by 1950, once a regular supply of *Kosher* meat could be arranged, all catering facilities became completely *Kosher*.<sup>122</sup> This step was welcomed not only because it enabled all members to enjoy the catering facilities of the Club but because it was felt that the Club as a Jewish communal institution, "should be a place to which any Jew could be brought."<sup>123</sup>

The Club's Bursary Sub-Committee, drawn from members

<sup>118</sup>Arnold Miller, p.50.

<sup>119</sup>*Hasholom*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 13.

<sup>120</sup>Arnold Miller, p.50.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, p.48.

<sup>122</sup>*Hasholom*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 22.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-2.

of the Executive,<sup>124</sup> continued to deal with the annual distribution of Club bursaries to pupils at primary and secondary schools and at University, whilst at the same time it also administered the Sol Jacobson and Michael Duchon bursaries.<sup>125</sup> In this way the Club reflected its concern for the educational advancement of the Jewish youth of Durban, and demonstrated once more its sense of communal responsibility.

The widespread concern shown generally by the Jewish community at this time for the future of its youth was shared by the Club. Together with the Jewish Education Council it grappled with ways in which to integrate the youth into communal life, and to this end a sub-committee of the Club spent much of 1946 in discussions with various youth groups. Arising from the sub-committee's report, which was made available in 1947, the Club decided to introduce a new type of membership for those between the ages of 18 and 25 years, with subscriptions at £1 10s 0d per annum for men and £1 for women. The Club made clear its desire to encourage the Jewish youth of Durban to become fully involved in its activities, subject only

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.7 (March, 1954), 33.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.3 (November, 1946), 28., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.3 (November, 1947), 15., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.3 (November, 1948), 22., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 21., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 29., *Ibid.*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 25., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 19., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 9., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.3 (November, 1954), 25., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 22.



to the limitations of the facilities which the Club was able to make available. The intention of the Governing Bodies was for the youth to form and administer their own Section of the Club, under the guidance of the Executive, and for a large part of the premises to be reserved for their use on Saturday nights.<sup>126</sup>

Although during 1949 steps were taken to alter the Club Rules, so as to enable young men and women up to the age of 25 years to become Junior Members of the Club, relatively few took advantage of this facility, which was bedevilled by the problem of inadequate accommodation.<sup>127</sup>

Concern persisted, however, for the well being of the youth. In 1951 a Commission was appointed by the C.N.J. to investigate the position of Jewish youth in Natal and their integration into the life of the community and representatives of the Council and Executive gave evidence on behalf of the Club.<sup>128</sup>

The report of the Youth Commission suggested, *inter alia*, that the Club should be doing much more for the youth and to this end the Club convened a meeting of the Jewish youth of Durban. This resulted in the election of an enthusiastic committee which during 1953 arranged no less than nine successful functions.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Arnold Miller pp.49-50.

<sup>127</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.3 (November, 1949), 17.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 21.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 7.



Arising out of the Commission's recommendations, steps were taken during 1954 to enable persons between the age of 16 and 25 years to take up junior membership of the Club, in the hope that such a step would enable the Club to cater for a substantial number of the Jewish youth of Durban.<sup>130</sup>

The alteration of the Club's Constitution to allow for junior membership and the reduction in the minimum age of junior members from 18 to 16 years was followed by the formation of a separate Youth Section, in 1955, which enjoyed the full status of other Club Sections.<sup>131</sup> The Youth Section organised a number of successful functions in the course of the year,<sup>132</sup> and junior membership of the Club rose to 170,<sup>133</sup> but the problem of inadequate accommodation persisted.

The Club's longstanding association with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies was maintained in this period by the participation of delegates from the Club in the Biennial Congresses of the Board.<sup>134</sup> Its support for the cause of Zionism was suitably acknowledged at the

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.5 (January, 1955), 9.

<sup>131</sup> Arnold Miller, p.61.

<sup>132</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.6 (February, 1955), 30., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.7 (March, 1955), 29., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.9 (May, 1955), 23 and 25., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.12 (August, 1955), 29., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (October, 1955), 30.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 20.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 11., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.10 (June, 1951), 17.

Second Natal Zionist Conference in 1950 when delegates inscribed the Club in the Golden Book of the J.N.F. as a token of appreciation for the many services rendered by the Club to the local Zionist organisations and the National Movement.<sup>135</sup> An expression of the Club's interest in Israel was the floating trophy in the form of a silver cup which was presented by the Club to the Ramat Gan Bowling Club, which was the first bowling club established in Israel.<sup>136</sup>

Through luncheons organised by the Luncheon Section of the Club, both members of the Club and the Jewish community of Durban as a whole paid tribute to local members of the community who had achieved distinction in

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<sup>135</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 68.

<sup>136</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 6., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.7 (March, 1954), 8-9.

a wide variety of fields<sup>137</sup> and to notable Jewish personalities in public<sup>138</sup> and communal life.<sup>139</sup>

The activities of the Luncheon Section also served as a vehicle for the Public Relations work undertaken by the Club and helped to strengthen the ties between the Jewish community and its Gentile neighbours. Apart from

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<sup>137</sup> Including Mr A. Goldberg M.P., (*The Natal Mercury*, May 10, 1946, p.6.) Mr Hector Hart, the President of the Natal Chamber of Industries, (*Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 25.) Mr H.L. Magid, the President of the C.N.J., (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.11 (July, 1949), 15.). Mr and Mrs F.C. Hollander on the occasion of their Golden Wedding, (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.12 (August, 1949), 17.) Mr S.N. Tomkin, President-in-Chief of the South African Institute of Architects (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1949), 7.) Rabbi and Mrs H. Swift, (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 27.) Mr A. Levine, President of the Natal Teacher's Society, (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.11 (July, 1950), 19.) Mr J.J. Friedman, the President of the C.N.J. (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 34-35.) Mr and Mrs S. Moshal, (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.2 (October, 1950), 21.) Mr A. Levine, the President of the C.N.J. (*Ibid.*, XXXI No.11 (July, 1953), 7.) and Mr E.S. Henochsberg, on his election to the Bench. (*Ibid.*, XXXIV No.2 (October, 1953), 17.).

<sup>138</sup> Including Dr Henry Gluckmann, the Union's Minister of Health (*The Natal Mercury*, October 8, 1946, p.6.) Mr Justice L.E. Greenberg, (*Hasholom*, XXX No.12 (August, 1952), 4-5.) and Councillor H. Miller, the Mayor of Johannesburg. (*Ibid.*, XXXII No.2 (October, 1953), 17.).

<sup>139</sup> Including Miss Sallie Kussel, Organising Secretary of the Union of Jewish Women (*Ibid.*, XXV No.11 (July, 1947), 29.) and Mrs S. Sloman, National President of the Union of Jewish Women of South Africa (*Ibid.*, XXXI No.10 (June, 1953), 13.).

the annual Luncheon in honour of the Mayors of Durban,<sup>140</sup> numerous other public personalities were afforded an opportunity through these luncheons to meet with the community and to speak on matters of mutual concern to them and their Jewish hosts.<sup>141</sup>

Equally important vehicles for public relations work with the Gentile community, were the Club's sporting sections, all of which were affiliated to Provincial bodies and which offered venues for league matches and

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<sup>140</sup> These included luncheons in honour of Councillor L. Boyd, (*Ibid.*, XXVI No.3 (November, 1947), 13 *Ibid.*, XXVII No.8 (April, 1949), 21.) Councillor K. Clarke (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.7 (March, 1950), 4.) Councillor P. Osborn, (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.7 (March, 1951), 8-9., *Ibid.*, XXX No.7 (March, 1952), 7., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.8 (April, 1953), 9., *Ibid.*, XXII No.7 (March, 1954), 7 and 24.) and Councillor R.A. Carte. (*Ibid.*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 21.).

<sup>141</sup> Including Sir Godfrey Higgins, the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, (*The Natal Mercury*, October 8, 1946, p.6.) Mr F. Evans, President of the Natal Chamber of Industries, (*Hasholom*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 25.) Mr J.H. Hofmeyr, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Union, (*Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 4-5.) the Administrator of Natal Dr the Hon. D.G. Shepstone, (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.3 (November, 1948), 21.) Mr M. Broughton, Editor of *The Natal Daily News*, (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 37.) Mr Andre Huguenet, the Director of the National Theatre, (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.2 (October, 1950), 21.) Mr Dudley Nourse, the Captain of the South African Cricket Team, (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.5 (April, 1951), 37.) Mr C.M. Booysen, Director of Education for Natal, (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.10 (June, 1951), 6.) the Judge President, the Hon. Mr Justice F.N. Broome (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.12 (August, 1951), 17.) and Mr E. Dunn, Durban's Musical Director, (*Ibid.*, XXX No.4 (December, 1951), 11.).



individual hospitality.<sup>142</sup> The many plays and revues staged by the Dramatic and Entertainment Sections were not only attended by members of the Gentile community, but also included non-members in their casts.<sup>143</sup> In 1946 the Drama Section in fact, acted as host for the National Provincial Festival for the Federation of Amateur Theatrical Societies of South Africa<sup>144</sup> and in the following year this Section represented Natal in the Theatrical Societies' National Festival in Bloemfontein.<sup>145</sup> Innumerable lectures were also arranged by the Culture Section at which memorable speeches were delivered by a variety of Gentile speakers.<sup>146</sup>

The history of the Club in this period was marked by a number of contradictions. On the one hand it faced numerous problems in respect of leadership, membership involvement, and finance whilst, on the other hand, it experienced a growth in membership and activity. All the while it remained a centre of Jewish communal life and yet whilst Club members appreciated the services which, through their continued support, the Club performed for the rest of the community, the community generally appeared to take the Club's existence for granted.

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<sup>142</sup> Arnold Miller, p.58.

<sup>143</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.1 (October, 1955), 9.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.3 (November, 1946), 28.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 15.

<sup>146</sup> Arnold Miller, p.58.

Non-members, whilst using the facilities of the Club, did not appear to be unduly troubled by the fact that those facilities which they used were paid for and maintained by Club members. As the Club, by its own admission, was maintained not only for its members but for the community as a whole, such action on the part of non-members, whilst strongly deprecated, did not inhibit the Club from fulfilling its declared objectives<sup>147</sup> and members by and large came forward to help the Club to discharge its financial obligations.

By 1951 the growth in sectional activities and the increased use of the Club's facilities by other Jewish organisations<sup>148</sup> led to the realisation that Club activities were becoming limited owing to the heavy demands which were being made on available space.<sup>149</sup> Before steps were taken, however, to extend the Club's premises, negotiations were entered into with the City Council in order to secure fresh leases over the Club's property, as the existing leases were due to expire in 1954, with an option thereafter for a further 25 years. Agreement between the City Council and the Club was achieved in August, 1952 with the granting of two leases by the Council.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 1-2.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.4 (December, 1951), 1-2.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 21.

<sup>150</sup> Arnold Miller, p.58.

The first lease, for 99 years, was in respect of the land on which the existing Club buildings stood, plus an additional strip whereby the Club's frontage was extended along Old Fort Road, from Playfair to Brickhill Roads. The lease stipulated that within ten years from the date of its commencement additions to the existing buildings or the erection of new buildings had to be undertaken which would bring about a total value of the buildings on the land of at least £30,000.<sup>151</sup>

It was further agreed that rents and rates on the area would be compounded, taking into account the Club's ability to pay the amount to be reviewed at eleven year periods. For the first eleven years the payment was to be £15,000 per annum, plus any additional rates incurred as a result of building additions.<sup>152</sup>

The second lease was for 27 years and was for the area used by the Club for sporting facilities. It fixed the rental for the land at £1 8s 6d per acre. The lease was terminable by the Corporation at any time subject to three years notice. In the event of notice to terminate the lease being served, within fifteen years of its commencement the City Council had to compensate the Club and make alternative suitable ground available.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59. and *Hasholom*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 11.

<sup>152</sup> Arnold Miller, p.59.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Hasholom*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 11 and 13.

With the matter of tenure satisfactorily settled the future development of the Club came under serious discussion amongst members. There was general agreement over the inability of the existing buildings to cope with the calls made on it by the different sections. Extensive use was made of the hall, often to the exclusion of other sections and to the detriment of private functions, whilst inadequate catering and cloak room facilities served to aggravate the Club's problems whenever it had to cope with large private receptions. The progress of the Youth Section was also found to be severely hampered by a lack of suitable accommodation.<sup>154</sup>

Once the leases with the City Council had been approved by the Administrator little time was lost by the Club in setting up a building sub-committee, under the chairmanship of Mr C. Sternberg, for the purpose of considering plans and alterations to the Club premises. The services of three architects, namely Messrs C. Fridjhon, Oppenheim and S.N. Tomkin, were engaged and plans began to be formulated.<sup>155</sup>

The initial report revealed that additions envisaged included plans for a large hall, a larger bar, larger billiard room, card rooms, better cloak rooms, offices, a strong room, additional kitchen facilities, improved stage and dressing rooms, storage rooms, servants quarters

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<sup>154</sup> Arnold Miller, pp.59-60.

<sup>155</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.3 (November, 1953), 5.



and improved quarters for the manager.<sup>156</sup> Economic considerations however, forced these plans to be modified considerably.

Great interest was manifested among members in the proposals of the building sub-committee and a great divergence of opinion amongst members became clearly apparent. Warnings were issued against hasty decisions being made to satisfy passing whims and the disused gymnasium was held up as an example in point. General agreement existed amongst members over the need for a proper lounge, the foyer, library and tea room inadequately filling this void, and for the creation of adequate shower rooms for the benefit of all sporting sections. There was general unanimity too over the need for special facilities for the youth.<sup>157</sup>

Once plans had been accepted in principle for the extension of the Club's premises, at a total cost including furnishing of £60,000, the Council was faced with the major problem of finding the funds necessary to bring the scheme to fruition. A sub-committee, consisting of Messrs M. Solomon, S. Moshal, M. Wolpert, P. Frame, M. Woolfson and L.S. Ditz, was appointed to consider ways and means whereby this sum could be raised. The constant and increasing use made of the Club's premises, not only by sectional committees but by the community generally,

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<sup>156</sup> Arnold Miller, p.60.

<sup>157</sup> Hasholom, XXXII No.5 (January, 1954), 3-4.

made expansion vital and the Council, conscious of its responsibility to the Club's members and to Durban Jewry gave its sanction to the ambitious building scheme.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup>*Ibid.*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 23-24.

## CHAPTER XL

IN THE SERVICE OF  
THE COMMUNITY : 1945 - 1955

The service organisations of the Jewish community, whilst all catering for different sections of the community were characterised by a number of similarities. All of these organisations served not only those within their ranks but the Jewish and general community of which they were a part, and all contributed to the social, cultural and intellectual advancement of their members and the fostering of cordial ties with their Jewish and Gentile neighbours.

## UNION OF JEWISH WOMEN

Plunged by prevailing world circumstances into an ambitious programme of war work which it had pursued alongside its regular activities, the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women had emerged steeled to meet the challenges of the post-war decade.

The Union continued in this period to occupy a unique position within the fabric of Jewish communal life. On a national level, it was the first Jewish

women's group in South Africa to concern itself with both Jewish and South African matters, and in its activities it strove to ensure that neither of these vital aspects of its work was neglected. At the same time it was the co-ordinating body of all Jewish women's societies and as such its committee included representatives of all other Jewish women's organisations that were affiliated to the Union. The Union was furthermore the only Jewish women's organisation which acted as an official liaison between the Jewish and Gentile communities,<sup>1</sup> and the representation that it enjoyed on all Gentile bodies consequently had a definite status. In their turn those non-Jewish bodies on which it served knew that there was a central organisation on which they could call whenever the need arose.<sup>2</sup>

With the return of peace in 1945, the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women experienced a considerable increase in membership<sup>3</sup> which, together with a corresponding rise in activities, necessitated amendments to its constitution to enable it to keep pace with changing circumstances. The size of the Committee

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<sup>1</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 29 and 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.4 (December, 1952), 38 and 39.

<sup>3</sup> During 1946 it acquired 276 new members. (*Ibid.*, XXV No.4 (December, 1946), 39.). By September 1947 it had 500 members (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 63.) and by September 1949 its membership roll stood at 550 (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 75.



was accordingly enlarged from 15 to 20 members and an Advisory Board, made up of past chairladies was formed.<sup>4</sup> In 1953 the position of hon. vice-president was created to honour those who had rendered outstanding service to the branch and the first recipient of this title was Mrs M. Lewis, who had been the branch's first chairlady.<sup>5</sup>

As the largest of the Union's three branches in the Province and the seat of the Provincial Vice-President for Natal, the Durban branch maintained close ties with the branches in Pietermaritzburg and Vryheid.<sup>6</sup> Links between the relatively isolated Durban branch and the National headquarters were sustained by periodic visits to the City by Miss Sallie Kussel, the National Organising Secretary of the Union,<sup>7</sup> and by members of the National Executive.<sup>8</sup> This contact with the mainstream of Union activity was strengthened furthermore by the

<sup>4</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.4 (December, 1951), 35.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.4 (December, 1953), 25.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 40., *Ibid.*, XXX No.4 (December, 1951), 37., *Ibid.*, XXX No.10 (June, 1952), 44., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.3 (November, 1954), 39.

<sup>7</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 63., *Hasholom*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 35 and 37., *Ibid.*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 37., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 27.

<sup>8</sup> For example in May 1953 Mrs Sara Sloman, the National President of the Union of Jewish Women of Southern Africa paid a four day visit to Durban in the interests of the Union. (*Ibid.*, XXXI No.10 (June, 1953), 13 and 25.).

participation of the Durban branch in all national meetings and conferences,<sup>9</sup> where its contribution was in no way insignificant. In May 1949 it in fact fell to the Durban branch to organise the annual Interim Executive Conference of the Union and this event, which took place at the Jewish Club, was judged to be an outstanding success.<sup>10</sup>

The close bond which existed between the different branches of the Union was reinforced by the inception, in 1954, of the annual nationwide Founder's Day celebrations, which were held to mark the anniversary of the Union's establishment.<sup>11</sup> Durban's first Founder's Day reception was held on October 28, 1954 at the Jewish Club. It was attended by Mrs D.G. Shepstone, the wife

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<sup>9</sup> At the 3rd Triennial Conference of the Union in Cape Town in January 1947 (*Ibid.*, XXV No.6 (February, 1947), 36-37.) the Durban branch was represented by Mesdames J. Kalf, G. Fridjhon, J. Greenberg, J. Hyams and P. Stein (*Ibid.*, XXV No.4 (December, 1946), 39.). At the Interim Conference of the Union in Port Elizabeth, in February, 1951, Durban delegates were Mesdames C. Hart and F. Morris (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.7 (March, 1951), 25.). At the Union's 5th National Conference, in Cape Town, in March 1952, the delegates from Durban were Mesdames C. Hart, E.B. Baynash, I. Goldberg and B.J. Abelson. (*Ibid.*, XXX No.9 (May, 1952), 35 and 37.). The Interim Conference, held in East London, in March, 1953 was attended by Mesdames E.B. Baynash, R. Slot and K. Kalf (*Ibid.*, XXXI No.8 (April, 1953), 17.). Mesdames B.J. Abelson and J. Kalf represented the Durban branch at the 7th National Conference in Cape Town, January 18-22, 1954 (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 57.).

<sup>10</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.9 (May, 1949), 17 and 19., *The Natal Mercury*, May 3, 1949, p.6.

<sup>11</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 57.

of the Administrator of Natal; Mrs R. Carte, the Mayoress of Durban; Mrs Kate Machanik, the National President of the Union of Jewish Women of Southern Africa, and representatives of Durban women's organisations.<sup>12</sup> Thereafter it remained one of the major events on the Union's calendar of activities and was always graced by the presence of distinguished guests.<sup>13</sup>

The Union's Durban branch devoted a major portion of its efforts at this time to social welfare work amongst the most needy sections of South Africa's population. In this regard members of the Union not only demonstrated their concern for their less fortunate fellow citizens, but also served as an example for other service organisations.

After years of experience in providing meals at the Durban Jewish Club canteen, the Union, wishing to play its part in post-war rehabilitation, was almost naturally drawn towards the idea of establishing a Soup Kitchen to help relieve the prevailing acute food shortage. Under the direction of Mesdames B. Hyams and D.M. Driman, who were later joined by Mrs J. Elias and Mrs A. Stiller,

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<sup>12</sup> *The Natal Daily News*, October 29, 1954, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> In 1955 the guests of honour were Miss Sallie Kussel, who spoke about her visit in 1954 to the International Council of Jewish Women's Conference in London (*The Natal Mercury*, October 28, 1955, p.8.) and Prof. Hansi Pollack, who discussed the International Council of Women's Conference in Helsinki (*Hasholom*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 27.).



who acted as hon. treasurer, the women began their self imposed task of alleviating malnutrition amongst Coloured and African children in September, 1945. The Soup Kitchen operated three days a week from an outhouse placed at the Union's disposal by the *Mayville Hotel*. At the commencement only 25 meals were served each day but within the first year the number had grown to such an extent that over 60,000 meals were served in the twelve months following its inception. In addition to feeding children, the kitchen fed expectant mothers, elderly men and women as well as cases set out by various welfare societies. This important section of Union activity was maintained from funds obtained mainly through the generosity of members of the Jewish community and from various business and sporting bodies,<sup>14</sup> as well as from donations such as those made by the Red Cross Society.<sup>15</sup>

The activities of the Soup Kitchen were continued until 1948 when, after exhaustive investigations,<sup>16</sup> it was re-organised and, in response to prevailing needs, was relocated at the Springfield Community Centre,<sup>17</sup> where it fed under privileged pre-school Indian, Coloured

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.12 (August, 1946), 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.7 (March, 1946), 39.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.8 (April, 1948), 19.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 35.



and African children.<sup>18</sup>

In 1949, in place of the Soup Kitchen, the Union of Jewish Women inaugurated an Infant Feeding Scheme. This was in response to a suggestion put forward by Dr Sidney Kark, the Chief Medical Officer of the Health Centre, run at Springfield. Under Dr Kark's guidance this scheme operated at Springfield for Indian children and at Lamontville for African children. The infants were brought to the clinic weekly for medical attention and were issued with a food prescription card which they in turn presented to the Union's women helpers who ran the food depot nearby. Apart from manning the food depot the Union also provided the necessary foods prescribed by the medical authorities.<sup>19</sup> The Feeding Scheme remained the Union's major social work activity<sup>20</sup> and its importance was underlined by Dr Kark, who ascribed the fall in infant mortality in Lamontville largely to the Union's efforts in this regard.<sup>21</sup>

The money to finance the Feeding Scheme came from a variety of sources, but was principally derived from an

<sup>18</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 75.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 71., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 67., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 61., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 67.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61.

annual concert at the City Hall, given by local artists, under the patronage of the Mayoress, for the benefit of underprivileged children of all races. Money was raised through the sale of tickets to business houses and other wellwishers and was devoted to the Union's feeding scheme and a charity designated by the Mayoress. First held in 1949 the concert became an annual feature of the Union's activities and an invaluable source of revenue.<sup>22</sup>

Other projects of the Union were financed through a variety of fund raising activities. Until 1946 the Union had, whilst raising thousands of pounds per annum, never raised money for its own expenses.<sup>23</sup> Escalating costs and increased financial commitments, however, forced it to revise this policy, and in June 1946 a fete was held at the Jewish Club in aid of Union funds.<sup>24</sup> The sole fund raising effort for the Union's welfare work in 1947 was a grand concert,<sup>25</sup> and in the following

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<sup>22</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 29., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 71., *The Natal Mercury*, October 26, 1950, p.12., *Hasholom*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 47., *Ibid.*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 40., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 23., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.4 (December, 1953), 25., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 54., *Hasholom*, XXXIV No.2 (November, 1955), 27., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.3 (December, 1955), 26.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.7 (March, 1946), 39.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.9 (May, 1946), 31., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.11 (July, 1946), 36.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 37., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.3 (November, 1947), 19.

year a Grand Mannequin Parade was held in aid of local Union charities.<sup>26</sup> Although supplemented by other fund raising activities<sup>27</sup> the mannequin parades, which came to be held annually, served as the major source of revenue for many of the Union's projects.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to their own Feeding Scheme the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women twice weekly also undertook to supervise the feeding and running of the Cato Manor Nursery School which was maintained by ToCH. and the Round Table organisation.<sup>29</sup> Mrs Hannah Woolfson, who convened the Cato Manor project for the Union, served with representatives of other interested parties on the Cato Manor Executive Committee.<sup>30</sup>

The scope of the Union's social welfare work was increased in June 1951 when it was announced that an Auxilliary Branch of the Union of Jewish Women had been constituted, mainly for young marrieds. The members of the new branch immediately signalled their intention to direct their efforts towards assisting those people

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 35.

<sup>27</sup> Such as a card afternoon (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 67.) and imaginary fetes (*Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61.).

<sup>28</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.2 (October, 1950), 48., *Ibid.*, XXX No.3 (November, 1951), 40., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.12 (August, 1953), 34., *The Natal Daily News*, June 23, 1955, p.6.

<sup>29</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 29.

<sup>30</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64.



associated with the David Landau Memorial Centre Scheme.<sup>31</sup>

A nucleus of 25 young women consequently undertook the running of the Women and Adolescent Girls' Clubs at Springfield and Merebank, which were maintained by the David Landau Memorial Centre. The Union members taught young Indian, Coloured and African mothers and girls to sew and knit for their children and their homes, and also supplied all the necessary equipment and materials.<sup>32</sup>

During 1952 the Auxilliary Branch found itself forced to disband because of personnel and transport difficulties. Its work with the David Landau Memorial Centre was continued, however, by the Sisterhood of Temple David, one of its affiliate bodies, which convened this project under joint auspices with the Union.<sup>33</sup> Together with the Sisterhood the Union ran two sewing groups at Springfield and Fosa and at the end of 1952 a third group was started at Claire Estate.<sup>34</sup>

The Union of Jewish Women also shared the general concern shown by other service bodies in Durban for the African residents of Cato Manor. From 1952 the Union therefore expanded its social welfare programme and associated itself with the Cato Manor Community Huts

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<sup>31</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.10 (June, 1951), 20.

<sup>32</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 67., See also *Hasholom*, XXX No.10 (June, 1952), 43.

<sup>34</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.4 (December, 1952), 38.



Scheme.<sup>35</sup>

To further aid those who were amongst the City's most deprived and impoverished residents the Union started a nursery school for African children in Cato Manor, in 1954. The money needed to initiate this project came from the Mayoress who for two years in succession had handed back to the Union her share of the proceeds of the concert for under-privileged children. The Union was given suitable premises at Cato Manor by ToCH and there, assisted by the Glenwood Women's Insititute, its Tukosa Nursery School began to operate, with an initial intake of 100 children. The Union which was responsible for the salaries of teachers and the daily supply of bread and milk to the children,<sup>36</sup> followed the progress of the school and its pupils with much interest and concern.<sup>37</sup>

The work of the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women within the wider community was in no way limited to its social welfare projects and in fact embraced numerous other areas of activity. Those activities served to foster a spirit of good neighbourliness and were important vehicles for public relations. They included

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<sup>35</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 67., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 63., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 57 and 61., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 54.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 61.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 54.

a scheme, started in 1946, whereby members took out the children of the Open Air School for Cripples on a monthly outing and provided them with tea, sweets and entertainment.<sup>38</sup> The Union was in fact the only Society in Durban to undertake this work,<sup>39</sup> and its efforts in this regard were greatly appreciated by Miss D. Davies, the school's headmistress.<sup>40</sup> The pleasure drives were continued until 1948 when they had to be suspended, owing to the polio epidemic that swept South Africa in that year.<sup>41</sup> In 1949 this project was resumed for a short while with children from the Clarence Road Nursery School, which came under the Durban Child Welfare Society.<sup>42</sup>

The Union was constantly approached by organisations outside the Jewish community for its assistance and it always responded gladly to these requests. In the first instance members of the Union attended lunch forums held under the auspices of ToCh

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<sup>38</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.9 (May, 1946), 30.

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

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.11 (July, 1946), 35-36.

<sup>41</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 75., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 33., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64.

and assisted with the making of tea and sandwiches.<sup>43</sup>  
In like manner it offered its services at luncheons held  
by the Round Table.<sup>44</sup>

Its members also gave of their time to help raise  
funds for a host of different organisations and causes  
that worked for the common good of all the City's  
inhabitants. The traditional support extended by the  
Union to the Durban and District Community Chest<sup>45</sup> and  
the Christmas Stamp Fund<sup>46</sup> was continued. Fund raising  
was also undertaken on behalf of Navy Week,<sup>47</sup>  
St Dunstan's Home and the Jan Smuts Memorial Fund.<sup>48</sup>  
The Union participated, furthermore, in numerous fetes  
for a great variety of worthy beneficiaries. In 1946  
it ran a stall at the Red Cross fete to help raise funds

<sup>43</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 33.,  
*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1  
(September, 1951), 64., *Hasholom*, XXXI No.4  
(December, 1952), 38., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah*  
*Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61., *Ibid.*,  
XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 57.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61.

<sup>45</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.6 (February, 1949), 19.,  
*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1  
(September, 1947), 63., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1  
(September, 1948), 65., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1  
(September, 1949), 75., *Hasholom*, XXIX No.4  
(December, 1950), 33., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah*  
*Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64.,  
*Hasholom*, XXXI No.4 (December, 1952), 38.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 15., *Ibid.*, XXV  
No.9 (May, 1947), 47., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah*  
*Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65.

<sup>48</sup> *Hasholom*, XXX No.4 (December, 1951), 35.

for the new Red Cross Building in Old Fort Road.<sup>49</sup>  
 Four years later it organised a stall at the National Council of Women's Fete held in aid of polio funds.<sup>50</sup>  
 That same year the Union ran a stall at the St. John's Ambulance Fete<sup>51</sup> and it assisted the St. John's Brigade in a similar capacity on a number of subsequent occasions.<sup>52</sup> Among the other organisations which were assisted in like manner were the National War Memorial Health Foundation,<sup>53</sup> the B.E.S.L.,<sup>54</sup> the Umlazi Mission Hospital,<sup>55</sup> the Brown's School for Cerebral Palsy Children,<sup>56</sup> the National Welfare of the Blind,<sup>57</sup> St John's Ophthalmic Hospital,<sup>58</sup> the Durban Child Welfare Association<sup>59</sup> and the Round Table.<sup>60</sup>

Through its contact with Gentile organisations the

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<sup>49</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, July 31, 1946, p.6.

<sup>50</sup>*Hasholom*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 33.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, XXXI No.4 (December, 1952), 38., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64.

<sup>54</sup>*Hasholom*, XXXI No.4 (December, 1952), 38.

<sup>55</sup>*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 61.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*

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

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>60</sup>*Hasholom*, XXXIII No.10 (June, 1955), 29.



Union came to be increasingly regarded as the organisation that spoke for the Jewish women of Durban. It consequently was accorded representation on all major women's and general committees which contributed in some manner towards enhancing the quantity of life of the inhabitants of Durban and its environs. These included the National Council of Women,<sup>61</sup> the Committee for Polio Research,<sup>62</sup> the People's Emergency Housing Scheme,<sup>63</sup> the Durban Child Welfare Society,<sup>64</sup> the Feed the Children's Fund,<sup>65</sup> the Anglican Hospice for Women,<sup>66</sup> the National War Memorial Health Foundation,<sup>67</sup> the David Landau Memorial Centre,<sup>68</sup> the Anti-T.B. Council<sup>69</sup> and the South

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<sup>61</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXV No.1 (September, 1946), 31., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 75., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 71., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 75.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 71., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 71., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64.

<sup>66</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 18.

<sup>67</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 67.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61.

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

African Institute of Race Relations.<sup>70</sup>

In its capacity as the co-ordinating body of the Jewish women's organisations in Durban it fell to the Union to organise functions of a social nature. These were important vehicles for maintaining and enhancing the cordial relations between the Jewish and Gentile communities, which the Union had in great measure helped to foster and initiate. In July 1947 the Union entertained Mrs G. Brand van Zyl, the wife of the Governor General and Mrs Ellis Brown, the Mayoress of Durban.<sup>71</sup> Subsequently the Union's guests included Mrs D.G. Shepstone, the wife of the Administrator of Natal; Mrs Edith Benson M.P., Mrs Cyrus, the President of the National Council of Women; Mrs L. Boyd, the Mayoress of Durban<sup>72</sup> and Mrs E.G. Jansen, whose husband had become Governor General in 1951.<sup>73</sup>

The work that the Durban branch of the Union of Jewish Women carried out within the general community, although extensive in its scope, reflected only a part of its multifaceted programme of activities. It was complemented by the work which the Union undertook within its own community and on behalf of the Jewish

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<sup>70</sup> Chairlady's Report Submitted to the 18th Annual General Meeting, November, 1955. In the Minute Book of the Union of Jewish Women, Durban.

<sup>71</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.12 (August, 1947), 39.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 41.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.11 (July, 1951), 3 and 5.

people everywhere.

A major priority of the Union in the immediate post-war period was the Women's Section of the South African Jewish War Appeal, which was conducted in Durban under its auspices. The members of the local branch of the Union assisted with the clothing drives held by the Appeal.<sup>74</sup> They also made all the arrangements in connection with the Appeal's campaign, which was launched in November 1946, by Lt. Col. J. Nadich, senior Jewish chaplain to the American forces in Western Europe and adviser to General Eisenhower on Jewish affairs,<sup>75</sup> and co-ordinated the various sections concerned with canvassing, the making of layettes and clothing and the packing of linen etc. for the displaced Jews of Europe.<sup>76</sup> From 1948, when the War Appeal was renamed the Jewish Appeal,<sup>77</sup> the Union retained responsibility for the Women's Section in Durban. It organised numerous fund raising activities, highlights of which were the fetes held at the Jewish Club, in June 1948,<sup>78</sup> and at *Doone Estate*, the home of Mr and Mrs A. Beare, in July of that year.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.7 (March, 1946), 39.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.4 (December, 1946), 25.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 24., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.5 (January, 1948), 37.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.6 (February, 1948), 7.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 14, 15, 17.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 25 and 27.

With equal enthusiasm the members of the Union assisted in 1947 in the campaign on behalf of Youth *Aliyah* which facilitated the transfer of refugee children to Palestine.<sup>80</sup> Like Jews everywhere at that time the Union's members shared in the general concern which was felt over events in Palestine. In February, 1948, as Britain was preparing to terminate her Mandate the Union joined with the Durban Women's Zionist League to purchase an air ambulance in the name of Durban's Jewish women,<sup>81</sup> in order to aid their co-religionists in their National Homeland who were preparing for Britain's departure.

Once the South African Zionist Federation and the South Africa Jewish Appeal agreed, in May 1948, to form the Israeli United Appeal,<sup>82</sup> the Durban Women's Zionist League, which concerned itself with fund raising for the *Yishuv*, and the Union of Jewish Women, which co-ordinated the work of the Women's Section of the South African Jewish Appeal, combined their efforts under the name of I.U.A. (Women's Section).<sup>83</sup> The Union of Jewish Women was thus drawn directly into fund raising for the newly established State of Israel. Together with the Women's Zionist League it convened the meeting, in August 1948,

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 15 and 17.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.7 (March, 1948), 19.

<sup>82</sup> See above pp.933-934.

<sup>83</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 4-5.



at which Rabbi L. Rabinowitz, of Johannesburg, launched the Women's Campaign<sup>84</sup> in which the Union played a crucial part throughout Natal. The Union's continued support for the I.U.A. was demonstrated through its involvement in subsequent campaigns, in which it assisted at the fetes held in aid of the Appeal<sup>85</sup> and served on the Appeal's Planning Committee.<sup>86</sup>

Even prior to the establishment of the Jewish State the Union of Jewish Women of Southern Africa had displayed a strong sympathy for Zionism which had been expressed in an annual contribution towards the upkeep of the Paristology Laboratory of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This Laboratory continued to remain a project of the Union, to which the Durban branch annually made its contribution.<sup>87</sup> The Union of Jewish Women's efforts on behalf of the Hebrew University came, in fact, to be amplified in the post-World War period with the creation of a hostel at the University campus to which all branches, including Durban, made an annual

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<sup>84</sup> *The Zionist Record*, August 20, 1948, p.4.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1, 1950, p.8., January 11, 1952, p.12.

<sup>86</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64.

<sup>87</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.6 (February, 1946), 19., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 63., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1948), 65., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 61., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 54.

contribution.<sup>88</sup>

The support for Jewish causes abroad was matched by the Union's involvement in local Jewish affairs. The Durban branch was closely identified with the work of the United Communal Fund, with which, from its inception in 1949, it remained intimately involved. The Union's members organised a stall at the Grand Communal Ball held at the conclusion of the 1st U.C.F. campaign, in May, 1950,<sup>89</sup> and they assisted at all subsequent drives on behalf of the Fund.<sup>90</sup>

On a national level the Durban branch of the Union remained affiliated to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and its delegates were present at the Board's Biennial Congresses throughout this period.<sup>91</sup> Within its own community it continued to be represented on the

<sup>88</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.6 (February, 1946), 19., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 63., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 61., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 54.

<sup>89</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.10 (June, 1950), 26.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX No.4 (December, 1951), 35., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 67., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 61.

<sup>91</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 11., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.10 (June, 1951), 17., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61., Minutes of the Executive Meeting of the Union of Jewish Women, Held at Mrs Kalf's residence, 291a Chelmsford Road, Durban, on 3rd October, 1955 at 9.30 am., p.1.

C.N.J., the Natal Provincial Committee of the Board.<sup>92</sup> Representatives of the Union served as well on the *Talmud Torah* Committee, and took a keen interest in the Sharona Nursery School.<sup>93</sup> Along with members of other Jewish organisations in the City the Union also assisted in organising the traditional Communal *Seder*.<sup>94</sup>

The Union's major contribution in respect of communal activity in Durban, however, lay not in the service which it rendered to existing organisations or committees, but rather in the part which it played in fostering the creation of additional communal bodies.

In 1947 Rabbi M.C. Weiler, of Johannesburg, visited Durban in the interests of Ort-Oze, intent on establishing a branch of this organisation, which, prior to the war, had enjoyed considerable support amongst the local Jewish community. The Rabbi addressed a meeting of the C.N.J. and was successful in obtaining the support of the

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<sup>92</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.1 (September, 1946), 31., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 63., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 75., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 71., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61.

<sup>94</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 33., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 64.



Union of Jewish Women,<sup>95</sup> who appointed Mesdames D. Beare, P. Patz and N. Fiddel to act as conveners.<sup>96</sup> With the Union's assistance a Provincial Committee was formed with Mr J. Nussbaum as Chairman and Mrs H. Meyerson, of the Union, as Treasurer.<sup>97</sup> When, during the following year, the Provincial Committee disbanded, the Ort-Oze in Durban was brought under the auspices of the Union and was convened by Mrs N. Fiddel.<sup>98</sup> Thus only through the Union's efforts was Ort-Oze able to persevere with its activities within the community. Under Mrs Fiddel's successor, Mrs H. Meyerson, Natal was represented at the South African Ort-Oze Conference in Johannesburg, in 1949.<sup>99</sup> The Durban branch recorded a steady increase in membership, which continued until Mrs Meyerson's departure from the City in mid 1949,<sup>100</sup> whereafter the Union, incapable of finding a convener for this section, was forced to discontinue its work on behalf of Ort-Oze.

Also under the auspices of the Union of Jewish

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<sup>95</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Council of Natal Jewry, Held at the Durban Jewish Club on Thursday, 4th September, 1947 at 8 pm., pp.2-3.

<sup>96</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 18.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.3 (November, 1947), 21.

<sup>98</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65.

<sup>99</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 13.

<sup>100</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 75.



Women a branch of the *Magen David Adom* was established in Durban, in July 1948, with Mrs N. Smith as its first chairman.<sup>101</sup> The Union took great pride in M.D.A.'s rapid growth and in its many achievements,<sup>102</sup> and even after it was firmly established in the City, and no longer came under the Union's auspices, members of the Union continued to follow its development with keen interest and took pride in the participation of Union members on the M.D.A. Committee.<sup>103</sup>

Arising out of a clause in its constitution that referred to ameliorating the position of the Jewish women under Jewish law, a resolution was adopted at the Union's Sixth Annual General Meeting, in 1942, that women should be admitted as members as well as seatholders of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, with all rights and privileges.<sup>104</sup> The call for representation on the Congregation with full membership rights was reiterated in 1948 when the Durban branch of the Union resumed its struggle on behalf of the Jewish women of the community. Early in the year Mesdames M. Moshal, V. Robinson, and P. Stein, from the Union of Jewish Women, met with the Synagogue Council to plead their cause. This meeting was followed by protracted negotiations and extensive

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<sup>101</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 17, 1948, p.14.

<sup>102</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 75.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 71.

<sup>104</sup> *Hasholom*, XXI No.4 (December, 1942), 27.

activity on the part of the women, who organised themselves into a Women's Seatholders' Organisation. The culmination of their efforts was reached in September 1948 when, at the annual general meeting of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, the Congregation's constitution was amended so as to enable two or more women representatives of the Seatholders' Organisation to sit on the Synagogue Council with full voting powers.<sup>105</sup> The creation of the Women's Seatholders' Organisation and the rights which it was able to secure for the women of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation was a major achievement for the Union, whose Committee was augmented by the inclusion of a representative of the Women's Seatholders' Organisation.<sup>106</sup>

All of the major Jewish women's organisations were in fact represented on the Committee of the Union of Jewish Women, and the Union, which strove to serve as a co-ordinating body for all Jewish women's societies, naturally maintained a most harmonious relationship with all these organisations. At times, however, this relationship was strained, owing to the tendency of these affiliated organisations to work for their own projects and to neglect to support the Union, which their affiliation rendered obligatory.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 21 and 23.

<sup>106</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIX No.1 (September, 1950), 71.

<sup>107</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.10 (June, 1955), 29.

Together with the Durban Women's Zionist League, the Union held numerous combined functions<sup>108</sup> and receptions,<sup>109</sup> conducted a campaign on behalf of the Youth *Aliyah*,<sup>110</sup> worked for the I.U.A. (Women's Section)<sup>111</sup> and assisted at the annual WIZO fete.<sup>112</sup> In collaboration with the Durban Jewish Women's Guild the Union made up Goodwill Parcels for Britain,<sup>113</sup> held a farewell reception, in 1949, to Mrs A.H. Freedman, the wife of

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<sup>108</sup> Including a reading by Taubie Kushlik, (*Ibid.*, XXIV No.10 (June, 1946), 36.) an address by Rabbi Prof. I. Abrahams, of Cape Town, (*Ibid.*) a meeting addressed by Miss A. Shapiro, a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps, (*Ibid.*, XXV No.2 (October, 1946), 35.) a talk by Rabbi Dr S. Rapaport on "The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Palestine," (*Ibid.*, XXVI No.9 (May, 1948), 17.) a talk by Dr S. Adler of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, (*Ibid.*, XXXI No.12 (August, 1953), 7) and an address by Rabbi M.C. Weiler. (*The Zionist Record*, July 30, 1954, p.13.)

<sup>109</sup> Including a reception in honour of Mrs C. Hyam, the wife of the Minister Plenipotentiary for Israel (*The Natal Mercury*, August 6, 1952, p.12) and the Consul General for Israel Mr Eylon and Mrs Eylon. (*The Zionist Record*, July 17, 1953, p.15.).

<sup>110</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 15 and 17.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 41-42., *The Zionist Record*, December 1, 1950, p.8., January 13, 1956, p.15.

<sup>112</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXII No.5 (January, 1954), 18., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 54., *The Zionist Record*, January 13, 1956, p.15.

<sup>113</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 6., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 65.



Rabbi Freedman,<sup>114</sup> and a function to welcome Mrs H. Swift, whose husband began his ministry in Durban in 1950.<sup>115</sup> In 1954 the Union took over from the Guild the running of the Golden Age Club, which provided a monthly social afternoon for the elderly,<sup>116</sup> and under the Union's direction this section flourished.<sup>117</sup> In co-operation with the Sisterhood of Temple David the Union ran sewing groups for Indian, Coloured and African women<sup>118</sup> and manned a stall at the Child Welfare Association Fete, held in the City Hall, in 1954.<sup>119</sup> In conjunction with the Women's Seatholders' Organisation the Union organised a number of lectures for the benefit of their respective members.<sup>120</sup>

The Union placed great emphasis on its cultural activities and when, at the conclusion of the war, a void in the area of adult education became apparent the Union and the Durban Women's Zionist League stepped in and arranged adult education classes which were conducted

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 76.

<sup>115</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.8 (April, 1950), 45.

<sup>116</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 54.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 54.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 67.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.1 (September, 1954), 57.

<sup>120</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXI No.8 (April, 1953), 17., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.7 (March, 1954), 21.



by Rabbi A.H. Freedman.<sup>121</sup> Notwithstanding the cultural efforts of the Jewish Education Council and other organisations the Union persisted with its own cultural programme and almost without exception, each monthly meeting included a lecture or talk on a wide variety of subjects by prominent speakers or communal

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<sup>121</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXIV No.1  
(September, 1945), 55.

personalities.<sup>122</sup>

- <sup>122</sup> These included lectures by Miss J. Little on "Speech Defects and Their Care." (*Hasholom*, XXIV No.7 (March, 1946), 39.) Mr E. Dunn, the Director of Music and Entertainment in Durban on "You Behind your Universe," (*Ibid.*, XXIV No.9 (May, 1946), 30.) and addresses by Mrs J. McPherson, the Mayor of Johannesburg, (*Ibid.*, 31.) Mr Edgar Bernstein, the South African novelist and writer on "Sarah Gertrude Millin," (*Ibid.*, XXIV No.11 (July, 1946), 35.) Mrs B. Solomon M.P. (*Ibid.*, XXV No.4 (December, 1946), 39.) Miss E. Middleton, headmistress of Girls' College on "Modern Aspects of Education," (*Ibid.*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 37.) Miss N. Manning, the Principal of the Stellawood Infants' School on "Education for Democracy," (*Ibid.*, XXVI No.11 (July, 1948), 33.) Mr A. Goldberg on "Problems of the Non-White Community," (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.2 (October, 1948), 35 and 37.) Prof. Hansi Pollack on "International Relief Work" (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.5 (April, 1949), 13.) Mr A. Levine, Vice-Chairman of the Public Relations Committee of the C.N.J., (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 31.) Mrs N. Smith, Chairlady of M.D.A. on her visit to the U.S.A., (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 39-40.) Mrs Brodie, wife of the Chief Rabbi I. Brodie of Great Britain on "Jewish Women in Contemporary Life," (*Ibid.*, 9) Rabbi H. Swift on "The Need for a *Sanhedrin*," (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.12 (August, 1950), 29.) Mr G. Moore, Deputy Director of the Administration of U.N.R.R.A. in the Far East 1947-1948, on "Crisis in China," (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 15.) Councillor Mary Asher on "The National Health Foundation," (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.7 (March, 1951), 25.) Mr Thompson, of the Department of Fine Art at the Natal Technical College, on "Contemporary Art," (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.10 (June, 1951), 20.) Miss E. Sneddon, Head of the Speech and Drama Department at Natal University, on "Drama" (*Ibid.*, 20-21.) Dr B. Moshal, Chairman of the Jewish Education Council, on "Why give your child a Jewish Education," (*Ibid.*, XXX No.8 (April, 1952), 39-40.) Dr H. Cobans, the Chief Librarian of Natal University, on "The United Nations Organisation," (*Ibid.*, XXXI No.4 (December, 1952), 38-39.) Mr S. Ernst on "*Pesach*," (*Ibid.*, XXXI No.8 (April, 1953), 17.) (Mr N. MacAdam, of the Natal Technical College, on "Listening to Music," (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 61.) Mr M. McNeite, the

The many and varied activities of the Union of Jewish Women reveal something of the unique character of this organisation which in Durban, as elsewhere in the country, concerned itself with the work of uniting and representing Jewish women and with work in 3 major areas of activity. In the first instance it worked in various capacities within the Gentile community whilst at the same time it devoted long hours and great effort to the needs of the Jewish community both at home and abroad and finally it provided a full cultural programme for the benefit of its members.

#### HEBREW ORDER OF DAVID

Having, in the face of innumerable difficulties, persevered with its many activities throughout the war, the F.C. Hollander Lodge, upon the return of peace, responded with equal dedication to the challenges of the post-war period.

Like the Order of which it was a part the Lodge helped the widows and the children of the bretheren who had lost their lives, supported the H.O.D. Educational

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Director of the Intimate Theatre, on "Aspects and Significance of Repertory Theatre," (*Ibid.*)  
 Mrs J. Kalf on "A visit to Japan," (*Hasholom*, XXXII No.4 (December, 1953), 25.) and  
 Mr C. van Reyneveld, Deputy Director of Parks and Gardens, on "Garden Design and Gardening," (*Ibid.*, XXXIII No.7 (March, 1953), 23.).

and Vocational Fund,<sup>123</sup> and lent its assistance to returning soldiers,<sup>124</sup> many of whom entered into its ranks upon their demobilisation.

Whilst it continued to serve as a mutual benefit society<sup>125</sup> this aspect of its work remained shrouded in secrecy and consequently received scant mention. Other areas of lodge activity, however, were widely publicised and much acclaimed.

The lodge continued to play its part in all spheres of communal activity and its members served on a wide cross section of organisational bodies. It was particularly interested in the work of the Council of Natal Jewry, on which it was represented,<sup>126</sup> and its longstanding concern for Jewish education<sup>127</sup> was reflected in its contributions to the Durban United Hebrew Schools.<sup>128</sup> The lodge maintained cordial relations with all other communal organisations in the City, and on occasion held joint activities with the Durban Zionist

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<sup>123</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 20, 1946, p.17.

<sup>124</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.10 (June, 1946), 36.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 29.

<sup>126</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 66., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 79.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 71., *Ibid.*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 66., *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 79.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 53.



Youth Movement,<sup>129</sup> the Durban branch of the Jewish Ex-Service League<sup>130</sup> and the C.N.J.<sup>131</sup>

Members of the Lodge continued to associate themselves with the community's numerous fund raising campaigns and after the war a number of brethren began agitating for a consolidation of these funds. In this way it was hoped that the critical position which had arisen in regard to collections for various Jewish causes would be alleviated. In 1948 during his term as President Wor. Bros. A. Baranov propounded a scheme which was accepted by the lodge, which provided for each Brother to impose an annual voluntary levy on himself which would be paid to a special F.C. Hollander Lodge Fund, to cover all campaigns for Jewish causes both within and without the Union of South Africa.<sup>132</sup> A special Sub-Committee was appointed to work out details of the self imposed levy, based on income, and notwithstanding initial difficulties by September 1949 the Lodge Collective Fund had proved itself to be highly practicable and successful.<sup>133</sup> This Fund, which predated the creation of the Israeli United Appeal and

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 64.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Hasholom*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 38.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 29., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 79.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 71.

<sup>133</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 31.

the United Communal Fund aroused considerable interest in the community,<sup>134</sup> but was ahead of its time, and owing to opposition from within and without the lodge it was soon abandoned.<sup>135</sup>

Alongside its benefit programme and its work within the community the lodge also strove to foster a spirit of brotherhood amongst its members through a variety of cultural and social activities. Its Festive Boards frequently included a talk by a distinguished member of the Jewish community,<sup>136</sup> and amongst other functions that it organised for its members were hat debates, record evenings, quiz evenings and film shows.<sup>137</sup>

The lodge persisted too with its efforts to foster a spirit of goodwill between the Jewish and Gentile community and to this end a succession of notable

<sup>134</sup> See Report of the Annual General Meeting of the Jewish Ex-Service League in 1948. (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 33 and 35.).

<sup>135</sup> From the history issued by the Lodge on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee, 1975.

<sup>136</sup> Including Bro. A. Goldberg, Dr S. Kark, Bro. S. Ernst, Mr A. Levine, Mr H.L. Magid, (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 64.) Wor. Bro. B. Levy, Bro. H. Saunders, Dr A. Woolfson, Dr M. Aufrichtig, Dr H.S. Berkowitz, Mr E. Schragenheim (*Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 71.) Mr E. Tannenbaum, of the Jewish Board of Deputies, Mr J. Katzew, Bro. H. Moss-Morris, Dr P. Klenerman, (*Hasholom*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 29.) Dr B. Moshal, Rabbi H. Swift, Bro. Dr N. Smith, Wor. Bro. D. Goldstein, Dr M. Silver (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 66.) Mr S. Clapper (*Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 79.).

<sup>137</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 29., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 66.

Gentile speakers were invited to address the brethren. They included Mr F. Valentin,<sup>138</sup> Pastor High Dawson,<sup>139</sup> Mr G.H. Calpin,<sup>140</sup> Mr J.R. Sullivan M.P.<sup>141</sup> and Mr D. Fannin M.P.C.<sup>142</sup>

It also continued its practice of distributing Christmas gift parcels to the patients of the King Edward VIII non-European Hospital<sup>143</sup> and came to take a keen interest in the Chesterville Child Welfare Association.<sup>144</sup>

The problem of suitable accommodation for the lodge activities persisted in the post-war period. In 1947 a scheme was in fact started by Wor. Bros. D. Goldstein and Bro. J. Sklarchik to acquire for the Lodge a home of its own.<sup>145</sup> This scheme was, however, abandoned, and from 1949 the Durban Jewish Club became the permanent venue of Lodge activities.<sup>146</sup>

As part of a nationwide Order the Lodge never lost an opportunity to maintain contact with the Grand Lodge

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 71.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 29.

<sup>141</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 66.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 79.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 79.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 64.

<sup>146</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 29.

and with its sister lodges around the country.

Delegates from the F.C. Hollander Lodge attended the Biennial Conferences of the Order,<sup>147</sup> and in 1954 the Lodge was represented at the celebrations held in Johannesburg to mark the 50th anniversary of the Order's inauguration in South Africa.<sup>148</sup> To mark this important occasion the F.C. Hollander Lodge donated £100 to the C.N.J. Educational Trust Fund.<sup>149</sup> A delegation from Grand Lodge and from sister lodges around the Union always attended the annual installation of officers in Durban,<sup>150</sup> and in 1953 a member from Durban participated in the consecration of the Pietersburg Lodge.<sup>151</sup>

For the F.C. Hollander Lodge the ten years that followed World War II were punctuated by a number of historic milestones. The first of these was the 21st anniversary celebrations which were held to coincide with the annual installation of office bearers on

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.10 (June, 1946), 37-38., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 71.

<sup>148</sup> *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.2 (October, 1954), 19.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.3 (November, 1955), 28.

<sup>150</sup> *The Zionist Record*, September 20, 1946, p.17., August 15, 1947, p.14., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 71., *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 29 and 31., *The Zionist Record*, September 22, 1950, p.19., September 21, 1951, p.18., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual* XXXII No.1 (September, 1953), 79., *Ibid.*, XXXIV No.1 (September, 1955), 33.

<sup>151</sup> From the history issued by the Lodge on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee, 1975.



September 8, 1946.<sup>152</sup> Three years later the banquet that followed the installation ceremony was attended by Mr and Mrs F.C. Hollander, who were presented with two silver tankards to mark their Golden Wedding Anniversary.<sup>153</sup> In August 1950 a soiree and dance were held to suitably celebrate the Lodge's Silver Jubilee.<sup>154</sup>

The post-war decade closed on a sad note for the Lodge with the passing of its patron Mr F.C. Hollander, in December 1955.<sup>155</sup> Hollander had however lived long enough to see the Lodge which bore his name grow in stature and in importance within the Jewish community, which it served in so many diverse ways. At the same time he had had the satisfaction of knowing that the lodge had contributed significantly towards fostering a spirit of Jewish brotherhood and that the influence of the lodge's work on its bretheren had led to the bretheren leaving their mark on Jewish communal life and on their fellow citizens.

#### SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH EX-SERVICE LEAGUE

As the 2nd World War had drawn to an end those who

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<sup>152</sup>*The Zionist Record*, September 20, 1946, p.17.

<sup>153</sup>*Hasholom*, XXVIII No.2 (October, 1949), 29.

<sup>154</sup>*The Zionist Record*, September, 22, 1950, p.19.

<sup>155</sup>*The Natal Mercury*, December 6, 1955, p.5.

had fought in the conflict, and had thereby come to be bound together through common experience, had sought to preserve the spirit of friendship that had been formed between them. The South African Jewish Ex-Service League, which had arisen from the South African Association of Jewish Soldiers, had developed in response to this desire to preserve the wartime bonds of comradeship, and also from a realisation of the desirability of an organisation which would help Jewish ex-servicemen to overcome their own special difficulties and problems.

In Durban a branch of the League had been formed early in 1945, chaired by Mr Josh Goldberg, and following its inaugural function on March 15,<sup>156</sup> it had held two receptions in honour of returned Prisoners of War.<sup>157</sup>

Immediately after the war ended the League joined with the Soldiers' Assistance Committee of the Council of Natal Jewry in assisting many of the Jewish community's ex-servicemen to cope with the economic hardships which confronted them upon demobilisation.<sup>158</sup> Apart from assistance extended in respect of housing, employment etc. the Durban branch of the League also established a bursary of £100 to enable an ex-serviceman or woman or a

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<sup>156</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIII No.8 (April, 1945), 27.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.11 (July, 1945), 19, 21, 23.,  
*(Ibid.*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 33.

<sup>158</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1  
 (September, 1949), 79.

dependant to study at University.<sup>159</sup> At the same time the League demonstrated a deep concern for the war disabled, and followed closely the progress of the Jewish patients in the Springfield Military Hospital.<sup>160</sup>

The passing of time in no way diminished the League's interest in the material and physical well being of its members. It steadfastly fought the callous disregard that was displayed by certain sections of the community to the rights and claims of ex-soldiers, and the League refused to allow the community to forget its obligations.<sup>161</sup>

Beyond caring for the welfare of ex-servicemen and women the League sought to provide a haven of comradeship and sympathy wherein, even temporarily, returning soldiers faced with estrangement from former friends and difficulties in finding a place in the community, would be able to find others who were sharing the same experiences or who understood their difficulties.<sup>162</sup> This objective was attained largely through the medium of social activities, which offered ex-servicemen and women a common meeting ground and an atmosphere which was conducive to recapturing the wartime

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<sup>159</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.7 (March, 1947), 14., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 13.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 33., *Ibid.*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 21.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.10 (June, 1946), 39.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.8 (April, 1945), 27.

feeling of comradeship.

In October 1945 the League held its first annual ball,<sup>163</sup> and after the *Chanukah* Service at the Park Street Synagogue, in December 1945, its members held a dinner at the Jewish Club.<sup>164</sup> The League's Entertainment committee subsequently worked hard to provide a satisfying programme of activities.<sup>165</sup> Owing to immediate post-war problems all efforts in this direction were, however, limited as a result of more pressing issues. Once many of these economic difficulties had been overcome however social activity increased and was reflected in the creation of a Functions Sub-Committee, in 1947.<sup>166</sup> This sub-committee's achievements included a Smoking Concert, organised at the Jewish Club in May of that year<sup>167</sup> and a *Simchat Torah* dance a few months later.<sup>168</sup>

In an attempt to further strengthen contact between the members and the League a Ladies' Committee was also formed in 1947, chaired by Mrs H. Friede,<sup>169</sup> and through

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 36.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 21.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.10 (June, 1946), 39.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 37.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.2 (October, 1947), 14.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 38.



its efforts a variety of social functions were arranged.<sup>170</sup>

From its inception the Ex-Service League recognised the need for Jewish communal life to be organised on a sounder basis and for a wider cross-section of the community to be involved in improving and maintaining the Jewish way of life.<sup>171</sup> The League therefore played its part in communal life and encouraged its members to do likewise.

Through its affiliation to the Council of Natal Jewry<sup>172</sup> the League was able to participate in communal decision making, and came to be represented at the Youth

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<sup>170</sup> Including social evenings in March, 1948, (*Ibid.*) June and September, 1948, (*Ibid.*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 39.) the annual ball in 1947 (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 67.) 1948, (*Hasholom*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1948), 33 and 35.), 1950, (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.2 (October, 1950), 47.) and 1951 (*Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 66.) a social evening in June 1949, (*Hasholom*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 13.) a dinner dance, in March 1950, at which a presentation was made to Mr J. Goldberg, upon his retirement as chairman (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.9 (May, 1950), 25.), an ex-servicemen's picnic at Umgeni Dam (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.11 (July, 1950), 37.) a social get together in February, 1951 (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.7 (March, 1951), 15.) and a dance at the Cosmo Club in May of that year. (*Ibid.*, XXIX No.10 (June, 1951), 25.).

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.8 (April, 1945), 27.

<sup>172</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVII No.1 (September, 1948), 67., *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 79., *Hasholom*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 31., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 66.

Meeting that was convened by the Council in August, 1945.<sup>173</sup> On a national level its membership of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies entitled the Durban branch of the League to be represented at the Board's Biennial Congresses.<sup>174</sup>

The extent of its communal involvement was most truly reflected, however, in its co-operation with a variety of Jewish organisations. The Ex-Service League held joint activities with the Durban Zionist Association<sup>175</sup> and the F.C. Hollander Lodge of the Hebrew Order of David.<sup>176</sup> It gave a luncheon for Lieut. Col. J. Nadich, former senior rabbi to the American forces in Western Europe and personal adviser to General Eisenhower on Jewish affairs, at the start of the South African Jewish War Appeal campaign, in 1946,<sup>177</sup> and it co-operated with the Palestine Maritime League in entertaining the crew of the fishing trawler *Drom Afrika*, during its visit to Durban in May, 1977.<sup>178</sup>

The League worked harmoniously with the Durban United Hebrew Congregation in conjunction with whom it

<sup>173</sup> *Hasholom*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 33.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII No.10 (June, 1949), 11.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 19 and 21., *The Zionist Record*, November 30, 1951, p.12.

<sup>176</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVI No.1 (September, 1947), 64., *Hasholom*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 38.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.4 (December, 1946), 3.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 35.

held an annual Military *Chanukah* Service, at one or other of the Congregation's two synagogues.<sup>179</sup> In February 1953 a plaque, erected by the League in memory of the Natal Jews who lost their lives during World War II, was unveiled and dedicated at the Congregation's St. Andrew's Street Synagogue. A large and distinguished gathering which included the Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor and Mrs P. Osborn, and other prominent Civic and Military dignitaries attended the service.<sup>180</sup>

Through the good efforts of the Congregation's *Chevra Kadisha*, and the efforts of the League, a tombstone was erected on the grave of Private Isaac Stein, who drowned at sea off the Natal Coast in 1952 and was buried at the Jewish Cemetery at Stellawood.<sup>181</sup>

The League's communal work embraced fund raising activities which benefitted widely divergent causes. These included a collection instituted in 1945 for the establishment of a Springbok Grove in Palestine in memory of the late Brigadier F. Kisch,<sup>182</sup> and a ball, the proceeds of which were divided between the South African Jewish War Appeal, the Jewish National Fund, and

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 27., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 9., *The Natal Mercury*, December 31, 1948, p.8., *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.6 (February, 1950), 35., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 23.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI No.7 (March, 1953), 37 and 38.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX No.3 (November, 1950), 47.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.2 (October, 1945), 33.



the Durban Jewish Community Chest.<sup>183</sup> In 1948 the Ladies' Committee helped the National Headquarters of the League to raise funds for Maayan Baruch, a *kibbutz* in Israel's extreme north, which was founded by Jewish ex-servicemen from South Africa.<sup>184</sup> The Durban branch of the League also contributed to the Relief Fund set up in Durban after the race riots of 1949, and made a donation to the Durban and District Community Chest.<sup>185</sup>

In its capacity as the representative body of Jewish ex-servicemen and women the League was frequently called upon to publicly represent its members and the Jewish community. It regularly participated in the wreath laying ceremony held at the Cenotaph on Armistice Day,<sup>186</sup> and in the Remembrance Day Services that were held in the City Hall.<sup>187</sup> Almost inevitably the rabbi of the Durban United Hebrew Congregation, in his capacity as minister to the largest section of the Jewish population, was included amongst the officiating clergy at these

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.3 (November, 1945), 36.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 38., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 39.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 27.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV No.4 (December, 1945), 17., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 79., *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 27., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.4 (December, 1950), 31.

<sup>187</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 79., *The Natal Daily News*, November 10, 1952, p.3., *Hasholom*, XXXIII No.12 (August, 1955), 22.



services.<sup>188</sup>

On March 20, 1947, during the visit of the Royal Family to Durban, Mr J. Goldberg, in his capacity as chairman of the Durban branch, was presented to the Royal Guests at the opening of the Gates of Remembrance at the Cenotaph, where he represented the League. Mr J.J. Friedman, the League's vice-chairman, attended the tea given by the City Council to the Royal Family at the conclusion of the ceremony. For the League a matter of great pride was the decision of Natal's premier regiment, the Royal Durban Light Infantry, to bestow the honour of receiving the regimental colours from the King, at a ceremony at Robert's Heights, on one of its members, Lieut. Philip Patz.<sup>189</sup>

In its role as the ex-servicemen's organisation of the Jewish community the League, in conjunction with the Jewish Club, held a reception in July 1947 in honour of General J.C. Smuts, the Prime Minister, which was also attended by the Minister of the Interior, Senator the Hon. C. Clarkson; the Mayor, Councillor

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<sup>188</sup> In 1947 Rabbi A.H. Freedman participated in the service (*Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 20.). In 1949 Major S. Ernst, the League's Hon. Chaplain, in the absence of a rabbi, was asked to participate in the service. (*Ibid.*, XXVIII No.4 (December, 1949), 11.). Rabbi Swift participated in the services in 1950, 1951, 1952 and 1953. (*The Natal Daily News*, November 13, 1950, p.7., *The Natal Mercury*, November 10, 1951, p.10., *Hasholom*, XXXI No.3 (November, 1952), 23., *The Natal Mercury*, November 9, 1953, p.5.).

<sup>189</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.8 (April, 1947), 37.

R. Ellis Brown; and Mr J. Sullivan M.P.<sup>190</sup> A few months later, during the visit to Durban of Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, the League was invited to send representatives to the Civic Luncheon held in honour of the distinguished visitor.<sup>191</sup>

The Ex-Service League maintained close contact with the M.O.T.H.S. and the B.E.S.L. and thereby fostered a spirit of goodwill and friendship between its members and other ex-service organisations in the City. In 1947 it cemented these bonds when it became affiliated to the B.E.S.L.<sup>192</sup> Thereafter it was represented at Congress of the B.E.S.L.<sup>193</sup> and on the B.E.S.L. Local Executive.<sup>194</sup> Members of the B.E.S.L. attended the League's activities<sup>195</sup> and there was also a reciprocal arrangement in respect of functions between the M.O.T.H.S. and the League.<sup>196</sup>

Within the Jewish community the Ex-Service League served a multifaceted purpose. It firstly protected and safeguarded the interests of members whilst at the same time it acted as a common meeting ground for

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.12 (August, 1947), 4-7.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.4 (December, 1947), 13.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 37.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 38., *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.12 (August, 1955), 22.

<sup>194</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 79.

<sup>195</sup> *Hasholom*, XXV No.10 (June, 1947), 37.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI No.10 (June 1948), 38., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.7 (March, 1949), 21.

ex-servicemen, involved itself and its members in Jewish communal life and served as a valuable medium for public relations work, as it fostered much goodwill with kindred ex-service organisations. Jewish ex-servicemen and women immediately recognised the League's worth and within a few weeks of its inception the organisation's membership stood at 120.<sup>197</sup>

The subsequent growth of the branch<sup>198</sup> was offset by a heightened disinterest on the part of the members in the activities of the League.<sup>199</sup> This state of affairs was partly due to a reduction in the League's activities, but also to a feeling among certain sections of the members that the League had outlived the purpose for which it had been established. At the League's annual general meeting in April, 1954 a discussion arose as to the advisability or otherwise of disbanding the branch, and considerable opposition was displayed towards this proposal.<sup>200</sup>

The League's importance in respect of its role as a representative body for Jewish ex-servicemen and as a vehicle for communal and philanthropic endeavour prompted

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII No.8 (April, 1945), 27.

<sup>198</sup> *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXVIII No.1 (September, 1949), 79., *Hasholom*, XXVIII No.6 (February, 1950), 35., *Hasholom Rosh Hashonah Annual*, XXX No.1 (September, 1951), 66., *Ibid.*, XXXI No.1 (September, 1952), 65.

<sup>199</sup> *Hasholom*, XXVI No.10 (June, 1948), 38., *Ibid.*, XXVI No.12 (August, 1948), 39., *Ibid.*, XXVII No.4 (December, 1948), 35., *Ibid.*, XXIX No.7 (March, 1951), 15.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.8 (April, 1954), 7.



its members to persevere with their activities. Whilst the branch's activities remained few it continued to serve the interests of the Jewish ex-servicemen wherever possible. Amongst its most notable achievements was a highly successful dance at the *Cosmo Club*, the proceeds of which were paid over to the League's headquarters for the National War Memorial Bursary Fund.<sup>201</sup> In placing increased emphasis upon its welfare, social and public relations work the League sought to adapt to changing circumstances and successfully strove to remain a relevant force within the community and to make its own contribution to Jewish communal life.

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<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII No.12 (August, 1955), 22.