
Union of South Africa

DURING the period under review (July 1, 1957, through June 30, 1958) there was renewed evidence of the country's underlying stability despite continued political and racial tension over *apartheid* (segregation). Although money became tighter and trade showed some decline, industrial development continued and employment fell little. The general election of April 1958 returned Premier Johannes Gerhardus Strijdom's Nationalists to power with an increased majority. He died in August 1958. Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, who succeeded him in September 1958, affirmed adherence to South Africa's traditional policies and categorically denied that he might introduce restrictions affecting the Jewish community.

South African Jewish communal activity progressed during the period under review, but failure to meet the budgets of major communal institutions required new plans for financing Jewish education.

Political Developments

The controversy over *apartheid*, described in preceding volumes of the AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, set the stage for the general election of April 16, 1958. While the government and the opposition with the exception of the small Liberal party agreed on maintaining racial segregation (which had in an important degree existed since before the establishment of the Union in 1910), they differed on its application. The governing Nationalists sought to extend segregation, while the opposition United party favored reversion to the system prevailing under former governments.

As a result of the elections, the Nationalists increased their strength from 96 seats to 103 and the opposition United party, led by Sir De Villiers Graaff, won 53 seats. The dwindling Labor party lost the only three seats that it contested. The few candidates of the Liberal party, advocating the abolition of *apartheid*, appealed only to small minorities and were heavily defeated. The election was fought under a new delimitation of constituencies which favored the Nationalists in a number of seats, but the Nationalists also increased their majorities and their total vote.

Jews were among the supporters of all parties, and there was no anti-Semitism in the election campaign.

In the elections, 10 Jews were among the 296 candidates; 7 for the United party, 1 for Labor, 1 for the Liberals, and 1 for a new party, the South African Bond, a moderate conservative group. Five were elected, all belonging to the United party: Mrs. Helen Suzman, Hyman Miller, Abraham Leo Kowarsky (all unopposed), Ephraim Fisher, and Borris Wilson. (Kowarsky

subsequently resigned his seat in favor of Marais Steyn, who had been defeated at Vereeniging).

In the separate election, held two weeks before the general elections for four white members of parliament to represent Colored (mulatto) voters (there is additional separate representation for the Native [Negro] population), two Jews, Abe Bloomberg and Charles Barnett, were among those elected. Four veteran Jewish members of parliament retired before the general election: Morris Kentridge, with nearly 40 years' parliamentary service, Mrs. Bertha Solomon, with 26 years, Henry Gluckman, with 20 years, and Hyman Davidoff, with nearly 10 years.

Premier Strijdom's death on August 24, 1958, was mourned at synagogue services and in messages by Edel Horwitz, president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and Israel Dunsky, chairman of the South African Zionist Federation, while at the monthly meeting of the Board of Deputies on August 31, 1958, Namie Philips, chairman of the board's executive council, expressing the condolences of the Jewish community, stated:

Although, at a critical period of South African affairs—a period which is fortunately well behind us—Mr. Strijdom, as leader of his party in the Transvaal, was associated with controversial policies affecting the Jewish community, it is right that we should record on this occasion, that when he took over the premiership, he faithfully adhered to the principles of equality enunciated by his predecessor. It is cause for satisfaction to all of us that the status and rights of Jews as full and equal citizens are now taken for granted, and we confidently look forward to this happy situation continuing when the premiership is taken over by Mr. Strijdom's successor. We are all deeply concerned for the future and well-being of South Africa, and all its peoples, and will without question cooperate to that end.

On September 2, 1958, Minister of Native Affairs Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd was elected as the National party's new leader, and the Union's sixth prime minister. Even more than Strijdom, he had been identified during the Hitler years with "controversial policies affecting the Jewish community." He had opposed the admission of Jewish refugees from Germany, and in an article in 1937 in the first number of the Johannesburg Nationalist daily, *Die Transvaaler* (of which he had become first editor after resigning a professorship at Stellenbosch University), he had advocated a quota system for Jews in trade, industry, and the professions. During World War II he lost an action for defamation against the Johannesburg *Star*, which had accused his paper of supporting Nazi propaganda and acting as a tool of the Nazis. In a 25,000-word judgment in the Transvaal Supreme Court on July 13, 1943, Justice Philip Millin found that, while Verwoerd's "legal right to publish what he did is not in question . . . he did support Nazi propaganda."

On September 3, 1958, however, in his first address as prime minister, he made it evident that, like Strijdom, he had effectively abandoned such an outlook. He pledged himself to

follow in my beloved predecessor's footsteps, and also those of his honored predecessor [Daniel François Malan]. No one should for a single moment doubt that it will be my steadfast task to maintain, with the necessary respect, the democratic foundations of our land, which are among the most

treasured possessions of western civilization. The will of the people, democratically manifested, must not be undermined.

He appealed for cooperation with the government, but also guaranteed "the right of people who have other convictions to express their views."

Prime Minister Verwoerd's past was nevertheless made the basis for rumors abroad, among them a report in the Israeli newspaper, *Yedi'ot Aharonot* of September 4, 1958, implying that South African Jewry was in danger, and that Verwoerd would pursue an anti-Israel policy. The report was denounced as follows by Max Melamet, chairman of the Cape Council of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, when asked to comment upon it by the Cape Town Nationalist paper, *Die Burger*, on September 6, 1958:

This is the sort of unfounded and nonsensical comment abroad against which the government can rightly object. Similar things were also said against Dr. Malan and Mr. Strijdom, while the truth is that their attitude towards Israel and the Jewish community in South Africa was friendly and was highly valued by the Jewish community. We know of no reason why it should be different under Dr. Verwoerd.

On September 8, 1958, Verwoerd authorized Solomon Kluk, a Jewish member of the National party, categorically to deny the *Yedi'ot Aharonot* report. On September 9, the prime minister told the Johannesburg evening paper, *Die Vaderland*, that he would follow Malan's and Strijdom's policy towards Israel and the Jewish community in South Africa. He made the same affirmation on October 21, 1958, when he received a delegation from the Board of Deputies which called to present the traditional good wishes of the Jewish community to the new prime minister.

Among the chief new items of political controversy was a government decision to extend the reservation of various skilled jobs in favor of white workers. (Under the Industrial Conciliation Act, the minister is empowered to reserve skilled jobs in any industry for white workers and may also grant exemption from such order of reservation in specific cases, within his discretion.) In this instance, the decision was to extend "job reservation" to the clothing industry. Protests against the decision were made by the industry, by the trade unions, and in parliament and the press.

A law passed in September 1958 reduced the voting age from 21 to 18. In the debate on this bill, which was strongly opposed by the United party, the Nationalists pointed out that in Israel the voting age was 18.

In July 1958 External Affairs Minister Eric Louw announced that the government—which in protest against attacks on South African racial policies had in October 1956 withdrawn from active participation in the United Nations (though remaining a dues-paying member)—had decided to return. Louw led the South African delegation to the General Assembly in September 1958.

The government deferred for consideration next year legislation providing for *apartheid* at the universities and the establishment of separate university colleges for non-whites. The parliamentary commission on this bill dropped from the original draft the so-called conscience clause, common to acts of parliament relating to universities, and forbidding discrimination on grounds of religion in the appointment of staff or admission of students. In August

1958 the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, several universities, and a large section of the press urged the government to retain the conscience clause.

TREASON TRIAL

The treason trial (*see* AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1958 [Vol. 59], p. 368) took an unexpected turn at the preparatory examination in December 1957 when the allegations against 61 of the accused were withdrawn. The remaining 95 accused were committed for trial before a special court of three judges. Argument on the constitution of the bench led to the withdrawal of one of the judges in August 1958 and his replacement by another. Following the defense argument against the indictment, the prosecution, headed by Oswald Pirow, announced in September 1958 that it would confine its case to the allegations of conspiracy against the government in the main treason charge, and drop subsidiary charges under the Suppression of Communism Act.

Jewish Population

No new figures for the Jewish population of South Africa were available since the 1951 census, which put the Jewish community at 108,496 persons out of a European (white) population of 2,588,933, and a total population (all races) of 12,437,277. It was estimated, however, that natural increase had since brought the Jewish community up to at least 110,000.

Civic and Political Status

Full civic equality of the Jews of South Africa continued as in the past, with relations between Jews and non-Jews marked by general goodwill.

Seventeen Jews were elected as mayors and three as deputy mayors of towns and cities. H. M. Bloch, Q.C., and Oscar Galgut, Q.C., were raised to the Supreme Court bench and the Freedom of the City of Port Elizabeth was conferred upon ex-Mayor and communal leader Adolph Schauder.

Anti-Semitism

There was very little anti-Semitic activity in South Africa during the period under review. Ray Rudman, of Pietmaritzburg, continued to send out anti-Semitic pamphlets and to advertise anti-Semitic books for sale; a small Cape paper, the *S.A. Observer*, published anti-Jewish material and veiled anti-Semitic references. Oswald Pirow's *Nuusbrief*, which often contained anti-Semitic references, ceased publication on August 31, 1958.

An allegation of anti-Semitic discrimination was raised in the Cape provincial council in July 1958 when Major Aaron Z. Berman charged that a Jew had been unfairly passed over for a senior Cape medical appointment. This was denied by the Nationalist leader of the council, J. N. Malan, who read official statements supporting his denial. He agreed with Major Berman that it would be misconduct for any hospital official to discriminate against any

applicant for a position on religious grounds, and a resolution to this effect was incorporated in hospital legislation before the council. There were some acrimonious exchanges during the debate.

Communal Organization

The biennial congress of the Board of Deputies was held in Johannesburg in March 1958, and the biennial congress of the Union of Jewish Women of Southern Africa was held in the same city in May 1958. At both, there were reports and discussions about organization, representation of Jewish interests, cultural programs, goodwill work, assistance to small rural communities, and the like. At both, also, the need for organized Jewish youth activities and for trained personnel was stressed. As a result, the Board of Deputies invited (through the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations in the United States) Leo Schwarz to come to the Union as a student adviser, and named a South African, Chaim Segall, as organizer-secretary of the board's youth committee. The Union of Jewish Women pledged to raise £5,000 (\$14,000) for the youth projects of the Board of Deputies. A smaller contribution for the same purpose was pledged by B'nai B'rith.

Edel Horwitz was elected president of the Board of Deputies, succeeding Israel Maisels. Namie Philips was reelected chairman of the board's executive council. The Union of Jewish Women chose Mrs. Pearl Mandelstam as their national president, succeeding Mrs. Kate Machanik.

The question of communal coordination occupied a special session at the Board of Deputies' congress. Professor Salo W. Baron of Columbia University visited South Africa at the invitation of the Board of Deputies, and was present at the session. At the end of the congress he told delegates: "As an outsider, I must say that this community is better coordinated than any other Jewish community I know in the world." He went on to speak of the evidence he found of communal progress in the 11 years since his last visit to South Africa, particularly in the educational sphere, and he urged patience and cooperation in exploring avenues of further communal coordination.

Fund Raising

The most serious problem during the period under review was communal finances. South African Jewry's central communal institutions—the Board of Deputies, the boards of Jewish education, the Federation of Synagogues, the Yiddish Cultural Federation, the Histadrut Ivrit, the ORT-OSE, and the Country Communities Assistance Fund—depended on the United Communal Fund, which operated on a "community chest" basis, to cover their budgets. The Fund's campaigns did not achieve their full goals, and participants had to accept reduced allocations. In the 1957-58 United Communal Fund stabilization campaign, the goal was raised to a higher figure to meet increased needs of education. This campaign started well in the last quarter of 1957, but in 1958 it again fell short, and in July a 30 per cent cut had to be made in monthly allocations to all participating bodies.

This created a crisis for the South African board of Jewish education which required assurance of a minimum monthly income to meet teachers' salaries and payments on school bonds. An attempt was made, in talks among the board of deputies, the Zionist federation, and the board of education, to get the Zionist Federation to assume a larger share of the responsibility for financing Hebrew education, but the federation was not prepared to go beyond a loan of £50,000 (\$140,000) which it had already made to the United Communal Fund. It was agreed that the board of education should conduct a local campaign for its Johannesburg institutions, and remain in the United Communal Fund for its national needs.

The biennial Israel United Appeal campaign of the South African Zionist Federation was launched by Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Zionist Organization, during a brief visit in September 1958. Thus three major communal campaigns proceeded simultaneously, although the United Communal Fund had been established to regulate fund raising on a basis which would give each campaign a clear field during its assigned period.

Jewish Education

Although financial stringency hampered expansion in Jewish education, the work previously set in motion was continued. The Herzlia Jewish Day School in Cape Town, a modern structure designed to house 615 pupils, was opened in April 1958. In Johannesburg the King David schools were unable to accommodate many of the children seeking admission.

Schools under the control of the South African Board of Jewish Education had 8,000 pupils, while 2,000 attended schools under the control of the Cape board.

New Hebrew schools were opened during the year at Parkview-Greenside and Doornfontein, Johannesburg, and at Claremont, Cape Town. Also during 1957-58, a combined new school building and synagogue center was started in Randfontein.

Religious Life

Progress in the religious field continued during 1957-58 under the leadership of Chief Rabbi Louis Isaac Rabinowitz in Johannesburg and Chief Rabbi Israel Abrahams in Cape Town.

Rabbi Moses Cyrus Weiler, founder and leader of Reform Judaism in South Africa, who left the Union in January 1958 to settle in Israel, returned briefly in September 1958 for the silver jubilee celebration of Johannesburg's United Progressive Jewish Congregation, of which he had been chief minister for 24 years. He also led the High Holy Days services of the congregation, as no successor had yet been found.

Despite Rabbi Weiler's retirement, the Reform movement maintained the ground which his leadership had won it over the years. Most Reform affiliates reported increased memberships at their annual meetings and their Hebrew schools registered rising enrolments.

Zionist and Pro-Israel Activity

The tenth anniversary of the State of Israel occasioned wide interest in South Africa and drew favorable comment from all sections of the South African press. The Johannesburg National party daily *Die Transvaler* published a 12-page supplement, with articles on Israel's progress and South African Jewry's contribution to it, and a message from Prime Minister Strijdom stressing the ties between South Africa and Israel.

The congratulations of the Union government were conveyed to the Israel government in a message by Governor-General Ernst G. Jansen. Albertus J. R. van Rhijn, the then Minister of Economic Affairs, voiced them in person at the diplomatic reception held at the Israel Legation in Pretoria, on April 24, 1958. As a tenth-anniversary gift to Israel, the South African Zionist Federation launched a fund to build a park in Jerusalem at a cost of £10,000 (\$28,000).

Israel opened its first national pavilion at the Rand Easter Show (the leading South African trade fair) in Johannesburg in March 1958, replacing the Israeli stand at previous Rand shows.

The Zionist Federation's imposing new offices and hall in Johannesburg were opened in February 1958.

South African Jewry's special assistance to Ashkelon in Israel was terminated during the year, and the Ashkelon town-planning project was presented as a gift from South African Jewry to the Israel government.

In July 1958, the United General Zionist party of South Africa and the Association of South African Zionists (non-party) merged to form the United Zionist Association of South Africa and Rhodesia. The association condemned the party system as "unnecessary and wasteful."

Social Services

At the annual general meeting in November 1957 of the Transvaal Jewish Welfare Council (representing the main Jewish welfare organizations in the province), it was announced that affiliated organizations had handled 775 cases during the year and that the three major relief and rehabilitation organizations—the Johannesburg Hevra Kaddisha, the Witwatersrand Jewish Women's Benevolent and Welfare Society, and the South African Jewish Orphanage—had spent, in this field of work alone, a total of £86,722 (about \$243,000).

Bikkur Holim societies in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and other centers visited the sick and provided comforts for hospital patients. The Johannesburg Bikkur Holim Society conducted an annual seaside camp for underprivileged children.

The Board of Deputies and the South African ORT-OSE maintained employment placement services. The ORT-OSE also supplied vocational guidance and provided grants and scholarships for a number of students to learn trades.

Cultural Activities

During the period under review cultural work in South Africa was advanced by a number of visitors. Professor Salo W. Baron, Leo Schwarz, and Yudel Mark conducted lecture tours, Hertz Grosbard gave Yiddish recitations, and Sidor Belarsky and Hannah Aharoni gave recitals of Yiddish and Hebrew songs.

People's College lecture programs in Johannesburg and other cities covered various phases of Jewish history and culture. Hebrew cultural programs were conducted by the Histadrut Ivrit and Yiddish cultural programs by the Yiddish Cultural Federation.

Publications by South African Jewish writers during the year included: *Two Bucks Without Hair* (short stories) by Sarah Gertrude Millin; *The Price of Diamonds* (novel) by Dan Jacobson; *A World of Strangers* (novel) by Nadine Gordimer; *Agriculture in Natal 1860-1950* by N. Hurwitz; *Anneaux de Mousse* (poems in French) by Adolph Shedrow; *With Ink in the Book* (sketches of South African Jewish life) by Rabbi J. Newman; *All God's Children* (social study) by Fanny A. Gross. Cantor Israel Alter published a volume of musical compositions, *Meine Lieder*.

Personalialia

Prominent South African Jews who died during the year included Johannesburg congregational leader Isaac John Hersch (June 30, 1958), Cape Town communal leader Chaim Winokur (January 4, 1958), Johannesburg Reform leader Samuel Geffen (January 29, 1958), and South African Labor party veteran Gabriel Weinstock (June 21, 1958).

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