
Union of South Africa *

THE economic recession that began during the preceding year (AJYB, 1959 [Vol. 60], p. 284), became more pronounced, but seemed to be easing at the time of writing. The government's *apartheid* policy of increased racial segregation continued to provoke political controversy. Both Jews and non-Jews were divided on the government's program, and Jewish organizations refrained from political action except on matters directly affecting Jewish interests.

Political Developments

As part of the *apartheid* program, Premier Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd introduced in parliament's 1959 session legislation to create a number of self-administering Bantu territories within the Union, under the authority of the central government, in which Natives (those of unmixed African descent) would elect their own tribal administrations and in general manage their affairs; at the same time, the existing representation of Natives, on a restricted franchise, by seven European (white) members of the Union parliament (four in the upper and three in the lower house), would be terminated. A bill was also introduced to create separate university colleges for Natives and bar them from white universities, where a number had hitherto studied.

Although government majorities in both houses assured passage of this legislation, the government's "Bantustan" policy was strenuously fought by the opposition parties and by large sections of the public and press, on the ground that it was politically undesirable and economically impracticable to split South Africa into autonomous black and white areas, and that the plan deprived Natives of existing rights. One member, Japie Basson, was expelled from the government caucus because, while supporting the bill's general principle, he opposed withdrawal of the existing limited Native representation from the Union parliament. Later he was also expelled from the party. Outside parliament there was also some dissent within the National party about aspects of this legislation, and also criticism of Premier Verwoerd. Despite these rumblings—notably in Nationalist intellectual circles—the party remained united behind its policy and leader.

In August 1959 the opposition United party, led by Sir De Villiers Graaff, split over the government's policy. Twelve of its parliamentary members seceded in protest against a party decision to oppose government purchase of land for the "Bantustans." The dissidents opposed the "Bantustan" policy even more strongly than the party's conformist majority, but held that pur-

* For meaning of abbreviations, see p. 359.

chase of land for settlement of Natives was a continuing obligation, whatever government was in power, and should not be opposed. They formed themselves into the new Progressive party, with a policy of constitutional reform.

CONSCIENCE CLAUSE

As reported last year (AJYB, 1959 [Vol. 60], p. 286-87), concern was felt in the Jewish community at the omission of the so-called conscience clause from the bill to create separate Bantu university colleges. (This traditional provision in South African university legislation prohibited any test of religious belief in the appointment of staff or the admission of students.) The South African Jewish Board of Deputies made representations to the government in August 1958, urging the retention of the clause. In February 1959 the concern of the Jewish community was again brought to the prime minister's notice by a Jewish member of the National party, Joseph Nossel. Premier Verwoerd, in a letter to Nossel, held that the bill did not affect the interests of the Jewish community, since Bantu education had always been associated with Christian religious teaching and missionary work and there had been "no attempt by Jewry to convert the Bantu to the Jewish faith." He added: "The existing universities, which all European students including Jews attend, and will continue to attend, have accepted the 'conscience clause,' with the exception of the Potchefstroom University. There is no legislation intending to change this."

When the bill came before parliament in April, the Board of Deputies issued a statement reiterating the Jewish community's concern at the omission of the conscience clause, declaring it to be "a cause of disquiet not only to persons of the Jewish faith and other religious groups, but also to all who are concerned to safeguard religious and academic freedom at our universities," and expressing the hope that the government would restore it. A similar attitude was taken by several university councils, some Christian bodies, and many newspapers.

In the parliamentary debate, Minister of Education Jonathan Serfontein mentioned the Jewish community's concern, but said that fear of discrimination was unwarranted: "The record of this Government is their warranty, and it is a warranty which is also valid for these institutions which we are now engaged upon." An opposition party amendment to insert the conscience clause was voted down, and the bill was passed without the clause.

FARM-LABOR ALLEGATIONS

The Jewish community was also concerned when, during the parliamentary debate on the so-called farm-labor issue in June 1959, two Nationalist members made remarks which were at first thought hostile to Jews.

The debate arose out of a government plan under which Natives arrested for certain offenses were given the option of serving a period of farm labor in lieu of prosecution. Court proceedings had taken place which had occasioned widespread concern. A number of Transvaal farmers had been ordered to produce Natives who had disappeared from their homes and were alleged to be working on the farms as "induced" labor. Evidence was based on allegations of maltreatment and degrading living and working conditions.

Some of the farmers involved were Jews. After the trials, Chief Rabbi Louis I. Rabinowitz called on the Jewish farmers involved to release Native laborers sent to them under this scheme, and to cease using this source of labor. He announced in a Shavu'ot sermon in Johannesburg that "all Jewish farmers except one" had agreed.

The opposition attacked the farm-labor plan in parliament and demanded a judicial inquiry into the allegations made in court. Minister for Bantu Administration Daan de Wet Nel, while defending the plan and asserting that the abuses had been exaggerated, agreed to institute a commission of inquiry (but not a judicial commission) and to suspend the plan pending the result of the inquiry.

The opposition's attack was largely led by two Jewish members of the United party, Mrs. Helen Suzman and Boris Wilson. What they said was misinterpreted by some government supporters as an attack on Afrikaner farmers, and in replies from the government side, two Nationalist members, F. E. Martins and J. F. Schoonbee, made pointed reference to the fact that several of the farmers alleged to be guilty were "not Afrikaners." Schoonbee added: "If I had been of Jewish extraction, I would have been the last person to raise this question in this House." Martins, when attacking Wilson, implied that his name had formerly been Benjamin Woolfson, who had avoided military service during the war. The press highlighted this sharp exchange, and there was an impression that an antisemitic outburst had occurred.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies issued a statement which deplored the introduction of a "Jewish angle" into the debate, defended the right of ministers of religion, members of parliament, and citizens to express their views without having their religion or community called into question, and appealed to all parties to "keep the Jew out of politics." The Board's statement was strongly supported by the Jewish press.

In parliament, Wilson presented his birth certificate as evidence that he was born Boris Wilson and had never changed his name. Benjamin Woolfson, he said, had been previously mentioned in parliament in connection with Communist activities. Martins replied with a full apology to Wilson, together with a denial that his remarks were meant to reflect on Jews. Schoonbee also denied any antisemitic intent and claimed that the press had given a distorted version of what he had said, omitting a laudatory reference to Jewish farmers. These statements were welcomed as correcting an erroneous impression.

CANDIDATES FOR PARLIAMENT

When it was reported that the Transvaal synods of the Dutch Reformed church had urged members to support "only persons of unimpeachable Christian character and behavior" for parliamentary and other public office, an exchange of letters took place between the Board of Deputies and the church. The latter adopted a clarifying resolution emphasizing that "it did not in the least intend to discriminate against persons of a different religious opinion, least of all the Jewish community, which was held in high esteem," but only

to stress the importance of an upright and God-fearing character in persons seeking public office.

TREASON TRIAL

The treason trial (AJYB, 1958 [Vol. 59] p. 368; 1959 [Vol. 60] p. 287) reopened in January 1959, with the reindictment of the accused in two groups. The first group of 30 were indicted on a charge of high treason and their trial began in January 1959. The defense took certain questions of law to the Appeal Court, which in June 1959 accepted a Crown submission that it was not entitled to hear an appeal until the end of the trial. It was resumed in August 1959.

The remaining group of 61 accused were divided into two groups, and in April 1959 were separately charged on new indictments. Legal argument secured the quashing of these indictments on technical grounds.

Dependents of the accused were being supported by a public fund in aid of the defense, conducted under the chairmanship of Anglican Bishop Ambrose Reeves of Johannesburg.

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

South African Jews continued to be full and equal citizens of the Union. Addressing a Transvaal regional conference of Jewish communities in Johannesburg on August 30, 1959, Gustav Saron, general secretary of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, said that there was

good cause for satisfaction especially when the situation today is contrasted with the difficult war and pre-war period. There are few or no public manifestations of antisemitism. The general reaction some months ago [in February 1959] on the occasion of Mosley's short visit to this country reflected public repugnance to antisemitism. There are no Jewish issues in politics. The goodwill shown towards Israel has its reflection in the attitudes to South African Jewry.

APPOINTMENTS

Several Jews were appointed to high positions during the year. Oscar Galgut was appointed a judge of the Transvaal division of the Supreme Court. Ted Mauerburger was elected president of the Cape Town chamber of commerce. Joel Mervis was appointed editor of the *Sunday Times*, South Africa's largest weekly newspaper.

Ian Maltz became Johannesburg's seventh Jewish mayor, and Alec Gorshel was elected deputy mayor. Jewish citizens also served as mayors in 14 other towns.

Antisemitism

There was little antisemitic agitation. Occasional isolated incidents reported in the press appeared upon investigation to have scant substance. When British fascist leader Oswald Mosley visited South Africa, he said that he had come on private business and without political intent. Nevertheless, he received a hostile press, which criticized two cabinet ministers for having received him when he paid them courtesy calls.

Ray Rudman of Pietermaritzburg, who for years had been issuing anti-semitic pamphlets, made an attempt to revive his so-called Boeranasie organization and spoke of "putting up candidates in the next election."

Communal Organization

Communal activities increased, notably in Jewish education and in a program to foster Jewish commitment among university students. This program was sponsored by the Board of Deputies, concerned for many years over trends towards assimilation at the universities and the small proportion of graduate students who took an active part in Jewish communal life.

At the invitation of the Board of Deputies, and with the assistance of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations in the United States, Leo W. Schwarz came to South Africa in December 1958, on an 18-month assignment to initiate counseling and other services for Jewish students at the universities. Schwarz visited all the university centers, finding that his work involved some 3,000 Jewish students—1,700 in Johannesburg, nearly 1,000 in Cape Town, and 300 scattered in small numbers over Durban, Grahamstown, Pretoria, and Stellenbosch. He arranged for the establishment of Hillel houses in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Progress was retarded at one point by differences between the South African Zionist Federation and the Board of Deputies over the respective roles of Schwarz and Samuel Almog, whom the Zionist Federation brought at the same time from Israel as a student adviser in the specifically Zionist sphere. At a conference of Jewish students in Durban in July 1959, it was agreed that Schwarz would direct Johannesburg's Hillel house and Almog Cape Town's Hillel house.

The Board of Deputies' youth department continued its program for non-student Jewish youth. A number of Jewish youth clubs were formed in Johannesburg.

Dwindling Jewish communities in small rural towns continued to require assistance in carrying on organized Jewish activities. This was supplied by the country-communities committee of the Board of Deputies, in which the Federation of Synagogues and the Yiddish Cultural Federation collaborated. Financial aid came from the Country Communities Fund, which helped to ensure for such communities the services of a minister-teacher wherever possible.

South African Jewry was represented at CJMCAG sessions in London in October 1958 and in New York in January 1959.

Johannesburg's monument to martyred European Jewry was dedicated at

the Westpark Jewish cemetery in May by Rabbi Mordecai Nurock, who came from Israel for the ceremony.

Several communities celebrated jubilees or other notable anniversaries. They included Durban (75th anniversary), East London, Kingwilliamstown, and Standerton (diamond jubilees), and Benoni (golden jubilee).

The Cape Town *Jewish Chronicle* ended 57 years of publication in August 1959, when it was amalgamated with the *Zionist Record*, which celebrated its golden jubilee in 1958.

FUND RAISING

Shortage of funds to finance communal expansion (AJYB, 1959 [Vol. 60], p. 288) was a continuing problem. The fifth campaign for the United Communal Fund (UCF), a national Jewish fund-raising effort for South African Jewry's major domestic organizations, closed in July 1959, substantially short of its £500,000 (about \$1.5 million) target, and allocations to participating organizations had to be cut by 30 per cent.

In the face of continuing deficiencies, it was necessary to decide whether UCF should continue. After exhaustive discussions, its participating bodies concluded that it was better to maintain the structure of united campaigning than to break up the partnership and leave each participant to fend for itself. This view was strengthened by resolutions from the provinces in favor of UCF. It was therefore decided to go ahead with a sixth and more ambitious UCF campaign.

The Union of Jewish Women's campaigns for UCF continued to be increasingly successful. The union also undertook a major financial commitment to the youth program initiated by the Board of Deputies.

The Israeli United Appeal (IUA) campaign did not encounter similar difficulties. The troubled situation in the Middle East, the potent reality of Israel, and the need to bring in many thousands of new immigrants afforded arguments which IUA workers found little difficulty in emphasizing. Launched in September 1958, the campaign made excellent progress.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

In the religious field, consolidation went on steadily, and was highlighted at the silver jubilee of the Federation of Synagogues of the Transvaal and Orange Free State in a banquet at Johannesburg in January 1959. Guests of honor included the minister of the interior and the administrator of the Transvaal, both of whom praised Jewish contributions to South Africa. Representatives of the Anglican and Dutch Reformed churches brought fraternal greetings.

Both in Johannesburg and Cape Town, some progress was made in developing facilities for the training of rabbis and ministers in South Africa.

New synagogues, Talmud Torahs, and communal halls were opened during the year in a number of centers. The annual meetings of Reform congregations reflected an increased membership.

JEWISH EDUCATION

Jewish education, while still handicapped by insufficient funds, expanded significantly. Work began on the establishment of a second Jewish day school in Johannesburg, in addition to the King David school. A day school was opened in Pretoria. Port Elizabeth also began organizing a day school. Existing day schools in Durban and Cape Town expanded their work.

Further expansion took place in the network of Hebrew nursery schools—now totaling 40—promoted by the Board of Jewish Education. The board's Rabbi Zlotnik Seminary continued to train Hebrew teachers.

Since the Board of Jewish Education was not able to obtain all the necessary money for its expanded education programs from UCF, it was again permitted to receive UCF funds for its national budget, while campaigning separately in Johannesburg for its institutions in that city (AJYB, 1959 [Vol. 60], p. 289).

A building-fund drive was also started by Yeshiva College, which planned new premises in Johannesburg.

ZIONIST ACTIVITIES

At the Zionist conference, held in Johannesburg from May 28 to June 1, 1959, the Board of Jewish Education asked that it be subsidized from IUA funds. The conference, however, voted against any diversion of funds contributed for Israel and asserted that South African Jewry must meet the bill for Hebrew education from its own resources.

In reports on the South African Zionist Federation's Tel-Aviv office, it was stated that some 2,000 former South Africans had successfully settled in Israel.

Israel Dunsky resigned as chairman of the South African Zionist Federation to settle in Israel with his family. He was succeeded by Edel Horwitz.

Zionist work proceeded during the year on a wide front, with distinguished personalities visiting South Africa for the Haifa Technion, Keren Kayyemet le-Yisrael, and other Israeli causes.

Women's work went forward at its accustomed tempo, through the various women's Zionist societies and the local branches of the Union of Jewish Women. Two hundred and twenty delegates attended the 13th Women's Zionist conference in Johannesburg in May 1959. Gertrude Kark was elected president of the council, succeeding Inez Gordon, who resigned after five years of office.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The economic recession brought increased calls for aid to the various Hevra Kaddisha and Gemillut Hasadim organizations, which successfully met the need, stressing rehabilitation rather than charity. The Johannesburg Hevra Kaddisha, largest organization in the Jewish welfare field, spent £75,966 (about \$217,000) on rehabilitation and relief work during the year. The Witwatersrand Jewish Aged Home and Our Parents' Home in Johannesburg,

and the Cape Jewish Aged Home in Cape Town, continued their work. Jewish orphanages in Cape Town and Johannesburg cared for orphans and children from broken homes. The Board of Deputies and South African ORT-OSE maintained employment placement services. ORT-OSE also furnished vocational guidance and vocational-training grants and scholarships.

The Transvaal Jewish Welfare Council coordinated much of the welfare work.

CULTURAL ACTIVITY

Cultural activity during the year included the Peoples College programs, which were an established part of South African Jewish life; the work of the Yiddish Cultural Federation and the Histadrut 'Ivrit; the observance of the Sholem Aleichem centenary and the promotion of Jewish book month in August 1959 by the Jewish Board of Deputies, and a lecture tour by Yudel Mark.

Books by South African Jewish writers published during the year included *Sabbath Light* (sermons), by Chief Rabbi Louis I. Rabinowitz; *Jewish Horizons* (essays), by Rabbi Solomon Rappaport; *The Untold Story of Latvian Jewry* (history), by Isaac Levinson; *Speak Unto the Children of Israel* (sermons for children), by Rabbi Jacob Newman; *Cantorial Compositions*, by Chief Cantor Israel Alter; *A World of Strangers* (novel), by Nadine Gordimer; *The Zulu and the Zeide* (short stories), by Dan Jacobson; *Market Street* (novel), by Arthur Markowitz; *South African Personalities and Places* (essays), by Bernard Sachs; *The Rains Came Late* (Yiddish stories), by Nathan Levinsky; *I Recall* (reminiscences), by Morris Kentridge; *Trader on the Veld* (reminiscences), by Albert Jackson; *Here Comes the Alabama* (history), by Frank and Edna Bradlow, and *Kimberley Train* (a play), by Lewis Sowden.

EDGAR BERNSTEIN