

South Africa

National Affairs

IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS held in April 1981, the key issues were the government's racial policies, the economic situation, and the detention without trial of persons alleged to pose a threat to state security. The National party (NP), under the leadership of Pieter Botha, was returned to power with 131 seats, while the Progressive Federal party (PFP), the official opposition, led by Fredrik van Zyl Slabbert, obtained 26 seats, and the New Republic party (NRP) eight seats. Although the right-wing Herstigte Nasionale party (HNP) gained no seats, it received 191,249 votes (13.1 per cent of all votes cast), a 10.5 per cent increase over its 1977 performance. Most commentators saw the election as indicative of much greater polarization among the electorate than had been the case in recent years. On the other hand, the NP (despite the loss of seven seats) received massive electoral endorsement of its policies.

The country was plagued by an increase in acts of sabotage and terrorism. These included a grenade and rifle attack at Fort Jackson near East London; an attack on a Ciskei police patrol; the blowing up of the train lines from Soweto to Johannesburg and from Durban to Umlazi; the detonation of a bomb at the Durban cenotaph; 15 explosions in the Eastern Transvaal which damaged power stations at Arnot, Camden, Delmas, and Rietvlei; a rocket attack on the Voortrekkerhoogte military base in Pretoria; the blowing up of the Durban South electricity supply sub-station; and a bomb blast in East London. The African National Congress claimed responsibility for most of the attacks; the weapons used were almost uniformly of Russian origin. The South African police reported uncovering secret "terror" bases and arms caches near Johannesburg and other Rand cities.

The South West Africa–Namibia issue remained unresolved, despite the endeavors of the contact group formed by West Germany, Britain, Canada, France, and the United States. Much, however, was achieved by Chester Crocker, U.S. assistant secretary for African affairs, who proposed a constitutional conference to be followed by elections, along the lines of the Lancaster House conference that had done so much to resolve the Zimbabwe problem. This was a significant departure from UN security council resolution 453, which the South West African Peoples Organization (SWAPO) strongly backed. Various attempts by African nations to have the

UN impose a total ban on ties with South Africa were foiled by the Western powers. Subsequent to his mid-year meeting with U.S. secretary of state Alexander Haig and U.S. president Ronald Reagan in Washington, South African foreign minister Roelof (Pik) Botha expressed the view that progress toward a solution of the SWA-Namibia problem was possible. Indeed, this seemed to be the case when first-round discussions of an American-proposed settlement plan were held in London.

At the end of August the South African defense forces launched a four-pronged search and destroy mission against SWAPO strongholds in Southern Angola, during which more than 450 SWAPO members and Angolan soldiers were killed, and radar and anti-aircraft installations were destroyed. Ten members of the South African defense forces died in the raid. Minister of Defense Magnus Malan announced that several Russian military officers had also been killed and a Russian warrant officer captured during the operation. The United States used its veto to block a UN security council draft resolution condemning South Africa for its Angolan operation.

A sharp decline in the price of gold had a deleterious effect on the economy. Strict economic policies, including a steeply hiked interest rate, helped to slow down inflation to 13.9 per cent, from 15.7 per cent in 1980. The country's trade deficit totalled 436.2 million rands as against a surplus of 5.27 billion rands in the previous year.

Relations with Israel

On a week-long visit to South Africa as guest of the Israel United Appeal (IUA), Abba Eban, Israel's former foreign minister, noted that "the Israel government need not necessarily agree with South Africa's internal policies to maintain diplomatic and trade links." Professor Marcus Arkin, director-general of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), pointed out that both Israel and South Africa "confront in-built hostility from the UN, . . . are indirectly threatened by their neighbors, and . . . are menaced by Soviet diplomatic and strategic designs."

Israel's destruction of an Iraqi nuclear reactor generated a mixed response in South Africa, with most commentators recognizing the defensive need for the action, but expressing caution about its overall implications. Widespread discussion of the extent of cooperation on nuclear research and development between South Africa and Israel followed the Israeli raid, particularly after Iraq charged that the two countries had twice secretly exploded nuclear devices off the South African coast.

Ariel Sharon, who was then serving as Israel's minister of agriculture, visited South Africa in April to discuss ways of expanding cooperation between the two countries.

Nathan Meron, the counsellor at the Israeli embassy, stated that South Africa provided a "progressive and healthy market for the Israeli exporter," a description well-supported by the continuing growth of trade and commercial links between the

two countries. South Africa was Israel's second fastest growing trade partner. Abe Barron, chairman of the South Africa-Israel Chamber of Economic Relations, reported that South African exports to Israel in 1980 (not including 500 million rands' worth of diamonds) were valued at 74 million rands, while imports from Israel were worth 48 million rands. Israel's purchases from South Africa represented two per cent of its imports, while Israel's exports represented 0.5 per cent of South Africa's total imports. A more cautious note was sounded by W.J. Saayman, the South African trade counsellor in Tel Aviv, who pointed out that the strengthening of the rand and economic progress in South Africa had seriously lowered the amount of South African exports to Israel during the year.

Cultural and scientific contacts between South Africa and Israel included the following: a tour of Israel by the 43-member Stellenbosch University wind ensemble orchestra; the participation in the International Choir Festival in Israel of the Baragwanath Hospital Choir, the Pretoria Boys and Girls Choir, the Potchefstroom University Choir, and the East Rand Youth Choir, which was placed third in the contest; an archeological tour of Israel by Professor F.N. Lion Cachet and 40 students from the theological school at Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education; and a visit to South Africa by five Israeli scholars who attended a conference on biosolar energy conversion organized by the South African society of the Weizmann Institute of Science and the Council for Scientific-Industrial Research.

The Israeli ambassador to South Africa, Josef Harmelin, completed his tour of duty and was succeeded by Eliahu Lankin.

Antisemitism

While there were some manifestations of antisemitic activity, they were restricted to extreme right-wing fringe groups and such notorious journals as the *SA Observer*, edited by S.E.D. Brown. Other papers, such as the Herstigte Nationale party's *Die Afrikaaner*, continued their anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist propaganda.

The *Zionist Record* reported that a number of members of parliament had received antisemitic publications published in the United States and mailed from Pakistan.

A sensational development was the arrest of a number of members of the extreme right-wing Wit Kommando organization, and the subsequent trial on charges of sabotage and terrorism of Massimo Domingo Bollo and Fabio Miriello, who were sentenced, respectively, to 52 and 42 years in prison. In effect, Bollo would serve ten years in jail and Miriello, five years. Miriello was the editor of a viciously antisemitic South African Italian paper, *Noi Europa*. A cache of arms was discovered in the possession of the convicted men, who were reported to have links to terrorist organizations in Italy and elsewhere in Europe.

It was reported that the leader of the extreme right-wing Afrikaanse Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), Eugene Terre Blanche, was warned by the authorities that his

activities were being observed. The AWB announced that it had formed Blitskommando, an action group.

A new umbrella organization, Action Save White South Africa, was formed to unite such groups as AWB, Aksie Eie Toekoms, the National Conservative party, the SA First Campaign, and the Kappie Kommando into a political party. Among the leaders of the organization were Lieutenant General Colin Royden Cockcroft, former surgeon general of the South African defense force, and Professor Alkmaar Swart of the University of South Africa; Willie Lubbe was elected chairman.

Rudolf and Ingrid Schmidt, leading members of various antisemitic and neo-Nazi groups, including the Anglo-Afrikaner Bond and its youth arm, the Odal Clan, left South Africa to establish a settlement of like-minded people on land allocated to them by the government of Paraguay. The Schmidts announced that they were emigrating because they felt that the right-wing cause was lost in South Africa. Their departure was considered a serious setback to the radical right.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Communal Activities

While South African Jews continued to benefit from the general wave of prosperity within the country, this was not reflected in Jewish communal coffers, which were adversely affected by the high inflation rate. To deal with its urgent financial problems, the South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE) ran an emergency campaign to raise R5 million; it was launched in May by Rabbi David Rosen, chief rabbi of Ireland. In preparation for the 17th United Communal Fund (UCF) campaign—launched by Professor Irwin Cotler, president of the Canadian Jewish Congress—*Jewish Affairs*, the journal of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), published a special edition which detailed the financial problems of local Jewish community organizations. In Cape Town, the guest of honor at the opening of the campaign was Eugene Louw, administrator of the Cape. He noted with satisfaction that 70 per cent of UCF's income was allocated to education, and added that the provincial administration would contribute R140 per pupil per year to private schools in the province. Louw used the occasion to laud the contribution made by South African Jews (3.5 per cent of the total white population) to various professional fields. Jews, he noted, constituted 21 per cent of all doctors, dentists, and veterinary surgeons, 17 per cent of auxiliary medical workers, 11 per cent of accountants, 10 per cent of jurists, and 12 per cent of teachers.

Archie Shandling, the outgoing chairman of the SAJBD Cape committee, caused a stir in the community when he stated that mounting right-wing extremism would result in a major exodus of South African Jews, and that all Jews would be out of the country by the year 2000. Shandling called on the Jewish community to pursue its usual activities, but argued that large-scale and costly projects be eschewed.

While the SAJBD national executive disassociated itself from Shandling's remarks, some Jewish leaders, including Frank Bradlow, national vice-president of SAJBD, did express concern about increased antisemitic activity.

At the November inter-provincial conference of SAJBD, Judge David Melamet presented a report on the functioning of the Board. Melamet, acting as a one-man commission, had taken extensive evidence from a wide spectrum of people, ranging from private individuals to communal leaders, throughout the country. The major recommendation was that the structure of the Board be altered to provide for the establishment of a truly national executive council, constituted on the basis of proportional representation, that would meet every two months to deal with national matters exclusively. In addition, a Transvaal committee would be formed to deal with regional concerns. A council of chairmen of leading organizations would convene regularly to keep the Board in touch with various communal groups. Melamet also recommended that some of the Board's current activities be transferred to other organizations that were better equipped to handle the job. It was decided to adopt the recommendations on an experimental basis and to evaluate them in one year's time.

The Johannesburg branch of the Union of Jewish Women celebrated its 50th anniversary with gala events. The group received many congratulatory messages lauding its achievements.

An association was established to promote the interests of professionals in Jewish communal work.

At the Yad Vashem memorial center in Johannesburg, Israel consul general Gershon Gera presented a certificate of honor to Lilo Hellenbrandt in recognition of the work done by her parents in saving Jewish doctors and their families in Poland during World War II.

The SAJBD Cape committee, in a well-publicized declaration, associated the Jewish community with a statement in which church leaders condemned the eviction and subsequent arrest of colored families from the Langa bachelor barracks.

Zionism

The Jewish community continued to express its deep Zionist commitment through the work of the various societies and departments of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), which organized lecture series, discussion groups, information services, and tours to Israel. SAZF maintained routine institutional relationships with major communal organizations, including SAJBE, SAJBD, and student and youth groups.

One of the major tasks undertaken by SAZF was the organization of the IUA biennial campaign, which was launched in 1981 by Abba Eban, who spoke in the major cities. The impact of Eban's visit was reflected in the number of important meetings held for him and in the media coverage that ensued. The central focus of IUA was Project Renewal. Other IUA emissaries included David de Rothschild

of France and Mordechai Gur, member of the Knesset and former Israeli chief of staff.

Ruth Izakson of Israel, chairman of World WIZO, was one of the guests of honor at the 24th South African women's biennial Zionist conference. She was accompanied by Yosef Mendeleovich, the recently-released Soviet Jewish activist. Mendeleovich was accorded a hero's welcome wherever he appeared, and was the subject of profiles in leading newspapers throughout the country.

SAZF organized various activities around the country celebrating Israel's Independence Day.

The Jewish community celebrated the 15th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem at Jerusalem Day functions. In Johannesburg, Israeli chief rabbi Shlomo Goren was the main speaker.

South Africa sent its largest team ever to the Maccabiah games in Israel. Although the visit was somewhat marred by the Mexican team's refusal to play soccer against the South Africans, the latter were applauded for winning the third highest number of medals at the games.

Religion

Writing in the *SA Jewish Times'* New Year annual, Alek Goldberg, executive director of SAJBD, noted a general impression of strengthened religious life in Johannesburg, visible in an increase in regular synagogue attendance, a growing number of *shiurim* (religious study groups), and increased utilization of available *kashrut* facilities.

Reacting to a statement by Abba Eban, that if the Labor party came to power, it would, *inter alia*, legalize the status of Conservative and Reform rabbis, Bernard Casper, chief rabbi of the Federation of Synagogues of South Africa (FSSA), condemned the proposal. With the backing of the South African Rabbinical Association, the Lubavitch Foundation, and the United Mizrahi Organization, he argued that such recognition would lead to "destruction . . . of a magnitude . . . not even contemplated by the enemies of the Jewish people and certainly not achieved by them in spite of all the diabolical attempts made to do so." Naturally offended by this statement, Reform Jews gave public expression to their anger in a communiqué issued by Rabbi Walter Blumenthal, chairman of the central ecclesiastical board of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism. Israel Abramowitz, chairman of SAJBD, expressed regret that the verbal strife, centered on an Israeli political matter, had become the cause of Orthodox-Reform friction in South Africa and had overflowed into the general press.

Both the Orthodox and Reform groups held major conferences during the year. FSSA's conference had as its theme "challenge, change, and continuity" and was opened by Israeli chief rabbi Shlomo Goren. Among other matters, it dealt with the escalating Jewish divorce rate, the crisis in Jewish family life, and the role of the

synagogue in a changing world. The 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Reform movement in South Africa was celebrated at a conference with the theme "roots in a moving stream." The Reform conclave was attended by large delegations from Israel and the United States; among the participants were Gerald Daniel and Rabbi Richard Hirsch, respectively president and executive director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and Rabbi Jerome Malino, president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Another important guest of the South African Reform group was its founder, Rabbi Moses Cyrus Weiler, who had been living in Israel for over twenty years.

Rabbi Solomon Gaon, spiritual leader of the World Sephardi Federation, dedicated the Shalom synagogue, the first Sephardi synagogue in Cape Town.

Jewish Education

The Lubavitch movement in Johannesburg launched a new school, the Torah Academy, located on a 22-acre piece of land, formerly the Good Shepherd convent, in the central residential area of Orchards. Extensive renovation and building converted the complex into one of the most up-to-date educational institutions in the country. In some quarters, concern was expressed that the existing Jewish day schools in the community would suffer because the new school would draw pupils away. On the other hand, SAJBE spokesmen referred to growing waiting lists of would-be students at its network of schools.

In Cape Town, M.H. Goldschmidt, who had undertaken to contribute R500,000 toward a major construction program at the city's Herzlia School, led the groundbreaking ceremonies. The project was to include 21 classrooms, six specialist rooms, a major hall, and an administrative complex.

The *yeshiva gedola* of Yeshiva College in Johannesburg welcomed its new director, Rabbi Aharon Pfeuffer.

The Cape Town Jewish community bid farewell to Meyer Katz, for many years the principal of Herzlia School and one of the country's leading educators, upon his *aliyah* to Israel. Upon her retirement, Miriam Fendel was honored by the Jewish community for 28 years of service as principal of the Rondebosch Hebrew school.

Jewish Culture

The contribution of Jews to every aspect of theatrical life in South Africa continued to be noteworthy. Leonard Schach, living in Israel for a number of years, returned to South Africa to direct Arthur Miller's *After the Fall*, to much critical acclaim. *Zayde*, written by Henry Rootenberg, and starring Molly Seftel, had its premiere. The first play by art critic Natalie Knight, *There's No Sugar Left*, was staged at the Market Theater in Johannesburg. Henry Goodman received the South

African Television Arts award for best actor in a television play, Geraldine Aron's *Mickey Harris Caught My Eye*.

Two Israeli ballet companies, Bat Sheva and the Kibbutz Ballet, toured South Africa.

There were numerous exhibitions of works by Jewish artists, among them Rachel Lipschitz, the late Sidney Goldblatt, Michael Muchnik of New York, David Goldblatt, Barbara Arenson, Na'ama Nothman, Myra Bloomberg, and Chaim Menashehaff of Israel.

Newly-published books by Jewish authors included *The Inverted Pyramid* by Rose Zvi, *July's People* by Nadine Gordimer, *Passport to Life* by Henia Brazg, and *Beikvei Haggim uMoadim* by Rabbi Eugene Duschinsky.

The Cape Council of Adult Jewish Education organized a successful symposium on the Jewish contribution to South African performing arts.

An evening of music and readings celebrated the 40th anniversary of SAJBD's *Jewish Affairs*.

Professor Piet Cillie, head of the department of journalism at Stellenbosch University, was the main speaker at the tenth anniversary celebration of SAJBD's Afrikaans journal, *Buurman*. The event drew much congratulatory comment in the press.

The Israeli ambassador to South Africa, Joseph Harmelin, opened the Israel exhibition arranged by the South African Union of Jewish Students at the University of Witwatersrand.

The fifth anniversary of the founding of Swazi radio's "Jewish Sound," a weekly program of Jewish affairs, was celebrated.

SAJBD organized a lecture tour by the Brandeis University historian Bernard Wasserstein.

The Kaplan Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town continued to offer stimulating programs, including "Origins of South African Jewry." The Center also inaugurated a Jewish oral history project.

Personalia

People appointed to communal offices included: Solly Kessler, chairman, Cape committee of SAJBD; Colin Jankelowitz, chairman, eastern province committee of SAJBD; David Orelowitz, national chairman, SAUJS; Mervyn Braude, chairman, Jewish Students Association, University of Cape Town; Melissa Elion, chairman, SAUJS, Rhodes University; Steven Warb, chairman, SAUJS, Stellenbosch University; Stephen Cohen, assistant to the executive director, SAJBD; Professor Yossi Gamzu, chairman, department of Hebrew, Witwatersrand University.

Lazar Druion, finance director of SAJBD, retired after 47 years of service. Eve Davis, secretary to the executive director of SAJBD, retired after more than 30 years of service.

Recipients of important awards and appointments included: Percy Amoils, senior ophthalmologist at the Johannesburg Hospital, the Medal of Honor for research in cryosurgery by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Edward Epstein, the establishment of a research fellowship in his name by the American Intraocular Society, in recognition of his work in lens transplants; Jack Barnett, Gold Medal of the Institute of South African Architects; Phillip Tobias, dean of the faculty of medicine at Witwatersrand University, the Paul Harris Fellowship award of the Rotary Foundation, for his "outstanding ability and devoted application to the science of mankind"; Morris Hellman, president of the Medical Association of South Africa, Cape Western branch; Harry Nelson, Merit Award for service to the Medical Association of South Africa; Lionel Goldes, Orange Free State commissioner for St. Johns ambulance brigade; Helen Suzman, member of Parliament, special medal for "heroism" by Edward Koch, mayor of New York City; David Lazarus, honorary life member of the Hebrew Order of David; Aviva Pelham, Nederburg Prize for Opera and Ballet; Cyril Adler, curator of the Adler Museum of History of Medicine, the University of Witwatersrand alumni honor award; Henry Gluckman, honorary doctor of laws by Witwatersrand University; Nadine Gordimer, the Commonwealth Award in Literature for her contribution to modern literature, by the Modern Language Association of America; J.S. Levy, chairman of the Rhodes University council; Sylvia Kaplan, national president of the South African Association of Arts; and Mendel Kaplan, treasurer of the World Jewish Congress.

A number of Jews were returned to Parliament, including Harry Schwartz, Ruben Sive, Helen Suzman, and Alf Widman, all of the Progressive Federal party. Theo Aronson was not reelected, but was returned to Parliament as a nominated member of the National party. Simon Chilchik, Alan Gadd, Herbert Hirsh, Irene Menell, Joel Mervis, and Samuel Moss were elected as provincial councillors. Jews elected to local government office included: Louis Kreiner, mayor of Cape Town for a second term; S.J. Gross, mayor of Vereeniging; H. Wolder, mayor of Fochville for a second term; Peter Ucko, mayor of Edenvale; Ivor Katz, junior mayor of Johannesburg; Dave Milner, mayor of Newcastle.

Individuals achieving honors in sports included: Greta Glaser, winner of the South African women bowlers' singles championship; Alan Chait, table tennis champion, chosen as Western province sportsman of the year; Charmaine Gale, *Fair Lady* sportswoman of the year; Antony Wainer, skier, Maccabi junior sportsman of the year; Mandi Yachad, cricketer, Maccabi sportsman of the year; and Peter Lindenberg, water-skier, the State President's Award for 1981.

Among prominent Jews who died during the year were: Norman Addelson, lawyer, sportsman, journalist, governor of Rhodes University, and communal leader in the Cape Border region, in February; Philip Lapin, veteran Pretoria lawyer, in April; Philip Bernstein, Cape Town lawyer and sportsman, in April; Maurice Porter, lawyer, Jewish communal leader, and past president of SAJBD, in June; Harry

Sneech, freeman of Edenvale, businessman and philanthropist, in July; Barney Shapiro, Vereeniging Jewish communal leader, in October; Rebecca Ostrowiak, educator, in October; Phyllis (Inkey) Lopert, national director SAZF Jewish National Fund Charitable Trust, in October; Shlomo Mandel, cantor of Berea Hebrew Congregation for 30 years, prior to his *aliyah* to Israel, in October; Louis Franklin Freed, scientist, author, and civic worker, in December; Solly Leibman, founder of Pretoria Progressive Jewish Congregation, in December; Professor Michael Moshal, director, South Africa Medical Research Council Institute for Diseases in Tropical Environments, in January; Ruth Hayman, civic and social worker, in January.

DENIS DIAMOND