

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY
IN NEW SOUTH WALES
1914-1939

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>A.J.C.</u>	<u>Australian Jewish Chronicle</u>
<u>A.J.H.</u>	<u>Australian Jewish Herald</u>
A.J.H.S.	Australian Jewish Historical Society, <u>Journal and Proceedings</u>
A.J.W.S.	Australian Jewish Welfare Society
<u>C.B.</u>	<u>Council Bulletin</u>
C. & Y.	Council and Young Men's Hebrew Association
<u>D.T.</u>	<u>Daily Telegraph</u>
G.J.R.F.	German Jewish Relief Fund
H.I.A.S.	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
<u>H.S.</u>	<u>Hebrew Standard of Australasia</u>
<u>J.H.</u>	<u>Jewish Herald</u>
J.N.F.	Jewish National Fund
<u>The Mac.</u>	<u>The Maccabean</u>
M.J.A.B.	Melbourne Jewish Advisory Board
P.J.R.F.	Polish Jewish Relief Fund
<u>R.A.H.S.J.</u>	<u>Royal Australian Historical Society Journal</u>
<u>Syd. J. News</u>	<u>Sydney Jewish News</u>
<u>S.M.H.</u>	<u>Sydney Morning Herald</u>
W.I.Z.O.	Women's International Zionist Organization
Y.M.C.A.	Young Men's Christian Association
Y.M.H.A.	Young Men's Hebrew Association

GLOSSARY

Ashkenazi (literally, German) — Jews originating from Central and Eastern Europe.

Barmitzvah — Religious ceremony to mark a Jewish boy's reaching maturity; held at the age of thirteen.

Beth Din (literally, 'House of Judgement') — Ecclesiastical Court.

B'nai Brith — 'Sons of the Covenant'; service organization.

Chanukah — Festival of Lights; originated in the Maccabean era.

Chevra Kadisha — 'Holy Brotherhood' in charge of burials.

Gaon — Jewish intellectual leader; name given to the Chief Rabbi of the Sephardi community.

Haftorah — Reading from the Prophets.

Hasidism — Pietistic religious movement which developed in the eighteenth century.

Kashruth — Jewish dietary laws.

Kol Nidrei — Part of the Eve of Atonement services, holiest prayer of the Jewish year.

Kosher (or Kasher) — Complying with the dietary laws.

Mikveh — Ritual bath.

Minhag — Custom, tradition.

Minyan — Group of ten male adult Jews, the minimum required for communal prayer.

Mishnah — Legal rabbinical codification of the Bible, containing the core of the Oral Law.

Pogrom (Russian, destruction) — organized attack, usually with government collusion, especially directed against Jews.

Protocols of the Elders of Zion — Anti-Semitic fabrication first published in Russia in 1902. Various editions appeared.

Schnorrer (Yiddish) — beggar; usually used in a derogatory sense.

Sephardi (literally, Spanish) — Jews originating from Spain, Portugal and the Orient.

Sepher Torah — Scroll of the Law containing the five Books of Moses.

Shechitah — Ritual method of slaughtering.

Shochet (pl. shochtim) — Slaughterer of animals according to Jewish law.

Shomer (pl. shomrim) — Watcher to ensure laws of Kashruth are observed.

Shtetl — small Jewish community in Eastern Europe; village.

Talmud (literally, 'study') — Basic collection of rabbinic literature.

Torah (literally, 'teaching') — Pentateuch; at times whole body of Jewish teaching.

Yeshiva — Talmudic college.

PREFACE

The years 1914 to 1939 were formative ones in the history of the New South Wales Jewish community. The community was challenged from within by the problem of assimilation and from without by developments in World Jewry. Most important of these developments were the rampant anti-Semitism of the 1930's, which was mainly due to the Nazi regime in Germany, and the problems faced by the Jewish National Homeland under the British mandate in Palestine. Prominent Jewish historians such as Nathan Glazer and Marshall Sklare in America and V. D. Lipman and H. M. Sachar in England, have already studied the impact of these developments on the major centres of the Anglo-Saxon world. The main aim of this thesis is to make an in-depth study of New South Wales Jewry in this period.

My thesis is that, in the 1920's, the community was dominated by an ideology of non-distinctiveness which involved a desire to integrate fully within the general community and to discard any concepts or practices which accentuated Jewish differences. This ideology, combined with the almost complete acceptance of the Jew within the general community, resulted in a high rate of intermarriage, 30% for males and 16% for females by 1921. This level was high enough to create the possibility of the eventual disintegration of the community.¹ This assimilatory trend might not have been reversed without the impact of Nazism, which resulted in a reappraisal of

¹ Intermarriage has been divided into four divisions by A. Ruppin; Australia was in the fourth division where almost a third of Jewish marriages were mixed. This constituted a serious threat to the continued existence of the already scanty Jewish population as the children of almost all mixed marriages were brought up in the Christian faith. See L. Wirth, The Ghetto, Chicago 1962, p.126.

Australian Jewish attitudes, or without the impetus of the refugees who came from the European centres of Jewish learning and culture challenging the attitudes and institutions of the establishment. By 1939, the position of the Jewish community in New South Wales had changed. Their sense of group cohesion was strengthened and the trend towards complete assimilation reversed.

To substantiate this overall thesis it is necessary to study the religious, political and cultural life of New South Wales Jewry, the growth of the Zionist movement, and to trace briefly the careers of a few leading Australian Jews who dominated the establishment and contributed to the community's basic framework. The institutions of a community reflect its strengths and weaknesses and represent community attitudes. They also indicate the ways in which a community attempts to solve its problems. In order to understand the reasons for the institutional changes of the 1930's, an in-depth study of the impact of the Nazi movement on New South Wales society is necessary. The growth of anti-Semitic movements in New South Wales in the 1930's and their significance will be assessed. A detailed analysis of the problems of admitting and integrating the Jewish refugees from Nazism is of even greater importance in gaining an understanding of the changes which took place in the 1930's.

This thesis is mainly concerned with the Jewish community of New South Wales; where relevant, comparisons will be made with other Anglo-Saxon Jewish communities. This study will focus on the period between the two world wars. With the outbreak of World War II migration ceased and so ended a

distinct phase in Australian Jewish history. The war years began a new era, one of adjustment of the immigrants to Australian conditions and consolidation of the communal changes begun in the late 1930's.

It is not intended to present an in-depth statistical survey of the New South Wales Jewish community, or a detailed demographic account of changes in occupation, places of abode and educational standards. Excellent work has already been done in this field by Charles A. Price in his "Jewish Settlers in Australia".² This study utilizes his statistical tables and demographic data.

In researching this thesis, there have been a number of problems to overcome. Problems arose from the difficulty in obtaining access to source material. Most individual institutions have retained control of their records and have been reluctant to allow them to be read by an 'outsider' for fear that 'confidential' information might be revealed. In one case only, however, was permission refused. Much material has been lost because individuals have either inadvertently or even deliberately destroyed it.³ The source material available is often unrevealing. For example, the Great Synagogue Minutes dealing with the Rabbi E. M. Levy dispute, 1938, are non-committal. They list only the dates of meetings held and have not recorded the actual discussions which took place. There

²Charles A. Price, "Jewish Settlers in Australia, 1788-1961", Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal, Vol. V, Part VIII, 1964, pp.355-412.

³For example, in the Minutes of the Sydney Beth Din twenty pages have been torn out. These cover the period 1937-1938 and probably dealt with the Rabbi Levy episode. It appears that the removal was deliberate.

is no mention of the reasons for the Board's insistence that Rabbi Levy resign. These gaps have had to be filled in with other methods of research.

Written source material has been supplemented by personal recollections. There are a number of difficulties relating to the techniques of an interview for historical research. Elderly people are often suspicious of an interviewer and are cautious in revealing their own ideas of a period so that rapport must first be established. Memory is often clouded and the interviewer must use both his discretion and evidence from written sources to decide what is valid. Despite these problems, the interview is an invaluable instrument for the social historian. It allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the attitudes and atmosphere of the period.

Until recently, the amount of published material dealing with Australian Jewry has been limited and patchy. In the last few years the number of works on Australian Jewish history and demography has grown in volume.

The majority of publications to date have been specialist studies of Jewish communities in the various Australian states. These include Rabbi L. M. Goldman's history of Victorian Jewry in the nineteenth century. This is largely a detailed institutional account of synagogal history based on synagogue minutes, although it does make some contribution to social and political history.⁴ H. Munz's study of South

⁴L. M. Goldman, The Jews of Victoria in the Nineteenth Century, Melbourne 1964.

Australian Jewry is a more comprehensive history but deals mainly with the nineteenth century.⁵ Israel Getzler's monograph on the Australian chapter of Jewish emancipation is broader in concept and outlines both the Jewish struggle for full equality in the Australian colonies and early developments in the major Jewish communities in Australia.⁶ Dr G. F. J. Bergman and Rabbi J. S. Levi published a detailed, biographical account of the Jewish convicts and early Jewish settlers in the penal colonies in the period 1788-1850.⁷ A history of the Australian Jewish Times, which incorporated the Hebrew Standard of Australasia, was written by myself to mark the newspaper's seventy-fifth year of publication in 1970.⁸ There is also much material published in the Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society; these articles are mainly studies of specific people or institutions, rather than a general overview. Most of these publications concentrate on nineteenth century Australian Jewish history.

A number of autobiographies and biographies have been published. Included in these are Steinberg's account of his experiences in Australia as he battled to win support for his plan to settle European Jewish refugees in the Kimberleys, Western Australia;⁹ Max Freilich's life-story and work for the Australian Zionist Movement;¹⁰ and the Rev. W. Katz's

⁵H. Munz, Jews in South Australia, 1836-1936, Adelaide 1936.

⁶I. Getzler, Neither Toleration nor Favour: The Australian Chapter in Jewish Emancipation, Melbourne 1970.

⁷J. S. Levi and G. F. J. Bergman, Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers, 1788-1850, Adelaide 1974.

⁸S. D. Rutland, Seventy-Five Years: The History of a Jewish Newspaper, Sydney 1970.

⁹I. N. Steinberg, Australia: The Unpromised Land, London 1948.

¹⁰M. Freilich, Zion in Our Time: Memoirs of an Australian Zionist, Sydney 1967.

account of his experiences as a German refugee arriving in Australia in the late 1930's and the growth of the North Shore Synagogue with which he was closely connected.¹¹ Rabbi I. Porush has recently published an account of his years as Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue (1940-1972), as well as giving an historical survey of the synagogue's development to mark its centenary.¹² The most significant biographies published deal with two leading Victorian Jews: one making his contribution to the general community, Sir Isaac Isaacs, and the other, Samuel Wynn, being more significant for his contribution to the Jewish community although he did assist in the development of the Australian wine industry.¹³ These works concentrate mainly on the lives of the individuals concerned. The autobiographies shed some light on communal developments, but they do not provide an overall picture of the growth of Australian Jewry.

Some important demographic and sociological studies have been published. Charles A. Price's study of Jewish immigration to Australia included statistical tables dealing with migratory trends, areas of settlement, family patterns, occupations and educational standards.¹⁴ P. Y. Medding's study of Melbourne Jewry gives the findings of a sociological survey and traces the historical development of the community

¹¹W. Katz, And the Ark Rested: The Story of a Jewish Community Born During the Holocaust in Europe, Sydney 1966.

¹²I. Porush, The House of Israel: A study of Sydney Jewry from its foundation (1788) and a history of the Great Synagogue of Sydney, Melbourne 1977. The Great Synagogue is publishing a centenary history, in press, to which the author of this thesis has contributed two chapters.

¹³M. Gordon, Sir Isaac Isaacs: A Life of Service, London 1962, and A. Wynn, Samuel Wynn: Winemaker, Humanist, Zionist, Melbourne 1968.

¹⁴Price, op.cit.

from 1920. Recently Medding has edited a new book dealing with the Melbourne Jewish community.¹⁵ Walter Lippmann published a demographic survey of Australian Jewry dealing with information in the 1961 census.¹⁶ In 1970 a sociological survey of New South Wales Jewry was conducted by Professor S. Encel and as yet has been produced in a duplicated version only. I was the author of the historical chapters of this study.¹⁷ No sociological survey was carried out in the period covered by this thesis so that it is difficult to assess intangible attitudes and the position of the unaffiliated Jew.

No comprehensive history has been published dealing with Australian Jewry, or even about one specific state. There has been much less published on New South Wales Jewry than on the Victorian Jewish community. This fact reflects the differences between the two communities as Melbourne Jewry is a larger, more committed community.

There are a number of reasons for the comparative paucity of studies dealing with Australian Jewish history. Some Australian historians are concerned that there is a lack of inherent interest in Australian history. This applies even more so to Australian Jewish historians. It is only since the 1930's that New South Wales Jewry has grown sufficiently to make a study of its history seem justified. Before the 1930's it would have been considered wrong to make a separate study of the

¹⁵ P. Y. Medding, From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community, Melbourne 1968, and P. Y. Medding ed., Jews in Australian Society, Melbourne 1973.

¹⁶ Walter M. Lippmann, The Demography of Australian Jewry, Melbourne n.d.

¹⁷ S. Encel, B. S. Buckley, J. Sofer-Schreiber, "The Sydney Jewish Community: A Survey", duplicated edition, Sydney 1972.

Jewish community because this would have emphasized the distinctiveness of the community. In the memoirs of John J. Cohen, a typical communal leader of the pre-1933 era, there is no direct reference to his Jewish background or to the significant contribution he made to Sydney Jewry.¹⁸ Attitudes began to change after 1933, as a result of the impact of the refugees from Nazism, but those refugees who arrived after 1933 often lacked a fluent command of the English language or were, at first, too busy establishing themselves to be concerned with historical research.

The growth of Australian Jewish history is a recent phenomenon. Most of the studies of Australian Jewish history have been published in the last decade. Included in this upsurge of interest is my choice of thesis topic, covering an interesting and previously unresearched area of Australian Jewish history. It appeared well worthwhile to study this topic while there were still people alive with clear recollections of the period and before too much primary source material was lost.

Despite its small size, Australian Jewry has become more important in the world scene as can be seen by its contribution to the establishment of the State of Israel. It is, therefore, meaningful to study its development in comparison with other Anglo-Saxon Jewish communities and to see how it evolved under the impact of Australian conditions. Many questions need to be answered, such as why was Australian

¹⁸ R. L. Dawson ed., Judge J. Cohen, Memoirs, Sydney 1940.

Jewry's contribution to the general community before 1939 out of all proportion to its numerical size? What was the general community's attitude to its Jewish minority? Why was there so little anti-Semitism, unlike most other parts of the world? What were the results of the almost complete acceptance? To what extent did the situation change in the 1930's? These questions interested me and I felt that this was a worthwhile area of research where the source material was largely available. It is the aim of this thesis to attempt to fill this vacuum in Australian Jewish history.

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable help, encouragement and suggestions given by Associate-Professor K. J. Cable of the University of Sydney who has supervised my research over many years. Associate-Professor B. Fletcher's advice is greatly appreciated.

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S. D. R.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Before the nineteenth Century the concept of Jewry was a uniform one. The term 'Jew' meant a person who believed implicitly in the divine revelation of the Old Testament and devoutly followed all the Jewish traditions as had been developed in the oral law of the Mishnah and Talmud. (Jews congregated together, at first for convenience and later because the predominantly Christian society introduced segregation edicts. This resulted) ~~In the (formation of)~~ ghettos ^{of medieval Europe} where group pressures forced all members of the Jewish community to conform. Any individual wishing to break away from the traditional practices was penalized.¹ Judaism was, therefore, a complete way of life which regulated every aspect of the individual's waking hours² and was oriented to the rigorous fulfilment of all religious commandments.³

~~The Economic Revolution resulted in the secularization of Western Society. When the Jew was incorporated into that society he was also subject to the same secular pressures. (The emancipation of the Jew occurred in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and posed completely new problems for the~~

¹In some cases Jews subject to communal excommunication could lose their property. See J. L. Blau, Modern Varieties of Judaism, New York 1966, p.6.

²P. Y. Medding, From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community, Melbourne 1968, p.11.

³M. Zborowski and E. Herzog, Life is With People: The Culture of the Shtetl, New York 1965, p.32.

~~Jewish religion.)~~ ^{Emancipation} It ended all exclusive measures against Jews, so that Jewish group life was weakened. (It also created the problem of the 'hyphenated-Jew' who had to decide if his first loyalty was to his country of birth or to Judaism.)⁴ As the Jew became the same as his non-Jewish neighbour, he was tempted to discard his distinctive religious practices. ↵

Jewish communities had to adapt to the dual pressures of emancipation and secularization. Some Jews rejected emancipation and continued to live the 'ghetto' existence.⁵ Assimilation was accepted by others as a means of coping with the newfound freedom of emancipation, but this answer did not mean the preservation of Judaism. Various other answers were found within European Jewry to try and retain the benefits of emancipation while at the same time preserving Judaism. These answers included the modernization of orthodox practice, the emergence of the Reform and Conservative movements, the Zionist movement and cultural groups such as the Bundists and the B'nai Brith.⁶ As a result of these developments, being a Jew could no longer be equated with the rigid practice of Judaism. The Jewish way of life was no longer a uniform one since it manifested itself in many forms. The Jew in the modern world may emphasize the religious, cultural or national aspect of his heritage.⁷

⁴Blau, op.cit., p.23.

⁵Medding, op.cit., p.12.

⁶Blau, op.cit., p.27.

⁷M.Freedman, ed., A Minority in Britain: Social Studies of the Anglo-Jewish Community, London 1955, p.4.

I

The fullest attempt to reconcile traditional Judaism with modern life occurred in Germany. Under the rabbinical leadership of Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) the Neo-Orthodox movement was established.⁸ Hirsch realized that change was inevitable but he believed that the method of change should be found within Judaism itself.⁹ He emphasized the importance of symbolism in Jewish tradition. This was a modernization and intellectualization of orthodoxy.¹⁰ His greatest contribution was that he stressed that modern, secular knowledge was not inconsistent with Jewish tradition.

Hirsch's principles were adopted by one of the most influential figures in Anglo-Jewry, Dr Nathan Marcus Adler (1803-1890). Adler, himself German born, filled the position of Chief Rabbi of British Jewry for almost half a century (1845-1890). His ideas were continued by his son, Dr Hermann Adler who followed his father as Chief Rabbi (1891-1911).

By the middle of the nineteenth century, British Jewry consisted of two main sections. The Sephardim (Spanish Jews) were the original settlers in the seventeenth century but their importance had declined. They had their own religious structure headed by the Gaon. The Ashkenazim (German Jews) later established separate religious organs under the leadership of the Chief Rabbinate and became sufficiently assimilated socially to consider themselves Englishmen. It was anomalous

⁸ James Parkes, A History of the Jewish People, London 1962, p.149.

⁹ Blau, op.cit., p.65.

¹⁰ Howard M.Sachar, The Course of Modern Jewish History, London 1958, p.157.

that the Chief Rabbinate which emerged after 1750¹¹ still considered the community as 'foreigners' and insisted that ministers preach in either Hebrew or Yiddish, neither of which were understood by many of the congregants.¹² Nathan Adler set about to overcome this anomaly by modernizing, reorganizing and Anglicizing the Ashkenazi community. In 1847 he issued his 'laws and regulations' which stressed the supremacy of the Chief Rabbinate on ritual matters and religious practice. In 1856 he was instrumental in establishing Jews' College as a modern ministerial training centre.¹³ (Through his initiatives the Board of Guardians (1859) and the United Synagogue (1870) were founded and developed as vital organs for the preservation of Judaism in the English milieu.¹⁴) In ritual matters, the services were shortened and English sermons introduced. Synagogue worship came to possess an air of coldness, decorum and dignified formality which was foreign to the East European Jewish tradition.¹⁵ It became typical of English orthodoxy to build a single, vast synagogue unlike the small, homely synagogues of Eastern Europe.¹⁶

As a result of Adler's work, Anglo-Jewry developed a distinctive religious outlook which combined 'orthodoxy and efficiency, piety and dignity, and modernity of method with

¹¹The Chief Rabbinate emerged to meet the needs of the provincial British communities who could not always afford a local rabbi. Later it also served the needs of the Jewish communities in the British Dominions.

¹²Freedman, op.cit., p.24.

¹³A similar European rabbinical seminary was not established until 1873 in Berlin under the leadership of I.Hildesheimer.

¹⁴V.D.Lipman, A Social History of the Jews in England, 1850-1950, London 1954, p.40.

¹⁵Freedman, op.cit., p.27.

¹⁶Lipman, op.cit., p.121.

strict adherence to tradition'.¹⁷ Its communal life was well organized and religious practices were modified to meet the demands of emancipation. These developments reflected both Jewish tradition and English culture and owed much to the influence of the Church of England. (The same thing happened with Roman Catholicism in England as it modified the theatrical and 'foreign' nature of its ritual to suit English tastes.)

The Neo-orthodox response was too moderate for Westernized German Jews. They found the traditional synagogue service, with its nasal sing-song, bargaining for the recital of prayers and lack of decorum, completely distasteful.¹⁸ Their desire to create a more dignified and aesthetic service resulted in the establishment of the Hamburg Temple in 1818. This was the beginning of the Reform movement which, until the 1840's, did not develop an adequate philosophy to justify its ritual changes. Abraham Geiger (1810-1870) provided this philosophical basis by emphasizing that the Jewish spiritual and ethical values were more important than the outward forms of Jewish practice and worship.¹⁹

As the Jews in Germany lived in a predominantly Protestant community, the Reform ideas owed much to the Protestant influence. This included the belief in the importance of the state in non-religious matters, the use of

¹⁷ Ibid., p.40.

¹⁸ Sachar, op.cit., p.147.

¹⁹ Blau, op.cit., pp.33 and 37.

the vernacular in prayers and the idea of the family pew instead of a separate women's gallery in the synagogue.²⁰ Protestantism and non-traditional Judaism, therefore, had many aspects in common.

By 1850 the Reform movement had strengthened itself in Germany, had gained some ground in England and had laid down firm roots in America. The Reform movement developed more readily in America than in Western Europe. American religion was not fettered by traditional restrictions on expression of organization²¹ so that all branches, especially the Protestant sects were more innovative. There was no pre-emancipation Jewish community in America so that traditional Judaism was not so strongly entrenched.²²

After 1850, the most important developments of Reform Judaism occurred in America. The task of formulating the guiding principles of Reform was begun at the rabbinical conference of 1869 held in Philadelphia and was completed in 1885 with the 'Pittsburgh Platform'. The traditional Messianic doctrine was changed to a universalistic concept. (The Reform movement believed that the destruction of the Second Commonwealth was not a punishment but a necessity. The subsequent dispersal enabled the Jews to carry their divine mission to the world. The concept of the 'Chosen People' was thus given

²⁰ Sachar, op.cit., p.147.

²¹ Ibid., p.176. In Germany, for example, every confessing Jew had to contribute to the maintenance of the principal congregation in his community, in addition to paying fees to his Reform Temple. This naturally limited the Reform movement.

²² Blau, op.cit., p.39.

an international meaning and the ideal of the return to Zion rejected. Any reference to the national aspect of Judaism in the prayers was removed and Jews' loyalty to their country of birth was emphasized.²³) The idea that the Bible was literally inspired was (also) rejected. Only its moral laws were binding and all laws that did not adapt to the habits of modern civilization were abrogated. These included the dietary laws, the traditional observance of the Sabbath and regulations regarding priestly purity and dress. The platform also urged that more prayers be recited in the vernacular and welcomed inter-faith co-operation.²⁴ Thus Reform Judaism tried to retain the ethical values of traditional Judaism, while rejecting the strict observance and ritualism of orthodoxy.

The growth of the Reform movement as a response to the challenges of the modern world was significant. It enabled Judaism to adjust to the scientific developments of the nineteenth century and provided a more modern interpretation of Jewish practice. In this way, Reform kept some of the community from complete alienation.

Conservative Judaism emerged as a middle of the road compromise between the rigidity of orthodoxy and the extremism of Reform. It accepted the need to adapt Judaism to modern challenges, but stressed that the principles of change must be found within the experiences of the Jewish people.²⁵ It felt

²³ Sachar, op.cit., p.148. This was also true of Reform in Germany.

²⁴ For a more specific summary of the eight sections of the Pittsburgh Platform see Blau, op.cit., pp.57-58.

²⁵ Ibid., p.96.

that Judaism could not abrogate important traditions embedded in the community. (Thus, Conservatism adhered to traditional practices such as the observance of the Sabbath and Kashruth, the use of the Hebrew language, daily prayer and retained a belief in the resettlement of Palestine. Its leaders stressed that change was permissible only if a certain tradition ceased to be meaningful to the Jewish people)²⁶

The foundations of the Conservative movement were laid in Germany by Zachariah Frankel (1801-1875).²⁷ At first associated with Reform, Frankel later rejected its extremism and developed a conservative or 'conserving' philosophy. His ideas spread to America where in the late nineteenth century Conservatism developed a definite organized structure under the leadership of Solomon Schechter. After 1885, it emerged as a third force in Judaism, especially on the American Jewish scene,²⁸ so that it failed to re-establish the unity of Jewish practice as its founders had hoped. The Conservative movement, however, was successful in coping with the challenges of the modern world because of its desire to achieve a balance between tradition and innovation.²⁹

Zionism, meaning Jewish nationalism, was an important secular response to the challenges of the nineteenth century. For the first time since the destruction of the Second Temple

²⁶Sachar, op.cit., p.156.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Blau, op.cit., p.102.

²⁹There is no rigid platform for the proportion of tradition and innovation and this flexibility has enabled the movement to be very successful in the pluralistic American society. Ibid., p.118.

an organized effort to recreate a Jewish state in Palestine was begun in the second half of the nineteenth century. Zionism was fostered both by the rise of nationalism of the post-Napoleonic era³⁰ and, more importantly, by the development of racial anti-Semitism. (After 1880, there were violent outbreaks of pogroms in Eastern Europe and also anti-Semitic incidents of a more subtle form in Germany and France — the centres of European Enlightenment.) The most publicized of such incidents was the Dreyfus Affair which aroused an assimilated Austrian Jew, Theodore Herzl, to meet the challenge of racial anti-Semitism. Herzl came to the realization that emancipation had not solved the Jewish problem, as persecution of the Jew remained as virulent as ever. For him, the only solution was the creation of a separate Jewish state.³¹ He became imbued with an idealistic fervour which enabled him to transform "the hitherto ethereal vision of a 'return to Zion' into a practical political movement",³² that of the World Zionist Movement. By 1914, this movement was firmly entrenched in European and American Jewries.

Zionism was at first a purely secular movement. In its early stages it was rejected by prominent lay and religious leaders such as Dr Hermann Adler, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire who believed only in the religious and not the national aspects of Judaism. When Zionism won increasing support, because of its practical successes, a religious branch developed.

³⁰ Sachar, op.cit., p.261.

³¹ Ibid., p.272.

³² Samuel Halperin, The Political World of American Zionism, Detroit 1961, p.6.

Zionism appealed to the emotions of the majority of Jews in Eastern Europe and provided a common ground for the many diverse sections within Jewry. (As such, it was a constructive response of the Jewish communities in confrontation with the modern world.)³³

The other major secular response was that of those Jews who only stressed the cultural aspects of Judaism. This was reflected in the Bundist movement which was partly cultural and partly economic. The Jewish Labour Bund represented a synthesis of non-Marxist, socialist philosophy, joined with Yiddish culture and Judaism's ideals of social justice. It was anti-religious and anti-Zionist.³⁴ The Bund was formed in 1897 and began as the General Jewish Workers' Association of Lithuania, Poland and Russia. In order to reach the Jewish masses it adopted the Yiddish language which, as a result, developed and experienced a cultural renaissance.³⁵ (In addition to improved working conditions, the Jewish workers began to demand cultural autonomy for Russian Jews, the recognition of Yiddish as a legal language and state funds for the establishment of a Yiddish school system.)³⁶ Although the Bundist movement failed to achieve its aims within Russia, many refugees from Russian pogroms took with them Bundist ideals to Western Europe and America. In America the Bundist movement established roots and developed a strong Yiddish

³³Blau, op.cit., p.128.

³⁴Medding, op.cit., p.14.

³⁵I.Elbogen, A Century of Jewish Life, Philadelphia 1945, p.373.

³⁶Sachar, op.cit., p.292

culture. Bundism was an important contribution to the adjustment of Judaism to the modern world since it catered for the needs of the Jewish proletariat.

^{19th century}
The religious, national and cultural re-adjustments to the challenges of emancipation were very diversified in Europe, America and other parts of the New World. This diversity was a sign of strength not weakness because it was an indication of the ferment and change which is vital to the survival of any religion.³⁷

II

The weakness of ^{Australian} New South Wales Jewry was the limited nature of its reaction to the challenges of the modern world. The community developed only one, uniform reaction -- the Anglo-Jewish form of modern orthodoxy, and this remained rigid and standardized. All the other forms of modern Judaism were either rejected or not even considered. New ^{Australian} South Wales Jewry ^{in the 19th} remained isolated from the mainstreams of Jewish thought which produced the new developments. Its leadership was concentrated in the hands of a few, prominent, Anglo-Jewish families who were concerned with civic recognition rather than Jewish consciousness. This remained the dominant feature of the community until the 1930's.

Since there was no pre-emancipation Jewish community in New South Wales, the history of New South Wales Jewry is a story of the voluntary banding together into synagogues and

³⁷ Blau, op.cit., p.185.

the attempts by the small Jewish population to impose cohesion and self-discipline on themselves.³⁸ This was a dominant feature of British Jewry. As in other parts of the New World, the synagogue had to assume the functions that in Europe were carried out by the communal super-authority — that is the control of education, dietary laws and the supervision of a burial ground.³⁹ So, in New South Wales the synagogue in the nineteenth century was the focal point of all aspects of Jewish life and the pattern of religious behaviour and ritual that developed was one of the most influential factors moulding New South Wales Jewry. It is necessary to trace the evolution of this development.

The history of New South Wales Jewry commenced with the colonization of Australia in 1788. Among the convicts of the First Fleet were a few Jews, some of whom later made an important contribution to early colonial development. It has been estimated that in all a few hundred Jewish convicts arrived in New South Wales before 1820,⁴⁰ but it was not until 1829 that the first service was held because most of the convicts had drifted away from Jewish congregational life. Most of the Jewish convicts were young, illiterate, English born, London paupers who would not have been connected with congregational life in England. In addition, convicts tended to intermarry as there were nine Jewish male convicts for every Jewish female convict. Intermarriage and the absence of any anti-Semitic

³⁸ Lipman, *op.cit.*, p.1.

³⁹ This was the same as in America, see Blau, *op.cit.*, pp.39-40.

⁴⁰ J.S.Levi and G.F.J.Bergman, Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers, 1788-1850, Adelaide 1974, p.218.

feeling towards the convicts weakened group solidarity.⁴¹ With the arrival after 1828 of a hundred free Jewish settlers, amongst whom were prosperous merchants, the Jewish community became more organized.⁴² Services were held first at the home of P.J.Cohen and Lawrence Spycer in George Street⁴³ and later at the Bridge Street Synagogue opened in 1832. With the shift of population from the Wynyard to the Town Hall area, a more permanent synagogue was consecrated in York Street in 1844. These free settlers "transplanted the educated, Anglo-Jewish middle class form of congregational life they knew to the Antipodes and thus became the founding fathers of organized Jewish religion and communal life in Australia".⁴⁴ Included in this transplantation was the rigid pyramid structure of synagogue management where executive positions were dominated by a small group of 'privileged' families or Ba'ale Batim.⁴⁵ The close ties the early settlers had with leading Anglo-Jewish families imprinted the English pattern of Jewish practice in New South Wales.

From its initial foundation, the community began to develop the other organs of communal life. During the gold rushes of the 1850's the Jewish community expanded, with most migrants coming from Germany,⁴⁶ some from Britain, and a tiny

⁴¹ Israel Getzler, Neither Toleration nor Favour: The Australian Chapter of Jewish Emancipation, Melbourne 1970, pp.15-17, and Levi and Bergman, op.cit., p.218.

⁴² Getzler, op.cit., p.17.

⁴³ Ibid., p.18.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.16, and see also Lipman, op.cit., p.43.

⁴⁶ In the period 1830-1880, 1307 German Jewish migrants came to Australia, accounting for 71.1% of non-British migration, Price, op.cit., Statistical Appendix II.

minority from central and Eastern Europe.⁴⁷ Most of these migrants became tradesmen on the gold fields rather than miners. Others became hawkers in country districts, so that by 1861 40% of Jews lived in the rural areas. As has already been shown, German Jewry was the centre of intellectual ferment and innovation in nineteenth century Judaism. German Jewish migration to America between 1830-1860 enlarged the American Jewish community⁴⁸ and stimulated religious development, especially the growth of the American Reform movement.⁴⁹ It also had some impact on the Reform movement in Melbourne in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁰ This was probably because a higher proportion of German Jews went to Victoria which was the centre of the gold rushes. German Jewish migration to New South Wales was too small, too dispersed and assimilated too easily⁵¹ to have any significant impact on the religious or cultural development of the community. The few German migrants who did assume leadership adjusted to the patterns of the dominant Anglo-Jewish community.

In 1878, the Great Synagogue in Elizabeth Street was consecrated after its minister, Rev. A. B. Davis, healed the schism between the York Street and Macquarie Street

⁴⁷ Charles A. Price, "Jewish Settlers in Australia", Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Vol. V, Part VIII, May 1964, p. 384.

⁴⁸ Between 1830-1860 it is thought that German Jewish migration may have been as high as 200,000. Sachar, op. cit., p. 168.

⁴⁹ Blau, op. cit., p. 50.

⁵⁰ Price, op. cit., p. 373.

⁵¹ According to Price of the nearly two thousand German-Jewish males who were naturalized between 1850-1910, only 376 returned themselves as Jews in the 1911 Census showing rapid assimilation. Ibid., p. 374.

congregations⁵² and it was decided to build a larger synagogue for both congregations. It became the focal point for all communal activities — religious, educational, philanthropic, and social — for the next half century. Modelled on the London Great Synagogue, it was considered the most magnificent synagogue in the Southern Hemisphere,⁵³ as it could seat almost a thousand worshippers, thus allowing the whole Jewish population to worship together. Despite the growth of the community from 3,266 in 1881 to 7,660 in 1911, the Great Synagogue remained the only one in the Sydney area, and played a decisive role in the development of the community and the maintenance of group cohesion.

The ritual of the Great Synagogue was, to a large extent, based on the model of English orthodoxy, being somewhat 'Anglicized' and stressing decorum and dignity. Although the congregation called itself orthodox, it strove to accommodate the differences in belief among the congregants regarding both ritual and doctrine through a spirit of compromise. The Sabbath morning service was read unaltered, with all the traditional prayers, to a small gathering of the orthodox, while in the latter part of the service minor variations were introduced. These included the reading of the Haftorah in English, the exclusion of the repetition of the Additional Prayers and the introduction of a mixed choir.⁵⁴

⁵²This schism occurred in 1859 over the ritual decision of the acting minister, Rev. Morris P. Cohen. Getzler, op.cit., p.53.

⁵³Jewish Herald, 4 January 1880.

⁵⁴Jewish Chronicle, 25 June 1909.

This compromise was largely engineered by Davis and in many respects resembled the Conservative movement as it developed in America. Religious observance, however, was weak. Since Davis did not possess a rabbinical diploma, all decisions of a rabbinical nature were referred to the Chief Rabbi, Dr Adler, in London, or to the Reverend Dr Abrahams of Melbourne.

After the retirement of Rev.A.B.Davis in 1903, it was hoped by the congregational leaders that religious observance could be strengthened by the appointment of a chief minister with rabbinical qualifications who would stimulate religious activity.⁵⁵ Rabbi Francis Lyon Cohen arrived in Sydney in June 1905. He was to have a dominant influence on all aspects of communal development from his arrival until his death in May 1934. He immediately began to participate actively in all communal institutions. The Sydney Beth Din was formed; steps were taken to improve the supply of kosher meat; post-Barmitzvah classes were introduced with the confirmation for girls; and attempts were made to improve educational facilities. Despite these efforts, religious observance remained minimal.

Although the Great Synagogue was an orthodox congregation constitutionally, there were very few practicing orthodox Jews. The congregation was called orthodox because they kept the orthodox synagogue service and were led by orthodox rabbis and cantors,⁵⁶ but in practice there was a

⁵⁵ Hebrew Standard of Australasia, 2 September 1904.

⁵⁶ The situation was the same in Melbourne. See Medding, op.cit., p.79.

general laxity of religious observance. This was evidenced by constant complaints in the Great Synagogue Annual Reports of poor synagogue attendance and neglect of the Sabbath and Kashruth.⁵⁷ Functions such as barmitzvah or wedding receptions were held where kosher food was supplied to the rabbi only while the rest of the guests ate non-kosher food.⁵⁸ In addition, many orthodox traditions (such as ritual purification in the Mikveh) were completely disregarded. In a truly orthodox congregation such practices would never occur.

Before 1914, the Reform movement did not gain a footing in Sydney because the community was, on the whole, apathetic about religion. There was some agitation for reform because it was felt that the synagogue service was unsuited to the changing times.⁵⁹ In 1896 it was proposed that a Sunday Service be held at the Great Synagogue at 11 a.m. every week with half the prayers in English and accompanied by an organ, in order to increase membership. One such service was held in Melbourne, but not in Sydney.⁶⁰ In a further attempt to introduce reforms, I. Jacobs tried to establish a Jewish Religious Union in Melbourne, on similar lines to that in England, but he did not meet with any success.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Great Synagogue Annual Reports, 1880-1914. For example, in the 1890 report, reference was made to 'the absence of a proper religious spirit in the community'.

⁵⁸ A resolution was not passed against this practice until 1935. Beth Din Minutes, 7 August 1935.

⁵⁹ Jewish Herald, 21 May 1880; Hebrew Standard, 16 July 1909.

⁶⁰ Australasian Hebrew, 28 August 1896.

⁶¹ The Jewish Religious Union was organized in 1902 in England to hold services on Sabbath afternoons with prayers in English. Lipman, *op.cit.*, p.156.

No capable leaders emerged to support the Reform movement which was opposed by the established leadership. They felt that the basis of Judaism was tradition and without it there would be only retrogression and disintegration. The Great Synagogue Board feared that if reforms were introduced, there would be a split between Orthodox and Reform members, which would be detrimental to the community.⁶² This opposition to Reform shows that, unlike America, colonial religion was very conservative and unadventurous since all the conditions favourable to Reform existed in New South Wales. This conservatism was evidenced in the other denominations where there was also a lack of support for innovations. This was largely due to a desire to hold onto the traditions of the old country. One minister of the Great, the Reverend J.H.Landau, emphasized this point when he commented that "it happens that the community as a whole is more English than the Jews in England".⁶³ Since Sydney's Jewish life revolved around the one synagogue, there was no rivalry, resulting in indifference and stagnation. This limited pattern of religious development was reflected in all other facets of communal life.

Jewish tradition treats religious education as second in importance only to the synagogue, since learning has always been regarded as a primary duty and a mark of distinction for every Jew.⁶⁴ The study of the Bible and Talmud is regarded as a means of communication with God, and according to some

⁶² H.S., 3 September 1909.

⁶³ Ibid., 6 November 1908.

⁶⁴ Louis Wirth, The Ghetto, Chicago 1962, p.55.

teachers, is a higher form of communion than prayer.⁶⁵ Although the Australian religious leaders stressed the importance of religious education as a means of ensuring the survival of the community, much of this reverence was transferred to secular education.⁶⁶

The main organ for religious education was the Sydney Certified Denominational School, established in 1866, which by 1880 had an enrolment of 140 pupils. Most of these pupils, however, were gentile children so that its religious distinctiveness was imperilled. The school was forced to close in 1882 after the Public Instruction Act of 1880 abolished government aid to denominational schools. Following this, strong opposition to the Day School movement developed for a number of reasons. It was considered that the cost of maintaining a day school was prohibitive for such a small community. It was also feared that the segregation of Jewish children from the general community would create an impression of disloyalty to Australia and so engender anti-Semitism.⁶⁷ This decision reflected the desire for Jewish non-distinctiveness.

The Public Instruction Act reaffirmed the 'right of entry' system introduced in the 1866 Act. This permitted ministers of religion to give one hour's religious instruction per day in the public schools. The right of entry classes were

⁶⁵ Louis Finkelstein ed., The Jews, Their History, Culture and Religion, Vol. IV, Philadelphia 1949, p.1331.

⁶⁶ In 1908 Rabbi Cohen complained that a section of the Jewish community felt that secular education was more important than religious education, H.S., 27 March 1907.

⁶⁷ J.H., 16 June 1882.

organized under the auspices of the Board of Jewish Education, and supplemented by classes held at the Great Synagogue during the week and on Sunday mornings, as well as by the Sabbath School. Under the new system Jewish education was, however, only minimal and in most cases came to an end when the pupil turned thirteen. The Hebrew Schools failed to attract more than 42% of Jewish children.⁶⁸ In addition, the Board's activities were severely limited by lack of finance, the need for more suitably qualified teachers and parental apathy. These problems were further aggravated by the move of the Jewish population to the suburbs. At first, Right of Entry classes were held only at Fort Street, Crown Street and William Street Public Schools.⁶⁹ By 1909, new centres had been established at Bondi, Newtown, Paddington, Darlinghurst and Mosman.⁷⁰ In order to ensure more efficient organization, the Sabbath School was incorporated with the Board of Jewish Education in 1908, but the Board continued to be plagued by an inability to cope with the growing number of Jewish centres.

A third focal point of Jewish practice is that of philanthropy. Charity has always been one of the cardinal virtues for Jews and, according to Judaism, is a notable and praise-worthy act obligatory to all.⁷¹ The tradition of giving charity became firmly entrenched in the 'shtetl'⁷² community in Europe, largely because of the poverty of those communities.

⁶⁸ It was estimated in 1908 that there were about 1,100 Jewish children of the ages 6-14 in New South Wales, but only 433 attended Hebrew School. H.S., 14 February 1908.

⁶⁹ J.H., 7 March 1884.

⁷⁰ H.S., 30 April 1909.

⁷¹ Medding, *op.cit.*, p.47.

⁷² The term 'shtetl' refers to the small-town Jewish community of Eastern Europe which was isolated from the non-Jewish world and completely ruled by religious precept and practice.

This was one field of Jewish activity which the Sydney Jewish community did not neglect. Until the 1930's, the main charitable organization was the Sir Moses Montefiore Home, which was established in 1899 and incorporated the oldest charitable institution, the Hebrew Philanthropic and Orphan Society, formed in 1833. Other charitable organizations such as the Jewish Aid Society, the Hebrew Ladies' Maternity Society, the Jewish Girls' Guild and the Hebrew Benevolent Society were also established in the nineteenth century. This multiplicity of charitable associations resulted in waste of time, money and effort because of the overlapping of responsibilities. It was, however, a common feature of Jewish life every where;

A Jewish community possesses almost as many institutions as it possesses members; and there are few issues of interest to Jews on which there are not at least two institutions reflecting each shade of opinion.⁷³

Rabbi Cohen strongly advocated amalgamation of these philanthropic organizations as was done by the Board of Guardians in Britain⁷⁴ but this was not achieved in Sydney before 1914. Despite the lack of co-ordination these institutions did serve as a focal point for maintaining the solidarity of communal organization.

In the nineteenth century, social and cultural activities centred around the Great Synagogue. The most important was the Hebrew Literary and Debating Club founded

⁷³ Freedman, op.cit., p.31.

⁷⁴ Lipman, op.cit., p.49.

in 1889, which encouraged interest in Judaism through regular discussions.⁷⁵ In addition, a few social clubs such as the Almack Jewish Social Club (1896) and the New South Wales Jewish Association (1901) were formed. These were not able to take root because the community was too small, dispersed and assimilated. It was not until the 1920's that the youth groups and social clubs began to play an important role in the community.

The Jewish press in Sydney developed in the 1890's. In 1894, the Australian Hebrew Times was published, but it enjoyed only a short-lived existence and was succeeded by the Australasian Hebrew, 1895-7. The Hebrew Standard, after the publication of two issues in 1895, began to publish a regular weekly edition in June 1897 and this paper became the main organ for Sydney Jewry until the 1920's. Under the ownership of the Harris family, the Standard was extremely conservative in its policies, reflecting the attitudes of the Great Synagogue Board. The editors of all these papers emphasized the value of a Jewish newspaper in strengthening group identity and spreading Jewish knowledge, especially to Jews in country areas.

The stagnation of New South Wales Jewish life resulted from the type of leadership which dominated all communal institutions before 1914. The leaders of the community, who

⁷⁵ After 1901, it changed its name to Jewish Literary and Debating Club.

were the members of the Great Synagogue Board of Management and who also dominated the other cardinal institutions such as the Board of Jewish Education and the Sir Moses Montefiore Home, were predominantly Anglo-Jewish in origins and attitudes.⁷⁶ They formed a type of communal aristocracy, whose ideal was of the socially responsible city gentleman who was also concerned with power. As a result, the Great Synagogue was dominated by a small clique who formed an 'oligarchy' which was very difficult to penetrate.⁷⁷ It was, therefore, criticized as being run more on the lines of a limited liability company than a religious institution.⁷⁸

These Communal leaders were mainly concerned with achieving political, social and religious equality with their non-Jewish neighbours and were eager to prove that they were loyal citizens. They fashioned "a Jewish communal ideology of non-distinctiveness",⁷⁹ whereby they minimized the differences between Jew and Gentile and their religious observance was minimal. Leaders of the community were often chosen on the basis of their success in public life rather than their religious piety and the community took great pride in the fact that their leaders were prominent in the political and commercial life of New South Wales. Between 1860 and 1914, a large number of Jews took part in State and local politics,

⁷⁶ The Sydney community was predominantly a second generation community with 65.4% born in Australia by 1911. 18% were United Kingdom born Jews.

⁷⁷ J.H., 29 September 1911.

⁷⁸ H.S., 4 September 1900.

⁷⁹ Medding, op.cit., p.77.

out of all proportion to the small size of the Jewish community. Most prominent among them was Sir Saul Samuel, who was active in politics for forty-five years, achieved ministerial status and was Agent-General for New South Wales, 1880-1897. At the same time, Sir Saul Samuel retained his links with the Jewish community and was the first President of the Great Synagogue. Another example was Henry Emanuel Cohen, who played a leading part in both politics and law, especially as the first President of the Industrial Arbitration Court, 1901-1904⁸⁰ while at the same time he was active in almost every Jewish movement inaugurated in Sydney,⁸¹ and was a member of the Great Synagogue Board from 1873 until his death in 1911. This active participation in politics at all levels was a result of the desire to participate fully in the general community, so that they should "not create the idea that Jews of Sydney consider themselves distinct from their confreres of other denominations".⁸²

During the same period Jews played a leading role in merchandising, banking and stockbroking. The Jewish family which played a most prominent part in the commercial life of the state was the Cohen family. The firm, David Cohen and Company, which was established in Maitland in 1836, was one of the oldest and most influential commercial houses in Australia. It gained the confidence of the commercial world and, thus,

⁸⁰ David J. Benjamin, "Henry Emanuel Cohen", A.J.H.S., Vol. II, Part X, 1948, p.524.

⁸¹ H.S., 12 January 1912.

⁸² The Australasian Hebrew, 29 November 1895.

increased the good name of the community.⁸³ One of the members of the firm, George Judah Cohen, played a very prominent part in commerce as well as being one of the most influential figures within the Jewish community.⁸⁴ Other leading Jewish merchants who established well known commercial enterprises included S.A. Joseph, Sigmund Hoffnung, Lewis Wolff Levy, J.G. Raphael and M. Gotthelf. Several Jews were active in the Chambers of Commerce (both city and country) and S.A. Joseph and M. Gotthelf were both presidents of the institution. In banking, the City Bank of Sydney, established in 1864 had S.A. Joseph and M. Moss on its provisional committee and S.A. Joseph was later one of its directors. The Commercial Banking Company was chaired by G.J. Cohen from 1901 and H.S. Levy was on its board in 1909. E.L. Davis, son of Rev. A.B. Davis, was associated with the Stock Exchange for many years. Jews played a significant part in the economic life of the state, but their business involvements tended to lessen their Jewish observance and this weakened communal cohesion.

Australia's isolation contributed significantly to the community's limited approach. Up till 1914, travel to Australia was lengthy and often hazardous so that the Jewish community was largely cut off from the mainstreams of Jewish learning and innovation not only in Europe but also in America.

The difficulties of travel explains why Australia, though a land of freedom, received so few Jewish migrants from anti-Semitic persecution before 1914. New South Wales Jewry

⁸³ H.S., 6 November 1908.

⁸⁴ For a more detailed discussion of George Judah Cohen see Chapter II.

was not significantly affected by the large scale emigration of Jewish refugees from Tsarist Russia in the period 1880-1914. In Britain, East European Jewish migration during this period increased the size of the Jewish community fourfold:⁸⁵ London's Jewish population increased from 46,000 in 1881 to 180,000 in 1914.⁸⁶ In America, in the same period nearly two million East European Jews reinforced the existing Jewish community of 250,000 Jews, who were mostly of German origins.⁸⁷ These East European Jews, coming from the small Jewish enclaves or shtetls, which were vibrant centres of Jewish life untouched by emancipation,⁸⁸ tried to transplant their Jewish way of life to their new homelands. In so doing, they revolutionized Jewish life not only in Britain and America, but also in smaller Jewish centres such as Canada and South Africa.⁸⁹ In Britain, for example, they established friendly societies or 'Hebroth' which often developed their own synagogue as well. The small congregations which were established by the newcomers and which reflected the traditional way of life of Eastern Europe, were joined together in the Federation of Synagogues in 1887.⁹⁰ In addition, it was these

⁸⁵ Lipman, op.cit., p.84.

⁸⁶ These figures are only rough estimates as there is no exact documentation of Jewish immigration since the census does not include religion. Lipman, op.cit., pp.97-100.

⁸⁷ Price, op.cit., p.375.

⁸⁸ See M.Zborowski and E.Herzog, op.cit., for a detailed discussion of shtetl life.

⁸⁹ South African Jewry was composed largely of immigrants from Lithuania, while Canada's Jewish population increased from 16,000 in 1901 to 50,000 in 1911. Elbogen, op.cit., pp.320-324.

⁹⁰ By 1903 there were 39 synagogues in the Federation representing 24,000 souls. Lipman, op.cit., pp.120-1.

East European Jews who were to provide grass-roots support for Zionism, for the growth of Yiddish culture and also for the left-wing Bundist movement and Jewish trade unionism which was very different from 'the bourgeois politics and the religious conservatism of Anglo-Jewry'.⁹¹ Similar developments occurred in other countries in which East European Jews settled, but not in Australia.

In the period, 1881-1914, there was an increased migration from Eastern Europe, with approximately 574 Jews settling in New South Wales although 36% or so had spent some years in the United Kingdom and so were already partly Anglicized.⁹² This was 58.3% of non-British migration, with more East European Jews settling in Sydney than Melbourne.⁹³ These refugees were greatly disturbed by the cold formality of the established Anglo-Jewish community which was torn between the desire to become part of the general community while at the same time remaining loyal to Judaism by retaining certain formal religious practices.⁹⁴ This conflicted with the ideal of the East European ghetto with its intense Jewish religious life. The Australian Jew saw the immigrant as fanatical, over-emotional, and coarse in his social behaviour,⁹⁵ while the immigrant criticized the lack of Jewish feeling of the local

⁹¹ Ibid., p.131.

⁹² The average length of stay of East Europeans was seven years. Price, op.cit., p.376. This is the number of settlers in New South Wales from Poland, the Russian Empire, and Rumania between 1881-1920. Price. op.cit., Statistical Appendix VII (c).

⁹³ In this period 45% of Polish Jews went to Sydney; only 25% to Melbourne; 36% of Russian Jews went to Sydney; only 24% to Melbourne. Ibid., Appendix VII (a).

⁹⁴ Medding, op.cit., p.371.

⁹⁵ H.S., 20 January 1911.

Jews. These differences between Eastern and Western Jewry were apparent not only in Australia, but in other Western countries. In order to overcome these differences in New South Wales, the 'foreign Jews' tried to establish their own institutions to aid the newcomers.

The first attempt by foreign Jews to create a more orthodox congregation was in 1881 with the Druitt Street Congregation, which was to be run on more orthodox lines with the Reverend A.D.Wolinski as minister. However, this congregation lapsed when Wolinski accepted a position at the Great in 1883. A more successful movement was the Baron Hirsch Memorial Aid Society, established in 1898 to lend poor Jews money without security. The new society also tried to satisfy the religious needs of the immigrants. It established a regular daily minyan for the first time in New South Wales. The services were conducted in 'a truly orthodox' fashion,⁹⁶ as the newcomers found the Great Synagogue services too diluted and formalized. Services were also conducted at Newtown by the Reverend I.Bramson who had qualified in Russia and gave his sermons in Yiddish. In 1899, Bramson delivered a Yiddish lecture which was considered a novelty and was much appreciated.⁹⁷ However, attempts by the foreign congregation to build its own synagogue proved unsuccessful and the Baron Hirsch Society eventually lapsed. The foreign Jews were numerically too small and too dispersed to maintain their own institutions.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 7 October 1898.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 8 September 1899.

It has been shown in America that each new group of immigrants tried to transplant its European way of life almost intact to the New World, but sooner or later the group started to adjust to the local scene. This process of adjustment was much more rapid when the immigrants came as individuals, or in family groups, in relatively small numbers.⁹⁸ This was the situation in New South Wales in the period 1880-1914. The East European Jews adjusted to the local scene which they did not alter radically.

The expansion of the Jewish community after 1880 together with the movement of Jews away from the inner city area created the need for suburban synagogues. The community's conscience received a jolt when it was calculated after the High Holidays of 1911 that, including the overflow service at Newtown, the Baron Hirsch Rooms and the Hebrew Relief Society, less than half of Sydney Jewry attended the Atonement services.⁹⁹ In addition, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century dissatisfaction had emerged, especially from the newcomers, with the dominant position of the Great Synagogue. This added to the desire to establish new congregations in the Sydney area.

The demand for additional synagogue accommodation outside the city centre produced results both within Sydney and in the country areas. The first synagogue to be established in this period was the 'Beth Israel' Synagogue in Broken Hill in 1911.¹⁰⁰ In 1913 Sydney's first suburban synagogue was opened in Bankstown, largely as a result of recent migrants settling in the area.¹⁰¹ In Newtown, where services had been conducted from 1883 first in a private home and then at the Oddfellows Hall, Newtown, steps were taken to build a synagogue with the purchase of land in 1912. This project did not reach fruition until 1918. These developments all resulted from the general pressure of expansion.

⁹⁸Blau, op.cit., p.108.

⁹⁹H.S., 17 and 24 November 1911.

¹⁰⁰50% of Broken Hill's Jewish population came from Eastern Europe, Price, op.cit., p.388.

¹⁰¹H.S., 19 September 1913.

In November 1912, a new movement was started to institute the Surrey Hills Congregation on old fashioned, orthodox grounds according to the Polish ritual.¹⁰² This decision reflected the East European influence. In 1913, this movement inaugurated the Central Synagogue at a meeting called by S. Pechter, a native of Galicia,¹⁰³ and ratified the purchase of a building on the corner of Napier and Dowling Streets, Paddington.¹⁰⁴ The creation of the Central Synagogue was a direct outcome of the newcomers' sense of dissatisfaction with the Great Synagogue but the initial decision to follow the Polish minhag was not fulfilled. The Great Synagogue remained the largest congregation and continued to set the pattern for the other congregations. Attempts by the East European migrants to change religious practice and ritual failed in the period 1890-1914.

The same applied to the secular movements, Zionism and Bundism, which developed in the other Western countries because of East European migration after 1880. The inauguration of the World Zionist Movement in 1897 met with a belated response in Australia. Australian Jews were the only community of any significance not represented among the subscribers of the Jewish Colonial Trust, the first Zionist bank. Herzl appealed for support in a letter published in the columns of the Hebrew Standard in April 1901,¹⁰⁵ but it was not until May 1902 that

¹⁰² Ibid., 29 November 1912.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 4 July 1913.

¹⁰⁴ The building was purchased in April 1913. Central Synagogue Minutes, 6 April 1913.

¹⁰⁵ H.S., 26 April 1901.

the New South Wales Zionist League was formed.¹⁰⁶ Even then, this organization failed to attract a significant following. The ministers of the Great Synagogue were strongly opposed to Zionism since they believed that Jews were held together by religious and ethical ties only, owing their allegiance to their country of residence.¹⁰⁷ In this way, they followed the lead given by the Chief Rabbi, Dr H. Adler and other leading figures of Anglo-Jewry, such as Claude G. Montefiore.¹⁰⁸ Economic and social opportunities, the virtual absence of anti-Semitism, and the fear that support of Zionism would make Australian Jewry appear unpatriotic, also contributed to the lack of support.¹⁰⁹ The New South Wales Zionist League remained a fringe movement in the community.

Cultural and political movements, such as Bundism and Jewish trade unionism, did not even find a footing in New South Wales before 1914, while Yiddish culture remained virtually unknown. This was largely explained by the character of the East European migration. In England and America, the large numbers of Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe were very poor and were taken advantage of in the 'sweating system'.¹¹⁰ Later, Jewish workers combined and used strike methods in order

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 7 March 1902.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 16 May and 29 August 1902. The ministers also opposed Zionism because of the secular nature of the movement which, they felt, negated the Messianic doctrine.

¹⁰⁸ In England, support for Zionism came from the East European rabbinical leaders, because they felt that only in a Jewish state could a full Jewish life co-exist with freedom. L.P. Gartner, The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914, London 1960, p.250.

¹⁰⁹ H.S., 2 October 1903 and 21 February 1908.

¹¹⁰ Sweating has no precise meaning, but the connotation is a cramped, dirty workshop, long hours, and insanitary conditions. Gartner, op.cit., pp.67-68.

to improve their conditions and this led to the growth of left-wing movements and Jewish trade unions in both Britain and America.¹¹¹ In New South Wales, however, the number of Jewish refugees was too small to produce such developments. After ten years of residence, only 10% of Jewish settlers were unskilled workers and 34.7% were skilled workers.¹¹² There was no large scale development of the sweating system in New South Wales. In the early 1890's, the Trades and Labour Council complained that the greatest offenders in 'sweating time' were Polish and Russian Jews, but government investigations found these allegations to be false.¹¹³ New South Wales Jewry continued to reflect the bourgeois conservatism that before 1880 had been the dominant feature of Anglo-Jewry.¹¹⁴

All these developments were influenced by marked changes in the areas of settlement of New South Wales Jewry. There was a decline of Jewish population in country areas from 40% in 1861, to 20% in 1901, and 14% in 1921.¹¹⁵ A typical example of the deterioration of country communities was West Maitland, which was forced to close its synagogue in 1898, owing to the gradual shrinkage of the congregation. Other centres that declined included Goulburn and Tamworth. Only in two country towns, Newcastle and Broken Hill, was there a marked development of the Jewish community after 1890, and both these communities experienced a continuing struggle for their existence. After 1900 New South Wales Jewry was largely an urban community, this being a typical feature of most Jewish communities in the world.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹In England Jewish socialism developed independently of the general English socialist movement. Ibid., p.127.

¹¹²Price, op.cit., p.395, Appendix V (c).

¹¹³J.H., 12 February 1892.

¹¹⁴Lipman, op.cit., p.131.

¹¹⁵There were no statistics for this in 1911. See Price, op.cit., Appendix VI.

¹¹⁶Finkelstein, op.cit., p.270.

There were a number of interacting factors which contributed to this decline. In some country towns, such as Goulburn, there was a slowing down of economic opportunities so that members of the Jewish community drifted away. The lack of a viable Jewish community and of Jewish educational facilities led to assimilation in most small towns. Those Jews who wanted to remain loyal to their religion moved to the larger centres, Newcastle and Sydney.¹¹⁷ This was more true of Jews in small communities which were situated close to a larger Jewish centre than of those in more isolated areas.¹¹⁸ In the 1890's many Maitland Jews were attracted to the developing community in nearby Newcastle, whereas the Broken Hill Jewish community experienced a significant development in the same period. The Sydney Jewish community continued to expand at the expense of the country communities.

The latter part of the nineteenth century was a period of demographic change for Sydney Jewry. By the end of the century, Jews had risen up the social scale from hawkers, grog sellers and unskilled workers to largely independent activities in finance and property, sale and manufacture of textiles and general dealing. As such, they were largely a middle class group.¹¹⁹ Together with the improvement of occupational status came a shift in the main areas of Jewish settlement. In the

¹¹⁷Price, op.cit., pp.387-388.

¹¹⁸This was shown to be a factor in small-town disintegration of small-town American Jewish communities. See Joseph Greenbaum and Marshall Sklare, "The Attitude of the Small Town Jew in his Community", in M.Sklare ed., The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group, Illinois 1958, pp.296-298.

¹¹⁹Price, op.cit., p.395.

1870's, 89% of the Jewish population was concentrated in the Town Hall area, the old Jewish quarter. Only a few well-to-do Jews had moved into the new residential areas of Woollahra and Waverley in the Eastern Suburbs.¹²⁰ By 1901 the Jewish population had begun to move away from the city centre, with 77.6% living in Surry Hills, Darlinghurst, Paddington, Glebe and Newtown; 5.4% in the working and lower middle class suburbs of the South-West; 11% in the residential suburbs of Woollahra, Waverley and Randwick; and 6% scattered in other areas.¹²¹ The Jewish community was affected significantly by the general move to the suburbs in the period 1880-1914.

By 1921 33.9% of Sydney's Jewish population had settled in the residential areas of the Eastern Suburbs. This drift to the Eastern Suburbs was mainly because a larger proportion of Sydney's middle class population lived there and Sydney Jews were rising up the social scale into the merchant and professional groups during the early twentieth century. The concentration of Jews in the Eastern Suburbs did not lead to the development of a ghetto as emerged in the lower East Side of New York or London's East End. The Jewish clusters were too dispersed and too mixed with other ethnic groups to be called ghettos.¹²²

By 1914, New South Wales Jewry had developed a distinctive communal pattern. Religious life was standardized

¹²⁰ Ibid., p.387.

¹²¹ Ibid., p.393.

¹²² Ibid., pp.397-400.

as any attempt to introduce Reform or Liberal Judaism was strongly opposed and the more orthodox forms of Judaism and the Hasidic way of life of Eastern Europe were virtually unknown. Jewish education was minimal and the only Jewish Day School was closed down in 1881. The community was only strong in the field of philanthropic activity where there was a multiplicity of organizations. This reflected the tendency of ritual to decline in importance in a pluralistic society, compared with social and charitable organizations.¹²³ Although the Zionist movement had established some roots, there was strong resistance to Jewish national aspirations, for fear that it might upset the Jewish status within the general community. As yet, no large scale cultural movements such as Bundism or B'nai Brith had begun to form. No central communal body had emerged to co-ordinate Jewish activities and represent the community, although the Great Synagogue leadership tried to fulfil these needs. The community failed to develop variations in Judaism and remained rigid in its approach to the major nineteenth century changes in Jewish practice.

The community failed to diversify its communal organizations because it was dominated by an Anglo-Jewish clique, the leaders of the Great Synagogue, who desired complete acceptance within Australian society. They wanted to eliminate any differences between Jew and non-Jew except in the very narrow religious sense. These attitudes led the Jewish leaders to fashion "a Jewish communal ideology of non-distinctiveness"¹²⁴

¹²³ Freedman, op.cit., p.190.

¹²⁴ Medding, op.cit., p.77.

which involved "minimal observance of Jewish ritual together with the continued acceptance of those basic and irreconcilable differences in religious belief and dogma, which separated Judaism from Christianity".¹²⁵ The fact was that New South Wales Jews, whether they were born in Australia, as most were by 1914, or England, regarded themselves primarily as British subjects and loyal Australians, and were more concerned with being Australian than being Jewish.¹²⁶

As a result of the rigid structure of communal organization and the limited, Anglicized leadership, Jewish communal life stagnated and the community lacked a strong sense of Jewish identification. This weakened group cohesion and threatened the continued existence of the community as a separate, religious entity. Assimilation was an important response of New South Wales Jewry to the challenges of living in a free, open society.

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp.77-78.

¹²⁶ This was also true of the assimilated English Jew, Gartner, op.cit., p.250.

CHAPTER TWO

THE JEW WITHIN NEW SOUTH WALES SOCIETY

1914 to 1933

The most serious problem facing ~~New South Wales~~ ^{Australian} Jewry in the 1920's was assimilation. The process of assimilation can occur at a number of levels. It can simply be the adjustment of an immigrant group to the demands of a new land, especially relating to the question of work methods and a new cultural pattern.¹ This form of assimilation is often referred to as acculturation. It can also refer to the breaking down of the distinctiveness of a group leading to the disintegration of group cohesion through intermarriage or conversion. ^{When Aust. J. Leaders expressed concern in regard to assim. it was in the latter ^{mean} sense, the real sense of breaking with ^{Judaism} Assimilation, meaning both the acculturation of the Jewish community and the disintegration of its ethnic separateness, was one of the dominant features of ~~New South Wales Jewry~~ ^{Australian} before 1933. ~~New South Wales Jewry~~ ^{Australian} was culturally assimilated in that it had assumed the cultural habits in dress, language and behaviour of the Australian community. The Jew was able to absorb his environment and to become the same as those around him.² The community also did not retain its structural separateness in its primary relationships.}

Frank Fletcher
'The Use of
Comm. 10/11/1901'
vol 6 p. 5
(1978) p. 116

¹C.B.Sherman, The Jew Within American Society, Detroit 1961, p.37.

²The Maccabean, No.23, 2 May 1929.

These include family, friends, and social clubs. M. Gordon has shown that once structural assimilation occurs, this leads to marriage outside the community resulting in the eventual disappearance of the ethnic group.³ This occurred in New ^{Australia} South Wales, as shown by the intermarriage rates. Intermarriage was relatively high in the nineteenth century because there were more Jewish males than females in the colony.⁴ Despite the significant increase in Jewish population 1891-1920, and the development of communal organizations, the number of intermarriages rose. In 1891, the percentage of Jewish husbands with non-Jewish wives was 20%. This increased to 26% in 1911, 30% in 1923 and there was a slight decline to 23% in 1933. Intermarriage rates for Jewish women were lower but also increased. In 1891 only 7% of Jewish women had non-Jewish husbands; in 1911 this had increased to 13%; and in 1921 to 16%; with again a slight decrease to 13% in 1933.⁵ These figures show the high level of structural assimilation.

Give
Australia
wide
figures.

Intermarriage rates alone are not reliable as a guide in indicating the possible disintegration of a community. The faith the child of a mixed marriage is brought up in must also be considered. In ^{Australia} New South Wales,

³ M. Gordon, Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins, New York 1964, p.80.

⁴ In 1861, for example, there were 1,072 Jewish males to 687 females in New South Wales. Price, "Jewish Settlers in Australia", Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Vol V, Part VIII, May 1964, Statistical Appendix I.

⁵ Ibid., Appendix XI.

most figures point to the fact that in a mixed marriage the child was not brought up as a Jew as conversion to Judaism was fairly difficult. There was almost no increase in the figures of New South Wales Jewry between 1921

Decreased Jewish population was in a similar position to the J. coms

and 1933, while the Jewish male population actually decreased in size. ⁶ *South Australia and Tasmania experienced a more dramatic decline in size. Only Victoria, West Australia Jewry increased numerically during Jewish immigration in the 1920's, this decline can be explained largely by the loss to the community through intermarriage. The fact that Jewish reproduction rates were lower than the general community also contributed to this decline.* ⁷ Taking all these factors into consideration, it can be stated that in the 1920's ~~New South Wales~~ *Australian* Jewry was not a viable community, that is it was not capable of reproducing itself. Without large scale Jewish immigration it would have disappeared eventually.

the 1920s when the total J. pop in Ausl increased slightly from 21,615 in 1921 to 23,553 in 1933. However the overall % declined from 0.40 in 1921 to 0.36 in 1933, the lowest % of the pop in the Aust. Jewry.

In the 1920's the community was small in size, both numerically and as a percentage of the general population. In 1911, there were 7,660 Jews in New South Wales, and they formed 0.40% of the total population; by 1933 the numbers had increased to 10,309, but the percentage of Jews in the population had declined to 0.36%. ⁸ Jewish contribution to the general community did not correspond to the community's small size. Observers of the period, both Jewish and non-Jewish, remarked on the high proportion of Jews active in public life. In an article entitled "One Hundred Years of

⁶ In 1921 the Jewish population of New South Wales was 10,151, with 5,395 males. In 1933 it had only increased to 10,309 but Jewish male population had decreased to 5,321. Ibid., Statistical Appendix I.

⁷ Ibid., Statistical Appendix XII.

⁸ Ibid., Statistical Appendix I.

Judaism" in the Sunday Times, for example, it was stated:

'Every country has the sort of Jews it deserves.' Berthold Auerbach made this epigram about his own race and if there is any truth in it, New South Wales has deserved exceedingly well. In every branch of our activities since the earliest times, members of the Jewish community have taken a large and distinguished part.⁹

Jewish activity within the general community reflected the assimilated nature of New South Wales Jewry and contributed to structural assimilation.

The community was proud of the fact that its leaders were so prominent in public life. This pride was expressed in the columns of both major communal organs, the Hebrew Standard and the Australian Jewish Chronicle. The communal leaders both lay and religious actively encouraged participation within the general community.¹⁰ They believed that it was the best way to prevent anti-Semitism because the Jew could prove himself a loyal and worthy citizen. As the editor of the Standard stated, the Jews were "in a land of freedom, only to remember that we are citizens of that land and it is our duty to make that land the best on God's earth".¹¹

Australian
The ~~New South Wales~~ Jewish community's contribution to the war effort, 1914-1918, was seen in the high number of enlistments, in their relative preponderance in the ranks and also in their voluntary work on the home front. It is

⁹ Sunday Times, 24 December 1922.

¹⁰ Hebrew Standard of Australasia, 18 July 1924.

¹¹ Ibid., 22 August 1919.

very difficult to calculate the exact number of Jewish enlistments. Those figures which do exist are based on the calculations of Harold Boas, who was ^{selected by the National Council of the YMCA} appointed in 1916 to act as the Jewish representative with the Australian Imperial Force ^{(A.I.F.) and remained in that capacity until 1920.} abroad. According to these figures, ^{2,304} ~~866~~ Jewish males from New South Wales enlisted in the A.I.F., this being ¹³ ~~11.5~~ % of the Jewish population. ¹² ^{In NSW the percentage of J. enlistments was 11.5%,} This ¹ was higher than the general population's total enlistments of 9.2%. ¹³ This difference was more significant as there was a lower proportion of Jewish men of military age due to lower Jewish birth rates.

There were a number of factors which contributed to this high proportion of Jewish enlistments. In the period before 1914, there was an upsurge of loyalty to the British Empire among the general population because of the sense of security provided by imperial defence against the rapid rise of Germany and Japan. For some imperialists, loyalty to the Empire assumed the depth and comprehensiveness of a religion. ¹⁴ Amongst New South Wales Jewry this feeling was even stronger. While Jews in other parts of the world suffered persecution and humiliation, the Jews in the British Empire were able to enjoy complete freedom and equality. The community felt that the appropriate way to manifest their gratitude for British

¹² Boas based his figures on Commonwealth War Records, Secretary of Defence records, and the Jewish chaplains' reports. See H. Boas and A. W. Hyman. "The Australian Jew in the Great War, 1914-1918", A.J.H.S., Vol. I, Part IV, 1940, pp. 97-105 and H. Boas, Australian Jewry, Book of Honour, the Great War, 1914-1918, Perth 1923.

¹³ P. J. Marks, "The Jew in Australian Life", The Australian National Review, Vol. 4. No. 21, September 1938, pp. 12-20.

¹⁴ L. L. Robson, The First A.I.F.: A Study of its Recruitment, 1914-1918, Melbourne 1970, p. 16.

justice and liberalism was by active service, both on the home and war fronts.¹⁵ A high proportion of Jews of British origins, who had strong ties with England, enlisted but there were also a considerable number of Russian Jews.¹⁶

The Jews ^{in Australia} of ~~New South Wales~~ wanted to prove that they were loyal citizens, and to contradict the anti-Semitic accusation that Jews make poor soldiers. They tried to prevent the growth of such sectarian feelings by active service, which ^{an IJPA spokesman wrote in 1916 (quote - Lab - p. 122)} was publicized in the general press. ^{in NSW's Rabbi Darglow in Vic,} In 1917, ~~for example,~~

⁷ Rabbi Cohen published an article in the general press on the Jewish contribution to the war.¹⁷ ^{in NSW's Rabbi Darglow in Vic,} [Rabbi Cohen, ~~who was in both~~ influential and highly respected leaders in the Jewish community, encouraged Jewish participation in the war effort. ^{quote Darglow} Even before the outbreak of the war, Cohen was involved in national defence. In London, he was one of the founders of the London Jewish Lads' Brigade; he originated the annual military Chanukah (Festival of Lights) Service; and he became the first Jewish chaplain to serve in the British military forces.¹⁸ When he arrived in New South Wales in 1905, he became closely associated with the Australian National Defence League¹⁹ and in December 1907 he inaugurated the Sydney annual Jewish military service on Chanukah.

¹⁵ This was stressed by the editor of the only New South Wales Jewish newspaper, the Hebrew Standard. See H.S., 6 August 1915.

¹⁶ M. Adler, The Jews of the Empire and the Great War, London 1919.

¹⁷ Sunday Sun, 28 January 1917.

¹⁸ Sydney Morning Herald, 19 November 1934.

¹⁹ H.S., 20 October 1905.

Cohen believed that one of the foremost religious duties was national defence, because it safeguarded the country's free institutions. He also emphasized the moral value of military training, because it not only invigorated the body, but:

A young fellow no sooner becomes a member of a military organization than that noble influence 'Esprit de Corps' begins its elevating work upon him. He realizes his own insignificance as a solitary individual and is taught to work with, to work for and to trust in those comrades who, together with himself, make up the greater unit.²⁰

He supported the idea of compulsory military training which was introduced in 1909 on a part-time basis for nineteen and twenty year olds. In 1910 this law was extended to include young men up to the age of twenty-five and involved an eight day training camp each year.²¹ When war broke out in 1914, he strongly advocated compulsory military training and, until this was introduced, he encouraged Australian Jews to volunteer for active service. In this, Cohen concurred with the religious leaders of the major Christian denominations (with the exception of Dr Mannix, Coadjutor Archbishop of Melbourne), who supported the war effort.²² He also followed the lead of the British Chief Rabbi, Dr J.H.Hertz, who appealed to all Jews to support the war.

(When Premier Holman requested the active co-operation

²⁰ Ibid., 6 December 1907.

²¹ Neville Meaney, The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-1914, Vol. I, A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1901-1923, Sydney 1976, pp.189 and 198.

²² Robson, op.cit., pp.24-5.

of all religious leaders for the recruiting drive of August 1915²³ Rabbi Cohen agreed to assist and he informed the Board of Management of the Great Synagogue that he would be unable to perform any communal duties during the first week of August. The Board objected to Rabbi Cohen officially participating in any public movement without the President's consent first being given.²⁴ In a sermon for the recruiting week, Cohen again stressed that volunteering was "a solemn religious duty, as well as a call of honour and patriotism".²⁵ Cohen, himself, wanted to go to the front as Jewish chaplain to the A.I.F., but the Board felt that they could not dispense with his services.²⁶

In New South Wales;

Rabbi Cohen was a strong advocate of conscription. In a sermon before the referendum of October 1916 he used the example of Moses before he entered the Land of Canaan in order to stress that no Jew could morally object to conscription. He claimed that:

No responsible leader could permit any section of the people to escape its equal burden in the perils and the sufferings and the anxieties of the nation's warfare. Nay, further, that the shirker who avoided his personal share was a sinner against God as well as against his neighbour.²⁷

In this philosophy Cohen had the active support of many prominent lay leaders of the Jewish community. Prominent Jews, such as Rabbi F.L.Cohen, Ernest L.Davis, John J.Cohen and

²³ Ibid., p.51.

²⁴ Minutes of the Board of Management of the Great Synagogue, 8 August 1915.

²⁵ H.S., 6 August 1915.

²⁶ Great Synagogue Minutes, 10 October 1915.

²⁷ H.S., 28 July 1916.

Daniel Levy,²⁸ were among the founders and office bearers of the Universal Service League formed to work for the introduction of compulsory service at home and abroad.²⁹ This Jewish support of conscription was understandable both because of their British patriotism, unlike the Irish Catholics,³⁰ and because of their class structure. The main opposition to conscription came from the working classes and the trade union movement.³¹ There were very few working class Jews as most were concentrated in largely independent activities.³² Conscription was therefore not an issue of conflict within the Jewish community. There was almost universal support for it, unlike the general community which was ~~openly~~ split ^{by} on the issue. *Freedman (Daylow as chaplain)*

In the war effort, Jews were closely associated with the fighting units, and suffered a comparable casualty rate. Three hundred Jews were killed, this being fifteen per cent of the Jewish enlistments, whereas the total number of Australians killed or missing was fourteen per cent. There were 192 Australian Jews in the commissioned ranks, a number were mentioned in the dispatches and seventy-five gained honours, including one V.C. to Leonard Keysor of Sydney.³³ *Quoted from 'Isay Smith's assisted in the Br forces & was also awarded a V.C. He returned to Melbourne in 1922.'*

This League was formed to work for the introduction of universal compulsory service at home and abroad, Robson, op.cit., p.70.

²⁹ H.S., 17 September 1915.

³⁰ One of the main groups opposing conscription was the Irish Catholics, led by Dr Mannix, who created tremendous opposition to conscription, Robson, op.cit., pp.89-90.

³¹ Ibid., p.96.

³² Price, op.cit., p.394. See Chapter I.

³³ P.J.Marks, op.cit., p.14.

The most successful of the Australian generals was Lt General John Monash. Since he was a Jew who gained a position of high command, Sydney Jewry felt immense pride in his achievements. His military ability was proof to the general community that Jews could be successful and loyal soldiers and so helped to dispel the anti-Semitic label that Jews were poor soldiers.³⁴ *Expanded (Reule) + Harold Cohen (A.W. Hyman)*

Jews were very active on the home front.³⁵ They contributed generously to the Red Cross, the Comfort Fund, the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Fund and the Australia Day Appeal of 1915. ^{In NSW} This appeal raised £900,000 largely due to the work of John J. Cohen.³⁶ Rabbi Cohen's pleas that those who could not participate in active service should give of their utmost in other ways contributed to this activity.³⁷ *In Melbourne, Joseph Waxman was part. prominent in the home front efforts while the Michaelis-Hallenstein firm gave generous donations* Although the suggestion was made to establish a separate Jewish War Fund,³⁸ this was strongly opposed because communal leaders did not want to infer any distinctiveness on the part of the Jew. The Jewish war effort was part of the desire to be like the middle-class Protestant denominations. In its efforts to achieve this aspiration, the Jewish community tried to be even more active than the group it was copying.

Although there were a number of Jews of German origin,

³⁴ A.W. Hyman, "General Sir John Monash, a Great Australian", A.J.H.S., Vol. II, Pt. I, 1944, pp. 20-29.

³⁵ "The Jews and the War", pamphlet published in Melbourne, no date.

³⁶ R.L. Dawson ed., Judge J. Cohen, Memoirs, Sydney 1940.

³⁷ H.S., 6 August 1915.

³⁸ Ibid., 14 August 1915.

there was little conflict over their status. There were some Jewish internees who were attended to by Rabbi Cohen.³⁹ These Jews were affected by their nationality, not their religion.

(Dr Max Herz).

II

The Jewish contribution to the war effort was undoubtedly out of proportion to the small size of the community. The same can be said of Jewish participation in the political life of the state. In the period 1914-1933, there were a number of Jews active in politics in New South Wales, including two Jewish Speakers, John J. Cohen and Daniel Levy, and a Jewish Lord Mayor, E. S. Marks. At one stage, in 1917, both the Speaker, J. J. Cohen, and the Deputy-Speaker, D. Levy, were Jewish so that the Legislative Assembly adjourned on the Jewish Day of Atonement out of respect for its Jewish officers. The Jewish World, an English publication, remarked on the unique nature of this situation.⁴⁰ Considering that the Jewish population comprised only 0.40%, it was a very good representation.

There were a number of reasons for this active participation. Jews of English origins believed that full participation in Australian society at large was vital and they wanted to submerge any Jewish differences or group

³⁹ Ibid., 12 May 1916.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 11 January 1918.

peculiarities.⁴¹ As the community was too small in size to offer sufficient challenges to persons with organizational abilities, they tended to enter the general political arena. Jewish prominence in politics also reflected their financial success and the large number of Jews in the legal profession.⁴² John J. Cohen, Daniel Levy and Abram Landa were all extremely successful academically and were brilliant lawyers.

The Australian Jewish community always tried officially to maintain a neutral, non-partisan position on political issues and did not attempt to influence its members to vote for particular candidates. At the same time, the Jewish politician was highly regarded as a spokesman for the community.⁴³ Since communal leaders in New South Wales always had free access to government representatives, this status was a result of an ingrained historical tradition. Until European emancipation, the Jews' right to exist depended on special grants from the sovereign or ruler, and the Jewish leaders who negotiated these concessions were held in high regard.⁴⁴ The feeling that there should be Jewish representation in the New South Wales Parliament and local government was a consequence of the traditional fear of anti-Semitism negating civil and religious liberties.⁴⁵

⁴¹ P. Y. Medding, From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community, Melbourne 1968, p.270.

⁴² In this respect they were similar to American Jewry. See N. Glazer and D. Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City, Massachusetts 1963, p.170.

⁴³ Medding, op.cit., p.200.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ The Jewish Chronicle, 15 July 1892.

In general it is possible to distinguish between two types of Jewish parliamentarians:- the 'Jewish politician' and the politician who may be Jewish. The 'Jewish politician' feels that an important part of his parliamentary duties is to represent and promote Jewish interests and the Jewish point of view, and he retains close connections with Jewish organizations.⁴⁶ Between 1914-1939 there were five Jews in the Legislative Assembly. They were John J. Cohen (1914-1919), Daniel Levy (1914-1937), H. Goldstein (1922-1925, 1927-8), Ernest S. Marks (1927-30), and Abram Landa (1930-32). All were 'Jewish politicians' in the sense that they attended to Jewish issues and were actively associated with Jewish organizations. The only politician of the 'may-be-Jewish' type was E. M. Mitchell, member of the Legislative Council, who drifted away from the community and was buried in a Church of England cemetery. J. J. Cohen was associated with the Great Synagogue Board, and was connected with the Education Board, the Montefiore Home and the Jewish War Memorial.⁴⁷ He played a central role in the negotiations about the Early Closing Bill, 1915. When the Great Synagogue Board heard of the provisions of this bill, they requested, through J. J. Cohen, that the Government insert a sub-clause stating that Jewish butcher shops, closed on Saturdays, be permitted to open between six and eight on the Saturday evening. The minister agreed to try and include this clause.⁴⁸ Other issues where Jewish

⁴⁶ Medding, op.cit., p.235.

⁴⁷ H.S., 30 March 1939.

⁴⁸ Great Synagogue Minutes, 12 December 1915.

politicians played a part included the Marriage Amendment Bill (Number II), 1924, when H. Goldstein stated the Jewish point of view⁴⁹ and the Great Synagogue, Sydney, Bill which aimed at incorporating the members of the Great Synagogue so that they could deal effectively with their property and was presented by Sir Daniel Levy in the Legislative Assembly.⁵⁰ The role played by the Jewish politicians assisted the growth of the Jewish community.

It is very difficult to determine to what extent there was an ethnic vote among New South Wales Jewry. On the whole, Jewish newspapers of the day stressed that the Jew did not mix his religion and politics but went to the polls first and last as a citizen who was concerned with the issues arising before the elections.⁵¹ Even if the candidate was a Jew, he did not secure the votes of those co-religionists who did not share his political views.⁵² However, since any group desires representation, Jewish newspapers sometimes advocated support for Jewish candidates if they were worthy of it.⁵³

Ethnic tendencies in voting may express the entire culture and traditions of a group.⁵⁴ This was true of New South Wales Jewry which, in the 1920's was largely middle class, and very conservative in its political attitudes. This was seen both in statements made by the Jewish press and in the fact that almost all the Jewish members of parliament

⁴⁹ The Australian Jewish Chronicle, 21 August 1924.

⁵⁰ New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 3 March 1931, pp.1609-1612.

⁵¹ H.S., 23 March 1929.

⁵² The Maccabean, 8 March 1929.

⁵³ See H.S., 15 May 1925, and A.J.C., 14 May 1925.

⁵⁴ Glazer and Moynihan, op.cit., p.168.

represented the more conservative Nationalist Party. The wealthier Jews were extremely successful in commerce and so were opposed to any radical change in the status quo, either within the community or outside it. Conservatism was the keynote of the Anglicized Sydney Jewish community. As the editor of the Hebrew Standard stated in 1931: "when we find sentiments promulgated which are intended to make drastic alterations in the social order we have to take a stand",⁵⁵ while the editor of the Australian Jewish Chronicle stressed that Labor was not successful because people were opposed to revolutionary methods, and the Jews especially were utterly opposed to revolution.⁵⁶ These factors can be seen in the type of Jew elected to the Legislative Assembly. Of the five Jews mentioned above, four were members of the Nationalist Party and were successful either professionally or in business ventures.

John J. Cohen, after a brilliant academic career at Sydney University where he studied Arts, trained as a civil engineer and architect; then studied law (1892-4), and entered the bar in 1894. He represented Petersham from 1898-1919⁵⁷ as a member of the conservative party. He was elected Chairman of Committees, 1907-1910, and was Speaker, 1917-1919, when he resigned to become a District Court Judge.⁵⁸

Sir Daniel Levy, the most prominent Jewish politician, was member for Woollahra from 1901 until his death in 1937, and

⁵⁵ H.S., 3 July 1931.

⁵⁶ A.J.C., 26 November 1925.

⁵⁷ Dawson, op.cit.

⁵⁸ S.M.H., 27 March 1939.

was Speaker from 1919 to 1937. Levy also followed a brilliant academic career. He was born in London in 1874 and migrated to Sydney in 1880. After studying at Sydney Grammar for two years, he matriculated to Sydney University in 1890 with the highest honours. In 1893 he graduated from Arts with first class honours, received the gold medal, and secured his law degree with honours in 1895. In 1913 he became a Fellow of the Senate of Sydney University and was a Trustee of the Public and Mitchell Libraries as well as being associated with many other public institutions.⁵⁹ Levy was a member of the Nationalist Party. In 1920, when there was equal representation of Labor and the non-Labor parties, he accepted the position of Speaker, thereby allowing Labor to govern with a majority of one. He was criticized for this action and, in reply, he stressed that the non-Labor parties were not united and that Labor should be given a chance to govern. In 1921, he resigned when the non-Labor parties, the Nationalists and the Progressives, agreed to co-operate and his resignation brought down the Labor government.⁶⁰ Levy was known for his fairness as Speaker⁶¹ and for his great knowledge of parliamentary procedure. He also believed that the Speakership should not be terminable because of its independence. The Sydney Morning Herald described him as "one of the state's most brilliant intellects in the last half century and a citizen imbued with the ideals

⁵⁹ Ibid., 21 May 1937.

⁶⁰ S.M.H., 9 December 1921 and The Sun, Sunday, 29 January 1922.

⁶¹ G. N. Hawker, The Parliament of New South Wales, 1856-1965, Sydney 1971, p.250.

of public service".⁶² He retained his ties with the Jewish community, which took great pride in his achievements. On the occasion of his knighthood, a special conversazione was held in his honour organized by the Maccabean Institute.⁶³

Hyman Goldstein was another prominent Jewish citizen who was active in many fields of public life including local government, patriotic work during the war, sporting activities, the friendly society movement and Freemasonry. He was a member of Parliament, 1922-5 and 1927-8 but his career was cut short in 1928 when he died in tragic circumstances. Goldstein was a prosperous manufacturer of furniture, a self-made man and a strong supporter of the Nationalist Party.⁶⁴ In 1927, he made a strong statement in reply to the Hon. R. Cruickshank, M.L.C., a member of the Labor Party, who criticised Daniel Levy and himself for opposing Bolshevism. Goldstein stressed:

But to say that I, as a Jew, have no right to save my country from Communism, because some Soviet leaders were Jews is outrageous... What if Trotsky were a Jew? In Australia, we shudder at Russian methods. Here we find Jews like Monash, Isaacs working for their country, as I am doing.⁶⁵

This sums up the attitude of the Jewish community which, on the whole, showed no support for socialism.

Similarly, E. S. Marks, was a prominent businessman, extremely active in the sporting world, local government and patriotic work. He was the member for North Sydney, 1927-30,

⁶² S.M.H., 21 May 1937.

⁶³ The Maccabean, 19 April 1929.

⁶⁴ A.J.C., 9 March 1922, 17 September 1925, and 13 September 1928.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 29 September 1927.

representing the Nationalist Coalition. As well, he was active in the Citizen's Reform movement and was one of the founders of the Darlington Liberal Club.⁶⁶

In this picture of strong support for the Nationalist Party, the only exception was Abram Landa, who became the first Jew to be elected to the Legislative Assembly as a Labor member. Landa, who was also a brilliant academic, graduated in Law in 1927, and had been connected with the Labor Party from the age of fifteen. This was partly because of the poverty of his family, as his mother, a widow, came from Ireland in 1913 with no money and four children to support.⁶⁷ In order to help support the family, Landa sold newspapers every morning before school for many years. In 1930, he stood for the State election as Labor candidate for the Bondi electorate. Although there were a number of Jews in the district, most of them worked against Landa, because they believed that the better party to support was the Nationalist Party.⁶⁸ Landa won the election in 1930 against great odds,⁶⁹ but he lost the seat in 1932 with the defeat of the Lang government.

Although Landa was an exception in politics on the local Jewish scene, he was much more typical of the Jewish

⁶⁶ Ibid., 26 June 1930.

⁶⁷ A. Landa, Unpublished Memoirs.

⁶⁸ Based on interview with A. Landa.

⁶⁹ This was because the seat was traditionally a conservative one and he stood against a one-legged returned soldier who had the support of the soldiers' clubs and could appeal to the intense feelings created by World War I.

politicians of other Anglo-Saxon countries. In both England and America, Jews were closely associated with socialism and were well represented in the trade union movement.⁷⁰ This was largely because of the pattern of East European Jewish migration to these countries. Many Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe became members of the working class in both Britain and America, and so became involved in the labour movement.⁷¹ New South Wales Jewry received fewer Jews from Eastern Europe, had few members in the working class and was still largely represented by the pioneer Anglo-Jewish families who, as members of the upper middle class, were very conservative in their politics. They considered Landa a radical communist, because he was active in the working class party, the Labor Party, and his political views were most unpopular with the established Jewish community.⁷² Dr Fanny Reading, a native of Russia, was one of the few Jews who was active in the Socialist Club and later became its vice-president.⁷³

The community was well represented in the Legislative Assembly and there was one Jew, E. M. Mitchell, in the Legislative Council from 1934 until his death in 1943. Ernest Meyer Mitchell was a lecturer in law from 1907 to 1916 when he enlisted in the army. After the war he began a successful

⁷⁰See Glazer and Moynihan, *op.cit.*, p.167, 169-170 and V. D. Lipman, Social History of the Jews in England, 1850-1950, London 1954, pp.116-117.

⁷¹New York, for example, once had a large Jewish working class and labour movement, Glazer and Moynihan, *op.cit.*, p.144.

⁷²Interview with A.Landa.

⁷³A.J.C., 19 June 1930.

career as a barrister involved in constitutional cases in the High Court. He was chief advisor to the Commonwealth and State governments on many laws relating to primary products, excise and taxation.⁷⁴

Jews were also active in local government. By far the most prominent Jew in local government was E. S. Marks, who was first elected to the City Council in 1920, representing Lang Ward, and in all, spent twenty-five years serving as an alderman.⁷⁵ In June, 1930, he was elected Lord Mayor of Sydney, representing the Citizens' Reform Association⁷⁶ and he remained in that position until December of that year. As an alderman, he worked to provide sporting facilities in Sydney and to improve health conditions.⁷⁷ He was also active in numerous amateur sporting organisations. Hyman Goldstein was also prominent in local government. In 1916, he was elected to the Randwick Council and six months later he was elected Mayor. Until his death in 1928 he was very active in municipal affairs in Randwick and Coogee.⁷⁸ There were a number of other Jews in local government such as C. J. Loewenthal and A. M. Loewenthal, both of whom were active in the Waverley Council; Alfred Shackel, Mayor of Grenfell; David Shackel, Mayor of Cowra; and W. Freeland who was Mayor of Katoomba.

⁷⁴ S.M.H., 22 April 1943.

⁷⁵ H.S., 4 December 1947.

⁷⁶ S.M.H., 25 June 1930

⁷⁷ A.J.C., 26 June 1930.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 9 March 1922.

Jews were very closely connected with the Citizens' Reform Association which worked for better administration in civic affairs. Sir Samuel Cohen was one of its foundation members and President from 1930. A. W. Hyman was also active in this association.

In this period there were no Jews from New South Wales in federal politics, although one Jew, H. R. Diamond, did stand unsuccessfully as candidate for the Nationalist Party for the federal seat of East Sydney.⁷⁹ Given the smaller number of electorates, it was obviously more difficult for a Jew to enter Federal Parliament. However, Jews in New South Wales took great pride in the achievements of Sir Isaac Isaacs at the federal level. After a brilliant political and legal career, including twenty-five years on the High Court Bench (1906-1930), he was appointed the first Australian-born Governor-General in 1930. The comments of the editor of the Australian Jewish Chronicle mirrored the sentiments of most New South Wales Jews:

This speaks volumes for the status of the Jew in Australia. It shows how a Jew can enrich the heritage of his adopted land and is an indication of the complete absence of racial and religious prejudice which exists in Europe. Therefore it reflects honour on all Jews... 80

Sir Isaac Isaacs was considered one of the key representatives of the Australian Jewish community.

One significant characteristic, therefore, of the New

⁷⁹ H.S., 4 October 1929. Diamond was defeated, but received 11,000 of 33,000 votes.

⁸⁰ A.J.C., 4 December 1930.

South Wales Jewish community before 1933 was this active participation in politics, mainly at the levels of local and state government. This political involvement was associated with the conservative movements, and in this way diverged from Jewish politics in Britain and America.

^{Australian}
Sydney Jews were very active in the commercial world, and most prominent Jewish leaders were successful businessmen. The nature of Jewish migration contributed to this development. Most of the pioneer Anglo-Jewish families came from the well-to-do middle class and they established important firms in the colony.⁸¹⁶⁷ As has been discussed, the influx of Jewish migrants in the nineteenth century was small, so that they rose comparatively rapidly into the middle classes.⁸²⁶⁸ Traditionally, few Jews worked on the land. This dated back to the period of feudal restrictions which prevented Jews from owning land. So, they tended to become the middle-men and ~~money-lenders~~⁸³ and this developed a pattern known as "occupational inbreeding".⁸⁴⁷⁰ Jews tended to prefer occupations, in both commerce and the professions, which were self-employed and not subject to discrimination. ~~This pattern was seen in New South Wales Jewry,~~

⁶⁴⁸¹ Israel Getzler, Neither Toleration nor Favour: The Australian Chapter of Jewish Emancipation, Melbourne 1970, p.17.

⁶⁸⁸² Price, op.cit., p.395.

⁶⁹⁸³ S.M.H., 21 March 1914.

⁶⁹⁸⁴ J. P. Dean, "Jewish Participation in the Life of Middle-Sized American Communities", in Sklare, ed., The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group, Illinois 1958, p.306.

where few Jews were engaged in agriculture. ^{Austr Jews} Most were engaged in independent activities although there is no evidence of discrimination against Jews as employees in big commercial firms, as there was against Roman Catholics. ^{Austr Jews} Jews played a more dominant role in the commercial life of the ^{Colonies} state than their small numbers would suggest.

^{in NSW} There were a number of prominent Jewish firms established in the nineteenth century, such as David Cohen and Company; Feldheim, Gotthelf and Company; and Hoffnung and Company. ^{67. Kadman + story of Hoffmanns.} The most influential of these was David Cohen and Co., which was originally established in West Maitland in 1836, and was one of the oldest and most influential commercial houses in New South Wales. ^{67. Kadman} In 1861, after his father, Samuel Cohen, died, George Judah Cohen, at the age of nineteen, took over control of the company in Maitland. ^{68 68} In 1879, together with his family he moved to Sydney where he became a leading commercial figure. ^{69 87} In 1885, he became the director of the United Insurance Company, the Commercial Banking Company, and the Australian Gaslight Company; in 1888, he joined Tooth and Company as Chairman and the Board of the Royal Exchange. In each of these companies he served for over forty years, he assisted in their growth into very large concerns, and helped them through the depressions of the 1890's and 1930's. ^{88 70} He was also director

⁸⁵ In 1901 only 2.2% of Jews in Australia were engaged in agriculture, compared with approximately 40% of the general population. Price, op.cit., Statistical Appendix V(a).

^{68 86} George Judah Cohen, A Memoir (no date or place of publication).

^{69 87} Sydney Mail, 27 January 1937.

^{70 88} George J. Cohen, op.cit.

of numerous other companies, and his name was never associated with a failure.^{89 71} He developed a reputation for remarkable business acumen and foresight, based on integrity and honesty.

Cohen's long continuous service was a unique record in the financial history of New South Wales.^{90 72} As the Sydney Morning Herald stated in an obituary in 1937, he was a "doyen of banking and commerce"^{91 73} and:

No man was more highly respected, and there was no one whose judgement was more eagerly sought in business matters. Mr. Cohen was an outstanding figure, especially in connection with banking problems.^{92 74}

George Judah Cohen was also extremely generous in all fields of charity work and was the most dominant figure of his time within the Jewish community, ~~as will be discussed later.~~

In all these activities his eldest son, Sir Samuel S. Cohen, followed in his father's footsteps although he was not as outstanding a figure in the commercial world. Sir Samuel was also a director of numerous commercial companies, including David Cohen and Company, the Australian Gaslight Company and Tooth and Company. He participated in civic affairs as President of the New South Wales Kindergarten Union and numerous other public bodies.^{93 75} He was knighted in 1937 in recognition of his public work.^{94 76} He also took over the leadership of the

71⁸⁹ Sydney Mail, 27 January 1937.

72⁹⁰ H.S., 30 April 1915.

73⁹¹ S.M.H., 23 January 1937.

74⁹² Ibid., 25 January 1937.

75⁹³ "Sir Samuel Cohen", A.J.H.S., Vol. II, Part X, 1948, p. 365.

76⁹⁴ S.M.H., 11 May 1937.

Jewish community from his father.

In general, Jews were active in the various commercial institutions of the state. ^{son of A. B. Davis} E. L. Davis was an almost continuous member of the Royal Stock Exchange and between 1889 and 1920 was elected chairman twelve times.^{95 77} There were a number of Jews associated with the Chamber of Commerce, especially in the Wholesale, Manufacturing and Jewellers sections.^{96 78} M. Gotthelf was connected with the Chamber for twenty-one years ~~and was also its President.~~

As in other parts of the British Empire, Jews were well represented in the professions, especially law and medicine, because these were largely independent. In law, a Jewish student won the Sydney University medal in the years 1925-1927,⁹⁷ and Jewish students often comprised a relatively high proportion of law graduates. Two Jews became judges: J. J. Cohen, District Court Judge, and M. E. Cantor who was a judge on the Arbitration Court Bench; while there were a number of King's Counsels such as Leonard Abrahams and E. M. Mitchell. There was, however, no Jew on the New South Wales Supreme Court. A comparatively large number of Jewish medical practitioners graduated each year,⁹⁸ although the proportion of

⁷⁷⁹⁵ H.S., 6 February 1920.

⁷⁸⁹⁶ In 1920, the following were elected to the Chamber of Commerce:- Albert Nathan (Commercial education); A. Shackel (Country); V. J. Phillips (Fruit Merchants); L. S. Barnett (Island Trade); N. N. Aronson, L. S. Barnett, J. H. Rosenberg, A. D. Salenger (Wholesale, Manufacturing, Jewellers); A. H. Phillips (Jute); G. Michaelis (Merchants and Importers); and D. Benjamin (Retail Merchants).

⁹⁷ H.S., 20 December 1927.

⁹⁸ In 1926, five of the 138 medical graduates were Jewish, University of Sydney, Calendar, 1926.

Jewish medical graduates was not as high in this period as it became later because university entrance tended to be restricted to the upper middle class as there were very few scholarships for the less well-to-do.⁹⁹ The Jewish members of the University Senate were Daniel Levy, E. M. Mitchell and Miss F. Cohen, while Miss Gladys Marks was acting Professor of French, 1929-1936.¹⁰⁰

Jews participated in the social and cultural life of the state. Freemasonry was one institution in which Jews were well represented. In Europe in the nineteenth century the admission of Jews into Freemasonry was an important aspect of Jewish emancipation,¹⁰¹ and a symbol of the full acceptance of the Jew as an equal. In Germany, where anti-Semitism and suspicion of the Jew was strong, Jews were not fully accepted into Freemasonry.¹⁰² ⁹⁵ In ~~New South Wales~~ ^{Australia}, on the other hand, Freemasonry acted as a barrier against anti-Semitism and was an important agency for social integration as it provided a common platform for all men.¹⁰³ ⁹⁶ Freemasonry was supported by the Protestant establishment and became the focal point of anti-Catholicism in the 1920's.¹⁰⁴ ⁹⁷ Joining the Freemasons connected the Jew with the Protestant establishment. ^{NSW J. Labor politician} ~~for~~ ^{for} example, decided against joining the Masons because "I knew my

⁹⁹ Interview with A. Landa.

¹⁰⁰ Who's Who in Australia, 1938.

⁹⁵ ¹⁰¹ Jacob Katz, "Freemasons and Jews", Jewish Journal of Sociology, Vol. 9, No. 2, December 1967.

⁹⁵ ¹⁰² ~~Ibid., p. 145.~~

⁹⁶ ¹⁰³ H.S., 5 November 1926.

⁹⁷ ¹⁰⁴ In 1738 the Catholic Church banned Freemasonry. Katz, op.cit., p. 140.

Catholic friends would dislike me for being a Mason". ¹⁰⁵ 98

Most Jews did not have these reservations and almost all the leaders of the community, including ^{the rabbinical leadership such as} Rabbi Cohen, ^{Rabbi Freedman, Rabbi Abrahams} were members of the order. ^{Freemasonry was largely a middle class}

institution and this also explains the high level of Jewish participation.

⁹⁹ Fletcher has argued that J. participation in Freemasonry did not sow the seeds of the J. ^{commented in 1899 on the cardinal relation} but ^{in U.K. J. Sternberg, M.L.C. was Provincial Grand Master for Brisbane, Q.L. Jews} had no difficulty in rising up the ranks of ^{Freemasonry.} John Goulston became Deputy Grand Master in ^{Catholics} ^{Crawshaw was treasurer of 2 lodges in 1900. Both were} 1918 and Grand Master, 1924-1928, because of 'his frequent, ^{"rel. missi"} active interest in the cause of charity'. ¹⁰⁶ ¹⁰⁰ He was the only ^{proton.} Jew in the British Empire to achieve that rank. ¹⁰⁷ ¹⁰¹ Many other ^{Protest} Soc

Jews held offices in local lodges, while Lodge Bondi was ^{9 had} established by A. I. Ellitt. ^{a long list} ^{in the case of} ^{active support} ^{of each other}

Jews were well represented in the Returned Soldiers' League which showed no sectarianism as far as Jews were ^{99 Fletcher, op. cit. p. 235} concerned. In 1926, A. W. Hyman was elected President of the R.S.L. Its conservative and formidable political influence ¹⁰⁸ appealed to the establishment within the Jewish community.

Jewish stress on philanthropy was transferred to non-Jewish institutions. Jews contributed both financially and in leadership to many public charities and friendly societies.

⁹⁸ ¹⁰⁵ A. Landa, Unpublished Memoirs, p.20. Landa felt a great sense of obligation to the Catholics, as he had gained his matriculation at a Catholic school, Waverley College.

¹⁰⁰ ¹⁰⁶ K. R. Cramp and George MacKaness, A History of the United Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of New South Wales, Sydney 1938, p.399.

¹⁰¹ ¹⁰⁷ Ivriah, Vol.I, No.7, 1937.

¹⁰⁸ F. Alexander, Australia Since Federation: A Narrative and Critical Analysis, Melbourne 1972, p.85.

M. Gotthelf and later E. S. Marks were Vice-Presidents of the United Charities. The Red Cross had 'many enthusiastic workers of the Jewish faith',¹⁰⁹ including J. J. Cohen, who was a Vice-President and E. S. Marks who was Deputy Chairman, 1934-39. J. J. Cohen was also honorary Secretary and President of the Hospital Fund. D. S. Benjamin was involved in the work of the St John's Ambulance Association among his many philanthropic activities. The Prisoners' Aid Society had a number of Jewish Presidents, including Louis M. Phillips and Orwell Phillips, Jewish members on the executive, and a number of Jewish Life Governors.¹¹⁰ Strong support was also given to hospitals, including the Royal Prince Alfred, which had two Jews, David Benjamin and Moritz Gotthelf, on its Board of Directors, and Sydney Hospital, where Louis M. Phillips and Sir S. S. Cohen were Directors. Jews did not contribute as much to St Vincent's Hospital because it was a Catholic Institution. Between 1905-1929 nine Sydney Jews directed the United Ancient Order of Druids which provided medical, friendly, sick, unemployment, and funeral benefits and had 23,000 members.¹¹¹ Many Jewish charitable organizations such as the Jewish Girls' Guild and the Council of Jewish Women also worked for non-Jewish causes. All these activities were evidence of the public spirited contribution of members of the Jewish community.

¹⁰⁹ H.S., 29 December 1916.

¹¹⁰ These included G. J. Cohen, Burnett D. Cohen, Mrs W. L. Cohen, A. Shackel and A. H. Nathan. Ibid., 16 September 1927.

¹¹¹ The Maccabean, 13 September 1929.

In cultural life, the Jewish contribution was on a smaller scale. There were some Jewish painters, such as Joseph Wolinski son of a minister of the Great Synagogue, the Rev. A. D. Wolinski, while a few Jews were also represented in music and on the stage. In literature, little was contributed. Enid Baumberg did publish a book¹¹² and Zara Aronson was for seven years editor of the women's page in The Sydney Mail, as well as being active in various literary societies.¹¹³ Unlike European Jewry, Jews in New South Wales made no outstanding contributions to the arts, but in this they were typical of the general Australian community, which had a disappointing cultural output in the years 1914 to 1929.¹¹⁴

Although Jews were not on the whole sportsmen, they were not untouched by the Australian's love of sport. The most prominent Jew in the sporting world was E. S. Marks, who was active in numerous amateur sporting bodies and was one of only two Australians to receive the veteran's badge awarded by the International Committee for services to amateur sport.¹¹⁵ Other Jews to contribute to sporting bodies included H. Goldstein, who was President of Coogee Life Saving Club, A. E. Phillips and A. H. Phillips, who were also involved in amateur sport.¹¹⁶

New South Wales Jewry was, therefore, a respected, entrenched tiny minority which, for a number of reasons, was

¹¹² This was called "The Scholarship Girl", A.J.C., 27 July 1922.

¹¹³ Australian Jewish Herald, 2 July 1936.

¹¹⁴ Alexander, op.cit., p.85.

¹¹⁵ P. J. Marks, op.cit., p.20.

¹¹⁶ H.S., 20 September 1929, and A.J.H., 2 April 1936.

very active in public life. In New South Wales there was a virtual absence of discrimination against the Jewish community. Whereas in other parts of the world the Jew was excluded from key financial institutions,¹¹⁷ in New South Wales E. L. Davis was President of the Stock Exchange while Jews were active in banking and public companies. The pioneering families of the community came from the educated middle class and this also explained their predominance in commerce and other aspects of public life. In the comparatively free Australian society it was possible for a Jew to achieve the fullest of his potential.

Communal leaders did not want to attract too much attention to the Jewish community and they repudiated any activity which might arouse the hostility of their Christian neighbours. This was illustrated by the controversy over the holding of dances on a Sunday evening at the Maccabean Hall. In 1925, Sunday dances at the Hall were ended because of protests from non-Jewish neighbours. Although this policy was criticized by some of the Jewish youth, Rabbi Cohen strongly defended its necessity,¹¹⁸ and this policy was maintained throughout the 1920's. When a complaint was lodged by a Christian minister against the holding of Sunday dances by the Randwick Coogee Social Club, Rabbi Cohen immediately condemned the club's actions although the complaint was based

¹¹⁷ In America Jews were excluded from the Stock Exchange, and there were few Jews in large corporations, Glazer and Moynihan, op.cit., p.149.

¹¹⁸ H.S., 8 May 1925.

on a misunderstanding.¹¹⁹ The attitude of communal leaders was summed up by the Maccabean:

No Jewish community enjoys a greater measure of goodwill or higher prestige than ours. Nor can there be any surer means of undermining it than a flagrant disregard for the true religious feelings of our neighbours.¹²⁰

In this way, the communal leaders tried to prevent any action

~~which would alienate the rest of the population.~~
The high level of intermarriage resulting in a structural assimilation was a result of both internal attitudes within the J. com. & its relationship with the majority of the com. Aust. J. leadership endorsed a policy of non-destructiveness
 There was also opposition to the creation of separate Jewish enclaves or the impression of Jewish insularity. One

correspondent in the Maccabean criticized the heading 'Jewish Sport' in the secular press and stressed that separate Jewish sporting organizations create the impression that Jews did not wish to assimilate with their neighbours in sport. The writer concluded with the point: "Let us be Jews in religious matters but Australians in sport", and this general idea was supported by the editorial comment.¹²¹ *Australia* The leaders of the community saw the absence of a ghetto existence in ~~Sydney~~ as a point of pride¹²² and the new immigrants from Eastern Europe were exhorted to avoid the creation of a ghetto by settling in Jewish enclaves and speaking Yiddish.¹²³ *

Civic recognition and social acceptance were the issues of prime concern for most of the community's leaders. These attitudes were criticized by some Jewish leaders. ~~A. I. Ellis,~~

¹¹⁹ A.J.C., 1 April 1926.

¹²⁰ Maccabean, No.23, 24 May 1929.

¹²¹ Ibid., 1 February 1929.

¹²² Ibid., 8 February 1929.

¹²³ H.S., 6 May 1927. *q Fletcher, op cit., p. 256.*

~~President of the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue, for a number of years pointed out that while Rabbi Cohen condemned Sunday dances, he took no steps to prevent dances being held during the Counting of the Omer,~~¹²⁴ ~~a traditional period of mourning in the Jewish religion when no festivities were to be held.~~ Victor Cornfield, in a letter to the Hebrew Standard, stated:

Our community has a dread of making a 'faux pas' which might endanger its social standing in the general scheme of things. Our leaders are on the tremble lest they be singled out as Jewish and prefer to keep in the background when prominent Jewish men and women come to our shores either as a visitor or with a message.¹²⁵

Although this observation is probably exaggerated, it is an apt summation of the fear of any action which would make the community or its leaders distinctive in any way. ~~The Jews in New South Wales~~ ^{Australia were} was much more concerned with being Australian and being fully accepted within the general society than with being Jewish,¹²⁶ and to achieve this, Jewish leaders stressed the need for Anglo-Saxon conformity.

The desire for Anglo-Saxon conformity mirrored the attitudes of the general community in the 1920's. Anglo-Saxon conformity meant the complete renunciation of the immigrant's culture in favour of the behavioural norms of the Australian society.¹²⁷ These norms were based on the middle class

¹²⁴ Ibid., 30 April 1926.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 23 August 1929.

¹²⁶ In this they were very similar to the British Jews before 1880, Lloyd P. Gartner, The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914, London 1960, p.250.

¹²⁷ Gordon, op.cit., p.85.

cultural pattern of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. The formation of ethnic colonies was opposed and new immigrants were expected to enter the general life of the community.¹²⁸ This was reflected in the Australian Government's attitude to immigration from non-British countries. The government felt that 98% of Australia's population was British or of British origins and that this proportion should be maintained.¹²⁹ Anglo-Saxon conformity was also supported in America where it received its fullest expression during World War I and was continued in the 1920's and 1930's.¹³⁰

The problem for ~~New South Wales~~ ^{Australian} Jewry, was that the demand for cultural conformity, by both Jewish and non-Jewish leaders, and the desire to prevent the formation of ethnic concentrations ~~in Sydney~~, resulted in assimilation.¹³¹ The dangers of assimilation have always been recognized by Orthodox rabbis who, in the past, consciously elaborated religious laws to make Jews different in dress, custom and outlook.¹³² The ideology of non-distinctiveness disregarded these preventive measures and this resulted in assimilation.

Structural assimilation is a two-way process that can be explained only by the attitudes of both the majority and minority groups.¹³³ Large scale intermarriage occurs only if

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.104.

¹²⁹ This policy was set out in a letter to Rabbi Cohen, 28 October, 1926. Department of Interior, Correspondence Files (Class 3: European Migrants) 1939-1959, 'Admission of Jews to Australia, 1921-1938', Commonwealth Archives Office, CRS A434 49/3/3196.

¹³⁰ Gordon, op.cit., p.98.

¹³¹ M.Gordon has shown that Anglo-Saxon conformity often involved the demand for complete amalgamation. Ibid., p.104.

¹³² Glazer and Moynihan, op.cit., p.163.

¹³³ Gordon, op.cit., p.111.

members of both groups accept one another as social equals and the cultural values of the two groups are congruent.¹³⁴

~~This was the case with New South Wales Jewry before the 1930's.~~

The virtual absence of anti-Semitism was a dominant feature of ^{Australian} New South Wales society. It was very significant in explaining the high rate of intermarriage, as prejudice and discrimination are very important factors influencing the degree of group identification. Identity with Judaism is less likely where there is little prejudice and discrimination.¹³⁵

Both Jewish and non-Jewish sources verify the complete lack of anti-Semitism in the 1920's. In an editorial in the Evening News, for example, it was stated that anti-Semitism in Australia was virtually unknown and that few Australians held Jews responsible for problems in the country.¹³⁶ The editor stressed that 'the persecution of the Jews is unworthy of a civilized people. In every country they make good citizens'.¹³⁷ *Geoffrey Serle has commented that as indicated of Jews experienced no anti-Semitism in their "how limited & mild anti-Semitism was at this time", was not for daily contacts with the general community and no questions on religion were asked when a Jew applied for a job. Most non-Jewish clubs and charitable organizations readily accepted Jews. Some anti-Semitic discrimination was practised by a restricted layer of upper-class Australians.*¹³⁸ Jews were not

¹³⁴ S. Goldstein and C. Goldscheider, Jewish Americans: Three Generations in a Jewish Community, New Jersey 1968, p.5.

¹³⁵ J. Milton Yinger, "Social Forces Involved in Group Identification and Withdrawal", Daedalus, Vol.90, Winter-Fall 1961, p.253-4.

¹³⁶ Evening News, 21 July 1923. See also comments in the S.M.H., 10 September 1921; H.S., 9 February 1923; A.J.C., 5 February 1925.

¹³⁷ Evening News, 21 July 1923.

¹³⁸ O. A. Oeser and S. B. Hammond, Social Structure and Personality in a City, London 1954, p.82.

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Geoffrey Serle,
Sir John Monash

A Biography, Melbourne, 1982, pp 490-491.

accepted in a few exclusive social and sporting clubs such as the Union Club, the Australia Club, and the Royal Sydney Golf Club, ^{in Sydney - the Melbourne Club} where there was no written statement of exclusion in the rules, but Jews were prevented from joining by the method of black-balling.¹³⁹ This exclusiveness did not greatly affect the position of Jews as they were still successful in the professions and business. It could explain why more Jews did not reach the highest echelons in government or the professions. Although there were a large number of Jewish lawyers, no Jew became a member of the New South Wales Supreme Court in the period 1914-1939. To overcome these barriers a successful Jew had to be of a very high calibre.

Anti-Semitism did not develop in Australia before the 1930's because of the Australian traditions of democracy and tolerance. From the establishment of the colony, Jews were fully accepted into the general community and no anti-Semitic tradition developed. New settlers to New South Wales had to travel a long distance and on the voyage they usually mixed with many different kinds of people so that they tended to lose the prejudices of the Old World,¹⁴⁰ and Jews in Australia could enjoy 'the tolerance of a new country'.¹⁴¹ The smallness of the community, its relative dispersion and its cultural assimilation also contributed to the lack of anti-Semitism. As an Anglo-Saxon middle class group who were very anxious to conform and be

¹³⁹ Information from interview with A. Landa.

¹⁴⁰ H.S., 6 April 1923.

¹⁴¹ This was one of the factors which made a deep impression on Landa when he arrived in New South Wales from Ireland. Personal communication.

helpful, the Jews did not seem a threat. As a result, there was a virtual absence of discrimination against them, unlike the Roman Catholics who experienced a high degree of discrimination in the 1920's.

This lack of anti-Semitism differed from other parts of the Anglo-Saxon world. In England, there was an element of anti-Semitism, which was reflected in the general press and in an attempt to interfere with shechitah.¹⁴² The Morning Post opposed Sir Alfred Mond's candidature for a seat in the Commons on the grounds that he was a Jew.¹⁴³ Anti-Semitism was very prevalent in America in the 1920's. In the late nineteenth century when Jews sought entrance into the higher levels of society, Americans responded with strict exclusiveness which reached a peak in the 1920's and 1930's. Jews were excluded from social clubs, preparatory schools, the better neighbourhoods, large corporations and even occupations associated with high status,¹⁴⁴ such as medicine where strict quotas on the number of Jews entering medical schools kept the Jewish medical students to a small proportion of the total enrolment.¹⁴⁵ After World War I, with the growth of racist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, and the anti-Semitic propaganda disseminated by newspapers such as Henry Ford's The Dearborn Independent, discrimination against the Jews further increased.¹⁴⁶ In order

¹⁴² A.J.C., 6 September 1923.

¹⁴³ H.S., 9 February 1923.

¹⁴⁴ Glazer and Moynihan, op.cit., p.160.

¹⁴⁵ H. M. Sachar, The Course of Modern Jewish History, New York 1958, p.341.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

to avoid rebuff from anti-Semitism, Jews tended to form their own institutions and to remain socially isolated.¹⁴⁷ As a result of these factors, Jewish intermarriage rates in America remained very low: 98.82% married within the group in 1900; by 1950 it was still 96.10%.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, as a result of the discrimination in England and America, most Jews did not assimilate structurally. This was the opposite to ~~New South Wales~~ ^{Australian Jewry} where the absence of anti-Semitic discrimination led to structural assimilation.¹⁴⁹

The dispersal of New South Wales Jewry increased the rate of structural assimilation. Intermarriage was most common in the country where it was difficult for the few scattered Jews to establish social contacts with other Jews. Even in Sydney, Jews were very scattered amongst the non-Jews, allowing for continual and free intercourse with their Christian neighbours.¹⁵⁰ Many young Jewish adults moved exclusively in non-Jewish circles.¹⁵¹ By the 1920's the New South Wales Jewish community was largely a second generation community. It has been shown that intermarriage rates are usually higher in the second generation as cultural assimilation has occurred.¹⁵² These factors increased the formation of primary relationships across ethnic groups and this resulted in structural assimilation.

¹⁴⁷ J. P. Dean, "Jewish Participation in Middle-Size Communities", in Sklare, op.cit., p.311.

¹⁴⁸ Gordon, op.cit., p.181.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.159.

¹⁵⁰ H.S., 4 May 1917.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 26 October 1917.

¹⁵² S. Encel, B. Buckley, J. Sofer-Schreiber, "The New South Wales Jewish Community: A Survey", duplicated edition, Sydney 1972, p.70.

The drift away from Judaism was a result of the social factors of free intermixing and the virtual absence of anti-Semitism. It was not due to any attempts at conversion by the Christian community. There was some missionary activity in the mid-1920's led by G. E. Ardill¹⁵³ and in 1928 the New South Wales Mission to Jews established central offices in Sydney,¹⁵⁴ but its impact was minimal. This missionary activity had its origins in nineteenth century England where it was predominantly Protestant and Evangelical and was related to the idea of the second coming. It was also part of the attempt to assimilate East European Jews in London. Neither of these factors operated strongly in New South Wales. Conversion was definitely a Protestant movement and the issue was discussed at conferences held by both the Presbyterians and Methodists. In 1917, Rabbi Cohen wrote a letter to the Presbyterian Assembly deploring its plans to discuss the revival of missionary activity in Sydney.¹⁵⁵ Missionaries ^{active in an effort} later described by Newman Rosenthal, a leader with the UJEB, tried to win over poor Jewish immigrants in Melbourne, ~~but~~ there was less evidence of this in Sydney.¹⁵⁶ In general, missionary activity did not reach significant proportions in New South Wales. As the editor of the Australian Jewish Chronicle stated 'conversion is not to be feared as much as apathy and indifference'.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ A.J.C., 10 June 1926.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 30 August 1928. 18 Nov

¹⁵⁵ H.S., 25 May 1917. (JH ~~29 Sept 1926~~)

¹⁵⁶ A.J.C., 10 June 1926. ^{As cited in} see history Rub. pp 139-140 and

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

The Jews in New South Wales society enjoyed prosperity and prominence within the general community and mixed freely in the non-Jewish society. They made a notable contribution to the Australian war effort and, after the war, Jewish names were prominent in politics, finance and the philanthropic activities of the state. This successful integration into the general community was due to the desire for Anglo-Saxon conformity and the virtual absence of anti-Semitism. However, the outcome of these factors was a relatively high rate of assimilation. In order to understand fully the question of assimilation, it is necessary to consider what was happening within the Jewish community in the 1920's. The outside pressures of living in a comparatively free society where the Jews enjoyed almost complete acceptance contributed significantly to Jewish intermarriage and assimilation. The weakness of the communal structure, itself, was equally important. For a minority group to be strong enough to withstand the pressures of assimilation, it needs to have strong roots and close group identification. This was lacking in the community and so posed a threat to the continued existence of New South Wales Jewry.

CHAPTER THREE

THE JEWISH SOCIETY,

1914 to 1933

Australian
The paradox of New South Wales Jewry was that although the communal leaders supported a policy of non-distinctiveness and wished to integrate within the general community they still wanted the community to retain its separate Jewish identity. This contradictory goal was very difficult to achieve. As one contemporary observer remarked:

Whatever the inheritance of the Jewish people may be; be it their faith, their national consciousness, their racial characteristics or a combination of all three; in the struggle to retain this inheritance, and yet absorb an environment with which it is not in harmony lies the anomaly of local Jewish life.¹

The outcome of this anomaly was assimilation. In the 1920's the Jewish leaders tried to strengthen the communal structure to overcome this problem but their efforts were, on the whole, unsuccessful.

I

Australian Jewish
The ~~Sydney~~ Jewish leaders were fully aware of the problem of assimilation and were disturbed by the rising rate of intermarriage. They advanced a number of causes such as parental laxity in the observance of Jewish tradition, a lack of Jewish feeling, the inadequacy of religious and educational facilities and the materialistic orientation of

¹The Maccabean, No. 23, 24 May 1929.

the Jewish community, in their explanation of the process of assimilation. During the 1920's efforts, ^{which differed in intensity in the different states} were made to overcome these ~~various~~ problems. These endeavours covered the entire range of Jewish activity in the hope that improved facilities would heighten Jewish consciousness and group identification.

~~In the religious sphere, the main steps taken were in the extension of synagogue accommodation. Communal leaders believed that the drift from Judaism was partly due to the difficulty of travelling to the Great Synagogue.² Before the First World War a few movements were started for the establishment of suburban synagogues. However, plans which were formulated before 1914 were put into abeyance during the war and reached fruition only after 1918.³ It was hoped that the building of new synagogues would stimulate greater religious awareness which would act as a barrier against assimilation.~~

Moves for the establishment of a permanent synagogue at Newtown began with the purchase of land in The Avenue, Newtown in 1912. The building of the synagogue was postponed until the debt on the land was liquidated and the Jewish population in the area increased.⁴ By 1918, the Jewish population in the area had doubled and specific building plans were formulated. In July 1918 the foundation stone was laid and the synagogue was consecrated a year later in September 1919.⁵

² Hebrew Standard, 17 June 1921.

³ Ibid., 3 January 1919.

⁴ Newtown Synagogue Minutes, 8 February 1914.

⁵ H.S., 5 July 1918; 12 September 1919.

In 1917 the synagogue engaged its first minister, the Rev. A. T. Chodowski, and in 1921, he was replaced by the Rev. B. Lenzer. Lenzer was the first permanent minister to be appointed to a suburban synagogue at a fitting salary. The development of the Newtown synagogue fulfilled an important need for Sydney Jewry.⁶

The Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue soon followed suit. The Central Synagogue movement began in 1912 both as a movement to provide more accessible synagogue accommodation and also as a reaction against the Anglicized nature of the Great Synagogue service.⁷ Its main concern was to arrest the drift from Judaism and:

arouse the community from its spiritual sloth and religious stagnation, to expand the narrow ambit of Jewish influence, to effect Jewish solidarity, to afford facilities for the practice of the traditions and customs of Judaism and above all to arrest the spread of the canker of intermarriage.⁸

Although land was purchased in 1913, an active congregation was not established until 1915 when the Rev. I. A. Bernstein was appointed minister and the buildings on the Dowling Street site were altered to provide suitable synagogue accommodation.⁹ The opening of this new synagogue was a further step in the development of the community.¹⁰

In 1916 the services of Bernstein were terminated but the congregation continued to develop. In 1919 a new building

⁶ Ibid., 12 September 1919.

⁷ Central Synagogue Minutes, 8 December 1912.

⁸ First Annual Report, Central Synagogue, 1914.

⁹ Central Synagogue Minutes, 3 October 1915.

¹⁰ H.S., 12 November 1915.

committee was established but no further steps were taken until 1921 when it was decided to purchase a new site at the corner of Grosvenor and Grafton Streets, Woollahra.¹¹ The Bondi-Waverley congregation, established in 1918, was invited to co-operate in the building of the new synagogue and, in March 1921, the two congregations amalgamated. The members of the Bondi-Waverley Congregation agreed to merge because they were small, had limited finance and although they rented a hall for services on Friday evenings, they could not conduct a full morning service as they did not possess a Sepher Torah.¹² The new congregation was called the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue. In 1921 the Chief Rabbi, Dr Hertz, laid the foundation stone for the new synagogue and in 1923 it was consecrated. The congregation expanded in size from 150 members in 1913 to become the second largest congregation in New South Wales with 500 members by the end of the 1920's.¹³ This membership was relatively small considering the total Jewish population of the Eastern Suburbs and the synagogue debt had still not been liquidated by 1929.¹⁴ In the early 1930's, two new congregations were formed as a result of disagreements with the executive of the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue. In 1931 the Machseeki Hadas congregation was formed by Cantor H. Rakman when the Central Synagogue refused to employ

¹¹ Ibid., 9 January 1921.

¹² D. J. Benjamin, "The Early Years of the Central Synagogue", Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal, Vol. II, Part X, 1948, p.513.

¹³ Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue Minutes, 24 November 1929.

¹⁴ Ibid.

him after they had sent him to England for training.¹⁵ Rakman was considered not sufficiently trained to be given the title Reverend by the Sydney Beth Din¹⁶ and, later, conflict arose over his activities. In 1933 the Mizrachi Congregation was formed to provide Rabbi Kirsner with a place of worship after his dismissal from the Central Synagogue.¹⁷ Both these congregations remained fairly small minyanim which failed to attract a significant following in the 1930's.

Further expansion occurred at Bankstown where a new synagogue was built in 1926 and the old synagogue converted into a social hall.¹⁸ This marked another stage in the growth of Sydney Jewry as the congregation provided a pivotal point for Jews over a wide area.¹⁹ Moves were made to establish a new congregation in the Randwick-Coogee area and a special Building Committee was appointed but these efforts failed to reach fruition in the 1920's.²⁰

The Great Synagogue in turn introduced improvements in order to stimulate interest and arrest the assimilatory process. Regular children's services were introduced in order to involve the younger generation and teach them about the synagogue service.²¹ In 1922 the Rev. L. A. Falk was appointed

¹⁵ Interview with Rev. D. Krass.

¹⁶ Sydney Beth Din Minutes, 27 November 1931.

¹⁷ Eastern Subs. Central Syn. Minutes, 28 September 1933.

¹⁸ H.S., 4 June 1926.

¹⁹ Australian Jewish Chronicle, 10 June 1926.

²⁰ Ibid., 25 April 1929.

²¹ H.S., 11 March 1921.

assistant minister in the hope that a young minister would inspire more enthusiasm. The Board of Management also formulated a new Incorporation Bill, passed by Parliament, allowing the sale of the Elizabeth Street city site and a move to a more accessible location if this proved necessary.²²

Despite all these efforts to improve the religious facilities of Sydney Jewry, religious life continued to stagnate. Attendances at regular services remained poor indicating the decreasing hold of the synagogue.²³ At the general meetings of all the congregations complaints were voiced about the indifference and lack of support of their congregants.²⁴ The new movements were successful in creating additional synagogue accommodation because of a body of staunch supporters, but a large proportion of Sydney Jewry remained outside the orbit of synagogal life.

The limitations of the synagogue were realized by communal leaders who believed that the establishment of a communal centre would provide a rallying point for the unaffiliated,²⁵ and so help reduce the rising intermarriage rate. H. I. Wolff, the editor of the Hebrew Standard, was the first to suggest the idea of building a communal centre as a War Memorial to commemorate the participation of Jewish soldiers in World War I.²⁶ In April 1919 a committee was appointed to further the plans for a communal hall which would centralize all

²² A.J.C., 10 May 1928.

²³ Ibid., 29 October 1925.

²⁴ Ibid., 26 September 1929.

²⁵ H.S., 20 October 1916.

²⁶ Ibid., 4 May 1917.

activities relating to the social, educational and sporting interests of the community and help with the integration of Jewish immigrants. The building of the Maccabean Hall aimed at revitalizing the community and increasing the involvement of the younger generation.²⁷ In this way, it was hoped that the Hall would become the nerve centre for Sydney Jewry.

In November 1920 members of the War Memorial Committee, which was established by the Board of Management of the Great Synagogue, purchased a site in Darlinghurst Road, Darlinghurst at their own personal risk.²⁸ On 3 February 1921, a public meeting confirmed the plans to erect a communal hall on this site and a committee was formed to raise the required £25,000.²⁹ Although the response to fund raising meetings was less than expected and of the 7,800 Jews in New South Wales only 400 had subscribed by 1922,³⁰ it was decided to commence building. On 25 February 1923, the foundation stone was laid by veteran leader George J. Cohen and a corner stone was laid by John J. Cohen who was the driving force behind the movement. The Maccabean Hall was erected under the supervision of the architect Gordon S. Keesing and on 9 November 1923 it was opened with great ceremony by Sir John Monash.³¹

The opening of the Hall increased communal social activities and the demand for rooms was so great that Alroy M. Cohen, who had bought the premises next door, also let rooms

²⁷ A.J.C., 14 December 1922.

²⁸ Minutes of the New South Wales Jewish War Memorial, 18 November 1920.

²⁹ H.S., 11 February 1921.

³⁰ Ibid., 28 April 1922.

³¹ Ibid., 9 November 1923.

for meetings.³² A number of local youth clubs amalgamated and became affiliated with the Maccabean Hall.³³ With the passage of time most social activities of the Jewish youth came to revolve around the Maccabean Hall.

The overall response to these efforts, however, did not match the organizers' expectations. In 1924 the membership target for the Maccabean Institute was one thousand (at a guinea a head), but only 680 joined.³⁴ The largest membership was reached in 1926 when 1050 enrolled in the Institute.³⁵ After this, numbers declined and in 1931 there were only 649 members, partly because of the effects of the depression.³⁶ In 1928 the Council decided to publish its own newspaper, The Maccabean,³⁷ but after a year the paper ceased publication because of financial problems resulting from "the indifference of Sydney Jewry".³⁸ In July 1929 a conference with representatives of all local organizations was held to discuss ways of increasing support for the Maccabean Hall, but this did not produce any long term results.³⁹ When (Lt. Col. A. W. Hyman) resigned in 1931 after three years as President of the Institute he stressed that he was a disappointed man "because of the incredible and unsatisfactory response of the community".⁴⁰

³² Ibid., 7 March 1924.

³³ A.J.C., 13 and 27 December 1923.

³⁴ Ibid., 28 March 1924.

³⁵ A.J.C., 10 May 1928.

³⁶ H.S., 7 April 1931.

³⁷ Minutes of the N.S.W. Jewish War Memorial, 30 May 1928.

³⁸ The Mac., Vol. 2, No. 2, 31 January 1931.

³⁹ Ibid., Vol. 1, No. 33, 2 August 1929.

⁴⁰ H.S., 1 May 1931.

The Maccabean Council faced great problems in paying off the debt on the Hall. In 1924 a special committee under the chairmanship of A. M. Loewenthal was formed and by 1926 the debt had been reduced from £12,000 to £2,000.⁴¹ Despite the work of this committee the Hall continued to be plagued with financial problems because of the poor response to membership campaigns and to letting the Hall which was more popular with non-Jewish clientele than with Jewish patrons.⁴²

The Maccabean Hall improved the institutional structure of Sydney Jewry by providing a variety of activities including social entertainment, gymnastics, Talmudic study, drama, sport, English speaking classes and an Employment Bureau.⁴³ However, it failed to attract the full spectrum of the community and so its facilities were not optimally utilized.⁴⁴

The growth of Jewish youth clubs also aimed at preventing assimilation by providing the younger generation with opportunities for social contact. The involvement of the youth was important for maintaining the vitality of the community as "young blood will bring young courage and new ideas, all of which are needed in Sydney".⁴⁵ In the 1920's, attempts were made to fill the need for more permanent youth groups. The Young People's Hebrew Association was established in 1915⁴⁶ as was the Randwick-Coogee Social Club in 1922.

⁴¹ Ibid., 19 November 1926.

⁴² A.J.C., 1 January 1931.

⁴³ Ibid., 28 April 1927.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 9 May 1929.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1 May 1930.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 21 December 1923.

The latter developed into a very successful social group with average attendances of over three hundred members by 1925.⁴⁷ Other youth groups were established at Bondi, Newtown and Bankstown. The Jewish scout movement made its appearance and, in 1927, a second scout troop was formed.⁴⁸ Jewish sporting activities increased, especially in association with the Maccabean Hall. In 1932 a Sports Federation was formed to co-ordinate Jewish sporting activities for Sydney.⁴⁹ All these activities increased Jewish consciousness and identification.

In 1924, in a letter to the editor of the Hebrew Standard, Hannah Hart suggested the idea of a combined Jewish Interstate Sports Competition as an extension of the increased interest in Jewish sport.⁵⁰ This idea was supported enthusiastically in the columns of the Standard and, in January 1925, Sydney sent a cricket team to Melbourne. This was the beginning of regular interstate competitions which gradually expanded to include all sports, and, in 1929, the first women's team participated in the Perth Carnival. These carnivals helped to strengthen and broaden communal life⁵¹ by arousing a sense of Jewish comradeship and by involving youth who were previously unaffiliated. In this way they provided another means of counteracting the threat of intermarriage.⁵² Yiddish cultural groups developed for the first time

⁴⁷ Ibid., 30 October 1925.

⁴⁸ A.J.C., 1 September 1927.

⁴⁹ H.S., 19 February 1932.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 7 March 1924.

⁵¹ Ibid., 2 January 1925.

⁵² A.J.C., 24 November 1927.

in Sydney in the 1920's. In 1922 the Jewish Dramatic Society staged a play in Yiddish.⁵³ The Maccabean Yiddish Speaking Society was established in 1924 and in 1925 decided to re-organize and present regular Yiddish plays.⁵⁴ However, Yiddish speakers felt unwelcome at the Maccabean Hall and in 1928 they established a separate movement, the Jewish National Club, to cater for those arriving from overseas and not accustomed to speaking English.⁵⁵ A second Yiddish club, the Jewish Cultural Club, was established in 1929 and in August of that year the two clubs amalgamated and were renamed the Jewish Club of Sydney.⁵⁶ The aim of this club was to keep the younger generation from drifting away by organizing social functions and by fostering a sense of Jewish consciousness as well as developing Yiddish culture.⁵⁷

The creation of a Jewish women's organization filled a long felt need in the institutional structure of Sydney Jewry. In June 1923 a world famous Zionist campaigner, Bella Pevsner, visited Australia to enlist support for Palestine.⁵⁸ Whilst in Sydney she suggested that the women of New South Wales should create a Council of Jewish Women similar to the American National Council of Jewish Women.⁵⁹ At the same time Dr Fanny Reading became aware of the need for a strong women's movement

⁵³ H.S., 28 July 1922.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 30 November 1925.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2 November 1928.

⁵⁶ A.J.C., 29 August 1929.

⁵⁷ H.S., 2 October 1931.

⁵⁸ Daily Telegraph, 13 November 1923.

⁵⁹ Interview with Dr Fanny Reading.

and, inspired by the words of Bella Pevsner, she decided to form the Council.⁶⁰ Two provisional meetings were held at the home of Mrs M. Symonds and in July 1923 the first general meeting was held at the Great Synagogue, where enthusiastic support was expressed. The establishment of the Council was an important move to combat assimilation because its aim was to educate young Jewish girls in Judaism and so overcome their apathy and indifference to things Jewish.⁶¹

The Council developed rapidly largely due to the determination, good organization and inspiration of Dr Fanny Reading. Before the Council was established the only Jewish women's organizations had been the comparatively ineffectual Jewish Girls' Guild and the Jewish Ladies Maternity Society, both of which were very limited in scope. The Council committee determined to attract a large membership and to raise the status of Jewish women and girls.⁶² Its programme was very comprehensive and included the provision of opportunities for social contact and discussion for Jewish women, improving Jewish education, immigration work, hospital visiting, assisting in the reconstruction of Palestine and helping Jews in less fortunate lands.⁶³ Dr Reading arranged the organization in such a way that it would have a broad appeal and that each woman could work for the aspect that most interested her. As many

⁶⁰ Council of Jewish Women's Minutes and Press Cuttings, 26 June 1923.

⁶¹ Interview with Dr F. Reading.

⁶² Interview with Dr F. Reading.

⁶³ Council Minutes, 1923.

groups as possible were created in order to carry out the aims of the Council. A Junior Section for the seventeen to twenty-one year olds was formed in 1927 and Sub-Junior (thirteen-seventeen) and Sub-Senior (for young married women) were established in 1931. Above all, the organization of monthly meetings for Jewish women and girls involved them in a greater sense of Jewish identity. This was achieved by making the Council meetings attractive and entertaining. Outstanding personalities such as Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, during his visit to Australia, were invited to council meetings. In this way the Council worked to reduce the threat of assimilation.⁶⁴

In every aspect the Council was a pathbreaker but for this very reason it was opposed by many of the established leaders of the community. Rabbi Cohen opposed the movement for personal reasons. He was reluctant to agree to the idea of Council Sabbaths being held at the Great Synagogue on a regular basis because 'he was aware of the Chief Rabbi's warning against American innovations'.⁶⁵ Communal leaders feared that the movement would interfere with congregational activities and lead to the abandoning of such customs as the segregation of the sexes in the synagogue as they believed occurred in America.⁶⁶ Many people claimed the scheme was too ambitious and would merely create another philanthropic organization resulting in unnecessary overlapping.⁶⁷ The Council was also

⁶⁴ Interview with Dr F. Reading.

⁶⁵ Great Synagogue Minutes, 9 April 1930.

⁶⁶ A.J.C., 26 July 1923.

⁶⁷ Council Minutes, 26 July 1923.

opposed because it was feared that its sectarian nature would create anti-Semitism.⁶⁸

Above all, the Council's support for Palestine was viewed critically by many members of the community. When the Council was created, Dr Reading promised Bella Pevsner to make the restoration of Palestine one of the Council's foremost aims.⁶⁹ Dr Reading supported the cause of the Palestine Infant Welfare Scheme, which was promoted by Mrs David Nathan of New Zealand.⁷⁰ In August 1922 the Colourland Fair, organized by the Council, raised over £1,000 which was used to support the Sydney Yemenite Centre in Tel Aviv for three years.⁷¹ The sending of such a large sum to Palestine was criticized by some members of the community. One correspondent to the Australian Jewish Chronicle stressed that the community should free itself from debt on the Maccabean Hall before helping others.⁷² A second fair, the Eastern Garden Fete, held in 1927, raised £2,000, £1,000 of which was sent to Palestine.⁷³ This action was again criticized by members of the community.⁷⁴ In its early years the Council, therefore, raised significant sums for Palestine in the face of indifference and opposition.⁷⁵

Despite early opposition to Dr Reading's work, the

⁶⁸ First Annual Report, Council of Jewish Women, July 1924.

⁶⁹ Interview with Dr F. Reading.

⁷⁰ Council Minutes, 3 December 1923.

⁷¹ Council Bulletin, 1 June 1937.

⁷² A.J.C., 7 August 1924.

⁷³ Ibid., 25 November 1926.

⁷⁴ C.B., Vol. 2, No.11, June 1928.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1 June 1937.

Council gained the esteem of the Jewish community and by 1925 had become an important and integral part of Sydney Jewry. In that year Dr Reading visited the United States to attend the quinquennial conference of the International Council of Jewish Women.⁷⁶ This visit helped to establish links overseas and end Australian Jewry's isolation. The Council gave Australian Jewry its first representative on the councils of World Jewry.⁷⁷

The Council copied the American example in its immigration work and was the first Jewish body in Sydney to provide organized assistance for Jewish immigrants. Dr Reading believed that immigration was vital to the Jewish community of New South Wales. She felt that as soon as the newcomers had become acclimatized they would become commendable citizens and make a valuable contribution to Sydney Jewry.⁷⁸ As Dr Reading stressed, the Council's aim was:

to give Jewish immigrants a home amongst us their own people, amongst their sincere friends at the time of their arrival, house them, teach them the language, customs, mode of living in this new country, assist them in every possible direction ... In this way those people will the sooner become accustomed to the new conditions and so much quicker absorb the characteristics of citizenship to our mutual advantage.⁷⁹

This indicated the forward thinking of Dr Reading who realized long before other communal leaders the importance of migration.

⁷⁶ H.S., 23 January 1925.

⁷⁷ A.J.C., 15 April 1926.

⁷⁸ C.B., Vol. 2, No.7, February 1928.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Vol. 1, No.3, November 1926.

In this she was assisted by Mrs Rieka Cohen who became President of the Immigration Welfare Section established in 1929 to meet all boats with Jewish immigrants and assist in their integration. In 1925 the Council established English speaking classes under Miss Dora Abramovich and in 1928 a Jewish Men's Hostel was opened in Day Street to overcome problems of finding accommodation for new arrivals.⁸⁰ This hostel provided beds for up to sixteen men and the Council hoped to establish a similar hostel for women and children, but this never eventuated. The warmth of the welcome given by the Council was much appreciated by the new arrivals. It filled an important gap in communal life as it helped to integrate the newcomers into the established Jewish community rather than drift away from Judaism.

The establishment of the Council's own journal, the Council Bulletin, in 1926 further improved Council organization.⁸¹ The format of the Bulletin was copied from the Philadelphia Section of the Council of Jewish Women. It was published "to enable every woman to keep her hand on the pulse of the movement" and to create a greater interest in all Jewish affairs.⁸² It also aimed at assisting Jewish women in country areas to remain in contact with Jewish affairs.⁸³

Dr Reading aimed to build a Council House to provide accommodation for new arrivals and also to be a meeting place

⁸⁰ H.S., 7 February 1928.

⁸¹ A.J.C., 10 June 1926.

⁸² C.B., Vol 1, No.1, September 1926.

⁸³ Ibid.

for members.⁸⁴ In 1926 land was purchased in Francis Street, Sydney for this purpose.⁸⁵ Until this was built the Council opened its own rooms in the city, first at Castlereagh Street and later in Pitt Street to serve as a central meeting place, a kind of Jewish women's club with a cafe, lounge, rest room and kitchen. Luncheons and afternoon teas were provided and the kitchen was strictly kosher. These rooms were considered to be necessary because of the inconvenience of the location of the Maccabean Hall.⁸⁶

In order to further the Council's aims, Dr Reading initiated the establishment of Council branches in Queensland and Victoria and in 1929 an interstate conference was held in Sydney and the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia and New Zealand was formed.⁸⁷ Common problems such as religious observance, education, Jewish women in country areas and especially the problem of intermarriage were discussed.⁸⁸ The conference was very successful and was an important landmark in Australian Jewish history as it was one of the first steps in interstate co-operation.⁸⁹ Regular interstate conferences were held bi-annually after 1929. In this way Dr Reading extended the orbit of Council influence and achieved her dream of creating "united Jewish sisterhood of Australia and New Zealand"⁹⁰ which greatly strengthened the institutional structure of Sydney Jewry.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Vol. 1, No.5, January 1927.

⁸⁵ H.S., 24 December 1926.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 19 April 1929.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 10 May 1929.

⁸⁸ C.B., Vol. 3, No.6, January 1928.

⁸⁹ First Jewish Women's Conference, May 21-27 1929, Sydney 1929.

⁹⁰ C.B., Vol. 3, No.6, January 1928.

Interstate co-operation also developed at the same time in the Zionist movement. In September 1927, a combined Zionist meeting representing all the states except Tasmania was held in Melbourne during the visit of Dr A. Goldstein, a member of the World Zionist Organisation's executive.⁹¹ At this meeting the Australian Zionist Federation was formed with Sir John Monash as Honorary President and Mark Ettinger as secretary *and Rabbi Jerome Brodie as the leading force, a post he retained until his death from Mosh in 1937.* This gave impetus to the growth of the Australian Zionist movement because it helped co-ordinate activities, improved Zionist publicity and facilitated the exchange of ideas. It tried to remove the haphazard, amateurish element in Zionist work.⁹² In May 1929 a second Zionist conference was held in Sydney immediately before the conference of the Council. Such interstate co-operation was slow to develop because of the large distances and the small Jewish population,⁹³ but it produced beneficial results for Australian Jewry.

In 1926 a Jewish Employment and Welfare Bureau was formed because of the growing unemployment problem exacerbated by increased Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe.⁹⁴ An office was set up at the Maccabean Hall with Frank Silverman as full-time officer.⁹⁵ During the depression the Bureau faced great financial problems and only succeeded in continuing its

⁹¹ Report of Sessions of the First Interstate Zionist Conference, Melbourne, 19-20 September 1927. Percy Marks Collection, Mitchell Library.

⁹² Second Annual Zionist Conference, May 1929, P. Marks Collection.

⁹³ Report of Sessions of First Zionist Conference, op.cit.

⁹⁴ A.J.C., 24 June 1926.

⁹⁵ H.S., 13 August 1926.

work because of loans from a few generous committee members.⁹⁶ The Bureau assisted Jewish unemployed in various ways including the issuing of meal tickets.⁹⁷ The Employment Bureau was important to the community because it prevented Jewish immigrants from becoming a charge on the general community. Many Jewish employers did not co-operate by informing the Bureau of vacancies because they believed that the Bureau supplied the wrong type of workers.⁹⁸ The small attendances at its annual meetings and its lack of sufficient finance reflected the community's shortsightedness to the Bureau's importance.⁹⁹

Communal structure was further strengthened by improvements in the major philanthropic organizations. Most important of these was the Sir Moses Montefiore Home, Philanthropic and Orphan Society which decided in 1918 that the old home, established in 1889 in Dowling Street, was unsuitable for the aged because of its several flights of stairs.¹⁰⁰ In 1922 a new site was purchased at the corner of Old South Head Road and Victoria Road, Bellevue Hill and the buildings on it were altered according to the cottage principle.¹⁰¹ In 1924 the new home was opened and consecrated¹⁰² but it was soon found to be inadequate. In 1930 five and a quarter acres were purchased at Hunter's Hill to

⁹⁶ A.J.C., 1 September 1927.

⁹⁷ Maccabean Institute Employment and Welfare Bureau, Annual Report 1930-1931.

⁹⁸ A.J.C., 1 January 1931.

⁹⁹ In 1930, for example, of 308 applicants the Bureau helped 219 find jobs, Annual Report 1930.

¹⁰⁰ H.S., 11 February 1918.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 10 November 1922.

¹⁰² A.J.C., 29 May 1924.

provide for better facilities and future expansion.¹⁰³

The function of the Chevra Kadisha,¹⁰⁴ established in 1912, expanded in the 1920's. After it achieved the status of the officially recognised organization for conducting all Jewish funerals, a Taharah and Mortuary Hall was established in 1924 near Mortuary Station.¹⁰⁵ By 1928 the building was free from debt, largely due to the work of Lewis Packer and Norman Block and it was considered "the most up to date mortuary in the Southern Hemisphere".¹⁰⁶ Sydney Jewry was the first Australian Jewish community to secure a mortuary hall which was a feature of every substantial Jewish community.¹⁰⁷

The Jewish press played an important part in the struggle to maintain Jewish awareness and prevent assimilation. The oldest ^{Syd} communal journal was the weekly newspaper, the Hebrew Standard of Australasia, which fostered the religious, cultural and historical heritage of the Jews and, therefore helped maintain the community's religious, educational and social consciousness. The paper acted as a forum for debate and discussion of controversial events such as the need for suburban synagogues, assimilation and intermarriage, orthodoxy and reform. This exchange of ideas assisted the community's development. The paper also served as a connecting link with the more isolated members of the community¹⁰⁸ and provided

¹⁰³ Sir Moses Montefiore Home, Forty-first Annual Report, 1930.

¹⁰⁴ The objects of the Chevra Kadisha were to supervise Jewish purification of the body and carry out religious services for the dying. A.J.C., 9 March 1922.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 5 March 1925.

¹⁰⁶ Chevra Kadisha Minutes, Annual General Meeting, 11 March 1928.

¹⁰⁷ Chevra Kadisha, Eleventh Annual Report, 1923.

¹⁰⁸ H.S., 2 July 1915.

publicity for the various communal organizations. In order to increase youth involvement in the community, a special page was devoted to this purpose.¹⁰⁹ As the editor of the Hebrew Standard stated in 1927, the paper was "the first line of defence against the tendency to drift away from the community", especially as it was the only weekly religious link for many members.¹¹⁰

The Hebrew Standard was very conservative in its editorial policies partly because it was under pressure from the patriarchs of the Great Synagogue who prevented the editors from advocating an independent policy. Jonah Marks who was editor from 1920 to 1925, was the only one who succeeded in achieving some independence. He gained this by placing the paper on a solid financial footing. Before he became editor, the paper's finances had been so mismanaged that, after subscriptions were paid in June, there was sufficient finance for only a few months. In order to overcome this problem Jonah Marks sent out accounts as subscriptions fell due and he also increased the revenue from advertisements. As a result he was less susceptible to external pressures. After the publication of his first editorial (16 January 1920), Rabbi Cohen called him into the vestry after the Sabbath service to criticize a number of points. Marks ignored this attempt at coercion and continued in his efforts to be broadminded and critical even if Rabbi Cohen was provoked.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 4 January 1924.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 28 January 1927.

¹¹¹ Interview with Jonah Marks.

In 1925 Alfred Harris resumed editorial control and the paper again became the mouthpiece of the leaders of the Great Synagogue. He stressed the importance of Jewish loyalty to the British Empire and was concerned with not giving offence to non-Jews as well as being anti-Zionist.¹¹² As a result of these policies and its lack of independence the Standard did not fulfil its potential as a dynamic force in the community.

In March 1922 a rival paper, The Australian Jewish Chronicle, began publication because its founder and editor, the Rev. A. T. Chodowski, believed that the Standard was "ineffectual" and that the community needed "a real exponent of Jewish affairs".¹¹³ Chodowski had been a minister in five Australian towns. He felt that in order to prevent the drift from Judaism and the prevailing apathy, a more progressive Jewish newspaper was needed.¹¹⁴ It was published fortnightly and followed a more progressive policy by advocating support for movements such as the Maccabean War Memorial, the Council of Jewish Women and Zionism. To counteract the Standard's anti-Zionist policy, the Chronicle was taken over by the Zionist leaders in 1925, with I. K. Sampson and Israel Horwitz as editors. In 1928 a company consisting of a number of Zionist leaders was formed to continue the management of the paper. It became a strong advocate of Zionism and the official publication of the Australian Zionist Federation. Alfred Harris' anti-

¹¹²H.S., 23 January 1925.

¹¹³A.J.C., 5 March 1925.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

Zionist comments were ridiculed in its editorial columns.¹¹⁵ Efforts were made to improve the paper by making it a weekly in August 1929 and by extending its circulation to the other Australian states. These efforts were not successful because of the effects of the depression and the paper ceased publication early in 1931. The existence of the two rival papers improved the overall standard of the Jewish press and so assisted in the growth of the community.

The isolation of New South Wales Jewry from the main-streams of Jewish life contributed to the high rate of assimilation. The pastoral tour in 1921 by the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Dr J. H. Hertz, attempted to deal with this problem. The community was facing a period of fading interest in Judaism and it was hoped that the visit would encourage lay and rabbinical leaders and awake a greater interest in Judaism especially among unaffiliated Jews.¹¹⁶ Rabbi Hertz believed that a tour of the Jewish communities in the British Empire was needed to create a feeling of Jewish unity, to stimulate religious activities and examine common problems.¹¹⁷ The tour was also made for the purpose of raising funds for the British War Memorial, which was a project to establish a Memorial College for advanced Jewish studies and the training of Jewish ministers.¹¹⁸ Rabbi Hertz spent the longest time of the tour in Sydney where he delivered more sermons and public addresses

¹¹⁵ See for example A.J.C., 6 and 13 November 1930.

¹¹⁶ H.S., 8 April 1921.

¹¹⁷ J. H. Hertz, The First Pastoral Tour to the Jewish Communities of the British Overseas Dominions, Oxford 1924, p.9.

¹¹⁸ H.S., 8 April 1921.

to Jewish and general audiences than in any other city.¹¹⁹ His main message was the importance of Jewish education and the need for parents to observe religious traditions.¹²⁰ He made a number of important suggestions in regard to religious education, provided a list of useful publications and stressed the need to cater for advanced students.¹²¹ In this way he tried to improve Jewish education and strengthen religious awareness.

Rabbi Hertz participated in a conference held at the Great Synagogue to discuss ecclesiastical matters such as the functions of the Beth Din, co-operation between congregations, proselytes, children's services, the use of the organ in the synagogue and travelling on the Sabbath.¹²² He stressed that if a congregation wished to retain its orthodox status, innovations such as the triennial reading of the Law, travelling on the Sabbath and the use of the organ were unacceptable and would alienate the most devout members of the congregation.¹²³ Other ways of increasing congregational involvement such as the formation of a Ladies Committee, the holding of two or three social functions a year and the establishment of a congregational newspaper were also discussed.¹²⁴

The acceptance of proselytes was an important issue relating to the problem of intermarriage. Some members of the

¹¹⁹ Hertz, op.cit., p.26.

¹²⁰ H.S., 15 April 1921.

¹²¹ Board of Jewish Education, Annual Report, 1921.

¹²² Great Synagogue Minutes, 2 May 1921.

¹²³ Correspondence from the Chief Rabbi, Great Synagogue Minutes, 31 January 1923.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 2 May 1921.

community felt that proselytes were admitted too easily¹²⁵ and that this increased the incidence of intermarriage and 'cheapened' the Jewish faith.¹²⁶ The Melbourne Hebrew Congregation in 1917 and the Brisbane Congregation in 1926 prohibited the admission of proselytes and there were some who advocated the same policy for Sydney. The Chief Rabbi advised that Sydney Jewry must formulate its own policy, taking into account the human side and also the general effect on the community.¹²⁷ He stressed that "rash and easy proselytization is a grave menace to our faith which cuts at the roots of our religious existence".¹²⁸ He suggested that a permanent inquiry committee, representing only lay members, be formed and that this committee submit each suitable case to the Beth Din for ecclesiastical acceptance.¹²⁹ The Great Synagogue Board believed that proselytization should be permitted because otherwise irregularities and scandals could result.¹³⁰ They followed the Chief Rabbi's advice and appointed a Proselyte Investigating Committee.¹³¹ Criticism was still voiced and in 1924 a motion was proposed at the Great Synagogue Annual Meeting that proselytization be prohibited. Rabbi Cohen stressed that almost all Jews were opposed to intermarriage but most of those who married out did not raise the question of

¹²⁶ A.J.C., 29 June 1922.

¹²⁷ Great Synagogue Minutes, 2 May 1921.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 31 January 1923.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 15 September 1924.

¹³¹ The committee based its considerations on three criteria: those entitled by Jewish law to consideration on grounds of Jewish parentage; wives of Jews who for a considerable time were living Jewish lives and keeping Jewish homes; and single, unmarried non-Jews with no special claim.

proselytization but simply abandoned Judaism. On the whole, most applicants accepted were brought up entirely as Jews and the Rabbi believed that such cases should be dealt with sympathetically. After some discussion, the motion was ruled out of order.¹³² Dr Fanny Reading believed that proselytization should be opposed when marriage was the objective,¹³³ and at the Council of Jewish Women's conference in 1929 the policies of the Great Synagogue Investigating Committee were criticized. John Goulston, a member of the committee replied that statements made at the conference were gross exaggerations.¹³⁴ The Great Synagogue continued to follow the guidelines laid down by the Chief Rabbi.

The Chief Rabbi was also welcomed by the general community. He was received by the Governor-General and a civic reception was tendered by the Lord Mayor.¹³⁵ He addressed the Millions Club¹³⁶ and delivered a lecture, 'The Bible as a Book' at the Sydney Town Hall which was filled to capacity. His lectures were reported favourably in the general press. The Sydney Morning Herald described the Town Hall lecture as 'a famous evening'.¹³⁷ As one correspondent to the London Jewish Guardian stated:

The effect so far as we Jews are concerned has been that our social status has been given

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ A.J.C., 18 September 1924.

¹³⁴ H.S., 27 September 1929.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 8 April 1921.

¹³⁶ The Millions Club was a luncheon discussion group formed by businessmen in the 1920's. It became a well-known forum for discussing new points of view and was very influential as it represented a good cross-section of important businessmen and professionals. Its upper-middle class composition made it generally conservative in its approach.

¹³⁷ S.M.H., 27 April 1921.

a decided fillip. It is felt that a community which can boast at its head such a cultured and broadminded gentleman must be worthy of tolerance from other creeds.¹³⁸

This aspect of the Chief Rabbi's visit won him the esteem of New South Wales Jewry because of the strong desire to create a favourable impression on the general community.

Rabbi Hertz's visit helped to improve communal organization and aroused Jewish awareness. As one observer stated:

Wherever he has gone he has proved a most valuable asset to the Jewish communities in this vast continent. By his uncompromising Jewishness Dr Hertz has undoubtedly done a great deal to reawaken in this country an interest in things Jewish which should have a lasting effect.¹³⁹

His advice produced long term results and was often referred to in succeeding years. The visit provided Sydney Jewry with a unique opportunity to have first-hand contact with one of the outstanding Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century and this, in itself, was beneficial. It was in many ways the highlight of the endeavours of Sydney Jewry to strengthen its communal institutions and so deal with the problem of assimilation.

II

The attempts to strengthen communal structure left no aspect of Jewish life untouched. The religious, educational, philanthropic, social and cultural institutions of the

¹³⁸ Reprint of a letter in the Jewish Guardian in Hertz, op.cit., p.62.

¹³⁹ London Jewish Chronicle, 1 July 1921.

community were all improved in the 1920's. However, these efforts did not meet with sufficient success to increase Jewish awareness and so were not able to overcome the problem of assimilation. There were a number of factors which contributed to the relative failure of the various movements described above and the continued weakness of the community.

The success of any movement is largely dependent on the quality and type of leadership available. In the 1920's Sydney Jewry continued to be governed by an oligarchy which controlled the community from the Great Synagogue.¹ In the period 1914-1939 there were only nine different presidents of the Great. Of these the most influential were George Judah Cohen and his son Samuel S. Cohen (later Sir Samuel).² G. J. Cohen, who died in 1937 at the age of ninety-two, was considered the grand old man of New South Wales Jewry and the guiding influence of its destinies. He was a member of the Great Synagogue Board for forty-five years and its President fifteen times. His son took over the reins from his father and was the most influential leader in the 1920's.³ Another veteran leader was Moritz Gotthelf who was closely associated with the Great Synagogue Board for forty-two years⁴ and whose offspring continued to play an active role in communal affairs. The Phillips family was also very influential. Orwell Phillips was President of the Great for four consecutive terms in the

¹D. J. Benjamin, "Twenty-Five Years of Australian Jewry, 1933-1958", unpublished paper.

²In the period 1914-1939, G. J. Cohen was President for four terms and S. S. Cohen for seven terms.

³A.J.C., 21 January 1926.

⁴Great Syn.Minutes, 21 July 1926.

1920's and his brother was a Board member and President of the Montefiore Home. Other leading families were the Lesnies, the Greens and the Symonds.

These leading families had certain characteristics in common. Most of them came from the pioneer Anglo-Jewish families who "brought to Australia the qualities that gave Anglo-Jewry, though comparatively small, its striking leadership: namely intense Jewish loyalty and a high sense of civic duty".⁵ The criterion for leadership was not religious devoutness but rather success and status in public life. All the Great Synagogue leaders were successful businessmen or professionals and had achieved positions of prominence in the social and political life of the state.⁶ As a result of their background and social status, they were most concerned with formality and decorum and were very conservative. They created the impression that the congregation was run for the benefit of the wealthy members only. When the Rev. L. A. Falk did not deliver a sermon one year on Chanukah it was assumed that this was because some privileged members wished to leave early.⁷ The pioneer families had such an entrenched position in the community that it was very difficult for newcomers to penetrate their ranks. Morris Symonds was one of the few immigrants from Eastern Europe who was accepted into the closed circle. John Goulston, a newcomer from New Zealand, experienced initial difficulty in

⁵ H.S., 22 July 1932.

⁶ Ibid., 2 April 1926.

⁷ A.J.C., 2 January 1930.

being elected despite his success in the general community. This conservative, domineering attitude stifled initiative and prevented new leaders from emerging.

The Central Synagogue began as a rebellion against the compromises in orthodox practice of the Great, but in the 1920's its own leaders made similar compromises. In 1915, at the consecration of the Synagogue, Rabbi Cohen referred to the founders' desire to create a truly orthodox congregation and went on to say:

It was only right that those holding rigidly orthodox views should be considered just as much as those who were moderately progressive. I, personally, would be by no means adverse if another wing, the Reform, were likewise represented. It would cut away the ground from the frequent excuse for ignoring Judaism altogether.⁸

However, the original founders' aim was not achieved. When the synagogue was built at Bondi Junction, the reading desk was not placed in the centre of the synagogue as was the custom in more orthodox congregations. Elias Green, one of the founders, criticized this decision as an unnecessary innovation and a breach of the founding declaration that the synagogue would follow the Polish Minhag.⁹ This criticism was disregarded and more English was later introduced to make the service more appealing.¹⁰ The East European immigrants were too few in number to exert a continued influence and, as more congregants joined the Central, a more Anglicized service evolved.

⁸ H.S., 12 November 1915.

⁹ A.J.C., 29 June 1922.

¹⁰ Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue Minutes, 19 November 1931.

There was clearly much sympathy for the Reform movement, as illustrated by a series of letters published in the Maccabean. A number of correspondents advocated the need for reform because the existing services were not attractive enough and few people understood Hebrew.¹¹ Yet, no moves were made to establish a Reform Synagogue.

This failure to diversify religious practice was partly because the majority of Jews were indifferent to religious observance and partly because of the attitude of the communal leaders. Samuel S. Cohen was unacquainted with orthodox Judaism. In a letter to Rabbi Hertz, he advocated driving on the Sabbath and the use of the organ¹² although both these suggestions were totally inconsistent with orthodox practice. In spite of his reform ideas, S. S. Cohen was a leader of the Great Synagogue which remained 'nominally orthodox'.¹³ Reform ideas such as the triennial reading of the Law were rejected as detrimental to the congregation.¹⁴ The Great Synagogue leaders supported a watered-down form of orthodoxy and opposed what they called 'ghetto Judaism'.¹⁵ Members travelled to the synagogue by car on the Sabbath and even had a car waiting outside the synagogue on Kol Nidrei, the most holy time of the Jewish calendar.¹⁶ Traditional Judaism was negated in many other ways yet the leaders did not initiate a Reform

¹¹ See The Mac., Vol. 1, 4, 11 and 18 October 1929.

¹² Letter from S. S. Cohen in the Great Syn. Minutes, 20 April 1921.

¹³ A.J.C., 29 June 1922.

¹⁴ Reform motions were defeated at the annual meetings of 1914, 1916, 1928, 1929 and 1932. Triennial reading of the Law meant reading The Five Books of Moses on the Sabbath Service over a period of three years instead of the traditional one year.

¹⁵ Great Syn. Minutes, 30 September 1923.

¹⁶ A.J.C., 21 August 1930.

congregation. This indicated the apathy and hypocrisy of the Jewish community and its leaders.

The undemocratic and exclusive nature of the communal leadership was reflected in the constitutions of the major organizations. The Great Synagogue's constitution stated that the Board alone had the power to alter or amend the rules of the congregation.¹⁷ In 1920, at the Annual General Meeting, a motion was passed stating that members should be able to alter or amend the rules.¹⁸ The Board decided that it was willing to accept the decision of a general meeting provided that "in the opinion of the Board it is in the best interests of the congregation".¹⁹ The constitution of the Maccabean Institute stipulated that the Council of Association should consist of the honorary officers and twenty-five committee members, at least three-fifths of whom had to be foundation members.²⁰ This rigid formula for election made it difficult for new members to become involved in the administration. As a result the Institute was run by:

prominent members of the community who think it is below their dignity or are insufficiently interested to visit the Hall. The only time they come is for the Annual General Meeting to be graciously appointed to the Council. It cannot be called an election when so many foundation members must be on the Council.²¹

In order to improve the administration of the Hall, leaders with

¹⁷ Great Syn. Minutes, 13 December 1920.

¹⁸ Ibid., Forty-third Annual Report, 1920.

¹⁹ Ibid., 13 December 1920.

²⁰ The Mac., Vol. 1, No. 34, 9 August 1929.

²¹ Ibid., 22 August 1929.

'a radical outlook' were needed.²² In 1929, at a Round Table Conference to discuss the problems facing the Maccabean Institute, I. K. Sampson moved that the power of the foundation members be reduced and that a new, fully representative Council be elected but this motion was rejected.²³ The same leaders continued to dominate the Maccabean Hall, as well as the other major communal institutions.

The movement which was able to break away from the Establishment and introduce new ideas was the Council of Jewish Women. Its success can be explained largely by the personality of its founder and leader, Dr Fanny Reading. She had a flair for organization and was said to be "a dreamer of big dreams with the courage to implement them even in the face of strong opposition".²⁴ With her boundless enthusiasm, energy and idealism she activated Jewish women and demonstrated what could be achieved with good leadership. Unlike the other leaders, Dr Reading came from the centre of Jewish life. She was born in Russia and migrated with her parents to Australia during her childhood. Her family settled in Ballarat where they continued to live an orthodox way of life. The Jewish community of Ballarat, though small, was strong and cohesive because it consisted mainly of immigrants from Eastern Europe.²⁵ This orthodox upbringing provided Dr Reading with her strong religious faith which was to prove such an inspiration to the others around her. It contrasted with the assimilated background of most of

²² Ibid., 5 December 1929.

²³ Ibid., 9 August 1929.

²⁴ C.J.W.Minutes, 27 July 1923.

²⁵ Interview with Dr F. Reading.

the other leaders of Sydney Jewry.

Few of the other leaders were of Dr Reading's ilk. This lack of good leadership was partly because of the effects of World War I. Since the Jewish community in Sydney was comparatively small, it was much more affected by the loss of many of its young men than the larger communities. Without dedicated leadership it was difficult to strengthen communal institutions.

The rabbinical leadership of Sydney Jewry was equally limited and uninspiring. The task of finding a suitable minister who could combine the qualities of scholastic knowledge in both Jewish and secular matters, determination to maintain the purity of religious traditions and sufficient tact and diplomacy to retain the support of the majority of his congregation, was difficult anywhere in the world.²⁶ The difficulties of this task were magnified in Australia because of its isolation, the community's inability to offer sufficient financial reward, and the limited prospects for advancement.²⁷ There was, therefore, a great shortage of competent ministers. This was also true for Christian congregations.

The Great Synagogue was the only congregation in Sydney which was in a position to attract men of high calibre such as Rabbi Francis Lyon Cohen, its Chief Minister from 1905 until his death in 1934. For most of this period Rabbi Cohen was the only minister in Sydney with rabbinical qualifications and, as head of the Beth Din, he made all the ecclesiastical

²⁶ A.J.C., 6 April 1922 and 14 April 1927.

²⁷ Ibid., 12 September 1929.

decisions. Rabbi Cohen was held in high esteem by the members of his congregation and his contribution was summed up in the eulogy passed by the Great Synagogue Board:

It is with very deep sorrow that the Board of Management of the Great Synagogue records the death of its Chief Minister, the highly esteemed and respected Rabbi Francis Lyon Cohen, who had for so many years directed the religious duties of his office with such distinction and the various functions outside and beyond these in the general affairs of public service with the approval and respect of our fellow citizens. His scholarly and cultured gifts were universally acknowledged and added much to the prestige and regard our community gained in public estimation.²⁸

Rabbi Cohen was widely admired for his qualities as a public speaker. He was not only British by birth and training but also by word and deed so that his patriotism, his love of the British Empire and English culture became a passion with him.²⁹ His role was similar to that of an Anglican bishop (he dressed in a similar manner to the Anglican clergy) and he emphasized dignity and decorum in the synagogue. He reinforced the lay leadership's policy of non-distinctiveness and their desire to be fully accepted by the general community. He opposed anything which made Jewish citizens appear different and tried to modify Jewish practices to suit the Christian environment. For example, he did not oppose Jewish families having Christmas trees but suggested in a sermon that the trees should resemble Chanukah candles.³⁰ Yet, as one correspondent in the Australian Jewish Chronicle stated, this was at variance with Jewish principles and "gives an invitation for the adoption

²⁸ Great Syn. Minutes, 9 May 1934.

²⁹ H.S., 4 May 1934.

³⁰ A.J.C., 28 December 1922.

of a non-Jewish festival".³¹ Rabbi Cohen appeared to be more concerned with the privileged Anglo-Jewish congregants and his aloof manner alienated many newcomers.³² As a result of these attitudes Rabbi Cohen, for all his qualities, did little to help stem the tide of assimilation.³³

The smaller congregations experienced greater difficulties in attracting suitably qualified and reliable ministers, largely because of lack of finance. The Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue had continual problems with its ministers. In 1915 the Rev. I. A. Bernstein was appointed minister but in July 1916 he was given three months' notice because of his mismanagement of synagogue property and finances.³⁴ B. Levito, who was appointed in 1923, was forced to resign in 1925 because of charges of misconduct.³⁵ In 1927 Rabbi Gedaliah Kirsner's arrival brought fresh hope for an improvement in ministerial leadership but tension soon developed between Kirsner and the Board. In 1929, during a Board discussion as to whether the Rabbi's contract should be renewed, A. I. Ellitt claimed that the Rabbi did not have the confidence of the congregation and that he "was not big enough for the job and the job was too big for him".³⁶

³¹ Ibid.

³² Great Syn. Minutes, Annual Meeting, 30 August 1914.

³³ It is interesting to note that Rabbi Cohen's elder son contracted a marriage outside the Jewish faith. The members of the Great Synagogue Board expressed their sympathy to the Rabbi for his domestic sorrow especially because it provided the community with such a public example. Ibid., 14 February 1915

³⁴ Central Syn. Minutes, 18 September 1916.

³⁵ Ibid., 9 June 1925.

³⁶ Ibid., 18 February 1929.

Despite these reservations, the Rabbi was re-engaged for a further three years in November 1929.³⁷ Dissatisfaction with Rabbi Kirsner continued and in December 1930 a motion was passed terminating his services, but it was rescinded immediately afterwards.³⁸ Rabbi Kirsner's contract came up for renewal in 1932 and on this occasion the Board decided not to re-engage him because he was "unfortunately physically unfitted to carry out his duties".³⁹ Kirsner's abrupt dismissal aroused much antagonism and in March 1933 a special general meeting was called to reverse it. A large majority voted to retain Kirsner but the synagogue's constitution stated that a four-fifths majority was needed to rescind a motion.⁴⁰ This conflict created such a schism within the congregation that many of its staunchest supporters left and formed a new congregation, the Mizrachi, because they believed that Kirsner had been dealt with unfairly.⁴¹ Rabbi Kirsner's services were dispensed with but this did not solve the problem of rabbinical leadership. In 1934 Rabbi Dr Marcus Wald was appointed to the post but he was recalled to London by the Chief Rabbi after only six months in Sydney because of personal misconduct. This series of abortive attempts to find a suitable minister hindered the progress of the congregation and illustrated the difficulties faced by the smaller synagogues.

³⁷ Ibid., 24 November 1929.

³⁸ Ibid., 1 and 15 December 1930.

³⁹ Ibid., 14 August 1932.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 19 March 1933.

⁴¹ H.S., 24 March 1933.

The ministers' impact was restricted by their inability to act independently. They were appointed by the synagogue Boards of Management and, as paid officials, were subject to the decisions of the lay leaders who were often ignorant, impermanent and concerned with their own self-aggrandisement. This resulted in many clashes and limited the effectiveness of rabbinical leadership. Even Rabbi Cohen, who was so highly respected, was not given complete independence. When he took action without first gaining the Board's consent he was rebuked. His request to hold a seat, ex officio, on the Board without a vote, was refused.⁴² The Rev. L. A. Falk conflicted with the Great Synagogue Board because he followed the dictates of his conscience in questions of orthodox practice and in so doing interfered with the usual administration of the Synagogue. S. S. Cohen pointed out to Falk that "he had shown a hostile attitude to authority which could not be permitted and had allowed himself to be wrongly advised by individuals".⁴³ Rabbi Cohen urged Falk "to regard himself as an officer bound in loyalty to the constitution of the synagogue".⁴⁴ This subservient approach made it very difficult for a minister to demand strict orthodox observance from his congregants. To retain his position, a minister had to be extremely careful and diplomatic.

The period after 1918 witnessed the growth of suburban

⁴² Great Synagogue Minutes, 26 July 1922.

⁴³ Ibid., 30 September 1923.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

congregations so that the community no longer revolved solely around the Great Synagogue.⁴⁵ Co-operation between the various synagogues was needed if the full benefit of these movements was to be realized. Issues such as Kashruth and Shechitah, Barmitzvah requirements, Jewish education, the reception of proselytes, pulpit exchange and pastoral visits could have been dealt with more successfully by united action.⁴⁶

Supply of kosher meat posed a continual problem. Repeated complaints were made that kosher meat was too expensive and that it was not distributed efficiently. The supervision of the ritual slaughter of animals at the abattoirs, the issue of licences to kosher butchers and the supervision of these shops was the sole responsibility of the Shechitah Committee chosen from the Great Synagogue Board. Since the kosher butchers did not make a profit because of their small patronage,⁴⁷ it was also the Great Synagogue which subsidised kosher meat supplies. By 1924 the Great was spending £900 per annum on Kashruth and it felt that it was not receiving a satisfactory return for this outlay.⁴⁸ The Board resented shouldering this burden alone and wanted the other congregations to share at least in the financial liabilities. In 1925 an unsuccessful request for financial support was sent to the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue.⁴⁹ In view of this lack of co-operation it was understandable that the provision of kosher meat was inadequate.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ A.J.C., 1 May 1930.

⁴⁶ H.S., 11 September 1925.

⁴⁷ A.J.C., 1 May 1924.

⁴⁸ Great Syn. Minutes, Presidential Report, Annual Meeting, 15 September 1924.

⁴⁹ Eastern Suburbs Central Syn. Minutes, 21 December 1925.

⁵⁰ A.J.C., 16 September 1926.

Until the 1930's the Sydney Beth Din had been an appendage of the Great Synagogue with Rabbi Cohen, the only Sydney minister with rabbinical qualifications, automatically its head.⁵¹ When Rabbi Kirsner arrived in 1927, Cohen invited him to join the Beth Din. However, a united Beth Din including the ministers of all the congregations was not created. This was a definite weakness in the communal structure as the smaller congregations resented the exclusive authority of the Great Synagogue Beth Din. As the editor of the Australian Jewish Chronicle stated:

We maintain we have no representative Beth Din. By this we mean that the Jewish community of New South Wales outside the Great Synagogue is not represented and until steps are taken to remedy this defect, there will be no settlement of this problem.⁵²

The antagonism to the Great Synagogue resulted in one of the smaller congregations, the Machseeki Hadas Congregation, flouting the authority of the Beth Din in 1932.⁵³ A united front was needed to confirm the authority of the Sydney Beth Din and to prevent irregularities in Jewish practice.⁵⁴

To overcome these problems, a United Synagogue movement was initiated in 1921 by Samuel Cohen, President of the Great.⁵⁵ At a conference held in March 1923, a draft constitution was discussed by representatives from the Great, Eastern Suburbs and Newtown congregations. The scheme proposed

⁵¹ The functions of the Beth Din (Ecclesiastical Court) were judicial (settling disputes); ministerial (dealing with divorce, proselytes); and advisory (supervision of communal facilities for ritual observance). Great Syn. Minutes, 2 May 1930

⁵² A.J.C., 1 May 1930.

⁵³ Sydney Beth Din Minutes, 3 February 1932. For a more in-depth discussion of this issue refer to Chapter V.

⁵⁴ A.J.C., 27 March 1930.

⁵⁵ H.S., 23 December 1921.

uniformity in the Barmitzvah syllabus, mutual responsibility for shechitah and proselytes, and joint effort with pastoral visits. Provision was also made for the creation of a United Beth Din. These activities were to be executed by a Council consisting of the President of each constituent congregation, plus one other member for every two hundred financial members or part thereof. Each synagogue was to retain its local autonomy and the question of pooling incomes was deferred.⁵⁶ A second conference was held in May 1924 when the details of the constitution were finalized⁵⁷ and it was resolved that each congregation should be requested to endorse the scheme. The draft constitution was unanimously accepted by all the congregations involved except the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue.⁵⁸ Further negotiations were conducted in 1927 but the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue again opposed the revised constitution largely because of distrust and suspicion.⁵⁹ Their proposed amendments were unacceptable to the Great and the scheme was left in abeyance.⁶⁰

The concept of a United Synagogue was opposed on the grounds that it would give the Great Synagogue undue influence over the suburban synagogues without their gaining sufficient compensating benefits.⁶¹ The Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue especially feared that it would become an appendage of the Great

⁵⁶ H.S., 16 March 1923.

⁵⁷ A.J.C., 10 July 1924.

⁵⁸ Eastern Subs. Central Syn. Minutes, 22 June 1924.

⁵⁹ A.J.C., 10 July 1924.

⁶⁰ Great Syn. Minutes, 9 November 1927.

⁶¹ Great Syn. Minutes, Annual Meeting, 15 September 1915.

and would lose its autonomy.⁶² S. S. Cohen stressed that, in fact, it would be the reverse as the Great would relinquish its control of the Beth Din, the acceptance of proselytes and shechitah but he failed to convince his critics.⁶³ The scheme aimed at introducing changes which were too ambitious to be accepted at this time.

Co-operation was eventually achieved in a more limited form. After a conference between the Great and the Central Synagogues in 1930 it was agreed that the latter would contribute to the cost of shechitah. The two congregations also agreed to follow the same Barmitzvah syllabus, to co-ordinate the programme of visitation by the clergy, to organize exchange of pulpits, to allow for Eastern Suburbs representation on the Beth Din and to co-operate on such matters as circumcision.⁶⁴ Co-operation on the arrangements for Jewish marriages was agreed to at a conference of the ministers of all congregations in 1931. A suggestion that all marriage application forms be submitted to Rabbi Cohen to avoid mistakes,⁶⁵ was also discussed but was deferred until a United Beth Din was created.⁶⁶

A United Synagogue of Sydney would have joined the community together and so helped in the fight against assimilation.⁶⁷ The domineering attitude of the Great Synagogue leaders and the parochialism of the smaller congregations, especially the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue, prevented its

⁶² A.J.C., 2 September 1926.

⁶³ Ibid., 24 July 1924.

⁶⁴ Great Syn. Minutes, 5 March and 7 April 1930.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 8 December 1931.

⁶⁶ Eastern Subs. Central Syn. Minutes, 18 January 1932.

⁶⁷ A.J.C., 19 August 1929.

realization. The community failed to create a local Board of Deputies to speak in the name of the whole community.⁶⁸ Regular interstate conferences of Australian Jewish ministers, which would have stimulated religious observance and allowed for the discussion of common problems, did not develop in the 1920's.⁶⁹ Despite the expansion of the community after 1918, the unity which was so essential for its progress remained elusive.

The dominant role assumed by the Great Synagogue caused problems in other areas of communal activity. In 1922 a breach occurred between the Great and the Chevra Kadisha (formed in 1912) because of a conflict over the choice of funeral director. The Chevra Kadisha claimed that it should have complete and direct control over the community's burial arrangements, including the choice of officials. The Great Synagogue Board was unwilling to relinquish its control of funeral arrangements and charged that the Chevra was not fulfilling its obligations in a satisfactory manner.⁷⁰ The Chevra's executive felt that they had been thwarted by 'the aloof and unsympathetic attitude' of the Great Synagogue Board and threatened to resign.⁷¹ This breach between the Chevra and the Great Synagogue seriously threatened the unity of the community. In November 1922, after the funeral director's resignation the conflict was resolved. It was agreed that the

⁶⁸ Great Syn. Minutes, 12 June 1929.

⁶⁹ A motion supporting this was passed by the A.G.M. of the Great Synagogue in 1923, H.S., 31 August 1923.

⁷⁰ Great Syn. Minutes, 11 January 1922.

⁷¹ H.S., 3 February 1922.

Chevra would conduct all funerals on a scale of charges decided by the Great Synagogue Board. The Chevra also took over responsibility for defraying the cost of 'community funerals'.⁷² This decision gave the Chevra the status of the officially recognized organization in charge of conducting funerals.⁷³

The issue of cremation, forbidden by Jewish law, created further friction. The members of the Chevra Kadisha were opposed to dealing in any way with the remains of a member of the Jewish faith who had been cremated. Rabbi Cohen ruled that one could not be intolerant and refuse to bury Jewish remains. He suggested that Jewish ministers officiate at a Jewish house or at the cemetery but not at a crematorium.⁷⁴ The Chevra Kadisha decided to follow this policy until 1936 when it was decided to have nothing to do with cremations.⁷⁵ This resulted in renewed conflict with the Great Synagogue Board which wished to conduct independent funerals to provide members who had been cremated with a Jewish burial.⁷⁶ The conflict was finally resolved at a conference held between the Chevra and the Great in 1937.⁷⁷ It was decided that the Chevra would bury the ashes in a normal sized coffin after they were received from the Crematorium but that the remains would not be removed to the Funeral Parlours.

The continued weakness of Jewish education was a major factor in explaining the failure of the attempts to strengthen

⁷²Forty-Sixth Annual Report, Great Syn., 1923.

⁷³Eleventh Annual Report, Chevra Kadisha, 1923.

⁷⁴The Maccabean, Vol. 1, No.8, February 1929.

⁷⁵Chevra Kadisha Minutes, 10 November 1936.

⁷⁶Ibid., 15 December 1936.

⁷⁷Ibid., 29 June 1937.

the community and counteract assimilation. Few significant changes were made in the 1920's to the system of Jewish education which remained completely inadequate. The Right of Entry classes conducted by the New South Wales Board of Jewish Education continued as the main medium for conveying Jewish knowledge. These classes did not allow for sufficient time to develop a satisfactory understanding of the basic principles of Judaism.⁷⁸ Hebrew education centres also developed around the new synagogues — Newtown, Eastern Suburbs and Bankstown — and in 1930 the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue built its own schoolrooms.⁷⁹ In 1922 an Education Board was established for the Randwick-Coogee area, but it disbanded in 1924 because of lack of support.⁸⁰ These synagogue classes provided religious training superior to the Right of Entry classes but the knowledge gained was still superficial. An attempt to provide a better system of Jewish education by teaching Hebrew as a living language was made in 1931 with the establishment of the Hebrew Model School, Tarbuth,⁸¹ but this failed to win the support of the community. The editor of the Hebrew Standard called the movement 'impetuous competition' to the Education Board and claimed that its followers did not understand local conditions.⁸²

There was very little support for any of these educational endeavours. In 1928 it was calculated that forty-six per cent of

⁷⁸Two thirty-minute lessons weekly were given at the primary level and one lesson at the secondary level. A.J.C., 22 January 1925.

⁷⁹Eastern Subs. Central Syn. Minutes, 22 June 1930.

⁸⁰Randwick-Coogee Jewish Education Board Minutes, 6 August 1922.

⁸¹A.J.C., 8 January 1931.

⁸²H.S., 18 December 1931.

the Jewish children residing in Sydney attended no Hebrew class, thirty-three per cent attended the Right of Entry classes and only twenty-one per cent the various synagogue centres.⁸³ As well as this attendance of those pupils enrolled was often very irregular. Jewish children who attended denominational boarding schools had no opportunity of receiving a Jewish education.⁸⁴ Many boys joined Hebrew classes only for Barmitzvah training, at too late an age to allow for sufficient religious preparation.⁸⁵ Those few who received a Jewish education to the age of thirteen rarely continued with their studies after their Barmitzvah.⁸⁶ The special post-Barmitzvah class held on a Wednesday afternoon met with a poor response. As a result the majority of children, even at the age of thirteen, knew little about Judaism:⁸⁷ they were unable to read Hebrew fluently; they were ignorant of its meaning; and they knew even less about Jewish history, traditions and religious practices.⁸⁸

There were a number of important factors underlying the inadequacy of Jewish education in Sydney. The most important of these was the apathy and indifference of the parents who did not support the Hebrew schools.⁸⁹ The amount collected from fees paid by parents was less in 1939 than it had been in 1914

⁸³ Ibid., 12 October 1928.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 9 July 1915.

⁸⁵ Great Synagogue Minutes, Thirty-Seventh Annual Report, 1914.

⁸⁶ H.S., 9 July 1920.

⁸⁷ A.J.C., 22 February 1923.

⁸⁸ H.S., 7 September 1917.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 23 October 1914.

even though there were slightly more children on the rolls. Parents often withdrew their children from Hebrew classes because they feared that Hebrew education interfered with secular studies.⁹⁰ The Board of Jewish Education felt that the Hebrew classes provided were not fully utilized because:

of the general desire of Jewish parents in this country that their children will reap the full advantage of instruction of secular studies and their refusal to further tax the minds and physical strength of young children to the extent customary in some parts of the world.⁹¹

Parents also failed to provide their children with a living example of Jewish religious practice so that the theoretical instruction of the classroom was not translated into practical observance at home.⁹²

The Board of Jewish Education could not achieve its aims partly because of a lack of funds. In 1918 there were only 169 subscribers out of a community of 7,000,⁹³ and this number decreased in the 1920's.⁹⁴ Insufficient finance made it difficult to obtain good teachers, suitable books and teaching aids. This shortage of staff meant that not all public schools were visited, and that pupils were not graded adequately.⁹⁵ The financial problems of the Board were further aggravated by the depression when teachers' salaries and the

⁹⁰ A.J.C., 16 February 1928.

⁹¹ Board of Jewish Education Minutes, Annual Report, 1916.

⁹² H.S., 3 May 1929.

⁹³ Ibid., 6 December 1918.

⁹⁴ A.J.C., 26 May 1927.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 29 November 1923.

number of teaching hours available were reduced.⁹⁶ A Ladies' Auxiliary was formed in 1927 to help raise funds⁹⁷ but its effectiveness was limited by the depression. Without the Great Synagogue's subsidy, increased from £250 to £400 in 1920, it would have been impossible for the Board to maintain its services. It reflected the community's attitude to education that such a large sum had to be diverted from synagogue funds.⁹⁸

Finding suitable teachers proved difficult. The Board employed two headmasters — M. A. Cohen who was scholarly and highly respected and held the post until his death in 1923⁹⁹ and A. Rothfield who arrived in 1925 and was a competent organizer. Both men had been educated in England. There were no proficient Australian-born teachers because few Jewish children received any education after the age of thirteen and there were no teacher training facilities in Australia. This was a serious limitation since teachers brought up in a country and immersed in its attitudes are better able to communicate with their pupils.¹⁰⁰ In addition, teaching methods were outdated and the short time at the disposal of the teachers made their task very difficult.¹⁰¹ There were only four and a half teaching hours (two hours in the Right of Entry classes and two and a half hours on Saturday and Sunday) but very few children attended all the classes available.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ N.S.W. Board of Jewish Educ., Annual Report, 1933.

⁹⁷ A.J.C., 4 August 1927.

⁹⁸ N.S.W. Board of Jewish Educ., Annual Report, 1917.

⁹⁹ A.J.C., 8 June 1923.

¹⁰⁰ H.S., 5 November 1926.

¹⁰¹ A.J.C., 22 January 1931.

¹⁰² H.S., 13 August 1915.

The large distances between the classes was another limiting factor. In 1907 there were 628 pupils at five inner city schools concentrated around Cleveland Street, Crown Street, Paddington, Newtown and Darlinghurst. In 1927 the Board had only 467 pupils but they were dispersed throughout twenty-five schools from Bondi in the Eastern Suburbs to Bankstown in the Western Suburbs.¹⁰³ With the dispersal of the Jewish population to the suburbs the attendance at the Great Synagogue voluntary classes significantly declined but the new suburban centres did not experience a corresponding increase.

A United Education Board was needed to deal with the problems created by dispersal. The dual system of Education Board and synagogue classes in the one area created the problem of overlapping so that closer co-operation was needed.¹⁰⁴ In 1922 a conference was held between the Education Board, Newtown and Randwick-Coogee and a motion was passed in support of the union of the various Jewish education bodies.¹⁰⁵ A further conference was held in 1923 when they agreed to co-operate on such matters as times and places of classes, the syllabus, teachers, examinations, fees and communications with the Department of Education and the University of Sydney.¹⁰⁶ This was a step towards unification but, despite the holding of conferences in 1925 and 1931, the complete federation of all the Education Boards was not achieved. This failure to unify

¹⁰³ A.J.C., 10 November 1927.

¹⁰⁴ N.S.W. Board of Jewish Educ. Minutes, 10 July 1924.

¹⁰⁵ H.S., 4 August 1922.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 23 November 1923.

greatly limited the effectiveness of the Education Boards.

Jewish education provided the foundations for Judaism and, especially in the free Australian environment, a good system of Jewish education was a vital prerequisite for the survival of the community.¹⁰⁷ As the editor of the Standard commented:

It augurs ill indeed for the future of Judaism when we see, as we did last Sunday, so few of the age of eleven or twelve belonging to the Board... was it not because of the Jewish education and the striving for those Jewish ideals set out in that education, that our people have been able to persist in the past.¹⁰⁸

The almost total neglect of education meant that the Jewish community was following a path to self-destruction.

The difficulties experienced by the philanthropic organizations added to the weakness of the communal structure. At every general meeting of the various societies insufficient communal support was stressed. The same donors supported all the different societies so that the total number of subscribers was very few.¹⁰⁹ The lists of subscribers remained static or even decreased in number although the demand for assistance trebled in the 1920's.¹¹⁰ Of the 11,000 Jews in Sydney in 1930 only 594 subscribed to the Montefiore Home which was able to maintain its relief programme only because of funds raised by the Home Ball organized by the Ladies' Committee.¹¹¹ In 1922 the Montefiore Home was in such difficult financial straits that

¹⁰⁷ A.J.C., 6 January 1927.

¹⁰⁸ H.S., 16 September 1921.

¹⁰⁹ A.J.C., 18 March 1926.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 9 December 1926.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 6 March 1930.

a motion to close its doors was tabled.¹¹² During the depression the Home had to cease giving outdoor relief.¹¹³ Sydney Jewry was a large and prosperous community yet the maintenance of charitable institutions, which were such an essential part of Judaism, was left to the indefatigable efforts of a small band of workers.¹¹⁴

As with other spheres of communal endeavour these problems could have been dealt with more successfully by co-operative effort. A united charitable body was needed to prevent duplication and to enable the holding of one joint appeal instead of the incessant requests for support.¹¹⁵ This would have allowed for greater efficiency and systematic organization, especially in gaining support from uncommitted members of the community.¹¹⁶ It would have created a greater sense of communal involvement and so helped combat assimilation.

In the early 1920's an attempt was made by D.B. Rothbury, President of the Montefiore Home, to create a federation of charities but this failed because of opposition by the Hebrew Benevolent Society.¹¹⁷ A second attempt was initiated by Aaron Blashki. A draft constitution was accepted by the major philanthropic organizations¹¹⁸ but this was inconsistent with the Deed of Association of the Montefiore

¹¹² Ibid., 1 June 1922.

¹¹³ Sir Moses Montefiore Home, Incorporating the Sydney Philanthropic and Orphan Society, Forty-Fourth Annual Report, 1933.

¹¹⁴ A.J.C., 5 July 1928.

¹¹⁵ H.S., 10 January 1919.

¹¹⁶ A.J.C., 22 January 1925.

¹¹⁷ H.S., 1 December 1922.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 20 July 1923.

Home.¹¹⁹ By the time the deed was altered in 1927 by an Act of Parliament the movement had lost its impetus. Some co-operation was achieved in 1926 with the joint Rota which considered requests for assistance each fortnight.¹²⁰ This was a more efficient system as each applicant needed to make one appeal only instead of going from society to society.¹²¹ Full co-operation was not achieved because of suspicion and distrust. The smaller societies feared they would lose their individual identity and all societies feared that they would receive less money from a joint appeal.¹²² Sydney Jewry lagged behind other Jewish communities in this. Both Britain and America had an effective federation of Jewish charities.¹²³

The move to the suburbs which had begun around the turn of the century increased significantly in the 1920's and further dispersed the community. This move reflected its growing prosperity. In 1921 Jewish population in downtown Sydney had decreased from 77.6% in 1901 to 36.5% and by 1933 it was only 20.4%.¹²⁴ The largest proportion of Jewish residents settled in the Eastern Suburbs where 53.7% lived by 1933.¹²⁵ There was a slight increase in the number of Jewish residents in the South, Mid-West and Northern suburbs. This dispersal created problems as it contributed to the declining support of communal

¹¹⁹ The federation was to include the Board of Jewish Education and the Jewish Aid Society which were not strictly charities. A.J.C., 21 July 1927.

¹²⁰ The 'joint Rota' was a combined meeting of the various philanthropic organizations which dealt with specific requests for charity. H.S., 15 January 1926.

¹²¹ A.J.C., 3 March 1927.

¹²² H.S., 26 August 1921.

¹²³ A.J.C., 5 August 1926.

¹²⁴ Price, op.cit., Statistical Appendix VIII (a). No figures are available for 1911.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

organizations and the rising intermarriage rate. It had been easier to cater for the religious needs of the Jewish population when the community was more compact. The Maccabean Hall was established on the basis of pre-war areas of Jewish settlement which included Surry Hills, Moore Park and Paddington.¹²⁶ With the movement of the Jewish population away from these areas, the Hall became less accessible and this was one reason for its lack of support.¹²⁷ Institutional development could not keep pace with the spread of Jewish population.

The country percentage of New South Wales Jewry halved from 19.5% in 1901 to 10.6% in 1933.¹²⁸ Newcastle was the only town outside Sydney which experienced some Jewish communal development in this period. It opened its own synagogue in 1927. As the Jewish population declined it was more difficult for those remaining to continue living in the country and still retain their Jewish identity. Country Jews had "almost no friends, no synagogue and no chance to keep a kosher diet"¹²⁹ and most either moved to Sydney or assimilated into the non-Jewish community.

The arrival of Jewish migrants from more orthodox Jewish communities was an important factor in maintaining the viability of New South Wales Jewry. As one observer commented

¹²⁶ H.S., 7 March 1919.

¹²⁷ The Maccabean, Vol. 1, No.34, 9 August 1929.

¹²⁸ Price, op.cit., Statistical Appendix VI.

¹²⁹ A.J.C., 23 July 1925.

in 1928:

The problem of Jewish immigration into Australia is important also, since it is linked so intimately with the intellectual self-preservation of Australian Jewry. We must frankly admit that unless we secure additional material in the form of new Jewish vigour and energy, the intellectual life of the Jewish population of Australia bids fair to slacken.¹³⁰

Significant Jewish immigration in the 1920's would have re-vitalized the community. After the First World War there were numerous Jewish refugees because of the dislocations that European Jews had suffered during the war. The position of Jews in Poland and the Ukraine further deteriorated in the 1920's with the introduction of anti-Semitic restrictions which removed their traditional sources of livelihood. America, the established safety valve for Jewish suffering, closed its doors with a rigid quota system introduced in the early 1920's. Palestine was a possible alternative but the economic and physical conditions there were very difficult and many new settlers were forced to leave. Australia, with its small population and its wide open spaces was thought to hold the key to solving the tragic position of East European Jewry. It did not fulfil this potential because of the fears of both the government and the established Jewish community.

The number of East European Jewish migrants did increase in the 1920's¹³¹ but it was still comparatively small because the Commonwealth Government opposed the idea of an influx of Jewish refugees. Polish Jews were considered undesirable

¹³⁰ The Jewish Pioneer, 24 February 1928.

¹³¹ Price, op.cit., p.375.

migrants because it was thought they were poor and uneducated. The Government feared that they would form clusters in the poorer areas of the cities and be exploited by the more enterprising business Jews.¹³² In 1924 the government introduced the first restrictions on European migrants by requiring that they possess either a written guarantee from a sponsor or £40 of their own. Non-British migrants also had to pay their own fares. These restrictions were strictly enforced with regard to Jewish refugees and the government discreetly discouraged their entry by creating difficulties with the language test.¹³³ In 1928 a quota system for immigrants from Greece, Yugoslavia, Albania, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Estonia was introduced.¹³⁴ Lucien Wolf, representing the Immigration Societies of Hias-Ica and Emigdirect, met with Australian Government officials to request that a special quota be introduced for East European Jews.¹³⁵ This request was rejected by the Minister for the Interior because he felt it would create considerable difficulties.¹³⁶ The onset of the depression resulted in the cessation of almost all migration to Australia.

The Australian Jewish community welcomed rather than opposed these immigration restrictions. They adopted "their own shadow of the White Australia policy: English Jews, as

¹³² "Admission of Jews into Australia, 1921-1938", October 1926 CA 31, Department of the Interior (II), 1939-1972, Correspondence Files, Class 3 (non-British European migrants), 1939-1950, Commonwealth Archives Office, CRS A434, Item 49/3/3196.

¹³³ Ibid., 3 October 1925.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 18 September 1928.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 18 December 1928.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 23 April 1929.

many as could come; the others only in small doses".¹³⁷ They feared that an influx of migrants would lead to the growth of anti-Semitism and did not want "a large group of unabsorbable Yiddish speaking Jews" in Australia.¹³⁸ In 1927 Rabbi Cohen, when he heard a report that 10,000 Jewish families were coming to Australia, wrote to the Commonwealth authorities stating that he believed such an influx would be disastrous.¹³⁹ Cohen believed that:

we must guide and control our own immigration (or) we shall in the next generation find the present amicable relations between Jew and gentile undermined and our children painfully faced with all those present costly anxieties of American Jewry.¹⁴⁰

Members of the Jewish community welcomed the quota system of 1928 because:

the danger was imminent that the progress of a century might suddenly be undone and Australian Jews swamped by a sudden eruption unable to speak English... fortunately this danger is guarded against through restricting visas for passports to Australia for persons of alien nationality.¹⁴¹

This attitude reflected the opinion of the majority of the community. Dr Fanny Reading was one of the few leaders to criticize this attitude. She stated:

Who are we to say that we are pleased that certain immigration restrictions will be placed on the admittance of our brethren to our country? That we are glad that our task will be made lighter while our brethren languish for freedom and the right to live?¹⁴²

¹³⁷ B. Litvinoff, A Peculiar People, New York 1969, p.198.

¹³⁸ H.S., 22 January 1926.

¹³⁹ A.J.C., 17 February 1927.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 8 January 1925.

¹⁴¹ H.S., 19 October 1928.

¹⁴² C.B., Vol. 3, No.4, November 1928.

but this way of thinking was the exception. The Australian Jewish leaders were concerned primarily with maintaining their position and feared any change in the status quo. They were not prepared to agitate for the right of entry of their less fortunate co-religionists.

The impact on the Jewish community of those refugees who did settle in New South Wales was limited. There was no central organization to assist in their integration and to help them become a positive factor in the community.¹⁴³ Antagonism developed between the foreigners and the established community which believed that the newcomers lacked an appreciation of the traditions of Australian Jewry.¹⁴⁴ In 1927 Rabbi Cohen criticized the newcomers for 'trying to establish a ghetto' in Sydney.¹⁴⁵ The foreign Jews felt alienated by the aloofness of the established community and so they formed their own social and cultural organizations.

The leaders of the community wanted the newcomers to settle on the land to prevent the formation of Jewish clusters which would draw attention to the Jewish community.¹⁴⁶ This idea was in keeping with Federal Government policy. In 1922 the Government passed the Empire Settlement Act which aimed at settling British migrants in the Australian outback to develop primary products. In 1925 a £35 million loan was arranged between Britain and Australia for this purpose.¹⁴⁷ In Victoria,

¹⁴³ A.J.C., 16 August 1928.

¹⁴⁴ H.S., 15 August 1924, and Great Syn. Minutes, President's Address, Forty-Sixth Annual Meeting, 6 September 1923.

¹⁴⁵ H.S., 6 May 1927.

¹⁴⁶ H.S., 1 July 1921.

¹⁴⁷ W. D. Borrie, Australia: Problems and Prospects, Sydney 1949.

where more European Jews settled, the Land Settlement Scheme developed and Jews were settled in Shepparton (where a Jewish settlement was founded in 1913) and Berwick, near the Dandenongs.¹⁴⁸ These settlements received government assistance but the Melbourne Jewish leaders wanted further aid. In 1928 a public meeting was held in New South Wales and a Victorian delegation led by Rabbi Brodie requested assistance and suggested that New South Wales Jewry investigate possibilities for establishing a similar scheme in their state. A committee, established for this purpose, decided in 1929 against the scheme because immigration to New South Wales had practically ceased and it would have been difficult to make the scheme self-supporting.¹⁴⁹

The newcomers to Sydney in the 1920's were too few to influence or change the community significantly. Some of them drifted away from Judaism because of their sense of alienation. They contributed to the development of Yiddish culture and Zionism but their impact was too limited to help stem the tide of assimilation.

Zionism was seen as "an important unifying force for Judaism and a mainstay against assimilation".¹⁵⁰ In the 1920's, a period of general religious disaffection, Zionism in other parts of the world provided a new point of contact for many Jews who otherwise might have lost their Jewish identity. After World War I the Zionist movement in New South Wales

¹⁴⁸ H.S., 31 August 1928.

¹⁴⁹ The Mac., Vol. 1, No. 6, 25 January 1929.

¹⁵⁰ H.S., 16 June 1916.

experienced some growth with the formation of the Union of Sydney Zionists in 1918, but its influence as a revitalizing force in the community was limited. Sydney Jewry failed to realize the significance of Zionism¹⁵¹ and the leading members of the community continued to 'sit on the fence' their absence being very apparent. [New South Wales Jewry lagged behind other parts of the world such as Britain, South Africa and Canada in its support of Zionism and in its fund raising activities.

The Zionist message had less appeal for New South Wales Jewry than for other parts of the world partly because few East European Jews had settled there. In addition, the relative absence of anti-Semitism,¹⁵² together with Sydney Jewry's active participation in all facets of public life, made the majority of the community oppose any movement which appeared to be in conflict with loyal Australian citizenship. Love for Australia was paramount and many 'super-patriots' wanted to be 'more British than the British'.¹⁵³ (As Israel Cohen, the first Zionist emissary to Australia, commented in 1920:

With such a record (of participation in public life) and in view of the comparatively smaller element derived from Eastern Europe, I understood why Sydney Jewry was spoken of as the most English of the Jewish communities in Australia and why I was warned not to expect such a cordial response to my appeal as I found in Melbourne and Perth.¹⁵⁴)

Zionism had limited appeal in a community which wanted to remove all differentiation between Jew and non-Jew except in the

¹⁵¹ A.J.C., 5 April 1923.

¹⁵² Ibid., 19 October 1922.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 28 May 1925.

¹⁵⁴ Israel Cohen, Journal of a Jewish Traveller, London 1925, p.60.

question of religious practice.

With the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the recognition of Palestine as a British mandate,¹⁵⁵ support for Zionism became more acceptable. As the editor of The Maccabean stated:

We have yet to learn that while Britain holds the mandate for Palestine and while Britain favours the development of a Jewish homeland there can be any lack of patriotism in being a Zionist.¹⁵⁶

It was when Zionism conflicted with British policy after 1929 that Britain was supported by many Sydney Jews for fear that otherwise the rights of Australian Jews would be impaired. After the Arab riots of 1929 the Zionist leaders criticized the British actions in Palestine and Jerusalem, where worship at the Wailing Wall was disturbed. The Melbourne Zionist Federation organized a protest meeting and this protest was supported by ^{2000 in Syd. Parish} the Union of Sydney Zionists. Many ^{Ques.} Sydney Jews, however, believed that such criticism would make them appear disloyal.¹⁵⁷ Rabbi Cohen called the action of the Melbourne Zionists 'impetuous',¹⁵⁸ and wrote to the Prime Minister to inform him that the Zionist protest did not necessarily represent the views of the majority of New South Wales Jews.¹⁵⁹ ^{Kol Nidrei - p. 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000} Bitter contention was aroused by the British White Paper of 1930 which restricted Jewish immigration into Palestine. A protest meeting,

¹⁵⁵ The Balfour Declaration announced British acceptance of the idea of a National Home for the Jewish people in Palestine. The British mandate was approved by the San Remo Conference of 1920 and verified by the League of Nations in 1922.

¹⁵⁶ The Mac., Vol. 1, No.19, 26 August 1929.

¹⁵⁷ A.J.C., 28 February 1929.

¹⁵⁸ H.S., 4 January 1929.

¹⁵⁹ Great Syn. Minutes, 13 March 1929.

organized at the Maccabean Hall, was criticized by the anti-Zionists. Alfred Harris, in a rather biased comment, claimed that the meeting was not representative of the prominent members of the community.¹⁶⁰ In the early 1930's pro-British feeling was paramount and any criticism of Britain intensified opposition to Zionism.

Some Australian Jews believed that a desire for personal return to Palestine was an integral part of Zionism. This belief was another reason for the lack of support of Zionism.¹⁶¹ Most of the community had established firm roots and had no desire to migrate to Palestine.

A number of prominent members of the community were anti-Zionist because of the secular nature of the movement. They believed that Jews were held together by religious and ethical ties only and owed their national allegiance to their country of residence. Alfred Harris exemplified this attitude in his statement:

It is the reason why the Nationalist propaganda of the Zionists will have to be discarded... it seeks a differentiation... it seeks to make us sojourners... no greater mistake is possible. It damages the Jew as much as it challenges his loyalty. We are just Jews held together by our great ethical gift... not by a national pride. Our next pride is the allegiance to our land and country wherein we are natural subjects.¹⁶²

The belief that the secular nature of Zionism conflicted with religious Judaism contributed to the opposition to Zionism not

¹⁶⁰ H.S., 7 November 1930.

¹⁶¹ A.J.C., 19 October 1922.

¹⁶² H.S., 27 February 1925.

only in Australia but in other parts of the world.

This view was shared by Rabbi Cohen, one of the most influential critics of Zionism. Rabbi Cohen's suspicion of Zionism considerably hindered the growth of the movement. Despite his claim that he was "neither Zionist nor anti-Zionist, but a neutral onlooker"¹⁶³ and that "he was still sitting on the fence but was open to conviction"¹⁶⁴ he was often critical of Zionism in his sermons. [On Kol Nidrei 1929 he used the pulpit to attack the Wailing Wall protests and Zionism.¹⁶⁵ After this some members of the congregation demanded that a special meeting be called to discuss a resolution that no anti-Zionist references be made from the pulpit.¹⁶⁶ When Cohen was informed of this request, he replied that he realized that it was important to maintain peace in the community, but that it was his duty to direct attention "to any matter detrimental to Judaism".¹⁶⁷ The comparatively greater success of Zionism in other parts of Australia was largely due to the work of the ministerial heads — Rabbi Israel Brodie in Melbourne and Rabbi I. D. Freedman in Perth.

Rabbi Cohen's attitude was reflected in the policies of the Great Synagogue. In 1917 S. Pechter proposed a resolution at the Annual Meeting that the congregation express its sympathy for Zionism. Voting on the motion was deferred

¹⁶³ H.S., 10 April 1925.

¹⁶⁴ Israel Cohen, op.cit., p.60.

¹⁶⁵ A.J.C., 6 November 1930.

¹⁶⁶ Great Syn. Minutes, 13 November 1929.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 22 January 1930.

because of the fear that it would create a schism in the congregation.¹⁶⁸ In 1929 a motion for a voluntary levy of one shilling per annum for the Palestine Restoration Fund was defeated on the grounds that it would be presumptuous to ask non-Zionist congregants to support Zionism.¹⁶⁹ Yet, similar resolutions were passed by the Central and Newtown congregations whose ministers supported Zionism.¹⁷⁰ [The Great Synagogue Board did not reprimand Rabbi Cohen for his anti-Zionist comments from the pulpit but the assistant minister, the Rev. L.A. Falk, an ardent Zionist, was admonished for his "discussion of political matters from the pulpit".¹⁷¹] The Board's policy was illustrated when, in 1929, Falk was given permission to attend the Zionist Conference in Melbourne only to have it withdrawn at the last minute.¹⁷² The Great Synagogue's antagonism to Zionism was a significant factor in inhibiting its growth.

[The Zionist movement was further handicapped by the remoteness of Australia and the small size of the community.¹⁷³] New South Wales Jewry was too far away to understand the significance of Zionism for the oppressed Jewish population of Europe¹⁷⁴ and the efforts of the Zionist emissaries who visited Australia in the 1920's failed to overcome this ignorance. Israel Cohen, the first Zionist emissary who toured Australia in 1920, tried to explain the meaning of Zionism and so

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., Annual General Meeting September 1917.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 19 September 1929.

¹⁷⁰ The Mac., Vol. 1, No.41, 27 September 1929.
In December 1917 the United London Synagogue adopted this resolution.

¹⁷¹ Great Syn. Minutes, 12 November 1930.

¹⁷² A.J.C., 13 November 1930.

¹⁷³ The Australian Zionist Pioneer, Vol. 1, No.1, November 1929.

¹⁷⁴ H.S., 13 August 1920.

strengthen the movement in Australia in addition to his fund-raising activities.¹⁷⁵ In all states, many successful meetings were held. Sydney, however, did not match Melbourne's contribution of £26,000 as only £15,000 was raised.¹⁷⁶ Many of the pledges made were not fully redeemed. Israel Cohen's visit was not a significant stimulus to Sydney Zionism for a number of reasons. The wave of enthusiasm created at the time of his visit was largely due to his magnetic personality and the desire of New South Wales Jewry to show their generosity, rather than as a result of an understanding of Zionism.¹⁷⁸ The accusation was levied that Cohen was working only for a commission and although this was refuted it limited the effectiveness of the campaign.¹⁷⁹ Two other emissaries, Bella Pevsner in 1923 and Dr Alexander Goldstein in 1927, experienced similar difficulties in developing an understanding of Zionism. Lack of information in regard to Palestine and anti-Zionist prejudice hindered the growth of the movement.¹⁸⁰

Jews in New South Wales believed that 'charity begins at home' and that while Sydney philanthropic institutions faced financial difficulties, funds should not be raised for Palestine.¹⁸¹ Rabbi Cohen also stressed the need for supporting local causes before subscribing to calls outside

¹⁷⁵ S.M.H., 6 August 1920.

¹⁷⁶ Israel Cohen, op.cit., p.51 and H.S., 6 October 1922.

¹⁷⁷ A.J.C., 24 January 1924.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 11 June 1925.

¹⁷⁹ H.S., 15 July 1921.

¹⁸⁰ The Mac., Vol. 1, No.49, 22 November 1929.

¹⁸¹ A.J.C., 1 September 1927.

the community.¹⁸² This attitude explained the difficulties faced not only by the Zionists but also by fund raisers for other overseas appeals. During the First World War appeals were held to assist dispossessed Jews in Belgium and later Russia but the response to these appeals was very limited. In 1915 Melbourne Jewry raised £700 more than Sydney Jewry even though it was a smaller community. In the period after the war the plight of Jews in Eastern Europe was tragic but the response to appeals for assistance was again limited. In 1921 Sydney Jewry raised only £2,600 for the Ukrainian appeal compared with £9,000 raised in Melbourne.¹⁸³ Sydney Jewry was concerned with its own needs and did not become involved in the suffering of co-religionists overseas.

This isolationism should be considered in the light of the religious commitment of the general community in this period. The 1920's was a period of weakening of religious ties for all religious groups as indicated by the significant decline of church attendance in the 1920's.¹⁸⁴ The doubts about religious beliefs raised by the scientific advances combined with the materialism of the age eroded the authority of nineteenth century religion. This contributed to the continuing weaknesses of the Jewish community in the 1920's, as it was easier to discard Jewish religious identity in a period of general religious disaffection.

By 1933 some changes had been made in the community.

¹⁸² Ibid., 17 February 1927.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 13 January 1921.

¹⁸⁴ J. M. Yinger, 'Social Forces Involved in Group Identification and Withdrawal', Daedalus, Vol. 90, 1961, pp.247-262.

New Synagogues and Hebrew schools were built, social and cultural organizations developed, and interstate co-operation was begun. The National Council of Jewish Women and the Australian Zionist Federation were two important movements created in the 1920's which contributed to the community's development. The aim of these movements was to intensify Jewish life and overcome the problem of assimilation but they met with only limited success. No fundamental changes were made in the community which remained isolated from important developments in world Jewry. The religious, national and cultural diversification of nineteenth century Judaism was yet to have an impact on New South Wales Jewry. Neither the Reform movement nor a more orthodox congregation developed while Zionism continued to be a fringe movement which was poorly understood and often bitterly opposed. At the time of the rise of Hitler in Germany, Sydney Jewry had failed in its attempts to strengthen and diversify communal institutions in order to stimulate Jewish awareness. Short-sighted leadership, both lay and ministerial, lack of unity in the main areas of communal endeavour, religion, education and charity, and the inadequacy of Jewish education all contributed to this failure. The small European Jewish migration of the 1920's did not change the Anglicized nature of the community which remained conservative in its outlook and lacking in a strong sense of Jewish identification. Internal changes did not solve the problem of assimilation or significantly reduce the high rate of intermarriage which could have led to the eventual disintegration of the community. It remained to external

changes, with the rise of Hitler and the events of the 1930's to reverse the trend of assimilation and force the community to rethink many of its basic attitudes.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANTI-SEMITISM and the JEWISH REFUGEE

PROBLEM IN AUSTRALIA in the 1930's

In the period after 1880 a number of European governments had come to use anti-Semitism as a political weapon. In Germany, for example, where many Jews supported the National Liberals who believed in free trade, Bismarck provoked anti-Semitism to help win support for his protectionist policies. In the 1920's anti-Semitic feelings continued to simmer under the surface, fed by anti-Semitic literature such as the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" which was resurrected and published in 1921. The onset of the depression facilitated the growth of this anti-Semitism because many people blamed the Jews, the 'international financiers', for the economic crisis. In addition, Jews were linked with the Bolshevik threat and it was claimed that Jews were out to destroy the world by the twin forces of capitalism and communism. Hitler's coming to power in 1933 gave legal expression to this anti-Semitism and Nazi Germany produced the most virulent form of anti-Semitism. Australia, a country severely affected by the depression, was also influenced by the growth of anti-Semitism in the 1930's. Although most members of the general community sympathized with the Jewish plight, Nazi ideas permeated some sections of Australian society. The rabid anti-Communism of the more conservative Australians made right-wing, fascist movements more acceptable and, for the first time, organized anti-Semitism appeared in Australia. One outcome of Nazi anti-Semitism was the creation of a refugee

problem which had a widespread impact on both the general and Jewish communities in Australia in the 1930's.

Most Australian observers saw the Nazis' coming to power as preferable to a Communist takeover. As the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald stated:

German civilisation and all that it means to the world should be able without difficulty to survive a Hitler dictatorship. But no West European could regard without despair a repetition of the destruction which Sovietism wrought in Russia.¹

This reluctant acceptance of Nazism did not mean that Nazi racist policies were condoned. Hitler's boycott of the Jews on 1 April 1933 and his anti-Jewish legislation evoked an outcry in the Australian press.² In a leader on 1 April 1933, the editor of the Herald outlined the sufferings of the Jews from the time of the Roman Empire³ and in a subsequent edition referred to the Nazis as "an unscrupulous gang, many of whose actions suggest insanity".⁴ Similar criticisms appeared in other major newspapers. Smith's Weekly published a feature article on the positive contribution of Jews to Australian development to prove how unjustified Hitler was in his attack on the entire Jewish race.⁵ Editorial statements were largely supported in the correspondence columns. As one correspondent commented, anti-Semitism was "strongly resented by Britishers and particularly in Australia where Jewish soldiers, statesmen

¹Sydney Morning Herald, 2 March 1933.

²In this, Australia followed the lead of the world press, J. Parkes, Anti-Semitism, London 1963, p.96.

³S.M.H., 1 April 1933.

⁴Ibid., 28 April 1933.

⁵Smith's Weekly, 1 April 1933.

and citizens are holding exalted positions and are highly esteemed".⁶

Disapproval of Nazi anti-Semitism in Australia increased in the period 1933-1939. Nazi intentions towards the Jews gradually became more obvious to the Australian people with the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935 and the murder and pillage of the Night of the Broken Glass following the assassination of the German consular official vom Rath in Paris in November 1938. The persecution of a religious group was completely alien to Australian traditions of liberty and justice and evoked strong opposition from all groups in Australian society.

Nazi Jewish policies were denounced by many prominent Australians. In May 1933, a mass protest meeting was called by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Hogan, at the Sydney Town Hall. Major religious and secular organizations, both Jewish and non-Jewish, were represented. The State Premier, B. Stevens, opened the meeting and stressed that:

To deny Jews the right to full citizenship and the right to observe the laws of the country is tantamount to saying they have no right to live. That idea is repugnant to our sense of fair play.⁷

The meeting condemned the treatment of German Jews and established a fund to assist Jewish refugees. When the President of the German-Australian Chamber of Commerce, L. Burkard, rose to speak, he was drowned out by a hostile

⁶S.M.H., 20 April 1933.

⁷Ibid., 19 May 1933..

demonstration.⁸ Protest meetings were organized in other areas of New South Wales such as Newcastle where a conference was called to discuss the mistreatment of German Jews.⁹

Leading Australian academics highlighted the injustice of Nazi attacks on the Jews. In 1933, C. E. W. Bean, the official historian of Australia's role in the First World War, refuted claims published in the correspondence columns of the Herald that Jews were not represented in the fighting units of the German army during the War.¹⁰ In his book, The House That Hitler Built, Stephen H. Roberts, Challis Professor of History at the University of Sydney, criticized the Nazi Jewish policy. He wrote:

Worst of all, worse even than the individual suffering of today amongst the Jews, is the creation of a national mentality bred on such a hate as that which the German feels for the Jew... It is not enough for them to make Ahasuerus take up his staff again and wander. He must be bent and broken and his grand-children with him. That is the measure of Nazi Germany's degradation.¹¹

This indictment was written after Roberts had spent over a year in Nazi Germany and neighbouring European countries.

Many Christian denominations protested against Nazi persecution of the Jews. In May 1933 the Presbyterian General Assembly adopted a resolution of sympathy and appointed a special day of prayer for the Jews.¹² In 1939 the organized

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 28 July 1933.

¹⁰ Ibid., 21 April 1933.

¹¹ Stephen Roberts, The House That Hitler Built, London 1938, pp.266-7.

¹² S.M.H., 23 May 1933.

Protestant Churches called a meeting in the Town Hall Vestibule to express Christian sympathy for European Jews.¹³ Bishop Pilcher, a leading Anglican churchman, worked to alleviate Jewish suffering. He believed that the Christian world was, in part, guilty for the disaster that had befallen the Jews.¹⁴ The Reverend Dr Victor Bell, Minister of the Presbyterian Church, Strathfield, was another leading advocate of Christian assistance to the Jews.¹⁵ The Catholic Church was more ambiguous on the Jewish question. However, in 1938 the Catholic Truth Association published a pamphlet which set out to prove the injustice of racial persecution.¹⁶ A similar pamphlet was published by the Unitarians.¹⁷ Since the Christian Churches were also harassed in Nazi Germany, there was a sense of empathy with the Jews.

Various political groups expressed sympathy. Support came mainly from the trade union movement and left-wing groups. In March 1933, the New South Wales Labor Council passed a resolution protesting against Nazi anti-Semitism.¹⁸ The Australian Labor Party was sympathetic to the Jewish plight and in November 1938, after the Night of Broken Glass, the New South Wales Branch passed the following resolution:

The unanimous voice of the Australian people is one of unparalleled protest against Nazi brutality towards the Jews and we call upon

¹³ Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue Minutes, 21 February 1939.

¹⁴ I. N. Steinberg, Australia — The Unpromised Land: In Search of a Homeland, London 1948, p.50.

¹⁵ Council Bulletin, Vol. 11, No.12, June 1937.

¹⁶ Dr I. N. Moody, "Why are the Jews Persecuted?" The Australian Catholic Truth Society Record, Melbourne, No. 139, 30 June 1938.

¹⁷ Rev. Wyndham Heathcote, The Jew in History, a lecture delivered at the Real Estate Institute, Sydney, 21 August 1938, later reprinted in pamphlet form.

¹⁸ S.M.H., 31 March 1933.

Mr Lyons to forward without delay the expression of the people's indignation against the pogrom in Germany.¹⁹

The Sydney Trades and Labor Council supported this protest and demanded that the German Consul-General, Dr Asmis, be deported. The Communist Party of Australia was more outspoken in its criticism of Nazi anti-Semitism although its concern for the Jews was largely for propaganda purposes. A number of local branches forwarded protest resolutions to the government. This policy resulted from the decision of the Comintern meeting of 1935 that the Communist parties cease their revolutionary activities until fascism was defeated.²⁰

The Commonwealth Government of the day, the conservative United Australia Party led by J. Lyons, was more cautious in its approach.²¹ and was suspicious of protests from left-wing organizations. Throughout the period 1933-39, the Government refused to forward any of the protests it received to the German Government because 'it was a well established principle that one country could not interfere with the internal affairs of another'.²² Its attitude was that no action could be taken unless an Australian citizen was involved. In 1937, Count von Luckner, a Nazi propagandist, decided to visit Australia. In spite of strong protests against this proposed visit, the Government decided that he could not

¹⁹"European Refugees — Views of Public re Admittance of", 23 November 1938, Department of the Interior (II) 1939-1972, Correspondence Files, Class 2 (Restricted Immigrants) 1939-1950, Australian Archives Office, A433, item 43/2/4588.

²⁰A. Davidson, The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History, California 1969, p.74.

²¹Parliamentary Debates, Commonwealth of Australia, 1 and 2 Geo.VI, Vol. 155, 30 November 1937-31 May 1938, p.592.

²²S.M.H., 7 June 1933.

be refused a visa on hearsay alone.²³ Von Luckner was given permission to enter Australia with the proviso that he did not disseminate any propaganda which might be detrimental to law and order in Australia. This decision was made shortly after Egon Kisch was refused a visa because of his allegiance to Communism which was considered incompatible with Australian beliefs.²⁴ These decisions reflected the attitude of powerful conservative interests which believed that the main threat to Australia's existence would come from the extreme left, not the extreme right which they saw as an important bulwark against Communism in Europe.²⁵

Commentators who sympathized with Nazi anti-Semitism tried to justify their stand and claimed that press reports exaggerated unfairly the level of persecution. In May 1933, an article was published in the Sydney Bulletin claiming that Nazi persecution of the Jews was not Jew-baiting but an attack on Communism and immorality introduced by the hordes of Jewish refugees who invaded Germany after World War I.²⁶ Sir David Rivett, Chief Executive Officer of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, visited Germany in 1936 and on his return wrote two articles defending Nazism which were published in the Argus. He stressed that there were some grounds for anti-Semitism in Germany.²⁷ Some commentators also excused the

²³ Ibid., 9 April 1937.

²⁴ Ibid., 21 May 1937.

²⁵ A. Manning, Larger Than Life: The Story of Eric Baume, Sydney 1967, p.66.

²⁶ "Germany and the Jews", the Bulletin, 24 May 1933.

²⁷ The Argus, 9 January 1937.

growth of anti-Semitism in other parts of the world. In a special article on Jews in South Africa published in the Herald, B. L. Tankard claimed that Jews controlled the diamond and mining industries and that once the Jew assumed control:

his attitude changes and in some subtle and indefinite way one perceives that the only nation he really cares about is the Jewish 'nation'... and that he regards all Gentiles with a considerable amount of contempt. This of course is typically Oriental and it should never be forgotten that the Jew is still an Oriental.²⁸

Statements such as this reflected the growth of anti-Semitic ideas among a minority of Australians.

Anti-Semitic news articles were not a new development in the Australian press. They first appeared in the 1890's in the columns of the Bulletin. The editorial comments of John Norton, owner and editor of Truth, were even more blatantly anti-Semitic. However, the emergence of right-wing, anti-Semitic political movements and their publication of anti-Semitic literature was a definite departure from traditional Australian politics even though these were fringe movements which received only marginal support. As Reika Cohen, a leading Jewish personality, claimed after receiving an anti-Semitic letter subsequent to her publishing a letter in the Sydney Sun "gone are the days when Australian Jews could boast 'There is no anti-Semitism in Australia'".²⁹

As in other parts of the world, anti-Semitism developed partly as a response to the severe impact of the depression.

²⁸ S.M.H., 6 November 1933.

²⁹ C.B., Vol. 9, No. 3, October 1934.

For the citizens of New South Wales, the depression was an extremely disruptive force which resulted in loss of work and income for one third of the workforce.³⁰ The radical socialism of the State's Premier, J. T. Lang, increased the sense of insecurity created by the adverse economic conditions and led to the formation in New South Wales of a quasi-military organization, the New Guard, in February 1931. Its aim was the formation of a body of loyal citizens capable of managing essential services during a period of mass strikes or in defiance of socialization of industry.³¹ Its leader, Eric Campbell, demanded the removal of Lang as Premier and the ruthless suppression of Communism. By late 1931, the New Guard had 87,000 recruits and was supported by hundreds of solid professionals, businessmen and churchmen.³² In Federal Parliament, some Labor members claimed it was a subversive movement³³ but the government denied this charge and no steps were taken to suppress the organization.³⁴ Its very existence and Campbell's provocative statements added to the tense and bitter atmosphere in New South Wales. Only Lang's defeat in the elections of June 1932 removed the possibility of an outbreak of violence instigated by the New Guard.³⁵ With Lang's defeat, the movement began to lose its force and support.

³⁰ P. Mitchell, "Australian Patriots: A Study of the New Guard", Australian Economic History Review, Vol. IX, No. 2, September 1969, p.156.

³¹ E. Campbell, The Rallying Point: My Story of the New Guard, Melbourne 1965, p.4. For a more indepth study of the New Guard see Keith Amos, The New Guard Movement, Melbourne 1976.

³² Mitchell, op.cit., p.160.

³³ Parliamentary Debates, Commonwealth of Australia, Vol. 145, 15 November 1934, pp.321-326.

³⁴ Ibid., Vol. 141, 12 July-26 October 1933, p.3125.

³⁵ J. McCarthy, "A Law and Order Election: New South Wales, June 1932", Royal Australian Historical Society Journal, Vol. 60, Pt.2, June 1974, p.105.

The New Guard was similar to the modern European Fascist movements in its attack on "Parliament, the party system, the power of the trade unions and big capital and its violent anti-Communism".³⁶ As with these movements, anti-Semitism was not part of its initial platform,³⁷ since the New Guard aspired "to unite all loyal citizens, irrespective of creed, party, social or financial position".³⁸ Campbell claimed that some of the Guard's staunchest supporters were Jews and that he believed "a proportion of good-class Jews (were) a distinct asset in any community".³⁹ One of his best friends, Hector Roy Blashki, was a Jew.⁴⁰ After his visit to Germany in 1933, however, Campbell became influenced by Nazism. He was very impressed by the Nazi regime which he praised as orderly, patriotic and determined.⁴¹ On his return to Australia, his public statements became more anti-Semitic. The New Guard's newspaper, Liberty, was Campbell's faithful mouthpiece in this as in other matters of policy.⁴² In June 1933, Liberty's editor, R. E. Lane, claimed that there was no substantial proof of atrocities committed against German Jews and, as he stated:

The alleged persecution of Jews gave rise to heated outbursts in newspapers throughout the

³⁶ Mitchell, op.cit., p.176.

³⁷ Neither Mosely nor Mussolini were anti-Semitic until they came under Nazi influence, Parkes, op.cit., p.104.

³⁸ Mitchell, op.cit., p.161.

³⁹ Campbell, op.cit., p.131.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ S.M.H., 26 July 1933.

⁴² Mitchell, op.cit., p.175.

world, but in assessing this reaction it is only necessary to reflect upon an important factor in the control and proprietorship of newspapers generally.⁴³

This was a clear reference to the anti-Semitic myth that Jews controlled the world's press. Campbell also propagated the notion that the Jews were the real rulers of Russia.⁴⁴ This support of Nazi anti-Semitism detracted from the appeal of the movement but its anti-Semitic phase came well after the New Guard had passed its peak. By the end of 1933 the movement had split and was no longer a significant political force.⁴⁵ Its development indicated that even in Australia, a country with a strong democratic tradition, a potentially dangerous right-wing movement⁴⁶ which emerged during the depression years could foster anti-Semitism.

The Social Credit Movement was a less important response to the depression which later developed anti-Semitic undertones. It was founded on the financial theories of the British ex-army officer, Major C. H. Douglas, who believed that poverty existed amongst plenty because of banks' monopoly over credit.⁴⁷ The Social Creditors believed that the Commonwealth should have sole power to issue credit by means of a National Credit Authority. In 1934 the Douglas Credit Party of Australia was formed to win support for these ideas; in 1936 it changed its name to the United Democratic Party and in 1937 to the Non-Party Political

⁴³ Liberty, 14 June 1933.

⁴⁴ S.M.H., 3 August 1933.

⁴⁵ Mitchell, op.cit., p.175.

⁴⁶ Amos, op.cit., p.77.

⁴⁷ The New Era: Advocating the Douglas Credit Proposals Throughout Australasia, 7 June 1932.

Electoral Campaign, but it did not develop into a significant political force. Douglas equated the banks with Jewish financiers and an anti-Semitic note crept into his writings. This anti-Semitism was not central to the movement but it was copied by his followers in Australia and Canada.⁴⁸

In 1932 the New Era began publication in Sydney to promote the Douglas Social Credit policies under the editorship of C. Barclay Smith. The paper published some anti-Semitic articles such as an article entitled "Germany and the Jews", republished from the New English Weekly, which attempted to justify Nazi anti-Semitism.⁴⁹ Father Coughlin and Henry Ford, both noted anti-Semites, were heroes of the paper. The paper publicized the activities of Eric Butler, a Melbourne journalist, lecturer for the movement and an outspoken anti-Semite.⁵⁰ It also published articles critical of Nazi anti-Semitism such as Professor Murdoch's article "Martyrdom — The Agony of the Jews"⁵¹ but stressed that the real threat to world peace was not Nazism but 'high finance' and 'international bankers'.⁵² In November 1938, in response to a reader's protest at the publication of an anti-Semitic article, "War Hysteria", written by G. MacDonald, the acting editor wrote:

The paper is committed to a definite policy of every person in Australia possessing in their own right, political and economic freedom.

⁴⁸ K. D. Gott, Voices of Hate: A Study of the Australian League of Rights and its Director: Eric D. Butler, Melbourne 1965, p.11.

⁴⁹ New Era, 22 June 1933.

⁵⁰ Gott, op.cit., pp.14-15.

⁵¹ New Era, 28 October 1938.

⁵² Ibid., 7 September 1939.

We believe that Australians of the faith of Judaism should enjoy the same rights and privileges as Australians of all other religious faiths.⁵³

The paper did not develop an overtly anti-Semitic editorial policy, unlike its Melbourne contemporary, the New Times. This was founded in 1934, and began a consistent campaign against Jews by recommending the infamous "Protocols of the Elders of Zion".

With the outbreak of war, the New Era for the first time published an overtly anti-Semitic article by C. H. Douglas. He claimed that the war's aims were "the elimination of Great Britain in the cultural sense, the substitution of American-Jewish ideals and the establishment of a Zionist state in Palestine with New York as the centre of world financial control".⁵⁴ Earlier than this, the New South Wales Social Credit Movement disseminated anti-Semitic propaganda in its confidential publication for party members when it claimed that wars were the making of financiers such as Rothschild.⁵⁵ Clearly there was an undertone of anti-Semitism in the movement but the New South Wales branch did not want it to be too obvious to the general reader as this could be offensive to British principles of liberty and justice.

A more irrational and blatantly anti-Semitic reaction to the depression was the Guild of Watchmen of Australia centred in South Australia. Members believed that the ten tribes of

⁵³ Ibid., 25 November 1938.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 15 December 1939.

⁵⁵ Information Sheet, Douglas Credit Association of New South Wales, Vol. 1, No.6, June 1939.

Israel were dispersed to the British Isles where they provided the foundations for Christianity and continued the covenant of God originally given to Israel. The remaining two tribes were dispersed and those few of the two tribes who remained Jews became aliens motivated by the devil. The Guild claimed that the Jews aimed at controlling the world and wanted to destroy British power and prestige. World War I was seen as a Jewish attempt at world domination and it was claimed that the Jews were leading the British race to destruction through the depression of the 1930's. The 'twin evils' of capitalism and communism were described as "Jew invented and Jew controlled".⁵⁶ The Guild of Watchmen set itself up as the means by which the British people could be saved from Jewish domination. The Guild's monthly newspaper, The British Times, propagated these views but four issues only were published. Other anti-Semitic publications, such as A. N. Field's The Truth About the Slump and The "Protocols of the Elders of Zion",⁵⁷ were endorsed. In 1938 Field published a further anti-Semitic pamphlet against the immigration of Jewish refugees into Britain or her dominions.⁵⁸ This organization was quite separate from the British-Israelite movement.

The Australian Unity League disseminated anti-Semitic literature which claimed that Jews were responsible for all

⁵⁶W. G. Selkirk, Wake Up Australia! A National Warning, Adelaide 1932.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸A. N. Field, "Today's Greatest Problem", reprinted from Examiner, No. 7, June 1938, Nelson, New Zealand.

wars and that both capitalism and communism were Jewish machinations. Hitler's anti-Semitism was supported and the "Protocols" were used to verify the movement's anti-Semitic statements.⁵⁹ Both the Guild and the Unity League were extremist in their views. They received only marginal support, as illustrated by the British Times' failure to continue publication, but their very existence constituted a threat to the security of New South Wales Jewry.

The influence of Nazism was an important factor in the growth of Australian anti-Semitism. Nazi Germany financed the publication of pro-Nazi propaganda and its distribution to Germans living in Australia.⁶⁰ English propaganda programmes were broadcast from Germany and were heard most clearly between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m.⁶¹ Australians of German origins were encouraged to join the German Alliance of Australia and New Zealand created in 1933 by the German Consul-General, Dr R. Asmis. In 1934 the Alliance began to publish a weekly newspaper in both English and German, Die Brücke (The Bridge), which was the 'spiritual creation' of Dr Asmis.⁶² The paper supported Hitler's New Germany with enthusiasm but was careful not to publish any virulently anti-Semitic articles in its English sections. A local Nazi movement was established under the leadership of W. Landendorff and German National Holidays were celebrated. The Australian Nazis'

⁵⁹ Refer to Ernest J. Jones, Hitler: the Jews and the Communists: Australia Awake! Sydney 1933, and The Sensational Confessions of Marcus Eli Ravage (a Hebrew) Against Christianity, published by the Australia Unity League, no date or place.

⁶⁰ Parkes, op.cit., p.106.

⁶¹ S.M.H., 17 March 1934.

⁶² Die Brücke, 20 July 1935.

numerical strength was subject to much conjecture. Referring to a report that there were 20,000 Nazis in Australia, the editor of Die Brücke stated that the paper did not have such a large circulation.⁶³ Clearly many Australians of German descent did not support the Nazis as Die Brücke constantly appealed for more support and only three or four hundred attended pro-Nazi gatherings in New South Wales.⁶⁴ The Government did not consider these Nazi activities a serious menace and believed that there was more cause for concern about Communist Clubs than Nazi Clubs in Australia.⁶⁵

The German Consul-General, Dr Asmis presented Nazi policies in the most favourable light to the Australian public. He made public statements and published letters denying that the attack on German Jews was connected with the Jewish religion. Only Jewish Communist and Jewish Capitalists whose actions were unsavoury and immoral were punished.⁶⁶ When the radio commentator and newspaper editor, Eric Baume, began his anti-Nazi broadcasts on radio station 2GB in 1938, Dr Asmis insisted that they cease.⁶⁷ As Asmis had many influential friends in and outside government, Baume was forced to discontinue broadcasting by a directive from Associated Newspapers that no editor had the right to broadcast.⁶⁸ In this way, Asmis ensured that Nazi influence was much more

⁶³ Ibid., 26 November 1938.

⁶⁴ For example, in October 1938, 300 attended the German Concordia Club for an appeal for German winter relief. £1,090 was collected for this cause, support coming mainly from Sydney and Melbourne, S.M.H., 10 October 1938.

⁶⁵ Parl. Debates, Commonwealth of Australia, 30 November 1937 to 31 May 1938, Geo. VI, Vol. 155, p.592.

⁶⁶ S.M.H., 30 March and 21 July 1933.

⁶⁷ A. Manning, op.cit., pp.65-66.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.67.

extensive than the narrow orbit of Nazi Party activities. The New South Wales Labor Council were so outraged by his activities that they demanded his removal and the Labor Daily claimed at the same time that:

It is the function of German Consul-Generals under the Nazi regime to direct and control espionage in the countries in which they are located... (Asmis has) interfered in the politics of this country and in its actual social life. To genuine Australians, Dr Asmis is without doubt a public enemy.⁶⁹

Despite the alarmist nature of these accusations, there was probably some justification, but the Lyons Government repudiated them and took no action against Asmis.

Australia also produced its indigenous racial organizations, the British-Australia Association and the Australia First Movement, both of which imitated Nazism and adopted anti-Semitism as a significant part of their platforms. The British-Australia Association founded by R. Mills advocated the purity of the British race, was anti-democratic, anti-communism and opposed 'Jewish domination'. The Angle: A Paper dedicated to the British Race and its Culture was published by Mills in Melbourne in 1935 but five issues only appeared. In 1936 Mills introduced a new paper, The National Socialist A Paper Devoted to the British Race and Culture, in Sydney but it also ceased publication after a few issues. Both these papers stressed that Jewish influence aimed at destroying British culture and that Britain's only salvation was the removal of the Jews.⁷⁰ The British-Australia Association

⁶⁹ Labor Daily, 18 November 1938.

⁷⁰ See The Angle, March 1935, and The National Socialist, December 1936.

criticized the idea of Jewish refugees settling in Australia and described Dr Steinberg's Kimberley Plan as "a direct menace to the future well-being of Australia".⁷¹ Madagascar was proposed as the best place for Jewish refugee settlement. The Association also agitated against any alien Jewish influences in Australia.

The Australia First Movement was concerned with the development of a spirit of nationalism in Australia⁷² and was distinctly anti-British. Its ideas were disseminated by The Publicist a monthly newspaper founded in 1936. Its editor was P. R. Stephensen, a Rhodes scholar, who developed a sense of Anglophobia after a stay in Britain and became an ardent Australian nationalist. Stephensen relied on the financial backing of W. J. Miles, a Sydney businessman, who was determined that the new nationalism should get a hearing.⁷³ The paper consisted of sixteen unillustrated pages and sold an average of 2,250 copies.⁷⁴ From 1937, its editorial policies became increasingly pro-German and anti-Semitic. Beginning in May 1937, Miles regularly published large excerpts from Hitler's speeches which he praised for their frankness.⁷⁵ He began a concerted attack on the Jews with a review of Stephen Roberts' book in which Miles categorically stated that

⁷¹"The Doctrine of Inclusion and the Doctrine of Exclusion", a leaflet published by the British-Australia Association, Sydney, no date.

⁷²The Publicist, July 1936.

⁷³Bruce Muirden, The Puzzled Patriots: The Story of the Australia First Movement, Melbourne 1968, p.4.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵The Publicist, 1 May 1937.

if there were no Semites there would be no anti-Semitism.⁷⁶ He believed that Jews created their own problems and that their alleged internationalism made them a menace to Australia.

A virulent campaign was waged against proposals for settling Jewish refugees in Australia by the movement. Any form of assistance to the Jewish victims of Nazism was disparaged. Dr Shein's address to the International Peace Service held in Sydney in 1938 was received with the following comment:

Why don't the Jews pay their own way and fight their own battles? Why do they jowl their troubles all over the world and seek Gentile assistance? Is every Jew a Schnorrer? Is it for that they think themselves CHOSEN? To Jerusalem with the Jews! Or to Heaven!⁷⁷

Such outspoken anti-Semitism was rare in democratic Australia but it did have some appeal to those who opposed all foreign influences in Australia. It also won the support of the German consulate and the Nazi Movement in Sydney.⁷⁸

World War II forced Miles to modify his pro-German stance but the paper continued to be anti-Semitic. Its publication ended abruptly after the internment of its key supporters in March 1942 because of Stephensen's attempt to erect a political structure for the movement.⁷⁹ Unlike the right-wing movements which developed in Australia as a response to the depression, the Australia First Movement was open about its racist policies which were a direct challenge to New South Wales Jewry.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 1 March 1938.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Muirden, op.cit.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.4.

The organizations discussed above were fringe movements which had a marginal impact only on the average Australian citizen. The New Guard alone won widespread popular support but by the time Campbell became an open supporter of Nazism the movement had lost much of its appeal. Australia was not the only Anglo-Saxon country to develop pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic movements in this period, Britain, Canada, South Africa and America experiencing similar phenomena, but the very existence of such anti-Semitism was significant. As one Australian parliamentarian commented before Hitler came to power, his movement was regarded incorrectly as a joke. Similar extremist movements in Australia could not be considered as insignificant⁸⁰ as they did constitute a potential threat to democracy.

The growth of anti-Semitism in both Europe and Australia shattered Sydney Jewry's sense of security and complacency and forced the community to rethink many of its basic attitudes. In Germany, the Jewish community had been highly respected and well assimilated before Hitler's rise to power, yet they were persecuted on racial grounds. The existence of similar anti-Semitic movements in Australia meant it was not inconceivable for Sydney Jewry's position to be undermined.

⁸⁰ Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 145, 15 November 1934, p.325.

Sydney Jews wished to assist their German co-religionists and, at the same time, defend themselves against Australian anti-Semitism. The Advisory Board, established in 1932 to deal with synagogue matters, was called on to speak as the official mouthpiece of the community.⁸¹ One of its initial acts was to pass a resolution of protest against the Nazi campaign of anti-Semitism and communicate this resolution to the general press.⁸² In May 1933 the Town Hall protest was organized by the Advisory Board at the recommendation of the British Board of Deputies.⁸³ Sydney Jewish leaders also supported the boycott of German goods and established the German Jewish Relief Fund to assist German Jewry. A Vigilante Committee was formed to counteract anti-Semitism by preventing the publication of anti-Semitic literature and circulating material defending Judaism.⁸⁴ In 1937 three thousand copies of the pamphlet "Jews and Christians" were circulated among non-Jewish clergy for this purpose.⁸⁵

Rabbi Cohen acted as official spokesman and replied to anti-Semitic articles and letters in the general press,⁸⁶ and this tradition was carried on by his successor, Rabbi E. M. Levy. When the Rev. Dr P. Tuomey, in a speech to the Roman Catholic transport workers, denounced the Jews as "the greatest

⁸¹ Great Synagogue Minutes, 31 August 1933. For more detailed information on the Advisory Board and its work in this regard see Chapter V.

⁸² The Hebrew Standard of Australasia, 31 March 1933.

⁸³ Ibid., 5 May 1933.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 15 July 1937.

⁸⁵ Grt Syn. Minutes, 11 February 1937.

⁸⁶ See for example his reply to Dr Asmis, S.M.H., 1 April 1933.

enemies of humanity"⁸⁷ Rabbi Levy immediately contacted the Roman Catholic Archbishop Kelly. An official repudiation of Tuomey's statements, which were described as "a serious misrepresentation", was issued by Kelly as a result of Levy's complaint.⁸⁸ In such instances the Chief Rabbi of the Great Synagogue publicly refuted the anti-Semitic charges.

No definite moves were made against the anti-Semitic organizations by the conservative leaders of the community. They believed that the less they did to publicize anti-Semitic movements, the sooner organized anti-Semitism would disappear.⁸⁹ They felt that a legal attack against those defaming Jewry would only provide anti-Semitic organizations with a public platform from which to propagate their ideas and win a wider base of support. On the other hand, if they worked quietly behind the scenes against these organizations, they would be more likely to undermine their position. In this, they differed from the other school of thought, represented by the Young Men's Hebrew Association, which felt that a more direct attack on organized anti-Semitism would be more effective. The methods suggested by the younger, more committed Jews in the community included a publicity campaign and legal action.⁹⁰ These ideas were rejected by the Advisory Board because of the established leadership's desire to continue the policy of non-distinctiveness. They felt that if the matter was publicized

⁸⁷ Ibid., 7 December 1936.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 8 December 1936.

⁸⁹ Interview with P. A. Cullen (formerly Cohen until 1941), son of Sir Samuel Cohen.

⁹⁰ H.S., 15 July 1937.

it would indicate that there was a specific Jewish problem which the established, assimilated Australian Jews were not prepared to accept.

Communal leaders believed in preventive rather than defensive action to combat anti-Semitism. They warned the community to take care not to give cause for the development of anti-Semitism. At the Great Synagogue's Annual Meeting in 1937, Sir Samuel Cohen stressed that Australian Jewry must protect its good name by maintaining a high moral standard in business activities.⁹¹ He also recommended that Australian Jews observe a modest demeanour and avoid ostentatiousness.⁹² The community's leaders hoped that these policies would prevent anti-Semitism from reaching significant proportions.

II

Hitler's rise to power created a refugee problem which was exacerbated throughout the 1930's. The refugee issue affected a wide spectrum of Australian society, both Jewish and non-Jewish. The Australian Government was compelled to reassess its alien immigration policies. A balance had to be created between humanitarian considerations and what the Government considered to be Australia's national interests and

⁹¹Grt Syn. Minutes, Presidential Report, A.G.M., 11 August 1937.

⁹²H.S., 10 June 1937.

this proved to be a difficult task. The established Jewish community was compelled to re-organize its structure to cope with the refugee problem, and it too found itself faced with the dilemma of a conflict of interests. The changes required by the challenge of the refugees had a maturing effect on both the established Jewish community and, to a lesser extent because it was less involved, on the Australian Government and people.

By the end of 1933 it had become clear that German Jews could not live in safety under Nazi rule and a world body, the Jewish Refugee Committee, was formed in London to assist in their emigration and resettlement. Members of this committee and individual German Jews, who faced the loss of their wealth to the Nazis, considered Australia as a possible place of refuge.¹ They believed that Australia's small population and low birth rate meant that increased migration could make a valuable contribution to the country's development.² The first approach to the Australian High Commissioner in London, S. M. Bruce, was made in September 1933 by Simon Marks, a prominent English Jew. At the same time, the British Government decided to accept refugees on a temporary basis and to help in the retraining of doctors, dentists, lawyers and industrial technicians and requested the co-operation of the Commonwealth Government in accepting some of these refugees.

¹ S.M.H., 16 October 1933.

² R. Lemberg, "The Problem of Refugee Immigration", Australian Quarterly, Vol. XI, No.3, September 1939, p.13.

In answer to these requests, the Federal Government decided that no departure could be made from the general conditions under which aliens were admitted to Australia.³ Only aliens with £500 landing money or dependent relatives, that is wives, minor children, or unmarried sisters, of aliens already residing in Australia, were allowed to emigrate. This virtually exclusive policy was introduced during the depression years because the government believed that there were too many Australians out of work to permit entry to foreigners.⁴ The government, although sympathetic to German Jewry's plight, could not see its way clear in 1933 to assist the refugees because of the continuing effects of the depression.

Australian Jewish leaders decided to appeal to the Federal Government to modify this policy. In January 1934 the Victorian Jewish Immigration Questions Committee sent a telegram to the Great Synagogue Board in which it suggested sending a joint delegation to Canberra for a personal interview with the Minister.⁵ The Great Synagogue Board opposed this suggestion on the grounds that it could result in publicity harmful to Australian Jewry and was unlikely to produce any positive results because of the adverse economic conditions.⁶ The Sydney Jewish leaders, who did not wish to compromise in any way the position of Australian Jewry, were

³"Admission of German Jews: Cabinet Decision re, 1933-1936", Memo 6 November 1933, Department of the Interior (II), Correspondence File, Class 3 (European Migrants) 1939-1950, Australian Archives Office, CRS A 434, item 49/3/7034.

⁴S.M.H., 16 January 1934.

⁵Great Syn. Minutes, 10 January 1934.

⁶Ibid., 17 January 1934.

out of step with the other Australian Jewish communities all of which supported the Victorian proposal. On 31 January 1934 a conference was convened between the members of the Great Synagogue Board and a Victorian delegation consisting of Rabbi I. Brodie, Rev. J. Danglow, and I. H. Boas to discuss the matter. The Victorians assured the Sydney leaders that the visit would not be publicized and so overcame their objections.⁷

Following on from this conference, a delegation consisting of Rabbi F. L. Cohen, Rabbi I. Brodie and John Goulston visited Canberra and personally presented a memorandum on German Jewish Immigration to Australia to the Minister for the Interior, J. A. Perkins. The memorandum requested the Commonwealth Government to view favourably the admission of a limited number of German refugees and stressed that the Jewish community did not support mass immigration or group settlements. The Jewish community would bring out only an excellent type of immigrant who would bring new skills and would not compete with Australians for employment or become a financial charge on the state.⁸ Although the Minister promised to give German Jews seeking admission sympathetic consideration, the Government decided not to relax its alien immigration laws.

In 1936, because of the intensified persecution of Jews following the Nuremberg Laws, it was realized that a more concerted effort was needed. A Council for German Jewry was

⁷ Ibid., 31 January 1934.

⁸ Ibid.

formed in Britain under the chairmanship of Sir Herbert Samuel and it was decided to raise three million pounds to assist over 100,000 young Germans to emigrate over a period of four years to Palestine and elsewhere. In response to a telegram from this Council, Sir Samuel Cohen called a meeting of prominent, interested Jews in his office and the German Jewish Relief Fund was created with Sir Samuel as its chairman. It was decided that Australian Jewry should raise £50,000 with £20,000 as the New South Wales quota.⁹ The first appeal meeting, held on 16 April 1936, raised £10,000 in one evening.¹⁰ Fund raising meetings were organized in the country areas of Newcastle and Tamworth,¹¹ and other organizations including the Council of Jewish Women, Ivriah and the Young Men's Hebrew Association assisted with the appeal.

Concurrently with these fund raising efforts, new approaches were made to the Commonwealth Government to try and increase the number of alien immigration permits. In February 1936, a deputation of prominent Jewish citizens led by Rabbi Brodie met the Minister for the Interior, T. Paterson, in Melbourne to request a relaxation of the alien immigration laws. During the interview, the advantages of accepting German refugees, both from the humanitarian point of view and Australia's self interest, were stressed.¹² In May 1936, Professor Norman Bentwich, President of the Council for German

⁹ Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the N.S.W. Appeal, held at the office of S. S. Cohen, 18 March 1936.

¹⁰ Minutes of the German Jewish Relief Fund, 16 April 1936.

¹¹ Ibid., 18 June 1936.

¹² "Admission of German Jews", cit. sup.

Jewry, met in London with Dr Earle Page, the Australian Minister for Commerce and leader of the Country Party. Bentwich requested that a limited number of selected German Jews between the ages of nineteen and thirty-five be admitted to Australia. He also requested that the Government waive the £500 landing money and accept instead a guarantee that the local Jewish community would be responsible for the welfare of the new immigrants. Funds collected in Australia would be used for this purpose.¹³ In considering these requests, the Cabinet felt it should prevent a large influx of Jews because they would not assimilate easily but rather would retain their separate ethnic identity.¹⁴ The government also wished to maintain the ratio of British stock which constituted 97% of Australia's population.

In 1936 the Lyons Government decided to ease restrictions on aliens, both Jewish and non-Jewish, notwithstanding the problems entailed. This change in government policy was due partly to improving economic conditions and partly to pressures from certain Jewish communal leaders for whom the Government had a high regard. These included Sir Samuel Cohen and others of equal standing such as his cousin, Brigadier Harold Cohen, a well known Melbourne businessman.¹⁵ The government reduced the amount of landing money to £50 for those guaranteed not to become a

¹³ Dept. of Int., Corres. File, Class 3, "Alien Immigration 1936, Cabinet Decisions, 1934-1938", Memo 33/4668, Australian Archives Office, CRS A 434, item 49/3/29456.

¹⁴ "Admission of German Jews", cit.sup.

¹⁵ Interview with Paul A. Cullen.

charge on the state by relatives or friends. A responsible Jewish organization could also act as guarantor, a significant concession which the Commonwealth Government did not want overpublicized. The negotiations for this concession were carried out by Sir Samuel Cohen, who personally guaranteed all applications for the German Jewish Relief Fund.¹⁶ The landing money referred to a family unit and was completely abolished for dependent relatives of aliens already resident in Australia. The Government decided that individual nominations only would be considered and that it would be obligatory for each applicant to state his proposed avenue of employment.¹⁷ In this way, the Government introduced a significant change in policy but, at the same time, it tried to ensure that Australian workers would not be disadvantaged and that strict control over the flow of refugees was maintained.

This change in government policy necessitated joint communal co-operation to cope with the expected increase of refugees. The Government sent a circular to the Jewish ministerial heads of all the capital cities requesting them to form local committees of responsible Jewish citizens to arrange for the reception and absorption of the selected Jewish migrants.¹⁸ At the same time the British Council for German Jewry requested that the funds raised in Australia by the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "Admission of German Jews", Memo, 7/10/36, cit. sup.

¹⁸ "Alien Immigration, 1936, Cabinet Decisions, 1934-1938". Dept. of Int., Corres. Files, Class 3 (European migrants) 1939-1950, Australian Archives Office, CRS A 434, item 49/3/29456.

German Jewish Relief Fund Appeal of 1936 be retained for the purpose of covering the £50 landing money and the required guarantee.¹⁹ A representative of the Council, E. Halstead, was sent to Australia to assist in the negotiations with the Government.²⁰ Following his arrival, a number of meetings were held with Hunter, the Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior, and the local Jewish leaders. The outcome of these meetings was the formation of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society in 1937 to co-ordinate all activities concerning applications for admission, reception and integration of the refugees. The Society consisted of prominent members of Sydney Jewry who were interested in assisting the refugees and was headed by Sir Samuel Cohen. His son, P. A. Cohen (later Cullen), and son-in-law, Keith Moss, were joint honorary secretaries. Sir Isaac Isaacs was appointed the Society's patron with the assurance that the refugees became British subjects as soon as possible. A Women's Auxiliary was also formed to assist in meeting boats and in looking after refugee children.²¹ The Welfare Society was formed, therefore, mainly at the instigation of the Commonwealth Government which did not wish to be bombarded by innumerable applications from different organizations. This was an attempt to place all refugee work on a proper, legal basis.

A number of steps were taken to avoid the growth of

¹⁹ German Jewish Relief Fund Minutes, 30 September 1936.

²⁰ Ibid., 3 September 1936.

²¹ Australian Jewish Welfare Society Minutes, 8 April 1937.

anti-Semitism which could have emerged with the arrival of 'undesirable' elements. There was to be close co-operation between the Australian and British Jewish Refugee Committees to ensure that only readily absorbable migrants were selected.²² Migrants were not to be sent out in batches exceeding six²³ and on every ship coming to Australia with refugees aboard there was a paid English instructor so that by the time the refugees arrived they had a workable knowledge of English.²⁴ In Sydney, English classes were conducted by various Jewish organizations, such as the classes run by the Council of Jewish Women under Dora Abramovitch, until the Department of Education took over this responsibility and opened classes at Bondi, Paddington, Darlinghurst and Crow's Nest Public Schools.²⁵ Every boat was met by an official of the Society and where possible the migrants were taken immediately to the Welfare office where they were told how to behave and were issued with a sheet of instructions which stressed:

Above all, do not speak German in the streets and in the trams. Modulate your voices. Do not make yourself conspicuous anywhere by walking with a group of persons all of whom are loudly speaking in a foreign language... Remember that the welfare of the old-established Jewish community in Australia as well as of every migrant depends on your personal behaviour. Jews collectively are judged as individuals. You personally have a grave responsibility.²⁶

²²G. J. R. F. Minutes, 26 November 1936.

²³Ibid., 3 December 1936. The number was increased to twenty in 1938.

²⁴A. J. W. S. Minutes, 25 November 1937.

²⁵Ibid., 22 January 1939.

²⁶S.M.H., 13 May 1939.

The refugees were also requested to settle in the country and to adopt Australian customs and manners.²⁷ Every migrant was requested to sign an undertaking to be naturalized as soon as possible and they were also asked to Anglicize their names.²⁸ In 1939, meetings were organized twice monthly to instruct the newcomers in Australian conditions and to stress their responsibility to Australian Jewry generally.

Harmonious relations were soon established between the Department of the Interior and the Welfare Society. Numerous visits by the Society's officials were made to Canberra to retain government sympathy and keep abreast of changes.²⁹ The Department was very co-operative within the limits of its administrative framework. In 1937, the Department readily approved the Society's request that an Australian bank pass book showing the £50 landing money deposited to the credit of the migrant be accepted in lieu of cash.³⁰ The Australian government official commended the fact that the A. J. W. S. was able to attend so efficiently to the welfare of the refugees and suggested that non-Jewish refugee organizations be established on similar lines.³¹

The Australian government was not prepared to overhaul its inefficient administrative procedures. The granting of landing permits was a very slow process since all alien

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Report on activities of A. J. W. S. "Refugees (Jewish and others), General Policy File (1938-1940)", Dept. of the Int., Corres. Files, Class 2, (Restricted Immigration) 1939-1950, Australian Archives Office, CRS A 433, item 43/2/46.

²⁹ A.J.H., 10 November 1938.

³⁰ "Alien Immigration, 1936", Memo 22 March 1937, cit. sup.

³¹ "Czechoslovakia", 22 December 1938, Dept of External Affairs (II); 1921-1970, Corres. Files, Alphabetical Series, 1927-1942, Australian Archives Office, CRS A 981, item Refugees 8.

immigrant applications had to be approved in Canberra. It took at least five months from the dispatch of an application until the permit was granted.³² The refugee needed proof of his currency holding, a certificate from the Nazi President of Police, a place of employment in Australia and he could not book his passage until he had received his landing permit.³³ The Australian Government insisted that all permits were approved in Australia and only in special circumstances could Australia House, London, approve an application.³⁴ The Department had no immigration officers in Europe to deal with applications which were handled through British consular offices. This complicated procedure for the admission of aliens was inadequate in view of the urgent nature of the situation.³⁵ As the editor of the Herald commented, the Government's policy 'created work for extra civil servants' and did not allow 'an appreciable number of approved migrants entrance to Australia within a reasonable time'.³⁶

Only in 1939 did the Department agree to modify its policy after strong representations were made by the Australian High Commissioner in London, S. M. Bruce.³⁷ He suggested that the selection of migrants could be done in Europe with the aid of British consular officers and European

³² H.S., 5 May 1938.

³³ George M. Berger, "Australia and the Refugees", Australian Quarterly, Vol. VIII, Nos. 3 & 4, September, December, 1941.

³⁴ "Australian Refugee Committee: Policy File, Refugee Organizations, 1938-1939", Dept. of the Int. (II), 1939-1972, Class 3 (European Migrants) 1939-1950, Australian Archives Office, CRS A434, item 49/3/7286.

³⁵ S.M.H., 18 November 1938.

³⁶ Ibid., 16 February 1939.

³⁷ Bruce was an ex-Prime Minister and as such he had some influence on government policy making during the period when he was High Commissioner.

Jewish organizations such as the Israelitische Multurgemeinde in Vienna. The issue of permits could be controlled from Australia House, London. He felt that such a system would end delay and provide more efficient machinery for scrutinizing the applicants at a point where information was readily available than a system which relied on written documents sent to Australia.³⁸ The Federal Government rejected most of Bruce's suggestions but it made some concessions. All applications without guarantors were to be lodged first at Australia House which was given the authority to refuse cases which were clearly unsuitable. The London authorities could also accept Jews with over £3,000 landing money who appeared suitable in all respects and Christians with £1,000 capital or those with £200 to £1,000 capital who could easily be absorbed without outside assistance.³⁹ Other cases were to be classified into three main religious groups (Jewish, Protestant and Catholic) and forwarded to Canberra. In 1939, T. H. Garrett, a high ranking officer in the Department of Interior was sent to London to supervise these new arrangements and to establish closer liaison with both the British Consular Authorities and the voluntary refugee organizations on the Continent. It was hoped that these new procedures would avoid much of the 'circumlocution and shuttle-cocking of applications and investigation between Canberra, Australia House and the Continent' which existed until 1939.⁴⁰

³⁸Letter from S. M. Bruce, 2 November 1938, Refugees (Jewish and Others), General Policy File (1938-1940), cit.sup.

³⁹Ibid., Memo 25/1/1939.

⁴⁰Ibid., Set out for a draft for the press, 16/2/1939.

Early in 1938 pressure on the Welfare Society and the Australian Government began to increase because of the events in Europe. The Anschluss of Austria increased the demand for entry permits as Jews from Austria and other parts of Eastern Europe such as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary sought an escape from anti-Semitism. European Jews affected by these events wrote desperate letters pleading for the chance of a new life to anyone in Australia whom they felt might be sympathetic and able to be of some assistance. Their feelings were reflected in the emotive letter of one Hungarian refugee:

In my grievousness, I do not know how to describe my days it is not yet only some weeks that I felt myself for an equal citizen and to be protected... but now it is painful to eat from the bread in which my brothers suffer want When sometimes in your pleasant moments you see life for beautiful think! That there are people who have forgotten how to smile... I implore you again! Think on the cruel lot and listen to my call for help.⁴¹

In one three-week period after the Anschluss the Welfare Society received 1,700 letters of this nature.⁴² In March 1938 Australia House was inundated with 120 written and personal enquiries a day,⁴³ especially from Austrians and Czechs, and 200,000 application forms were distributed on the Continent.⁴⁴ Rabbi Falk, Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue, dealt with much urgent correspondence from religious leaders and from

⁴¹Eugen Lax, 21 March 1939, Correspondence File of Rabbi Falk, Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue, A.J.H.S. Archives.

⁴²A. J. W. S. Minutes, 7 July 1938.

⁴³Refugees 4, 5 April 1938, Dept. of Ext. Affairs, Corres. Files, Alphabetical Series, 1927-1942, Australian Archives Office, CRS A 981.

⁴⁴S.M.H., 17 March 1938.

refugees whose applications had been rejected. John McEwen, Minister for the Interior from November 1937 to April 1939, also received many personal letters and telephone calls from relatives of refugees. D. H. Drummond, Minister for Education in New South Wales, was another government leader to whom the refugees turned since many had high educational qualifications. The major newspapers such as the Herald were another avenue through which refugees sought help.⁴⁵ Australia's isolation from Europe and its democratic form of government was attractive to many European Jewish refugees.

Many prominent leaders believed that the government should introduce a more sympathetic policy towards the refugees. Sir Arthur Rickard, President of The Millions Club and leading Sydney businessman, believed that if employment could be found for the refugees they should be welcomed.⁴⁶ The editorial policy of the Herald favoured a generous policy to the refugees, because they could directly benefit Australia through the acquisition of new people and fresh blood.⁴⁷ The editor stressed that with their greater numbers and new technical skills they would create industrial development, lower costs, increase employment, raise living standards, and so would assist Australian development.⁴⁸ The New South Wales Trades and Labor Council also departed from its usual policy of opposing immigration and declared that Jewish refugees should be admitted and that the Federal Government should accept financial responsibilities provided that the influx of Jewish refugees

⁴⁵ See, for example, the S.M.H., 5 July 1938, letter from six Viennese citizens.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 6 July 1938.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 18 August 1938.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

did not affect Australian living standards.⁴⁹

In April 1938 President F. D. Roosevelt called an inter-government conference to create an international committee which would facilitate the flow of refugees from Nazism. He proposed that the representatives on the committee be chosen by the governments, but that the finance be provided by private organizations already in existence. No country was expected to accept a greater number of refugees than was permitted by its existing legislation.⁵⁰ Australia was one of the many countries invited to participate and was the first and only British Dominion to accept the invitation.⁵¹ This was because of the large number of political refugees hoping to come to Australia. The Lyons Government took the initiative in this decision and did not wait for the United Kingdom to set the policy guide lines.⁵² This was an unusual policy decision since, until the 1930's, Australia had been totally dependent on British leadership in foreign policy. As such it was an example of the beginning of Australian independence in foreign affairs.

In preparing for the conference, the Lyons government drew up a memorandum in which it set out the following reasons for preventing a flood of refugees into Australia. The govern-

⁴⁹ Ibid., 18 November 1938.

⁵⁰ "Refugees from Austria, Special Committee proposed by U.S.A. Government, Evian Conference, 1938-1940", Dept. of the Int., Corres. Files, Class 3 (Non-British European Migrants), Aust. Archives Office, CRS A434, item 50/3/41837.

⁵¹ S.M.H., 24 June 1938.

⁵² "Inter-Government Committee (including Evian Conference, 1938-1940)", Dept. of Ext. Affairs (II) 1921-1970, Corres. Files, Alphabetical Series 1927-1942, Australian Archives Office, CRS A981, item Refugees 4.

ment believed that it would be extremely difficult to absorb large numbers of refugees without harming the position of Australian workers. An influx of lower class Jews who, the government believed, almost invariably engaged in second-hand shops and cheap clothing factories was especially undesirable. Even though most Jews were highly intelligent and successful, they usually did not assimilate completely into their country of adoption because of their religious beliefs and strict rules about intermarriage. The existence of a large, separate, ethnic minority with different religious traditions could create racial tensions of a type unknown to Australia.⁵³ The Government also wished to maintain the predominantly British nature of the population. In addition to these problems, the Commonwealth Government stated that there was no efficient organization to assist the refugees on their arrival as there was little cooperation with state governments and that there would be difficulties owing to opposition from sectional interests.⁵⁴ For these various reasons the Government decided not to change its alien immigration quotas at the time of the international conference.

In July 1938 the conference was convened at Evian, France, where thirty-two nations were represented to discuss Roosevelt's proposals. Australia's delegate, T. W. White, Minister for Trade and Customs, played an important part at the conference. He was chairman of the committee which dealt with

⁵³"Refugees from Austria: Evian Conference", cit.sup.

⁵⁴Ref. 4, Comments on U.S. proposals, 6 April 1938, cit.sup.

the reports from the various refugee organizations. In his statement to the conference, White stressed that Australia was unable to increase her quota for refugees.⁵⁵ His speech reflected the Australian Government's initial reluctance to introduce a more liberal policy towards the refugees.

White's speech indicated that, at the time of the Evian Conference, the Australian Government had closed its ears to the pleas for help from the thousands of Jewish refugees. As the editor of the Herald commented:

We are disappointed at the negative speech made by the Australian delegate, Mr White, at the international conference. He had little constructive to offer. Our citizens of Jewish race have proved their worth... Mass migration is undesirable, but a greater influx of citizens is both necessary and desirable.⁵⁶

The editorial policy of the Daily Telegraph supported this view that Australia should accept more of the refugees.⁵⁷ The Government's fears obscured its ability to perceive the possible beneficial contribution of the refugees. This hesitation reflected a conservative way of thinking shared by many Australians. Editorial policy in the Bulletin commended White's statement and stressed that Australia should accept only a strictly limited number of immigrant Jews of the type 'vouched for by such good Australians as Sir Samuel Cohen'.⁵⁸ The Bulletin also warned against refugee Jews importing Communism into Australia. Other journals such as the Sunday Truth issued even more dire warnings against admitting any refugees.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ S.M.H., 7 July 1938.

⁵⁷ Daily Telegraph, 8 July 1938.

⁵⁸ Bulletin, 13 July 1938.

Australia accepted a limited number of refugees only but, of the thirty-two nations at Evian, her quota was among the most generous per head of population. The United States' quota, for example was 27,370 which was proportionally smaller than Australia's quota.⁵⁹ The countries of the free world were willing to sympathize with the plight of the refugees and to create machinery to assist them escape from Nazism but they were not prepared to change their immigration laws. Because of this the conference's chances of success were remote from the start. They were further limited by lack of finance which was only provided by the voluntary organizations. There was also a fear that if the conference showed too great a readiness to accept refugees, other East European countries such as Poland and Rumania would intensify their anti-Semitic campaign and expel more of their Jewish populations. Alfred Stirling, External Affairs adviser to White at the conference, in his summing up stated that the Evian Conference 'made little or no progress' on the refugee issue.⁶⁰ It merely acted as a salve for the international conscience, although at least it showed that such a conscience still existed.⁶¹ Its only success was the creation of the International Government Committee with a permanent secretariat in London headed by an American. Given America's general isolationist policy in the 1930's this American involvement with a European problem was considered at the time

⁵⁹ "Inter-Government Committee (including Evian Conference, 1938-1940)", Report on the Evian Conference, cit.sup.

⁶⁰ Ibid., letter from Alfred Stirling to Lt. Col. W. K. Hodgson, 17 July 1938.

⁶¹ D.T., 8 July 1938.

to be the main achievement of Evian.⁶² The establishment of the International Government Committee largely duplicated the work of the League of Nations' Refugee Committee of which America was not a member.

In November 1938, the Government decided to reassess its refugee policy in the light of the worsening situation of Jews in Germany. The wave of violence against German Jews following the murder of vom Rath in November 1938 produced a sense of indignation in the free world. The need became more pressing for international co-operation to settle as many refugees as possible in the less populous areas of the world such as Australia.⁶³ The International Government Committee appealed to Australia to indicate the number of refugees it would be prepared to accept while, inside Australia, concerned individuals such as E. J. Holloway, M.H.R. representing Melbourne Ports, proposed that the Government increase the quota of refugees.⁶⁴ However, the most persuasive request for a public statement of government policy came from S. M. Bruce. He suggested that Australia admit 30,000 refugees over a period of three years because he felt that such a declaration would be advantageous to Australia. It would end speculation as to what Australia would do for the refugees. It would also increase goodwill, particularly with America, and add to Australia's prestige as the country which made the most

⁶²"Inter-Govt. Com., Evian Conference", cit.sup.

⁶³"Refugees — General Policy File", telegram from High Commissioner S. M. Bruce, 21-22 November 1938, cit.sup.

⁶⁴S.M.H., 23 November 1938.

practical and sympathetic contribution to the refugee problem. Bruce urged the Australian Government to act immediately in order to take advantage of the favourable sentiments expressed by the Australian public towards the refugees.⁶⁵

In response to these requests, the Minister for the Interior, John McEwen, announced on 1 December 1938 that Australia would admit 15,000 refugees over a period of three years, compared with the 1,800 per year she had been accepting. The Cabinet decided that the figure Bruce suggested of 30,000 was too high because Australia wished to continue absorbing migrants from traditional sources.⁶⁶ Of the 5,000 permits each year, 750 permits were set aside for the A.J.W.S., and 1,500 were for refugees who possessed between £200 and £1,000 landing money and had no guarantor. The latter group was also referred to the Welfare Society where their selection was verified. The rest of the quota was made up of 900 permits to refugees with over £1,000 landing money; 600 permits to migrants guaranteed by friends and relatives already in Australia; and 250 permits to refugees without guarantors but who, because of their special qualifications, were approved by the Department without reference to the Welfare Society.⁶⁷ In all 4,000 permits were to be granted to Jewish refugees the remaining 1,000 permits being for non-Jewish refugees. The quota was to be as flexible as possible, with no rigid figures for each month or year. More refugees were admitted in the

⁶⁵ "Refugees — General Policy File", Telegram, from S. M. Bruce, 21-22 November 1938, cit. sup.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Memo prepared by J. A. Carrodus, 24 November 1938.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Memo, 28 October 1938.

first year than the 5,000 stipulated⁶⁸ and only the outbreak of war stopped the flow of refugees.

The final quota was an attempt to reconcile the interests of the Australian people and the refugees. Only those refugees who would not disturb the existing labour conditions were admitted, and those with capital or new industrial skills were favoured. The Government decided not to depart from its general alien immigration policy. Migrants who had over £1,000 landing money were favoured as the Welfare Society felt that those migrants who had only the stipulated £200 did not have sufficient finance to establish themselves and tended to become unemployable.⁶⁹ On humanitarian grounds, aged parents over 55 years who could be supported by their children were excluded from the quota.⁷⁰ The refugees were to be distributed as widely as possible throughout Australia.

Government policy originally favoured the establishment of a single undenominational society, to be called the Australian German Migration Association, which would be in charge of the selection and absorption of all refugees irrespective of religion or race.⁷¹ This idea was rejected by the A.J.W.S. which felt that the functions of such a joint body could be misunderstood⁷² because if there was only

⁶⁸ D.T., 6 December 1938.

⁶⁹ "Refugees — General Policy File", Memo prepared by T. H. Garrett, 9 November 1938, cit.sup.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Memo, 31 January 1939.

⁷¹ "A.J.W.S. Proposals re Control of Jewish Immigration, 1938-39", Dept. of Int. I, Corres. Files, Annual Single No. Series, 1903-1938, Aust. Archives Office, CRS AI, item 38/23138.

⁷² "Ref.— General Policy File", Letter to minister from A.J.W.S., 3 November 1938, cit.sup.

one organization the bulk of the finance would be supplied by Jews and there was a danger that they would receive prior consideration to Christians.⁷³ The government agreed with the Welfare Society and McEwen suggested in his ministerial statement of December 1938 that church and other interested bodies establish a non-Jewish refugee organization similar to the A.J.W.S.⁷⁴ Applications were to be considered by the appropriate religious committee — A.J.W.S. for the Jews, the Catholic Continental Migrant Welfare Society for Catholics, and the German Emergency Refugee Council for Protestants. As the refugees were not required to state their religion on the application form, the separate refugee organizations were to approach their European counterparts to determine the religious category of each applicant and investigate his moral character and physical and occupational suitability.⁷⁵ The government did not wish to publicly differentiate on a religious basis but, for efficient administration, they did differentiate between Jew and non-Jew in their quotas as shown in confidential government sources.

On the whole, McEwen's ministerial statement was favourably received. Curtin, the Leader of the Opposition, commented:

I can say unhesitantly that the principles involved will be acceptable to the people of

⁷³ Ibid., Memo by T. H. Garrett, 9 November 1938.

⁷⁴ Parliamentary Debates, Commonwealth of Australia, 2 Geo. VI, Vol. 158, 16 November to 8 December 1938, pp. 2534-2536.

⁷⁵ "Ref.— General Policy File", Memo, 3 January 1939, cit. sup.

Australia... The quota suggested by the Minister is a reasonable one. I feel also that the vigilance exercised by the government will be sufficient to prevent the formation of racial colonies.⁷⁶

Conservative elements also supported the quota believing that this would protect Australia from being flooded with Jews who could take control of the country.⁷⁷ Overseas sources congratulated the Australian Government for its decision. The London Times in a leading article referred to Australia's characteristically generous quota and stated that Australia had done its full share.⁷⁸ A few critics such as the editor of the Herald felt that the quota 'did not err on the side of generosity',⁷⁹ and that the number could easily be doubled or even trebled because of the positive contribution of the refugees,⁸⁰ but such criticism was the exception.

With the deteriorating position of European Jewry, a further request came from London in February 1939 for a more generous quota from Canberra. The cable stressed that the Welfare Society must 'redouble (its) already great efforts to save a harrassed and tormented people'.⁸¹ The Council for German Jewry believed it should play a more direct role in the selection of migrants not guaranteed by the A.J.W.S. as it felt that many of the refugees chosen were not suitable for

⁷⁶ Parl. Debates, Common. of Aust., Vol. 158, op.cit., p.2536.

⁷⁷ See, for example, the Bulletin, 7 December 1938.

⁷⁸ "Inter-Government Committee", letter from A. Stirling, 16 December 1938, cit.sup.

⁷⁹ S.M.H., 20 June 1939.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 5 August 1939.

⁸¹ A.J.W.S. Minutes, 3 February 1939.

Australian conditions.⁸² The Welfare Society arranged a conference in Canberra with representatives from Sydney and Melbourne to discuss these different problems.⁸³ The Society requested that there be less delay in granting permits for cases guaranteed by themselves and that decisions be made in regard to all cases as quickly as possible. The Government was asked to increase the number of permits granted direct to the Society (Form 40 Cases) and to reduce the quota for those who possessed landing money of £200 to £1,000 (Form 47 Cases). Most of the latter cases came to the Welfare Society for assistance and this placed an intolerable strain on the Society's funds. The idea of a separate quota of 750 for orphans over three years was also suggested.⁸⁴ Gerald de Vahl Davis requested that the Government modify its attitude to group agricultural settlements and introduce small group settlements to allow for co-operative farming.⁸⁵ Following the conference the Government agreed to increase the Welfare Society's direct quota to 1,000 and to reduce the quota of migrants with landing money over £200 but no guarantors to 1,250. It also allowed for the entry of 250 orphans per annum as part of the latter quota,⁸⁶ but problems were encountered

⁸² "A.J.W.S. — Proposals re Control of Jewish Migration", letter from the Council for German Jewry, Woburn House, London, 14 February 1939, Dept. of Int. (I), 1932-1939, Corres. Files, Annual Single No. Series, 1903-1938, Australian Archives Office, CRS AI, item 38/23138.

⁸³ The deputation consisted of H. Lesnie, G. de Vahl Davis, K. Moss, F. Silverman, S. Symonds and H. Boas.

⁸⁴ "Ref.— General Policy File", Report of conference by J. A. Carrodus, 27 February 1939, cit. sup.

⁸⁵ Ibid., Letter setting out this request made verbally at the conference, 6 March 1939.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Notes on the deputation from A.J.W.S. 1 March 1939.

in finding suitable refugee orphans and this quota was not filled.⁸⁷

In April 1939 the Government decided to extend further the quota of permits to Jews from 5,000 to 6,000 to relieve immediate pressure. This decision was carried out by increasing the number of permits to Jews not directly under Hitler's rule. Permits to those with guarantors were increased by 600 and to those without guarantors but with capital and with excellent qualifications for Australia by 400.⁸⁸ As these various policy decisions show, the Australian Government responded in a comparatively generous and sympathetic manner to the requests of the A.J.W.S. The government was prepared to extend its quotas within reasonable limits because it recognized a moral responsibility in the circumstances and believed that accepting more migrants was in Australia's interests.

The failure of the Evian Conference to solve the refugee problem gave impetus to the idea of large-scale Jewish settlement in an unpopulated and economically under-developed area in Australia although this idea never won widespread support. The promoters of Jewish colonization stressed its mutual advantage to Australia, which needed men and money to develop her empty spaces and make them less inviting to a potential Asian invader, and to the Jews who desperately needed a place of refuge without developing clusters in the cities.⁸⁹ They believed that the agricultural miracle wrought

⁸⁷ Ibid., Memo, 22 August 1939.

⁸⁸ Ibid., Memo, 21 April 1939, 27 April 1939.

⁸⁹ See, for example, letter from C. H. Chomley, editor of the British-Australian, published in the J.C., 13 May 1938.

in Palestine could be repeated by Jewish pioneers in Australia.⁹⁰ The most concerted effort was made by the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonization Overseas which was created in London in 1935. In 1938 this League decided to concentrate its efforts on the Kimberleys, Western Australia, which it considered the best area in the world to resettle 100,000 Jewish refugees. The Kimberleys covered seven million acres, had a hot tropical climate, good soil and adequate water supply.⁹¹ The League planned to purchase the properties of Connor, Doherty and Durack Ltd. and to organize and finance a pioneering settlement to be followed later by large scale colonization. The Jewish colonists would retain autonomy in local matters but the Commonwealth Government would control defence, customs and immigration.⁹² The League approached the Australian High Commissioner in London, Bruce, who felt that the idea had distinct possibilities and referred the request to the Commonwealth Government. The government decided that although there were undoubted economic advantages in developing the Kimberleys with the aid of Jewish capital it was not prepared to countenance an autonomous Jewish state within Australia.⁹³ The League, however, decided to send its secretary, Dr I. N. Steinberg, to Australia to personally

⁹⁰ S.M.H., 2 April 1938.

⁹¹ I. N. Steinberg, "Jewish Settlement in Australia", The Canadian Forum, Vol.23, November 1943, pp.174-5.

⁹² I. N. Steinberg, Australia: The Unpromised Land, op.cit., pp.154-5.

⁹³ "Proposed Settlement, East Kimberley District. Settlement of Jews in Kimberley District, 1939-1944", 23 May 1938, Dept. of the Int. (II) 1939-1972, Corres. Files, Class 2 (Restricted Imm.) 1939-1950, Australian Archives Office, CAO CRS A433, item 44/2/50 Pt.1.

investigate the Kimberleys. The Commonwealth Government was reluctant to grant him a tourist visa because the visit was seen as a waste of time.⁹⁴ Steinberg's Russian origins and socialist background also made him suspect but Bruce advised that he had been "politically quiet for several years and was regarded by the authorities as unexceptional".⁹⁵ Members of the Welfare Society and other Jewish leaders opposed the Kimberley scheme and believed that the visit would be futile. Keith Moss, honorary secretary of the Society, voiced these misgivings in a letter to the Minister for the Interior.⁹⁶ Despite all these reservations McEwen decided to admit Steinberg for three months in March 1939.

Steinberg arrived in Australia in May 1939 and immediately organized a preliminary investigation of the area with G. F. Melville of the University of Western Australia. After three weeks of intensive study, Steinberg came to the conclusion that the area was suitable for colonization as it had great potential for both primary and secondary industry. After a period of negotiations, the Western Australian Premier, J. C. Willcock, stated that he had no objections to an approach being made to the Commonwealth Government which had to give its approval.⁹⁷ The Premier stipulated a number of tentative conditions included in which were direct government

⁹⁴ Ibid., 16 March 1939.

⁹⁵ Ibid., letter from Bruce, 20 March 1939.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 22 March 1939.

⁹⁷ Willcock's attitude and conditions were set out in a letter to Dr Steinberg, dated 25 August 1939. Memorandum by H. S. Foll, Minister for the Interior, summing up the problems of the Kimberley Scheme, 21 November 1940, *ibid.*

representation and control of the refugees chosen to settle in Western Australia; an official investigation of the proposed scheme; payment of government officials associated with the scheme by the Freeland League; no government financial responsibility for the first three years; the creation of a body of reputable and financially substantial Perth Jews to be in charge of the welfare of the refugees; and all schools to comply with the requirements of the state school system. Willcock wanted government control of the scheme but no financial involvement. He did not oppose the scheme because his state's population was sparse and the state had many financial problems. The Perth Chamber of Commerce approved the scheme because they felt that the Kimberleys was so remote that the Jews might as well be there. As a result of these attitudes there was no organized opposition in Perth to the scheme.⁹⁸

When Steinberg received Willcock's response, he decided to try and win a wide spectrum of public support before approaching the Commonwealth Government. He visited Melbourne and Sydney, where he claimed that he received support from prominent citizens, leading newspapers such as the Herald, Smith's Weekly, and the Australian Worker, the Trade Union Movement and the churches. In both Melbourne and Sydney a manifesto, signed by eminent citizens, was published in support of the scheme.⁹⁹ Those who supported the scheme did so because it appeared to be a 'good idea' to assist both the Jewish

⁹⁸ S.M.H., 23 August 1939.

⁹⁹ Steinberg, Australia: The Unpromised Land, op.cit., pp.151-154.

refugees and the development of the Australian outback, but they did not analyze sufficiently the full implications. A settlement of 100,000 Jews in the Kimberleys, supported by Jewish money, could have succeeded economically but as soon as circumstances permitted it was probable that a large scale exodus would ensue because of the difficult tropical climate.¹⁰⁰

From the very beginning, there was much opposition to the scheme as the idea was totally unacceptable to many Australians both Jewish and non-Jewish. A number of prominent Jewish leaders in both Sydney and Melbourne believed that the scheme was potentially dangerous because, if it failed, the dispersal of the settlers could cause great problems and lead to anti-Semitism. This opposition was reflected by Dr A. Patkin, a prominent Melbourne Jew, who stated that the scheme would never win the support of Australian Jewry because it was completely utopian.¹⁰¹ Professor Norman Bentwich, representative of the London and European Welfare Society, in a speech to the Millions Club, pointed out that:

You cannot have mass settlement in underdeveloped parts in an emergency. These places have no roads, no markets, and need great development. While these places may have great possibilities, the real and urgent problem is that of finding homes now for the thousands of people who are being turned out of their country by this ruthless persecution.¹⁰²

A significant section of the general Australian public also opposed the scheme. In a leading article in January 1938 the

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Paul A. Cullen.

¹⁰¹ A.J.H., 24 March 1938.

¹⁰² S.M.H., 30 September 1938.

Daily Telegraph voiced this opposition when it stressed that Australia could not permit the growth of an isolated community detached from the broad stream of Australian life.¹⁰³ A similar view that all immigrants must assimilate into the mainstream of Australian life to prevent the growth of racial tension was expressed by the editor of the Sun, Sir Hugh Denison,¹⁰⁴ while the editor of the Sunday Truth was even more critical of the scheme.¹⁰⁵ Opposition to the scheme was much stronger in the Eastern States which were more concerned about the unacceptability of a separate, unassimilated Jewish colony than Western Australia which saw some advantages for the state's economic development. There was also debate about the suitability of the Kimberleys for intensive settlement. W. N. MacDonald, a pastoralist from the Kimberleys, claimed that the idea was completely impractical as the area was already used for the sheep and cattle industry and the pastoral leases extended till 1985.¹⁰⁶

The Kimberley scheme remained an unrealistic vision which never reached fruition. In August 1940, a memorandum was presented to the Prime Minister, R. G. Menzies but, because of pressures resulting from World War II, Cabinet delayed consideration of the issue. It was not until July 1944 that the Australian Government, under Prime Minister Curtin, rejected the proposal.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ D.T., 18 January 1938.

¹⁰⁴ The Sun, 14 December 1938.

¹⁰⁵ Steinberg, Australia: The Unpromised Land, op.cit., p.79.

¹⁰⁶ S.M.H., 25 February 1938.

¹⁰⁷ Steinberg, Australia: The Unpromised Land, op.cit., p.166.

There were several other suggestions for Jewish colonization. Different parts of the Northern Territory were proposed, the first suggestion being made as early as 1934 by Melech Ravitsh, a Yiddish writer from Warsaw, during his visit to Australia.¹⁰⁸ In 1938 further proposals were made by the member for the Northern Territory who suggested a settlement near the Katherine River¹⁰⁹ and by J. B. Cramsie. Cramsie first suggested a Jewish colony in the Northern Territory during a speech to the Millions Club¹¹⁰ and then later proposed a Jewish colony of 100,000 people on Melville Island, Northern Territory, to be financed by overseas Jewish organizations.¹¹¹ An area on King Island, Tasmania, owned by a private Melbourne-based company, was also suggested as a possible site for small-scale Jewish land settlement.¹¹² The South Australian Government was approached by a group of Jewish citizens in Vienna about agricultural group settlements of five hundred families, but the Premier, T. Playford, decided that no land could be made available for such settlements.¹¹³ These various suggestions were rejected by the Commonwealth Government as the schemes were considered 'neither practical nor desirable'. The Government remained firm in its belief that aliens should be distributed as widely as possible and also

¹⁰⁸ S.M.H., 16 January 1934.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 14 December 1938.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 25 February 1938.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 17 November 1938.

¹¹² Ibid., 13 May 1939.

¹¹³ "Premier, South Australia, Proposal for Jewish Settlement in Australia (1938)", Dept. of the Int. (I), 1932-1939, Corres. Files, Ann. Single No. Series, 1903-1938, Australian Archives Office, CRS AI, item 38/21559.

in its opposition to the idea of a self-contained, autonomous, unassimilated colony in Australia.¹¹⁴ The guidelines laid down by John McEwen in his ministerial statement of 1 December 1938 continued to determine the Government's refugee policy until the cessation of migration with the outbreak of war.

During 1938, as a result of the Government's changes in its alien immigration policy, the flow of refugees increased from a few hundred a year to five thousand.¹¹⁵ With this increasing flow of migrants, the Welfare Society was revolutionized from a small organization with an office in Bond Street run largely by a volunteer staff to a large scale association with an office at the Maccabean Hall¹¹⁶ and fourteen full-time employees (four men and ten women) who had to work nights and weekends to cope with the work load.¹¹⁷ In the period July to October 1938, alone, the demands on the Society trebled. From the beginning of July the number of the refugees calling at the office at Darlinghurst increased from forty to eighty a day, the majority of these being refugees who came to Australia independently of the A.J.W.S.¹¹⁸ A sub-committee of the Executive Council was formed to consider all matters relating to the refugees.¹¹⁹ At first, it met weekly, but by the end of 1938 it was being convened up to five

¹¹⁴ S.M.H., 17 November 1938.

¹¹⁵ A.J.H., 8 September 1938.

¹¹⁶ This move was made in April 1938.

¹¹⁷ H.S., 24 November 1938.

¹¹⁸ "Refugees — General Policy File", Report to Honorary Secretaries, A.J.W.S., 26 October 1938, cit. sup.

¹¹⁹ A.J.W.S. Minutes, 13 January 1939.

times weekly, its members often devoting fifteen to twenty hours to voluntary work each week.¹²⁰

With these increased demands and the pressing need for more permits, greater interstate co-ordination was necessary. In October 1938, an interstate conference with delegates from all states was held in Melbourne to discuss all matters relating to the refugees. Professor Norman Bentwich, who was in Australia for the Commonwealth Relations Conference¹²¹ was chairman and he offered much valuable advice on how problems were dealt with in England.¹²² It was decided to retain Sydney as the head office, but offices were to be set up in other states where they did not exist. The Sydney branch was to be responsible for all overseas and government communications, largely because of Sir Samuel Cohen's standing in the general community, and it assisted in the establishment of branches in Adelaide and Brisbane.¹²³ By June 1939, all the Relief Societies were amalgamated into the A.J.W.S., which had branches in every state.¹²⁴ The aim of the A.J.W.S. was that it should be a co-ordinating body, representing the whole of Australian Jewry. However, Victorian Jewry was not fully co-operative and the A.J.W.S. remained largely a New South Wales concern dominated by Sir Samuel Cohen and the conservative, Anglicized leadership in Sydney.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ A.J.H., 10 November 1938.

¹²¹ "A.J.W.S. Proposals re Control of Jewish Migr.", letter to the Dept. of Int., 6 September 1938, cit.sup.

¹²² H.S., 13 October 1938.

¹²³ A.J.W.S. Minutes, 5 September 1939.

¹²⁴ "Refugees — General Policy File", letter from Paul A. Cohen, 21 June 1939, cit.sup.

¹²⁵ Interview with Paul A. Cullen.

As a result of the progressively increasing number of refugees requiring assistance, the Welfare Society felt it should participate more actively in the selection of refugees. In September 1938, Sir Samuel Cohen wrote to the Department requesting that all or at least most Jewish refugees applying to Australia be investigated by the Welfare Society. He made this request because the Welfare Society assisted most Jewish refugees who came to Australia, whether they were sponsored by it or not. The Society was prepared to guarantee that all Jewish refugees would not become a charge on the state for five years after their arrival, if it participated in their selection.¹²⁶ The Welfare Society set out recommendations for the selection of migrants. These covered the categories of employment distribution to various states, and recommended that at least fifty per cent should be under twenty-five years.¹²⁷ The Department agreed that the A.J.W.S. should play a central role in the selection of those migrants guaranteed by the Society and those who came out without a guarantor.¹²⁸ Most of the other suggestions concerning the bases of selection were also approved. The Government agreed with the Society's requests because it felt that Jewish participation in the selection of the refugees would facilitate their absorption and save government money and effort.

¹²⁶ "Proposal re Control of Jewish Migration", letter to Dept. from Sir Samuel Cohen, 6 September 1938, cit. sup.

¹²⁷ Ibid., "Refugees — General Policy File, 1938-40", letter to Minister, 3 November 1938.

¹²⁸ Ibid., Memo by T. H. Garrett, 9 November 1938.

The amount that could be achieved by the Welfare Society depended largely on the capital available to cover fares, landing money and settlement needs.¹²⁹ In view of the attitude of non-Jews in Australia, "the last thing the Welfare Society wanted was that the government should ever have to pay one penny for Jewish migration for fear of a possible backlash against the Jews".¹³⁰ There was a tacit understanding of this fact between the Government and the Society. The A.J.W.S. had to raise funds for its own administration. The cost of conducting the work of the Society was at least £3,000 per annum and this did not include money advanced to assist migrants to establish themselves.¹³¹ At the Melbourne conference of 1938, it was decided to hold another appeal for £50,000 with £20,000 as the New South Wales quota. This appeal was commended by McEwen who wrote to the Victorian branch that:

I feel that any responsible body of Australian citizens who devote themselves to such a task as this, are not only doing necessary work in the interests of these unfortunate refugees but are performing a service of real value to Australia.¹³²

Melbourne raised its quota within a few weeks, while in Sydney £15,000 was subscribed at the first appeal meeting.¹³³ The appeal was very successful, but financial assistance was still

¹²⁹ Great Syn. Annual Report, 1938.

¹³⁰ Interview with P. A. Cullen.

¹³¹ "Refugees -- General Policy File", Report on the activities of the A.J.W.S., cit.sup.

¹³² "Australian Refugee Immigration Committee, Policy File", letter from McEwen to A. Michaelis, cit.sup.

¹³³ A.J.H., 13 October 1938.

sought from overseas to aid in the absorption of the refugees. In March 1939, Gerald de Vahl Davis, among other Jewish communal leaders, visited America to request aid from the American Refugee Relief Organization which was impressed by the Welfare Society's efforts.¹³⁴ The American organization readily agreed to assist the Society's rural and business ventures for the refugees.¹³⁵ The wealthy American Jewish community was anxious to give financial assistance to any country prepared to admit Jewish refugees because of its own country's comparatively small quotas.

A number of auxiliary committees were formed in 1938 to further the Welfare Society's aims. Under its decentralization policy, the Society wanted as many migrants as possible to settle in country areas and in September 1938 Mutual Farms Pty. Ltd. was created for this purpose. In October 1938, Chelsea Farm, near Windsor, was purchased for migrant training in agriculture.¹³⁶ At first the farm accommodated forty people but in August 1939 its facilities were expanded to accommodate sixty.¹³⁷ The farm was largely a publicity exercise. Great care was taken to purchase only well-established farms and to spread Jewish farms as far away from each other as possible. Various other schemes were considered, including the settlement

¹³⁴ Interview with Keith Moss, who himself visited America.

¹³⁵ A.J.H., 16 March 1939.

¹³⁶ A.J.W.S. Minutes, 25 and 26 October 1938.

¹³⁷ Sydney Jewish News, 18 August 1939.

of Jewish refugees in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area.¹³⁸ In July 1939, after an overseas trip, P. A. Cohen announced that large sums of money from Britain and America would be used to settle refugees on small farms scattered throughout Australia. The money would be invested with £10,000 being provided by the Refugee Economic Committee of America and £5,000 by the Welfare Society.¹³⁹ It was hoped that Jewish farmers in Australia would be as successful as their co-religionists in Palestine.¹⁴⁰ On the whole, these rural ventures were not successful as not many refugees were prepared to settle in the country. Of those who did, about half stayed on their farms until after the war. The rest were attracted back to Sydney because of the difficulty of maintaining a Jewish way of life in the country, their search for economic opportunities or because they enlisted in the services during the war.

Migrants were also sent to country towns where existing Jewish communities were responsible for their welfare and employment. Jewish residents in Newcastle, Tamworth and Wagga assisted in this way.¹⁴¹ Contracts were also made with Narrandera and Grafton to assist refugee settlement in their area.¹⁴² These schemes did not meet with long-term success.

In addition to agricultural work, Mutual Enterprises Ltd. was created with six different committees to help refugees find

¹³⁸ A.J.W.S. Minutes, 3 November 1938.

¹³⁹ Syd. J. News, 14 July 1939.

¹⁴⁰ S.M.H., 11 July 1939.

¹⁴¹ A.J.W.S. Minutes, 16 May 1939.

¹⁴² "Refugees — General Policy File", Report of Work of A.J.W.S., cit.sup.

employment in the professions, business and technical trades.¹⁴³ The Migrant Consultative Council was established in 1938 as the organization representing the refugees themselves and it worked in close conjunction with the Welfare Society. In 1939 the Migrant Advisory Committee was formed as an adjunct to the Consultative Council to advise migrants on general and domestic matters.¹⁴⁴ Thirty people volunteered to become district advisers to the Advisory Committee.¹⁴⁵ A Ladies' Auxiliary was also formed to assist in meeting boats and welcoming the newcomers. All these committees broadened the scope of the Welfare Society.

The Society tried to protect the refugees from being exploited. Permit dealers, for example, tried to obtain permits from Canberra for refugees and aliens often charging exorbitant fees of £20 to £200, although the normal fee was only £2.¹⁴⁶ This type of problem was brought to the attention of the Department of the Interior.¹⁴⁷ The Society also warned refugees against patronizing firms such as the Farm, Business and Baggage Agencies, which were not authorized by the Society as they had been set up by newcomers who had little idea of Australian conditions. In this way, the Society tried to help the refugees safeguard their capital.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ A.J.W.S. Minutes, 8 November 1938.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 14 March 1939.

¹⁴⁵ H.S., 16 March 1939.

¹⁴⁶ S.M.H., 29 June 1939.

¹⁴⁷ "Proposal re Control of Jewish Migr.", letter from F. Silverman, December 1938, cit.sup.

¹⁴⁸ H.S., 27 April 1939.

Anti-Semitism in Poland, stimulated by German Nazism, led to an increase in Polish immigration, but the Welfare Society at first did not regard this as coming within the orbit of the German Jewish Relief Fund. Despite representations from A. S. Rose of Melbourne,¹⁴⁹ the Society declined to take any action to persuade the Commonwealth Government to increase visas for Polish immigrants.¹⁵⁰ In July 1938, a permanent committee representing Australian Jews of Eastern European origins was formed in Sydney to assist Polish Jews¹⁵¹ and in August 1938 a separate Sydney Polish Relief Fund was inaugurated.¹⁵² The Welfare Society then decided to assist all migrants whether they came under the auspices of the Society or not.¹⁵³ At the same time, the Society took over the functions of the Jewish Welfare and Employment Bureau and its general secretary, Frank Silverman, became the general secretary of the A.J.W.S. In February 1939, the assets of the German Jewish Relief Fund were paid into the Welfare Society,¹⁵⁴ which was constituted as a federal organization to deal with both state and federal departments. This ended all dichotomy between the assistance given to German Jews and Jewish refugees of other nationalities. The Government decided that all new Jewish refugee organizations must be associated with the A.J.W.S.

¹⁴⁹ Rose founded the Polish Jewish Relief Fund in Melbourne in 1934 and worked to collect finance and later to introduce a limited number of Polish Jewish orphans to Australia. "Polish Jewish Relief, 1937-1940", letter from A. S. Rose, 21 September 1937, Dept. of the Int. (II) 1939-1972, Corres. Files, Class 3 (European Migrants) 1939-1950, Aust. Archives Office, CRS A434, item 41/3/1039.

¹⁵⁰ G.J.R.F. Minutes, 14 January 1937.

¹⁵¹ H.S., 21 July 1938.

¹⁵² Ibid., 4 August 1938.

¹⁵³ A.J.W.S. Minutes, 1 September 1938.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 21 February 1939.

which was to be the only spokesman for Jewish refugee migration. In 1939 the Austro-Australian Jewish Relief Committee was formed in Melbourne to assist in the decentralization of Jewish migrants and the Government insisted that it affiliate with the Welfare Society. This was done in March 1939, but when this merger did not function adequately, the Government refused to deal with the Relief Committee as a separate organization.¹⁵⁵

The organization, structure and activities of the Welfare Society provided an example to the non-Jewish refugee organizations which were established much later. In December 1938, in response to McEwen's ministerial statement, a public meeting was held at the Town Hall to form The Refugee Emergency Council of New South Wales and to elect communal leaders to the Council. The aim of this Council was to co-ordinate efforts for the refugees and to prevent overlapping. It was not intended to take over the work of the separate religious societies. The Emergency Council had representatives from the League of Nations' Union, the Continental Catholic Migrants' Welfare Committee, the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, the German Emergency Fellowship Committee and the Inter-Church Committee for the relief of non-Aryan Christians and began operating in January 1939. Sir Samuel Cohen was Vice-President.¹⁵⁶

Plans by the Refugee Emergency Council were made to

¹⁵⁵"The Austro-Australian Jewish Refugee Committee", Dept. of Int. (II), Corres. Files 1939-1972, Class I (General Passports), 1939-1950, Aust. Archives Office, CRS A659, item 39/1/1551.

¹⁵⁶S.M.H., 6 January 1939.

establish an Economic Research and Advisory Committee to help explore avenues of employment and suitable new industries.¹⁵⁷ Joint representations were made by the various organizations on the Council to both state and federal governments. In February 1939, a joint deputation approached the Minister for Labor and Industry, Hawkins, and the Minister for Agriculture, Major Reid, to discuss the absorption of refugees.¹⁵⁸

No religious distinction was made in admitting refugees as the Department of the Interior did not request applicants to state their religion. When, in April 1939, the Department introduced a new immigration form which included a declaration of whether a person was Jewish or not, the Welfare Society objected and this was declared a mistake.¹⁵⁹ Care of refugees, however, remained the function of the separate religious organizations and the Emergency Council stepped in only to assist those cases which were not covered by any of the organizations.

Despite the easing of immigration restrictions, in 1939 only twenty per cent of those who applied for permits were accepted.¹⁶⁰ Each applicant had to pass a rigid test, be healthy in mind and body, not displace an Australian in employment and yet be assured of some form of income.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ "Refugee (Emergency Council) Organization in New South Wales for their Absorption, (1938-9)", Minutes of Refugee Emergency Council, 13 February 1939, Dept. of the Int. (II) 1939-1972, Corres. Files, Class I (General Passports), 1939-1950, Aust. Archives Office, CRS A659, item 39/1/4451.

¹⁵⁸ A.J.W.S. Minutes, 21 February 1939.

¹⁵⁹ A.J.H., 20 April 1939, and 4 May 1939.

¹⁶⁰ S.M.H., 25 July 1939.

¹⁶¹ Syd. J. News, 18 August 1939.

Possession of substantial capital was of great assistance in securing a landing permit.¹⁶² Alien doctors and other professionals were not accepted unless they had some other means of earning a living.¹⁶³ As a result, highly intellectual refugees who could have contributed to Australia's cultural development were often bypassed. As the editor of the Herald commented:

The financial criterion is obviously not all important. Large numbers of the victims of Nazi tyranny have been competely robbed of all their possessions...and they will naturally include many individuals of the very type with outstanding technological or cultural attainments who would enrich the life of this country... The plain truth is that the Federal Government has not yet tackled the whole problem of the refugees with that vigour and enthusiasm which it demands.¹⁶⁴

The Rev. A. J. A. Fraser, Honorary Secretary of the Inter-Church Committee suggested that a committee of responsible citizens and state government officials be formed to advise Commonwealth officials on the selection of refugees and ensure that more refugees of intellectual capacity were admitted.¹⁶⁵ No such moves were made in this direction and the Government continued to give preference to those migrants in a good financial position.

In the period 1933 to 1939, the need for granting permits to refugees who wished to enter Australia became ever-more pressing. Initially, the government was not prepared to

¹⁶² S.M.H., 20 June 1939.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 9 May 1939.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 20 June 1939.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 15 June 1939.

change its alien immigration laws to cater for this need. In 1936, however, it changed its policy in the light of improved economic conditions and in response to an urgent appeal from Australian Jewish leaders such as Sir Samuel Cohen. From 1936 until the outbreak of war, the Lyons Government responded sympathetically to appeals made by Jewish communal leaders through the Australian Jewish Welfare Society which was created in 1937 from the German Jewish Relief Fund. The most generous increase in the number of refugee permits was made in December 1938, following the Evian Conference and the Night of Broken Glass. Concurrent with the government's changes in alien immigration quotas, the work of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society increased and its scope was broadened to keep pace with the growing demands on its facilities.

III

There was a significant dichotomy between the official and unofficial attitudes towards the refugees. While both the Australian government and the Welfare Society were very sympathetic to the plight of the Jewish refugees, the reception accorded by the Australian public, Jewish and non-Jewish, was on the whole cold and aloof and, in some cases, even hostile. Both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities were critical of the refugees not as Jews but as foreigners. The established Jewish community, Anglicized as it was, rejected social contacts with the refugees on a non-Jewish, national basis. As Australians they did not understand what was happening.¹

¹Interview with Paul A. Cullen (formerly Cohen).

This rejection was also a reflection of fear and distrust because the refugees appeared as a potential threat to their social and civic status.² This hostility towards the refugees was a typical reaction of an isolated parochial community.

This reaction was exemplified by Sir Samuel Cohen, the acknowledged leader of the community at the time. His status, wealth and power was similar to that of 'a Victorian merchant prince' and this created an enormous, unbridgable social gap.³ As his son, Paul A. Cohen, commented:

There was a stuffiness of behaviour, whether they were Jews or non-Jews. My father wanted to help the refugees but not to mix with them. He would do anything on an official basis but little on a personal basis. This was a snobbish attitude but it was shared by the majority of the established Jewish families. The greater the degree of establishment, the greater the elitism.⁴

Members of the established Jewish community, as Australians, were anti-German but as Australian Jews they wanted to help the German Jewish refugees. These were "separate channels of thought which only wanted to mingle at the edges".⁵ Although the Australian Jews opposed Nazism and Hitler, this had only a marginal impact on their preparedness to mingle socially with the refugees. In addition, there was an enormous language barrier as there were very few German or Yiddish speaking Jews in Sydney. The majority of Australian Jews remained distant from the social needs of the refugees although this varied with individuals.

² Article by Rabbi E. M. Levy in Western Bulletin, Vancouver Canada, 11 September 1943.

³ Interview with P. A. Cullen.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

The refugees saw the established Jewish community's social aloofness as a "cold, unfeeling, materialistic approach which was totally divorced from their needs and the realities of the situation".⁶ They had been severed from the centres of Jewish creativeness and could not understand the Anglicized behavioural patterns of the Australian Jews who stressed formality and good manners — a direct contrast with the more spontaneous European patterns of behaviour. They expected to be received wholeheartedly by the established community but instead were faced with social rejection which created a sense of loneliness and disappointment. As a result, tensions developed between the established Jewish community and the newcomers.

The Australian Jew was concerned that the refugees should in no way jeopardize his position. A few Australian Jews would have preferred the exclusion of all refugees because, as one commented to the editor of the Sunday Truth:

I do not want this place overrun with foreigners, no matter where they come from. I can't stand them, their outlook or their methods of living.

I live Australian, think Australian and play Australian. My kids are Australian and won't have a bar of foreign kids.

Maybe that seems intolerant; but I want to make it clear that I am an Aussie of the Jewish religion.⁷

Although this represented an extreme point of view, most

⁶ Personal communication from Dr J. Schneeweiss who arrived with his family as a refugee from Germany in 1939.

⁷ Sunday Truth, 9 October 1938.

Australian Jews did not want an influx of refugees and favoured only carefully controlled immigration.

The Welfare Society welcomed departmental restrictions on alien immigration. Sir Samuel Cohen, the Society's President, reflected this attitude when he stated:

Our Council is in favour of even more rigorous hand-picking than the government — in its wisdom and kindness — has seen fit to impose.

The view of my Council and my personal view is that only young migrants — who are likely to become true Australians — should be admitted.⁸

Sir Samuel warned members of the community not to guarantee relatives and friends unless they were sure that employment was available. He stressed that Australian Jews must consider the needs of their country as well as of their persecuted brethren and that a cool head was needed as well as a warm heart if the refugee problem was to be solved to the satisfaction of the refugees, the community and the state.⁹

In November 1938, it was reported that a special liner was to sail from Berlin to Australia with several hundred European migrants, mainly Jews, aboard.¹⁰ This report was greeted with dismay by Jewish leaders such as Sir Samuel who immediately cabled London to prevent the ship leaving for Australia.¹¹ The leaders of the Welfare Society were perturbed by the number of refugees migrating independently of the Society

⁸ Smith's Weekly, 1 July 1939.

⁹ Presidential Address, Sixty-Second A.G.M., Grt Syn. Minutes, 31 August 1939.

¹⁰ S.M.H., 4 November 1938.

¹¹ A.J.H., 3 November 1938.

with £200 landing money. These refugees were often 'unemployable' because many were not prepared to risk losing their capital by buying a small business, factory or farm and yet could not secure employment.¹² The Society also wanted permits for personally guaranteed migrants to be granted only if the guarantor was a British subject, so that migrants residing in Australia for less than five years could not act as guarantors.¹³ The Department decided on a more generous policy and allowed migrants who had been living in Australia for three years to act as guarantors and did not require them to be British subjects.¹⁴ Australian Jewry was prepared to assist the few refugees who could easily be absorbed but, because they feared the development of anti-Semitism, they were not prepared to fight for Australian assistance on a larger scale.

The established community expected the refugees to adjust immediately to Australian conditions, to discard any foreign behaviour and to become 'one hundred per cent Australian'.¹⁵ At a mass meeting for migrants held at the Maccabean Hall in July 1939, Inspector D. R. B. Mitchell of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch and a third generation Australian held up the Australian Jews as the ideal type of citizen and stressed that the newcomers must strive to maintain the same high standards. He instructed the refugees to speak English; to abide by Australian laws, especially the

¹²"Refugees — General Policy File", Report to Hon. Secretaries, A.J.W.S., 26 October 1938, cit.sup.

¹³Ibid., Statement from A.J.W.S., 28 October 1938.

¹⁴Ibid., Memo by T. H. Garrett, 9 November 1938.

¹⁵Syd. J. News, 14 July 1939.

wage awards; not to barter; and not to dress conspicuously because:

Those flat leather portfolios you carry, those overcoats reaching to the ground, may be fashionable in Europe, but in Australia it simply advertises the fact that you are a refugee.¹⁶

These instructions from a non-Jew were welcomed by the established Jewish community who feared that any foreign behaviour on the part of the refugees would arouse hostility to all Australian Jews.

The refugees were considered inferior by the establishment, even though they came from the centres of European culture and were generally well educated. The Welfare Society assumed a snobbish, patronizing attitude to the refugees and tended to treat them as units rather than people.¹⁷ Frank Silverman, the general secretary, spoke only in English and treated the refugees with a lack of consideration.¹⁸ The Hebrew Standard acted as the official organ of the Welfare Society and published a weekly page entitled "The New Australian" but the paper's editor, Alfred Harris, was not sympathetic to the problems facing the refugees. Harris requested that people meeting boats speak only English and he criticized the migrants for "congregating in and about King's Cross and Bondi, perhaps not realizing that in so doing they are looked upon as forming colonies

¹⁶ Ibid., 28 July 1939.

¹⁷ Letter from D. H. Drummond, New South Wales Minister for Education, to John McEwen, Minister for the Int., 13 April 1939, in Rabbi Falk, Correspondence File, A.J.H.S. Archives, Grt Syn. Sydney.

¹⁸ Interview with S. D. Einfeld.

which is positively undesirable."¹⁹ He repeatedly exhorted the refugees to demonstrate their gratitude for the privilege of living in Australia, by not undermining the economic position of the established community. The best way to achieve this was, in his opinion, for the refugee to settle on the land.²⁰ As a result of these attitudes, many refugees felt that they were treated like second-class citizens by the Australian Jews.

The rejection of the newcomers created a sense of alienation amongst the refugees. One of their most articulate spokesmen, George M. Berger, expressed this resentment in two strongly worded articles published in the Australian Quarterly. In these articles, Berger claimed that the Welfare Society was hostile to refugee migration and that some of the Society's officers exploited the newcomers.²¹ Although Berger's criticisms were exaggerated, they reflected the refugees' dissatisfaction with the Welfare Society which was considered inefficient and lacking in sympathy to the newcomers.²² As the editor of the Australian Jewish Herald commented, it was run in the same way as other philanthropic bodies, as the hobby of a few individuals, rather than as a concern of the whole community.²³ Its activities were controlled by the conservative, assimilated leaders of Sydney Jewry and they failed to respond wholeheartedly to the challenges of the refugees.

¹⁹ H.S., 27 July 1939.

²⁰ Ibid., 12 January 1939.

²¹ George M. Berger, "Australia and the Refugees", Australian Quarterly, Vol. XIII, Nos. 3 & 4, September, December 1941, pp.39-48.

²² A.J.H., 24 November 1938.

²³ Ibid.

Opposition to refugee immigration also developed in the general community. Most Australians favoured migration from the British Isles and opposed the admission of large groups of aliens for fear that they would undermine Australian living standards. This xenophobia was reflected in the White Australia Policy which virtually excluded all Asians and was a keystone of Australian immigration policy for many years.²⁴ The anti-refugee feelings were both anti-foreign and anti-German. The refugees represented an intrusion of an alien way of life and the Australian non-Jews could not understand their different behavioural patterns and unfamiliar mode of dress.²⁵ This was also a period when Australia had, in the recent past, fought a war with Germany while another war with Germany appeared imminent. At a time when antagonism to Germany was gaining momentum, the less educated Australians were not very welcoming to ex-German citizens, even though they had been subjected to German persecution. The anti-refugee feeling was also a symptom of Australia's isolation.²⁶ This feeling was even stronger in New Zealand where the government refused to increase its refugee quota at all.²⁷ Many Australians believed that European Jews were different in ethics and morality from the Anglo-Saxon Jews whom they respected and admired. There was also a fear of economic

²⁴ Frank Crowley ed., A New History of Australia, Melbourne 1974, pp.267 and 274.

²⁵ Personal communication from P. A. Cullen. The anti-refugee feeling continued after the war. A survey in Melbourne in 1948 showed that over half the respondents wanted to keep out all Jewish migrants. Crowley, op.cit., p.482.

²⁶ Fred Alexander, Australia Since Federation, Melbourne 1972, p.170.

²⁷ Lazarus Morris Goldman, The History of the Jews in New Zealand, Wellington 1958, p.227.

competition from the refugees at a time of economic hardship in Australia.²⁸ All these factors created a sense of hostility to the refugees and led to mounting accusations of various malpractices and 'unsavoury' behaviour. These accusations were used to justify the 'anti-reffo' feeling.

The refugee was seen as embodying many evils and was blamed unfairly for creating many problems by sections of the Australian public.²⁹ Attacks on the refugees were made in both state and federal legislatures. In the New South Wales Legislative Council, Graham Pratten claimed that there should be more stringent control of the inflow of foreign Jews because:

These people should not be considered in the same light as the Jewish community living within our shores. They should all be regarded as foreigners... They are just as foreign to our Jewish community as they are to us. They are foreign to our ways of living, to our ways of thinking, to our ideals and to our aims and even speak a different language.³⁰

Other members of state parliament also warned against an indiscriminate influx of aliens.

Alarmist headlines and articles appeared in the general press, especially the Bulletin and the Sunday Truth, and these heightened anti-refugee sentiments. The Bulletin stressed that the refugees would form unassimilable colonies in the already

²⁸ Interview with Keith Moss.

²⁹ Syd. J. News, 16 June 1939 and "Backyard Industries and Sweating amongst Refugees", Report of A. Nutt, Dept. of the Int. (II) 1939-1972, Corres. Files, Class 2 (Restricted Imm.) 1939-1950, Australian Archives Office, CRS A433, item 39/2/909.

³⁰ New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 156, 8 November 1938, p.2511.

overpopulated cities of Sydney and Melbourne and that these would become the foci of disorder and racial tension.³¹ In addition, the paper warned, the Jews would soon gain control of these cities.³² The proprietor of Truth, Ezra Norton, believed that the refugees would undermine Australian living standards, increase unemployment and economic distress, lower standards of communal life and conduct, and break down professional and ethical standards.³³ The paper's attitude was summed up in one article which stressed:

We do not want Jewish refugees! Not because we do not sympathize with their plight; but because we cannot possibly allow them to undermine our life and economic fabric.

As a racial unit, they are a menace to our nationhood and standards. As an inflow of migrants, they are a menace to employment... it is a problem of self-preservation.³⁴

For these reasons, Truth demanded that all Jewish refugees be refused admission into Australia.³⁵

Critics of the refugees believed that the Government was admitting too many with insufficient government control. In November 1938, the Australian Natives Association passed a resolution that the Federal Government should provide more stringent supervision of alien migration.³⁶ It was alleged that many refugees were entering Australia illegally, bypassing the alien immigration restrictions. In both federal and state

³¹ The Bulletin, 27 July 1938.

³² Ibid., 7 December 1938.

³³ Truth, 9 October 1938.

³⁴ Ibid., 16 October 1938.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ S.M.H., 1 November 1938.

parliaments the allegation was made that the same £50 bond money was being re-used to qualify as many as twenty to thirty different migrants.³⁷ The Minister in charge of immigration, Senator Foll, denied this claim and stated that it had never been verified.³⁸ Some refugees did try to evade the government's alien immigration policy by arriving in Australia on a tourist visa and then remaining,³⁹ but the Government introduced greater control of tourist visas to eliminate this problem.⁴⁰ These allegations of illegal immigration flooding Australia with refugees reflected the hysteria and antagonism felt by some sections of the Australian public to the refugees.

The effects of the depression resulted in a feeling that the admission of any refugees at all would increase unemployment. In the period 1937-1939 there were still 100,000 unemployed in New South Wales.⁴¹ Many Australians believed that all these unemployed should be found jobs before aliens were admitted.⁴² In July 1939, members of the Returned Soldiers' League, Bankstown, passed a resolution that Australians who guaranteed employment to refugees were committing a breach of the Returned Soldiers' Preference Act as many ex-servicemen were unemployed.⁴³ In both the general press and in parliament, Jewish migrants were accused of

³⁷ See Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 157, 2 Geo. VI, 21-26 November 1938, p.594.

³⁸ Ibid., p.596.

³⁹ Truth, 9 October 1938.

⁴⁰ S.M.H., 6 October 1938.

⁴¹ Truth, 4 December 1938.

⁴² See, for example, comment of Senator Armstrong (Labor) even though the A.L.P. as a whole favoured migration. Common. Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 157, 2 Geo. VI, 21 September-16 November 1938, p.596.

⁴³ S.M.H., 5 July 1939.

displacing Australian workmen. In the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, David Jones Ltd. was reproached for dismissing six Australian employees from one department in order to assist refugees. This statement was later denied.⁴⁴ Some Jewish manufacturers and jewellery and other retail stores were also criticized for giving preference to Jews.⁴⁵ The New South Wales Department of Labour and Industry concurred with these objections and forwarded a report to the Federal Government with the comment that there were registered unemployed in all professions in the state except professional golfers and chiropodists. Following this complaint, the applications of all refugees were submitted to the state government before they were accepted.⁴⁶

The problem of refugee employment was twofold. On one hand was the problem of the refugees displacing Australian workers; yet on the other was the problem of the unemployed refugees. Once refugees arrived in Australia, many experienced difficulty in finding suitable employment. In July 1939, the Premier of New South Wales wrote a letter of complaint to the Prime Minister. He stated that there were at least 1,500 refugees in Sydney without employment who lived off their capital. He feared that these refugees would become a charge on the state, especially as he believed over 82% settled in New South Wales.⁴⁷ His aim was to achieve the utmost co-

⁴⁴ N.S.W. Parl. Debates, Vol. 158, 9 March 1939, p.3954.

⁴⁵ Truth, 16 October 1938.

⁴⁶ A.J.W.S. Minutes, Memo on visit to Canberra, 19 November 1937.

⁴⁷ "Premier of N.S.W. — Problem of Employment of Alien Refugees (Including doctors), 1939-40", letter from S. B. Stevens, 31 July 1939, Dept. of the Int. (II) 1939-1972, Corres. Files, Class 2 (Restricted Imm.), 1939-1950, Aust. Archives Office, CRS A433, item 39/2/2197.

operation with the Federal Government to absorb the refugees and to prevent them becoming a drain on public finances. The Department of the Interior, in reply, stressed that 1,500 unemployed refugees was an excessive figure and, at the most, 60% of refugees settled in New South Wales. The Federal Government endeavoured to ensure that only refugees who could find employment and were not over fifty years of age were admitted. In this way, the Minister tried to pacify the fears of the State Premier.⁴⁸

The refugees were accused of working under conditions of 'sweated labour' and of establishing backyard industries where industrial awards were not observed.⁴⁹ In May 1939, Sir Frank Clarke, President of the Victorian Legislative Council made a bitter attack on the refugees and claimed that:

Hundred of weedy East Europeans... slinking, ratfaced men under five feet in height and with a chest development of about twenty inches... worked in backyard factories in Carlton and other localities in the North of Melbourne for two or three shillings a week pocket money and their keep... One group here tendered for the supply of 100,000 articles of women's silk underclothing at seven and a half penny each. No Australian factory could compete with such prices and pay awards.⁵⁰

Similar allegations were made in Sydney by a deputation from the Clothing Trades Union to the Federal Attorney-General, Hughes.⁵¹ The secretary of the Saddlery and Leather Trades

⁴⁸ Ibid., letter to Premier of N.S.W., Alex Mair, 11 October 1939.

⁴⁹ That is, establishments which were conducted surreptitiously as a factory, Report of A. Nutt, 4 January 1940, "Backyard Industries and Sweating", cit. sup.

⁵⁰ D.T., 9 May 1939.

⁵¹ S.M.H., 5 July 1939.

Union, P. J. Sheehan, also accused the refugees of sweating in the leather industry.⁵² The American Bag Store was charged with giving out piece-work to refugees at under-award payments but this charge was not substantiated in the Arbitration Court.⁵³ There was more opportunity for sweating in the clothing trade because the industry worked largely under Commonwealth Awards and, until 1939, there were no specific Commonwealth inspectors. This deficiency was overcome at the beginning of 1940 when Commonwealth inspectors were appointed.⁵⁴

Jewish refugees were said to be receiving 'slow-worker permits' which allowed an employer to pay lower rates to those employees who could not work as quickly as ordinary adults. The secretary of the Clothing Trades Union, Peter Fallon, stressed that Jewish refugees could work as fast, if not faster, than Australian workers and that language was not a barrier — there was no justification to issue them with slow-worker permits.⁵⁵ The belief was prevalent that the refugees deliberately set out to evade industrial awards in every possible way and so should not be admitted into Australia.

Owners of small businesses also opposed the admission of refugees who, they believed, were prepared to offer cut

⁵² D.T., 12 April 1939.

⁵³ S.M.H., 18 April 1939.

⁵⁴ "Backyard Industries and Sweating", Report of A. Nutt, cit. sup.

⁵⁵ Truth, 9 October 1938.

prices in order to attract a clientele. In a letter to the Commonwealth Government, the Business Brokers' Association charged that:

Instead of observing local conditions and standards and showing appreciation of the protection and shelter accorded them in this country, they engage in fierce competition and cut prices to almost non-profit point. Cases have been reported where they have inspected businesses with a view to purchase and inspected books and records and from the information obtained thereof, have opened in opposition.⁵⁶

Local shopkeepers, particularly in the Eastern Suburbs, were adversely affected by migrants setting up in competition. They believed that the migrants did not abide by local industrial awards, especially in the hairdressing business.⁵⁷ Manufacturers in certain industries were also affected by competition from refugees. The manufacturers of artificial flowers were concerned for the survival of their trade should more refugees trained in this field be admitted.⁵⁸ Another charge levelled at refugees was that they set up factories in rented flats with concrete floors to avoid observing wage awards and correct industrial conditions.⁵⁹ It was difficult to police such practices because the powers of inspectors to enter private homes were not well defined.⁶⁰ These charges were made because a number of refugees were engaged in the fully legal production of articles such as gloves, lamp shades

⁵⁶ "European Refugees — Views of Public re Admittance of", cit.sup.

⁵⁷ S.M.H., 13 June 1939.

⁵⁸ "European Refugees — Views of Public re Admittance of", cit.sup.

⁵⁹ N.S.W. Parl. Debates, Vol. 158, 9 March 1939, p.3953.

⁶⁰ "Backyard Industries and Sweating", Report of A. Nutt, p.3, cit.sup.

and other novelties in their private homes. The allegations concerning competition and the existence of backyard industries were, on the whole, exaggerated.⁶¹

Refugees who arrived with capital were accused of investing their money in blocks of flats instead of establishing new industries, as they pledged to do before migrating. In this way, they were building up a "rentier class of foreigners" in Australia.⁶² This aspect was highlighted in an article in Smith's Weekly about a Czech refugee, Leo Grimm, who arrived with £7,000 captial of which he invested £6,500 in a block of flats in Waverley and the rest he used to establish a pawnbroker's business. The editorial comment stressed that refugee Jews who arrived with capital should invest in businesses which would provide employment for Australians.⁶³

The refugees were further criticized for clustering together, forming unassimilable colonies which could become centres of racial tension. In 1939 many newspapers published alarmist articles that such a colony was developing at King's Cross. A leader in the Sydney Sun claimed that:

The situation that so many people said would occur has come to pass in Potts Point. Refugees from foreign persecution have taken it over like Grant took Richmond... Small, hardworking groups of men and women have established factories for turning out shirt and other articles at cut rate prices... The very isolation that everyone wished to avoid has happened right under our own noses.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid., p.7.

⁶² "Premier of N.S.W.— Problem of Employment of Refugees", letter from Premier S. B. Stevens, 31 July 1939, cit.sup.

⁶³ Smith's Weekly, 1 July 1939.

⁶⁴ Sunday Sun, 15 January 1939.

An article in Smith's Weekly alleged that a similar colony existed in Double Bay where, in one area, every flat available was occupied by refugees. One two-bedroom flat in Double Bay was said to be occupied by fifteen to twenty refugees who converted it into a miniature factory in the day-time; it was assumed that this was not an isolated incident.⁶⁵ In 1939 there were at least 3,000 refugees living within three miles of the G.P.O., Sydney, and this was considered an undesirable concentration.

Refugees gathered in the inner city suburbs, especially King's Cross, for a number of reasons. These were the areas close to the city and to the offices of the Welfare Society at the Maccabean Hall, Darlinghurst,⁶⁶ which the refugees visited frequently in their search for employment. In some areas of Sydney the refugees were barred⁶⁷ and this forced them to settle where they could find accommodation. This was often difficult because real estate agents were very suspicious of the refugees who, they believed, would bargain about the rent⁶⁸ and in general were undesirable tenants. Most refugees who went to King's Cross first used it as a base from which they found permanent accommodation either in the outer suburbs or even in the country.⁶⁹ In this period, they played a part in building up the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the King's Cross area. The temporary nature of this distribution of the refugees did

⁶⁵ Smith's Weekly, 24 June 1939.

⁶⁶ S.M.H., 17 June 1939.

⁶⁷ Smith's Weekly, 24 June 1939.

⁶⁸ S.M.H., 20 May 1939.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 15 June 1939, and personal communication from P. A. Cullen.

not lessen the outcry.

Australian professional groups worked to prevent refugees with professional qualifications from entering Australia because of their fear of competition. Doctors and dentists voiced their opposition to an influx of Jewish refugees to the Government.⁷⁰ Architects, engineers and accountants were more sympathetic and did not object to the arrival of refugees. The large number of refugee lawyers who settled in Australia found it difficult to find employment as all European lawyers, whether or not they were refugees, were not trained in the common law tradition. The dentists believed that the standard of German dentists was inferior as they had undergone two years less training. The medical profession was the most significant pressure group opposing the admittance of refugee doctors. The British Medical Association began its campaign in March 1934 with a strongly worded letter to the Commonwealth Government. It stressed that an influx of alien doctors would be detrimental to the medical profession which, it believed, was already adequately supplied with British-trained doctors. It was feared that the German doctors would charge lower fees and lower the standards of medical practice.⁷¹ The Government decided not to bar medical practitioners but to warn them to ascertain whether they were eligible to practise in Australia. In 1938 the

⁷⁰S.M.H., 29 July 1938. See also "Premier of N.S.W. — Problem of Employment of Alien Refugees (including doctors) 1939-40", cit.sup.

⁷¹Migration Restrictions No.46, "Migration to Australia of German-Jewish Medical Practitioners", Dept. of Ext. Affairs (II), 1921-1970, Corres. Files, Alphabetical Series, 1927-1942, Aust. Archives Office, CRS A981.

Department of the Interior decided to alter this policy by refusing all applications of doctors, dentists and chemists who proposed to follow their professions in Australia but were not eligible to do so, unless their applications presented some special features or they were prepared to follow another profession.⁷²

Registration of medical practitioners was a state matter and each state had its own restrictions. Until 1938, the New South Wales government did not accept any German doctors because of a ban against German and Austrian doctors passed during the First World War.⁷³ In 1938 a new Medical Practitioners Bill was introduced to remove this ban⁷⁴ and to place all foreign doctors on an equal footing. Before they could be registered, foreign doctors had to pass the examinations prescribed by the University of Sydney for the Fourth, Fifth and Final degree examinations. The only exceptions were practitioners with outstanding qualifications or those who had been granted a post-graduate teaching position. Eight foreign doctors only could be registered from these categories each year.⁷⁵

In May 1939, because of a shortage of country doctors, the New South Wales state government introduced an amendment

⁷² "Foreign Doctors — Conditions of Practice in Australia (1937-1942)", Dept. of the Int. (II) 1939-1972, Corres. Files, Class 2 (Restricted Imm.), 1939-1950, Aust. Archives Office, CRS A433, item 41/2/1305.

⁷³ D.T., 2 June 1934.

⁷⁴ This decision was made partly because of pressure from the German Government which refused to participate in N.S.W.'s 150th anniversary celebrations until the ban was removed. "Foreign Doctors — Conditions of Practice in Australia", cit. sup

⁷⁵ "Foreign Doctors — Conditions of Practice in Australia", cit. sup.

allowing up to five foreign doctors to practise in specified country areas for a period of five years.⁷⁶ The Bill was supported by those localities without a medical practitioner⁷⁷ but was criticized by the British Medical Association which feared that it would harm the position of medical graduates and existing country doctors.⁷⁸ Some members of the Lang Labor Party also criticized the scheme in parliament on the grounds that it gave preference to a few select individuals.⁷⁹ Critics of the scheme believed that the government should increase the subsidies for country doctors in order to attract British-trained doctors. One member of the Lang Party claimed that the fact that the amendment was introduced was an illustration of the "intrigue, manipulation and nefarious business methods that Jews were capable of and that led to the growth of anti-Semitism in Germany".⁸⁰

In 1939 there were forty-eight refugee doctors in New South Wales who were not registered.⁸¹ It was alleged that some of these alien practitioners set themselves up in practice even though they were unregistered. This was seen as harmful to the high ethical standards of the Australian medical profession⁸² and was opposed by the British Medical Association.

⁷⁶S.M.H., 6 May 1939.

⁷⁷For example, Tullibigeal requested the services of a refugee doctor at its hospital.

⁷⁸D.T., 23 July 1939. The British Medical Association was the forerunner of the Australian Medical Association.

⁷⁹S.M.H., 18 May 1939.

⁸⁰D.T., 19 May 1939.

⁸¹"Premier of N.S.W. — Problem of Employment of Alien Refugees", *cit.sup.*

⁸²"Foreign Doctors — Conditions of Practice in Australia", *cit.sup.*

The Association was so determined in its opposition to refugee doctors that Senator Foll, Minister for the Interior in 1939, accused it of being 'narrow minded' and of excluding many outstanding refugee doctors from practice in Australia.⁸³

Some Australians feared that the Jewish refugees would introduce political tension because of their hatred for Nazism and Hitler. At a special English class held at Paddington Junior Technical School, the refugees were told not to criticize Hitler in any way by their teacher, R. Blackmore.⁸⁴ The Welfare Society also warned the refugees against becoming involved in political arguments or being critical of the Nazi regime.

Criticism was often directed at the refugees on other grounds. Some people believed that they would increase the incidence of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis in Australia.⁸⁵ Claims of the refugees being in poor health or unsatisfactory physical condition were, on the whole, not true since all refugees were examined by the medical officers attached to British consular offices so that their medical certificates were almost always genuine.⁸⁶ The special English classes organized by the Department of Education received unfavourable comments because of the fear that these classes would reduce the funds available for the state school system.⁸⁷

⁸³ S.M.H., 22 and 23 June 1939.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 21 June 1939.

⁸⁵ N.S.W. Parl. Debates, Vol. 158, 15 March 1939, p.4024.

⁸⁶ "Backyard Industries and Sweating", letter to Prime Minister from Senator Foll, 8 June 1939, cit.sup.

⁸⁷ N.S.W. Parl. Debates, Vol. 157, 2 March 1939, pp.3837-

The refugees also aroused antagonism because they differed in dress and mannerisms. In order to succeed in a new land, the refugees often thrust themselves forward giving the appearance of being greedy.⁸⁸ The German and Austrian Jews seemed arrogant and overbearing. In October 1938, T. V. Hull, Captain of the Aorangi, which arrived from Vancouver with approximately seventy refugees aboard, protested to the Federal Marine Stewards' Association at what he claimed was 'arrogant' behaviour by a few Jews who made the trip a nightmare.⁸⁹ These differences, combined with fears of unemployment, sweating, cut prices and the formation of alien colonies, gave the word 'reffo' (refugees) a derogatory meaning in the late 1930's.⁹⁰

Both federal and state governments tried to ensure that there was no justification for criticism of the refugees. All allegations of economic malpractice were thoroughly investigated by the Commonwealth Investigations Branch but the Federal Government failed to find any tangible evidence to substantiate the charges.⁹¹ The Welfare Society had only one case reported to it, that of Chaim Borkowski. He was employed at the General Paint Company, Paddington, by a foreign Jew, Scher, who had been living in Sydney for some time. Scher paid Borkowski the full wages by cheque and then forced him to return half of his wages in cash.⁹² This system was used in

⁸⁸ Muirden, op.cit., p.57.

⁸⁹ S.M.H., 24 October 1938.

⁹⁰ Muirden, op.cit., p.57.

⁹¹ S.M.H., 15 April 1939.

⁹² "Backyard Industries and Sweating", Report of A. Nutt, p.7, cit.sup.

some cases where alien workers required education in local working methods. During this transition stage they were sometimes paid the full award wage but were then required to make repayment of part of the wage to the employer.⁹³ When Borkowski's case was brought to court, Scher, while proclaiming his innocence, decided to settle the matter privately with the plaintiff in the middle of the proceedings.⁹⁴ Except for this isolated case, no other specific examples of economic malpractice or unfair competition were brought to light.

The government introduced a number of measures to control sweating and prevent contravention of industrial awards. Senator Foll decided that all aliens should sign a declaration on the landing permit that they would abide by all awards of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court and all other statutory industrial awards.⁹⁵ In June 1939, the government introduced a bill aimed at stricter control of sweating by giving the Arbitration Court absolute power to frame awards which would give unconditional preference to unionists.⁹⁶ The Commonwealth Government also appointed a special investigator, A. L. Nutt, to ensure that no clusters of foreigners developed, that Australian workers were not displaced by aliens, and that industrial awards were observed.⁹⁷ A registration bill was introduced first in 1938 and then again

⁹³"Backyard Industries and Sweating", Report of R. S. Browne, cit.sup.

⁹⁴"Premier of N.S.W. — Problem of Employment of Alien Refugees", cit.sup.

⁹⁵S.M.H., 22 April 1939.

⁹⁶Ibid., 6 June 1939.

⁹⁷Ibid., 22 April 1939.

in 1939 for the registration of all migrants to allow for stricter control of aliens, to ensure that there were no undue concentrations of aliens in one area and to protect Australian living standards.⁹⁸ The Commonwealth Government sought the assistance of state governments in information gathering and preventing the refugees congregating in certain districts. The Premier of New South Wales was happy to co-operate in this matter and offered the help of the Central Recording Bureau in Sydney.⁹⁹ In this way, both federal and state governments retained control of the activities of the refugees so that they did not become a political liability.

The Australian Government did not succumb to anti-refugee pressures as occurred in New Zealand. It felt that there was no substance to the accusations against the refugees. The Lyons Government continued its generous refugee policy because of 'its humanitarianism and the influence of prestigious Australian Jews such as Sir Samuel Cohen'.¹⁰⁰ The Government believed that if it accepted a limited number of wealthy and well educated refugees, they could assist Australia's development. The refugees' rapid adjustment to the Australian way of life and their subsequent success in business and the professions justified the Government's confidence.

Despite the fact that the number of refugees who settled in Australia was comparatively small they made a valuable contribution to Australia's development. During the period

⁹⁸ Ibid., 10 May 1939.

⁹⁹ "Jews/Refugees/Congregating in Districts", Dept. of Int. (II) 1939-1972, Corres. Files, Class 2 (Restricted Imm.), 1939-1950, Aust. Archives Office, CRS A433, item 39/2/742.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with P. A. Cullen.

1934-1940, according to the Welfare Society's calculations, over 5,000 Jewish migrants arrived in New South Wales.¹⁰¹ Of these, 1,885 arrived in 1938¹⁰² and 1,516 arrived in the first six months of 1939.¹⁰³ The largest proportion of refugees who came to Australia settled in New South Wales which attracted three times as many Hungarians and Czechs and double the number of Germans, Lithuanians and Rumanians as Victoria.¹⁰⁴ It was claimed in a pamphlet produced in association with the A.J.W.S. that 54% of the refugees were highly skilled tradesmen and technicians; 22% were businessmen; 7% were professionals; 5% rural workers; and 12% others. The A.J.W.S. claimed that they were a valuable asset in these fields.¹⁰⁵

The refugees helped establish new industries and so increased employment opportunities. Senator Foll outlined these new industries which included optical and scientific instruments; weaving of silk and rayon, printing of textiles, glove making, fountain and propelling pens, Viennese knitted ware, elastic webbing, cosmetics and bakelite goods.¹⁰⁶ The technical skills of the refugees also reinforced established firms. In June 1939 the Main Roads Commissioner stated that the position of the Main Roads Board was strengthened by the employment of three highly qualified refugees whose ability and

¹⁰¹The figure 5,340 is derived from the records of the Welfare Society. On the other hand, the census of 1947 showed 13,220 persons identifying themselves as Jews, an increase of only 3,000 over the 1933 census figures of 10,300. Given the circumstances, there is no way of determining how many Jewish refugees arrived in this period. Many of those whose Jewish identity was thrust upon them by Hitler clearly discarded it as soon as possible, while others would have been afraid to identify themselves as Jews.

¹⁰²S.M.H., 14 July 1939.

¹⁰³Ibid., 24 August 1939.

¹⁰⁴Berger, op.cit., pp.39-48.

¹⁰⁵Pamphlet of the European Refugees' Appeal, associated with the A.J.W.S.

¹⁰⁶S.M.H., 25 July 1939.

experience was of great assistance.¹⁰⁷ In this way, the refugees furthered Australia's industrial development.

Australia needed to increase its population for economic and military reasons but the low birth rate meant that more migrants were needed to achieve this. In 1939 Senator Foll estimated that Australia needed at least three million migrants.¹⁰⁸ The refugees helped increase Australia's population to some extent. The refugee women were also a valuable asset because they were:

A body of women whose courage, fortitude and determination to make a new life with their husbands and children in the country which has given them a new opportunity, stamps them as fine as any who have come to our shores since our own pioneers.¹⁰⁹

They brought with them a quality of dedicated motherhood and they inculcated into their children, whether born in Europe or later in Australia, a love for their newly adopted homeland.

Australia's cultural development was stimulated by the refugees. Many of them were well educated and they brought with them a more cosmopolitan way of life.¹¹⁰ In every way the refugees represented a "far higher grade of mentality than ever experienced in alien immigration".¹¹¹ In this way, they broadened their new homeland's cultural and artistic life.

Many refugees wished to demonstrate their gratitude

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 20 June 1939.

¹⁰⁸ Syd. J. News, 7 July 1939.

¹⁰⁹ "Backyard Industries and Sweating", comment of Inspector R. S. Browne, cit.sup.

¹¹⁰ Len Fox, Australia and the Jews: The Facts about Jewish Influence, The Facts about the Refugees, Melbourne 1943, p.27.

¹¹¹ "Backyard Industries and Sweating", comment of Inspector R. S. Browne, cit.sup.

by enlisting in the Australian Defence Forces. At a meeting of Jewish refugees held in April 1939, the formation of a special foreign legion was proposed but the Minister for Defence, Street, pointed out that this was not possible. Street stated that the Military Board had the power to approve, in special cases, persons who were not naturalized British subjects and it was decided that individual migrants should apply on this basis to enlist for military service.¹¹²

Most of the Jewish refugees arrived in Australia with a deep sense of gratitude to the Australian Government for saving them from Nazism. They were keen to learn English and adapted themselves quickly to Australian conditions. Thus, they proved themselves to be "Hitler's loss and Australia's gain".¹¹³ Although the initial response to them was antagonistic, they were gradually accepted during the Second World War and by October 1943 were exempted from all police and security restrictions placed on enemy aliens.¹¹⁴ In every way the refugees proved themselves of value in Australia, out of all proportion to their small numbers. The impact they had on the internal development of the New South Wales Jewish community was of even greater significance.

¹¹² S.M.H., 26 April 1939.

¹¹³ See pamphlet by Brian Fitzpatrick, Refugees: Hitler's Loss, Our Gain, Melbourne 1945.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE

A CHANGING COMMUNITY —

NEW SOUTH WALES JEWRY IN THE 1930's.

The decade of the 1930's was a watershed in the history of New South Wales Jewry. During this period the foundations were laid for a complete transformation of all aspects of communal life. This was a direct outcome of the rise of Hitler. The Nazi racist theories forced many of the assimilated Australian Jews to reassess their concept of Jewishness, thereby strengthening their own sense of Jewish identity. As Sir Samuel Cohen stated:

Many of us have roots in Australia from the very early days — my own company was established in 1836 and I, in common with a large number of co-religionists, have looked upon myself as an Australian of the Jewish faith. Unfortunately, it is different in Europe and Hitler aims to show us as a race apart.¹

In addition, the communal leaders' endeavours to assist the newcomers forced them to become more inward looking and involved with purely Jewish problems. The refugees themselves introduced new dimensions to Sydney Jewry. They came from key centres of Jewish thought and culture and brought with them a knowledge of the new developments in Judaism and a strong sense of Jewish identification. The synthesis of Sydney Jewry's changed attitudes, together with the arrival of refugees, in the short term produced rapid changes in the late 1930's and, in the long term, resulted in a transformation

¹Great Synagogue Minutes, Presidential Report, Sixty-second Annual General Meeting, 3 August 1939.

of Sydney Jewry with the newcomers assuming control of all aspects of communal life.

Until the 1930's, the Great Synagogue had been the main influence in communal life.² The Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue did not succeed in its attempt to provide a more orthodox form of worship and the Great Synagogue's religious standards continued to dominate the community. In the 1930's, however, greater diversification of religious practice developed with the formation of the first liberal congregation and the creation of more orthodox congregations. These developments resulted from the interaction of forces within the established community and from without, with the impact of the refugees.

The growth of Liberal Judaism in the late 1930's added a new dimension to the religious practices of New South Wales Jewry. Liberal Judaism was a more moderate offshoot of the Reform movement. It believed in the right of each generation to amend or abrogate any Jewish law in order to adapt it to its own needs,³ and it was affiliated with the World Union of Progressive Judaism. The Movement, which had its origins in Germany in the early nineteenth century, was very slow to penetrate Australia. The first Liberal congregation, the Temple Beth Israel, was established in Melbourne in 1930 but attempts to establish a similar congregation in Sydney in the

² Australian Jewish Herald, 13 June 1939.

³ P. Y. Medding, From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community, Melbourne 1968, p.85.

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early 1930's failed.⁴ This was despite strong support for reform ideas as indicated in the columns of the Jewish newspapers,⁵ and in the frequent motions for reforming the synagogue service proposed at the Great Synagogue's general meetings. Sydney Jewry lacked a sufficient body of people prepared to promote and take an active part in the establishment of a Liberal congregation.⁶ Most of the refugees who settled in Sydney before 1939 were wealthy, well educated, assimilated German Jews who had been associated with the Liberal or Reform movements in Europe rather than with orthodoxy. They provided a basis for the foundation of a Liberal congregation, the Temple Emanuel.

In March 1938, Rabbi Dr H. M. Sanger of the Temple Beth Israel, Melbourne, visited Sydney as a delegate to the Australian and New Zealand Zionist Conference. Rabbi Sanger, born and educated in Germany, was appointed to the position of senior Rabbi of the Temple Beth Israel in 1936.⁷ He provided much of the enthusiasm and leadership for the creation of the Temple Emanuel. During his visit to Sydney, he held a meeting at the Carlton Hotel, attended by thirty to forty people, to discuss the establishment of a Liberal Synagogue. A further meeting was held in April when it was resolved to hold the first Jewish progressive service at the Maccabean Hall in order to assess the amount of interest in the movement.⁸ This service,

⁴Hebrew Standard of Australasia, 10 October 1930 and 6 February 1931.

⁵See, for example, The Maccabean, 11 and 18 October 1929

⁶Ibid., 18 October 1929, and personal correspondence from Rabbi Dr H. M. Sanger.

⁷Information from correspondence from Rabbi Dr H. M. Sanger

⁸Minutes of the Provisional Committee of the Temple Emanuel, 27 April 1938.

conducted by Rabbi Sanger, was extremely well attended with about five hundred worshippers present. After the service, a meeting was held in the library where 173 people registered their support for the movement. A motion was passed affirming the formation of a Progressive Jewish Congregation⁹ and in June 1938 a provisional Board was created with Cecil A. Luber as President. Sabbath services were commenced at the Maccabean Hall and a booklet explaining the meaning of Progressive Judaism was published to attract new members.¹⁰ In July 1938 it was decided that, while abroad, Luber would interview prospective ministers. On his return, he recommended either Rabbi Max Schenk of Washington Heights, New York, or Rabbi Perlzweig of Finsbury Park Congregation, London.¹¹ After a period of negotiation, Rabbi Schenk's appointment was confirmed¹² and he was inducted on his arrival in Sydney in September 1939 by Rabbi Sanger.¹³ Rabbi Schenk's leadership qualities provided the additional stimulus needed for the growth of the Temple Emanuel.

The creation of a Liberal Congregation was an important development for Sydney Jewry. Its founders' aim was to provide Sydney Jewry with a more modern alternative of Jewish practice and ritual. They also wanted to provide a medium of contact for Jews who had drifted away from Judaism.¹⁴

⁹H.S., 19 May 1938.

¹⁰"What is Progressive Judaism? A Dialogue", issued by the Provisional Committee of the Temple Emanuel, Sydney 1938.

¹¹Minutes of the Temple Emanuel, 26 October 1938.

¹²Ibid., 22 June 1939.

¹³Ibid., 7 September 1939.

¹⁴First Annual Report, Temple Emanuel, 1940.

Of the 10,000 Jews in Sydney, only a little over one-quarter were affiliated with a congregation — the leaders of the Liberal Movement hoped to appeal to the remaining thousands.¹⁵ The movement also introduced a more liberal policy to proselytes and in this way aimed to preserve Judaism by enabling children of mixed marriages to remain Jewish.¹⁶ The creation of the Temple Emanuel thus provided a new instrument for Jewish survival in Australia.

The leadership for the new movement came from the ranks of the established Australian Jewish community rather than from the refugees. The son of Sir Samuel S. Cohen, President of the Great Synagogue in 1938, Paul A. Cohen,¹⁷ was the Temple Emanuel's first honorary Treasurer. Gerald de Vahl Davis was on the executive of the Central Synagogue before he joined the Liberal Movement and Cecil A. Luber was another leading member of the community. These local Jews were experienced in administering a congregation, they knew the channels that would lead to success and they possessed the financial resources necessary for the establishment of a new congregation. The refugees, on the other hand, were faced with the difficulty of understanding a new language and of establishing themselves in a new land. Moreover, the formal Anglo-Saxon procedures of motions, seconding amendments and

¹⁵ "What is Progressive Judaism?" op.cit.

¹⁶ A.J.H., 10 December 1936.

¹⁷ Major-General Cullen had his surname changed from Cohen in 1941.

quorums at committee meetings were foreign to them and made it difficult for them to accept key leadership positions.¹⁸

It was the refugees, however, who possessed the knowledge and experience of the structure and procedures of a progressive congregation. Fritz Coper, a German refugee, organized the choir while the first organist was Dr Theodor ~~g~~ ^c Shoenb~~u~~rger who had been professor of Music at the Stern Conservatorium and had played the organ for twenty-five years with a Liberal congregation in Berlin.¹⁹ Two other refugees who were associated with the Welfare Society, Dr Dora Peysor and Dr W. Matsdorf, were welcomed to the ranks of the Liberal leadership.²⁰ In July 1939 a Liberal Rabbi, Dr Oppenheim, Rabbi Emeritus of the Mannheim Congregation, Germany, arrived in Sydney to offer thanksgiving prayers on behalf of those members of German Jewry who had settled safely in Australia and to plead for their oppressed brethren in Germany.²¹ In this way, the refugees provided the necessary catalyst for the creation of Sydney Jewry's first Liberal congregation.

There was little opposition to the formation of the Temple Emanuel from the lay leadership of the orthodox congregations. The President of the Great Synagogue, Sir Samuel Cohen, commented in his annual report for 1939 that the spread of the movement to Sydney was inevitable as Liberal Judaism was an integral part of all the larger Jewish communities.

¹⁸ Rev. W. Katz, And the Ark Rested: The Story of a Jewish Community Born during the Holocaust in Europe, Sydney 1966, pp.24-26.

¹⁹ Sydney Jewish News, 18 August 1939.

²⁰ Temple Emanuel Minutes, 9 August 1938.

²¹ Sydney Jewish News, 14 July 1939.

Sir Samuel stressed that the new synagogue looked chiefly to unaffiliated Jews for its membership and that its leaders intended to work in harmony with the Great Synagogue. This desire was reciprocal.²² The main opposition to the movement came from the orthodox rabbinate but in the late 1930's there was a paucity of rabbinical leadership with only Rabbi Falk at the Great and Rabbi Kirsner at the Mizrachi to voice disapproval. As a result the Liberal Movement was integrated into the religious structure of the community with minimal opposition.

In the second half of the 1930's there was a gradual strengthening of orthodox Judaism. Before 1933, all the congregations in New South Wales were orthodox in name only and to the orthodox Jewish refugees who arrived after 1933 New South Wales Jewry appeared to be a spiritual wilderness. It was unimaginable to them that a situation could exist where there was no butcher shop which sold kosher meat only, that ministers attended public Jewish functions where non-kosher meat was served, and that on the second day of the Jewish Festivals *shochtim* travelled to the abattoirs and ministers conducted funerals, a time when such activities were forbidden by orthodox tradition. The influence of new ministerial leadership and the establishment of more orthodox congregations which were bolstered by the arrival of the refugees both contributed to the gradual elimination of these practices. As a result the orthodox congregations were

²²Grt Syn. Minutes, Sixty-Second Annual General Meeting, 31 August 1939.

gradually brought into line with their counterparts in World Jewry.

Rabbi Ephraim M. Levy, Rabbi Cohen's successor, who accepted the position as Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue in 1934, devoted himself to the cause of more stringent observance of Kashruth. Through the Sydney Beth Din he introduced policies which removed the most flagrant breaches of orthodox precepts. In August 1935, the Beth Din passed a resolution that the clergy could not attend weddings, barmitzvahs or other Jewish functions if the catering was not in accordance with Beth Din requirements.²³ Rabbi Levy also introduced facilities to produce kosher wine in Sydney. Before this, wine sold as kosher was not acceptable because the shomer (watcher) had not been present from the crushing of the grapes to the bottling stage. Rabbi Levy rectified this deficiency.²⁴ He also informed the Great Synagogue Board that Saturday evening weddings were not kosher as food prepared on the Sabbath was unsupervised, and that clergy could not attend such celebrations.²⁵

Rabbi Levy was less successful in other endeavours to improve the observance of kashruth. An unsuccessful attempt to restrict the sale of non-kosher hindquarters of an animal, stamped killed kosher but not purged, was made by Rabbi Kirsner in 1932.²⁶ In 1937, Rabbi Levy again tried to end this

²³ Sydney Beth Din Minutes, 7 August 1935.

²⁴ Ibid., 28 November 1935.

²⁵ Ibid., 24 June 1937.

²⁶ Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue Minutes, 5 September 1932.

practice but, after an initial period of success, it was reintroduced. The Great Synagogue Shechitah Board claimed that "consumption of kosher meat decreased at such an alarming rate that licences could not carry on".²⁷ The Synagogue Board believed that its first duty was to encourage people to buy kosher-killed meat.²⁸ In 1937 Levy assisted in an attempt to establish an exclusively kosher meat depot at Paddington for those members of the community who refused to purchase meat from shops selling both kosher and non-kosher meat. The purveyor was unable to pay the shechitah fees and so the depot was closed by the Great's Shechitah Board. Despite heated correspondence between Rabbi Levy as head of the Beth Din and Sir Samuel Cohen, President of the Great, no solution to this problem was reached.²⁹ A further attempt to establish another fully kosher depot at Bondi Junction was made but the management of the shop became suspect when Rabbi Falk claimed that the meat was not kosher. Rabbi Levy was forced to resign in 1938 and Sydney Jewry remained without a fully kosher butcher shop. These anomalies in the observance of kashruth were not removed until Rabbi Dr I. Porush assumed the leadership of the Beth Din as Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue in 1940.

Orthodoxy was strengthened by the formation of the Mizrachi congregation, established in 1933 as a breakaway movement from the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue. The

²⁷Grt Syn. Annual Report, 1938.

²⁸Grt Syn. Minutes, A.G.M. 11 September 1938, Pres. Report.

²⁹Sydney Beth Din Minutes, 6 and 9 November 1937.

congregation came into existence because some members of the Central Synagogue believed that Rabbi Kirsner was dismissed in a most unjust and undignified manner without sufficient notice or compensation. They created the new congregation to ensure that the Rabbi did not become destitute and weekly services were held in private homes. The Rabbi's remuneration, which was very small, was made up by voluntary collections. Initially the congregation had no seatholders and no regular attendance except on the High Holidays when a hall was hired, first at the Waverley School of Arts and later at the Masonic Hall, Bondi. The members of the Mizrachi consisted largely of East European Jews who migrated to Australia after World War I. Although not all members were strictly observant of the Sabbath most observed the dietary laws and were concerned with strengthening Jewish orthodox practice in Sydney.³⁰

In the late 1930's the initiators of the Mizrachi began to plan for future needs. In February 1936 a resolution was passed giving authority to a general committee to collect funds to purchase land in Bondi as a synagogue site but insufficient funds were raised to achieve this aim.³¹ In 1939 the congregation acquired a permanent place for worship when Rieka Cohen, President of the Women's International Zionist Organization (W.I.Z.O.) Ivriah, offered the use of her organization's premises in Bondi. No rent was charged and the old cottage served its purpose of providing a central meeting

³⁰ Interview with Mr J. Lee.

³¹ A.J.H., 13 February 1936.

place for the congregation, which attracted a regular attendance of only twenty to thirty worshippers at the Sabbath services. The continued existence of this small congregation was significant, as the other breakaway congregation from the Central Synagogue, the Machseeki Hadas Congregation, disintegrated in the late 1930's. The Mizrachi did not attract many new members from the refugee migration before the Second World War because most of the more orthodox East European Jews settled in Melbourne in this period, but it became an important nucleus for the more orthodox Jews who migrated to Sydney immediately after the war.

Although most of the refugees were not strictly orthodox in their personal lives, some had been affiliated with orthodox synagogues in Europe and so they joined the established orthodox congregations in Sydney, thus expanding membership. Most of the refugees arrived with some capital and tended to congregate in the Eastern Suburbs, the second area of settlement because it was more fashionable.³² Some of these German Jews joined the Central, stimulating its growth. The Great Synagogue also gained new members but it was considered more aloof from the refugees' needs. The Newtown and Bankstown Synagogues were less affected as fewer refugees settled in these areas. Overall, the refugees came to Australia with a greater awareness of their Jewishness and this brought a revival to all the synagogues in New South Wales.

³² Charles Price, "Jewish Settlers in Australia", Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Vol. V, Part VIII, May 1964.

The ministerial ranks were also infused through the arrival of refugees with ecclesiastical training who brought with them dedication to orthodoxy and new ideas. In July 1937, the Rev. E. Wolff was appointed Second Reader at the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue. Wolff left Germany in 1937 and spent a few months in England where his journey to Australia was organized by Woburn House, London. Other additions to the clergy included the Rev. W. Katz, who arrived in 1939 and officiated first with the Tamworth Hebrew Congregation and later with the Northern Suburbs Hebrew Congregation. The Rev. I. Rabinovitch, who was Oberkantor in Vienna, accepted a post at the Newtown Synagogue in 1939, filling the vacancy created by Rabbi Lenzer's death in 1937. It was hoped that this appointment would attract some of the Central European migrants who settled in Sydney between 1938 and 1939, but this did not eventuate.³³

The refugees strengthened the Jewish congregations in the outer metropolitan suburbs and country districts as a result of the Welfare Society's policy of decentralization. In 1937 the Newcastle Hebrew Congregation enjoyed record attendances at the High Holiday services,³⁴ and the congregation experienced continued growth because of refugee settlement in the area. The Illawarra Jewish Association, which was formed in 1931 at Wollongong by Jacob Glass, a well-known South Coast identity,³⁵ developed in the 1930's partly because of the impact

³³ "History of the Eastern Suburbs Synagogue", Ibid., Vol. VII, Part 6, March 1974.

³⁴ H.S., 23 September 1937.

³⁵ Ibid., 26 August 1932.

of the refugees.

The short-lived emergence of the Tamworth Hebrew Congregation was largely due to the settlement of German and Austrian refugees in this area. A few Jewish residents from established Australian families lived in Tamworth and they held services on the High Holidays at the home of Nathan Cohen, youngest brother of H. E. Cohen.³⁶ In July 1934 an organized Jewish congregation was formed with the hope that an influx of newcomers would help stabilize congregational life.³⁷ The congregation requested the loan of a Sepher Torah from the Great Synagogue³⁸ and this was returned in 1938 when the congregation purchased its own Sepher Torah.³⁹ In 1937 rooms were hired and furnished for use as a synagogue and also for the cultural and social activities of the Tamworth Judean Club.⁴⁰ The refugees in the area attended services in Tamworth and, in 1938, four German refugees were brought from the Glen Innes Experimental Farm for the High Holiday services.⁴¹ In 1939 the congregation agreed to guarantee a position as minister to William Katz and his family, German Jews, only in order to help another Jewish family escape from Nazism. The Tamworth Hebrew Congregation expected Katz to remain in Sydney, but on his arrival in Australia in August 1939, he travelled directly to Tamworth. After the misunderstanding was cleared up, Katz

³⁶H. E. Cohen was a prominent Jewish citizen who was a member of the state legislature and later first Judge of the Arbitration Court.

³⁷Rabbi I. Porush, "The Jews of Tamworth", Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal, Vol. III, Pt. IV, 1950, p.201.

³⁸Grt Synagogue Minutes, 8 August 1934.

³⁹Ivriah, Vol.2, No. 3, December 1938.

⁴⁰H.S., 14 October 1937.

⁴¹Ivriah, Vol.2, No. 3, December 1938.

remained in Tamworth for one and a half years, during which time he officiated as minister. Subsequent to Katz's departure, the other refugee families also moved away and the Tamworth congregation disintegrated.⁴²

Rev. W. Katz left Tamworth in December 1940 to take up a position as minister of the Northern Suburbs Hebrew Congregation formed in 1940 under the leadership of Sidney Morris. Morris had become aware of the increased Jewish population in Cremorne, Neutral Bay and Mosman because of the settlement of German and Austrian Jewish families in those areas after 1938. He befriended many of these refugees and determined to build a congregation around them.⁴³ From this emerged the first organized congregation on the North Shore, a congregation which developed into a significant centre of Jewish life in Sydney. Katz was appointed the congregation's first minister and held this position until his retirement in 1960. In this way, the German and Austrian refugees contributed to the growth of Jewish life on the North Shore.

Another step which would have strengthened religious practice in Australia was the inauguration of regular Australian ministerial conferences to discuss common problems such as proselytism, cremations and means of increasing religious observance. A united Australian Beth Din could also have been created at such a conference.⁴⁴ In October 1936,

⁴² Katz, op.cit., pp.17-18.

⁴³ Ibid., p.21.

⁴⁴ Grt Syn. Minutes, 14 April 1937.

the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation sent a letter to all Australian congregations inviting representatives to a meeting to be held in November 1936 to discuss the creation of a Council of Australian Synagogues.⁴⁵ This invitation was postponed when the Melbourne Advisory Board decided to call a similar meeting to inaugurate a Council in May 1937.⁴⁶ When Rabbi I. Brodie resigned, the conference was postponed again until his successor arrived.⁴⁷ The subsequent date suggested by the Melbourne Advisory Board in March 1938 was considered unsuitable by the Great Synagogue Board,⁴⁸ possibly because of a conflict with their chief minister, Rabbi E. M. Levy. As a result, the first Australian ministerial conference did not eventuate until after World War II when it was convened under the leadership of Rabbi I. Porush, Rabbi Levy's successor as Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue. Before 1939, the rivalry and parochial jealousy between the two communities continued to prevent effective co-operation in the religious sphere. The bitterness created by the 'failure of 1901', when attempts at interstate synagogal co-operation lapsed into acrimony, had not abated.

The refugees did not have as significant an innovating influence on orthodox Judaism in Sydney as they did in Melbourne. As it became known that Melbourne provided a stronger Jewish life with better orthodox facilities, more of

⁴⁵ Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue Minutes, 20 October 1936.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 24 November 1936.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 11 May 1937.

⁴⁸ Great Syn. Minutes, 8 December 1937.

the orthodox Jews settled there.⁴⁹ As a result, more Jews from Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe, where Jewish life was stronger and more cohesive, settled in Melbourne while Sydney Jewry attracted more of the assimilated German Jews. The outcome of these migration trends was that the refugees who settled in Sydney were, on the whole, less committed to orthodox Judaism and they contributed more to the growth of the Temple Emanuel than they did to the strengthening of orthodox practice.

The inadequacies of the system of Jewish education had to be overcome in order to stimulate Jewish consciousness in New South Wales. In the early 1930's, there was an increasing awareness of the need to improve Jewish education by established Australian Jewry. In 1934 the New South Wales Board of Jewish Education passed the following resolution:

That this Council believes the present Jewish Religious Education classes to be no longer adequate to meet existing conditions and resolves as and when funds permit to supplement the right of entry classes by the establishment of after-school classes, similar to those held in Castlereagh Street, in the most populous Jewish Residential Districts.⁵⁰

In order to implement this resolution, Cecil A. Luber proposed a far reaching scheme to re-organize the Board's activities. He suggested that the Sydney metropolitan area be divided into four divisions and that in each division classes be provided during school hours, after school, on Sunday morning and the

⁴⁹For a more detailed discussion of Melbourne Jewry and the reasons why it developed as a more orthodox community, see Chapter VI.

⁵⁰New South Wales Board of Jewish Education Minutes, 13 September 1934.

Sabbath.⁵¹ The aim of this scheme was to ensure that all Hebrew Education centres would follow the same curriculum, to be drawn up by Rabbi E. M. Levy, and that children would be taught by the same teacher both during school hours and after school.⁵² Luber also stressed the need to inaugurate a teachers' training class.⁵³ The only part of this scheme which was implemented was the amalgamation of the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue's Hebrew School with the Board of Jewish Education in February 1937, but this agreement was short-lived. It was cancelled in 1939 because the Eastern Suburbs Synagogue Board felt that they had not benefitted from the amalgamation as enrolments had not increased,⁵⁴ and the Education Board had not provided a male teacher on a regular basis as they had promised.⁵⁵ The only other significant development for Jewish education in the 1930's was the acceptance of Hebrew as a matriculation subject.⁵⁶ In this period pupil enrolment did not increase and a number of right of entry classes were discontinued because of lack of support. Although the Australian Jewish leaders were aware of the need for change in Jewish education, they lacked the impetus and manpower to implement the changes so that Jewish education continued to stagnate.

It was only with the influx of refugees, 1938-1939,

⁵¹ Ibid., 11 November 1935.

⁵² Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue Minutes, 11 October 1935.

⁵³ N.S.W. Board of Jewish Edu. Minutes, 11 November 1938.

⁵⁴ Eastern Subs. Central Syn. Minutes, 15 March 1938.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 9 May 1938.

⁵⁶ Grt Syn. Minutes, 14 December 1938.

that the picture began to change. In 1939 attendance at the Jewish education classes increased rapidly, with the total pupil enrolments up from 584 in 1938 to 750 in 1939. This growth in class sizes occurred mainly in the North Bondi, Bellevue Hill and Double Bay schools. The Double Bay class, for example, was closed in 1938 because of lack of support but was re-opened in 1939 when refugees settled in the area. Within a period of six months the class had forty-six pupils on its roll.⁵⁷ These developments created new problems for the Board of Jewish Education. One difficulty was that of teaching larger classes during the very limited time provided for Jewish education. To cope with this problem, the Board decided to send out two senior teachers, A. Rothfield and P. Rosenberg, in place of one to each of the schools in the Eastern Suburbs.⁵⁸ The additional demands on the Board's resources created an extra financial burden.⁵⁹ These problems generated a positive stimulus to the development of Jewish education in Sydney.

The influence of the refugees on Jewish education was not at first innovative because they lacked the financial resources needed to introduce widespread change and were limited by their lack of knowledge of English. In order to improve Jewish education and bring it into line with other parts of the world, a Jewish Day School movement was required. In 1934 Rabbi Dr Wald of the Central Synagogue suggested the idea of a

⁵⁷ Board of Jewish Education, Annual Report, 1939.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Annual Report, 1938.

model school, with classes to be held after school hours, where Hebrew would be taught in the same way as secular subjects with properly trained teachers and a programmed syllabus.⁶⁰ The Board decided to establish such a school at Bondi and began to search for a suitable property, but the plan did not reach fruition.⁶¹ In 1937 Rabbi E. M. Levy went a step further and proposed that the Education Board purchase the Montefiore Home in Victoria Street, Bellevue Hill, and convert the property into a boarding house and day school for Jewish children.⁶² The principle of a Jewish boarding school was supported but the concept of a separate Jewish Day School was rejected as neither practical nor desirable.⁶³ The established Jewish community continued to oppose the Day School movement for fear that segregation would create anti-Semitism.

In spite of the various new ideas suggested during the 1930's, nothing practical was achieved until the refugees, who arrived in the few years before 1939, began to take an active interest in Jewish education. The initiative for the Day School movement came from these new arrivals in the period after the outbreak of World War II. In August 1942 the first Jewish kindergarten was opened, largely as a result of the efforts of Rabbi H. E. Blumenthal, a refugee from Nazi Germany who influenced Abraham Rabinovitch to provide the necessary

⁶⁰ Board of Jewish Edu. Minutes, 8 October 1934.

⁶¹ Ibid., 30 June 1936.

⁶² Ibid., 8 March 1937.

⁶³ Ibid., 23 March 1937.

capital.⁶⁴ The Jewish kindergarten established in a cottage at Glenayr Avenue, North Bondi, was only a small beginning but it opened a new chapter for Jewish education in Sydney. The refugees were also instrumental in the establishment of Talmud Torah classes in March 1942. These classes, held after school, aimed at providing additional education for the new arrivals who felt that the Board of Jewish Education did not cater sufficiently for their needs.⁶⁵ They were also organized by Blumenthal. In this way, the refugees brought with them both the impetus and the manpower to implement the new ideas suggested during the 1930's.

The events in Europe led to greater demands on Jewish philanthropy. During the depression years the philanthropic institutions faced great difficulties because of the decrease in their income at a time of greatly increased demands on their resources. The joint Rota meetings for providing general relief, established in 1927, ceased to function and the Montefiore Home was in such financial straits that it had to end all outdoor relief in 1933.⁶⁶ By the mid 1930's, the financial position of the various organizations was beginning to improve when new demands were made because of the refugees. The creation of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society was the major change in the institutional structure of Jewish charity in the

⁶⁴Blumenthal studied in Germany and Lithuania, was for a short time a rabbi in Rumania, escaped to England in 1938, came to Australia on the Dunera and was released from internment in 1940. From S. Caplan, "History of the Jewish Day School Movement in New South Wales", unpublished Master of Education thesis, University of Sydney, pp. 18 and 32.

⁶⁵Ibid., p.31.

⁶⁶Sir Moses Montefiore Home, Forty-Fourth Annual Report, 1933.

1930's. The activities of the older institutions, such as the Maccabean Institute Employment and Welfare Bureau, the Chevra Kadisha, the Montefiore Home and the Sydney Jewish Aid Society were also much more extensive in the years 1937-1939.⁶⁷

In order to cope with the refugee problem, the Executive of the Montefiore Home again attempted to bring about an amalgamation of all the local Jewish charities. The Executive felt that it was imperative to conserve adequate support for local charities in addition to assisting the refugees and that the only way to achieve this goal was by the creation of a united Jewish charity with one large scale appeal. A combined meeting was called of the Sydney Hebrew Philanthropic and Orphan Society, the Hebrew Ladies' Maternity Society, the Help-in-Need, Jewish Girls' Guild, and the New South Wales Hebrew Benevolent Society, but no agreement was reached. Amalgamation did not eventuate because of the parochial sentiments of the individual organizations and their lack of understanding of the necessity for co-operation.⁶⁸ The refugee problem which led to the renewal of attempts to unify the charities failed to produce any positive results before 1939.

With the increase of Jewish population, the Montefiore Home Executive began to plan for future expansion. In 1930 the Board purchased a site at Hunter's Hill⁶⁹ but the depression

⁶⁷ Maccabean Institute Employment and Welfare Bureau, Annual Report, 1938.

⁶⁸ Montefiore Home, Forty-Ninth Annual Report, 1938.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Forty-First Annual Report, 1930.

prevented the execution of any building plans.⁷⁰ In 1937 it was decided to begin building the new Home which was to include a hospital, synagogue, and possibly a convalescent home.⁷¹ An orphanage was to be built from the Rachel and Elizabeth Lazarus bequest. The actual building was begun in May 1939 and completed in November 1939. It was envisaged that it would help to provide facilities for Jewish refugees, especially refugee children whose parents were interned or murdered in the Nazi concentration camps.⁷² In this way the refugee problem gave impetus to Sydney Jewry's most important and oldest charitable organization.

In the 1930's, Yiddish culture expanded, particularly as a result of the arrival of refugees from Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe. The Jewish Cultural Home, founded by East European migrants who settled in Australia in the 1920's, expanded its activities and in 1939 promoted the visit of a leading Yiddish actress, Rachel Holcer. Her visit was seen as an event of outstanding importance for Sydney Jewry's cultural development as she brought to the Sydney stage the atmosphere of European and Jewish drama.⁷³ A number of other social clubs included Yiddish cultural activities as part of their programmes. In 1934 the Kadimah Jewish Club, formed in the early 1930's, opened its own premises in George Street. It became the focal point for Yiddish speaking Jews of East European origins who were either concerned with preserving the

⁷⁰ Ibid., Forty-Fourth Annual Report, 1933.

⁷¹ Ibid., Forty-Eighth Annual Report, 1937.

⁷² Ibid., Fiftieth Annual Report, 1939.

⁷³ Sydney Jewish News, 14 July 1939.

Yiddish language or who were not fluent in English.⁷⁴ In 1935 Kadimah organized a programme conducted entirely in Yiddish, an event which would previously have been unheard of in Sydney. At this meeting Rabbi Levy gave a fluent address in Yiddish and his knowledge of the language "delighted all those present".⁷⁵ The use of Yiddish was no longer restricted to a peripheral minority within the community.

The emergence of a second Sydney Jewish weekly in 1939 was a direct response to the needs of the refugees who felt that the editorial policies of the Hebrew Standard lacked sympathy and understanding. In June 1939 the Sydney Jewish News began publication with the specific intention of catering for the needs of the newcomers who, the editor stressed, would be a great asset to the community.⁷⁶ The paper consisted of twelve pages printed in English with a six page Yiddish supplement. It was supported by the Yiddish institutions, such as the Jewish Cultural Home and the Yiddish Young Theatre which welcomed the paper's 'progressive policy' compared with the Standard's conservatism.⁷⁷ The Sydney Jewish News was an offshoot of the Melbourne Jewish News, established in 1930, and its managing editor, Leslie Rubenstein, endeavoured to take a wider view of Australian Jewish problems. Its publication was an important development as it provided a medium for the refugees to discuss common problems and innovations within the

⁷⁴ M. Freilich, Zion in our Time: Memoirs of an Australian Zionist, Sydney 1967.

⁷⁵ A.J.H., 22 August 1935.

⁷⁶ Syd. J. News, Vol.1, No. 1, 16 June 1939.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

community, especially in regard to Zionism.

Another sign of the growing awareness of the community's Jewish identity was the formation of the Australian Jewish Historical Society in August 1938 by P. J. Marks, S. B. Glass, Rabbi L. A. Falk and H. Munz. The Society aimed at arousing interest in the part played by Jews in the development of the Commonwealth and in providing a record of the historical development of the Australian Jewish communities.⁷⁸ This emphasis on the Jewish contribution to Australian development helped increase communal awareness. The formation of the Society reflected the change in communal attitudes. Before the 1930's the leaders had not been concerned with preserving material of specific Jewish interest. They did not accept the concept that Jewish citizens in Australia had made, in some ways, a unique contribution to Australian development because of their different cultural heritage. Until this time they had participated in the non-Jewish institutions but in the 1930's they developed their own, separate, Jewish institution. The creation of the Historical Society indicated the beginning of community self-awareness and the realization that citizens of the Jewish faith could make a separate and different contribution which was worth recording.

A new movement, the Young Men's Hebrew Association, based on the concept of the Y.M.C.A., was strengthened by the events of the 1930's. In 1929 the leaders of the various cultural, social, welfare and youth groups began to explore the possibility of merging the various organizations into one

⁷⁸ H.S., 18 August 1938.

all-embracing organization. From these discussions the seeds for the establishment of the Y.M.H.A. were sown. The Council of Jewish Women provided the pattern for the new organization and Dr Fanny Reading's advice and encouragement during its formative period contributed to the organization's initial success. Dr F. Reading had studied the ramifications of the Y.M.H.A. in America and wanted to form an Australian counterpart. She was supported in this desire by a number of prominent young men such as Abram Landa, Dr Joseph Steigrad and Dr A. Stanley Reading. In November 1929, the first official meeting was held at the home of Dr A. S. Reading and a provisional committee, with A. Landa as President, was elected. The aims of the organization were set out as follows:

All over the world, the Jews are united by means of various organizations for the benefit of the Jewish cause. Australia should join in having a national organization linking up all Jewish men and youths in the community. Only if we stand together will we be able to secure the future of Jewish life and work in this country.

The Young Men's Hebrew Association... has as its aims and objects: Religion, Education, Philanthropy, Social and Athletic activities. This organization will be open to every Jewish man and youth who is willing to foster our ideals.⁷⁹

After a quiescent period, the first mass meeting held to inaugurate the movement in December 1930 filled the Maccabean Hall.⁸⁰

The membership of the movement grew rapidly under the leadership of Dr J. Steigrad (1931-1933). It became the centre

⁷⁹ Young Men's Hebrew Association, Silver Jubilee, 1929-1954, Anniversary Issue, 1954.

⁸⁰ H.S., 20 December 1930.

of debating, cultural and sporting pursuits and so assisted in the training of public speakers and communal leaders.⁸¹ In October 1931 the organization opened its own rooms at 175 Pitt Street so that meetings, previously held at the Maccabean Hall, could be convened at a more central location.⁸² A Junior Section for the ages sixteen to twenty-one was formed in March 1931 and Sub-Juniors for ages ten to sixteen in May 1932, thus extending the movement's activities to the youth. Sections were established in the other major Australian Jewish centres so that by 1933 it had become a fully national organization.⁸³

During 1933 the activities of the movement began to show signs of stagnation with the impact of the depression. Many members lost interest because of business pressures or kept themselves apart to avoid embarrassment because of their personal problems. Only a few stalwarts worked for the movement in the period of Dr A. S. Reading's presidency.⁸⁴ In December 1936 Hans Vidor was elected president and this marked a period of renewed activity and increased membership. The five years of Vidor's presidency were a turning point for the movement with the beginning of many new developments which were closely connected with and accelerated by the influx of refugees.⁸⁵

Hans Vidor, an Austrian Jew, brought to Sydney his own

⁸¹Y.M.H.A. Anniversary Issue, 1954, op.cit.

⁸²H.S., 2 October 1931.

⁸³Y.M.H.A. Anniversary Issue, op.cit.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

concept of the Y.M.H.A. which he saw as being similar to the B'nai Brith. His election to the presidency made the Y.M.H.A. the first major Jewish organization in New South Wales to elevate a recent migrant to leadership. Many of the migrants from Germany and Austria were academics or businessmen and were often well-to-do. For them the rooms in Pitt and later George Streets became a central meeting place which also served as a business centre for those migrants without offices such as diamond merchants and other traders. The migrants who went to the Y.M.H.A. rooms could not speak English and so regular meetings for migrants — 'speak easy nights' — were introduced on Thursday nights to teach them English and help them integrate. In this way, the movement became a melting pot for the influx of migrants who, in turn, stimulated its growth.⁸⁶

After 1933, the 'Y' became involved in an anti-Nazi campaign and tried to combat anti-Semitism in Australia. This policy developed largely because of the influence of Hans Vidor who was acutely aware of the danger facing the Jews in Germany. Through his first-hand knowledge of the situation he was able to arouse other young members of the movement. They organized public meetings, printed pamphlets and published a newsheet in order to create a clearer understanding of the tragic situation of German Jewry.⁸⁷ In 1937 the movement intensified its activities in this field but it came into conflict with the conservative leadership of the Advisory Board which considered its policies to be too radical.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Interview with Sam Karpin.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ H.S., 17 June 1937.

Concurrent with this growth in propaganda work, the movement extended its activities in other directions. In conjunction with the Council of Jewish Women new rooms were rented at 374 George Street. The rooms were managed by a committee of two executive officers of the Council and two from the Y.M.H.A. as a business concern.⁸⁹ This proved a very successful venture and the new rooms became an important social centre for both the established community and the newcomers, as well as providing kosher restaurant facilities in the city centre. Each month on a Wednesday evening the Council held special 'get togethers' for the newcomers and talks were given on Australian history.⁹⁰ The Y.M.H.A. introduced weekly Thursday luncheons which developed into an important discussion forum for controversial issues. In February 1938, for example, Captain G. R. Turner gave a talk on the Kimberley Scheme⁹¹ while in 1939 J. A. McCallum introduced a discussion on the reasons for the antagonism towards the refugees and means of dealing with this problem.⁹² The combined rooms also allowed for joint social activities. Combined C. & Y. Juniors and Sub-Juniors, formed in the late 1930's, allowed young men and women to co-operate in education, sporting and social functions.⁹³ This was a significant development in the social fabric of Sydney Jewry.

This joint co-operative effort between the Council and

⁸⁹ Council Bulletin, Vol.12, No. 11, June 1938.

⁹⁰ Ibid., Vol.13, No. 11, June 1939.

⁹¹ H.S., 27 January 1938.

⁹² Syd. J. News, 30 June 1939.

⁹³ C.B., Vol.12, No. 11, June 1938.

the Y.M.H.A. developed after the failure of a more ambitious unity scheme first proposed by Dr Fanny Reading in 1934. Dr Reading wanted to create one united communal centre where the Council, Y.M.H.A., New South Wales War Memorial and Union of Sydney Zionists would be represented to allow for greater unity and co-operation.⁹⁴ She believed that the centre should be located in the city as she felt that the Maccabean Hall, Darlinghurst, was not sufficiently central in its location to be convenient and should be sold. If all the major Jewish organizations worked harmoniously under one roof, overlapping of money and work could easily be prevented.⁹⁵ Dr Fanny Reading, however, failed to win support for this proposal from a group of prominent members of the Council executive led by Rieka Cohen. They believed that building a new communal centre was too great an undertaking⁹⁶ and were emphatic in the belief that the proposal involved unnecessary financial obligations.⁹⁷ This opposition forced Dr Reading to shelve her proposal.

In September 1935 a goodwill meeting representing most of the Jewish organizations was held at the Maccabean Hall to welcome Rabbi E. M. Levy as the new Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue. At this meeting Rabbi Levy commented on the unnecessary overlapping in communal organizations and stressed the need to create a Council of New South Wales Jewry to reduce this problem.⁹⁸ These remarks gave new impetus to Dr Fanny Reading's Unity Scheme and on 28 October 1935, the Jewish War

⁹⁴ Ibid., Vol.9, No. 2, September 1934.

⁹⁵ Ibid., Vol.9, No. 10, May 1935.

⁹⁶ Maccabean Institute Minutes, 5 September 1934.

⁹⁷ Ivriah, Vol.1, No. 11, January 1936.

⁹⁸ A.J.H., 26 September 1935.

Memorial, the Council of Jewish Women and the Y.M.H.A. held a meeting to discuss the formation of a United Jewish Communal Council.⁹⁹ It was decided that each group should hold a separate meeting on 18 November to ratify the proposals discussed and to elect four representatives to a committee which was to negotiate and complete the details of the Unity Scheme.¹⁰⁰ The Union of Sydney Zionists, Kadimah and the Bankstown and Illawarra Associations were also invited to participate. At the Council meeting of 18 November, Dr. F. Reading spoke strongly in favour of the scheme because she believed that Sydney Jewry needed a central representative body. She stressed that there were too many groups working independently¹⁰¹ and that, in view of the urgency of world Jewry's situation, more co-operative effort was required.¹⁰² The Council meeting ratified the Unity Scheme proposals as did the New South Wales War Memorial and the Y.M.H.A. but, after this, negotiations lapsed because Dr Reading became ill¹⁰³ and the leaders of the other organizations were not motivated sufficiently to bring the scheme to fruition.¹⁰⁴ As a result the Council and the Y.M.H.A. decided to create their own communal centre in the city and Dr Reading's visionary scheme did not become a reality.

The whole question of communal representation became

⁹⁹ H.S., 1 November 1935.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ C.B., Vol.10, No. 5, December 1935.

¹⁰² H.S., 22 November 1935.

¹⁰³ C.B., Vol.10, No. 10, May 1936.

¹⁰⁴ H.S., 27 March 1936.

more pressing in the 1930's because of the events overseas. Before 1931 the President of the Great Synagogue had acted as the unofficial spokesman¹⁰⁵ and this patriarchal form of leadership had provided a cohesive if oligarchal system of communal representation which was sufficient to deal with the problems of the pre-Nazi Era. In the 1930's new issues arose such as the need for public relations, the growth of anti-Semitism in Australia and the integration of the refugees; these required a different approach to leadership.¹⁰⁶ A wider, more comprehensive system of representation to allow for total communal involvement was needed¹⁰⁷ and this gradually emerged in the decade after 1933.

In 1932 the New South Wales Congregational Advisory Board was created as a result of the unauthorized activities of the minister of the Machseekei Hadas Congregation, Cantor Rakman, which were considered a threat to orthodoxy by the Sydney Beth Din. In February 1932 the Beth Din warned the Jewish community against buying meat which was not killed and supplied by shochtim authorized by themselves,¹⁰⁸ because Rakman was permitting slaughtering animals without Beth Din authorization.¹⁰⁹ In April 1932 Rakman further antagonized the Beth Din by accepting a proselyte into the Jewish faith without proper authorization.¹¹⁰ This action caused Rabbi F. L. Cohen

¹⁰⁵ The Maccabean, 3 May 1929.

¹⁰⁶ D. Benjamin, "Twenty-Five Years of Australian Jewry (1933-1958)", unpublished article, A.J.H.S. Archives, Great Synagogue.

¹⁰⁷ A.J.H., 13 June 1935.

¹⁰⁸ Grt Synagogue Board Minutes, 10 February 1932.

¹⁰⁹ H.S., 19 February 1932.

¹¹⁰ Grt Syn. Minutes, 28 July 1932.

to call a conference of all recognized Jewish ministers and the lay heads of the Great, Newtown, Eastern Suburbs and Newcastle Synagogues. Rabbi I. Brodie, Chief Minister of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, was also present. The aim of the conference was to facilitate congregational co-operation, to prevent the occurrence of such unauthorized activities and so protect orthodox Judaism in New South Wales.

The meeting decided to form the New South Wales Congregational Advisory Board for mutual co-operation and protection. It was to consist of the honorary executive officers of each congregation which acknowledged allegiance to the Sydney Beth Din. The President of the Great Synagogue was to be the Advisory Board's convenor and chairman, and the secretary of the Great was to be its secretary. The Board could consider any matter affecting the Jewish community in New South Wales or any issue referred to it by the board of a constituent synagogue or other Jewish organization. It could make any necessary pronouncement to the Jewish or general community. All applications from proselytes were to be referred to the Great Synagogue Investigating committee which was to be enlarged by one representative from each of the other synagogues on the Advisory Board. A New South Wales Jewish Ecclesiastical Board was also formed, its constituent members being all rabbis of the synagogues which were members of the Advisory Board and any other minister recommended by the London Chief Rabbinate and awarded the title 'Reverend' by a recognized Australian Beth Din. The Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue was to act as the Convenor and President of the Ecclesiastical Board which was to carry out the duties and

exercise the prerogatives of a Beth Din except that it could not accept a proselyte until the Investigating Committee had favourably recommended the applicant. The Board could confer the title 'Reverend' on a suitable candidate who passed the examination on the syllabus prescribed by the London Chief Rabbinate. The Board also had the responsibility of verifying the credentials of any Jewish religious official before he accepted a position with a constituent synagogue.¹¹¹

The formation of the Advisory Board was the first step towards providing New South Wales Jewry with a roof organization which would also be the official spokesman for the community. Its scope, however, was limited as it was not elected on a democratic basis and was largely concerned with the ritual matters which had been the catalyst for its formation.

The events in Germany in 1933 rapidly changed the nature of the Advisory Board's activities. When Hitler came to power in April 1933, the Board sent a cable to the London Board of Deputies supporting its efforts to ameliorate the conditions of German Jewry.¹¹² The Advisory Board tried to ensure that no action was taken in Australia which would worsen the plight of Jews. All letters to the general press were carefully assessed as its President was anxious to prevent "irresponsible people publishing letters that would reflect discredit on their community".¹¹³ These activities necessitated that the Board broaden its base of representation. In December 1933 it was

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 5 April 1933.

¹¹³ Ibid., Presidential Address, Annual General Meeting, Grt Syn. Minutes, 31 August 1933.

decided that no organization should take public action on any communal matter without first submitting its point of view to the Advisory Board. All Jewish institutions were invited to appoint immediately one delegate to consult with the Board.¹¹⁴ The Advisory Board no longer represented the synagogues alone and by 1938 it had fifty delegates representing all the major communal organizations.¹¹⁵ Its comprehensiveness continued to be limited by the fact that its members were not elected in a democratic manner. The Great Synagogue continued to exert a controlling influence and its President often acted without consulting the other delegates.

The dominant position of the Great Synagogue leaders produced friction with other constituent members of the Board. The Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue had reservations about joining the Advisory Board in 1932 but decided to do so with the proviso that if the synagogue board was dissatisfied it could withdraw after giving six months' notice.¹¹⁶ Dissatisfaction developed in 1934 after the death of Rabbi F. L. Cohen when the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue felt that Rabbi Dr Wald was not given full recognition as the only minister with a rabbinical diploma in New South Wales.¹¹⁷ As Rabbi Wald was forced suddenly to return to London, the issue was no longer relevant. In 1938 the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue Board decided to withdraw¹¹⁸ because they

¹¹⁴ H.S., 8 December 1933.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 28 April 1938.

¹¹⁶ Eastern Subs. Central Syn. Minutes, 12 December 1932.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 16 December 1934.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 15 March 1938.

felt that Advisory Board meetings were called without their Board's representative being invited. Since they were ignored, there was no point in remaining a member of the Board¹¹⁹ but following a special conference they rescinded their resignation. Other organizations associated with the Advisory Board also expressed dissatisfaction with its conservative approach. The Y.M.H.A., for example, was highly critical of the Board's campaign against anti-Semitism in Australia. The dominant role of the conservative leadership emanating from the established Australian Jewish families associated with the Great Synagogue prevented the Advisory Board from being a representative body of the community.

With the accelerated growth of the community in the late 1930's, the structure of the Advisory Board proved inadequate. The Anglicized Jews found themselves confronted by European refugees who were accustomed to other forms of communal organization. The migrants experienced a lack of sympathy for their personal problems and they believed that Sydney Jewry was insufficiently organized to assist them. Many of them felt that a roof body should not derive its existence from the synagogues alone but should be autonomous and elected democratically. As a result of this sense of dissatisfaction, the wheels were set in motion for the creation of a Jewish Board of Deputies.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 12 April 1938.

The first move to create a new communal organization was made in April 1942 with the publication of an open letter to the community in the monthly review, the Australian Jewish Forum.¹²⁰ The eighteen signatories of this letter called for a mass meeting at which the democratization, reorganization and regeneration of the Sydney Jewish community would be discussed. In response to this letter, the Advisory Board agreed to the need for a new constitution and invited other organizations to offer suggestions. After much controversy, a meeting was held on 7 May 1942 between representatives of the Advisory Board and five delegates on behalf of the signatories. It was decided in March 1943 that "the principle of a unified Jewish community and a single, controlling, directing and representative body" be recognized as "fundamental to the welfare of New South Wales Jewry" and a provisional committee of a Board of Deputies was established.¹²¹ The Board was formed in June 1944 with Saul Symonds, President of the Great Synagogue, at its head.

The foundations for these developments were laid by the immediate pre-World War II refugee immigration. A number of the eighteen signatories of the open letter, 1942, were newcomers and Dr I. N. Steinberg, who came to Australia on behalf of the Freeland League in 1939, was a key figure in the battle for the creation of a Board of Deputies. In this way, the refugee migration of the late 1930's contributed to this area of communal development.

¹²⁰The Australian Jewish Forum, April 1942.

¹²¹H.S., 18 March 1943.

The creation of the Board of Deputies marked a significant break with the previous structure of the community. It provided an organization which could act as the official spokesman for Jewish interests and as a forum for discussion. It helped decrease the parochial bitterness and mistrust between the various synagogues and charities and its creation emphasized the fact that the synagogues were no longer the focal point of Jewish activity.¹²² The struggle for a central communal organization was partly a struggle for supremacy in which the dominant role of the Great Synagogue was challenged. Before the 1930's the Great Synagogue had acted as the official spokesman for the community. Even after the creation of the Advisory Board, the Great's influence continued as its President was also chairman of the Advisory Board. The Board of Deputies' power base, however, was not the synagogues alone. The newcomers often saw the secular and national organizations as more important to Jewish communal life than the synagogue. The central pivot of the community moved away from the Great Synagogue and, as a result, its influence diminished.

By the outbreak of World War II, a greater understanding of the significance of Zionism developed and the movement was no longer on the fringe of communal organizations. This was a result of both the impact of the events overseas and changing attitudes within the community largely brought about by the refugees. The change in the status of Zionism occurred only gradually because the Zionist movement had first to overcome many obstacles.

¹²² P. Y. Medding, op.cit., p.29.

Despite the Nazi era and the modification of the assimilation doctrine in New South Wales, prominent Jewish men and women did not identify immediately with Zionism.¹²³ It took time to overcome the prejudices against the concept of Jewish nationalism which were fostered during the long period of Rabbi F. L. Cohen's ministry.¹²⁴ Many members of the community still opposed sending money overseas while local Jewish organizations were in a position of financial hardship. This argument was raised against the proposal for a voluntary levy of five shillings per member for the Jewish National Fund made at the Great Synagogue general meeting of 1937.¹²⁵ The conservatism of the Great Synagogue leadership and its attitude to the British government's management of the problems which developed in Palestine in the 1930's continued as significant inhibiting factors to the growth of the Zionist movement. In 1934 the Zionists attempted to change the Board's composition by proposing, at the suggestion of Max Freilich, an increase in the number of Board members, but this was rejected. Those prominent Zionists who stood for election in 1934, such as S. Kessler and Dr A. S. Reading, were also defeated.¹²⁶ Following the failure of this attempt to change the Board's composition, it remained a bastion of anti-Zionist sentiment in Sydney, as illustrated by the Rabbi Levy incident.

In December 1934 Rabbi E. M. Levy was appointed as

¹²³ A.J.H., 25 February 1937.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 4 March 1937.

¹²⁵ H.S., 26 August 1937.

¹²⁶ Freilich, op.cit., p.38.

Rabbi Cohen's successor. He was selected for the position because of his excellent qualifications which included an Honours degree in Semitic Studies from the University of London and a Mastersdegree (Honours) in Law from Oxford.¹²⁷ He was also a very polished public speaker. He had practised as a barrister before deciding to enter the ministry and had then officiated for ten years at Durban, South Africa, before coming to Australia.¹²⁸ Temperamentally, and in his attitudes to Judaism, Rabbi Levy was a direct contrast to his predecessor. He instigated a stricter observance of Jewish traditions as illustrated by his efforts to improve kosher facilities and remove all anomalies in the Beth Din's administration of kashruth. In addition to his work in the religious field, he was also an ardent Zionist who immediately allied himself with the Sydney Zionist movement.¹²⁹ He was optimistic that he could win over the anti-Zionists by explaining the cultural, and spiritual value of Zionism¹³⁰ and Sydney Zionists were hopeful that he could persuade the Great Synagogue Board to accommodate itself to Zionism, but this hope was not realized.¹³¹

Dissatisfaction with Rabbi Levy began to manifest itself openly when he accepted the position of President of the Australian Zionist Federation following the resignation of Rabbi Israel Brodie, Chief Minister of the Melbourne Hebrew

¹²⁷ C.B., Vol.9, No. 12, July 1935.

¹²⁸ Grt Syn. Board Minutes, 20 December 1934.

¹²⁹ A.J.H., 19 September 1935.

¹³⁰ H.S., 19 July 1935.

¹³¹ Ibid., 13 September 1935.

Congregation, who was returning to England. Although the Board did not object in principle to Levy's accepting the position, they felt that he had not fulfilled his synagogue commitments because of lack of time and so would not be able to cope with an added responsibility without further interference with his regular duties.¹³² Special Board meetings were later called with Rabbi Levy present to request his regular attendance at all services, to increase his hospital visitations and to keep all official appointments.¹³³ In July 1937 Rabbi Levy ignored accepted procedure and rejected a proselyte's application before it was considered by the Great Synagogue's Investigating Committee.¹³⁴ With this action Rabbi Levy lost the confidence of his Board.

The matter came to a head in November 1937 over the issue of Zionism. In October 1937 the Hebrew Standard reprinted an article on "Zionism and Jewish Nationalism" by Claude G. Montefiore who criticized the whole concept of Jewish nationalism and stressed that Judaism was a religion with no racial connotations.¹³⁵ In his capacity as President of the Australian Zionist Federation Rabbi Levy published an emotional reply. He claimed that because of the ethnic character of Judaism, even in England, Montefiore would be considered as a Jew not an Englishman since "even the friendly Englishman considered it absurd for a Jew to pretend he is an Englishman".¹³⁶ This line of argument alienated the

¹³² Grt Syn. Board Minutes, 12 February 1936.

¹³³ Ibid., 13 May 1936.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 14 July 1937.

¹³⁵ H.S., 21 October 1937.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 11 November 1937.

Australian Jews since it implied that loyalty to both Judaism and the British Empire was incompatible and this struck at the roots of the established community's basic philosophy towards Judaism.

Rabbi Levy's article was publically refuted in the columns of the Hebrew Standard of the following week by two leading Australian Jews. Sir Isaac Isaacs voiced his dissent from Levy's arguments which, he felt, were "suited to a Hitler or a Mosley but not to a British community".¹³⁷ Sir Samuel Cohen condemned Levy's statements "as highly misleading and impugning the whole-hearted loyalty of Jews as one hundred per cent Australian citizens".¹³⁸ Despite all Levy's efforts to affirm his loyalty to the British Empire and to clarify his meaning,¹³⁹ the damage to his standing within the community and to the Zionist cause in Australia could not be undone.¹⁴⁰ As the editor of the Australian Jewish Herald commented:

In my opinion the cause of Zionism in Australia has received a most unfortunate setback by Rabbi Levy's hasty and ill-advised article.¹⁴¹

The controversy deterred many Jews who were gradually being won over to Zionism.

Levy's article provided the final catalyst needed by the Great Synagogue Board in its decision not to renew his contract when the original three years were completed in March 1938. This decision was made at a special Board meeting held

¹³⁷ H.S., 18 November 1937.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 25 November and 2 December 1937.

¹⁴⁰ A.J.H., 25 November 1937.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

on 17 November 1937,¹⁴² and was due to Levy's lack of understanding of and disharmony with the lay authorities. Their diluted form of orthodoxy led to a heated exchange between Levy, as head of the Beth Din and Sir Samuel Cohen, as President of the Board, over the issue of a fully kosher butcher shop in November 1937.¹⁴³ The same applied to their deep-seated suspicion of Zionism as expressed by Sir Samuel Cohen who claimed that "I do not oppose Zionism but I dislike Zionists".¹⁴⁴ In his efforts to strengthen orthodox practice and revise his congregants' attitudes, Levy introduced too many changes too rapidly and was often tactless and undiplomatic. The situation was further aggravated by his failure to establish a working relationship with Rabbi L. A. Falk who felt that he possessed a greater knowledge of Judaism than his chief minister. The situation reached such a critical stage that, in February 1938, Falk asked to be relieved of attending Beth Din meetings.¹⁴⁵ The interaction of all these problems made Sir Samuel and his executive determined to dismiss Rabbi Levy; his reply to Claude Montefiore gave them a convenient excuse to implement their decision.

Rabbi Levy was deeply distressed as he had believed that his appointment was for life.¹⁴⁶ After a series of meetings with the Great Synagogue Board, when they failed to arrive at a satisfactory compromise, he decided to carry out his duties

¹⁴² Grt Syn. Board Minutes, 17 November 1937.

¹⁴³ Sydney Beth Din Minutes, 6, 9, 10 and 16 November 1937.

¹⁴⁴ The Jewish Post, 6 April 1944, in the Marks Judaica Australiana, Special Collections, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

¹⁴⁵ Grt Syn. Board Minutes, 16 February 1938.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 29 November 1937.

after the 31 March 1938, in spite of the Board's decision and, if necessary, to take his case to court.¹⁴⁷ An untenable situation developed where both Falk and Levy acted as Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue. This schism was finally resolved after a special deputation consisting of S. Biber, M. Freilich, R. Rich and D. Levitus met with the Great Synagogue Board to facilitate a settlement.¹⁴⁸ Levy agreed to resign on condition that he be paid two years salary (totalling £2,500) and that recognition be given to his value as a preacher outside the community. In return, he agreed not to accept another position in New South Wales and to leave Australia within three months, during which time he would not participate in the synagogue service unless invited, engage in the vocation of a minister, interfere with Beth Din matters or express himself on behalf of any synagogue or Jewish organization.¹⁴⁹

In June 1938, Levy left for England, a disheartened man. He believed that his forced resignation was entirely due to the publication of his reply to Claude Montefiore. He later claimed that Sir Samuel had ordered all copies of the paper containing his article to be confiscated from the printers and that, on the same day, Sir Samuel sent off the letter terminating his appointment.¹⁵⁰ Levy despised Sir Samuel,

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 30 March 1938.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 8 April 1938.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 20, 21 April 1938.

¹⁵⁰ See The Jewish Post, 6 April 1944.

whom he described as having:

The arrogance of the men with great names in finance and politics, combining it with a supreme and supercilious disregard of the wishes of the Jewish masses and their wide tribulations.¹⁵¹

The Zionist issue did play a part in Levy's dismissal. The anti-Zionists and those who were indifferent to Zionism supported the Board's decision, while the Zionist leaders, such as Max Freilich, rallied to his support.¹⁵² Rabbi Levy's demise was only partly due to anti-Zionist feeling. The real factors were the inadequacies of his approach, his lack of understanding of the philosophy of non-distinctiveness and his neglect of ministerial duties for outside interests. This controversy, however, was the last time that anti-Zionist sentiments predominated in the deliberations of Sydney Jewry.

The Zionist movement in New South Wales experienced a change in its status by 1939 for a number of reasons. The Nazi racist theory as elaborated by Hitler was a most significant factor in explaining the changing attitude to Zionism. As a result of the increased persecution of Jews in Europe in the 1930's Australian Jews came to see the development of Palestine as the only hope for the victims of Nazism because before 1939 no other country was prepared to admit large numbers of Jewish refugees. As the Australian Zionist leaders stressed:

Will you allow this man (Hitler) to say "The Jew must be obliterated?" Or will you say:
"No! The Jew like the rest of the human race

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Freilich, op.cit., pp.56-59.

is entitled to life and liberty?" It is the German Jew to-day; it may be you tomorrow. A strong Jewish National Homeland under British protection and supported, sustained and rebuilt by Jews of the world is the best answer. Zionism aims at just this ideal.¹⁵³

The interest of the youth in the Zionist cause was also aroused by the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany.¹⁵⁴ In the 1930's the Zionist organization assumed the task of helping as many refugees as possible to settle in Palestine, legally or illegally, and this appealed to the younger members of the community.¹⁵⁵

With the development of Palestine and the improvement of sea transport to Australia, closer links were established between the two countries. A number of Australian Jews visited Palestine in the 1930's and often returned as converts to Zionism being impressed by what they had seen. In 1935 Philip Moses, an assimilated Jew born in Auckland, who was indifferent to Zionism, visited Palestine and returned an enthusiastic missionary for the cause.¹⁵⁶ He made a valuable contribution to the growth of Australian Zionism because the sight of an assimilated Australian Jew becoming so involved with the movement made a deep impact on Sydney Jewry.¹⁵⁷ Dr Fanny Reading realized the need for first-hand knowledge of Palestine and tried to organize a group tour following on from the Council conference in Adelaide in 1937. Although the

¹⁵³ poster put out by the State Zionist Council, Silva Steigrad President, Sydney, no date.

¹⁵⁴ Ivriah, Vol.2, No. 6, August 1936.

¹⁵⁵ S.M.H., 6 September 1939.

¹⁵⁶ A.J.H., 19 December 1935.

¹⁵⁷ Freilich, op.cit., p.46.

tour did not eventuate, some Council members travelled to Palestine on an individual basis and this helped to stimulate Australian Zionism.

Interest in Zionism was aroused by the visits of Dr Benzion Shein. Dr Shein settled in Palestine as an agricultural pioneer and then visited South Africa where he began a medical course which he completed in Switzerland. After practising for a time in Switzerland, he decided in 1933, to settle permanently in Palestine and prior to this he visited Australia and the Far East to seek support for Zionism and the Palestine Foundation Appeal.¹⁵⁸ A recurring theme in his speeches was that Palestine was the only country which could offer German Jewry immediate relief and this line of argument won him an enthusiastic body of support.¹⁵⁹ Dr Shein returned for a second appeal campaign in 1938 and again met with an excellent response.¹⁶⁰ At the first appeal meeting held in Sydney in 1938 and presided over by Sir Samuel Cohen £7,400 was raised,¹⁶¹ £18,000 being the total amount raised during the campaign. Dr Shein's second visit aroused a far greater sense of enthusiasm for Zionism than that stimulated by Israel Cohen in 1920, the first Zionist emissary to Australia.¹⁶² This extraordinary success surprised many contemporary observers who opposed the visit on the basis that New South Wales Jewry had been faced with too many appeals.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ C.B., Vol.7, No. 12, July 1933.

¹⁵⁹ H.S., 29 September 1933.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 28 July 1938.

¹⁶¹ A.J.H., 14 July 1938.

¹⁶² Ibid., 28 July 1938.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 26 May 1938.

Other Zionist emissaries helped boost Zionist activity. In November 1934 Itamar Ben Zvi of Palestine and Morris Alexander of Johannesburg visited Australia and together they addressed a packed meeting at the Maccabean Hall.¹⁶⁴ In mid-1939 Dr S. Bension, representing the Mizrachi Zionist movement, visited Australia¹⁶⁵ and shortly afterwards the first visit of a Jewish Palestinian soccer team aroused further enthusiasm. The Friends of the Hebrew University was formed in 1936 on the return of Dr A. M. Schalit from Palestine and in 1939 Dr Chaim Wardi visited Australia to raise funds for the University and increase the membership of the association.¹⁶⁶ In July 1937 another branch organization, the Friends of the Palestine Orchestra was formed when Bronsilow Huberman, a prominent Jewish musician and member of the orchestra, inspired members of the Y.M.H.A. to assist the orchestra during his address to one of their lunchtime meetings.¹⁶⁷ The visits of the prominent W.I.Z.O. personality, Mrs Ida Bension, in 1937 and again in 1939 were also very important.¹⁶⁸ The efforts of these overseas personalities did much to strengthen Australian Zionism.

The formation of Ivriah in 1935 played a significant role in the growth of Zionism in Sydney. In October 1933 Rieka Cohen a prominent Council personality was instrumental in the formation of an Eastern Suburbs Branch of the Council of

¹⁶⁴Freilich, op.cit., p.40.

¹⁶⁵A.J.H., 8 June 1939.

¹⁶⁶Freilich, op.cit., pp.64 and 68.

¹⁶⁷C.B., Vol.11, No. 12, July 1937.

¹⁶⁸Ivriah, Vol.3, No. 12, September 1939.

Jewish Women.¹⁶⁹ It was felt that a suburban branch would assist Council development as it could attract those women restricted by lack of time or money from travelling to the Council rooms in the city.¹⁷⁰ In December 1934 Dr Fanny Reading and her executive decided to close the Eastern Suburbs Branch on the grounds that its existence was not justified. Rieka Cohen, completely alienated by this decision, immediately resigned from all Council activities.¹⁷¹ She decided to form a new organization to replace the Eastern Suburbs Branch and in January 1935 she convened a public meeting to gauge the level of support for her idea. The meeting was well attended and the Ivriah Women's Zionist Organization was formed with the aims of supporting Palestine and Jewish education. In March 1935 Rieka Cohen commenced publication of a monthly journal (circulation of 350) called Ivriah to assist the growth of her organization and to keep the community informed of developments in Australia and abroad.¹⁷² The new organization held monthly meetings and in January 1936 extended its activities to include the first Zionist Youth Movement, later named Habonim.¹⁷³ Other activities of Ivriah included the creation of an annual Jewish Eisteddfod, first introduced in July 1936.¹⁷⁴ In November 1936 Rieka Cohen purchased a property at 640a Old South Head Road which she converted at her own expense into the Ivriah headquarters.¹⁷⁵ In January 1937,

¹⁶⁹ C.B., Vol. 8, No. 3, October 1933.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., No. 4, November 1933.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., Vol. 9, No. 6, January 1935.

¹⁷² Ivriah, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1935.

¹⁷³ H.S., 14 February 1936 — Habonim, in Hebrew, means the builders.

¹⁷⁴ Ivriah, Vol. 2, No. 5, July 1936.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., Vol. 1, No. 2, November 1936.

Ivriah became directly affiliated with the Women's International Zionist Organization (W.I.Z.O.). This affiliation brought Ivriah into closer alignment with a world-wide movement representing 80,000 women.¹⁷⁶

In every way, Rieka Cohen worked to increase support for Zionism among New South Wales Jews, both through the work of her organization and through the pages of Ivriah, which became a 'messenger for Zionism'.¹⁷⁷ She exhorted the Australian Jew to overcome his fears that support for Zionism meant disloyalty to Britain and to realize the vital importance of a Jewish National Homeland, especially for the persecuted European Jews. She stressed that:

The Australian Jew from time to time says glibly 'I am proud to be a Jew'. What does he mean? Is he proud of his own achievements? Is he proud of being an Australian Jew? If these be the reasons for his pride, 'the time has come' for him to feel and acknowledge pride in his people, pride in his historic race. The Briton will not respect you less because you develop love and loyalty for your brethren.¹⁷⁸

She believed that the main reason for anti-Zionist sentiment was ignorance and lack of knowledge¹⁷⁹ and she tried to overcome these obstacles. She also stressed that financial support of Zionism was not a charity but a duty of every Jew.¹⁸⁰ In order to increase the appeal of her journal she ensured that news was recent and in September 1936 she began to receive cables direct from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in London.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., Vol. 1, Nos 4 & 5, January and February 1937.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., Vol. 1, No. 1, October 1936.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., Vol. 1, No. 3, May 1935.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., Vol. 1, No. 11, January 1936.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., Vol. 2, No. 1, March 1936.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., Vol. 2, No. 7, September 1936.

She also published statements from leading Zionist figures such as Chaim Weizmann and Sir Herbert Samuel¹⁸² both of whom congratulated Ivriah on the extension of the journal from a typewritten sheet to a printed production of one thousand copies. At the Sixth Australian Zionist Conference it was decided that Ivriah should be the official journal of the Australian Zionist Federation and this further consolidated its propaganda work.¹⁸³

The visit of prominent W.I.Z.O. leader Mrs Ida Bension in July 1937 further invigorated and changed the direction of the Ivriah movement. Before this visit, Ivriah raised money mainly for the Jewish National Fund but in 1937 at Mrs Bension's suggestion, it changed its money raising activities to assist W.I.Z.O. projects as well as continuing its support for J.N.F.¹⁸⁴ Mrs Bension's visit also resulted in the formation of a W.I.Z.O. Section as part of the Council of Jewish Women.¹⁸⁵ Australian W.I.Z.O. was reorganized and a W.I.Z.O. Central Council created.¹⁸⁶ This allowed for co-operative effort between Ivriah and Council in such activities as organizing luncheons for distinguished guests. Mrs Bension assisted in the formation of the Bellevue Hill W.I.Z.O. Branch in 1937¹⁸⁷ and in 1939 a Randwick-Coogee Branch was formed.¹⁸⁸ In June 1939 a W.I.Z.O. office was opened in the city at 147 Elizabeth Street and the name of the organization was changed officially

¹⁸² Ivriah, new edition, Vol. 1, No. 1, October 1936.

¹⁸³ Ibid., Vol. 1, No. 7, April 1937.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ C.B., Vol. 12, No. 3, October 1937.

¹⁸⁶ Ivriah, Vol. 1, No. 12, September 1937.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., Vol. 2, No. 2, November 1937.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., Vol. 3, No. 4, January 1939.

from Ivriah Women's Zionist Organization to Women's International Zionist Organization. A second visit of Ida Bension in August 1939 further strengthened the organizational structure of W.I.Z.O. in New South Wales.¹⁸⁹ Women's Zionist work in Sydney was diversified further by the introduction of Ezra, an organization mainly concerned with improving maternity facilities in Palestine. In September 1939 Mrs Rose Slutzkin and her daughter visited Sydney from Palestine to appeal for support for Ezra's activities¹⁹⁰ and received a good response. This growth of Women's Zionist Organizations played an important part in the strengthening of Zionist activities in Sydney. As with any communal endeavour, dynamic leadership as in the case of Rieka Cohen, was a significant contributing factor to this development.

The general Zionist movement also received inspiration from new leaders which emerged in Sydney in the 1930's. In the early 1930's Sydney Zionists were still led by the few, Australian-born Zionists such as Percy Marks, A. W. Hyman, Cecil Luber and, especially, Silva Steigrad. Steigrad, though born in Palestine, settled in Australia in his youth and tended to follow the autocratic leadership patterns of the Anglo-Saxon Jews.¹⁹¹ In the late 1930's a new leadership group emerged under the helm of Max Freilich, a Polish-born Jew who had settled in Australia in the 1920's and became an

¹⁸⁹ A.J.H., 17 August 1939.

¹⁹⁰ Syd. J. News, 1 September 1939.

¹⁹¹ Freilich, op.cit., p.49.

indefatigable worker for Zionism. Two of Mr Freilich's closest friends, Horace B. Newman a Scottish Jew, and Norman Shureck an assimilated Australian Jew whose father came from Germany, became involved in the Zionist work and whole-heartedly committed themselves to Zionism.¹⁹² It was largely due to the efforts of this triumvirate that Dr Shein's Foundation Fund appeal of 1938 was such a success. In 1939, during a very short period, Norman Shureck increased the membership of the Union of Sydney Zionists from sixty-eight to four hundred.¹⁹³ This highly successful membership drive was carried out with efficient business-like methods and self-dedication.¹⁹⁴ These characteristics typified the new Zionist leadership and contributed to the fact that later they became influential in every aspect of communal organization.

Many refugees contributed to the strengthening of Sydney Zionism by joining the Zionist ranks. As victims, themselves, of anti-Semitism they were keenly aware of the need for a Jewish homeland, a refuge from persecution, and they also brought with them their own experience of involvement in European Zionist organizations. In June 1939 a discussion was held by the Young Zionist Set at which E. Heller, who had been President of the Young Zionists in Vienna, outlined the use of social functions in Austria to attract new members. This idea stimulated considerable debate as it was criticized

¹⁹² Ibid., pp.48-49 and p.64.

¹⁹³ Syd. J. News, 14 July 1939.

¹⁹⁴ A.J.H., 4 March 1939.

by Mr Freilich who believed new members should be attracted on ideological grounds.¹⁹⁵ In March 1939 W.I.Z.O. welcomed Mrs Celie Kamsler, another Jewish refugee from Austria, who had been an executive officer of the Austrian W.I.Z.O. Federation¹⁹⁶ and soon became very involved in W.I.Z.O. work as Chairwoman of Propaganda and Organization.¹⁹⁷ A welcome was extended to Mrs Friedl Levi, who had been on the executive of Youth Aliyah in Berlin, in August 1939.¹⁹⁸ Her arrival assisted the early beginnings of Youth Aliyah work in Sydney.

The Australian Zionist Federation arranged annual conferences which strengthened Zionism and reflected the growing importance of the movement.¹⁹⁹ At the Fourth Zionist Conference held in Melbourne in 1934, there were only three interstate delegates, all from Sydney.²⁰⁰ The Fifth Zionist conference held in Sydney in 1936 was an improvement with a well-organized programme.²⁰¹ By 1938, the Zionist Conference held in Sydney was well represented with delegates from Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Newcastle, efficiently organized and a highly successful event.²⁰² The conference played an important role as a platform for Zionist propaganda, a medium for expressing support for Zionism and as a forum for

¹⁹⁵ Syd. J. News, 23 June 1939.

¹⁹⁶ Ivriah, Vol. 3, No. 9, June 1939.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., Vol. 3, No. 9, June 1939.

¹⁹⁸ C.B., Vol. 14, No. 1, August 1939.

¹⁹⁹ In 1939 the name was changed to Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand.

²⁰⁰ Freilich, op.cit., p.40.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p.46.

²⁰² H.S., 31 March 1938.

discussion of common problems. Improvements in the work and organization of the state branches were initiated by the conferences. At the conference of 1936 it was decided to use insurance schemes as a fund raising method for the J.N.F.²⁰³ but the schemes were abandoned in 1939²⁰⁴ because they did not measure up to expectations.²⁰⁵ At the 1936 conference the Friends of the Hebrew University was created to raise funds for the University, to establish a fund for an exhibition and to arrange for exchange schemes with the University of Sydney.²⁰⁶ The society developed under Alroy M. Cohen's leadership and in 1938, Bentwich's visit to Australia further stimulated its growth.²⁰⁷ At later conferences other improvements were initiated in the organization of the J.N.F. The importance of collecting shekolim²⁰⁸ for the World Zionist Congresses as a sign of identification was also stressed. A country needed to collect two thousand shekolim to have one representative but, before 1937, Australia had not succeeded in collecting the required number. Prominent Australian Zionists attended the Congresses on an unofficial basis and their experiences enriched the work of Australian Zionism.²⁰⁹ In 1937 there was a successful drive to collect shekolim so

²⁰³ A.J.H., 12 March 1936.

²⁰⁴ Syd. J. News, 14 July 1939.

²⁰⁵ Freilich, op.cit., p.51.

²⁰⁶ A.J.H., 16 April 1936.

²⁰⁷ Freilich, op.cit., p.64.

²⁰⁸ Shekel (plural shekolim), an ancient Hebrew silver coin used in religious ceremonies for many years, evolved to become a symbol of allegiance to Zionism.

²⁰⁹ Ivriah, Vol. 1, No. 5, February 1937.

that Rabbi Brodie, who was leaving Australia to take up a post in England, became the first official Australian delegate at a Zionist Congress.²¹⁰ As a result of all these activities, the Australian Zionist Conferences consolidated Zionist work throughout Australia.

In the early 1930's J.N.F. work was haphazard. The various Zionist organizations collected funds for J.N.F. Ivriah, for example, set aside ten per cent of its funds for J.N.F. and also organized the 'popular child contest' to raise funds.²¹¹ In November 1933 the Young Zionist League was formed during the visit of Dr Shein, with the help of S. Symonds and Rev. L. A. Falk, and was efficiently organized under the leadership of David Selby and Maurice de Berg. One of its main aims was the placement of Blue Boxes²¹² in private homes and collection of their contents. In June 1934 it opened its own centre in Castlereagh Street²¹³ and, for a number of years, was very active in arranging fortnightly social and cultural functions with lectures on Zionism and Jewish topics of general interest.²¹⁴ It introduced a kosher kitchen at the centre on similar lines to the Kadimah Rooms²¹⁵ and it also tried to spread Zionist propaganda to the outer suburban centres such as the Bankstown congregation by

²¹⁰ Ibid., Vol. 1, No. 7, April 1937.

²¹¹ Ibid., Vol. 1, No. 7, September 1935.

²¹² Blue Boxes were metal money boxes the keys of which were retained by J.N.F. workers and were emptied on a biannual basis.

²¹³ S.M.H., 25 June 1934.

²¹⁴ Freilich, op.cit., p.36.

²¹⁵ A.J.H., 4 July 1935.

organizing lectures and films at the synagogue centres.²¹⁶

Although the Young Zionist League and other Zionist organizations worked hard for J.N.F., the amounts collected were comparatively small. The League managed to place only four hundred Blue Boxes and collected around £50 each year.²¹⁷ There was only one J.N.F. Commissioner, L. Goldberg, who co-ordinated all J.N.F. collections from the Zionist organizations and paid incidental expenses himself. By 1937, this work had become too demanding for one man and the Australian Zionist Federation decided to establish a J.N.F. Commission in Sydney with representatives from the Union of Sydney Zionists, the Young Men's Zionist League, the Council, Y.M.H.A., Ivriah and the Jewish War Memorial. The Commission was in charge of collecting money from existing Blue Boxes, distributing new Blue Boxes and propagating the idea of building up Palestine by means of legacies and insurance policies.²¹⁸ In August 1937 a lease was taken on a city property, corner of William and Palmer Streets to be the J.N.F. headquarters,²¹⁹ and in October 1937 Cecil Luber was elected chairman of the J.N.F. Commission, a position he retained until September 1939.²²⁰ Luber proved to be a dedicated and enterprising commissioner whose slogan was "a Blue Box as an insurance policy in every Jewish home in Sydney and the payment of one penny a

²¹⁶ Ibid., 23 May 1935.

²¹⁷ H.S., 3 May 1935.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 1 July 1937.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 5 August 1937.

²²⁰ Syd. J. News, 1 September 1939.

week for children and thrupence a week for adults every Friday evening as premium".²²¹ In addition to Blue Box work, an annual J.N.F. Ball with a Queen Esther competition was commenced, the winner being the girl who raised the most money for J.N.F. The first of these balls was held in March 1938 with candidates from Bellevue Hill W.I.Z.O.; Ivriah, the Council, BEJAX and the J.N.F. Younger Set which was formed in February 1938 and superseded the activities of the Young Zionist League. In all, £883 was raised at the ball, the first time such a large sum was raised for J.N.F.²²² and the ball became the forerunner of many successful J.N.F. balls.²²³ The ball held in March 1939 was a greater success, both financially and socially with £1,000 raised, plus £100 donated by the J.N.F. Younger Set.²²⁴ In this way, J.N.F. work was revolutionized in the years 1937 to 1939.

During the interstate Zionist Conference of 1938, the creation of a state co-ordinating council was suggested.²²⁵ In April 1939 the first meeting of the New South Wales State Zionist Council was called with representatives from the various Zionist and communal organizations.²²⁶ Silva Steigrad was elected Chairman. The Council's aims were to prevent overlapping and facilitate assistance and co-operation between the various

²²¹ Ibid., 21 October 1937.

²²² Ivriah, Vol. 2, No. 9, June 1938.

²²³ Freilich, op.cit., p.61.

²²⁴ A.J.H., 13 April 1939.

²²⁵ Ivriah, Vol. 2, No. 10, July 1938.

²²⁶ Grt Syn. Minutes, 10 April 1939.

Zionist organizations. As such, its formation filled an important gap in the Zionist structure of New South Wales Jewry.²²⁷

The changing communal attitude to Zionism was reflected most clearly by the reactions of Sydney Jewry to the worsening situation of Arab-Jewish relations in Palestine, 1936-1939, and to the British White Paper of 1939. Tensions in Palestine began to increase with the outbreak of Arab rioting in April 1936 as "an expression of the demand for Arab nationalism" and of the fear that increased migration of Jews from Nazi Germany to Palestine was detrimental to Arab interests.²²⁸ The Arabs aimed to stop Jewish immigration, to prohibit the sale of Arab lands to Jews, and to create a national, representative government in Palestine.²²⁹ In response to the worsening situation the British Government appointed a Palestine Royal Commission, with Lord Peel as chairman, to investigate the causes of the tensions and to suggest solutions.²³⁰ After a detailed investigation the commission recommended in July 1937 that Palestine be divided into two states — Arab and Jewish — because the conflict between the two groups was irreconcilable.²³¹ This decision was disappointing to Jewish national aspirations since the area promised was smaller than anticipated, but the Zionist Congress of 1937 decided to accept it as a pragmatic solution.²³² The proposals, however, were rejected by Arab

²²⁷ A.J.H., 4 May 1939.

²²⁸ S.M.H., 19 May 1936.

²²⁹ Freilich, op.cit., p.50.

²³⁰ S.M.H., 31 July 1936.

²³¹ Ibid., 9 July 1937.

²³² A.J.H., 19 August 1937.

leaders and during 1938, Arab rioting and disorder increased with demands for an independent Arab state in Palestine.²³³

In the face of Arab violence, the British Government capitulated and in November 1938 rejected the Partition Plan.

Violence continued to prevail and, in February 1939, a conference was held in London to try and restore order in Palestine.²³⁴ After a further period of negotiation, the British Government gradually came to the conclusion that the only possible solution was to agree to Arab demands and restrict Jewish immigration. This was made official with the publication of the MacDonald White Paper in May 1939 which restricted Jewish immigration to 75,000 over a period of five years, to be regulated by the economic absorptive capacity of the country. After five years all Jewish immigration was to cease and Jews were not to exceed one third of Palestine's population. In addition, the sale of land to Jews was also regulated on a three to one basis.²³⁵ This decision destroyed all hopes for the development of an autonomous Jewish National Home in Palestine and negated the concept of the Balfour Declaration. The White Paper, published at a time of a further deterioration in the situation of Jews under Nazi rule, also destroyed the hope of Palestine providing a haven for Jewish refugees. As a result, it was greeted with dismay, bitter criticism and protest from Zionist supporters, both Jewish and non-Jewish, throughout the world.²³⁶

²³³ S.M.H., 13 October 1938.

²³⁴ Ibid., 9 February 1939.

²³⁵ A.J.H., 6 April 1939.

²³⁶ Ibid., 25 May 1939.

Most Jews in Australia joined their co-religionists in condemning the White Paper and appealing to the British Government to reverse its decision. In March 1939 when restrictions were proposed the President of the Australian Zionist Federation, Dr Leon Jona, sent a protest resolution to the Prime Ministers of Australia and Britain appealing for support for the principles of the Balfour Declaration.²³⁷ The Victorian Advisory Board also sent a protest cable and at the same time urged its New South Wales counterpart to follow suit. John Goulston, acting-chairman of the New South Wales Advisory Board, concurred and his action was supported by all constituent members.²³⁸ A further protest cable was sent in April 1939 by the New South Wales Advisory Board.²³⁹ When the White Paper was published in May 1939, protest resolutions were passed by the Victorian and New South Wales Advisory Boards and cabled to London. The June meeting of the New South Wales Advisory Board re-affirmed the Board's loyalty to Britain, but expressed disappointment with the White Paper and resolved to continue to urge the British Government to reverse its decision and recognize the claims of the Jewish people in Palestine;²⁴⁰ a further cable was sent in August 1939.²⁴¹ This expression of opposition to British policy demonstrated a realization by the representative body of New South Wales

²³⁷ Ibid., 2 March 1939.

²³⁸ Grt Syn. Minutes, 8 March 1939 and Eastern Subs. Syn. Minutes, 21 March 1939.

²³⁹ Grt Syn. Minutes, 19 April 1939.

²⁴⁰ H.S., 8 June 1939.

²⁴¹ Syd. J. News, 1 September 1939.

Jewry that Britain had cut off the main refuge for the persecuted Jews of Europe.

Editorial comment in the major Jewish newspapers also expressed the community's sense of disappointment. The editors of both the Australian Jewish Herald and Sydney Jewish News described the British decision as 'a policy of appeasement' in which Britain capitulated to Arab force and violence.²⁴² Rieka Cohen, in a special article in Ivriah described the decision as "a blatant betrayal of the Balfour Declaration" and stressed that the Jews would not accept the verdict passively.²⁴³ The Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand published a pamphlet in August 1939 putting forward the pro-Jewish arguments against the Paper which were contained in the speeches of L. Amery and Winston Churchill in the British House of Commons in May 1939. They wanted to show that prominent non-Jews also opposed the new policy.²⁴⁴

The editor of the Hebrew Standard, Alfred Harris, was the only voice raised in support of the British Government's decision. In reference to Jewish riots in Palestine, he stressed that:

We deplore the fact, because we believe that whatever their disappointment, the demonstrators made a serious mistake... the British decision was an attempt to act equitably and justly.²⁴⁵

²⁴² See A.J.H., 2 March 1939 and Syd. J. News, 21 July 1939.

²⁴³ Ivriah, Vol. 3, No. 9, June 1939.

²⁴⁴ Jewish Opposition to the Palestine White Paper is Reasonable! pamphlet issued by the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand, Melbourne 1939.

²⁴⁵ H.S., 25 May 1939.

Whereas the Standard reflected the attitudes of the majority of the community in the early 1930's, by 1939 it was a lone voice praising British justice. There were other stronger voices which believed in open protest against the British decision. They stressed its injustice and expressed their support for the leadership of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency.

During the 1930's the various aspects of Zionist work which had already emerged in other major Jewish communities, evolved in New South Wales. The Zionist organization diversified with the formation of the Jewish National Fund Commission, W.I.Z.O., the Zionist Youth Movement, Habonim, the Friends of the Hebrew University, Friends of the Palestine Orchestra and Ezra. The State Zionist Council ensured efficiency in the functioning of these various organizations. At the same time, the Union of Sydney Zionists increased its membership and activities and the Palestine Foundation Fund enjoyed greater financial success. This strengthening of the Zionist Movement resulted from changing communal attitudes due to events in Europe and Palestine, closer ties being established with Palestine through Zionist emissaries, new and energetic leadership, and the impact of the refugees.

The most significant manifestation of the change in communal attitudes was the difference in the reactions to the British White Papers of 1930 and 1939. Rabbi Cohen had voiced the sentiments of the established Jewish leadership when he condemned the Zionist protests of 1930 and wrote to Canberra dissociating the Jewish community from them. In 1939, in

contrast, the Advisory Board publically criticized the British government's decision and forwarded its protests to Canberra. Since its leadership still emanated from the Great Synagogue, this decision indicated a fundamental change of attitude. This change had already been shown by the fact that, at the Great Synagogue annual general meeting of 1937, the congregation had voted in support of a voluntary levy of five shillings for the Palestine Foundation Fund, thereby bringing the Great into line with the other synagogues. When Sir Isaac Isaacs, the leading Australian Jewish citizen of the period, published anti-Zionist articles in the Standard in 1941 and later in the Melbourne daily, the Argus, he was condemned by the Advisory Boards of both New South Wales and Victoria. In many ways, the debate engendered by Sir Isaac's articles and the rejoinder "Stand Up and Be Counted", published by Professor Julius Stone, served only to bring the meaning of Zionism to the fore and thus strengthen the Zionist cause.²⁴⁶ The debate showed that Zionism was no longer an insignificant movement but a vital part of Jewish life which was supported by the foremost intellects and key leaders in the community.

During the 1930's Sydney Jewry experienced significant changes in every facet of communal life. Religious practice diversified, moves were made to improve Jewish education, charities were strengthened and Jewish cultural activities fostered. The most significant changes were made in the areas of communal organization and Zionism. The Zionist movement

²⁴⁶ S.D. Rutland, Seventy-Five Years: The History of a Jewish Newspaper, Sydney 1970, pp.54-59.

developed from a poorly organized fringe movement to one of more central importance. It reflected all the ramifications of the World Zionist Organization as it had developed in other overseas Jewish communities. The violence of Nazism in Europe was a most significant factor in explaining the changing attitudes to Zionism and the whole concept of Jewish identity. Eric Baume, an assimilated Jew, stressed:

Hitler has given the Jews of every country in the world a startling lesson of what not to do.

He has indicated that even in a violently anti-Semitic country it is better to be a Jew courageously than to avoid or seek to avoid the menace of anti-Semitism by the often attempted movement towards assimilation... The Jew who is ashamed of being a Jew has no place not only in the Jewish community but anywhere in the world...

The answer to Hitler's challenge does not lie in wild talking or empty, vain threats. The challenge to every Jew can be answered only by the thought of the Zionist movement.²⁴⁷

Baume's words were indicative of the change of attitude to assimilation and Zionism that occurred among Sydney Jews in the late 1930's. The impetus of the refugees who arrived after 1933 helped to consolidate these changes which were taking place in the community. The refugees provided first hand knowledge and expertise to help implement the new ideas. As a result, the foundations were laid in the late 1930's for the transformation of Sydney Jewry.

²⁴⁷ Israel Horwitz, ed., The Dawn and the Rebirth of Palestine, pamphlet published by the J.N.F., Sydney 1936.

CHAPTER SIX

A COMPARISON WITH JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN OTHER PARTS OF THE ENGLISH SPEAKING WORLD

The experiences of New South Wales Jewry in the period before 1939 are more meaningful when considered in the light of developments experienced by Jewish communities in other parts of the English speaking world. Jewish life developed a different pattern in these communities because of different patterns of migration. The interaction between Jew and non-Jew was a key determining factor in the evolution of the different characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon communities.

Before the 1920's it appeared as if the Melbourne Jewish community faced the possibility of eventual disintegration through assimilation.¹ According to the census figures of 1921, 26% of Jewish males and 14% of Jewish females in Victoria had non-Jewish spouses. These figures were comparatively lower than the intermarriage rates of New South Wales Jewry but they nevertheless reflected a significant level of structural assimilation. The community was small and its institutions were weak. It was composed largely of second generation Australian Jews who, like their Sydney counterparts, were concerned with active participation in the general community and with minimizing Jewish distinctiveness. During the interwar years Melbourne Jewry experienced an even greater transformation than did Sydney Jewry. In 1921 Victorian Jewry

¹P. Y. Medding, From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community, Melbourne 1968, p.1.

was numerically the smaller, with a population of 7,677, compared with over 10,000 Jews in New South Wales. In the following two decades more Jewish immigrants settled in Melbourne which, by 1947, had a Jewish population of 14,910 compared with Sydney Jewry's 13,220 members. Concurrently, the various facets of Jewish life developed in Melbourne.

In 1921 there were three congregations in Melbourne: the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, the St Kilda Congregation and the East Melbourne Congregation. Melbourne's congregational structure was more diversified than that of Sydney which, until 1921, revolved largely around the one synagogue. The larger number of well-established congregations created the necessity for communal co-ordination and the Melbourne Jewish Advisory Board was formed in 1921, over a decade before its Sydney counterpart. The Board aimed at reducing tensions between the foreign Jews 'North of the Yarra' and the more acculturated Jews 'South of the Yarra'.² It represented synagogues only, its scope being limited.

At the same time the Judean League was formed to represent all other aspects of Jewish life: cultural, social and Zionist. The League became the centre of opposition to the M.J.A.B. as its leaders believed that the Board should be elected by the whole community in a constitutional manner. The East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, which was associated with the more orthodox foreign Jews, was also dissatisfied with the structure of the M.J.A.B. and, in 1930, it withdrew on the grounds of unfair discrimination. The migrants who arrived in the 1930's added to the discontent by criticizing the Board's

²Ibid., p.31.

undemocratic constitution and synagogue dominance. Matters came to a head when, in April 1938, the President of the Board, I. H. Boas, issued an official press statement on refugee immigration. He stated that Victorian Jewry did not want a large influx of refugees and that this would not be in the interests of the refugees themselves. This statement aroused resentment among the newer elements in the community who demanded democratization of the Board. The patrician leadership was reluctant to abdicate power but, after a series of conferences, a more democratic constitution was introduced in November 1938. This constitution was revised in 1942 to make the new Victorian Jewish Advisory Board fully representative.³ These revisions marked a successful takeover bid by the newcomers — from 1938 onwards the East European, pro-Zionist elements, held the controlling influence in the community.

Religious, national and cultural life intensified and diversified in this period. The Liberal Movement was founded in 1930, almost a decade earlier than in Sydney, with the establishment of the Temple Beth Israel. The movement, however, made slow progress until the arrival of German and Austrian refugees, especially after 1937. A number of ultra-orthodox communities appeared. Yiddish culture, almost non-existent in Sydney, developed rapidly in the 1930's, especially with the growth of the Bundist movement which did not gain a foothold in Sydney. Zionism was supported more wholeheartedly by Melbourne Jews, even in the 1920's, as seen by their more generous

³Ibid., p.37.

response to Israel Cohen's appeal. The development of Zionism in Melbourne too, was hindered by those Australian Jews who supported the British administration in Palestine. In 1929 the Melbourne Jewish Advisory Board dissociated itself from the Zionist Federation's protest resolution against the Wailing Wall incident of 1928 and contacted the Commonwealth Government in an attempt to prevent the resolution being forwarded to London. In the 1930's the Zionist movement expanded as the new arrivals prospered and increased their influence within the community. The anti-Zionists became a powerless minority and by 1939 the Advisory Board had come to fully support Zionism.

Melbourne Jewry developed organizations to assist foreign Jews at an earlier stage than Sydney Jewry. Between 1920 and 1930 two thousand Jews arrived in Victoria from Eastern Europe.⁴ At first no Jewish organization existed to assist them or to promote Jewish immigration. In 1926 the Jewish Welcome League of Victoria was formed to meet boats and to arrange employment and accommodation for Jewish migrants. In 1927 the M.J.A.B. set up the Jewish Immigration Questions Committee to assist the newcomers and to advise overseas immigration organizations. A Jewish Land Settlement Trust was created. Melbourne Jewry established a German Jewish Relief Committee in 1936 at the same time as Sydney Jewry and, concurrent with this, the Polish Jewish Relief Fund was formed. The latter organization was very different from the G.J.R.F. (later the Australian Jewish Welfare Society) because of its

⁴Ibid., p.147.

founders' countries of origin and cultural background. Most were East European Jews who had an anti-Zionist, Bundist orientation.⁵ The P.J.R.F. in Sydney was comparatively ineffectual because East European Bundism was non-existent.

The differences between Melbourne and Sydney Jewry were mainly due to migration trends. More Jews from the Jewish centres of Eastern Europe were attracted to Melbourne than Sydney by the process of chain migration. In the 1920's 68% of the East European Jews settled in Melbourne; only 18% settled in Sydney. In the 1930's, more East European Jews continued to be attracted to Melbourne, partly because the Polish Jewish Relief Fund was stronger there than in Sydney and Melbourne Jewry, overall, was better equipped to assist the newcomers. Between 1931 and 1940 73% of East European Jews settled in Melbourne compared with 20% in Sydney. The East European Jews brought with them the strong Jewish culture of the shtetl and, although many of them discarded the orthodox traditions, they still retained a strong sense of Jewish identity. The newcomers had great difficulty in understanding Australian Jews' diluted form of orthodoxy and their concern to be like the non-Jewish population. They believed that control of Jewish affairs should be in the hands of those who were more concerned with emphasizing their Jewishness⁶ and were responsible for the introduction of all the major changes relating to both new forms of Jewish

⁵Ibid., p.165.

⁶Ibid., p.37.

identification and to new centres of institutional power. Slightly more Jews from Germany and Austria settled in Sydney and these Central European Jews had a relatively greater influence in Sydney than Melbourne.⁷ The Central European Jews had already been exposed to assimilatory pressures before settling in Australia and they had less of an innovative influence. Before World War I, Melbourne Jewry had been a more committed community than Sydney partly because its colder climate and small town atmosphere were more conducive to religious development. Its institutional structure was also more diversified and the friendly rivalry between congregations stimulated development. In the inter-war years, the differences between the two communities were further accentuated.

The number of refugees who settled in the other Australian capital cities was comparatively insignificant. New South Wales and Victoria received over 93% of the Jewish immigration from Germany, Austria, Poland and the Russian Empire in the period 1931-1940. In the years 1933-1947 both the Brisbane and Adelaide Jewish communities decreased in size. Since 1891, Adelaide Jewry had experienced a steady decline, both numerically and in proportion to the general community. In 1947 there were only 454 Jews in South Australia, about half the total for 1891. Similarly Hobart Jewry was half the size of the Jewish community of 1882, although it did increase from 70 to 123 members in the years 1933-1947.⁸ The

⁷ Charles A. Price, "Jewish Settlers in Australia", Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Vol. V, Part VIII, May 1964, p.406.

⁸ Ibid., Statistical Appendix I.

decline of these communities in this period of increased Jewish immigration was largely due to the attractions of the larger Jewish centres of Sydney and Melbourne. Their decline was influenced by the same factors which precipitated the disintegration of the small Jewish country communities in New South Wales and Victoria.

The Perth Jewish community was more successful in resisting assimilation and developing its communal organization. Perth received a large proportion of the Palestinian Jews who arrived in the 1920's because it was their first port of call and they were not aware that Melbourne and Sydney contained stronger Jewish communities. The effective ministerial leadership of Rabbi D. I. Freedman from 1897-1939 moulded the community and intensified Jewish involvement. Perth was much further away from Sydney and Melbourne and so these communities exercised less of a magnetic pull. In spite of all these factors, Perth Jewry remained comparatively small and insignificant as it was too isolated to attract many newcomers.

The Australian Jewish Welfare Society failed in its efforts to decentralize refugee settlement and distribute the refugees equally throughout the Commonwealth. The smaller capital cities remained Jewish backwaters and, with the influence of the refugees in Sydney and Melbourne, were left progressively further behind.

The same was true of the New Zealand Jewish communities. Until the 1930's, Jewish development in New Zealand paralleled development in Australia but on a lesser scale. New Zealand Jews participated in every aspect of life in the general

community because of their desire for complete acceptance and their philosophy of non-distinctiveness. Jews were active in the army, various branches of political life including local government and parliament, in industry and in commerce through the Chamber of Commerce. In contrast to Australian Jewry, some Jews were also active in the New Zealand Labour Movement and a few participated in the establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party in 1902 and the New Zealand Federation of Labour in 1909.⁹ This was because a small number of British Jews who were influenced by socialist ideas, such as Solomon Gordon, settled in New Zealand. New Zealand Jews reached the highest pinnacles in the general community and, in 1873, Sir Julius Vogel was the first professing Jew to be elected as Prime Minister in the British Empire. The community was, therefore, very aware of its civic role and was accepted on an equal basis with the general community.

Jewish religious observance and education, however, was minimal. Synagogue board members frequently forced their unorthodox practices on their ministers who made many concessions to maintain communal unity. The daily evening and morning services were abandoned and, in some synagogues, the Sabbath morning service was shortened to one hour. Of the four major Jewish communities, Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin, only the first two had provisions for the supply of kosher meat.¹⁰ These minimal standards of religious observance resulted in a very high rate of assimilation as

⁹ Lazarus Morris Goldman, The History of the Jews in New Zealand, Wellington 1958, pp.218-219.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp.187-188.

shown in the large number of intermarriages. Zionism alone received almost unanimous support from New Zealand Jewry. Zionist work gradually prevailed over all other Jewish activities largely because of the influence of Zionist emissaries and communal leaders such as Mr and Mrs David L. Nathan. The events in Europe in the 1930's also persuaded the community of the importance of the Jewish struggle for a national homeland. Unlike their Australian confreres, New Zealand Jews were much less inhibited about their support of Zionism because their small numbers reduced the fear of an anti-Semitic reaction.

In the 1930's the patterns of communal development in Australasia diverged. New Zealand Jewry responded to the call for assistance from the German Jewish Relief Fund and established the New Zealand Jewish Welfare Society, but the government steadfastly refused to liberalize its alien immigration laws. In the period 1933-1940, only 711 refugees were admitted, of whom half were Jewish. The government feared that greater numbers would disrupt the country's economy and believed that its first duty was to people of British stock. Despite pressures from groups such as the New Zealand Jewish Welfare Society, the League of Nations' Union, the Peace Pledge Union of Wellington, the Wellington Diocesan Synod of the Anglican Church and the Wellington Synod of the Methodist Church, it maintained its opposition to refugee immigration. In 1939, the New Zealand High Commissioner in London stated that the government was prepared to admit as many Czech refugees as could be accommodated, but he was later forced to retract

this statement.¹¹ As a result, the Central European Jews who settled in New Zealand in the 1930's were too few in number to have any real impact. New Zealand Jewry was in no way rejuvenated by an influx of new blood and fresh ideas as occurred in Sydney and Melbourne in this period.

The transformation experienced by the two major Australasian Jewish communities, Melbourne and Sydney, in the period before and after World War II was a unique development in the Anglo-Saxon world. This was because of the different migration trends experienced by the various countries, the most relevant contrasts being with Canada, South Africa, Britain and the United States of America.

Before 1880, Canadian Jewry, like the Jewish communities in Australia, was fairly small and largely Anglo-Saxon. The main community centre was in Montreal with smaller congregations scattered throughout the country. In the period 1880-1914, its composition was changed by the influx of East European Jews. At first Russian Jews settled in Canada mainly by accident but after 1900 the immigration rate was accelerated by the process of chain migration and the mounting demands for immigration restrictions in America.¹² Between 1900 and 1931, 120,000 Jews settled in Canada and Jews eventually became the seventh largest ethnic group. Toronto attracted many of the refugees and it rapidly developed into the second largest Jewish community in Canada. As in America, the Russian Jewish

¹¹ Ibid., p.227.

¹² H. M. Sachar, The Course of Modern Jewish History, New York 1958, p.501.

immigrants emerged from the sweatshops to become a largely middle class group of prosperous textile manufacturers, businessmen and professionals. There was no well established German Jewish community in Canada before 1880 and the Russian refugees had to fend for themselves. They retained more strongly their Russian-Jewish religious and cultural traditions so that orthodoxy and Yiddish culture became more strongly entrenched in Canada than America.¹³ As a result, they assimilated less rapidly¹⁴ and set their stamp on the Canadian Jewish community.

Approximately 60,000 Jewish refugees from Nazism settled in Canada before and after World War II. Their impact was much less than in Australia, however, as they merged into the predominantly East European Jewish community. The Canadian Jewish community grew less rapidly than the general community so that it declined from the fifth largest minority group in 1920 to the tenth largest in the 1960's. In contrast, Australian Jewry has become slightly larger, proportionately, than it was at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Canada is a land of ethnic minorities and the Jews have not achieved the same high level of acceptance experienced by their Australian co-religionists. Jewish social mobility was limited by French sensitivity in Quebec to minority groups, by the divisions between the English and the French which created a tradition of separatism and by the growth of anti-Semitism

¹³Ibid., pp.504-505.

¹⁴Barnett Litvinoff, A Peculiar People: Inside the Jewish World To-day, London 1969, p.174.

in the 1930's.¹⁵ The Quebec education system was organized on a denominational basis of French-Catholic and English-Protestant, financed by a special real estate tax. In 1903 the Jewish community made an agreement to be part of the Protestant system but Jewish children were still subject to discrimination. They were often segregated into separate classes and were not excused for Jewish festivals. An agreement made in 1931 promised to overcome these disabilities but was not implemented effectively. The Jewish community in Montreal established its own parochial day schools but many Jewish parents resented the forced segregation.¹⁶ In Quebec there was no civil marriage so that intermarriage was extremely rare. Jews were not encouraged to play an active role in public life and until the 1950's there were few Jews in government, at the bar, associated with hospital practice, industrial management or the Masons. No Jew ever held a seat on the Montreal Stock Exchange or on the Club Market. In the 1930's a significant proportion of French Canadians supported fascist ideals and anti-Semitism. In 1935 Quebec's Labour Minister, Adrien Arcand, and the provincial premier, Duplessis, encouraged an anti-Jewish boycott but this was not successful as it did not win the support of the English Canadians.¹⁷ The Social Credit Movement also won a wide following during the depression years and succeeded in achieving office in Alberta. The exclusion of Jews and anti-Semitic undertones in Canada

¹⁵ Ibid., p.177.

¹⁶ Sachar, op.cit., pp.502-503.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.504.

prevented the Canadian Jewish community from merging with its non-Jewish neighbours and becoming assimilated.

Canadian Jews maintained their ethnic separateness to a high degree and tended to think of themselves as Jews by nationality rather than Canadians. They supported Zionism and actively worked for the cause in every way. The Canadian Jewish Congress, which officially represented the whole community, provided cohesion for the community's organizational structure. In this way, the pattern of development until the late 1930's was very different from Australian Jewry.

The South African Jewish community began to develop in the early nineteenth century with the arrival of English, German and Dutch Jews and, in 1841, the first synagogue opened in Capetown. However, the number of Jews remained small and they were well assimilated into the general community in which the Jews actively participated. In the period 1880-1914, more than 40,000 East European Jews settled in South Africa, attracted there by the diamond and gold mines discovered in the late nineteenth century. Most of these Jews came from Lithuania, which was severely affected by the Tsarist pogroms. They transformed South African Jewry from a few weak congregations to a firmly established community.¹⁸

Not all the Jewish settlers in South Africa clustered in large towns. Some moved into the hinterland, working as pedlars and small shopkeepers. By 1950 40% of South African Jewry lived in small towns in the interior while the community as a whole had become a prosperous middle class group. Jews

¹⁸G. Gershater, "From Lithuania to South Africa", in The Jews in South Africa, G. Saron and L. Hotz, ed., London 1955, pp.59-84.

participated actively in every aspect of public life although this was nearly always in areas of British, not Dutch settlement.¹⁹ The Jewish destiny was with the English speaking South Africans, not the Afrikaners, and the Jews saw Great Britain 'as the epitome of freedom'.²⁰

At first Jews were welcomed into South Africa but after 1914 public opinion, led by the Afrikaners, turned against Jewish migration. The Afrikaners formed the majority of South Africa's white population and they resented the virtual control of the country's industry and commerce by the British and their supporters, the Jews. The Boer leader, Jan Christian Smuts, was an exception in this as he sympathized with the Jews and opposed extreme anti-Semitic legislation. Since 1914 only 30,000 Jews have settled in South Africa largely because of the attitude of the Boer community.

In the 1930's Jewish migration to South Africa was opposed and anti-Semitic movements proliferated both of these developments being mainly supported by the Afrikaners. The Immigration Quota Act of 1930 introduced a strict quota for East Europeans. As very few non-Jewish East Europeans settled in South Africa, the Act was clearly aimed at Jews and it reduced East European Jewish migration to about fifty persons each year. Several thousand German Jews found refuge in South Africa in the period 1930-1936 but this Western Jewish immigration was stopped by the Aliens Act of 1936. The

¹⁹Sachar, op.cit., pp.507-508.

²⁰Litvinoff, op.cit., p.186.

National Party, led by Dr Daniel Malan, who later became Prime Minister of South Africa in 1948, opposed Jewish immigration and wanted all Jewish immigrants to be deported. When a ship, the Stuttgart, arrived in Capetown in 1936 with German Jewish refugees aboard, Dr Verwoerd, a leading academic and member of the National Party led a protest march through the town.²¹ The Party's fear of Jewish immigration must have been stronger than its fear of the blacks as Jews would have helped the National Party's cause by increasing the numerical strength of the white population. The National Party supported Hitler before and during World War II and anti-Jewish policies were enunciated in its platforms of 1939 and 1941. Other even more fanatical Afrikaner political organizations which completely supported Nazi ideology emerged in the 1930's.²² Most important of these was the Greyshirt movement which was commended by the Secretary of the National Party for its anti-Semitism. As a result of this internal support of Nazi racial policies and the resultant opposition to Jewish immigration, South African Jewry was not reinforced by refugee immigration in the 1930's.

The position of the Jews in South Africa was a difficult one since they were a minority group within a minority²³ being 3.5% of the white population and 0.01% of the total population. They supported the English-speaking section and were reluctant

²¹H. Katzew, "Jews in the Land of Apartheid", Mainstream, A Quarterly Jewish Journal, Vol. VIII, No. 4, December 1962, p.67.

²²Robert G. Weisbord, "The Dilemma of South African Jewry", The Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1967, pp.233-235.

²³E. Feit, "Community in Quandry: The South African Jewish Community and Apartheid", Race, Vol. 8, No. 4, April 1967, p.396 and p.398.

to give their support to the National Party when it gained power in 1948. As a result of their minority status, the Jews were economically vulnerable and politically insignificant. The community's sense of insecurity contributed to the formation, in 1912, of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies which aimed at creating a unified communal structure. The South African traditions of separatism and racial segregation prevented rapid assimilation of the East European Jews who continued to adhere to their orthodoxy and Jewish traditions of self help. From the initial formation of the South African Zionist Federation in 1895 support for Zionism was almost unanimous because of fear of an anti-Semitic reaction against the Jewish community.²⁴ Many South African Jews emigrated to Palestine and later Israel, but most chose to remain in South Africa. As a matter of practical necessity through their fear of an anti-Semitic backlash, they have remained silent partners in the apartheid policy. As a result of this sense of insecurity, South African Jewry has been a cohesive community from the beginning of the twentieth century, unlike their Australian co-religionists.

From the time of Cromwell, when Jews were readmitted²⁵ to England, the British Jewish community developed gradually, first with the arrival of the Sephardi Jews and later with the growth of the Ashkenazi community. By 1880 there were over 35,000 Jews living in Britain with a well organized communal structure. This consisted of the United Synagogue which

²⁴Sachar, op.cit., p.50.

²⁵All Jews were expelled from England in 1290.

combined all the major congregations into one organized body to allow for pooling of resources; the British Board of Deputies, the communal roof body and official spokesman; and the British Board of Guardians which dealt with all aspects of Jewish philanthropy. The Jews living in England before 1880 reached the highest pinnacles in society and were an accepted, largely urban middle class minority.

The influx of refugees from Tsarist Russia completely changed the character of British Jewry. By 1914, the community had increased seven-fold to a population of 250,000. The newcomers clustered largely at the East End of London although a significant proportion settled in Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool so that, by 1911, nearly 100,000 Jews lived outside London.²⁶ They brought with them a new religious, economic and cultural background. Their greater orthodoxy led them to establish small minyanim, in contrast to the larger British synagogues, and these later united to form the Federation of Synagogues. At the same time the Liberal Movement developed in Britain, the Liberal Jewish Union being formed in 1902 by Claude Montefiore. This was largely an indigenous movement but some Russian Jews were attracted. The Russian Jews joined the ranks of the working class because of their poverty and lack of training. Many were influenced by socialist ideas and some became active in the British trade union movement. Their strong sense of Jewish identity and first-hand knowledge of Russian anti-Semitism made them enthusiastic supporters of Herzl who visited England in 1895. From the beginning of the twentieth

²⁶Ibid., p.495.

century until 1948 British Jews were among the main leaders of the Zionist movement. The Yiddish press and theatre also flourished under their influence. After 1880, the development of British Jewry diverged from that of the Australian Jewish community.

In the 1920's Anglicization of the East European Jews gained momentum but they did not assimilate in the religious sense.²⁷ There was a further rise up the social scale as many of the second generation became members of the professions, especially law and medicine, and manufacturers of textiles, furniture, jewellery, furs, cosmetics and electrical goods. With this shift in occupations the East End declined as a Jewish residential area. Many second generation Jews moved to the North and North West of London at the rate of twenty to thirty thousand a year.²⁸

The rise of Nazism affected Anglo-Jewry in a number of ways, but to a lesser extent than that experienced in Australia. Between 1933 and 1939 the British Government accepted few refugees on a permanent basis but about 85,000 Jewish refugees were granted temporary asylum. Of these, about 40,000 remained in Britain after the war. This wave of immigration was completely different in character to the pre-1914 East European migration. The refugees comprised one seventh the number of previously established British Jews and a high proportion were middle class professionals already assimilated into European

²⁷V. D. Lipman, A Social History of the Jews in England, London 1954, p.165.

²⁸Sachar, op.cit., p.496.

culture. Most were unable to bring their assets with them but they were assisted by the well-established Russian Jewish community particularly in finding living quarters and employment and by means of loans for establishing businesses. Therefore, the Central European Jews were able to adjust quickly and had little impact on the organizational structure of British Jewry. The main changes they introduced included the creation of the Orthodox Union by a few ultra-orthodox German Jews and the establishment of the Weiner Library which became a world centre for the study of Nazi authoritarianism.

The events of the 1930's increased the feeling of communal solidarity in Britain.²⁹ The financial drive carried out by the British Council for German Jewry to assist the victims of Nazism helped to consolidate the community. The anti-Semitism of Sir Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascism which led to street battles in the East End of London, also forced the Jewish community to strengthen its defence organization and this in turn increased group cohesion.³⁰ Organized anti-Semitism of this nature was not significant and British Jewry continued to enjoy virtually complete acceptance in British society in the 1930's.

The development of American Jewry was very different from the Australian experience. By 1870 there were 300,000 Jews living in America, some of Sephardi origins but most of German origins. As in Australia they were a respected, well-entrenched

²⁹Lipman, op.cit., p.165.

³⁰See M. Freedman ed., A Minority in Britain: Social Studies of the Anglo-Jewish Community, London 1955, p.36 and p.110.

relatively assimilated minority group. They were comparatively wealthy and included leading figures such as Jacob Schiff in banking and the journalist, Joseph Pulitzer, who established the New York World. The German Jews were dispersed throughout America since many had begun their careers as hawkers and pedlars during the Gold Rush period after 1849. Their main branch of personal religion was Reform Judaism. This appealed to the German Jews because they were, as a whole, more concerned with accommodating to the American way of life than with maintaining a separate Jewish identity.³¹

This picture changed completely with the mass migration of Jews from Tsarist Russia in the period 1880-1924, when over three million East European Jews migrated to America. Over 65% of these immigrants settled on the Eastern seaboard, particularly in New York which by the 1920's had a population of 2,300,000 Jews constituting 30% of the city's total population.³² Most impoverished Jewish migrants settled in the slum areas of the big cities, the 'first area of settlement', and worked for long hours and low wages as labourers in the sweatshops and in light industry. As they became aware of the inequities of their working conditions they became involved in the American trade union movement and American socialism. Samuel Gompers, leader of the American Federation of Labour, was himself a Jew and an immigrant. The flood of East European Jews to America was reduced to a mere trickle by the quota system introduced with the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 and was

³¹C. Bezalel Sherman, The Jew Within American Society: A Study in Ethnic Individuality, Detroit 1961, p.75.

³²Sachar, op.cit., pp.316-317.

virtually terminated by the additional restrictions of 1927.

As elsewhere, the newcomers brought with them a totally new concept of Jewish life. They divided into two main groups, the orthodox and the radicals. The latter were irreligious, even athiest, but they still considered themselves Jewish on a secular, national basis.³³ The established Jewish community helped the newcomers lest they become a charge on the state, but they felt alien to both the orthodox and radical Russian Jews.

The 1920's and 1930's were decades of consolidation when second generation East European Jews gradually took over leadership from the established German Jews. The newcomers acclimatized quickly and by the 1920's the second generation were largely white collar wokers, businessmen and professionals, who began the move to the 'uptown second area of settlement'.³⁴ This change in economic status from working to middle class within one generation was largely due to the Russian Jews' stress on education.

As they moved up the social scale many drifted away from their parents' ultra-orthodox practices which, it was felt, bore the stigma of the European ghetto. They were attracted to Conservative Judaism which appealed to them as an acceptable compromise between the "Eastern, orthodox, legalistic Judaism of the Old World and the Western, Protestant, secular environment of the New World".³⁵ The Jewish Centre developed around the

³³ Sherman, op.cit., p.74.

³⁴ Nathan Glazer, American Judaism, Chicago 1957, pp.80-81.

³⁵ Marshall Sklare, Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement, Illinois 1955, p.31.

Conservative synagogue and stressed cultural, educational and social activities as did the Young Mens' Hebrew Association which also developed in this period. The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York provided the ideological basis for Conservative Judaism and attracted outstanding scholars such as Louis Ginsberg, Louis Finkelstein and Mordechai Kaplan. Reform Judaism, which seemed alien to the East European concept of Jewishness, became more traditionalist under the migrants influence. In the Reform Platform of 1937 the previous anti-Zionist stand was rejected and in 1940 the new Union Prayer Book introduced a more traditional service.³⁶ The East European impact resulted in increased support for Zionism which became a major unifying factor for American Jewry. The Zionist movement attracted leaders of high standing such as Louis D. Brandeis and Henry Morgenthau both from the established American community. Without the East European influence it is unlikely that these men would have been attracted to Zionism. The growth of American philanthropy to assist overseas Jews through the work of the American Joint Distribution Committee was also largely due to the East European influence. By 1939 American Jewry had achieved an effective federation of its charitable organizations when the American Joint Distribution Committee joined with the United Palestine Appeal. Between the wars, its Jewish communal organization also became fully democratic. In 1918 the American Jewish Congress was established on a more democratic basis than had been the American Jewish Committee created at the beginning of the

³⁶Glazer, op.cit., p.103.

twentieth century. The American Jewish Congress did not replace the Jewish Committee but, in the interwar years, it was very active in combatting anti-Semitism and supporting Zionism. These developments were due both to the East European influence and the American characteristics of utilitarianism and democracy.³⁷

Americans were susceptible to anti-Semitism as an outcome of the American ethos of the frontiersman, who was suspicious of spiritual differences; the legacy of the populist movement with its strong anti-immigrant philosophy; and American isolationism which suspected the Jew of war-mongering.³⁸ After World War I the development of racism, as typified by the Ku Klux Klan, also contributed to the growth of anti-Semitism, as did the propaganda of Henry Ford's paper The Dearborn Independent. In the 1920's and 1930's restrictive quotas were introduced for Jews in colleges and universities, especially in the faculties of law and medicine where Jews were limited to a small proportion of total enrolments. Jews were excluded from large corporations, economic institutions such as banks and the stock exchange and even from certain residential areas.³⁹ This growth of anti-Semitism at a time of increased acculturation of second generation East European Jews prevented a high rate of assimilation so that the rate of intermarriage did not increase

³⁷ Sherman, op.cit., p.195.

³⁸ Ibid., p.202.

³⁹ N. Glazer and D. Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City, Massachusetts 1963, p.160.

significantly.⁴⁰ American Jews became politically active in an attempt to combat anti-Semitism, especially through the B'nai Brith anti-Defamation League. In the 1930's a close alliance developed between the Jews and the Democratic Party during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The external threat posed by discrimination forced the Jewish community to submerge its internal differences and to become a better organized, more consolidated ethnic group.⁴¹

By World War II, American Jewry had become the leader of World Jewry. Communal organization reflected a diversity of Jewish religious practices, a strong Yiddish culture, a deep commitment to Zionism and a well organized political lobby. However, despite their political influence, American Jews could not persuade the American Government to modify the quota system in the 1930's and 1940's. Comparatively few refugees from Nazism settled in America and the East European ethos continued to dominate. American Jewry developed a strong sense of Jewish identity and rejected Anglo-Saxon conformity. The sense of self-confidence and acceptance of the concept of cultural pluralism was not undermined by the anti-Semitism which emerged in the interwar years.

American Jewry experienced its most fundamental change at a time when Australian Jewry was stagnating. With the passage of time Australian Jewry was directly affected by the events in America. The restrictive immigration quotas of the 1920's

⁴⁰ Sherman, op.cit., pp.177-178.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.144.

redirected some of the flow of Jewish refugees to Australian shores. The Australian Jewish community began to copy many of the innovations introduced by American Jewry. However, Australian Jewry did not experience a parallel growth of institutions and cultural diversity. Conservative Judaism and Reform Judaism did not establish roots in Australia, since the Australian orthodox synagogues were more Anglicized than their American counterparts. In orthodox American congregations the rabbi played a less central role in communal leadership and usually gave his sermons in Yiddish unlike Australia where the rabbi played an important role in the community and was himself usually Anglicized. In Australia, Yiddish culture developed to a limited extent only and Jewish involvement in socialism and the trade union movement was virtually non-existent. Despite all attempts, Australian Jewry was not successful in federating its charitable organizations before 1939. It took much longer for Australian Jews to accept Zionism as wholeheartedly as American Jews because they had not experienced the same level of anti-Semitism and were not subject to the same East European influence. Australian Jews were reluctant to become involved in politics as a separate ethnic group and were slower to reject their desire for Anglo-Saxon conformity. As Australia drew closer to America, the Jewish communities in Australia were more affected by the American experience, but the British pattern continued to dominate until 1939.

New South Wales Jewry, experienced a different pattern of communal development compared with other Anglo-Saxon Jewish communities. It was almost completely unaffected by the period

of East European Jewish migration. As a result it did not develop the diversity of religious practice, the strengthening of communal organization or an active Zionist movement as occurred in those communities where large numbers of East European Jews settled. On the other hand, comparatively more refugees from Nazi Europe settled in New South Wales. Whereas in other parts of the English speaking world these refugees were absorbed into the East European majority without a specific impact, in New South Wales, as well as in Victoria, they had generated significant changes by 1939. The other communities in Australasia were almost completely untouched by the migration of the 1930's because of their relative remoteness. New South Wales Jewry enjoyed almost complete acceptance within the general community, unlike Canada, South Africa and to some extent America, where the Jews were much more aware of their minority status and ethnic separateness. The internal tensions within each of these countries produced a comparatively higher level of anti-Semitism, in differing degrees, and this prevented the complete acceptance of Jews within the general community. In New South Wales, on the other hand, the Anglicized Jewish community was not seen as a threat by the Protestant majority. In the other Anglo-Saxon communities the East European clusters provoked the non-Jewish society and resulted in the passage of restrictive immigration laws which prevented an influx of refugees in the 1930's. New South Wales had no Jewish clusters as such and so the Australian Government was more prepared to modify its alien immigration laws to assist the refugees from Nazism. This, in turn, produced the changes experienced by New South Wales Jewry before 1939.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In 1914 New South Wales Jewry was a small, assimilated community threatened by the possibility of disintegration. In the 1920's communal leaders attempted to stem the tide of assimilation by improving communal institutions but these internal endeavours to strengthen the community failed. Pressures from outside the community with the rise of Nazism, the increase of anti-Semitism and the influx of refugees produced an environment capable of stemming the tide of assimilation. For the first time in the history of New South Wales Jewry, a European migrant group arrived in sufficiently large numbers to impose their own, more intense Jewish values on the previously dominant ideology of non-distinctiveness.

At the time of outbreak of war in 1914, New South Wales Jewish life still revolved around one institution, the Great Synagogue. All aspects of religious practice such as Kashruth, burials and acceptance of proselytes were controlled by the Great Synagogue Board whose president acted as official spokesman for the community. The Anglo-Jewish form of modern orthodoxy continued as the only pattern of religious observance in Sydney. The other nineteenth century developments in Jewish practice were rejected by the conservative, Anglo-Jewish leadership. Opposition to Zionism continued as a key feature of Jewish communal thinking so that the Zionist League was an insignificant fringe movement in the community. The New South Wales Jewish community was comparatively unaffected by the Russian

Jewish exodus of the period 1880-1914 which so completely changed the Anglo-Jewish communities in South Africa, Canada, Britain and America. As a result, New South Wales Jewry remained, in the 1920's, a small, parochial community, isolated from the mainstreams of Jewish thought.

In the period after World War I, the New South Wales Jewish community was mainly concerned with participating actively in every facet of the general community's life. Its members played an active role during World War I and after the war they made a significant contribution, out of all proportion to their small numbers, to the political, commercial and social life of the state. Some of the outstanding figures of this period included Sir Daniel Levy, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly for many years, George Judah Cohen, a doyen in the financial world, and John Goulston, who became Grand-Master of the Masons. Jews were able to achieve such a high status in the non-Jewish world because of their middle class background, their desire to submerge their Jewish differences and to imitate the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant majority and the relative absence of anti-Semitic discrimination. Their policy of non-distinctiveness and desire to succeed enabled them to integrate fully with the non-Jewish community and to become an entrenched, well-respected minority group.

The successful integration of the New South Wales Jewish community and its desire for Anglo-Saxon conformity threatened its continued existence as a separate religious entity. In the period 1900-1933 the community was faced with a growing problem of structural assimilation. Many young Jews moved almost

entirely in non-Jewish circles and failed to maintain strong social contacts within their own community. The outcome of this intermixing was an increasing rate of intermarriage with a resultant loss of members from the Jewish community. Structural assimilation occurred so readily both because of the desire for non-distinctiveness on the part of the Jewish community and the lack of discrimination by the non-Jewish community. The relative absence of anti-Semitic restrictions on Jewish social mobility and the Anglicized second generation status of the Jewish community contributed to the high level of structural assimilation. As a result, in the 1920's, New South Wales Jewry was not a viable community.

The paradox for the Jewish community was that while its communal leaders wished to be fully accepted by the general community, they still tried to retain their loyalty to the Jewish religion. As they became aware of the rising rate of intermarriage, the leaders attempted to strengthen communal institutions in the 1920's to prevent assimilation. New synagogues were built, the social fabric of the community was strengthened, particularly with the opening of the Maccabean Hall and the creation of the Council of Jewish Women; various other endeavours were made to improve the community's organizational structure. These efforts failed, however, in their basic aim mainly because of the conservative, Anglicized leadership, both lay and ministerial. The lack of co-operation within the community, the inadequacy of Jewish education and the fact that few migrants from the European Jewish centres settled in Sydney in the 1920's also contributed to this failure. All

changes continued to emanate mainly from the Great Synagogue which retained its dominant role in the community. New South Wales Jewry had not yet experienced the diversification of Jewish life which occurred in Europe and America in the nineteenth century. In the 1920's the community remained limited in its outlook, isolated from the mainstreams of Jewish thought and lacking a strong sense of Jewish identification. As a result, the problem of assimilation was not solved.

The watershed in the history of New South Wales Jewry came in the 1930's. In this period the community experienced significant changes for a number of reasons. With Hitler's rise to power in Germany, racial anti-Semitism gained legal acceptance and a Jewish refugee problem of immense proportions ensued. These developments forced the New South Wales Jewish leaders to reassess their concept of Jewish identity and to become more aware of Jewish ethnicity. The growth of indigenous anti-Semitic political groups, such as the Australia First Movement, was very disturbing for New South Wales Jews because it was a new phenomenon in Australian politics. The events in Europe heightened the sense of need for a Jewish homeland in Palestine and the British restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine added to the Jewish sense of distress. All these factors, in turn, affected the local Jewish community.

The refugee issue placed new demands on New South Wales Jewry. Local Jewish organization had to be improved in order to cope with the difficult tasks of integrating the refugees and ensuring that they did not become a charge on the state.

In 1936 the German Jewish Relief Fund, formed to raise money to help German Jews overseas, began to direct its efforts and funds to help Jews settle in Australia. This task resulted in the evolution of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society which negotiated with the Australian Government to increase the quota for refugees and to arrange its application on a more efficient basis. After 1936, the Australian Government gradually increased its alien immigration quotas to allow more refugees, both Jewish and non-Jewish, to settle in Australia. With this liberalization of refugee quotas, especially after December 1938, an increasing number of Jewish refugees arrived in New South Wales. All these activities made the established leadership more introspective and concerned with specifically Jewish problems. The refugees who arrived in the late 1930's provided the impetus and manpower to introduce significant institutional changes which had previously been suggested by the established Jewish community but never successfully implemented.

"Jewish institutionalism is a barometer that at any given moment accurately registers the climate of the Jewish community".¹ In the 1930's Jewish institutions experienced significant changes in every area so that, by 1939, the community presented a different picture to that of 1914. In the area of religious development the Great Synagogue was no longer the only synagogue in Sydney. Its diluted form of orthodoxy was challenged by the formation of more orthodox

¹C. Bezalel Sherman, The Jew Within American Society: A Study in Ethnic Individuality, Detroit 1961, p.194.

congregations and the establishment of the Liberal Temple Emanuel. A more varied pattern of religious observance emerged to give expression to a wider spectrum of the community. It was no longer necessary for the Great Synagogue's rabbinical leadership to continue with compromises in orthodox practice as less orthodox Jews, previously members of the Great, left to join the Temple. Under the pressure of those European Jews who were more orthodox and the new rabbinical leadership of the 1930's, a more committed Sydney Beth Din removed most of the anomalies in orthodox practice. The Great Synagogue's ritual practices were amended to conform with accepted orthodox traditions. Religious education was intensified with an increase in the number of pupils attending the Right of Entry Classes. Newcomers settling in Sydney before 1939 also brought with them a belief in the need for both the Jewish Day School Movement and Talmud Torah classes in order to maintain Jewish traditions. Jewish social and cultural life was augmented by the formation of the Young Men's Hebrew Association, Kadimah and the various groups concerned with Yiddish culture. In the 1930's kosher restaurant facilities could be found in a number of Jewish clubs situated in the city, an important innovation as communal issues could be discussed at lunch. The Jewish press improved with both the Sydney Jewish News and Ivriah presenting alternative views to the conservatism of the Hebrew Standard.

The Zionist movement was the institution which underwent the greatest transformation in the 1930's. In 1914 Zionism had been an insignificant fringe movement and, despite all

endeavours in succeeding years, its position did not change until 1933. The combined impact of the events in Europe and the arrival of refugees imbued with Zionist principles changed this. Branches of the various facets of the Zionist movement — the Jewish National Fund, the Palestine Foundation Fund, W.I.Z.O., Friends of the Hebrew University and Friends of the Palestine Orchestra — were established in Sydney. Zionist leadership became more prestigious and the influence of pro-Zionist forces within the community became gradually more effective.

Inherent in all these developments was the gradual change in attitude and composition of the leadership of New South Wales Jewry. Members of the Great Synagogue Board began to lose their dominant position as newcomers gained positions of power. The challenges of the 1930's made the leadership more introverted with the result that they became less involved in the general community. Sir Samuel Cohen was the last of the old-style patrician leaders. A new more democratic style of communal leadership, with a completely different attitude to the position of the Jew in a non-Jewish society, evolved. The previous concern for civic recognition and social acceptance which had led to the ideology of non-distinctiveness was replaced by a stronger desire to maintain a separate Jewish identity. As support of movements such as Zionism and the Jewish kindergartens increased, New South Wales Jewry moved away from the desire for Anglo-Saxon conformity towards the concept of cultural pluralism.²

Following consolidation of the Jewish institutions, the

²P. Y. Medding, From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community, Melbourne 1968, pp.270-271.

enrichment of Jewish life and the change in communal attitudes, largely resulting from the impact of the refugees, the tide of assimilation was slowed. The newcomers acclimatized to the Australian way of life but resisted structural assimilation. Many congregated together in the Eastern Suburbs so that they could attend the same social clubs and organizations as well as being near synagogues and other institutions. Figures for intermarriage subsequently decreased from 23.1% of males married to non-Jewish females and 12.6% of females married to non-Jewish males in 1933 to 14.0% and 8.0% respectively in 1961.³ The previous trend towards complete disintegration of the community had been reversed.

After World War II, a new and larger influx of refugees to Australia began. Between 1947 and 1954 the Jewish population of New South Wales increased from 13,220 to 19,637. The arrival of more migrants from the major Jewish centres of Europe continued and accelerated the changes in attitude to religion, Jewish education and Zionism which commenced in the 1930's. The community was transformed from "a number of specially favoured family interests into a virile body nourished from manifold streams of Jewish life from all corners of the world".⁴ The process of diversification which had begun before 1939 was completed after 1945.

In the 1940's the growth of the Jewish population in the Eastern Suburbs and the North Shore necessitated the

³Figures for the 1947 and 1954 censuses are not available. S. Encel, B. Buckley, J. Sofer Schreiber, "The New South Wales Jewish Community: A Survey", duplicated edition, Sydney 1972, pp.67-68.

⁴Australian Jewish Times, 15 July 1955.

formation of new congregations. This process accelerated in the 1950's with the formation of new congregations and the construction of new synagogues at Parramatta (1956), South Head (1956), the large modern North Shore Synagogue (1957), Kingsford-Maroubra (1959), Strathfield (1959), Bankstown (1959), and the new Central Synagogue which could seat 1,400 people, as well as having two communal halls and a complex of classrooms. The Great Synagogue War Memorial was opened in 1956, providing the synagogue with a communal hall. By 1960 there were seventeen synagogues (and two temples), a very different picture from the situation in 1913 when the community centred around the Great Synagogue, the only synagogue in the Sydney area.

Concurrent with this expansion of synagogue accommodation, there was a further diversification of religious practice. The Liberal movement expanded and a second temple was built at Chatswood on the North Shore in 1960. In 1955 the Yeshiva, a more orthodox congregation was founded by Rabbi Herc, and other smaller, more orthodox congregations also developed. With the growth of the Liberal and more orthodox traditions, the Great Synagogue alone no longer set the tone in ritual and synagogue matters.

With the proliferation of synagogues, greater co-operation between the clergy became necessary. Following on from the first national conference of Jewish ministers convened by Rabbi Porush in 1946, other conferences have been held. At these conferences problems such as intermarriage, proselytism and education have been discussed. A further difficulty created

by the increasing number of congregations was the supervision of kashruth and shechitah, previously under the control of the Great Synagogue Board. By 1950, three congregations had their own shochtim and this resulted in chaos. This problem was largely overcome by the formation of the Kashruth Commission in 1967. However, kosher meat continued to be expensive and its supply has remained a problem for this reason alone.

Another central area of change in the post-war period was the revival of the Jewish Day School movement. In 1953 Moriah College was established as a primary school and, in 1960, a high school was opened. With the passage of time other day schools were established and by 1970 there were three day schools, Moriah, Yeshiva College, and Masada, the last being a primary school only and situated on the North Shore. The progress of the day school movement in Sydney was hindered by personality conflicts and a lack of funds. Many Jewish parents were also apprehensive about the effects of segregating their children in separate schools and about the academic standards of the Jewish schools. However, the expansion of these schools has reflected the change in communal thinking on the issues of Jewish identity and survival.

New cultural and service groups were introduced by the migrants. The service organization, the B'nai Brith, established in 1945, was the most important of these. This movement grew in size and influence and in 1962 the first Australia-New Zealand convention was held in Sydney with fifty delegates from twenty lodges attending. Youth groups and welfare and philanthropic organizations also expanded and the

first Jewish hospital, the Council of Jewish Women's Wolper Hospital, was built in the 1950's.

In the post-war years the role of Zionism has continued to change. The fact that Jewish identity was not purely religious in character was underlined by Nazism. The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 gave further impetus to the growth of Zionism. Australian Jews were particularly elated by the role played by Dr Herbert Evatt, Minister for External Affairs, who was chairman of the United Nations Committee on Palestine which recommended its partition. After 1948 the Zionist Organization grew in strength until it became the dominating force in communal life. By the late 1960's the Jewish National Fund had the largest affiliation of any Jewish institution with Blue Boxes in 6,000 homes. In many ways Zionism replaced religion as the central focus of Jewish communal life and the Zionist leadership became concerned with inculcating a love for and a knowledge of Israel, the Hebrew language and Jewish traditions, as well as collecting funds for Israel.

The Australian Jewish communities experienced an internal revolution in the post-war years which continued the changes introduced in the years immediately preceding World War II. The two largest communities, those of Sydney and Melbourne, were most affected by these new developments but there was a definite difference between the two cities in the vitality and direction of the changes discussed above. Support for Yiddish culture was important in Melbourne but relatively insignificant in Sydney. The Day School Movement was more

successful in Melbourne where Mount Scopus' developed into the largest Jewish Day School in the world and over 50% of children in the community attend Jewish Day Schools compared with 17% in Sydney. In general, Melbourne Jewry's group identification has continued to be much stronger than that of the Sydney Jewish community.

Sydney's Jewish life was diversified and strengthened by the transformation created by the rise of Nazism and the impact of the refugees from Europe, both immediately before and after World War II. The community developed an intricate web of organizations which represented the varied strands of Judaism. These different aspects of Jewish life were co-ordinated more effectively by the creation of the Board of Deputies, on a state level, and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, on a national level. Although the migrants adjusted to the Australian way of life, they maintained their Jewish identity and did not assimilate structurally. Their greater communal awareness and stronger sense of Jewish loyalty was reflected in the significant decrease in the rate of intermarriage. The quality of Jewish life in New South Wales developed so that it became comparable with other Anglo-Saxon communities. New South Wales Jewry could no longer be considered a dying community.

On the basis of present Jewish communal attitudes, the prospects for the continued survival of New South Wales Jewry are very positive.⁵ Throughout the community there is a strong

⁵ Encelet.al., op.cit., pp.154-155.

desire to maintain a separate Jewish identity, regardless of the degree of religious commitment resulting in a high level of concern with Jewish issues and Jewish consciousness. The character of Jewish identity has diversified, with a greater emphasis on the national aspects, and there has been an adaptation of Jewish identity to the Australian environment. This adaptation reflects the ability of Judaism to survive in different conditions and can be considered a sign of strength.

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Paul A. Cullen (son of Sir Samuel Cohen; honorary secretary of the A.J.W.S. and a founder of the Temple Emanuel).

Sydney D. Einfeld (son of Rev. M. Einfeld, Cantor of the Great Synagogue, 1909-1937; a leader of Sydney Jewry).

Gerald Falk (son of Rabbi L.A. Falk, Minister of the Great Synagogue, 1923-1957; a Jewish communal leader).

Max Freilich (leading Australian Zionist and communal figure).

Simon Green (son of E. Green, a founder of the Central Synagogue; executive member of the Central and Great Synagogue Boards).

Sam Karpin (executive committee member of the Y.M.H.A.).

Rev. D. Krass (Cantor of the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue, 1933-1972).

Abram Landa (prominent Jewish Labor parliamentarian).

J. Lee (son of one of the founders of the Mizrachi Synagogue).

J. Lewis (associated with the Bankstown Synagogue).

Jonah Marks (editor of the Hebrew Standard of Australasia, 1920-1925).

Keith Moss (son-in-law of Sir Samuel Cohen; honorary secretary of the A.J.W.S.).

Rabbi Dr. I. Porush (Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue, 1940-1972).

Dr Fanny Reading (founder of the Council of Jewish Women and prominent communal figure).

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