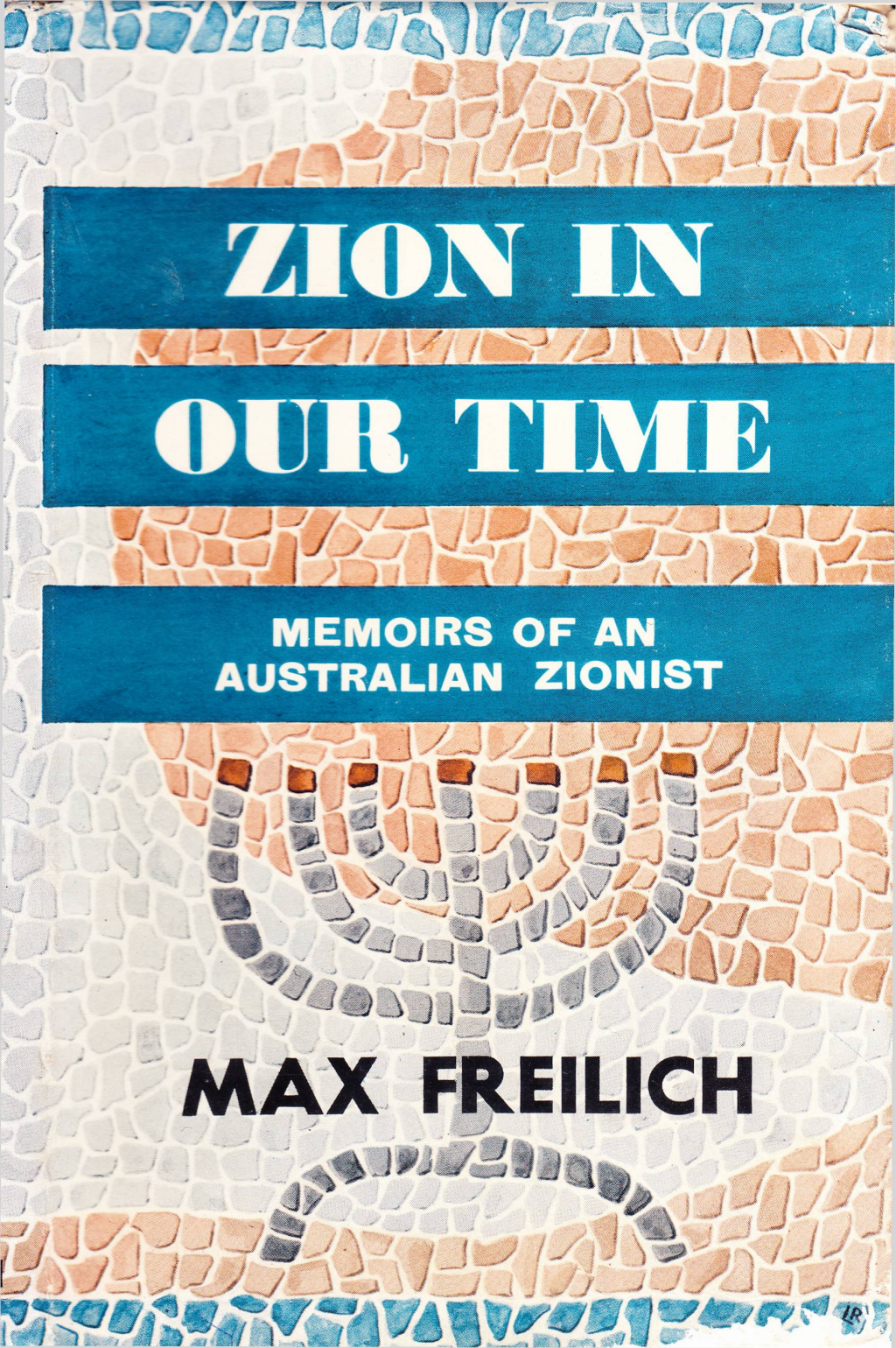

ZION IN
OUR TIME
MEMOIRS OF AN
AUSTRALIAN ZIONIST
MAX FREILICH

# ZION IN OUR TIME

*Memoirs of an Australian Zionist*

THIS IS THE STORY of a full life spent mostly on an ideal and one that has been achieved in his lifetime—the coming into being of the Israeli State.

Zionism was not always as popular in Australian Jewish circles as it is today and this book shows the struggle for recognition as a force within the community as well as the efforts made by visitors from Europe, Africa and U.S.A. to rouse the Australian people from their lethargy on this important matter.

Everyone who helped in the cause is mentioned in this book and it is therefore a record they will want to keep for their children and their children's children.

Above all else, it was not "a one-man band" and in his own modest way Mr. Max Freilich, who was an inspiration to all his co-workers, makes this quite clear.

It is also an important history in Australian political affairs and not only of the Jewish segment of our nation.

# *Zion In Our Time*

***Memoirs of an Australian Zionist***

*by*

MAX FREILICH

MORGAN PUBLICATIONS

Digitized by Touro College Libraries
For Project Zikaron
www.zikaron.tourolib.org
2022

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1967 BY
MORGAN PUBLICATIONS

PRINTED IN AUSTRALIA BY
HALSTEAD PRESS, SYDNEY

# ZION IN OUR TIME

# *Foreword*

FOR nearly forty years the name of Max Freilich has been largely synonymous with Zionism in this country. The modest title of this book covers, therefore, a great deal more than a personal autobiography, interesting as Max's life has been. The book is, as well, a history of Zionist activity in Australia from the time of Max's arrival here until the period of the birth of the State of Israel. As such it will serve at least a twofold purpose. For those, like myself, who have lived through this period it will recreate and recall events and characters whose recollection the passage of time may perhaps have dimmed. Beyond this it will serve for the future as a permanent record of an important epoch in Australian Jewish life as seen through the eyes of a dedicated Zionist who was always at the centre of affairs. Max richly deserves the thanks of the present and future generations of Australian Jewry for the labours which have made this record possible and is to be sincerely congratulated upon the result. These pages will, I am sure, be found of absorbing interest by many readers. I am deeply grateful to my old friend Max for having honoured me with a request to contribute a brief foreword.

BERNARD SUGERMAN

# *Acknowledgement*

These memoirs have been written on the repeated urging of my friend and colleague Horace B. Newman in order to record for posterity the unique experiences of those of us of this generation who helped in some measure to shape the Jewish destiny leading to the emergence of the State of Israel. Horace was strongly supported by the pleas of my wife Sasha and our dear friend Shlomo Lowy, of the *Keren Kayemeth le Israel* in Jerusalem.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Alan D. Crown, lecturer in Semitic Studies at the Sydney University, and to Colonel A. W. Sheppard for their invaluable advice and for their painstaking assistance in the editing of this book.

MAX FREILICH

# *Contents*


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| | Foreword by Mr. Justice Sugerman | v |
| | Acknowledgement | vii |
| | Introduction | xiii |
| | Background | xv |
| 1 | Arrival in Australia | 1 |
| 2 | Home in Sydney | 6 |
| 3 | Early Activity | 12 |
| 4 | First Palestine Visit | 23 |
| 5 | Ben Shein | 32 |
| 6 | Communal Events | 37 |
| 7 | Sydney's Slow Progress | 42 |
| 8 | An Enduring Friendship | 48 |
| 9 | Rabbi Brodie's Departure | 52 |
| 10 | A Painful Episode | 56 |
| 11 | Greater Effort | 60 |
| 12 | World War II | 69 |
| 13 | The Fall of France | 76 |
| 14 | Ben Gurion's Visit | 83 |
| 15 | Michael Traub's Campaign | 89 |
| 16 | Australia-Palestine Committees | 94 |
| 17 | Professor Stone Replies | 108 |
| 18 | Ida Silverman's Campaign | 116 |
| 19 | Dreams and Realities | 123 |
| 20 | Ernest Bevin's Palestine Policy | 132 |
| 21 | Twenty-second Zionist Congress | 148 |
| 22 | State of Siege | 160 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 23 | The Local Scene | 172 |
| 24 | Dr. Evatt's Vital Role | 186 |
| 25 | After the Decision | 200 |
| 26 | The Birth of the State | 206 |
| 27 | Zionist Fulfilment | 223 |
| 28 | The Jewish Future | 236 |
| | Conclusion (Epilogue) | 241 |

# *Illustrations*


| | FACING PAGE |
|---|---|
| Benzion Shein | 44 |
| Michael Traub | 44 |
| Mrs. Ida Silverman | 44 |
| Miss Elsa London, Mrs. Faye Schenk, Mrs. S. Freilich, Mrs. Rebecca Sieff, Mrs. Rieke Cohen | 44 |
| Rabbi Dr. Porush, Mrs. Ruth Levin, Consul-General Levin, and author | 45 |
| Author and Horace Newman in Sydney | 45 |
| Sir Barnett Janner with author | 45 |
| Chaim Weizmann | 60 |
| Watch-tower Corner-stone ceremony | 60 |
| Author being introduced to President Ben Zvi | 61 |
| Mrs. and Mr. Alec Breckler, Sasha Freilich, the author and President Shazar | 61 |
| Author and his family | 140 |
| Shlomo Lowy, Faye Schenk, Rivka Lowy | 140 |
| Norman Schureck | 156 |
| Mr. S. Kessler with Rabbi Brodie | 156 |
| Announcement of death of Leib Jaffe | 204 |
| Moshe Sharett with author | 204 |
| Jerusalem after 1948 fighting | 205 |
| Opening of Hadera paper mills | 205 |
| Author being entertained in Israel | 220 |
| Members of Zionist Federation Executive | 220 |
| Dinner to Dr. H. V. Evatt | 221 |
| Dr. H. V. Evatt congratulating Moshe Sharett | 221 |

# *Introduction*

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF ISRAEL as a sovereign State after nineteen centuries of dispersion is unique in the history of mankind and constitutes a miracle of modern times. It came about as a sequence in the chain of extraordinary circumstances which culminated in the Declaration of Jewish Statehood proclaimed by David Ben Gurion on 14th May 1948 in the all-Jewish city of Tel Aviv.

The survival of the Jewish people in the face of inconceivable physical and spiritual suffering throughout its long and dark history of nearly twenty centuries in exile can only be conceived as transcendental. Dr. Theodor Herzl's appearance on the scene of Jewish history in the grimmest days of Czarist pogroms with the publication of his *Judenstaat* and the creation of the Zionist organisation surmounting the incredible obstacles put in its path were surely acts of providence and of almost superhuman achievement. It was the same immense national verve, bordering on the supernatural, that enabled Dr. Chaim Weizmann to overcome the most powerful opposition against him and against the national idea, and helped him obtain from the British Government the Balfour Declaration of November 1917 which blazed the trail for the re-establishment of Jewish nationhood. It can truly be described as miraculous that out of the ashes of Hitler's crematoria had risen the spirit of unbounded resistance and the relentless determination for national independence and freedom which combined to defeat Bevinism and the hostile forces in Palestine. It was surely a miracle that the Jewish people scattered over the face of the globe, united as never before, withstood the onslaught on their legitimate rights, their aspirations and just claims to the tiny land of Palestine, the cradle of Jewish peoplehood of nearly four thousand years ago. It was due to the accumulation of all these historic facts that the miracle of Israel's rebirth happened in our own days.

The Jews of Australia, inspired by the Zionist Federation of

Australia and New Zealand, may justly lay claim to have played a significant part in bringing about this miracle. Because of my personal involvement in this several friends and colleagues and members of my family have urged me to write these memoirs and to put on record for posterity the Australian contribution to the drama of Jewish national renaissance and to the creation of the State of Israel. It was certainly no easy task and no mean achievement on the part of Australian and New Zealand Jewry to have enlisted the genuine sympathies of their Governments in these remote lands towards the Zionist cause. It was fortunate that the sincere friend and supporter of Israel, the great Australian Labour leader and international statesman, Dr. Herbert Vere Evatt, was the chairman of the *Ad hoc* Committee which considered the UNSCOP Report and was thus able to pave the way for the decision of the United Nations General Assembly on 29th November 1947 for the setting up of a Jewish State in a partitioned Palestine. The Governments of Australia and New Zealand, ever since, have consistently given their support to the State of Israel and to the cause of the Jewish people whenever the occasion has arisen in the Security Council, in the General Assembly or in the Special Agencies of the United Nations. The friendly attitude of the Australian Government to the State of Israel is symptomatic of the underlying character of the Australian people, its liberalism and its fair-mindedness. This was made evident to the Jews of Palestine by the Australian soldiers of both world wars.

# *Background*

My identification with Jewish communal life and with Zionism from the time we arrived in New Zealand and later in Australia was not accidental. From my earliest youth, as far back as my memory takes me, I was imbued with a deep sense of Jewishness and with the Jewish national idea. Because of my upbringing and family background I was inspired by the messianic message of Zionism. I was born in June 1893 in Lesko, a small town in central Galicia, into a strictly observing Jewish home. My father, Aaron, a scholarly Jew and businessman, was more liberally minded. My mother, Yetta, on her mother's side a descendant of a long line of famous rabbis, was a deeply pious woman. Soon after my Barmitzvah I was sent to a *yeshivah* (Talmudic college) to study under the tutelage of the famous scholar and Gaon, Rabbi Halberstam of Brzezany, in the eastern part of Galicia. At the age of thirteen, I was the youngest *yeshivah bachur* (lad) and I became known there as the *Ilui*, a Talmudic prodigy. After one year I returned home with laudatory testimonials from Rabbi Halberstam and from the head of the college, testifying to my Talmudic and *halachic* knowledge as befitted a future rabbi, a fact taken for granted by my teachers. Matters turned out differently and on my return home I abandoned my Talmudic studies and literally forced my way into my father's business. At the same time I took up at night, secretly, the study of secular subjects which up to the age of fifteen were almost inaccessible to me. My parents sent me to *cheder* and the *yeshivah* but did not let me attend the public school, although I did manage to get some private tuition of a secular nature. I then began to educate myself in German language and literature and years later, at the age of twenty, I left for Vienna where I prepared myself for matriculation. After World War I, I enrolled at the University of Vienna and there completed a Science course in the faculty of Philosophy.

It would appear that I was attracted to Zionism at a very

tender age but there is no record or any other means of reference available to determine the exact time or how I became aware of the existence of Dr. Theodor Herzl and his formulation of the idea of Zionism. Recently a friend and colleague of mine, Paul Ungar, a native of Vienna, who later settled in Sydney, very generously presented me with several early issues of *Die Welt*, a weekly magazine founded and until his death edited by Dr. Herzl. In Issue Number 30, of 22nd July, 1904, my name is included in the list of donors of trees in the forest intended to be planted in memory of this great leader and founder of modern Zionism who tragically passed away on 4th July at the age of forty-four in Vienna. It is possible that at eleven years of age I already followed enthusiastically these events which were published in the Yiddish and Hebrew dailies which at the time were on sale in my town. My memory of these years is vague but I have vivid recollections of the period from 1907 onwards and of the intense political struggles during elections for the Parliament of Austria-Hungary.

Professor Dr. Leo Kellner of Czernowitz and Adolf Stand of Lemberg (Lvov) were then Zionist candidates for election to Parliament and I travelled in secret to our neighbouring larger town to listen to them addressing election meetings in Yiddish. This I could only do in great secrecy for in the circle of my near relatives a Zionist was equated with a heretic. When I left for Vienna in 1913 it was to attend the eleventh Zionist Congress held there in late August of that year.

During World War I, I served in the Austro-Hungarian armed forces on the Russian front and was stationed for some time in Przemysl, a town near Lvov, where my father and eldest sister were temporarily residing; usually I spent my army leave with them. It was on one such occasion that I met my future wife. Late in 1917 I was given extended army leave to return to Vienna for the purpose of completing my studies for matriculation and at the war's end I was in Vienna and passed my examination for matriculation in February 1919. I enrolled at the University of Vienna in April of that year.

Early in November 1918, even before the official signing of the armistice agreement on the eleventh of that month, the Armies of Austria-Hungary were leaving the battlefield and large numbers of soldiers were either wandering aimlessly or

straggling home. As a consequence there was much looting by these demoralised ex-servicemen and Jewish homes and businesses were the principal victims. In eastern and central Galicia bitter fighting broke out between Poles and Ukrainians for the possession of the territory of the disintegrating Austro-Hungarian Empire and in Lvov, and in many other towns, bloody pogroms were perpetrated on the Jewish population: this happened especially where the violently anti-Semitic army of General Haller appeared.

When the news of these barbaric acts reached Vienna I left for home to be with my people and found the Jewish population living in terror of what might be in store for them. Rumours were spreading like wild-fire of riotous peasant soldiers from neighbouring villages marching on the town for loot and murder; so, together with other Jewish ex-servicemen, I organised a kind of self-defence and for several nights we posted vigilantes outside the town for protection against an attack on the Jewish inhabitants.

Nothing untoward happened and I utilised my stay addressing meetings and helping to organise the youth for *aliyah* (immigration) to Palestine. Although we had heard of the Balfour Declaration previously, it was only after the conclusion of hostilities that we learnt the full story of the historic declaration of 2nd November 1917 by the British Government which read:

> "His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this project . . ."

The impact on us, youth and adult alike, was truly electric and a wave of tremendous enthusiasm swept through the Jewish communities of Central Europe. Rumours of the setting up of a Jewish government were wide-spread throughout the strife-torn lands of the vanishing Habsburg Empire.

During my stay in Lesko with my relatives I was most anxious about the fate of my fiancée Sasha, and her people in Lvov. There were no means of communication immediately available and I had to stay at my home town until rail connection with eastern Galicia was resumed. I took the first available train to Lvov, a journey which was a nightmarish adventure as it was

packed with soldiers and but a handful of civilians who were asked several times during the journey to leave their compartments and take cover from rifle fire from nearby fighting positions. After making a full day's journey of what was normally a three hours' train ride, I arrived late at night at the house of my future in-laws and was relieved to see Sasha and her family safe and sound, after their terrifying experience of the pogroms in the Jewish quarters of Lvov and the street-by-street and house-to-house fighting of the Civil War. The family had narrowly escaped death or injury during the terrible weeks of fighting which had ceased but a few days before my arrival.

My father-in-law, Osias Landau, was a deeply religious Jew and a well-to-do financier who, before the war, had counted many members of the Polish aristocracy amongst his clientele. The famous Hassidic rabbis of Belzec and Sasov frequently stayed at his home.

At first he objected strongly to my courting his daughter, on account of my Zionist beliefs but, on my arrival at his home that night, I was warmly welcomed by all the family, including my father-in-law. It was then that Sasha and I became engaged to be married. However, after spending only a few days in Lvov I had to return to Vienna to resume my studies and sit for my examinations.

The political and economic situation in truncated Austria was very precarious and Vienna, as the capital of a small country, was likened to a dwarf with a large head and tiny body. Amidst the upheavals that followed the dismembering of the Austro-Hungarian State there were anti-Semitic outbreaks in the provincial towns as well as in Vienna and these had serious repercussions on the student body at the University. For some months following my enrolment fist fights broke out frequently when anti-Semitic German national students tried to block the entry of the Jewish students to the University buildings. These disgraceful happenings made a profound impact on me and I resolved to leave Austria and the continent of Europe on completing my course at the University. This was also a time of a great upsurge of Jewish national consciousness amongst our students and Jewish youth generally, a consciousness which manifested itself in many ways. Hebrew schools were founded, both primary and secondary (Gymnasium), and lectures on

Jewish topics were organised and well attended. We students took part in organising political meetings and formed the vanguard of the campaigns to elect national Jewish candidates to Parliament and to municipal governing bodies as well as to the Jewish *Kehila* of Vienna.

In late August 1920, my mother-in-law, Leah, a gracious and kind-hearted woman, came with her daughter to Vienna, and Sasha and I were married on 5th September. Our first son, Theodor, named after Theodor Herzl, was born on 11th February 1922 and our second son, Herbert, named after Sir Herbert Samuel, the first British High Commissioner for Palestine, was born on 25th April 1925. After this second happy event a relative from New Zealand on a second visit to Vienna persuaded us to come to New Zealand for what, we believed, was to be a trial period of three years.

After making our decision to emigrate it took only a matter of a few months to arrange our affairs in preparation for departure. The fourteenth Zionist Congress was held in Vienna in late August of that year (1925) and I attended most of the sessions as a spectator. At one of the last sittings I learnt that there were two visitors from Australia attending the Congress but my efforts to see them were unsuccessful. Later when we settled in Australia, I found that these visitors had been Dr. Fanny Reading and her mother. We left Vienna in June 1926 for Poland where we spent several weeks with our parents in Lvov and Lesko and took sad and heartbreaking leave of our relatives. Eventually we left for Belgium and England where we remained until November 1926 and then embarked at Southampton on the *Athenic* for New Zealand.

The long voyage of six weeks and the passage across the Atlantic in the autumn months was fairly rough. This was our first sea trip but, contrary to our expectations, we had a comfortable time on board. Theodor, a lively boy of four, soon found playmates and Sasha readily made friends with women passengers who watched as she occupied herself with needlework. My time was taken up with the study of the English language and occasionally I played a game of chess.

One Sydney passenger took more than a usual interest in us and invited me to visit him should I ever come to Sydney. I took him at his word and on my first visit to Sydney telephoned

him and was invited to come to his home which was situated in an outer suburb. When I arrived there, one Sunday afternoon, there was a large crowd gathered. These people were staring at me continuously and I learnt afterwards that this large number of guests had been invited to see a Jew for the first time: Henry Ford's anti-Semitic publication and his subsequent retraction in the press had aroused their curiosity about Jews. I did not enjoy the experience and made my exit as soon as possible.

We arrived in Wellington in late December 1926.

CHAPTER

# 1

# *Arrival in Australia*

ON MY FIRST AUSTRALIAN VISIT I arrived in Sydney on the S.S. *Maunganui* from Auckland, on Tuesday, 14th June 1927, and in deep excitement watched from early morning the skyline of the city of Sydney as the ship moved slowly up the beautiful harbour to its berth. It was love at first sight for this gloriously situated metropolis.

My wife and two children stayed behind in Auckland whither we had arrived from Europe six months earlier. My Zionist friends in that city had furnished me with letters of introduction to Zionist leaders in Sydney but I used these very sparingly and then only on a subsequent visit to Australia.

On this voyage there was also a young woman from Auckland travelling to Sydney to be married; the bride-to-be was Miss Vera L. Emanuel, who a day after our arrival was wed at the Great Synagogue to Mr. Bernard Cohen of Sydney. Little did I then dream that Vera was destined to become a dynamic leader of Jewish women in Australia and that it would be my good fortune to be associated with her in active and fruitful work in many and varied fields of Jewish endeavour in the Commonwealth of Australia.

On 14th May, exactly one month before my landing for the first time on Australian shores, the official opening of Federal Parliament House took place in Canberra. This historic occasion was celebrated throughout the Australian continent but little did I think that nearly two decades later, in the most critical period of Zionism and of the Jewish National Home in

Palestine, I was to pay frequent visits to the National Capital and the Federal Parliament on behalf of the Zionist cause.

The purpose of my first visit was to explore the possibility of setting up business in Australia. On the morning of my arrival I came in contact with Mr. A. Bamberg of Centennial Park, who invited me for the Sabbath eve meal at his home. There I learned of the presence in Sydney of Dr. Alexander Goldstein of the *Keren Hayesod* (Palestine Foundation Fund) of Jerusalem who was on a mission to conduct a campaign for the fund in the countries of the Far East, including Australia and New Zealand. The daughter of my hosts, Enid, was acting as secretary to Dr. Goldstein and was assisting him in the campaign. I was staying at the Hotel Australia where Dr. Goldstein was also staying and the next morning when I called at his room he invited me to accompany him to a meeting of the Christadelphians to take place on the following afternoon at the Regent Hall. This was my first experience of a *Keren Hayesod* meeting in this country, of which fund I was to be Chairman in N.S.W. for nearly two generations and whose cause I served from the early years of my residence in this country. It was a strange experience to see plates handed around to the two hundred or more congregants in the hall for a collection in support of the fund.

Dr. Goldstein had come to Australia from the Far East on the S.S. *Tasman* which had stranded on a coral reef near Clerk Island about three hundred and fifty miles from Brisbane. The passengers, who included the world-famous violinist Jasha Heifetz, were taken off by the Japanese vessel *Aki Maru* and were disembarked in Brisbane in May 1927. Dr. Goldstein visited all the capital cities of Australia and New Zealand campaigning tirelessly. He was rewarded for his hard physical work and great mental strain in that his mission, the first campaign in this part of the world since the founding of the *Keren Hayesod* in June 1920, was very successful. Prior to this campaign Mr. Israel Cohen of London had conducted, in April 1920, a highly successful drive throughout the Jewish communities in the Far East and in Australasia on behalf of the Palestine Restoration Fund, which was the forerunner of the *Keren Hayesod.*

Reflecting on this epoch of Zionism one realises that the

1920's were the years of the Zionist honeymoon, especially as it concerned Jewry of the British Empire. These were the years after the Balfour Declaration of November 1917 and those immediately following the ratification by the League of Nations of the British Mandate over Palestine in July 1922. Zionism was then acceptable to almost every Jew as the decent and normal attitude towards the national aspiration of the Jewish people instead of being taboo as it became to a large section of Anglo-Jewry during the 1930's, and even more so, in the critical years of the 1940's before the coming into being of the State of Israel in May 1948. The campaigns of Mr. Israel Cohen and Dr. Alexander Goldstein were symptomatic of this attitude and of the prevalent spirit of the period in which they were held. On both occasions the drive for funds was supported enthusiastically by nearly all sections of the Jewish communities of Australia and New Zealand. Such general support was not readily forthcoming for Zionist campaigns in later years.

Dr. Goldstein arrived in Sydney from Brisbane on 19th May 1927, and was met at the Central Railway Station by leaders of the entire Jewish community. He opened the Sydney campaign at a reception given by the Union of Sydney Zionists. The meeting, held at the King's Hall, was presided over by Mr. Orwell Phillips, then President of the Great Synagogue. On the platform with Mr. Phillips was Percy Marks, President of the Union of Sydney Zionists. It is characteristic of that time that on the executive and committee of the Zionist society were S. S. Cohen, later Sir Samuel Cohen, Orwell Phillips, A. M. Lowenthal, Morris Symonds, Saul Symonds, Dr. Fanny Reading, Julius Rosenfeld and other leading personalities of Sydney Jewry. Shortly before the arrival of Dr. Goldstein the Women's Zionist League was formed with Mrs. Marcus Marks as its first President and a great driving force. Mrs. Marks, Julius Rosenfeld, the Union's Honorary Treasurer and I. K. Sampson, the Honorary Secretary, did much to make this first *Keren Hayesod* campaign in Sydney an outstanding success.

Dr. Goldstein addressed numerous meetings, Jewish and non-Jewish, during his stay in Sydney and his campaign was by no means an easy task. On the eve of his departure for Auckland on 1st July I called at his room and found him in a depressed state of mind and extremely weary from his long and arduous

work in Sydney. I handed him a cheque as my modest contribution towards his New Zealand drive for *Keren Hayesod.* This cheered him up somewhat and he took a message from me for my family in Auckland.

The campaign in New Zealand was very successful and Dr. Goldstein returned to Australia on 9th August for the continuation of his mission in the Commonwealth. On 19th and 20th September the first Australian Zionist Conference was held in Melbourne and was addressed by Dr. Goldstein. It was on his initiative that the conference was convened and a resolution adopted approving the formation of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand. An executive was elected with Sir John Monash as Honorary President, Mr. M. Zeltner, President, Rabbis I. Brodie and S. Mestel, Vice-Presidents, L. Ellinson, Honorary Treasurer and A. Masel, Honorary Secretary, all of Melbourne. A council comprising members from the other States was elected and it was decided to call another conference a year later.

It was not very long after our arrival in New Zealand before I made contact with leading members of the Auckland Zionist Society and the Jewish Social Club, as well as with other members of the Jewish communities in Auckland and Wellington. The leaders of the Auckland Zionist Society at the time were Rev. S. A. Goldstein, Louis Phillips, Max Salas, I. Meltzer and Max Robinson. Of the leading Zionists in Wellington I knew best Mr. Isaac Gottlieb, his brother Morris and my cousin Max Heiman. The *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle,* a monthly publication, was edited by Ben Green of Wellington who later settled in Melbourne. He was ably assisted by Louis Phillips of Auckland, a profound thinker and founding father of New Zealand Zionism.

Whilst it was easy for me, being occupied in business and having found like-minded friends, to settle down in this remote country away from relatives and far from the Jewish centres and the Jewish milieu to which I was accustomed, it was very hard for my wife, Sasha, to adjust herself to our new life. She found it especially difficult when I often had to leave home travelling on business. However, she gradually overcame the distressing feeling of strangeness and loneliness and was helped by her vivacious nature and her ability to make friends easily. We

struck up a close friendship with the Salas family whom we visited frequently. Mrs. Salas admired Sasha for her beautiful needlework and her artistic tendencies and during my first visit to Australia she introduced Sasha to the management of Milne and Choyce, the largest department store in Auckland who became very interested in Sasha's handicraft. The firm engaged her for three months as demonstrator in the needlework department and advertised her and the demonstrations prominently as "Madame Sasha of Vienna". On my return from Australia I found that my wife had become a well-advertised and popular person in this, our newly-found home. Altogether we lived in Auckland for some sixteen months and were fortunate to have made there several very dear and lifelong friendships. Nevertheless, after my second visit to Australia, I decided to take my family across the Tasman and settle in Sydney.

CHAPTER

# 2

# *Home in Sydney*

ON MY LAST VISIT TO SYDNEY I booked accommodation for my family at a boarding house in Kings Cross for late March 1929. Because of a shipping strike our departure from Auckland was delayed and I advised the management that we would come as soon as the strike was over. On our arrival, about two weeks later, I found that, not knowing when the strike would be settled, the accommodation had not been kept for us. We stayed instead at the Hotel Australia until after the Easter holidays when I began looking for a house to rent. The fact that we had two young children proved to be a great handicap and we had difficulty in finding a suitable home. Eventually I purchased a cottage in Arthur Street, Bellevue Hill, where we have lived for forty years.

During our stay at the Hotel Australia, Rev. (later Rabbi) L. A. Falk paid us a courtesy call which we much appreciated. This visit began an association for many years of working for a common cause—the cause of Zion. At this early period of our life in Sydney I could hardly devote any time to communal activity because I obviously had to get settled down with my young family and establish myself in business. I joined the Union of Sydney Zionists some time later but my contact with Samuel Kessler, a leading Zionist, dates back to our first days in this country. On my first visit to Sydney I had met Mr. P. J. Marks, then President of the Union of Sydney Zionists, and several members of the committee; but Mr. Kessler and his family were, at that time, on a trip overseas. I was then, and always will be, grateful for the hospitality and friendship he

extended to us in the early months of our sojourn in a strange city. Sam Kessler was also helpful in our search for a suitable dwelling place.

It was on the recommendation of Mr. Kessler that I engaged the services of a leading Jewish solicitor, who on one occasion asked me quite seriously to explain how it was that people like myself could afford to buy a property so soon after our arrival in the country. He deemed it incredible that any newcomer could have brought with him the financial means to purchase a house. This, seemingly, was the general notion of the local Jews and of those who had settled in the country for some years past. On another occasion I called on a prominent Zionist at his office to hand him a letter of introduction from a New Zealand friend. I came at the appointed hour and after waiting for some considerable time was taken to his office. At the interview he repeatedly asked me what was the purpose of my visit and what could he do for me. He was obviously nonplussed when I replied that I had not come to ask for any personal favours but merely to meet local Jewish leaders with a view, perhaps, to joining the Zionist society at a later stage and being of some service to the Zionist cause if, and when, this was possible. This incident caused me to put aside the other letters of introduction from my friends in New Zealand so as to be spared any such further embarrassment.

Several years later, having lived in the country and having learned about the conditions of new arrivals, I could understand how this concept concerning newcomers came about. The great majority of Jews hailing from Central and Eastern Europe arrived in the country without means and the only way open to them to earn a livelihood was either to become peddlers or to find manual employment. These new arrivals depended in large measure on the assistance given them by the local communities. There existed from early times a number of loan and aid societies as well as welfare and benevolent institutions in each of the capital cities in Australia to serve the needs of such new arrivals. Furthermore, there were and still are, welcoming committees to meet the ships arriving at the Australian ports as well as employment bureaux to find work for those in search of it. These acts of friendliness often lightened the lot of the newcomer and helped him to a new start in life in a strange

land. It is usually not very long before these new arrivals establish themselves and become integrated into the life of the general community.

I came to Australia representing a large diamond firm of Antwerp, Belgium, and to establish myself I had to travel frequently. For the first twelve months of our residence in Sydney I was away from home most of the time travelling to New Zealand and interstate in Australia. Under the circumstances I could not spare any time for active participation in the life of the community. This was a period of growth in Jewish consciousness and of relatively rapid progress in Zionist endeavours. Although I took little personal part I watched this development with great interest. My contact with some of the leading Zionist personalities was my source of information about new trends in the life of the Jewish communities of Australia. Apart from his mission for the *Keren Hayesod* Dr. Alexander Goldstein was instrumental in kindling the flame of the Zionist spirit and of the Jewish national idea amongst the Jews throughout the Commonwealth of Australia. Following the formation of the Australian Zionist Federation Mark Ettinger of the *Keren Hayesod* office of Jerusalem arrived here in April 1928 to take up the position of General Secretary of the Federation. After staying in Melbourne for four months he came late in August to Sydney where he organised a number of well-attended and enthusiastic meetings on behalf of the Zionist Federation. In October of the same year, Sir John Monash, in his capacity of Honorary President, published in the Jewish press in moving terms a call "to the Jews of Australia" to rally around and support the Australian Zionist Federation. It is indicative of the prevailing spirit of those days that the Herzl memorial service, organised by the Union of Sydney Zionists in July 1928, was held at the Great Synagogue with an attendance of nearly three hundred people.

In the same month of July 1928 the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Union of Sydney Zionists was formed with Mrs. Julius Rosenfeld as President. She was supported by an active committee consisting of women representing a cross-section of the Jewish community. At the annual meeting of the Union of Sydney Zionists held in October that year, Mr. Justice Cantor was elected President and Mr. Morris Symonds Honorary President.

Serving on the committee were several outstanding Jewish personalities including Orwell Phillips, S. S. Cohen and Eric F. Baume. In the same month the first meeting of the University Zionist Society took place and Saul Symonds was elected its President.

Simultaneously with increased Zionist activity there was also in evidence a strengthening of Jewish life in the community as a whole. The Australian Jewish population was then approximately 22,000, of whom about 10,000 were in Sydney. There were four congregations in existence, the Great Synagogue being the oldest and most important, having celebrated its Jubilee in March 1928 with great solemnity. Of the ten charitable and relief institutions, the Sir Moses Montefiore Jewish Home for the Aged occupied pride of place. For social and welfare work the National Council of Jewish Women, under the inspiring and dynamic leadership of its founder, Dr. Fanny Reading, was well organised and did a splendid job. It was then the meeting place for newcomers and overseas visitors where they were given a warm welcome and were made to feel at ease away from home. Apart from the recently formed Zionist Federation it was then the only organisation with branches in each State of the Commonwealth. The National Council of Jewish Women participated in every phase of communal activity including every fund-raising event, whether it was for Zionist, overseas relief or local funds. When Mrs. L. Slutzkin, originally from Melbourne, and later of Jerusalem, came to Australia in April 1928 to raise funds for the EZRA association in Palestine the Council collected £2,000, the total sum required to erect a maternity wing at the *Misgav Ladach* Hospital in Jerusalem. In August 1929 the Council of Jewish Women formed a Zionist Committee within the framework of its organisation and Zionist fund raising became an important plank of its aims and objects.

The incident of the Wailing Wall of 24th September 1928 on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) aroused deep resentment throughout the Jewish world and found its echo also in Australia. Rabbi F. L. Cohen in a sermon, "The Law and the Flag", stated by implication that the British police acted within their legal rights under Ottoman law in forcibly removing the wooden partition erected at the Wailing Wall for the purpose of screening off the women worshippers from the men on the morning

of the Day of Atonement. This caused a bitter public controversy, lasting several weeks. To my knowledge, this was the first open clash of the Rabbi with the Zionists.

Early in 1929 we planned a trip home and later in April I left with my wife and children on the P. & O. liner *Orontes* for the continent of Europe. We spent several weeks in Belgium where I attended to business at the offices of my partners. At the same time Sasha's younger sister Celia came with her parents to Antwerp to be married and this was a most welcome opportunity for a reunion with one part of our family on such a happy occasion. We left Antwerp, together with Sasha's parents, for Poland and, after staying with them a few days, we went to visit my people in Lesko whence we returned to Antwerp to finalise my business affairs. Altogether we remained in Europe for three months and returned to Australia via the U.S.A. late in August. On our arrival in New York at Ellis Island, after concluding customs and immigration formalities, I noticed that our elder boy Theo, then seven years old, was not at our side. I went back looking for him and saw that one of the immigration officers had engaged him in conversation. My occupation was shown in our passports as diamond merchant. The officer casually remarked to Theo, "Father has diamonds, hasn't he?" "Yes," said the boy, "he has a lot of diamonds." "Where?" asked the officer. "At home," he replied.

The second Zionist Conference was held in Sydney on 19th-21st May 1929. Since the first Conference in Melbourne about eighteen months earlier the Zionist movement in Australia had grown in stature and in scope, and this was reflected in the reports submitted to Conference by Rabbi Israel Brodie, its President, Mark Ettinger, the General Secretary, and other members of the executive. Of a number of important resolutions adopted one pledged the full support of Australian Zionists for the efforts made by Dr. Chaim Weizmann to enlarge the Jewish Agency with non-Zionist members which was to be included in the agenda for discussion at the sixteenth Zionist Congress which was to be convened in Zürich in July of that year. Thus it happened that I was absent from Australia at the first two conferences of the Zionist Federation of Australia but I have attended every conference—except one—since then.

During our stay in London, waiting to embark for New York,

came the sad news of the tragic Arab riots in Jerusalem and of the savage killings in Hebron and Safed in August 1929. A mass protest meeting was held at the Sydney Town Hall on 5th September with the largest Jewish attendance ever before seen in New South Wales. In the same month, Morris Symonds, Zionist leader and well-known benefactor, was elected President of the Great Synagogue as successor to S. S. Cohen. A month later, in October, Henrietta Irwell visited Australia on behalf of the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO), addressing many Jewish and non-Jewish meetings on the aims and tasks of the organisation. She was accompanied by Simone Nathan of Auckland, the distinguished founder and leader of WIZO in New Zealand. In the following month Mark Ettinger left Sydney to visit the other communities of Australia before returning to his home in Palestine.

The *Australian Jewish Chronicle*, a fortnightly published in Sydney, at the end of 1929 changed its ownership, its editorial management and its format to become a more ambitious weekly journal. The new venture was financed by several leading Zionists. In its first editorial on 1st January 1930 under the heading "The Changing Face of Sydney Jewry" it commented on the anarchic growth of the community. Whilst until World War I it was homogeneous in its composition and its aims, the arrival of Yiddish-speaking elements from Central and Eastern Europe caused a marked change in its development. It would also seem, the editorial stated, that most anglicised Jews resented the critical attitude of the Zionists towards the British Administration of Palestine during the Arab riots of August 1929.

CHAPTER

# 3

# *Early Activity*

UP TO THAT TIME my position in the community was merely that of an interested observer. I was in contact with many of its leading members but did not serve on any committee of the existing organisations; but at the annual meeting of the Union of Sydney Zionists I was elected a member of the committee. The committee occupied a small room in the Jewish War Memorial Building, known as the Maccabean Hall, where it held its monthly meetings. It had no defined programme and its activity was circumscribed and restricted to casual fund-raising, clearance of the small number of Jewish National Fund boxes and such like. The organisation assumed the name of Union of Sydney Zionists as a result of the merging of two smaller Zionist societies which had existed before and during World War I. At the time when I joined the committee it had few paying members and not enough revenue to cover its very low rental and the small incidental expenditure. At one of the first meetings I attended I volunteered for the task of enrolling more members to increase revenue and hence cover the modest financial needs of the committee.

In the early months of 1930 several significant events took place in the Jewish community. Alderman E. S. Marks, M.L.A., brother of the Zionist leader Percy J. Marks, was elected Lord Mayor of Sydney. Habonim, the League of Jewish Children, came into being in early 1930. Sir Isaac Isaacs was appointed Chief Justice of Australia in April, whilst another Jew, Sir Michael Myers of Wellington, New Zealand, had been appointed Chief Justice of New Zealand a few months earlier. Abram

Landa married Perla Levy on 10th April and later that year was elected a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. The Parliament of N.S.W. was notable for the many senior positions held by Jewish citizens. It once happened that the sitting of Parliament had to be suspended because of *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), Sir Daniel Levy, the Speaker, and Judge Cohen, Deputy Speaker, both being Jews.

Samuel Kessler, who was elected Jewish National Fund Commissioner of Australia at the second Zionist Conference in May 1929, published an appeal in late January 1930 to organise drives throughout Australia for the raising of funds to purchase land in Palestine. The appeal was made to the community under the slogan that the redemption of land by the Jewish National Fund was the most effective answer to Arab hostility. The drive in N.S.W. was organised by the State Commissioners, Berthold Herrman and Joseph Dix, with good financial results.

In the same period the Jewish Club was established with I. K. Sampson as foundation President. The club aimed at being a centre for spreading Yiddish culture in Sydney and for many years it was the meeting place of the Yiddish-speaking members of the community and was frequented by many visiting Yiddish actors, authors and lecturers of high repute.

The prevalent mood of the period was characterised by doubts and uneasiness in the Zionist camp as a consequence of the publication of the Shaw Report and the appointment of Sir John Hope Simpson as Government Commissioner charged with investigating problems of immigration and land settlement in Palestine. The British Government then ordered the suspension of most of the immigration certificates already granted by the Palestine administration, an action which aroused vigorous protest from the World Zionist Executive. This anxiety was reflected at the third Zionist Conference held in Melbourne on 12th-16th April 1930 which I attended as a member of the Sydney delegation.

The delegates from Sydney were Morris Symonds, Samuel Kessler, J. Kisselhof, Berthold Herrman and myself and we arranged to make the journey to Melbourne in Herrman's car. The journey was scheduled to take two days and we left Sydney before daybreak to call for Mr. Symonds at his country home in

Bowral, about ninety miles from Sydney. Celia Symonds prepared a sumptuous breakfast for us and we left soon after in high spirits. The Hume Highway to Melbourne, at the time, was in the course of construction and the road was broken up in many places with only a dirt track for travelling. Because of the rainy season most of these dirt tracks were now quagmires and our car was frequently bogged in the muddy ground. Berthold Herrman remained at the wheel and Morris Symonds, because of ill health, was not allowed to leave the car. We, the three remaining passengers, often had to walk uphill and at times had to lift the car out of the mud. As the youngest member I had to do the lion's share of the job: as good Zionists we did our best to enjoy the experience. The Zionist Conference turned out to be more of a social event than a business meeting; but it gave me the opportunity of meeting Zionist colleagues from the other States.

On our return journey to Sydney I was persuaded by Kessler to join the editorial committee of the *Australian Jewish Chronicle* and to participate in the venture financially. Israel Horwitz, the capable managing editor, invited me to write a series of articles on Zionist and general Jewish topics and to assist in the production of the paper. This afforded me both the opportunity to express myself and to observe the trends in the life of the Australian Jewish community. The problem of Hebrew and general Jewish education was to me very perplexing. There were in existence a number of Hebrew schools or education boards attached to the Synagogues and these were limited to Sunday morning classes where a few prayers were taught or some religious precepts were explained to the very young. It happened that a couple of qualified Hebrew teachers, one from Palestine and the other from South Africa, were in Sydney knocking at the doors of the educational institutions looking for teaching positions but were refused entry. As a result of the agitation and the strong case we published in the editorials of the *Australian Jewish Chronicle* two special schools were established where the modern Hebrew language was taught in classes for young folk as well as for adults.

At that time the teacher of the *Tarbuth* Hebrew school, Max Braude, applied for a subsidy from the Union of Sydney Zionists and Elias Green and I were delegated to inspect the school,

which was located in the Randwick-Coogee municipality, and report back to the committee. There were a number of young pupils receiving tuition in modern Hebrew and Jewish history as well as religious instruction. Rabbi Francis Cohen of the Great Synagogue called a conference of Hebrew schools in Sydney for the purpose of co-ordinating Hebrew religious education and spoke at some length on the necessity of co-ordinating the work of the schools with a view to avoiding overlapping. The Rabbi then asked for comments and called on me first as I was the youngest present. I opened my remarks by saying, perhaps a little facetiously, that the Rabbi spoke of overlapping in teaching Hebrew but in my understanding overlapping denotes doing a job twice, while here in Sydney the job of teaching Hebrew was not being done at all. The Rabbi jumped to his feet and did not allow me to continue. Rabbi Cohen was highly respected within and without the Jewish community and enjoyed a fine reputation as a scholar; but he was also known for his obvious dislike of those of us who spoke English with a foreign accent, a dislike which was even more accentuated if the speaker was a Zionist. The Rabbi hardly ever spoke to me afterwards.

In September 1930 Rabbi Joseph Lipman Gurevich came to Sydney on a mission for the *United Yeshivot* of Poland, Lithuania and Volhynia. In addition to being a notable Talmudic scholar he was a fine Hebraist, well-versed in modern Hebrew literature. During his stay in Sydney he paid frequent visits to the offices of the *Australian Jewish Chronicle* and was helpful in propagating the study of Hebrew and of Jewish culture. Rabbi Gurevich was later invited to accept a Rabbinical post in Melbourne, an invitation which he accepted.

Because of my nature I was ever watchful for the good name of Jewry. On one of my frequent visits to Brisbane, late in November 1930, I attended a service one Sabbath eve at the Synagogue and was struck by the very poor attendance: the congregation consisted of only two adults and several boys. After the service I was introduced to the Minister, Rev. Nathan Levine. On hearing that I was on the editorial committee of the *Australian Jewish Chronicle* he insisted that I should be his guest for the Sabbath eve meal. On the long walk from the Synagogue to his home, Rev. Levine poured out his heart to

me. After several years of ministering to the congregation he had been given notice and his services were to be dispensed with on the grounds that the community could not afford to pay his salary. At home I found the family broken-hearted and the atmosphere of dejection made a deep impression on me. There was the likelihood of legal proceedings and the tabloid press, especially *Smith's Weekly*, gave wide publicity to the story of the conflict between the Minister and the Jewish community.

Because of the economic depression of the early 1930's the situation in Brisbane was by no means unique. At an extraordinary meeting of the Eastern Suburbs Synagogue in Sydney in October that year the contract of Rabbi C. Kirsner, the Minister of the congregation, came up for consideration because of the congregation's difficult financial position. Similar conditions prevailed at the East Melbourne Hebrew congregation and the Adelaide Hebrew congregation. Whereas Rabbi Mestel of Melbourne and Rabbi David Hirsch of Adelaide voluntarily vacated their respective posts, Rev. Levine of Brisbane strongly opposed the stand taken by his Board of Management.

On my return to Sydney I consulted Israel Horwitz and Rev. L. A. Falk, my colleagues on the editorial board, and we publicised in very carefully couched terms the lamentable state of affairs in the Jewish community of Brisbane. At the same time we appealed to both sides to arrive at a peaceful settlement of the dispute to avoid a public scandal and a *chilul hashem* (defamation of the name of Jewry), with the result that Rev. Levine remained at his post with the Brisbane congregation for several years afterwards.

The Union of Sydney Zionists at its January meeting elected only the committee and at a further meeting held in early September elected its honorary officers, appointing Morris Symonds as Honorary President and Samuel Kessler as President. In the following weeks and months the Zionist position further deteriorated to a point where it was impossible for Dr. Chaim Weizmann to remain at the helm of the World Zionist Movement. As a result of the Hope Simpson Report, the Passfield White Paper was issued which presaged a further whittling down of the terms of the British Mandate over Palestine and the negation of the Balfour Declaration. On the day the White Paper was published, 21st October 1930, Dr. Weizmann

resigned as President of the World Zionist Organisation and of the Jewish Agency. This was followed by the resignation of Mr. Felix Warburg from the chairmanship of the Administrative Committee, and of Lord Melchett from the chairmanship of the Council of the Jewish Agency. These events brought forth most vigorous protests from world Jewry. The White Paper was also denounced by non-Jewish world figures such as Mr. Lloyd George and General Smuts, surviving members of the British Cabinet which had issued the Balfour Declaration, and by many others. Mass meetings of protest against the White Paper were held in Melbourne on 26th October and in Sydney on 2nd November, coinciding with the day on which the Balfour Declaration was issued in 1917. The Zionist Federation of Australia sent strongly worded protests to Mr. Scullin, the Australian Prime Minister, to be conveyed to the British Government.

The meeting in Sydney adopted the following resolutions:

1. Expresses loyalty to His Majesty King George V and voices its strong protest against the White Paper as a breach of the terms of the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate.
2. Pledges loyalty to the Zionist cause and expresses confidence in its leaders.
3. The resolutions to be communicated to the Governments of Australia and of Great Britain.
4. Pledges to continue the *Shekel* Campaign in order to secure an Australian delegate to the next Zionist Congress.

At a time when voices of protest were raised and strong criticism was levelled against British policy in Palestine there were a small number of *Yahudim* (assimilationist Jews) who felt impelled to minimise and even to justify the actions of the British Government. These found expression in letters appearing in the columns of the contemporary Sydney weekly, the *Hebrew Standard*, which became the mouthpiece of anti-Zionists. In its editorial comments the protests were described as acts of hysteria and the critics were stigmatised as Zionist fanatics. The editorial of 31st October referring to Lord Melchett's trenchant criticism of the White Paper and the curtailment of Jewish immigration into Palestine asserted that "Lord Melchett is a poor specimen

as a champion of Jewish causes" as he "puts the love of Palestine before the adherence to Jewish religious precepts". In the issue of 7th November, reporting the mass meeting of Sydney Zionists in protest against the White Paper, it claimed that the meeting was not representative of the Sydney Jewish community, "the majority believing in the British sense of justice". The true facts were that the leaders of all sections of the community, without exception, were represented on the platform and that most of them spoke in support of the resolutions which had been adopted unanimously at the meeting.

On the local scene, other events of historical significance for the Jewish community were also taking place. In November the initial meeting for the formation of the Young Men's Hebrew Association was held and Abram Landa, M.L.A., was elected its first President. In the following two decades this association played a significant role in the life of the Australian Jewish community and Y.M.H.A. branches were established in all capital cities of Australia. In December 1930 Sir Isaac Isaacs was appointed the first Australian-born Governor-General, the highest honour ever accorded a Jewish citizen in the Commonwealth.

At the end of 1930 my friend and colleague Israel Horwitz resigned the managing editorship of the *Australian Jewish Chronicle*. This meant the end of a publication which had well served the Jewish national cause in the Commonwealth of Australia. The reason for this regrettable step was the lack of financial means to keep such an ambitious and progressive production going. I was persuaded to join its editorial committee with a view to examining the financial position and of reporting to my colleagues of the Union of Sydney Zionists on the prospect of balancing the income and expenditure of the venture. After six months of investigation I was forced to the conclusion that it was impossible to maintain the high standard demanded by the managing editor without incurring a substantial annual deficit. In consequence of a decision to reduce the paper to a size that could make it financially viable, Israel Horwitz relinquished his position. After some consideration it was decided to liquidate the journal and I was given the sad task of translating this decision into action. For the next two months I had to look after both the business side of the pub-

lication and the editorial work. This was done in a very much reduced format and at the end of February 1931 the *Australian Jewish Chronicle* ceased to appear and the Zionist cause in Australia sustained a serious loss.

The letter of Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister, to Chaim Weizmann on 13th February 1931 was couched in friendly terms explaining away the objectionable passages of the Passfield White Paper. This resulted, temporarily, in a calmer atmosphere for the *Yishuv* and for the World Zionist Organisation and the Jewish Agency. Dr. Weizmann who had resigned from the presidency of both bodies in October 1930 was asked by the Zionist General Council to continue in office until the next congress. The seventeenth Zionist Congress which was held in Basle early July 1931 elected Dr. Nahum Sokolow President of the World Zionist Organisation and of the Jewish Agency.

In Australia there was little Zionist activity in the succeeding months. The severe economic depression which was at its height at the time caused many active Zionists to tend their own vineyards. At the annual meeting of the Union of Sydney Zionists held in November 1931 much heart-searching discussion on the position took place. The meeting elected its committee but again failed to elect an executive.

After the closing down of the *Australian Jewish Chronicle* I was entrusted with the task of organising cultural activities for the Union of Sydney Zionists. To my knowledge the only functions arranged until then by the society were an annual *Hannukah* Concert and the Herzl anniversary celebration. I submitted a plan for monthly meetings with lectures and debates on Zionist and general Jewish topics. The first meetings were reasonably well attended and held out good promise for the success of our future meetings. Some members of the committee apparently looked askance at this success on my part. When the next meeting was to take place, with a debate in which speakers from the Kadimah Jewish Club were to participate, we found that Rev. (later Rabbi) L. A. Falk had organised a *Siyum Hatorah* on the same evening and, moreover, in the same place. Rev. Falk was a prominent member of the committee of the Union of Sydney Zionists and the *Siyum* was the concluding ceremony relating to a Scroll of the Law which had

been donated by our Honorary Life President, Morris Symonds, to the Great Synagogue. This caused us much annoyance and particularly angered Mr. Zanders, the President of the Kadimah, who was also a member of the Zionist Committee. This regrettable incident hampered our activity and well-nigh put a stop to our monthly cultural evenings. Another untoward incident occurred when the next *Hannukah* Concert was held. We had borrowed from Mr. Kessler, then President of the Union of Sydney Zionists, his *menorah* for the ceremony of kindling the lights. Rev. Falk had been asked to deliver an address and I was to chair the evening. When Rev. Falk saw the *menorah* he refused to give his address because, as he told me, for many years past he had borrowed a *menorah* from another respected member of an old-established Jewish family in Sydney.

Mr. L. M. Phillips, a member of a prominent Jewish family and a charitable benefactor, called together at that time a few public-minded members of the community to advise them of the financial plight of the *Hebrew Standard* which was then the only Jewish paper published in Sydney. A small committee was formed and Louis Solomon, a young solicitor, and I were asked to undertake the task of straightening out the paper's finances in consultation with the owners and the managing editor, Alfred Harris. A list of prospective supporters from whom we were to solicit financial contributions to establish a fund was compiled and I collected a reasonable amount which I was holding until we could discuss ways and means of securing the financial future of the publication. Mr. Solomon and I made several attempts to discuss plans with Mr. Harris but to no avail. Louis Solomon lost interest and Alfred Harris demanded that I hand over to him the cheques I had collected. In the end, after consultation with Mr. Phillips and the donors, I handed them to Mr. Harris. After a few months the latter again pleaded for financial help to maintain the journal and Mr. Phillips called on me once more to assist; but this time I refused.

During the years 1931-2 the Zionist ship remained becalmed and the voices of the anti-Zionist elements grew stronger. To an important segment of Sydney Jewry the spirit of Jewish nationalism was unpalatable: uppermost in their minds was the notion that they were Australians of the Jewish persuasion. The chief proponent of that idea was Rabbi Francis L. Cohen, Alfred

Harris being its vociferous spokesman. The Rabbi returned early in 1931 from an overseas trip but, despite requests by a number of his congregants, did not find it expedient to make a short stop-over in Palestine. Later that year, when he first introduced English into parts of the Sabbath morning service at the Great Synagogue, he justified the innovation by quoting from the week's *Sidra*, Numbers XVII: 13 ". . . and he [Aaron] stood between the dead and the living and stopped the plague." The Rabbi commented: "The dead denotes the Hebrew language, and the living the English language." This angered a number of the congregants, especially the Zionists, several of whom left the Synagogue in protest.

In those early years of my participation in communal and Zionist activities in Sydney, Dr. Fanny Reading, M.B.E., the founder and life-long President of the National Council of Jewish Women, was my mentor and guiding spirit. This truly great and wonderful woman, from the early days of our residence in Sydney, was a very good friend often extending warm hospitality to my wife and myself. She was an inspired and dedicated leader serving every Jewish and many non-Jewish charitable causes. Dr. Fanny, as she was generally called, was a devout Jewess as well as being a convinced and devoted Zionist. She helped and encouraged me personally in the difficult moments when I met with much discouragement from many quarters. The meetings of the Union of Sydney Zionists were then frequently held in the premises of the Council at weekends, when outside help was unavailable. As the youngest (and perhaps most willing) member of the committee, I was allotted the task of setting out the chairs and tables in the Assembly Hall. On many occasions Dr. Fanny helped me with this chore. When in 1932 we planned our second trip overseas and arranged to leave our two children at Scots College boarding school, Dr. Fanny and her brother Dr. Stanley Reading undertook to look after them during our eight months' absence.

We were more than fortunate in our associations and in the friendships we made at such an early stage of our sojourn in a remote and completely strange land. Not very long after making our home in Sydney we made an acquaintanceship which soon blossomed into friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Morris Symonds who played a prominent part in the life of the Jewish

community. Morris Symonds was then Honorary Treasurer and later became President of the Great Synagogue. For many years he was the President (later Honorary President) of the Union of Sydney Zionists. Mr. Symonds was renowned for his generosity and for the large donations and endowments he made to Jewish and general local institutions as well as to Zionist and overseas Jewish relief funds. In 1920 he donated £5,000—a very large sum in those days—to the Hebrew University which was then in the course of construction on Mount Scopus. The Symonds family had a palatial country home ninety miles from Sydney which my wife and I often visited. It was just outside a township which was then well known as a country resort and Sasha and the boys frequently spent the school holidays in the township. Unfortunately Mr. Symonds' health was failing and deteriorated greatly in the latter part of 1931.

CHAPTER

# 4

# *First Palestine Visit*

AT THE BEGINNING OF 1932 we decided to go overseas and to include in our itinerary our first visit to Palestine where we intended spending the Passover festivals. On learning of our plans Morris Symonds insisted, against doctors' orders, on joining us on our voyage to Palestine although his family sought to dissuade him from undertaking such a long and arduous journey. They called in an eminent physician for a thorough check-up and he advised against the excitement of a long voyage. These attempts were of no avail and the only concession Morris made was to travel on a small Swedish freighter with accommodation for a dozen passengers and which was equipped to make the voyage in the utmost comfort and quietness. Sasha and I travelled on one of the larger Orient line steamers and we arranged to meet him at Port Said and from there to travel together to Tel Aviv.

We left Australia in mid-March 1932 and after an extremely pleasant and interesting voyage across the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea arrived in Port Said late one afternoon. There were about nine hundred passengers aboard the ship and we had to queue up to be cleared by the Egyptian immigration authorities. Before disembarking we received a message from Morris Symonds that he was not well enough to meet us at the wharf but that he would wait for us at the hotel. An extremely disagreeable incident, however, delayed our clearance by the customs for several hours. Prior to our disembarkation Sasha, in fear of thieves, gave me her jewellery for safe-keeping. On leaving the customs shed a soldier at the exit searched me,

going through my pockets. When Sasha's jewellery was found on me we were recalled for a thorough examination of our baggage and were told that the jewellery was being confiscated. The entry in my passport as diamond merchant aggravated the position and all our pleadings were unheeded. We arrived at the hotel well after midnight and found Mr. Symonds in bed with a high temperature and nearly delirious. We went to our room, spending the rest of the night greatly upset and without any sleep. We remained in Port Said for the day, during which time Mr. Symonds improved sufficiently to make the train journey to Tel Aviv. The British Consul intervened on our behalf with the customs authorities, asking for the release of Sasha's jewellery. On the same afternoon we were brought before a court presided over by the Collector of Customs and were interrogated through an interpreter. I put our case through him to the court, stating that if I had intended to smuggle, I would have been more likely to let my wife wear the jewellery with little or no risk of being caught. There was much excited discussion by the members of the court whereupon the Collector asked Sasha to come over to him and asked on which fingers she wore each of the rings. On finding that they fitted perfectly he handed the jewellery back to her, apologising for having caused us much worry and anxiety.

We left soon afterwards by the night train for Tel Aviv. At El Kantara where we changed to the Palestine train I heard our name being called. It was Elias Epstein of the J.N.F. Head Office in Jerusalm who had come to meet us. On our arrival at Tel Aviv we were met by Louis Kahn, a friend of Morris Symonds, who took us to the Pension Moskowitz where we stayed. Mr. Symonds left the same afternoon for Jerusalem whilst we remained in Tel Aviv for the next few days.

After a long lapse of time it is difficult to recapture and describe adequately the emotions and the internal excitement we experienced on stepping down for the first time on the soil of Palestine, the land of the Bible and of our forefathers. For several days I walked the streets of Tel Aviv and the surrounding countryside in a dazed state of mind. The image of a 100 per cent Jewish city was both intriguing and challenging. The image of the Jew as a middleman, the Jew as a merchant and broker dissipated at the sight of the Jewish policeman, the

Jewish factory labourer and tiller of the soil. It was the first time that we faced the reality of Jewish nationhood and the possibility of a normal national existence. Furthermore we were deeply moved by the warmth and friendliness of the Tel Avivians of that time. It was exhilarating to sit down at one long table at breakfast with other guests speaking a Babel of languages and converse with our neighbours to the right and to the left as intimately as if we had known each other for a long time. Sasha and I felt at home on our very first day in the country.

On our second day in Tel Aviv, looking out of the window of our room, I noticed a young woman standing opposite awaiting transport. I could hardly believe my eyes, recognising our sister-in-law, the daughter of a well-known rabbi, who had come from Lvov to meet us in Palestine. She had not known the time of our arrival, nor did she know where we were staying. The chance meeting was most exciting and a source of much happiness.

Soon after our arrival in Tel Aviv, Mr. Symonds decided to go to Jerusalem where he expected mail from home addressed care of the Hebrew University. Because of his poor state of health we pleaded with him not to travel alone. An old friend of his, a resident of Tel Aviv, who came to visit him, undertook to accompany him to Jerusalem. A few days later we received advice from the University that he was taken ill and was in a private convalescent home where, unfortunately, he remained for the rest of his stay in the country. On receiving this sad message we cut short our visit to Tel Aviv and left immediately for Jerusalem where we booked in at the Eden Hotel.

Going to Jerusalem, climbing the serpentine road atop the Judean Hills, is always an experience rich in emotion. Our first feeling was one of sheer ecstasy and elation. On visiting old as well as new Jerusalem, with its innumerable Biblical places and the sites of our ancient history, one has a vision of walking alongside the Biblical and historical figures who in ancient times populated the Holy City. For days we were intoxicated by what we had seen and by these emotional experiences and it took us some time to sober up and to grasp the reality of the present.

Before leaving Sydney, Dr. Fanny Reading had briefed me

on a matter which had caused her, personally, and the National Council of Jewish Women, much embarrassment. As described in a previous chapter, the amount of £2,000 had been raised in 1929 by the Council in conjunction with Mrs. L. Slutzkin, President of the EZRA organisation of Jerusalem, for the purpose of building a maternity wing at the *Misgav Ladach* Hospital in Jerusalem, to be at the disposal of the EZRA organisation. Mrs. Harris Cohen, then President of the Council in N.S.W., visited Palestine in 1930 and on her return to Sydney advised against the *Misgav Ladach* project, advocating instead the building of a maternity section at the *Hadassa* Hospital on the same terms and for the same amount of £2,000. The money raised in Australia was deposited at a bank in Jerusalem on a joint account in the names of Dr. Fanny and Mrs. Slutzkin. The latter insisted on building the wing at *Misgav Ladach* and Dr. Fanny requested me to discuss the matter with Henrietta Szold, the founder of *Hadassa* in the U.S.A. and a member of the Jewish Agency executive, with a view to reaching some understanding with Mrs. Slutzkin.

Miss Szold was also lodging at the Eden Hotel and this gave me an early opportunity to be introduced to her and to hand her the letter from Dr. Reading. I also had several meetings with Mrs. Slutzkin both on my own and in the presence of Miss Szold; but I failed to achieve a settlement with her. However, the affair afforded me an opportunity of watching, at close range, the dynamism and dedication to the cause of Zion and of our people of this truly great and wonderful woman, Miss Henrietta Szold. Her capacity for work was astounding. On a number of occasions I was summoned to her office at 7 o'clock in the morning where I found her already absorbed in her daily routine which I understood often lasted until after dark.

We remained in Jerusalem for the rest of our stay in Palestine and made a number of excursions from there to many parts of the country. With shocked feelings we saw the ruins of the *Yeshivah* in Hebron and of the destroyed market place in Safed where the blood of the victims of the dastardly Arab riots of 1929 was still clearly visible on the walls and stone pavements. On the other hand we were thrilled to see the early beginnings of the many collective settlements (*Kibbutzim*) and of the developments which have changed completely the landscape of

the Plain of Sharon and, further north, in the Emek, the Valley of Jezreel. The extreme friendliness of the people everywhere made a deep impression on us.

We celebrated the festival of Passover in Jerusalem. For the first *Seder* night, together with our sister-in-law, we were invited to the home of Mr. G. Shneierson, Treasurer of the Hebrew University. Amongst the many guests present were several professors and lecturers of the University. It was a most enjoyable festive night which lasted till the small hours of the morning. We attended the second *Seder* arranged by the Jewish National Fund for overseas visitors. It was a memorable and thrilling experience to be seated at table with Mr. M. Ussishkin, the President, Rabbis Meier Berlin (later Ilan), Y. Fischman (later Maimon), and the national Hebrew poet Saul Tschernichowski. There was a large attendance including many prominent personalities of the *Yishuv* and from abroad.

Because of the difficult economic situation and the depression in Australia I decided to give up my diamond business and to dissolve the partnership with the firm in Belgium. Whilst in Palestine I discussed with Sasha the possibility of settling there. Being aware of my state of agitation or rather my enthusiasm about life in Palestine she was fearful that I might act imprudently in making a rash decision. As she told me later, she was strengthened in this belief because of an incident in Jerusalem. On our first visit to the Head Office of the Jewish National Fund which was the only completed part of the new Jewish Agency Building, I noticed an uprooted young tree in the grounds surrounding the building. I stooped down to lift up the sapling and to fasten it in the ground. Sasha had walked ahead of me and when she turned to look for me she saw me straightening myself with my hands dirtied from touching the soil. She firmly believed that I had fallen on my face, kissing the ground, and she became very agitated. She confided to our friends and to Elias Epstein her fears about my strange behaviour. I was warned by everyone not to make a snap decision about settling in Palestine and when we called on Mr. Ussishkin prior to leaving the country he told me that my place was in Australia where I could better serve the cause of Zion than in Palestine.

The time arrived for our departure and we were very much

concerned about leaving Mr. Symonds in view of the precarious condition of his health. Before our departure, arrangements were made for him to leave for Australia as soon as a ship was available. It was a sad moment, leaving Palestine and parting with our sick friend. We did not then realise that we would not revisit the country until fifteen years later, in 1947.

From Palestine we travelled to Antwerp where we spent some time settling my business affairs and in visiting our near relatives. From there we left for Poland to see our parents and other members of the family in Lesko and Lvov. In general, life in Poland was unbelievably difficult and for the three million Jews the position was desperate. I pleaded in vain with our parents and in particular with the younger members of our family to pack up and settle in Palestine. I sensed the catastrophic fate which was in store for our people in Eastern and Central Europe. There was nothing one could say or do to persuade our relatives to take the bold step of leaving their homes and the few comforts they still had. Alas, this was the last time we set our eyes on them as none of our dear ones survived the Nazi holocaust. With heavy hearts and tearful eyes we said goodbye. We are still haunted by the sight of the disappearing and pathetic figures of our loved ones as we left them behind in their homes, the places of our birth, to which we were never to return.

In 1926, before the final casting of the die as to whether we should emigrate from Europe, I had made a solemn promise to Sasha that we should return after three years and make our decision then, based on our experience of life in the Antipodes. In 1929, when we returned to Europe with our children, we were still undecided about the choice of our permanent residence. We agreed to return to Australia for a further three years and then to make our final decision. In 1932 conditions of life in Europe had deteriorated immeasurably since our last visit and because of the darkening clouds of Nazism on the horizon, Sasha was impatient to return to Australia to make our permanent home there. It was necessary, however, for me to stay on in Europe for several weeks in order to make plans for setting up a new business enterprise in Australia.

In the course of our stay in Europe in the fateful summer months of 1932 the political situation in Germany grew more

menacing day by day and week by week. At the successive elections for the Reichstag held during a short period the popular vote for Hitler's National Socialist Party was increasing each time. The signs of Hitler's ascent to power in Germany were clearly in evidence and the inescapable fate of German Jewry could not be in doubt. The fact that in Berlin and elsewhere the Jew was going about his business as usual was to me incomprehensible and perplexing. Unfortunately the Jews in Germany were destined to pay a terrible price for their wishful thinking that Hitler, when in power, would forsake his avowed creed of the Germans as the "Herren Volk" and his violent anti-Semitism.

We left Europe in early autumn with few regrets. Sasha and I were glad to return to Australia, the land of freedom and the country of our choice. We enjoyed the long sea voyage after the stress and strain of our experiences in Europe. On our arrival in Fremantle, the first Australian port of call, and whilst waiting on deck for the customs clearance of the ship, we heard our name called over the loud-speaker system. On the wharf a number of ladies, members of the National Council of Jewish Women in Western Australia, were waiting for us. We were brought to the home of Mrs. Fanny Breckler the much beloved and revered Jewish woman leader of Perth. She was the mother of Alec and Cecil Breckler, the devoted and active Zionists and life-long leaders of the Jewish community in Western Australia. For several generations the Breckler family has given dedicated service to the Jewish people. A similar reception awaited us on our arrival at Port Adelaide. Later we learnt that this was due to Dr. Fanny Reading who had advised members of the executives of the Council of Jewish Women in both States to meet us and to extend a warm welcome to us. For this we were most grateful. It was a gracious act of friendship on her part and at the same time afforded us the opportunity of meeting the leading members of the Jewish community in these two smaller States.

In Melbourne we had the pleasure of an unexpected early morning visit in our cabin by Rabbi Israel Brodie, the President of the Zionist Federation, who was then the Chief Minister of the Toorak Synagogue in Melbourne and who in later years was Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth. Rabbi Brodie

was interested to hear of our experiences in Palestine and warmly welcomed us on our return to Australia.

For several months following our return we were both busily occupied, Sasha with her domestic chores and I with business affairs. Our home needed much attention and the task of finding suitable premises in which to establish a factory left me little time for communal activity. During our absence overseas the economic depression remained unabated and unemployment assumed very high proportions. Secondary industry in Australia was in its very early stages of development and skilled labour was well-nigh non-existent. Altogether the fitting out of a factory and assembling of the plant and equipment which I purchased in Europe was no easy task for one who had no mechanical or engineering experience.

The year 1932 was communally and Zionistically a period of very little activity. The Sir John Monash Forest Appeal was launched by the Jewish National Fund in Sydney at a public meeting in January with Rabbi Brodie as guest speaker. The Jewish National Fund of Jerusalem designated a site in Megiddo to plant a forest with 10,000 trees. Apart from this event there was no other noteworthy activity during 1932. It was the era of "calm before the storm".

The storm broke when Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of the German Reich in January 1933 with the resultant tragic plight of German Jewry. The series of anti-Semitic acts in the early months of Hitler's regime dealt a shattering blow to the Jews in Germany and came as a great shock to the entire Jewish world. It brought into bold relief the fate awaiting the Jews under the Nazis and large numbers began to leave the country in search of refuge in other lands. Meetings of protest were held and committees for the relief of German Jewish refugees were set in motion wherever Jewish communities existed. Meetings to show sympathy with German Jewry were contemplated by the Jewish Advisory Boards in all States of Australia and a preparatory conference of Jewish leaders was held in the beginning of May at the Great Synagogue, attended by representatives from all sections of the community, to decide on action to be taken. At a public meeting held on 18th May at the Sydney Town Hall, presided over by the Lord Mayor and attended by many Jewish and non-Jewish dignitaries, a German-Jewish Relief

Fund Appeal was launched and a considerable amount was subscribed.

The Union of Sydney Zionists held its annual meeting in July 1933, a meeting which was attended by an enthusiastic and representative gathering. Mr. Justice Cantor was elected Honorary President; Saul Symonds, President; Messrs. Percy J. Marks, Samuel Kessler and myself Vice-Presidents and a committee consisting of leading members of the community was also elected. Because of the German catastrophe all Zionist groups sprang again into life and Zionist activity was stimulated throughout the community. Silva Steigrad conducted classes in Jewish history, ancient and contemporary, at the rooms of the Young Men's Hebrew Association and they were well attended and received much attention. Melech Ravitch, the well-known Yiddish author, arrived in Sydney in August and was given an enthusiastic reception by the entire Jewish community. It was, however, Dr. Benzion Shein, who came to Australia on a mission for the *Keren Hayesod*, who made the most profound impact on Jewish life in Sydney. After visits to Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne he arrived in Sydney in September 1933.

CHAPTER

# 5

# *Ben Shein*

DR. SHEIN'S VISIT was sponsored by the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand and it was the task of the Union of Sydney Zionists to be responsible for his campaign in N.S.W. Members of the executive and of the committee met him at the Central Railway Station on his arrival from Melbourne. After being introduced to the individual members whilst still on the platform, he was brought to the hotel where we assembled in his room for an informal chat. When we were preparing to leave Dr. Shein whispered in my ear, requesting that I remain with him. He asked to be briefed on the position in Sydney, on the set-up of the community and the personalities with whom he would join forces to work for the appeal. I stayed for some considerable time with him and from this first meeting we forged a life-long bond of friendship. I remained at his side for his entire stay with us, planning and working together for the *Keren Hayesod* Campaign in N.S.W.

At a meeting of the Union of Sydney Zionists held on the eve of Dr. Shein's arrival in Australia, several members of the executive expressed great doubts and serious misgivings about the prospects of the forthcoming *Keren Hayesod* drive because of the depressed economic position in the country. In addition, there were several other appeals in progress at the time: the Sir John Monash Forest Appeal, the appeal for Reconstruction of East European Jewry conducted by Mr. Poliakov from overseas, and the appeal for the German-Jewish Relief Fund. A small organising committee consisting of Rev. L. A. Falk, young Maurice de Berg and myself was appointed to carry out the

programme drawn up by the committee of the Union of Sydney Zionists and to organise the public and private parlour meetings for the appeal. The first reception was given by the Union of Sydney Zionists to welcome our emissary and was held at the home of Rev. and Mrs. L. A. Falk. Dr. Shein was told of the difficult task he was facing and I made bold to suggest at the function that we, the members present, announce our contributions and set a standard of giving for the community. Together with my brother Oscar I named my own pledge and was followed by all the others, resulting in a fairly satisfactory and encouraging start for the campaign.

Dr. Shein addressed a number of public meetings, two of which were held under the banner of the Union of Sydney Zionists, one at the Maccabean Hall and the other at the Methodist Central Mission in the Lyceum Theatre. On both occasions the attendance was very large and the halls were crowded with Jewish and non-Jewish people. Other meetings were arranged by the Eastern Suburbs Synagogue and the Council of Jewish Women in conjunction with the Young Men's Hebrew Association. There were as well several meetings in private homes of which those given by Mr. L. M. Phillips and Mr. and Mrs. Simon Green were particularly successful, both financially and socially. At the end of the campaign a children's meeting, which was attended by several hundred young boys and girls, was held at the St. James Theatre on a Sunday afternoon and this proved to be the outstanding feature of the entire campaign as it generated tremendous interest and enthusiasm amongst the youngsters as well as the adult community. After his address Dr. Shein was presented with a laurel wreath by Velda Symonds, the six-year-old granddaughter of Morris Symonds. At the age of eighteen Velda left for Israel on *aliyah* where she became a valued member of Kibbutz Ein Dor in the Galilee near Afula.

Dr. Shein's addresses were highly emotional and made a deep impression on his audiences. His personal charm and youthful good looks added much to his popularity with all sections of the community. The financial result of the appeal in Sydney exceeded somewhat the amount raised in 1927 by the veteran Zionist propagandist, Dr. Alexander Goldstein. Considering that the appeal of 1933 was held at a time of deep economic depres-

sion in Australia this result was no mean achievement. At the meeting of the Eastern Suburbs Synagogue a moving incident occurred. After Ben's address, an elderly man, Albert Goldstein by name, came forward to the stage and handed over a diamond ring to the speaker with the request that it should be sold and the proceeds go to *Keren Hayesod.* It was the only earthly possession of the elderly man who insisted that the gift he made be accepted. The piece of jewellery was thereupon auctioned on the spot. It was bought for a sizeable amount by Mr. Simon Green who in turn donated it to the museum in Tel Aviv.

The parlour meeting at the home of L. M. Phillips was the result of much effort on the part of Ben and it turned out to be a great social and financial success. After a promise was made to Ben and myself to hold the meeting, Louis Phillips telephoned me next morning, obviously in great distress, saying that he had changed his mind and would not go on with the meeting because he was afraid of its being a failure. I called at his home and succeeded in persuading him to honour his promise, whereupon he made out a list of thirty-odd leading families of the Anglicised Jewish community to be invited to his home. Nearly everyone came and an amount of over £1,000 was contributed. The host welcomed the guests and briefly introduced Dr. Shein, calling on him to speak. After Ben's address, Mr. Phillips called on me to speak. I declined and instead asked his individual guests to come to a prearranged table and announce their contributions. Mr. Orwell Phillips, the brother of our host, came over first and announced his donation. He was followed by the other guests who then went into the dining room where supper was served. I was left with Mr. Alfred H. Nathan, a member of the Phillips family who was reputed to be very wealthy. For fifteen minutes he paced up and down the drawing room before deciding on the large amount he would contribute to the appeal.

In addition to the many speeches he made at appeal meetings, Ben delivered a number of cultural lectures on a variety of Jewish topics while in Sydney. He was invited to occupy the pulpit of the Eastern Suburbs Synagogue on a Sabbath morning as well as on *Kol Nidre* eve. He also addressed luncheon meetings at the Millions Club, the Rotarians and several meetings of the Christadelphians. A well-prepared address on Yiddish literature proved to be a masterpiece which electrified his

audience. He was instrumental in forming the Young Zionist League with Mr. David Selby—later His Honour Mr. Justice Selby—as its first President and Maurice de Berg as Honorary Secretary. Before leaving for Brisbane in early November, a farewell function was arranged in his honour as a recognition of his fine achievement. The Maccabean Hall was crowded and tributes were paid in glowing terms to the outstanding and remarkable success of his mission and to his dedication to the cause of the *Keren Hayesod.* In his reply he thanked the community for its financial support and proceeded to praise leaders of the community whom he mentioned by name for their devoted work. He caused me no end of embarrassment in singling me out for praise in exaggerated terms.

The farewell function was arranged by the Union of Sydney Zionists and the programme provided for the serving of supper after the addresses. For this purpose the hall was arranged in banquet style with small tables and chairs and the seating arrangements were left to Maurice de Berg and myself. It was a thankless and ticklish task because of the large number of honorary office-bearers attending from nearly all communal institutions in Sydney. Maurice de Berg was only available for a short time, whilst I spent the entire afternoon arranging the seating with place cards on the main tables. Amongst the important guests attending the function were Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Marks for whom seats were reserved at a table near the top. I left for home for a quick change and on returning to the hall I found guests were already arriving and a long queue was forming at the entrance. When I managed to get into the hall, I noticed that Mr. and Mrs. Marks were occupying seats at the top table and that the place cards of the main table were in disarray, causing near pandemonium amongst the guests. Mrs. Marks called me over, heaping abuse on me for seating them further away from the guest of honour than, as she believed, they were entitled to be.

Ben also had his critics who became vocal after his departure from Australia. One such critic was Samuel Orchert, a life-long Zionist and respected member of the Union of Sydney Zionists. On meeting me casually in the street after Dr. Shein's departure he strongly criticised his conduct as well as my own, stating, *inter alia,* that Dr. Shein was seen spending the week-ends in

the country with a woman friend, and that I was shielding him. When I challenged the truth of his statement since Dr. Shein spent only one week-end away from Sydney in the company of my wife and myself, Sam angrily retorted that Norman Ravdel, his business partner in Brisbane, had this information first-hand. Sam said that his partner, who was due to visit Sydney shortly, would testify to the truth of the story. In due course, Ravdel came to Sydney and we invited him, Sam Orchert and their wives to our home. Ravdel told us that a relative of his who knew Dr. Shein saw him at the registry desk of a hotel one week-end in company with a woman. What actually occurred was that at the conclusion of the campaign Sasha and I drove Ben to the mountains and we stopped for the week-end at the Jenolan Caves. On arrival at the hotel Ben and my wife alighted and went inside to ask for a porter to help us with our luggage, whilst I drove the car to the parking area some little distance from the hotel. Ravdel's informant was evidently at the time in the lobby and reported to Ravdel what she actually saw. I doubt whether my friends believed me, being convinced that I was shielding Dr. Shein.

Dr. Shein visited some of the smaller centres in N.S.W. before going to Brisbane. He visited Broken Hill and Newcastle where the small Jewish communities have a precarious existence. Unless reinforced by migrants from overseas their numbers are constantly diminishing, partly because of inter-marriage and partly because they are attracted to life in the larger Jewish centres. Visits by Jewish leaders to the small communities are unfortunately infrequent and are very much appreciated when they occur. On his return from Brisbane in mid-December to embark for New Zealand, Dr. Shein addressed in Sydney a crowded *Hannukah* celebration of the Young Zionist League whose membership was increasing. For a number of years its executive was very active arranging fortnightly social and cultural meetings with lectures on Zionist and general Jewish topics which attracted young people from a broad cross-section of the community.

CHAPTER

# 6

# *Communal Events*

In December 1933 the N.S.W. Jewish Congregational Advisory Board was formed, constituting the lay leadership of the community. This was the first of a series of events which had a marked influence on the development of Sydney Jewry. The Board concerned itself mostly with congregational matters but it also took on the task of watching over the general welfare of the local Jewish community. In a sense it was the precursor of the N.S.W. Jewish Board of Deputies which came into being more than a decade later. Whilst the Board of Deputies, however, is composed of representatives elected by organisations or by general franchise, the Advisory Board consisted of members appointed by the synagogues.

Rabbi Francis L. Cohen who had been in indifferent health for some time passed away in late April 1934. The Rabbi had been Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue for many years and was highly respected by the Jewish and non-Jewish community. His influence amongst the anglicised Jews of Australia was very strong and his understanding of the Jew as a British citizen of Jewish faith made a deep impact on a large section of Australian Jewry. His attitude to the Jewish national idea and to the Zionists was highly critical and at times became very hostile.

At the end of June the Zionist Centre was opened in premises in the centre of the city. It was a great occasion for the Zionists of Sydney and the official opening was attended by a large gathering of people from all walks of life. A month later, in July, the Kadimah Jewish Club opened its premises in George Street and became the focal point of the Yiddish-speaking

members of Sydney Jewry. The Zionist Centre and the Kadimah Club premises provided meeting places for social and cultural purposes and in the Kadimah rooms light meals were served. Both these events stimulated the Jewish spirit and Jewish consciousness, serving in some small measure as an antidote to the eroding influence of an affluent society.

The annual meeting of the Union of Sydney Zionists was held in the new Centre at the end of July 1934 and Saul Symonds was re-elected President, Silva Steigrad, senior Vice-President, Samuel Kessler, Elias Green and myself, Vice-Presidents, Leon Goldberg, Honorary Treasurer, and Harry Kresner, Honorary Secretary. To raise funds for the maintenance of the Centre, the Young Zionist League organised a very successful social function at the home of Simon and Ann Green. Ann was a devoted and energetic worker for Jewish and Zionist causes and was always ready and willing to lend her home and to invite her large circle of friends on all occasions for fund-raising drives.

Whilst these activities found fertile ground in the wider community the leadership of the Great Synagogue maintained a closed door attitude, shutting out the winds of the new trends prevailing outside. The Board of Management was controlled by a small circle of the older-established, conservative families. However, a group of more progressive members of the congregation decided to attempt a breakthrough and agreed to nominate several of their own group for election to the Board. I was invited to attend their meetings to assist in this objective. All sitting members of the Board were equally respected in the community and I suggested that we should not try to unseat anyone but to ask that the membership of the Board be increased to include our nominees and hence make the Board more representative of the whole congregation. I was authorised to submit this proposal to the President of the Synagogue. However, my approach was unsuccessful and our group nominated several candidates for election. The annual meetings of the Synagogue usually had an attendance of thirty to fifty members but on this occasion the meeting was crowded with over six hundred congregants and all our candidates, some of them leading Zionists, were defeated. It made history for the Great Synagogue and was a manifestation of the loyalty to its established leadership.

This incident in no way deterred the progressive trend in the

general Jewish community, as was demonstrated in the marked increase of Zionist activity. In September Mr. and Mrs. Harris Cohen returned from an extended trip overseas which included a visit to Palestine. Rieke Cohen brought with her Elsa London, a school teacher from England, who became her life-long companion, a loyal friend and collaborator. At the annual meeting of the National Council of Jewish Women, held in January 1935, Mrs. Victor Cornfield was elected President, replacing Rieke Cohen, who was a Zionist stalwart. It was at that time that Rieke founded the Ivriah Women's Zionist Organisation. In later years the name was changed to WIZO Ivriah, the first group of WIZO (Women's International Zionist Organisation). Rieke Cohen was in fact the founder and first leader of Australian WIZO.

The visits of two senior Zionist and Jewish leaders, Itamar Ben-Avi of Palestine and Morris Alexander, K.C., M.P., of Johannesburg, added much to the resurgence of the Zionist spirit throughout Australia. Itamar Ben-Avi came on a lecture tour for the Jewish National Fund in Jerusalem. He addressed the Zionist Conference in Melbourne in November 1934 and suggested the establishment of an Australian settlement in Palestine for which the fund should be raised by the Australian Jewish National Fund. Morris Alexander came with a South African Parliamentary delegation to attend the Melbourne Centenary celebration in January 1935. He was asked, whilst in Australia, to enlist financial support for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Both leaders met accidentally in the overland train from Perth to Melbourne and decided to join forces and to appear together, wherever possible, to address meetings in support of the J.N.F. and the J.T.A.

Unaware of this arrangement, at the request of the Zionist Federation in Melbourne, the Union of Sydney Zionists arranged a public meeting for Ben-Avi to be held on 13th November at the Maccabean Hall. The notices for the meeting were mailed in advance and it was advertised also in the Jewish weekly papers. To our disappointment we were advised from Melbourne, two days before the meeting, that Ben-Avi was indisposed and would not be able to address the meeting in Sydney and that Morris Alexander had consented to come over to address the meeting instead. The following day we received a further message that some hitch had occurred which made it impossible for Morris

Alexander to arrive in Sydney in time for the meeting. We made an urgent plea to our colleagues of the Zionist Federation to use their good offices to enable one of the visitors to be present at our meeting. Silva Steigrad and I went to meet the Melbourne Express next morning not knowing whether either of our visitors would be able to come and to our surprise and great relief, both Morris Alexander and Itamar Ben-Avi arrived and addressed our meeting in the evening. Ben-Avi was obviously unwell but, nevertheless, he delivered his usual highly charged emotional address. I am always reminded of these events when visiting our friend, Shlomo Lowy, in Itamar Benavi Street, Jerusalem.

The next morning the daily papers reported the meeting and described Morris Alexander's Parliamentary career in South Africa. In the afternoon I met him at his hotel when he told me of a message from a Mrs. Bamberg who stated that she had met him many years ago in London and would like to meet him again. He asked me who the Bambergs were and I told him that they were a respected Jewish family. He then telephoned and was invited to their home for dinner. Some time later he advised me that he was leaving for the country to take a few days' rest and requested me to collect his mail from the hotel and to keep it until his return. He came back to Sydney to attend the farewell luncheon arranged for him by the Union of Sydney Zionists and was accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Bamberg and their daughter, Enid, whom he later married.

The fourth Zionist Conference, held in Melbourne late in 1934, was attended by only three interstate delegates, representing the Union of Sydney Zionists. This small attendance was very disappointing and the Conference gave serious consideration to the question of whether, under the circumstances, the Zionist Federation should be continued. Itamar Ben-Avi strongly advocated that we persevere and at the end of the Conference a resolution was passed that the Federation set-up be retained. Later that month the Union of Sydney Zionists, at a well attended meeting of all Zionist groups, endorsed the resolutions adopted by the Conference.

From early in 1935 onwards the Ivriah Women's Zionist Organisation was intensely active and became a driving force in the community. Rieke Cohen, the President, made a special effort to seek out and to welcome into the organisation new arrivals

from Central European countries, especially those who came fleeing from the Nazis in Germany. The Ivriah membership was thus continually increasing. With the assistance of Elsa London, classes were organised to teach the newcomers the English language to help them become integrated into their new country. Lessons in Hebrew were also arranged for those who wanted to acquire some knowledge of the language. These social and cultural activities were very successful and caused the Women's Zionist Organisation to flourish.

The Union of Sydney Zionists held two successful functions in February 1935. The first was a welcome to Alec H. Kahn, a young lawyer who had recently returned from overseas and a visit to Palestine. Mr. Justice Cantor, the Honorary President, presided over the meeting at which Alec Kahn spoke on his impressions of Palestine. He later joined the executive as its Honorary Publicity Officer. The second function held was to say farewell to Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur W. and Mrs. Hyman who were leaving for overseas and Palestine. Silva Steigrad, who for some months past had been acting President, was in the chair. Colonel Hyman who at one time had been President of the Australian Returned Soldiers' League (R.S.L.) was also a prominent Jewish and Zionist leader, serving for a number of years on the committee of the Union of Sydney Zionists.

Maurice de Berg resigned as President of the Young Zionist League but remained a dynamic force on its committee. The League held regular functions of both a social and literary character which were well attended by young people. It also took over the task of the J.N.F. work in the community. The Kadimah Jewish Club was presided over by Harry Cohen, a cultured person and devoted Zionist. Its members were mainly of Eastern European origin, who were either bent on preserving the Yiddish language and its literary treasures, or who had not as yet mastered the English language. The club continued to hold regular cultural and social functions for many years which contributed much to the preservation of the knowledge of Yiddish and to the maintenance and development of the Zionist spirit in our community.

It is worth recording that the last public meeting attended by the well-known Australian author Miles Franklin was a talk on Yiddish literature at the Kadimah Club in George Street.

CHAPTER

# 7

# *Sydney's Slow Progress*

IN ASSESSING THE POSITION of the wider Sydney Jewish community of that period, pregnant as it was with Jewish tragedy, it was a notable fact that the overwhelming majority of the influential families still remained aloof, untouched by any feeling of the destiny or the new spirit of contemporary Jewish history. At best, the zeal and intense activity of the Zionists was tolerated; but was not shared. The majority of the Jews in Sydney at that time were either members of the Great Synagogue or remained detached from anything Jewish, be it the Synagogue or any other communal institution. The result of the last annual meeting of the Great Synagogue when the attempt to inject a more progressive trend was soundly defeated showed that there was little or no hope of any changed attitude in these quarters.

The arrival of Rabbi E. M. Levy with his family from Natal, South Africa in June 1935 to fill the position of Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue, created tremendous interest, not only within the Sydney Jewish community, but throughout Australia. Rabbi Levy was inducted by Rabbi Israel Brodie in the presence of His Excellency, the Governor-General of Australia, Sir Isaac Isaacs, and a packed congregation, who gave their new Minister a tumultuous reception.

On the day after his arrival, Rabbi Levy was given a civic reception by the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Sir Alfred Parkes, at which a Cabinet Minister representing the Government of New South Wales and many Church and civic dignitaries were present and in the following weeks many of the communal

institutions held receptions in his honour. From the very beginning, Rabbi Levy proclaimed himself a devoted adherent to Zionist ideals. At the reception of welcome given by the Union of Sydney Zionists, Silva Steigrad, its President, told the large assembly that all present most certainly had already met the Rabbi on other occasions but at this reception they were to meet a Zionist of deep conviction and devotion from whom inspired Zionist leadership might be expected.

In fact, throughout his sojourn in Australia Rabbi Levy identified himself with every facet of Zionist activity and served the Zionist cause with zeal and dedication. He joined the committee of the Union of Sydney Zionists and attended its meetings as often as his time permitted. The Rabbi's reputation as a scholar, orator and writer soon became known throughout the Jewish and non-Jewish communities of the Commonwealth of Australia. He was invited to contribute articles to the daily press and to address audiences from all walks of life. The Nazi pogroms and bestial treatment of German Jewry, as well as the Arab riots and their intransigence in Palestine, caused many non-Jews to flock to lectures and public addresses on Jewish topics. Rabbi Levy's addresses enjoyed great popularity and on all possible occasions he expounded the Zionist cause and the idea of the Jewish National Home. Mrs. Levy in her own right was a popular figure in the community and was an intelligent speaker and a good Zionist propagandist who joined the Ivriah Women's Zionist Organisation. Rieke Cohen and Elsa London cultivated a close friendship with Mrs. Levy, lasting long after her departure from Sydney.

At an afternoon reception given by Sydney Zionists in honour of Rabbi Brodie on the occasion of his visit to install Rabbi Levy, Rabbi Brodie complained of the lack of support the Zionist Federation was receiving in Sydney. The J.N.F. work had become the special task of the Zionist Federation and Rabbi Brodie pointed to the fine effort of the Victorian Zionists. The J.N.F. Committee in Melbourne, under the energetic chairmanship of the veteran Zionist, S. Wertheim, organised a special drive to raise larger amounts for the fund—a very commendable effort at that time. Rabbi Brodie also urged that Sydney Zionists undertake an intensive *Shekel* Drive before the nineteenth Zionist Congress, to be convened in Lausanne, Switzerland. A

similar campaign for the sale of *Shkolim* had already begun in Melbourne, and the Zionist Federation was eager to sell sufficient *Shkolim* to entitle Australia, for the first time, to be represented at the Congress. Dr. Leon Jona of Melbourne who was at the time in Europe was to be available to attend the Congress as the Australian delegate.

The *Australian Jewish Herald* was launched in May 1935 as the official organ of the Victorian Jewish community. The editorial committee and its founders were Rabbis I. Brodie and J. Danglow, Sir Archie Michaelis, M.L.A., M. Zeltner and the brothers Abrahams; Newman Rosenthal was its managing editor. It remained an independent, but staunchly pro-Zionist publication throughout the critical years prior to and since the establishment of the State of Israel.

The Union of Sydney Zionists at its annual meeting in August 1935 elected its honorary office-bearers consisting of Silva Steigrad, President, S. Kessler, A. Landa and Alan Rosenburg, Vice-Presidents, S. Orchert, Treasurer, myself Secretary and Alec Kahn, Publicity Officer. A strong committee was elected in anticipation of the fifth Zionist Conference, which was scheduled to be held in Sydney early in 1936. To avoid the débâcle of the fourth Zionist Conference held in Melbourne in late 1934, and to ensure adequate attendance by interstate delegates, it was decided to prepare an elaborate programme well in advance of the date of the Conference. A committee was appointed by the Union of Sydney Zionists to plan the comprehensive programme for the Conference. For several months Alec Kahn published in the Sydney Jewish weekly articles on Zionist topics, on the situation in Palestine, and on developments and achievements in the Jewish National Home. The conference was to last four days with an agenda replete with reports from Zionist societies in all States and addresses by personalities on aspects of Jewish life in Australia and abroad. Social functions, excursions and other attractions were to be included.

The position of the Jews in Germany was deteriorating day by day and in August 1935 persecution reached the stage of a pogrom with a threat to life and property. The nineteenth Zionist Congress held in Lausanne in September had a record attendance of 463 delegates from many countries. It met under a cloud of the dreadful plight which befell German Jewry. After



Benzion Shein.



Michael Traub.



Mrs. Ida Silverman.



*Left to right*: Miss Elsa London, Mrs. Faye Schenk, Mrs. S. Freilich, Mrs. Rebecca Sieff, Mrs. Rieke Cohen.



*Left to right*: Rabbi Dr. Porush, Mrs. Ruth Levin, Consul-General Levin, and author.



Author and Horace Newman in Sydney.



Sir Barnett Janner with author.

a lengthy debate, a resolution was adopted approving the "Transfer Agreement" (*Haavarah*) with the German Government to come under the jurisdiction of the World Zionist Executive. The agreement made it possible for German Jews to transfer their assets on their emigration to Palestine. The Congress re-elected Dr. Weizmann President and Nahum Sokolow, Honorary President, of the World Zionist organisation and of the Jewish Agency.

The Jewish communities in Sydney and Melbourne were growing more rapidly from 1935 onwards, as a result of the greater influx of migrants from Germany and Poland where life for the Jews had become intolerable. The existing synagogues and other places for religious services could not accommodate the increased number of worshippers on the High Holy-days of the New Year and the Day of Atonement, so the *Mizrachi* Synagogue with Rabbi Kirsner as its Minister, and the *Machsikei Hadass* with Rakman as its Cantor, were then established by the orthodox groups of the community. In December 1935 Dr. Maurice Lazerson arrived on his first fund-raising visit on behalf of *Ort-Ose*. These events were the "bricks and mortar" for the building of a stronger Jewish and Zionist life in our communities.

It happened at that time that Philip Moses, an assimilated Jew, born in Auckland, who had settled as a young man in Sydney, returned from overseas where he had made a chance visit to Palestine. He became a convert to Zionism with the zeal of a dedicated missionary. From then on, he devoted his life to the cause of Zion and to the Jewish national idea. During Dr. Shein's visit to Australia for *Keren Hayesod* in 1933, we both called on Philip Moses one afternoon at his home. He listened very attentively to Benzion Shein's explanation of the aims and achievements of *Keren Hayesod.* Ben spoke for one hour, after which afternoon tea was served but there was no response from our host to our appeal for a contribution to the fund. Several months later, when visiting London, according to Philip's own story, he was taken by some friends to a luncheon given by Lord Melchett, at which Dr. Weizmann was the guest speaker. The occasion was to inaugurate a drive for funds to plant the King George V Forest in Palestine. The place was crowded and a

substantial sum was raised. Philip was intrigued by the spectacle of people being eager to come to a luncheon and pay considerable amounts for such projects and thereupon decided to go to Palestine and investigate the position for himself. On his return to Sydney, unaware of the existence of Zionist societies, he inserted a notice in the Jewish paper, asking that anyone interested in Palestine should get in touch with him. Silva Steigrad, Sam Orchert and myself called on him, explaining that there were several Zionist organisations who were keenly interested in, and giving devoted service to, the *Yishuv* in Palestine. Whereupon Philip joined the Union of Sydney Zionists, and became its staunch supporter and dedicated leader. The sight of an assimilated and agnostic Australasian-born Jew appearing on the Zionist scene with such zealous devotion to the Jewish National Home, and returning to the fold of the Synagogue, made a deep impact on the Australian Jewish community.

The fifth Zionist Conference, scheduled for 26th to 29th January, was postponed because of the death of King George V a week earlier. King George was a benevolent monarch and his passing was deeply mourned by the peoples of the British Empire. The Conference was held in late March 1936 and was attended by a record number of delegates from Australia and New Zealand. The programme was planned and executed in great detail. It included a Palestine exhibition, a "talkie" film on Palestine, a social reception at the home of Sam Kessler, with a banquet at the conclusion of the Conference. It embraced several other attractive features including outings and harbour trips, for the benefit of delegates.

Rabbi Brodie opened the Conference, extending a welcome to the large number of delegates, observers and guests. He asserted that the Federation did not function satisfactorily and said that the criticism was directed partly to himself but that it was due mainly to the lack of support from the Zionists in Australia. Greetings to Conference were extended by Rabbi E. M. Levy and John Goulston of the Great Synagogue, by Silva Steigrad on behalf of the Union of Sydney Zionists, by Rieke Cohen of the Ivriah Women's Zionist Organisation and by a representative of the National Council of Jewish Women, Dr. Fanny Reading being ill at the time. Several papers were read

followed by debates on the position of the Jews in Germany, the situation in Palestine and the proclamation of the Palestine Legislative Council by the British Administration, on the local Jewish scene and on the future of the Zionist Federation. Dr. Aaron Patkin addressed the Conference on the Jewish National Fund in Australia whilst I spoke on *Keren Hayesod* work in the Commonwealth. An insurance scheme for the benefit of the J.N.F. was discussed at great length. A number of appropriate resolutions were adopted including one to establish a J.N.F. insurance project in Australia. Honorary officers elected for the ensuing year were Rabbi Brodie, President, S. Steigrad and Philip Moses, Vice-Presidents, S. Kessler, Treasurer, and myself Secretary. Les Abrahams was elected Secretary in Melbourne to Rabbi Brodie and A. Kahn Publicity Officer. Lieutenant-Colonel A. W. Hyman was also elected a member of the executive. It was resolved that the Federation be located in Sydney until the next Conference and Silva Steigrad was to be Chairman of the Federation in Sydney.

CHAPTER

# 8

# *An Enduring Friendship*

A CHANCE MEETING in April 1936 profoundly influenced the course of my life and in the long run influenced greatly the leadership of the Australian Jewish community and the development of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand. I met Horace B. Newman in the course of business and we soon struck up an enduring friendship which in time blossomed into much more than a personal relationship. It was a bond forged by sharing a common faith in the destiny of our people based on an appreciation of the heritage and of the spiritual values of Judaism and the historic unity of our nation. Our background and upbringing, however, were completely different. Horace was born in Scotland of a Polish father and a German mother and at the age of sixteen went to London but a few years later migrated to Australia; whilst I was born in Galicia, reared in a strictly orthodox home and educated myself as an autodidact in Vienna, Austria. Unlike Philip Moses, he was not an assimilationist but, because of the circumstances incidental to the environment in which he lived, he remained aloof from the Jewish way of life. He was a regular worshipper at the Great Synagogue but socially and in business his friends were either non-Jews or totally assimilated local Jews. Consequently, he had no contact with Zionists nor was he aware of Zionist trends and local communal activity. With the ripening of our friendship we met regularly and often discussed, amongst other topics, the aims and objects of Zionism and my personal involvement in the movement. It was not because of persuasion on my part but rather through becoming aware of the problem and thinking it

over, that he joined the Zionist ranks of his own accord. At an early stage of our association I noticed that whilst mixing freely with his non-Jewish friends he never hid his Jewishness, nor was he in any way inhibited on account of his Jewish origin. After many of our discussions and after accompanying me occasionally to Zionist meetings it was the most natural thing for him to join the Union of Sydney Zionists and before very long he was co-opted to the committee. For the last thirty years Horace has given loyal, devoted and distinguished service to the cause of Zionism and to our people.

In the years 1936-37 Silva Steigrad was President of the Union of Sydney Zionists and for some part of the time was the Chairman of the Zionist Federation, whilst I remained the Honorary Secretary. My contribution to the effective functioning of these Zionist roof organisations during that time was almost negligible. This was partly because of personal and business reasons but mostly because of circumstances beyond my control. Silva Steigrad was born in Palestine and came to Australia early in the century as a young man together with his parents and several members of the family. In Palestine he received a thorough Jewish and general education and made a name for himself in Australia as a fluent public speaker and a capable Zionist propagandist. At the time of my arrival in Sydney he was withdrawn and inactive in the community and I hardly knew him. It was only some years later that he resumed his position of leadership in the community and in the Zionist movement. Silva had a fine reputation and was highly respected. Serving under him as Honorary Secretary I found that he was carrying out the duties as captain of the Zionist ship from the desk of his own office without giving me the opportunity to carry out my duties as Honorary Secretary and I knew little or nothing of his activity. When I quietly complained to him about it he was somewhat resentful.

There was another circumstance which kept me out of the official Zionist leadership. I had been in Australia only a few years and I was regarded as a newcomer. With the advent to the Zionist leadership of British- and Australian-born Jews like Rabbi Levy, Philip Moses, Cecil Luber and Rieke Cohen, I felt my presence was something of an embarrassment. As far as I was concerned I had neither pretence nor ambition to top

leadership but was content to serve in any capacity and to perform any practical Zionist task which I was called upon to carry out. Together with others of the Zionist rank-and-file we organised the distribution and clearance of the Jewish National Fund boxes, the collection of Zionist membership fees and the sale of *Shkolim*, which was considered very important at the time. At the annual meeting of the Union of Sydney Zionists in August 1936, I did not nominate for any position on the executive but soon afterwards I was appointed Chairman of the *Keren Hayesod* Appeal Committee for the impending campaign in Australia.

The years 1936-37 were highly critical and very difficult for the *Yishuv* in Palestine and for European Jewry. Proposals for the establishment in Palestine of a Legislative Council which were announced by the High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Wauchope in December 1935, were discussed in the House of Lords and in the House of Commons in February-March 1936. The Arab leaders rejected the proposals and an Arab delegation was invited to London. The Arab revolt and acts of terror began in Jaffa on 19th April 1936 and soon spread to all parts of the country. The Arab High Committee, headed by the Mufti of Jerusalem, proclaimed a general strike demanding (a) the stoppage of Jewish immigration, (b) the prohibition of the sale of Arab land to Jews, and (c) the creation of a national representative government of Palestine. The campaign of terrorism lasted, with short interruptions, until the outbreak of World War II in September 1939. The British Government appointed a Royal Commission with Lord Peel as Chairman, which met in Palestine from November 1936 to February 1937. The partition of Palestine, as proposed by the Commission, was debated at great length at the twentieth Zionist Congress held in Zürich early in August and was rejected. The executive of the World Zionist Organisation and of the Jewish Agency, however, were empowered to carry on further negotiations with the Government in London.

The situation of European Jewry was more alarming than ever before. In Britain, Fascism under Sir Oswald Mosley and his Blackshirts was getting out of hand; in Mussolini's Italy, anti-Semitism was gaining ground; in Rumania and in Poland the position was getting more threatening day by day, but the

enactment of the Nuremberg Laws in February 1937 made life for Jews in Austria and Germany untenable. The stream of refugees from these two countries was growing into a torrent and the problem was receiving world-wide attention.

The anti-Semitic fury sweeping the continent of Europe caused deep anxiety and stirred the hearts of Jewish people the world over. In Australia the German-Jewish Relief Fund inaugurated in London on 15th March, was launched at the Maccabean Hall in Sydney on 21st April. The crowded meeting was presided over by Sir Samuel Cohen and the appeal made by Israel Green raised the record amount of £10,000 in the hall, the largest amount ever subscribed in Sydney at one meeting. The final result was about £18,000 of the announced target in Sydney of £20,000. It was a splendid response, especially by comparison with the amount of £4,000 pledged at a similar meeting in Melbourne with very little additional support forthcoming afterwards for the campaign in Victoria.

The passing of Nahum Sokolow in June 1936 came as a great blow to the world Zionist movement and he was deeply mourned by world Jewry. Rabbi E. M. Levy delivered a moving address from the pulpit of the Great Synagogue in Sydney, eulogising the great leader for his wonderful attainments as the spokesman of his people and his diplomatic exploits in the service of the Jewish National Home. The Union of Sydney Zionists in conjunction with all other Zionist societies, and many other Jewish groups held a *Shloshim* memorial meeting paying tribute to this popular departed leader and indefatigable servant of his people. Similar memorial meetings were held in every capital city of Australia.

The Jewish National Fund Insurance Scheme, decided upon earlier that year by the fifth Zionist Conference, was launched in August 1936. Final arrangements were made by Silva Steigrad, Chairman of the Zionist Federation, with the Prudential Assurance Company, the largest in Australia, to handle the insurances, taken out in the name of the fund at all their offices in Australia. The inauguration of the project, setting out in detail its terms and conditions, were announced in full-page advertisements in the Jewish papers and periodicals in all States of the Commonwealth. The scheme was severely criticised in some quarters but continued to operate for several years. The result, however, did not come up to expectations.

CHAPTER

# 9

# *Rabbi Brodie's Departure*

RABBI ISRAEL BRODIE'S resignation as Chief Minister of the Toorak Synagogue in Melbourne late in 1936 came as a thunderbolt to all sections of the Australian Jewish community and in particular it dealt a stunning blow to the Zionists of Australia. The Rabbi resigned his post after thirteen years of purposeful ministry in Melbourne to take a course of study at Oxford University for the degree of D.Litt. He remained at his post with the Toorak Synagogue till mid-April 1937.

The sixth Zionist Conference was held in Melbourne at the end of February 1937, and this was the last opportunity for Rabbi Brodie to preside over a Zionist Conference in Australia. As a mark of our high esteem, in appreciation of his selfless and meritorious service to the Zionist cause and, in particular, for his devoted work for the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand of which he was the leader and titular head since its inception in 1927, it was decided to ask for a full attendance of delegates to make the Conference a memorable event. The number of Conference delegates was not fixed constitutionally and we issued an urgent call to all Zionist societies, groups and sympathetic institutions to appoint delegates for this Conference.

It was my task to make personal contact with the various Zionist groups and communal institutions to ascertain who and how many would attend and to assist in the booking of hotel accommodation. In this way it was possible to have a large representation from Sydney comprised of Zionist—and several communal—leaders.

Rabbi Brodie in his opening address again stated that he had

received little support from Zionists in the other States and warned the Conference that there could be no future, nor was there any *raison d'être* for the Zionist Federation unless effective support was to come from all the Zionist societies of Australia. Papers on a variety of subjects were read and debated by Conference and a goodly number of significant resolutions were adopted. Among them were

That:

(a) The Federation continues to function.
(b) The domicile of the Federation be in Sydney.
(c) The journal *Ivriah* (published by Rieke Cohen) be the official organ of the Zionist Federation.
(d) The Boards of Synagogues be asked to impose an annual levy of ten shillings—to be included on the accounts of seat-holders—for *Keren Hayesod.*
(e) A budget of £300 be provided for the administration of the Federation.

A resolution was also passed: "That this Conference places on record its appreciation of the splendid work performed for the Australian Zionist Federation by Max Freilich and that this expression of appreciation be forwarded to him." Rabbi E. M. Levy was elected President and the old executive re-elected *in toto.*

The twentieth Zionist Congress was scheduled to be held in Zürich early in August 1937 and it was resolved by Conference that an effort be made to sell in Australia two thousand *Shkolim* which would entitle us to have a delegate to the Congress and that Rabbi Brodie should be the delegate. At a social function in honour of Conference delegates at the home of Mrs. A. Morris of Melbourne the matter was discussed by the many delegates present and A. Rabinovich and I undertook to sell a thousand *Shkolim* in Sydney. This was easier said than done, but we made strenuous efforts to make good our promise, and we decided on a door-knock drive of Jewish homes on several Sunday mornings which helped us to complete the sale of the thousand *Shkolim.* On one occasion we knocked at a home at an address taken from a Synagogue list. In reply to our knock we were asked to enter and we found a man resting in his bed. He invited us to sit down and we stated the purpose of our

visit. He was obviously ignorant of the meaning of the *Shekel* and we explained at great length its meaning and purpose. After we finished the man told us that the person we were looking for had moved some time ago and that he himself was not Jewish. He stated however that he was greatly interested in what we were doing and insisted on buying a *Shekel* from us.

An important item at the Conference was the Jewish National Fund work in Australia and it was resolved to strengthen the J.N.F. commissions in Melbourne and in Sydney. Sam Wynn of Melbourne, who had returned from overseas shortly before, spoke most enthusiastically about his impressions in Palestine. At a general meeting of the Victorian Jewish National Fund Commission held soon after the Conference he was elected President, succeeding the Zionist stalwart and Melbourne identity, S. Wertheim. In Sydney a J.N.F. Commission was formed of representatives from the Zionist societies, the Council of Jewish Women, the Young Men's Hebrew Association and the N.S.W. Jewish War Memorial. At the many farewell functions for him in Melbourne and Sydney before he left in mid-April, Rabbi Brodie stressed the importance of practical effort for Palestine and of work for the Jewish National Fund.

At the end of May 1937 Mrs. Ariel Bension arrived on her first visit to Australia on a mission for WIZO. Mrs. Bension was a most colourful personality and an outstanding Zionist leader. An accomplished orator and widely-travelled, she was for several years editor of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* and had visited many out-of-the-way corners in Asia, Africa and South America. From her first visit here she was instrumental in building up WIZO as one of the greatest forces in Zionism and the Jewish life of the communities throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Some years before Mrs. Bension's visit Rabbi Brodie had founded the first WIZO group in Melbourne, with Mrs. Morris as President. Ida Bension was instrumental in establishing, in addition, southern and northern sections of WIZO as well as a Young WIZO League, with a Central Committee in control. In Sydney, Ivriah Women's Zionist Organisation was changed into a WIZO Ivriah. At the same time the WIZO Bellevue Hill Group was formed with Mrs. Frank Goldberg as its President. Ida struck up a close and life-long friendship with Agolda Gold-

berg, an assimilated Jewess hitherto entirely remote from Zionism and Jewish nationalism, who became a disciple and loyal follower and in time the leader of WIZO in N.S.W.

Ida Bension's visit to Sydney in June 1937 coincided with the visit of Bronislaw Huberman, the world-famous Polish Jewish violinist, who was on a concert tour of Australia. Mr. Huberman came from Palestine where he established the Palestine Symphony Orchestra and at a luncheon in his honour in the rooms of the Y.M.H.A. the virtuoso proposed the establishment in Australia of an association of Friends of the Palestine Orchestra. Silva Steigrad, who was Chairman at the luncheon, suggested that those present should be the committee with a view to forming an association in Australia as proposed by Huberman. Many of us agreed to become members but little progress was made towards the objective of establishing such a society.

At the annual meeting of the Union of Sydney Zionists held in August of this year M. Yarmovsky was elected President with Silva Steigrad and Sam Kessler as Vice-Presidents. At the sixtieth annual meeting of the Great Synagogue held the following month a resolution moved by W. Lieberman and seconded by Philip Moses to include a levy of five shillings for *Keren Hayesod* (not ten shillings as decided by Conference) in statements sent to seat-holders was carried by a show of hands. This was in accordance with the decision of the sixth Zionist Conference held earlier that year in Melbourne and was considered a great moral victory for the Zionist movement in Australia, since the Great Synagogue hitherto had been the citadel of opposition to Zionism.

CHAPTER

# 10

# *A Painful Episode*

In November 1937 a most regrettable occurrence caused me to become unwittingly involved as a go-between in a most painful conflict between the Board of Management of the Great Synagogue and its Chief Minister. The *Hebrew Standard*, a Sydney weekly, reprinted in its issues of 21st and 28th October from the *National Review*, a London publication, an article by Dr. Claude G. Montefiore on "Zionism and Jewish Nationalism", denouncing and denigrating the concept of Jewish nationalism. Rabbi Levy, as President of the Zionist Federation, felt impelled to publish a rejoinder which appeared in the *Hebrew Standard* on 11th November in which he wrote *inter alia*, that even a "friendly Englishman would consider it absurd for a Jew to be an Englishman only and that there is a national bond between Jews the world over". Sir Isaac Isaacs and Sir Samuel Cohen in letters to the editor published on 18th November strongly protested against Rabbi Levy's assertions which they said would suggest that Jews were "disloyal" to the Crown and to the country. These letters created something of a panic in the Zionist camp and in the same issue of 18th November Rabbi Levy explained that he referred only to the Jewish heritage and to the spiritual aspect when he said that the Jew was not regarded as an Englishman only and that there was a common bond amongst Jews the world over. The Zionist executive also published in the same issue a statement pledging the unqualified loyalty of Zionists to His Majesty the King and to the British Empire. The managing editor of the *Hebrew Standard* then announced that he had received a flood of letters on the Rabbi's

"rejoinder" and declared the matter closed as far as his paper was concerned.

Unfortunately the matter was not closed as far as Rabbi Levy and the Board of Management of the Great Synagogue were concerned. The Rabbi had been appointed Chief Minister of the Synagogue on a formal three years' contract which expired on 31st March 1938. Early in January of that year the Board of the Synagogue served advance notice on the Rabbi that his contract would not be renewed and that his position as Chief Minister would be terminated on the expiry date of the contract. This notice came like a bolt from the blue and dealt a stunning blow to him and to Mrs. Levy. The Rabbi made it known to the Board that in his opinion his contract was intended to be for a permanent appointment and not for three years as claimed by the Board.

As Commissioner of *Keren Hayesod* for Australia I was a member of the executive of the Zionist Federation but I had little contact with Rabbi Levy as President of the Zionist Federation and I did not belong to the inner circle of the top Zionist leadership of Sydney, which consisted of Silva Steigrad, Philip Moses and Rieke Cohen; the latter being also a very close friend of Mrs. Levy. I was therefore unaware of the position in which the Rabbi found himself until Israel Horwitz called on me one day to tell me of the Rabbi's plight and urged me to call with him on Rabbi and Mrs. Levy at their home. Israel hailed from London where the families of Mrs. Levy and his own were neighbours and he had known Mrs. Levy in his youth. On our arrival at the Rabbi's home we found several reporters of the daily press present, amongst them one from the sensationalist *Smith's Weekly* of Sydney, awaiting a statement from Rabbi Levy. We hurriedly called the Rabbi to another room and persuaded him not to issue any statement to the press, on the understanding that Israel and I would take up his case with the Board of the Synagogue. The Rabbi claimed that he had given up a prized and lucrative post in South Africa to come to Sydney and that obviously he would not have done so had he thought that his appointment was only for three years. Furthermore, during his ministry in the Great Synagogue, he had passed the age of forty, beyond which age it was most difficult for a Rabbi to find a post with a large congregation.

We made several abortive approaches to the Board and Rabbi Levy sought legal advice. On the opinion of counsel he was determined to bring his case before the Courts. The Board which adamantly refused to state the reasons for his dismissal was determined to terminate the Rabbi's contract which according to the opinion of Leonard Abrahams, K.C., a distinguished lawyer and a Board member, would automatically lapse on the date of expiry, 31st March. Acting on this advice the Board refused to enter into any negotiations with the Rabbi and would not discuss the matter with Horwitz and myself.

On the Sabbath morning after 31st March, Rabbi Levy arrived early at the Synagogue to occupy his usual seat on the *Almemar*. When the service reached the point where the sermon should be delivered Rabbi Levy and, on the Board's instructions, Rabbi Falk both strode towards the pulpit together.

This sad spectacle forced the President, Sir Samuel Cohen, to negotiate a settlement. After the Sabbath I received an urgent call to attend a meeting of the Board of Management who, a few weeks earlier, had turned a deaf ear to my entreaties to appear before them. The task of hammering out a settlement acceptable to both sides was one of the most arduous I have ever undertaken. Rabbi and Mrs. Levy were often in a state of near hysteria and several times revoked, the following morning, the terms agreed upon in the evening. After a full week of difficult negotiation, settlement terms were finally agreed upon. Apart from financial compensation to the Rabbi, it was also agreed that the Board withdraw its notice and that Rabbi Levy should, instead, hand the Board a letter of resignation. Furthermore, it was agreed that the Board of Management was to tender Rabbi and Mrs. Levy a testimonial and valedictory dinner prior to their leaving Australia. The Rabbi, on his part, agreed not to accept a Rabbinical post in Sydney for the next two or three years. The farewell dinner was given by Orwell Phillips at his private residence and all members of the Board and their wives were invited to attend.

Next morning Mr. Phillips telephoned asking me to call at his office. He told me that the evening with Rabbi and Mrs. Levy went off very well and that he promised the Rabbi to see to it that the members of the Board contributed to a Testimonial Fund for him. Rabbi and Mrs. Levy were due to sail two days

later and Orwell Phillips very courteously asked me to call on the Board members with whom he had spoken the night before, for their contributions. This was not so easy a task as Mr. Phillips had suggested to me and I had to work hard for the doubtful privilege of finishing the job. Afterwards Sir Samuel invited me to his office and thanked me very warmly for all I had done: from Rabbi Levy I received a very nice card from one of the ports of call en route to England, expressing his warm thanks for my efforts.

CHAPTER

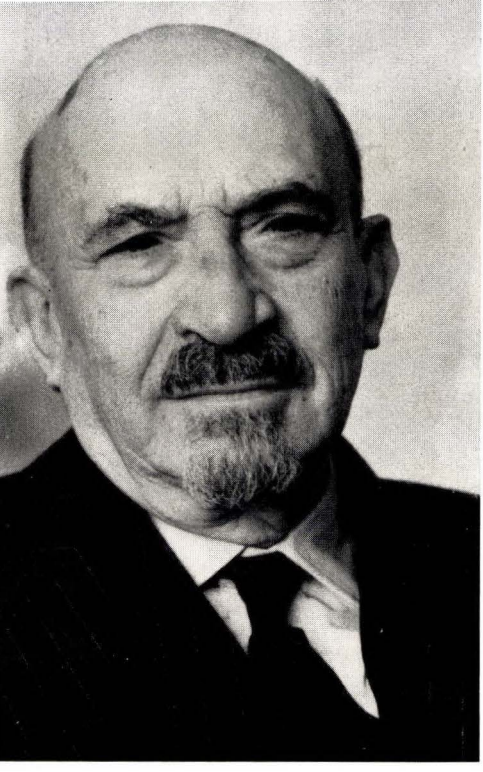
# 11

# *Greater Effort*

THE SEVENTH AUSTRALIAN ZIONIST CONFERENCE was held in Sydney early in March 1938 at a time of serious crisis for Zionism, the *Yishuv* in Palestine and for the Jewries in Eastern and Central Europe. The Sir John Woodhead Commission was appointed by the British Government in February 1938 following the Lord Peel Royal Commission's report and its partition plan. This obviously implied that the Peel partition plan was to be investigated further and that the British Government was not committed to accept the proposals made by the Royal Commission. The position of Rumanian Jewry became more desperate and early in 1938 King Carol deemed it necessary to oust the violently anti-Semitic Coga Government. This, however, did not improve the position of the Jews in the country. In March 1938 the plight of Austrian Jewry reached crisis proportions and a mass flight of Jews from Austria started, many of whom emigrated to Australia.

The Conference elected Dr. Leon Jona President, Silva Steigrad, Chairman, and Philip Moses, Honorary Treasurer. Cecil Luber and I were appointed Commissioners of the J.N.F. and *Keren Hayesod* respectively.

Cecil A. Luber, prominent businessman and communal identity, was elected J.N.F. Commissioner in N.S.W. in October 1937. He organised, in conjunction with Philip Moses, the first J.N.F. Queen Esther Competition with seven candidates participating. To defray the expenses of the Queen Esther dance an afternoon tea function was held on the S.S. *Orion* and the dance itself was held in March 1938 at the Trocadero. This was



Chaim Weizmann,
First President of Israel.




Watch-tower Corner-stone ceremony.
*Left to right*: Dr. M. Berman, Dr. Shlomo Lowy, Sasha Freilich, Jacob Tsur, John Hood, Australian Ambassador, the author.



Author being introduced to President Ben Zvi (former President of Israel).



*Left to right*: Mrs. and Mr. Alec Breckler of Perth, Sasha Freilich, the author and President Shazar (present President of Israel).

the forerunner of the successful and glittering J.N.F. balls of later years. Both events were a great social success and for the first time raised a considerable amount for the J.N.F. in Sydney.

The imminent *Keren Hayesod* Campaign in Australia was very high on the agenda of the seventh Zionist Conference. Dr. B. Mossinson, former principal of the Herzl Gymnasium in Tel Aviv, was chosen as the emissary to come to Australia. However, because of indifferent health his visit was abandoned and Dr. Benzion Shein was invited by the Head Office in Jerusalem to undertake a second mission in Australia and New Zealand. Soon after the Conference a committee was set up in Sydney to organise the campaign and I was elected Chairman with Philip Moses and Horace Newman, Joint Treasurers. An influential committee comprising personalities from a cross-section of the community was formed, amongst them Norman Schureck. Dr. Shein was scheduled to start the Australian campaign in Brisbane where he was due to arrive late in June 1938.

In the initial stage of our association Horace Newman and I frequently met for morning tea at Sargent's coffee shop opposite his warehouse in York Street. On some occasions, we were joined by Norman Schureck, a friend of Horace, whose office was also nearby. Our conversation was either about business or about current world affairs in which Norman took a lively interest but whenever our conversation touched upon a Jewish subject, Norman remained silent and his indifference was made apparent by his leaving us. He was the prototype of the completely assimilated Jew and, as I later learned, he was reared in a totally assimilated environment. Norman's father, a German Jew, came to Australia in his youth and his mother was a third generation Australian Jewess. Before very long Norman and I also became good friends and the three of us spent much time in each other's company. Norman had an alert mind, was a keen conversationalist and a most agreeable personality. He was a well-to-do bachelor, interested in the arts and a lover of good music. His was a cultured home, with an aura of refined taste and of civilised living. We frequently visited each other and the three of us would sit up until the small hours of morning in lively philosophic discussion.

In this early period of our friendship I avoided Zionist conversation, even though I was at times challenged or tempted to

introduce it. I did not consider myself a Zionist missionary and I never set out deliberately to impose my ideas or convictions on anyone. When Horace joined the Union of Sydney Zionists early in 1937, Norman chided him for doing so. However, before Dr. Shein's arrival in Australia in June 1938, Horace suggested that we discuss the matter with Norman with a view to his joining the committee which was in the process of being formed to organise the drive for the *Keren Hayesod*. We both agreed that he would be a worth-while acquisition for the campaign and could help us a good deal in the arduous weeks ahead. After several talks and much persuasion he agreed to serve on the committee if only for the sake of our friendship. Philip Moses, Silva Steigrad and our other colleagues on the committee were delighted with this acquisition.

Once he accepted the position, Norman threw in his lot with us and together with Philip, Horace and myself worked very hard for the success of the campaign. The grim position of the Jews in Germany, Austria, Poland and Rumania brought in its wake a large immigration into Palestine and for this substantial funds were needed. The committee in Sydney set itself a target of £20,000 which at the time was a very ambitious goal. We organised two main functions, a banquet at the Carlton Hotel, and a public meeting at the Maccabean Hall, which were held on 13th and 19th July respectively. For the opening gala function at the Carlton about a hundred and twenty special invitations were issued whilst for the public meeting full-page advertisements were inserted in the Jewish papers inviting the community to attend.

Benzion Shein arrived in Sydney during the first week of July after a short but successful campaign in Brisbane. Norman arranged a reception for Ben at his flat to meet the members of the committee which included Rabbi Falk and Sasha and Edna Goulston volunteered to supervise the kitchen staff for the purpose of serving kosher food only. Norman seemed to enjoy this first experience of holding a Zionist function at his home as much as did his guests.

Our choice of people to be invited to the opening banquet was based on the consideration of their ability to contribute a large sum to the appeal, thus setting a higher standard of giving for the campaign. The response to our invitations was rather

poor and Norman, Horace and I spent the entire week-end before the function telephoning and exhorting people to attend. In many instances we followed up the invitation by personal calls. One such instance comes to my mind when Norman and I called on Ray Gardiner, a very generous and public-spirited Jewess. It took some convincing talk to get her to promise to attend. Later she telephoned Norman two or three times to say that she had changed her mind and Norman did his best to persuade her to keep her promise. In the end she came and by her generous contribution set an example for others to follow. Philip Moses opened the appeal with a donation of £1,000—a very considerable sum at the time. He also arranged for himself, Cecil Luber and Norman to call on Isaac Kahn to persuade him to match Philip's contribution of £1,000. Isaac Kahn was also persuaded to appear in person at the public meeting on the stage of the Maccabean Hall and announced his contribution of £1,000.

The banquet, which was presided over by Sir Samuel Cohen, was a resounding success. The attendance of a hundred and fifty people was very good and the sum of £10,000 was pledged. This was an excellent result considering that only a limited number from whom larger contributions could be expected were invited. The public meeting at the Maccabean Hall, also presided over by Sir Samuel, had a capacity attendance. Dr. Shein gave moving addresses on both occasions and these were undoubtedly responsible for the excellent financial results.

The committee organised a number of smaller meetings in the suburban centres as well as a personal canvass of prospective donors. Norman Schureck invited the members of the committee and a few contributors to his home to be addressed by Dr. Shein. He also gave a small dinner party at which Ben, Edna Goulston, Horace and his wife, Sasha and myself were present to celebrate the success of the campaign so far. Ben, although not a teetotaller, hardly ever took any drink but on this occasion he let himself go, joining in the gaiety of the small party. When the first guests arrived for the meeting, Norman left us to receive them. We remained a little longer at the table but rose soon afterwards to join Norman and his guests. Ben, who felt rather ill, was taken, discreetly, to Norman's bedroom where he was put on a couch, falling asleep immediately. There were a number

of guests already in the lounge and we made sure that the incident was not noticed. As Ben was to address the meeting we intended to make some excuse for his non-appearance. However, when all the guests had arrived and had been chatting for some little time, Ben entered the room, none the worse for his experience, and delivered a most eloquent address.

The total amount pledged in Sydney for *Keren Hayesod* exceeded £18,000, which was very close to the target the committee had set itself. This was a very satisfactory result considering that concurrent with the *Keren Hayesod* drive there was in progress an appeal for a Polish-Jewish Relief Fund. The second annual meeting of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society held late in July decided to launch an appeal for £25,000 for the German-Jewish Relief Fund in September. The terrible tragedy of European Jewry at that period demanded supreme efforts and sacrifice from the Jewish communities in the free world. Late in August Dr. Shein left for Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth where he conducted successful campaigns for *Keren Hayesod.*

In September 1938 Professor Norman Bentwich arrived in Sydney on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Society of Friends of the Hebrew University which had been established in 1936 at a luncheon given in Sydney in honour of Dr. A. M. Schalit on his return from a visit to Palestine. The luncheon was presided over by Judge Cohen and Dr. Schalit, speaking of his experiences, spoke very movingly about the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus. He suggested that a "Society of Friends" be formed in Sydney in line with similar societies which existed in many parts of the Jewish world. Mr. Alroy M. Cohen, Q.C., who became President in March 1938, Dr. Schalit and others devoted much time and energy to furthering the cause of the Hebrew University throughout the Commonwealth of Australia. After the establishment of the State of Israel, Alroy Cohen became Federal President of the Australian Friends, was later made a Governor of the University, and regularly attended the meetings of the Board of Governors in Jerusalem. Shortly before his death in 1966 he became an Honorary Fellow of the University, a rare honour.

In November Dr. Shein left for New Zealand to conduct the *Keren Hayesod* appeal in the sister Dominion. He returned to

Australia in early 1939 where he remained for several months, attending the medical school of the Sydney University.

At a meeting in the home of Cara Goldberg, daughter of Agolda Goldberg, President of the Bellevue Hill WIZO, a committee of Jewish women was formed for the purpose of organising the 1939 Jewish National Fund Queen Esther Ball. In later years the J.N.F. Queen Competition became a highly popular annual social event and a principal fund-raising means for WIZO and J.N.F. in Australia. The candidate with the highest amount raised was crowned Queen Esther. The first ball committee was presided over by Mrs. Alroy M. Cohen and the ball was held at the Trocadero on 28th March 1939. It was a glittering social occasion with the Premier of the State, the Hon. B. S. B. Stevens, and Mrs. Stevens, the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress and many other distinguished Government and civic leaders, Jewish and non-Jewish, in attendance. Lady Cohen crowned the Queen Esther and a cheque for a considerable sum was handed to Cecil Luber, the J.N.F. Commissioner for N.S.W. It was a forerunner of what became later known as the J.N.F. Coronation Ball and in later years became an institution in all capital cities of Australia.

The eighth Zionist Conference was held in Melbourne early in March 1939 and was convened in a period of deep depression for Jewry and the Zionist movement. The assassination in Paris of the German diplomat von Rath by Herschel Grynspan, and the subsequent pogroms in Germany shocked the Jewish world and civilised people everywhere. The dismal proceedings at the London conference between representatives of the Arab States and the leaders of the Jewish Agency called by the British Government in an attempt to find a solution to the problem of the Jewish National Home in Palestine were a bitter disappointment. Moreover, the intensified Arab terror in Palestine and the refusal of the British authorities to admit ten thousand children into Palestine as was proposed by the Jewish Agency on urgent humanitarian grounds, brought about a sense of frustration and profound depression. The Conference was poorly attended and the delegation from Sydney was small. Dr. Shein attended the opening session and delivered a spirited address, pleading for greater efforts from the Zionists of Australia. Our elder son Theodor came with us as co-driver on the long car drive from

Sydney to Melbourne: this being his first experience of a Zionist Conference. Reports of the year's activities were given to the Conference and a number of resolutions were adopted. At the request of the New Zealand delegate it was resolved that the name "Australian Zionist Federation" be changed to "Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand". It was further resolved that the next Zionist Conference (the ninth) be held, if possible, in New Zealand. Following the report on the *Keren Hayesod* Campaign a resolution was adopted which made special mention of the excellent work done by Philip Moses and myself. The elected office-bearers were Dr. Leon Jona, President, Philip Moses, Honorary Treasurer, Horace Newman, Honorary Secretary. Cecil Luber and I were re-elected Commissioners of J.N.F. and *Keren Hayesod* respectively and Mrs. Ruby Rich-Schalit the representative of WIZO on the executive.

On 26th April the Zionist State Council was formed in Sydney as an integral part of the Zionist Federation Executive. The eighth Zionist Conference had elected Dr. Leon Jona, a resident of Melbourne, President whilst all other office-bearers of the Federation resided in Sydney. This meant that the President had to attend meetings of the executive in Sydney, frequently travelling between Sydney and Melbourne. At the first meeting of the State Council at which Leon was present Silva Steigrad was elected Chairman with Norman Schureck and myself Vice-Chairmen, Horace Newman and Philip Moses Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer respectively. Cecil Luber and I became members of the Council, in our capacities of Commissioners of J.N.F. and *Keren Hayesod.* At this meeting, Leon announced that the ninth Zionist Conference would be held in New Zealand in January 1940; but this meeting never took place because of the outbreak of World War II.

The Union of Sydney Zionists, which had come into being more than two decades earlier, still had only a comparatively small membership. On joining the committee of the Union Norman Schureck was co-opted to the executive and undertook the task of organising a membership drive. With his customary zest for any task he undertook, Norman set to work on the enrolment of members with an *élan* beggaring description. He organised many parlour meetings which Silva Steigrad or he ad-

dressed and insisted that every member of the committee make himself responsible for enrolling at least five new members. In the space of a few months Norman was instrumental in increasing the membership of the Union of Sydney Zionists nearly tenfold.

The MacDonald White Paper of May 1939, limiting Jewish immigration to 75,000 during a period of five years and severely restricting the purchase by Jews of Arab land, aroused the most profound indignation and protests of the *Yishuv*, the Jewish Agency and world Jewry. Dr. Weizmann, in a strongly worded statement, said that the White Paper policy constituted a repudiation of the Balfour Declaration and the mandate over Palestine. It was severely criticised in both Houses of the British Parliament. Sir Winston Churchill called the document "another Munich". Leon Jona, as President of the Australian Zionist Federation, issued a statement vehemently protesting against the White Paper and this statement was cabled to Dr. Chaim Weizmann in London. Sir Archie Michaelis of Melbourne issued a similar statement of protest in the name of the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board.

The Head Office of the J.N.F. in Jerusalem suggested at this time to the Zionist Federation that Colonel Kish should be invited to conduct an appeal for the fund in Australia and New Zealand but several members of the executive voiced strong opposition to the proposal on the grounds that Dr. Shein's *Keren Hayesod* Campaign the previous year had in many cases allowed for payments to be made in twenty-four monthly instalments. Bernard Cowan, President of the Victorian J.N.F., most vigorously voiced his opposition to the visit and a heated controversy was carried on for several months. It was finally resolved that Head Office be asked to postpone the visit until the following year (1940).

In the months from June to August the Zionist Executive organised an intensive drive throughout Australia and New Zealand for the sale of *Shkolim* in anticipation of the twenty-first Zionist Congress convened for mid-August at Geneva. There was no prospect of a delegate from Australia attending the Congress but it was considered desirable to have the numbers of *Shekel* holders greatly increased as a demonstration of our support for any Zionist public relations activity to be undertaken in the future.

In the same months an influx of visitors from overseas had a significant effect on the local scene. Rabbi Dr. Samuel Bension arrived on a mission for the Mizrachi Palestine Fund and a committee, with Sir Samuel Cohen as Chairman, was formed to launch the appeal, which unfortunately was not successful. Dr. Bension severely criticised the leaders and the Jewish communities of Australia for the failure of the appeal and published attacks in the Jewish press threatening to direct his appeal to non-Jews. The Sydney community was incensed by this threat.

A soccer team of the Maccabi Tel Aviv arrived in Australia in June at the invitation of the Australian Soccer Football Federation. Benzion Patkin, of Melbourne, who initiated the negotiations with the Maccabi and the Australian football authorities, apparently had assumed that it would be a national Palestine team and not a team of one club only. Because the team was not of international class and because of the disturbed times, the tour was not a financial success. Benzion made an effort to raise some funds from the Zionists in Melbourne and appealed to me to do likewise in Sydney. In addition, he tried to arrange additional games in order to earn extra income for the team. War broke out immediately after the end of the tour and whilst some of the players managed to return to Palestine, others remained in Australia for the duration.

At this time, also, Dr. Chaim Wardi of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem arrived in Australia on a mission to enlist greater financial and moral support for the University. He addressed several meetings in Sydney to try to increase membership of the Friends of the Hebrew University in Australia. On the eve of the outbreak of war Ida Bension arrived on her second visit, to launch an appeal for a "Youth Aliyah—Save a Child" Campaign. Dr. Shlomo Lowy of the J.N.F. Head Office in Jerusalem arrived early in September to organise and establish a permanent J.N.F. organisation in Australia. Rabbi Max Schenk of New York arrived in the same month to take up the post of Minister of Temple Emanuel, the recently established Liberal Congregation of Sydney. The presence in Australia of these overseas personalities during the crucial war years and in the years preceding the establishment of the State of Israel made a significant contribution to Australian Zionism and to the advancement of Jewish communal life in the Commonwealth.

CHAPTER

# 12

# *World War II*

On 3rd September 1939 the British Prime Minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, announced to a stunned nation and an alarmed world that "a state of war exists between the United Kingdom and Germany". Like millions of others my family and I listened with tense anxiety to this declaration broadcast from 10 Downing Street. Although not unexpected the announcement was more than painful, for many of us sensed the depth of peril and catastrophe which this war would bring to the world, to our own people here and those who remained in Poland and Central Europe. Though this was an hour of extreme crisis for the entire human race, many Jews were profoundly troubled in a more specific and personal way, being conscious of the inescapable fact that as Jews, our people in Europe were exposed to the gravest dangers and untold suffering when brought under the heel of the Nazi tyranny. The events which had taken place since 1933 in the Third Reich were unmistakable pointers to the terrible fate of the Jews under Hitler at war with the Western democracies.

When contemplating the gloomy and calamitous position of European Jewry I could not escape a feeling of deep harassment and dejection. The certain knowledge that our people were facing a cruel and horrid fate whilst we were living in reasonable safety and security in this remote and free land weighed heavily on me: to devote all my energies and all my waking hours to the idea of Jewish redemption and national survival became an all-absorbing personal challenge. It was this firm resolve that animated me in all my actions in the coming years.

The experience of World War I and of the intervening years made me realise that in the wake of global conflagration came political upheavals and changes in the world's map which were unthinkable in times of peace. The bitter disappointments and set-backs which our cause had suffered as a result of the vacillating policies in Palestine of the mandatory power persuaded me that in World War II our goal must be to establish an independent Jewish nation on our ancestral soil. I did not pretend to know the practical means of achieving this aim and I did not know what plans, if any, the executive of the Jewish Agency and of the World Zionist Organisation might have formulated for the fulfilment of Zionist aspirations in the Jewish National Home. My own thinking was that in each free country, large or small, Zionists must concentrate on doing political work at the highest level, aiming at Jewish national independence in Palestine.

It was this conviction that led me during World War II to devote much of my time and energy to public relations work in this country on all levels—a path I followed throughout the war years and immediately afterwards until the State of Israel came into being. In this I was supported strongly by several colleagues on the executive of the Zionist Federation; but my actions at times were looked upon with disfavour by other members. I was greatly encouraged, however, from the outset and at all times by my closest friends, Horace Newman and Norman Schureck. We spent many long hours discussing plans and exchanging views on ways and means of giving effect to our ideas.

Within hours of the outbreak of war Lord Mayors' Comfort Funds were organised in all capital cities of the Commonwealth to provide personal amenities for the armed forces. Church groups of the various denominations and many lay organisations made available their premises or erected special huts where free meals and light refreshments were served and other amenities provided for soldiers on leave or for those spending their free time out of barracks. The Red Cross established centres for sewing and knitting and the packing of gift parcels to be sent to those who enlisted for war duties. In all these patriotic activities, Jewish voluntary helpers participated. Sir Samuel Cohen, on being asked for guidance, published a state-

ment in the Jewish papers advising strongly that Jews should make their contributions as members of the general community and not as Jews.

The issue was discussed by the Zionist Executive and it was decided that although we all agreed in principle with Sir Samuel's views, nonetheless, we should undertake some specific patriotic activity to be featured as a special Jewish contribution. We felt that this ought to be done on two grounds. As is usually the case in times of stress, in the early war months there was a rising anti-Semitic tendency amongst the general public and one could frequently hear it publicly stated that the Jew was a shirker and a black-marketeer. Denials and protestations published in the daily press were of no avail and anti-Semitism was on the increase. We contended that in this war the Jewish people had a special stake because the Nazis started the war against the Jewish people long before they launched their attack on Poland and also because of Hitler's open determination to wipe the Jewish people off the face of the earth. Our contribution to the fighting of this war therefore had to be made more evident than that of the average citizen. This was particularly so because the Jewish Agency's request to be allowed to form a Jewish Army recruited from Palestinians and from Jews in other countries to fight under a Jewish flag within the British armed forces had been refused by the British Government on political grounds. Another reason for organising a special Jewish war effort in this country was to create a more favourable climate of public opinion for Zionist aspirations in Palestine.

After several months of discussion and consideration the Zionist Executive endorsed the idea of a special patriotic project and Norman Schureck undertook the task of investigating what was most suitable. The National Council of Jewish Women, working in conjunction with the Red Cross, formed a committee for sewing and knitting as its effort for the soldiers' comforts. The Lord Mayor's Comforts Fund erected the Anzac Buffet Kiosk in Hyde Park with the well-known social worker Miss Zara Isaacs in charge assisted by her sister Rae and a band of ladies from the Sydney community. After consultation with the administrator of the Sydney Lord Mayor's Comforts Fund, the John Monash Recreation Hut and Rest House was erected in

Hyde Park near the Anzac Buffet and operated for the men and women of His Majesty's Forces. The N.S.W. Jewish Advisory Board approved the launching of an appeal for funds in July 1940 and the project became known as a purely Jewish effort. The Monash Hut was opened officially in September of that year by the Governor of N.S.W., Lord Wakehurst, in the presence of the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Alderman Crick, and over one thousand people. On that occasion Sir Samuel Cohen handed the Lord Mayor a cheque for £5,000 as the cost of the building. A House Committee was formed with Saul Symonds as Chairman, Horace Newman as Honorary Treasurer and Norman Schureck as Honorary Organiser. The Monash Recreation Hut, the best of its kind in Australia, was frequented daily by many hundreds of soldiers. For the duration of the war and for some time afterwards it remained the best patriotic Jewish effort and provided for the comfort of our fighting forces. It was often singled out for praise by government authorities in N.S.W.

In the early months of the war there was a lull in local Jewish and Zionist activity. Early in 1940 came the tragic news of the agony and wholesale massacre of Polish Jewry and the horrid fate of five hundred thousand Jews crowded into the Warsaw ghetto by the Nazis. This catastrophe stirred us all into intensified communal activity. The *Shomrim* organisation, consisting of recently arrived young people from Europe with Zionist tendencies, was formed. The *Tarbuth* (Cultural) Zionist organisation was established by a group of Zionists from Vienna. Both these newly formed organisations generated much enthusiasm and made an impact on Zionist life in the community. Ida Benzion was eminently successful in her efforts to rally the entire Jewish community in support of the "Youth Aliyah—Save a Child" campaign. Her mission was sponsored by the London Youth Aliyah Committee and letters were received by Sir Samuel Cohen from Professor Norman Bentwich and by Lady Isaacs, wife of Sir Isaac Isaacs, from Marchioness Reading and Lord Melchett strongly recommending the "Save a Child" fund.

Dr. Shlomo Lowy of the J.N.F. Head Office in Jerusalem arrived in Sydney with his wife Rivka and their young daughter Tamar at the beginning of the war. He made his first contact with Philip Moses, who introduced him to the Zionist leader-

ship and helped him to settle down with his family. With his unassuming characteristics Shlomo made an easy entry into the life of our community. From the outset he was befriended by the individual members of the various societies and Zionist organisations, their executives and committees. His presence at meetings was very much sought after and his talks on the developments in the *Yishuv* and especially on the significance of the J.N.F. were very much appreciated. After one year's stay in Sydney, the family settled in Melbourne for the duration of the war but Shlomo travelled widely and visited the capital cities and the smaller Jewish centres throughout Australia. His zeal and devotion to the task of building a strong and lasting J.N.F. structure knew no bounds and his hard labours and unrelenting efforts were rewarded by the establishment of a J.N.F. stronghold in Australia which in popularity and mass movement is not matched in any other part of the Jewish world. In his last year here he organised the Federal J.N.F. of Australia as an autonomous structure, with Dr. Leon Jona as its first President. During his stay in Sydney I was closely associated with Shlomo as a friend and co-worker in a common cause: and the bond of friendship which was forged in those difficult times of the war remains as strong and intimate today as it was more than a quarter of a century ago.

In February 1940 the British Administration of Palestine published the Land Sale Ordinance, severely restricting the purchase of land by Jews from Arab landowners in accordance with the policy announced in the Malcolm MacDonald White Paper of May 1939. This ordinance was a bitter disappointment to the *Yishuv* in Palestine and was sharply criticised by Jewish and Zionist leaders as well as by many British statesmen and Parliamentarians. Dr. Weizmann's formulations of Zionist policy "to fight the White Paper as if there was no war and to fight the war as if there was no White Paper" however remained unchanged. The determination of the British Government to implement the policy of the MacDonald White Paper in the face of the great tragedy which overtook the Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland came as a great shock to the Jews of Australia. It stimulated the Zionist sentiment and gave greater impetus to practical Zionist work.

The fact that the President of the Zionist Federation lived in

Melbourne whilst the other honorary officers and most members of the executive were in Sydney proved to be a serious handicap to the smooth working of the Federation and at times created most embarrassing situations. Such was the case when the Head Office of the J.N.F. in Jerusalem suggested that Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig of London visit Australia on a fund-raising mission and his visit was approved by the Federation Executive in Sydney. Rabbi Perlzweig was to come in place of Colonel Kish who had been proposed as the emissary for the J.N.F. in June 1939 but whose visit had been postponed on the insistence of the Melbourne Zionist Executive until March 1940. Colonel Fred Kish, a brilliant officer of the Royal Engineers, came to Palestine in late 1922, on the invitation of Dr. Weizmann, to serve as political officer of the Zionist Executive and its liaison with the British Administration. At the thirteenth Zionist Conference in 1923 he was elected a member of the World Zionist Executive. Colonel Kish enlisted for active war service with the British armed forces at the outbreak of hostilities and Rabbi Perlzweig, who as Honorary Secretary of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Chairman of the British section of the World Jewish Congress, was planning a tour to the Far East, was asked by the J.N.F. in Jerusalem to include Australia and New Zealand in his itinerary for a fund-raising campaign on its behalf. The *Australian Jewish Herald* which was published in Melbourne opposed Rabbi Perlzweig's visit for the J.N.F. in several of its editorials and severely criticised the Federation Executive in Sydney for its endorsement of the Rabbi as a J.N.F. emissary. The tacit agreement of Leon Jona, the Federation President, with the view of the managing editor of the *Australian Jewish Herald*, was a source of embarrassment to the Federation Executive in Sydney.

Because of the war it was inopportune to hold the annual Zionist Conference in New Zealand as was agreed at the eighth Zionist Conference in 1939. It was therefore decided to hold the ninth Zionist Conference in Sydney in April 1940, with an agenda limited to a discussion of the important business of the Federation and the election of an executive. The Conference resolved that the plans for Perlzweig's visit should be continued and that the executive of the Zionist Federation be transferred to Melbourne in three months' time, if the requisite personnel

could be found. Meanwhile the Conference re-elected the Sydney executive to carry on the business of the Federation.

On his return to Melbourne after the Conference, Leon, under pressure, continued his opposition to Perlzweig's visit and in June resigned his position as President. In August the Federation Executive was transferred to Melbourne, with Leon Jona as President, Bernard Cowan, Vice-President, Alec Masel, Honorary Treasurer, and Maurice Cohen, Honorary Secretary. Rabbi Perlzweig did not visit Australia and an emergency J.N.F. Campaign was launched in Sydney the same month with Shlomo Lowy as the emissary. Several parlour meetings which were addressed by Shlomo were organised with good results. Unfortunately, Philip Moses who was ill and Norman Schureck who as the Honorary Organiser in charge of the Monash Recreation Hut's establishment had a full-time job, were unable to assist and the main burden of the campaign thus fell on the shoulders of Shlomo and myself. For several weeks we carried on a personal canvass calling on individual donors at their offices or at their homes. The war position in Europe was then most unfavourable to the Allies and the "blitz" on the British Isles was reaching its peak. This made our task most difficult. Because of the emergency in the *Yishuv* we persisted in our efforts asking contributors to the 1938 *Keren Hayesod* appeal, who had pledged to pay in twenty-four monthly instalments to continue the payments to the Jewish National Fund for a similar period. Most agreed to do this.

CHAPTER

# 13

# *The Fall of France*

ON THE MORNING following the fall of France Horace and I met for morning tea at our usual place in the city in a state of utter depression and bewilderment. Strolling through the city we asked ourselves dejectedly: "Where are we to go from here and what shall be our tasks as Zionists in the months to come?" It was not despair or fear about the final outcome of this terrible war that prompted us to pose these questions; but rather was it to determine our attitude on the course of action we were to take, which would have to be taken by our movement in the dark days of the total war which lay ahead of us. As Zionists we perceived that we had a twofold duty to perform. In the first place our duties were to Australia as citizens of the country and in addition we were obliged to work for a better Jewish future.

The collapse of France in June 1940 and the grim position of the Jews in Poland and in the other territories occupied by Germany caused the deepest dejection. At the same time it stimulated all of us to far greater efforts in our patriotic activities and in our Zionist endeavours. Many of our young, and not so young, people enlisted as volunteers in the armed forces and nearly every Jewish man or woman who remained at home was engaged in some kind of patriotic or war work. Concurrently, the Zionist spirit and the eagerness to make some concrete contribution towards the Zionist effort was notable in these most difficult times of the war. The Zionist Executive issued a call to Australian Jews to rally wholeheartedly behind every organisation dedicated to the task of supporting the Jewish National

Home. It pointed to the fact that the *Yishuv* in Palestine was most eager to fight in the war against the Nazis and that 147,000 Jewish men and women had volunteered for service in a Jewish Army. The Australian Federation of WIZO came into being at that time with Mrs. Ruby Rich-Schalit as President, Mesdames S. Burleigh and Friedl Levi being in charge of Youth Aliyah. A virile executive was elected and showed great enthusiasm for the ideals of Zionism and for the humanitarian task of the "Save a Child" movement. Ruby Rich was a distinguished woman leader and for many years was prominent in Australia and beyond in the fight for women's equality. She was a leading member of the Australian Federation of Women Voters and was its representative at many international conferences. She was later awarded the M.B.E. for these and other services. As a Zionist she rendered invaluable service in the field of public relations, in particular in the promotion of cultural activities on behalf of the Zionist movement and in later years on behalf of Israel. Because of her integrity and idealistic outlook she was a great asset to the Zionist movement and to every organisation, Jewish and non-Jewish, to which she gave support.

The National Council of Jewish Women intensified its patriotic activity and in July opened a kiosk in Martin Place to serve meals and refreshments to the general public, the proceeds of which were donated to the Lord Mayor's Fund. The service was provided by volunteer women teams who donated the food and worked as waitresses as well. Sasha was in charge of one such team working on a weekly roster system. It became known as "Zionist Day" and was very successful, being well patronised and getting the best financial result. In response to the call of the WIZO Federation, the Council formed a special Palestine Committee to work in support of Zionist fund-raising and of our aspirations in Palestine.

Rabbi Dr. Israel Porush accompanied by his family arrived in June from England to fill the post of Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue. Notwithstanding the critical war days, the Rabbi was installed with the solemnity and religious ceremonial which befit such an occasion. The induction was followed by numerous receptions in which Rabbi and Mrs. Porush were accorded an enthusiastic welcome by his congregation and by

the wider community including the Zionist organisations. Because of the sad experience of his predecessor, Rabbi E. M. Levy, which was no doubt due to Rabbi Levy's strong Zionist ardour, we were somewhat concerned about the attitude which Rabbi Porush might take. This matter was discussed at a meeting of the Union of Sydney Zionists and Silva Steigrad and I were delegated to call on the Rabbi and acquaint him with the Zionist position in the community and at the same time to hear his views on Zionism generally and on the local scene. Dr. Porush received us most cordially and we spent a pleasant evening enjoying the hospitality of his home and discussing at some length the issues about which we had come to see him. It was obvious that he leaned strongly towards the spiritual concept of Zionism but not to the exclusion of our national aspirations in Palestine. In our talk with him it became apparent also that Dr. Porush was more sedate than Rabbi Levy and that he would be more circumspect in his conduct all round, including his attitude towards the Zionists. In the long and fruitful years of his ministry at the Great Synagogue the Rabbi earned the affection and esteem of his congregation and of the whole Jewish community. He also gained the respect of the general Australian community for his scholarly attainments, his great dignity and fine personality.

The months of August-September 1940 were extremely busy in the field of fund-raising. The appeal to raise £5,000 for the Monash Recreation Hut and the campaign of the J.N.F. Emergency Fund were both launched in August. In September Camille Honig came to Australia on a mission from London for the Lord Rothschild Relief Fund for War Victims. A committee was formed in Sydney with Sir Samuel Cohen as Chairman; Norman, Horace and I served on the committee. In addition there were two visitors from Palestine soliciting financial support for institutions in Jerusalem, causing the Zionist leadership much embarrassment. The Jewish Congregational Advisory Boards in Sydney and Melbourne informed the Jewish public that all appeals for local or for overseas needs should only be supported if authorised by them. The Zionist Executive asked the Advisory Boards to refrain from authorising Palestinian appeals unless approved by the Zionist State Councils in each State. Horace Newman as the Honorary Secretary of the N.S.W. Zionist

Council published this fact in the local papers and informed the authorities in Jerusalem to this effect.

Mrs. Ida Bension left Australia in May 1940 and returned as Mrs. Sam Wynn in mid-September of the same year. Ida and Sam married in New Zealand and spent some time in Sydney before going to Melbourne. Sasha and I visited them on several occasions when I had an opportunity to discuss with them our Zionist plans and I made special mention of the need for public relations work in Australia in support of Zionist aspirations in Palestine. In the crucial days of our political struggle for the creation of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine their home in Melbourne was an important meeting place and clearing house for this vital facet of Zionist activity.

Ida's marriage to Sam Wynn explained to Sasha and myself an amusing incident of their courtship. When in Sydney, Sam never failed to call us and on the Friday in May before Ida's departure from Australia he telephoned as usual. On learning that he was to spend the week-end in Sydney Sasha invited him for the Sabbath evening meal, which invitation he accepted readily. A little later Ida phoned saying that she had arrived from Melbourne and was leaving for the United States early the following week. Knowing that when in Sydney Ida always stayed with her friend Agolda Goldberg, Sasha did not ask her to be our guest on the Sabbath eve. Whereupon Ida told Sasha that she would like to invite herself for dinner that evening if Sasha agreed. Sasha told her that she would be very welcome and at the same time told Ida that there would be another guest on that evening, namely Sam Wynn of Melbourne. We were both puzzled as to Ida's reason for wishing to be with us on the last Friday evening of her stay in Australia as we had no inkling of the romance between her and Sam. We spent the evening very pleasantly with them without becoming any the wiser about their relationship until a few weeks later when we learned of their marriage in New Zealand.

The Liberal Judaism movement of Australia started in Melbourne in 1930 and in Sydney the Liberal Congregation was formed in 1938. Cecil Luber was its first President and Rabbi Dr. H. Sanger of the Liberal Synagogue in Melbourne was its mentor. Cecil selected Rabbi Max Schenk of the United States for the post of Chief Minister of the Temple Emanuel in Sydney.

Max Schenk arrived with his wife Faye and their two children in September 1939, soon after the outbreak of World War II. From the outset Max and Faye endeared themselves to the members of their large congregation and they became very popular beyond the confines of Temple Emanuel. Rabbi Schenk was a fluent and forthright speaker and of a very friendly disposition. Faye Schenk was a charming and capable public speaker and a born leader. Both made friends easily and very soon made their impact on the community. Every Saturday afternoon was "open house" in their residence which was frequented by many congregants and personal friends.

Max and Faye were confirmed Zionists and possessed of a very deeply ingrained Jewish national consciousness. Rabbi Schenk made this fact known early to the leaders of Temple Emanuel and in sermons from the pulpit to his congregation. Throughout their stay in Australia their association with the Australian Zionist leadership and in particular with the Zionists of Sydney was most cordial and their services to the movement invaluable. Rabbi Schenk's contribution to Zionist public relations was especially notable. Following in the paths of Liberal Judaism, Temple Emanuel arranged an exchange of pulpits with clergy of various denominations. Max always included the Zionist credo in his addresses to Christian congregations. As an American he was invited by the Army authorities to speak at various camps of the Australian armed forces. He travelled frequently, visiting country army camps and he often chose the theme of Palestine for his subject, explaining the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate over Palestine. Because of his reputation as public speaker he was invited by numerous non-Jewish clubs and institutions in the city of Sydney and in the country towns of New South Wales and whenever possible he spoke on the situation in Palestine. As a citizen of the United States he felt uninhibited in criticising British policy and acts of injustice whenever the occasion for such criticism occurred. Sasha and I became close friends with Faye and Max and this endured long after they left Australia. I was privileged to have Max's confidence and unqualified support in the Zionist political struggle in later years.

As mentioned earlier, the Zionist Federation was transferred to Melbourne in August 1940 and Leon Jona resumed the posi-

tion of President. Two months later, in October, Norman Schureck was elected President of the New South Wales Zionist State Council, with myself Chairman, Horace Newman Honorary Treasurer and Sam Lipson Honorary Secretary. The same honorary officers were also the office-bearers of the Union of Sydney Zionists and were supported by strong teams on both executives, which fact augured well for the future Zionist movement of Australia.

In November 1940 Dr. J. M. Machover arrived from London in the company of Mr. Elsley Zeitlyn on behalf of the London Committee for the Relief of Polish Refugees and War Victims Fund. Dr. Machover, a veteran Zionist and an émigré of the Russian Revolution, had settled in London long before World War II. He was a friend of Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder and leader of the Revisionist Party, but he himself belonged to the "Jewish State" Party and was a member of the Zionist Actions Committee. On his arrival in Sydney he got in touch with Silva Steigrad who recommended him to me. I knew Dr. Machover by reputation and I was glad of the opportunity to make his acquaintance. Sasha and I extended our hospitality to him and I introduced him to the Zionist leadership of Sydney. Norman Schureck arranged an evening in his home to which leaders of the community were invited to meet Dr. Machover, on which occasion he gave an enlightening talk on the subject of the Jewish Agency's demand for the establishment of a Jewish Army. We invited Machover to join the Zionist Executive on which he served for the entire period of his stay in Australia during the war years. His sound counsel and political acumen were appreciated by all with whom he came in contact. At the beginning of his stay we often met to discuss Zionist affairs and I readily listened to his advice on Zionist policy and deferred to his views on problems confronting us in the Zionist movement. In later years he rendered invaluable service as Chairman of the Department for Zionist Policy.

Dr. Walter J. Fischel of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem arrived from Palestine in the month of November 1940 on an extensive lecture tour in Australia en route to the U.S.A. with the object of enlisting financial and moral support for this great institution of learning. Alroy M. Cohen, the President, and Braham Moses, the Honorary Secretary of the Society of Friends

of the Hebrew University, were instrumental in organising numerous lecture meetings at a most critical time of the war. Dr. Fischel had an attractive personality and his lectures were extremely popular amongst Jews and non-Jews. His talks on the scientific work of the University in aid of the war effort attracted much attention and were well attended. He remained in Australia several months generating much goodwill in the general community, especially in academic circles, for the *Yishuv* in Palestine.

The tragic fate of the Jewish refugees from the Nazi hell in Europe who were not allowed to enter the Jewish National Home was forcibly brought to our attention as a result of the tragedy of the S.S. *Patria* with its 1,900 passengers which blew up in the harbour of Haifa with the loss of 237 lives. It agitated and deeply moved the *Yishuv* and the Jewish people in the Allied countries and brought into clear focus, more than anything else, the terrible plight of the Jews in Europe. In the case of the *Patria*, because of widespread public protests in Great Britain and in America, the survivors of the explosion were allowed to remain in Palestine, whereas in all other cases the refugee ships were either turned back, or as in the case of the S.S. *Atlantic*, which carried seventeen hundred and fifty refugees, passengers were landed in Palestine to be interned and later deported to Mauritius. These tragic events and visits to Sydney by Jewish leaders of international stature stirred us to ever greater and more intense activity in the fields of public relations and practical Zionist endeavour. It caused me to spurn any personal embarrassment which such activity might have had in store for me.

CHAPTER

# 14

# *Ben Gurion's Visit*

As a consequence of the air battle raging over England at that time the air route between Palestine and the United States was diverted from the Atlantic to the Pacific via the Far East and Australia. The planes, mostly converted Lancaster bombers, landed at Mascot, the Sydney airport, for refuelling and overhauling and were grounded for a period from twelve to eighteen hours. Thus it was my good fortune to meet many Jewish and Zionist personalities who passed through Sydney, to some of whom our address had been given by the *Keren Hayesod* office in Jerusalem. In October 1940 Mr. S. Schoken, head of the famous Schoken Publishing House, accompanied by Miss Meierstein of the *Keren Hayesod* office, passed through Sydney on his way to the United States. Miss Meierstein telephoned late in the evening asking me to call on them at the Wentworth Hotel. As the plane was to take off again early next morning, I went to the hotel and stayed a considerable time with them. They brought me greetings from *Keren Hayesod* and told me of the latest developments in Palestine. A few weeks later Mrs. Schoken and her youngest son, also en route to the United States, stayed in Sydney several days whilst waiting for repairs to be made to their aircraft. Sasha and I extended them hospitality and in this way made their enforced stay somewhat more comfortable. I recall another passenger-visitor, the wife of Professor Zondek of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who called us during her short stay in Sydney.

By far the most important traveller passing through Sydney en route from America to Palestine was Mr. David Ben Gurion,

then Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, in early February 1941. The news of his arrival reached me only a few hours prior to the landing of the flying-boat travelling from Auckland, New Zealand, and in my capacity as Chairman of the N.S.W. Zionist State Council I hurriedly summoned the members of my executive for a meeting with him at the Hotel Australia. With several colleagues whom I could reach at such short notice, I went to the flying-boat base to await his arrival and eventually brought him to the hotel where the entire executive was assembled. It was a most interesting and instructive meeting with the great leader who inspired and deeply moved us. He spoke at some length about recent events in the *Yishuv* and of the Zionist plans and activities in Great Britain and the United States and answered many questions put to him by members of the executive. To my question: "What political action can we undertake in Australia in line with official policy of the World Zionist Executive?" he replied rather sharply that this was for us to decide locally.

At his request I took him for a short car drive to some of the beautiful harbour views of Sydney and after a brief rest brought him to the library of the Maccabean Hall where a meeting had been convened. The place was crowded and our distinguished visitor was given a tumultuous ovation. I opened the meeting with a few words of welcome and expressed our great delight and happiness at his presence, even though his stay with us was too short. Mr. Ben Gurion spoke for about an hour telling us of the latest political developments in the United States and in Palestine. He spoke in particular about the land transfer regulations of the White Paper of 1939 and the question of the Jewish Army and stated that the Jewish Agency was postponing public discussion of its disagreements and controversies with the British Government until victory was won. He spoke in glowing terms and with sincere admiration of the heroism and of the stoic qualities of the British people which had been demonstrated during the terrible air attacks on London and on the cities of the provinces. He also told the audience how when addressing a small group of Jews in Auckland, during his brief stop-over there, he had been deeply moved and greatly honoured when the New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr. Peter Fraser, came unheralded and unceremoniously to the meeting to bid

him welcome. Mr. Ben Gurion left for Singapore in the small hours of the next morning and his short visit remained a memorable episode in the life of Sydney Zionists.

The offer to recruit 147,000 volunteers in Palestine for a Jewish Army was made repeatedly to the British Government but was not accepted. The executive of the Zionist Federation in Sydney decided to make representations to the Prime Minister, Mr. (later Sir) Robert Menzies, to intercede with the British Government on our behalf. We asked Leon Jona, the President, to seek an appointment with the Prime Minister in Melbourne to ask him to receive a small deputation of our executive. Leon addressed a letter to the Prime Minister conveying our request to him instead of arranging a personal interview. Norman Schureck and I drove to Melbourne early in February 1941 to meet the executive and to prevail on Leon to ask for an appointment with the Acting Prime Minister as the Prime Minister meanwhile had left for London. The executive decided to consult first with the Zionist State Council and with communal leaders before asking for the appointment.

Later that month I approached the Honourable Sam Snider, M.L.C., of Sydney requesting him to arrange for a deputation to be received by Sir Arthur Fadden, the Acting Prime Minister. In March a deputation comprising the entire Zionist Executive of Sydney and the members of the N.S.W. Congregational Advisory Board was received by Sir Arthur Fadden, who listened attentively to Saul Symonds and Silva Steigrad, the leaders of the deputation. We submitted to him a resolution that had been carried at our meeting reading:

> "Whereas the World Zionist Organisation and the Jewish Agency for Palestine since the outbreak of war sought the approval of the British Government for the formation of a Jewish Army as a unit within the Armed Forces of the British Empire etc. . . ."

Sir Arthur was most sympathetic and pledged the support of the Australian Government to our claim for a Jewish Army and promised to submit our resolution to the Government of the United Kingdom. The publicity officer of the Prime Minister's Department released Sir Arthur's statement to the press and it was published throughout the Commonwealth.

In the same month the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the widely circulated and highly influential daily, published an interview favouring the formation of the Jewish Army. Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur W. Hyman in an article published in the *Hebrew Standard* expressed the view that a Jewish Army should be formed consisting of enlisted Jews from outside the British Commonwealth. The Zionist State Council announced its agreement in principle with this view but added that the Jewish units should also be open to British Jews if they preferred to serve under a Jewish flag. At that time the British Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, authorised the training of Palestinian units to be incorporated in the British Army. These units later served in the campaigns of North Africa and in the Western Desert with distinction.

In March Dr. Maurice Lazerson was appointed official representative of the World Jewish Congress. Sir Samuel Cohen received letters from Rabbi Dr. Stephen Wise and Dr. Nahum Goldman requesting his support for the setting up of a branch of the World Jewish Congress in Australia and Sir Samuel agreed to serve as its President. Dr. Lazerson asked me to join and this request was followed up by a letter from Dr. Goldman. I declined only because I was fully committed to the struggle for the Zionist cause and this was energy-consuming to a degree that left me little time for any other activity. At public meetings held in Sydney and Melbourne the Australian section of the World Jewish Congress was duly formed with Sir Samuel Cohen as President, Gerald de Vahl Davis as Chairman of the Sydney Branch and Alec Masel Chairman of the Melbourne Branch.

The Jewish Folk Centre also came into being at that time. It was founded by a small group of supporters of Dr. I. N. Steinberg's unsuccessful Kimberley Plan. This group inaugurated the publication of the monthly *Australian Jewish Forum* which, inspired by the idea of the Jewish territorial colonisation, was initiated and propagated in Australia by Dr. Steinberg of the Freeland League which had its headquarters in London, England. The battle for the furthering of the Zionist war aims had then to be fought on a three-pronged front including that of the anti-Zionists who had become vocal at the time.

In April 1941 we were encouraged by a short visit by Dr.

Bernard Joseph who was a member of the executive of the World Zionist Organisation and the Jewish Agency. Dr. Joseph was on his way to Palestine from New York and was able to stay only twenty-four hours. His visit paved the way for Dr. Michael Traub's mission on behalf of *Keren Hayesod* later that year.

The Zionist State Council of N.S.W. organised a mass rally at the Maccabean Hall with Cecil Luber in the chair, deputising for Norman Schureck, who was indisposed. I was featured as the main speaker and a resolution was passed pledging loyalty and unstinting support for the British war effort and appealing to the British Government to allow Jews to fight the common enemy. In July we initiated a vigorous drive for the sale of *Shkolim* for the year 5701, to demonstrate our numerical strength in the Australian Jewish community and to support our claims for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine in accordance with the programme adopted by the Zionist Conference held at the Biltmore Hotel in New York a few months earlier. The Herzl-Bialik memorial meeting organised by the Union of Sydney Zionists and addressed by Rabbi Porush adopted a resolution along these lines which was enthusiastically acclaimed by the large audience. On the following Saturday the ministers in all synagogues addressed their congregations on the significance of the *Shekel* as a "Declaration of Faith" in the future of a Jewish Palestine.

The tenth Australian Zionist Conference was held in Melbourne in mid-June 1941 at which forty-one delegates, mainly from N.S.W. and Victoria, attended. A large enthusiastic public meeting was held with a view to bringing the Zionist aspirations for a Jewish Commonwealth to the attention of the Australian Jewish community and especially to the Zionist rank-and-file. Silva Steigrad and I were the principal speakers. Alec Masel was elected President, Sam Wynn Honorary Treasurer and Benzion Patkin Honorary Secretary. The Conference elected fifteen members to form the executive of the Zionist Federation for the next term. The first Conference of the WIZO Federation which was opened by the President, Ida Wynn of Melbourne, was held in Sydney the following month.

In the same month a large transport of Nazi deportees from the German colonies in Palestine came to Australia and amongst

the police guarding the transport were several members of the Jewish Police Force in Palestine. The fact that Jews were entrusted with the task of guarding German Nazis created much excitement in the Jewish community of Australia. In Sydney a public reception was arranged for the Jewish police and this meeting was crowded. They remained in Sydney for a few days and were given a rousing welcome by all sections of our community.

CHAPTER

# 15

# *Michael Traub's Campaign*

EARLY IN SEPTEMBER 1941 Dr. Michael Traub arrived in Australia on a mission for the *Keren Hayesod.* At a late hour one evening I answered the telephone and listened to an agitated voice on the other end of the wire saying that he had arrived from Palestine by flying-boat and that he could not understand why I was not there to meet him. When he calmed down I learned that it was Dr. Michael Traub from the *Keren Hayesod,* Jerusalem, and that the day before he had sent a cable from Singapore informing me of his date of arrival in Sydney. Unfortunately this message never reached me and I had received no information whatever about Michael's impending arrival. However, I drove immediately to the flying-boat base where I found Michael waiting for me. From this very first meeting Michael and I became good friends and close collaborators in the cause of the *Keren Hayesod* in particular and in the Zionist cause in general during his stay in Australia.

Dr. Traub was a colourful personality, an experienced campaigner and a tremendous driving force, whose quality of leadership was recognised by large sections of the Australian Jewish community. Soon after his arrival, the annual meeting of the Union of Sydney Zionists took place and Norman Schureck retired from the Presidency and Philip Moses was elected in his place. Michael lost no time in organising a strong *Keren Hayesod* Campaign Committee with me as Chairman. He drove himself very hard in preparation for the appeal and transmitted his zeal and enthusiasm to the members of the committee. He did most

of the publicity work himself and the campaign got the best press coverage we were ever able to obtain.

Apart from the fund-raising activities, Dr. Traub urged us to continue the public relations effort in favour of the Jewish Army plan as well as in advancing Zionist aims for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine after the war was won by the Allied nations. We asked Alec Masel, President of the Zionist Federation, to arrange for a Zionist deputation, with Michael Traub as spokesman, to be received by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Curtin, who, as leader of the Australian Labour Party, had taken office only one month earlier. The deputation was received by the Prime Minister the day before the official opening in Sydney of the *Keren Hayesod* "Victory Drive" in Australia.

Michael and I travelled from Sydney to Canberra where we met Alec Masel, who came from Melbourne to introduce the deputation to the Prime Minister. After waiting for several hours in the ante-room of the Prime Minister's office in the House of Parliament and after a warning was given us that because of urgent war business Mr. Curtin could only give us fifteen minutes of his time, we were conducted into the Prime Minister's spacious chamber. Alec spoke a few words of introduction whereupon Michael let loose a flood of words in the most rapid speech I have ever experienced. He presented the Zionist case with particular emphasis on the Jewish Army postulate. He also told the Prime Minister of his visit to South Africa earlier in the year where he was received by General Smuts, the Prime Minister of South Africa, who was a great friend and supporter of the Zionist cause. Mr. Curtin listened attentively and when Michael concluded he said that he was in constant consultation with "Winston" the British Prime Minister, and that he would talk to him in support of a Jewish Army. But, for our work to be effective, he advised us to request General Smuts, whose envoy happened to be in Canberra, to join him and Mr. Peter Fraser, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, in a *démarche* to the British Government on our behalf. We left the Prime Minister's office after forty-five minutes, most gratified with the result of our interview.

The "Victory Drive" of *Keren Hayesod* was launched in mid-November 1941 at a banquet in the Hotel Australia with Sir Samuel Cohen as Chairman. Amongst the dignitaries present

were the Hon. C. E. Martin, State Attorney-General, representing the Premier of N.S.W., Mr. (later Sir) William McKell, the Hon. Abram Landa and Alec Masel of Melbourne, President of the Zionist Federation. Messages of greeting and good wishes for the occasion were received from Dr. Chaim Weizmann, Professor Albert Einstein, Rabbi Dr. Stephen Wise and from many other world Jewish leaders. It was a highly successful function and was attended by many newcomers who had arrived only recently after fleeing from the Nazi terror in Central European countries.

Michael was a dynamic speaker and the drive was continued with many meetings arranged by organisations and in private homes. However, with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941 the campaign slowed down considerably and no further fund-raising meetings were held until early 1942 when the "Victory Drive" was resumed. I accompanied Michael on numerous visits to private Jewish homes and offices. These visits were extremely tedious but brought some good results. Michael was untiring and did not spare himself in his onerous task of bringing his mission for the *Keren Hayesod* in Sydney to a successful conclusion and at the same time propagating Zionist aspirations for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine.

During his stay in Australia Michael became involved in a public controversy with Sir Isaac Isaacs, at one time Governor-General of Australia. Sir Isaac had been approached by Dr. Maurice Lazerson to lend his name to the senior position of the Australian section of the World Jewish Congress. Sir Isaac asked for a written statement of the aims and objectives of the World Jewish Congress and was given a printed booklet published by the organisation. On finding that amongst its aims was also the support of the Zionist cause and its efforts for a Jewish Palestine and that it claimed to speak for world Jewry, Sir Isaac became hostile and flatly refused to be associated with it. Obviously inspired by Sir Isaac Isaacs, the *Hebrew Standard*, a Sydney Jewish weekly, in its editorials and articles which appeared during July and August 1941 repudiated the claim or right of the World Jewish Congress to speak in the name of Australian Jewry or any other Jewry. Gerald de Vahl Davis, as Chairman of the Sydney section, replied in long articles and

claimed that the World Jewish Congress *was* authorised to speak in the name of world Jewry including the Australian Jewish community. In further articles published in the issues of August and September the *Hebrew Standard* posed the question: "Is Jewish nationality compatible with British or Australian nationality?" and this provoked a most heated controversy in the Jewish press of Australia.

Dr. Michael Traub, in his public addresses, stressed the terrible tragedy of the Jewish people in dispersion and emphasised the extent to which the position of the Jewish people had been made catastrophic in the Hitler era as a result of "Jewish homelessness". Sir Isaac Isaacs returned to the attack on Zionism in an article under the heading "Extreme Zionism—a Disclaimer and an Appeal" which was published under his name in the *Hebrew Standard* of 20th November 1941. In the same issue it published a detailed three-page account of the opening function of the *Keren Hayesod* "Victory Drive" which raised the amount of £9,000, as well as a full-page rejoinder to Sir Isaac's article by Horace B. Newman as the Secretary of the Zionist State Council for N.S.W. Dr. Aaron Patkin of Melbourne also replied to Sir Isaac in a well reasoned article under the title "Zionism Sober or Extreme".

Michael Traub remained in Sydney for over six months, during which time he delivered about sixty addresses at public meetings and in private homes. These included many lectures given to non-Jewish audiences on a variety of Zionist topics and in particular on the problem of a Jewish Army and our desire for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. Prior to his departure for Melbourne, accompanied by the Hon. Abram Landa, Silva Steigrad, Horace Newman and myself, Michael was received by the Premier of N.S.W., Mr. (later Sir) William McKell. In a straightforward and enthusiastic talk he presented the Zionist case to the Premier. As a result of an interview Michael had with its editor-in-chief, the *Sydney Morning Herald* in a sub-editorial entitled "Jewry after the War" came out in favour of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. It was the first and only occasion that this, the oldest Australian daily, supported Zionism as its official policy and the editorial provoked favourable comment from many of its readers. Michael made a lasting impact on the Sydney Jewish community and before leaving for Mel-

bourne late in March 1942 the Zionist State Council gave him a farewell dinner at which all sections of the community were represented. In a record number of farewell speeches his praises were sung by all: it was the most enthusiastic tribute ever paid to a visitor from abroad.

On completion of the highly successful *Keren Hayesod* Campaign in Melbourne and Adelaide Dr. Traub proceeded to conduct the campaign in Brisbane. On arrival there he found the committee sceptical as to the prospects and as he considered them unready to launch the appeal he sent me an urgent call to come to Brisbane to assist in the campaign. I responded to his call and the psychological effect of my appearance in the northern capital was to stimulate the members of the committee, and in particular the President, Mr. Freeman, to a greater effort with very good results.

On Sunday, 22nd March, the annual meeting of the Zionist State Council was held and I, as Chairman, gave the report of activities during the fifteen months of Norman Schureck's term as President. It was during this period that the State Council established its permanent office with a part-time secretary and a typist, paid for by Philip Moses, Cecil Luber, Norman and myself. Norman declined to nominate for office and I was elected President, with Rabbis Israel Porush, Max Schenk and E. M. Levy, Vice-Presidents, Horace B. Newman, Honorary Secretary, and Bernard Hammerman, Honorary Treasurer. It was at a most crucial period that the mantle of Zionist leadership in the largest State of the Commonwealth of Australia fell on my shoulders.

CHAPTER

# 16

# *Australia-Palestine Committees*

FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE of Great Britain we initiated action at this time to establish Australia-Palestine Committees in the various States of the Commonwealth to consist of prominent citizens, Jewish and non-Jewish, for the purpose of bringing Zionist aims to the attention of the general public. Bishop C. V. Pilcher and Mr. (later Sir) Ian Clunies Ross, head of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, agreed to be Chairmen of the committee in Sydney. In the following months an all-out effort was made to increase the membership and to enhance the importance of the committee and we succeeded in getting members of the N.S.W. Government including the Premier, Mr. (later Sir) William McKell, the Attorney-General, Mr. C. E. Martin, the brothers Lazzarini, several other members of Parliament and such distinguished citizens as Lady Fairfax and Sir Francis Anderson.

Similarly, a most representative Pro-Palestine Committee was formed in Melbourne, mainly through the efforts of Michael Traub and Shlomo Lowy. It included the Premier of Victoria, the Lord Mayor, the Catholic Archbishop, Mr. P. J. Clarey, M.P., President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and many other prominent personalities, with Professor H. A. Woodruff as Chairman. Michael and Shlomo, each in his turn, whilst visiting the smaller States and New Zealand, enlisted the support of many non-Jewish leaders for the Zionist aims in Palestine. We considered it important to enlist the support of Labour leaders who would be willing to join the committee and I asked Mr. Jack Hook, who had returned recently from military

service in the Middle East and Palestine, to help us. To our disappointment we found that because of ignorance and preconceived views there existed in Labour circles prejudice and even suspicion of the Jew as a capitalist and therefore hostile to Labour. Through the assistance of Jack Hook, Dr. Maurice Lazerson, the Australian representative of the World Jewish Congress, and other speakers were invited to address several important Labour Leagues as well as a meeting of the Trades and Labour Council to explain the Jewish case and Zionist aspirations in Palestine.

Rabbi Max Schenk's lectures on Palestine were very popular and much sought after. These and similar activities paved the way for our political work in the years ahead, especially in the crucial and historic years of the pre-State era from 1945 to 1948.

Because of these efforts Zionist sentiment in general grew in intensity at that time and in the following months the Zionist Executive held regular weekly meetings and generated much activity in all spheres of Zionist endeavour. A Zionist Youth Council was formed and was represented on the executive of the Zionist State Council. As far as fund-raising was concerned there was continuous activity in Sydney and Melbourne. Whilst Michael Traub campaigned in Victoria, Dr. Shlomo Lowy came to Sydney to organise traditional and "special project" work for the Jewish National Fund. Mrs. Friedl Levi and her committee were very active on behalf of Youth Aliyah and Mrs. Ida Wynn of Melbourne paid frequent visits to Sydney doing excellent organisational and fund-raising work for WIZO. She was ably assisted in these efforts by Mrs. Rieke Cohen of Sydney. Michael Traub continued with great success in his "Victory Drive" for the *Keren Hayesod* Campaign in Melbourne. I was indeed fortunate to have stood at the helm of the Zionist ship in N.S.W. when the Zionist image was at the zenith of its popularity, engendering great enthusiasm amongst all sections of our community which found expression in its thriving activity.

The tragic news of the sinking of the *Struma* in the Black Sea on 25th March 1942 with the loss of 762 lives came as a severe shock to the Jews of Palestine and to the Jewish communities everywhere. Acting in accordance with international usage, the Turkish authorities did not allow the people fleeing the Nazi terror to land because the British Administration in

Palestine refused them entry into the "Promised Land". It was a terrible indictment of the MacDonald White Paper of 1939 restricting Jewish immigration into Palestine, and Jews as well as enlightened non-Jews protested vigorously against such treatment of the Nazi victims. We in Australia received some time later the full blast of the indignation which swept through the Jewish free world and on receiving the full particulars of the tragedy the Zionist State Council of N.S.W. decided to hold a mass protest meeting on 5th July to coincide with the Herzl-Bialik memorial evening.

At this time I received a call one morning from Max Schenk to say that Bishop Pilcher had telephoned him and in conversation told him that he intended to preach on the Sunday morning at a special service on an important Christian occasion, linking the text of his sermon with the Balfour Declaration and its repudiation, as a consequence of the policy enunciated in the MacDonald White Paper. Max and I decided to attend the service in the Anglican Cathedral to listen to Bishop Pilcher's sermon. We arrived fairly early and occupied seats in one of the front pews of this magnificent church. The service was attended by the State Governor and other civic dignitaries. We listened with deep excitement to the Bishop's forthright and courageous indictment of the British authorities in Palestine for their inhuman treatment of Hitler's victims. After the service, we met the Bishop in one of the vestries of the Cathedral and we thanked him for his friendly and sympathetic stand in this vital struggle for Jewish rights. The Bishop became a personal friend of Rabbi Schenk and myself, assisting us greatly in our public activity and in the fight for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine.

We announced "the *Struma*-Herzl-Bialik meeting" in advertisements in the two Jewish weekly papers and mentioned that our guest speakers would be His Excellency the "Minister Plenipotentiary of the Polish Government in Exile" Dr. Gruszka and the Hon. Camilla Wedgwood, the daughter of Lord Wedgwood and principal of the Women's College at the University of Sydney. Sir Isaac Isaacs, on reading our advertisement, wrote a lengthy and incisive letter to the editor of the *Hebrew Standard* in which he at first commiserated with the *Struma* victims, expressing his sorrow at the loss of many lives, and

went on to blame the tragedy on the "extreme Zionists" for contravening the British policy in Palestine. He proceeded to quote Malcolm MacDonald's statement at the time of issuing the White Paper in 1939 restricting Jewish immigration into Palestine that "he greatly admired Jewish achievements in the country but that the British Government had the duty to protect Arab rights alike as Jewish rights". Sir Isaac went on to admonish Dr. Gruszka, as the representative of a foreign and Allied Government, not to criticise the Government of the country to which he was accredited. Sir Isaac asserted that the protest was not *to* but *against* the British Government. Not satisfied with the publication of his letter Sir Isaac asked Alfred Harris, the editor of the *Hebrew Standard*, to intervene on his behalf with Horace Newman who had signed the advertisements as Secretary of the Zionist State Council. Later he sent long telegrams to Horace insisting that the meeting be cancelled.

The protest meeting was held as advertised and the Maccabean Hall was packed to capacity. Dr. Gruszka sent an apology to the meeting for his non-attendance and a resolution was adopted protesting against British policy in Palestine and expressing our shock and deep sorrow at the loss of so many lives in such tragic circumstances as a result of this policy. The resolution moved by Rabbi Dr. Porush was seconded by the Hon. Camilla Wedgwood and supported by all the leaders of the Jewish community present at the meeting and was passed enthusiastically by the large assembly. Israel Horwitz, head of a publishing company and member of the Zionist Executive, published in the *Hebrew Standard* a sharp rebuttal to Sir Isaac Isaacs' letter.

Before the din of this heated battle of words died down Sir Isaac went over to the attack once more. A few days after the *Struma* meeting Julius Stone, world-renowned jurist and Professor of International Law at the University of Sydney, delivered an address to the Union of Sydney Zionists on "Where we Stand" in which he traced the origin of the Balfour Declaration leading up to the White Paper of 1939 and pleading for justice and the commonsense demand for a Jewish Army. In an article of very great length Sir Isaac severely criticised Professor Stone, taking him to task especially for his remark (it

was actually Churchill's) that the White Paper of 1939 was "a breach and repudiation of the Balfour Declaration" which he saw as a grave and unmerited indictment of Great Britain, "our staunchest friend, benefactor and hope".

Whilst this public controversy with Professor Stone was not yet ended, Sir Isaac took issue in further letters to the editor of the *Hebrew Standard* with Dr. Maurice Lazerson for an address the latter gave to the Trades and Labour Council of N.S.W. as a result of which that Council adopted a resolution of sympathy with the Jewish people, and expressed support for the Jews, as the "national ally" of the democracies, to have a seat at the Peace Conference together with other Allied nations. Sir Isaac sharply attacked Dr. Lazerson for his appearance at the Council's meeting. He went on to praise the Labour movement for its humanitarian sentiments but objected to the concept of the Jewish people as a "national ally" of the democracies whose representatives should have a seat at a Peace Conference with the other nations. Sir Isaac asserted that there does not exist a Jewish nation and therefore it cannot have a representative to sit with other nations. The Jew, according to Sir Isaac, is the national of the country of his birth or of whose citizenship he has adopted.

Sir Isaac continued with a broadside attack on Michael Traub in Melbourne on the occasion of an address given there to the League of Nations Union. Despite the high esteem in which Sir Isaac was held, his repeated attacks on "extreme Zionism" had little support and there was only a handful of people throughout Australia who followed his anti-Zionist line, not always out of conviction but sometimes because they deemed it improper to oppose or challenge his authority. As an aftermath of this unfortunate public controversy, in July 1942, after the *Struma* meeting the Zionist State Council was visited by an officer from the Criminal Investigation Branch who wished to see the President. Together with Israel Horwitz I called next day on the Police Department. We were interrogated by two officers who asked us about the *Struma* meeting, and what were our aims and objectives. We were also asked to supply the names and addresses of our executive of the Council. I promised them a list of our members and went on to tell them about Dr. Herzl, the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate over Palestine.

I stated that our aims were to ensure that the present British Government fulfilled the promise given to the Jews, i.e. to carry out the terms of the mandate enabling the Jews fleeing from the Nazi inferno in Europe to enter Palestine. Furthermore, that it was our object that the Jews of Palestine be allowed to join in the fight against Hitler as a Jewish unit within the British armed forces. I spoke at some length and when I concluded the two C.I.B. men left us for a few moments and on returning were followed by about a dozen other officers who seemed to be the entire staff of the C.I.B. who were present at the time. I was asked to repeat my story to them all. This I did and it was the last we heard from the department.

Out of the welter of ideas and the widely publicised exchanges between Sir Isaac Isaacs and the leaders of the community, the Zionist image grew in prestige and in importance. This was reflected in the fact that the Presidents and Chief Ministers of the three large congregations of Sydney as well as Presidents of the important non-Zionist organisations, such as the National Council for Jewish Women, the Young Men's Hebrew Association and the Sydney section of the World Jewish Congress were then active affiliates of the Zionist State Council. At the annual meeting of the Union of Sydney Zionists, Philip Moses, already gravely ill, was in the chair. Saul Symonds, Chairman of the Bureau of Jewish Affairs and of the Provisional Committee of the Jewish Board of Deputies, was elected President. In the same month, the first meeting of the newly established *Haoved*, a Labour Zionist organisation, was held and was attended by many non-Jewish Labour leaders including members of the N.S.W. Labour Government. Mr. Zanders, an old Labour Zionist identity, was its first Chairman, and E. Heller, a newcomer from Europe, who later settled in Israel, was its mentor and guiding spirit. Thus we were encouraged to continue with our crusade for a Jewish Army and to propagate the establishment, after victory by the Allies, of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine.

The Bureau of Jewish Affairs which was established earlier that year as the public relations committee of the Jewish Advisory Board asked the Zionist State Council for representatives to join the committee and Norman Schureck, Horace Newman and myself were appointed. On the initiative of Dr. Lowy,

a J.N.F. Teachers' Committee was formed to bring Palestine within the orbit of the Hebrew classes in the synagogues and elsewhere. A proposal for a deputation to wait on Dr. H. V. Evatt, the Commonwealth Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs, was discussed and the Zionist Federation instructed me to arrange it. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration was celebrated at a crowded and enthusiastic meeting on 2nd November 1942. The Right Rev. Bishop Pilcher and Mrs. Lucy Woodcock, Vice-President of the Teachers' Federation, were the principal speakers. The spirit of Zionism in that period pervaded not only the Jewish community of Sydney but also the Jewish communities in all States of Australia.

After the treacherous attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 the Japanese Army made a rapid advance through the jungles of South-East Asia to capture Singapore from the British and the Australian armed forces. The Japanese Air Force succeeded in dealing a knock-out blow to the British Fleet guarding the approaches to this, for Australia, vitally important gateway. The enemy was thus able to establish his bases on islands in the Timor Sea and its Air Force caused the first heavy destruction to the northern and western strategic defence positions of the Australian continent. Sydney, the most important sea port, expected an assault by the Japanese Navy on its shore defences and indeed some of the enemy's midget submarines managed one night to slip through to intrude into the inner harbour.

In these critical months in 1942, before the battle of the Coral Sea in May, when Japanese naval power suffered its first setback, the numerical strength of the Zionist Executive and of the Zionist State Council was diminished. Like many other Australian citizens advanced in years beyond the age group for compulsory military service, several members of the executive and of the Council volunteered for some kind of war service. Horace Newman, Harold Bloom and Gerald de Vahl Davis, members of the executive, joined the Voluntary Defence Corps (V.D.C.). Norman Schureck volunteered for the full-time job of taking charge of several amenity units for officers and soldiers on leave in Sydney. Other leading elderly members of the executive like Dr. Machover and Silva Steigrad took up residence

in the country near Sydney. There were several others, including myself, who did part-time vital civilian war work, but living near the city were thus able to devote time to the service of the Zionist cause.

As President of the Zionist State Council I was called upon not only to perform tasks of specific Zionist interest but also to take part in activities concerning the general Jewish community. In addition to holding the position of *Keren Hayesod* Commissioner in Australia I was also the Chairman of the campaigns in N.S.W. for the Jewish National Fund. I took an active part in every other Zionist fund-raising campaign in New South Wales, including those which were conducted by WIZO, by Youth Aliyah and by the Friends of the Hebrew University, which earned me the reputation of the "Zionist fund-raiser *par excellence*". The Zionist Council then occupied a small, two-room office at No. 3 Castlereagh Street, next door to the office of Philip Moses. Our staff in 1942 consisted of a junior, non-Jewish, female stenographer, and I spent regular hours daily at the office. The many calls made on me heavily taxed my physical and mental energies. I recall one occasion when the Japanese Army was expected to invade the Australian continent, a leading woman Zionist came to see me at the Zionist office suggesting that I form a committee for the protection of the honour of Jewish women against the Japanese soldiers. My visitor was serious in putting forward this suggestion as a Zionist duty.

At this time, in March 1942, an open letter to the Jews of N.S.W., signed by eighteen leading members of a variety of Jewish organisations headed by Dr. I. Steinberg, was published in the Jewish press proposing strongly a Jewish Democratic Community (*Kehila*) whose leaders should be elected by popular franchise. This open letter was a challenge to the authority of the Jewish Advisory Boards in the various States whose members were appointed by the congregations and leading organisations. After a public controversy lasting several months, the N.S.W. Jewish Advisory Board decided on the formation of a Jewish Board of Deputies and a committee was set up for the drafting of a constitution. The Zionist State Council was represented on the committee by Dr. Machover, Horace and myself. Dr. Machover who had had personal experience in London of

the Board of Deputies of British Jews, was most helpful in the task of preparing a draft constitution. The final composition of the N.S.W. Board of Deputies was a compromise, in that its members were partly elected by the synagogues, organisations and institutions and partly by general franchise. The draft constitution was adopted in March 1943 and the provisional committee proceeded to arrange the election of deputies. There were protracted discussions as to whether the Zionist State Council composed of affiliated organisations and without direct membership should qualify for representation on the Board of Deputies. It was finally agreed that any purchaser of a *Shekel* distributed by the Zionist Council should be entitled to claim membership of the Council for purposes of representation on the Board. It was not until 1944, however, that the final form of the constitution was drafted and Zionist representation accounted for 45 per cent of the total number of deputies. Soon afterwards Boards of Deputies were established in Victoria and in some of the smaller States and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (E.C.A.J.) was established from representatives elected by all Jewish Boards of Deputies. The E.C.A.J. constitutes the supreme organ of Australian Jewry and is recognised as such by the Jews of Australia as well as by Government authorities and the public at large.

The news of the diabolical methods of murdering European Jews employed by the Nazis reached Australia late in 1942. This lengthened the shadow which had fallen over free Jewish communities everywhere. In December, synagogues throughout the Commonwealth declared a day of fasting and prayer for the victims of the terrible holocaust. The Sydney executive of the Zionist Federation Department for Zionist Policy called an emergency conference of all sections of the Jewish community to consider the overwhelming tragedy of European Jewry. A small committee was appointed to formulate a plan of action to be undertaken by the Australian Jewish community with Dr. Machover as convenor. Early in February 1943, on learning the sad and heart-rendering news that ninety-three girls of Warsaw had committed suicide in preference to being dishonoured, a second emergency conference of Jewish citizens was called and the United Emergency Committee for European Jewry was

established with Dr. Machover as Chairman. Similar committees were formed in the other States of Australia.

Whilst the Zionist State Council was deeply committed to the vital task of public relations it was also mindful of the urgent need for more immediate practical work in Zionist fund-raising and for the better organisation of the local Jewish community.

Dr. Shlomo Lowy of the Jewish National Fund, Jerusalem, made arrangements to follow the *Keren Hayesod* Campaign in Australia with an immediate drive on behalf of the Jewish National Fund. At the same time, Friedl Levi, the official representative of Youth Aliyah, and Ida Wynn, President of Australian WIZO, organised committees in Sydney and in Melbourne to launch appeals for Youth Aliyah and WIZO institutions in Palestine respectively. The Zionist Councils in N.S.W. and Victoria in collaboration with the Zionist Federation Executive devoted much time in an effort to prevent the disastrous effect of three Zionist organisations having simultaneous appeals for funds. The problem caused us deep concern and it was long and earnestly debated whether there should be separate appeals at different periods or whether a combined drive of the three important institutions could be arranged.

After discussing the issue of multiple Zionist appeals running concurrently, which would surely damage the Zionist image in the community, it was finally decided that Youth Aliyah and the J.N.F. should have separate appeals and that Youth Aliyah and WIZO should hold their appeal early in 1943, to be followed by the J.N.F. "SOS Campaign". Consequently the Children and Youth Aliyah Appeal in Sydney was launched at the end of January at a public dinner presided over by Mrs. Julius Stone and Mr. Silva Steigrad. A large and representative committee was organised by Friedl Levi, the capable Australian representative of Youth Aliyah. The campaign publicity was based on the humanitarian aspect and the appeal was supported by the Zionist State Council from behind the scenes. The opening dinner was attended by the Lord Mayor, Alderman J. Bartley, Dr. Silvester Gruszka, Bishop Pilcher, the Hon. Camilla Wedgwood and many other Jewish and non-Jewish personalities. Ida Wynn, Federal President of WIZO, was the guest speaker and made an impassioned appeal. The drive was conducted vigorously at parlour meetings in private homes with gratifying

results. This campaign created considerable public interest and was invaluable from the point of view of public relations.

When the Youth Aliyah drive was well under way, Dr. Lowy came to Sydney to organise the appeal committee and to draw up plans for the J.N.F. "SOS Campaign". The committee was formed with Philip Moses, ill in bed, as President, myself Chairman, Dr. Fanny Reading and Rieke Cohen, Vice-Chairmen. Our plans for the appeal were well advanced when an announcement was made that the Commonwealth Government promised to issue entry permits for one hundred and fifty children from Europe. The Australian Jewish Welfare Society publicised the intention to launch an appeal for £50,000 of which £27,000 was given as the target for Sydney. Early in April 1943 a mass meeting was held, presided over by Sir Samuel Cohen, calling upon the Jewish community to support the appeal of the Welfare Society to bring the children to Australia. The proposed time for the appeal was the month of May which was also the time planned for the opening of the J.N.F. drive. The prospect of two major appeals running simultaneously caused deep concern to the campaign committee of the J.N.F. and together with two other colleagues I was delegated to meet the leaders of the Welfare Society to discuss the position. We pointed out that as our plans were well advanced and the permits for the one hundred and fifty children were only expected to be issued at a later stage, probably after the end of the war, our appeal should be given priority. Our request was not agreed to by the Welfare Society and the two appeals were conducted at the same time. I attended the meeting of the Welfare Society when the announcement of the children's permits and the launching of an immediate appeal was made and to my surprise and embarrassment Sir Samuel, who had previously agreed to be the Chairman of the J.N.F. campaign, called on me to speak in support of the Welfare Society's appeal, to be held in the same period. At first I declined but Sir Samuel challenged me to come to the platform. In my capacity as President of the Zionist Council I pledged full support for the Welfare Society's appeal but I also pointed out that the J.N.F. campaign for which preparations had been made several months before was to be launched early in May. I suggested, therefore, that the appeal of the Welfare Society should follow the J.N.F. appeal

in about two months' time. Sir Samuel and the Chairman of the Welfare Society, Israel Green, vehemently disagreed and I returned to my seat forthwith. It was symptomatic of the spirit of the time, and the Sydney Jewish community is to be commended on the fact, that the financial results of both campaigns were exceedingly gratifying. For several months large advertisements and extensive publicity for the two appeals appeared side by side in our weekly newspapers both of which were equally supported by all sections of the Jewish community. The income of the J.N.F. "SOS Campaign" throughout Australia and New Zealand was earmarked for the purchase of an area of land in Palestine to be named after General Sir John Monash, Commander-in-Chief of the Australian armed forces in World War I.

The J.N.F. "SOS Campaign" was officially opened at a public function held at the Paddington Town Hall with myself as Chairman. The success of the drive was due greatly to the tremendous effort and hard work done by Dr. Lowy who remained in Sydney until September organising parlour meetings and making individual calls for financial support. He was assisted by an enthusiastic band of volunteers until he left for Melbourne to launch the appeal in Victoria. A farewell function given to Dr. Lowy prior to leaving Sydney coincided with the silver wedding anniversary of Horace Newman and his wife Diddy as well as with my fiftieth birthday. Tributes were paid to us by the very large assembly.

The Zionist State Council played an important part in these fund-raising efforts and its activities grew in scope as time went on. The question of obtaining the services of a general secretary was discussed for a considerable time and Rev. W. Katz of the North Shore congregation, which was then very small, was appointed early in August as part-time secretary. Rev. Katz was then battling to establish the North Shore congregation where he initiated the holding of Divine Services in a private hall. In order to carry out this self-imposed task he sought to eke out a livelihood by getting part-time employment with the N.S.W. Jewish Board of Education and later as secretary of the Zionist State Council. He had the satisfaction of seeing his labours well rewarded in the remarkable growth of the North Shore congregation which today occupies an important place in the life of the Sydney Jewish community.

The Department for Zionist Policy of the Zionist Federation, established in June, 1941 and reconstituted late in 1942 under the capable and diligent chairmanship of Dr. Machover, did most useful public relations work within and outside the Jewish community. He was ably supported by his colleagues on the executive which included Horace Newman, Rabbi Schenk, Silva Steigrad, Gerald de Vahl Davis and myself. Dr. Traub was also very active during his stay in Australia and was for a short time co-Chairman in charge of the work done in Melbourne. Professor Julius Stone and the Hon. Abram Landa, then a member of the N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, rendered invaluable service in a consultative capacity. Late in August the Zionist State Council gave a dinner in honour of the N.S.W. section of the Australia-Palestine Committee at which Bishop Pilcher presided and the address by Dr. Machover was followed by the showing of a film "A Day in Dagania". Those present were: Prof. I. Clunies Ross, Rev. Dr. G. W. Thatcher, the Most Rev. Archbishop Mowll, Rev. Mr. E. J. Davidson, Rector of St. James' Church, the Hon. J. Lazzarini, Assistant Minister in N.S.W. Government, the Hon. Camilla Wedgwood, Principal of the Women's College of the Sydney University, Miss Lucy Woodcock, Vice-President, Teachers' Federation, the Hon. Colin Tannock, M.L.C., W. Sheehan, M.L.A., W. Davies, M.L.A., A. Morgan, M.P., Rev. Dr. Dart, President, Council of Churches of N.S.W., Right Rev. S. Richardson, Moderator of Presbyterian Church, Lady Anderson, Prof. Tasman Lovell, Prof. G. G. Nicholson, Prof. W. Bland, Prof. H. Sutton, Prof. R. Sedley, Miss R. Board, President, National Council of Women, Mr. Jack Hook, Major A. Conlon, and many others. A suitable resolution was adopted asking that the White Paper should be repealed and that Palestine be opened for Jewish immigration. It was a very successful function, highlighting the Zionist public relations effort.

The Union of Sydney Zionists at its annual meeting held late in August elected Horace Newman as President. In the same month Paul Ungar was elected Chairman of the J.N.F. Blue Boxes, the important traditional activity of the fund. Horace was also President of the J.N.F. in N.S.W. at the time. Both of these colleagues and close personal friends were destined to occupy positions of leadership in the Australian Zionist move-

ment and in the Federal J.N.F. of Australia. Horace and Paul earned the respect and esteem of the Jewish and general Australian community for their integrity and devoted service to every branch of communal and civic endeavour. Horace, born in Scotland, was of rather a dour personality and possessed a highly developed sense of fair play whilst Paul, a native of Vienna, had the attributes of great personal charm and of a cultured demeanour. As such they left their mark on the community in their different ways.

CHAPTER

# 17

# *Professor Stone Replies*

THE UNITED EMERGENCY COMMITTEE for European Jewry published in the *Hebrew Standard* of 30th September 1943 a statement in which it was noted that at the Bermuda Conference on Refugees held in April no mention was made of helping to save Jewish refugees or of recommending that at least a substantial number be allowed to enter Palestine. It went on to quote from statements made by distinguished members of the House of Lords criticising the British delegation which attended the Conference for its passive attitude on this issue. In the first October issue of the *Hebrew Standard* there appeared a very lengthy letter to the editor from Sir Isaac Isaacs in which he defended the policy of the British Government in Palestine. At the same time he pointed to some omissions by the Emergency Committee in their quotations from statements from members of the House of Lords. In the following issues of the journal during October and November Sir Isaac published a series of articles on "Political Zionism" in which he bitterly attacked the "pestilential doctrines" of Zionism and made violent accusations against Australian Zionists, branding them as being "disloyal citizens" of the country of their choice. During the month of November, Sir Isaac proceeded to publish these views in the general press of Melbourne. These damaging accusations coming as they did from one of the most distinguished fellow Jewish citizens caused the deepest indignation and shock in the ranks of the Australian Jewish community.

The Jewish Advisory Boards, in an act unprecedented in the

history of Australian Jewry, adopted in November a resolution which it communicated to the Australian Government. It read:

"Be it resolved that Boards composed of elected Representatives of Jewry fully conscious of their responsibilities draw the attention of the Commonwealth Government to the perilous state of European Jewry and urge the Government to use its best endeavours to help in the solution of the problems of the Jewish victims of Fascism in the following ways:

1. By providing a policy of immigration into the country that shall be liberal and wide-visioned as the needs of the country demand.
2. By joining with the Labour and Liberal Parties of the United Kingdom and with the leaders of public opinion in the United States of America to denounce the MacDonald White Paper aimed to limit and very soon—in direct violation of the Balfour Declaration of 1917—to stop Jewish immigration into Palestine.
3. By participation in any international scheme for the provision of relief to the European survivors of Nazi atrocities and the sending of food and clothing also into the Ghettos of Poland and other countries wherever it is possible to send such relief.
4. By urging the immediate establishment by the United Nations of an International Agency which is to concern itself exclusively with the tremendous problems arising from the present position of European Jewry."

Sir Isaac Isaacs continued with his denunciations of "political Zionism" in the columns of the *Hebrew Standard* and denounced any expression of protest by Jews and non-Jews against British determination to prevent by all means Jewish immigration to Palestine. It is noteworthy that despite his distinction as an Australian of the Jewish faith Sir Isaac's threats and attacks although they caused the Jewish community great embarrassment, had no adverse effect. Meetings of protest were always crowded, demonstrating Jewish solidarity with the unfortunate victims of the Nazis, and no sections of the Jewish community or the many groups of enlightened non-Jews were deterred from supporting the Zionist claims for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine.

After nearly three years of unbridled attacks and terrible imputations by Sir Isaac Isaacs in his relentless efforts to stifle our freedom to give voice to our bitter disappointment with the grossly unjust policy of the British Government vis-à-vis Jewish claims concerning Palestine, Professor Julius Stone felt impelled to counter Sir Isaac's "denunciations" of his fellow Jews. In a series of open letters published in the *Hebrew Standard* in the months of November-December 1943 Professor Stone questioned at first the authority by which Sir Isaac took it upon himself to speak in the name of Australian Jews. He then proceeded in a most brilliant analysis to destroy Sir Isaac's thesis on the issue of the legality of the White Paper of 1939, and to point out the "inconsistencies" and "doubtful methods" of Sir Isaac's arguments. Side by side with Professor Stone's articles which were entitled "Commentaries on Sir Isaac Isaacs' Contributions to the Jewish Question" there appeared also Sir Isaac's "Rejoinders to Professor Stone" which filled the pages of the *Hebrew Standard* until January 1944. Alec Masel, President of the Zionist Federation, then published a letter on the controversy in the Jewish press supporting Professor Stone and quoting excerpts from Victor Gollancz's booklet *Let My People Go*. Sir Isaac violently refuted Alec's attitude and continued his vituperations against Zionism until March 1944. This, however, was the last incident, for Sir Isaac never again took up his pen to attack Zionism or to criticise Jewish views or behaviour. The Jewish community deeply appreciated Professor Stone's work and, at a public meeting held in April 1944, paid warm tribute to him for his courageous and magnificent defence of the loyalty and good name of the Jewish citizens of Australia.

After concluding his articles in the Jewish weekly Professor Stone was asked for permission to reprint them with a view to wider distribution. He readily agreed to re-edit them as an "Open Letter to the Right Hon. Sir Isaac Isaacs, P.C., G.C.M.G." under the title *Stand Up and Be Counted*. Horace Newman and I undertook the first publication, whilst a committee of influential members of the Jewish community afterwards decided on a larger edition and agreed to look after distribution. Several public receptions were given in honour of Professor and Mrs. Stone in recognition of their meritorious service to the community.

At a meeting advertised to take place in October 1943 it was stated that the intention was to propose the setting up of a Jewish People's Fund for post-war relief in Europe. Dr. I. Steinberg, Rabbi L. A. Falk and members of Dr. Steinberg's Freeland League Committee were announced to be the speakers. At the request of the Jewish National Fund Commission of N.S.W. the Zionist State Council objected to the name "Jewish People's Fund" as it would be confused with that of the "Jewish National Fund". Dr. Steinberg and his committee ignored the Zionist objection and it was decided that members of the Zionist Council should attend the meeting at the Assembly Hall to voice our protest. Together with several members of our executive I went to the meeting and it was arranged that one of our members would make the protest when the proposal for the formation of the fund was put to the meeting. The resolution was moved by Dr. Steinberg but none of my colleagues ventured to stand up and voice our objections. I was urged to make the protest in my capacity as President of the Zionist Council. After Dr. Steinberg, who chaired the meeting, had spoken to his motion to establish the "Jewish People's Fund", I rose to my feet to voice our objection to the proposed name. It appeared that our intention of protesting at the meeting was known to its organisers and when I asked for permission to speak to the resolution several of Dr. Steinberg's small band of followers crowded around our group, threatening to eject us from the hall. I stood my ground protesting against the use of a name which closely resembled the time-honoured name of the Jewish National Fund. In the pandemonium which followed, Dr. Steinberg did not actually put the resolution to the meeting but declared it to have been adopted. The Jewish People's Fund failed to get any worth-while support and faded out completely after Dr. Steinberg's departure from Australia not very long afterwards.

The Zionist State Council convened a conference in November 1943 at which representatives from every communal organisation attended. Dr. Machover, Silva Steigrad and I were the principal speakers. The theme of my address was "Zionist Tasks in War and Peace". The purpose of the conference was to inaugurate an intensive *Shekel* and membership drive. Resolutions adopted were:

1. To work unrelentingly for victory.
2. To win approval of the Australian Government and people for Zionist aims.
3. To enlist every adult Jew as a member of the Zionist organisation.

A second conference of the Zionist Council was held in April 1944 at which Alec Masel, President of the Zionist Federation, was present. Its object was to bring to the attention of the Jewish community the aims and objectives of contemporary Zionism, to report on activities since the last conference with regard to the drive for the sale of *Shkolim* and for increasing Zionist membership. Suggestions were invited of how best to implement these objectives. On this occasion, also, a resolution of profound gratitude to Professor Stone for his magnificent stand against Sir Isaac Isaacs was carried.

The year 1943 saw Allied war operations victorious in North Africa and in the Mediterranean area. Following the occupation of Tunisia and the conquest of Sicily came the downfall of Mussolini and the surrender of Italy in September 1943. At the Summit Meeting in Teheran in November, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt of the United States, Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain and Josef Stalin of Soviet Russia deliberated on joint strategy for defeating speedily the armed forces of Germany and Japan. But for the Jews of Europe it was a year of mass murder, of the gas chambers and of the carrying into effect of the avowed genocide policy of the barbaric Hitler regime.

Whilst the Governments of the Allies did nothing to rescue the victims of the Nazi barbarities there were enlightened people in many lands who showed deep concern about the terrible atrocities perpetrated against defenceless men, women and children and who raised their voices in sympathy with the sufferers from the Nazi terror. In Great Britain a National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror was formed in March 1943. It was headed by the Honourable Marquis Crewe as President and Colonel Victor Cazalet, M.P., as Chairman. Amongst its Vice-Presidents were the Archbishops of Canterbury and of York, many distinguished members of the British nobility and gentry, members of the House of Lords and many

well-known political and civic leaders. Miss Eleanor F. Rathbone, M.P., was its most effective spokesman. In the United States public opinion was even more vehement in the demand for steps to be taken by the administration for the rescue of victims from the terribly cruel Hitler rule in occupied Europe. In July 1943 an emergency conference to save European Jewry was convened and a committee of experts was set up who presented their conclusions to Mr. Hull, the Secretary of State. It put forward the opinion that if the Allies wanted to do so, they could save 50,000 European Jews monthly without jeopardising the war effort.

In Australia, Bishop Pilcher and the members of the Australia-Palestine Committees in Sydney and in Melbourne were the *avant-garde* in the fight for Jewish rights and for saving Jews in Europe. Mr. B. Burgoyne Chapman, for many years principal of the Central China Teachers' College at Wuchang and Secretary of the Central China Christian Educational Association, who had recently returned to Australia, initiated a virtual crusade appealing to the Australian Government and people for the rescue of Jewish sufferers from Hitler's Europe and their admission into Palestine and elsewhere. Mr. Chapman, a great humanitarian and idealist, travelled extensively throughout Australia addressing public gatherings and preaching in numerous churches pleading the cause of European Jewry. Mr. Chapman, born in Bathurst, N.S.W., was a neighbour and friend of the then Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer, Mr. Ben Chifley. He stayed with Horace Newman when he came to Sydney to discuss problems and plans of action with the members of the Department for Zionist Policy of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand.

The Australian Council for Jewish Rights was also established in November 1943 with Bishop Pilcher as its Chairman. On 20th January 1944 the Australia-Palestine Committee held a mass meeting of Jews and Christians at the Assembly Hall which was presided over by the Bishop. Speakers included Professor Ian Clunies Ross and Mrs. Jessie Street. Messages of greeting were received from Professor Woodruff, Chairman of the Victorian Committee, as well as from the Chairmen of the Palestine Committees of Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand, and a cabled message from Robert Wagner, Mayor of New York. A

resolution demanding the abrogation of the MacDonald White Paper of 1939 and postulating the rescue of Jews from Europe as an important task was carried enthusiastically.

In my capacity as President of the Zionist State Council and member of the Department for Zionist Policy, I was actively associated with this public relations effort. But perhaps more than any of my Zionist colleagues I realised that such public relations activity is a long-term educational process, a process not conducive to, or capable of, getting immediate results. As victory for the Allies was in sight and the war's end was drawing nearer I was deeply persuaded that to be effective and to achieve immediate results we must aim for a direct and short-cut approach to the political leaders of the country. I often had occasion to discuss this problem with my friend Abram Landa, Labour Member of the N.S.W. Parliament, who agreed with my viewpoint. Abe was a close friend of Dr. Herbert Vere Evatt, Minister of External Affairs in the Labour Government of the Commonwealth of Australia and Dr. Evatt was the logical Cabinet Minister to approach. The executive of the Zionist Council, as far back as August 1942, at my suggestion, decided that Dr. Evatt be requested to receive a deputation which would put to him the Zionist case. Alec Masel, President of the Zionist Federation in Melbourne, was asked to make the appointment to see the Minister. After a delay of more than twelve months, Alec told us that an approach was not opportune because at that time Dr. Evatt, who was also the Federal Attorney-General, was in frequent consultation with Sir Isaac Isaacs on constitutional amendments which were contemplated by the Commonwealth Government. Alec said that in his view if approached by us Dr. Evatt was likely to discuss it with Sir Isaac who was violently opposed to what he termed "political" or "extreme" Zionism. A deputation led by Saul Symonds, President of the N.S.W. Jewish Advisory Board, was received eventually by Dr. Evatt, presenting to him the Zionist case and the tragedy of European Jewry. Dr. Evatt received us most cordially, assured us of the Commonwealth Government's deep sympathy and promised his utmost support "when the time comes".

The formal approach to the Government and the result, favourable as it certainly appeared to be, did not satisfy my sense of urgency in that extremely tragic epoch of Jewish and

Zionist history. An official and formal approach could only be made on specific occasions and could not be repeated often on the same subject, whereas in the capacity of a private citizen one can always seek an opportunity for a chat with a Minister of the Crown acquainting him with our problems and putting our point of view to him. The opportunity for personal contact with members of the Government of the day came to me in mid-1944 when the Commonwealth Government decided to hold a referendum on amendments to the Constitution granting the Government greater powers after the war. Through the good offices of Abram Landa I was able to serve in some small measure the cause of the Government. This brought me into personal contact with Mr. Ben Chifley, then Federal Treasurer, and Dr. Evatt, Minister for External Affairs and Attorney-General in John Curtin's Cabinet. Whilst my contacts in later years with Mr. Chifley as Prime Minister and Treasurer were limited, my association with Dr. Evatt developed into a warm personal friendship during the critical and historic days for Zionism in the pre-State period, when the partition of Palestine was dealt with by the United Nations at Lake Success.

Whilst my private and personal relationship with members of the Government and particularly Dr. Evatt were encouraged and fully supported by Abe Landa and several colleagues in the Zionist Executive like Horace Newman, Rabbi Schenk and Aaron Patkin, there were others who looked upon my actions with suspicion or at best treated them with indifference. There were also some members of the Zionist Executive who at the time viewed them with hostility either on personal grounds or because they considered me a Zionist fanatic and irresponsible, and therefore dangerous as far as my political activity was concerned; hence they tried to stop me.

CHAPTER

# 18

# *Ida Silverman's Campaign*

THE ELEVENTH ZIONIST CONFERENCE of Australia was convened at the end of May 1943 in Sydney and the Zionist Council appointed a small committee to organise it. The conference committee met for several weeks and an elaborate programme was drawn up with a view to bringing to the attention of the Jewish and general community our determined stand for the formation of a Jewish Army and for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine after the Allied victory. Messages of greeting were received from many parts of the world including, in particular, from Dr. Chaim Weizmann and Professor Selig Brodetsky of England. The highlight of the Conference was a recorded address by the Right Hon. Arthur Greenwood, Parliamentary Leader of the British Labour Party. The address was broadcast from London and relayed by the A.B.C.'s national network to the public meeting at the Mayfair Theatre in Sydney. The opening address of the Conference was given by Alec Masel, President of the Zionist Federation, who was followed by Dr. Machover giving a comprehensive survey of problems of Zionist policy. On behalf of the Zionist State Council I extended a welcome to the large number of interstate delegates. The proceedings of the Conference and the resolutions adopted reflected the Zionist mood of the day and at the same time raised our spirits and hopes for a brighter Jewish future. At the end of the Conference the old executive was re-elected and Dr. Machover became the Chairman of the Department for Zionist Policy of the Federation.

A very sad moment of the Conference was the reading of a

message by Philip Moses, sent from his death-bed, calling for unity in the Zionist ranks and stating that only by uniting our forces would we succeed. It was the last pronouncement of his Zionist credo. About a fortnight earlier, he had arranged a private meeting for the J.N.F. "SOS Campaign" to which he had invited members of his family and many of his friends. This meeting was to take place the day after the conclusion of the Conference. He knew that his death was imminent but insisted that the meeting should take place. He asked Silva Steigrad to act as host in his stead. The following day this devoted colleague and exceptional friend passed away. It is said that a short while before he departed this life he asked the nurse to bring him the J.N.F. Blue Box and explained to her the significance of the box and what it meant to him, symbolising Jewish land-ownership and Jewish Statehood.

The emphasis in discussion and the principal decisions arrived at in the eleventh Zionist Conference were on the steps to be taken for the implementation of Zionist policy and for a revision of the constitution of the Zionist Federation. The Zionist State Council of N.S.W. appointed the following committees: 1. To plan a vigorous membership drive; 2. to intensify political action for the abolition of the White Paper of 1939; 3. to consider the reorganisation of the Council so that its affiliates should comprise only Zionist bodies. For several months afterwards these matters engaged the attention of the Zionist Executive and the rank-and-file.

Against this background of intense public relations work our practical Zionist effort was greatly stimulated. Zionist fund-raising received a strong fillip and Zionist influence in the general affairs of the community was much strengthened. The N.S.W. Board of Jewish Education in February 1944 asked for and received the support of the Zionist Council. A most successful J.N.F. Queen Competition with Ruth, daughter of Paul Ungar, as the winning candidate, was held during the months of February and April. Youth Aliyah was extremely active both in its fund-raising and in its organisational efforts. The first Warsaw Ghetto Commemoration was organised on 18th April by the Zionist State Council with myself as Chairman. Rabbi Porush and Gerald de Vahl Davis, the latter representing the World Jewish Congress, were the principal speakers.

The eleventh Zionist Conference also resolved that campaigns for the two major funds *Keren Hayesod* and the Jewish National Fund should be held alternately each year. After completion of the highly successful 1943 Jewish National Fund appeal, and on my recommendation as the Australian Commissioner, the Zionist Federation decided to conduct a *Keren Hayesod* campaign in mid-1944. Following an exchange of cables and correspondence with Jerusalem, the Zionist Executive in March 1944 extended an invitation to Ida Silverman of the United States to come to Australia to lead the campaign. Mrs. Silverman accepted our invitation and made all arrangements to cross the Atlantic on a Liberty ship. It was my task to map out the programme of the visit to all States of the Commonwealth, whereupon the Federation Executive in May made the public announcement of our plans for Mrs. Silverman's *Keren Hayesod* Campaign. It was only then that we were informed that the Overseas Jewish Relief Fund was planning an appeal for funds to the Australian Jewish community to be launched in the immediate future.

In the previous year it was the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, a non-Zionist association, which saw fit to run an appeal on behalf of the children for whom the Government promised permits to enter Australia after the war, in competition with the J.N.F. "SOS Campaign". The Overseas Jewish Relief Fund, however, was headed by Silva Steigrad, the veteran Zionist leader, and Gerald de Vahl Davis, an esteemed member of the Zionist Executive, and on its committee were included leading Zionists like Dr. Machover, Rabbi Max Schenk and others. The announcement by the Overseas Jewish Relief Fund came as a great shock, both to myself and to my colleagues in New South Wales and Victoria, particularly since the funds collected were not to be used until after the war. It was incomprehensible to us that this should happen whilst the *Yishuv*, in defiance of the British Administration and military force was using every means to save Jews from occupied Europe and to bring them to Palestine. The funds raised for *Keren Hayesod* were intended to assist this effort and hence were earmarked for immediate use. However, the leaders of the Overseas Jewish Relief Fund were determined to proceed with their appeal, disregarding our protestations and the fact that the *Keren Hayesod* Head Office in Jerusalem was pleading for urgent financial assistance and that

Ida Silverman, their emissary, was already on the high seas on her way to Australia.

The Zionist State Council had no choice but to proceed with its well-laid plans for the *Keren Hayesod* drive in accordance with the programme and time-table arranged for Mrs. Silverman's interstate visits. On 11th June a meeting was held under the auspices of the Zionist Council at which a strong New South Wales *Keren Hayesod* Appeal Committee was set up with myself as Chairman, Dr. Fanny Reading and Rieke Cohen, Vice-Chairmen, Horace Newman and A. J. Chorley, Joint Campaign Directors. We were under great pressure to agree to a combined *Keren Hayesod*-Overseas Jewish Relief Fund Appeal but I resisted the attempt and insisted that the decision must await the arrival of Mrs. Silverman, the official delegate of the *Keren Hayesod.*

Ida Silverman landed at Port Melbourne early in July and, in company with the members of the Melbourne Executive of the Zionist Federation I met her the same evening at a dinner party held in her honour at the home of the President and Mrs. Masel. Mrs. Silverman was told of the unfortunate position which had arisen in Sydney and of the suggestion of conducting a combined appeal for the *Keren Hayesod* and the Overseas Jewish Relief Fund. From the beginning she showed great vigour and determination, stating that she had made the hazardous crossing of the submarine-infested Atlantic on a mission for *Keren Hayesod* and that she would insist on fulfilling her task for the *Keren Hayesod* and for nothing else. The Australian campaign was scheduled to start in N.S.W. and we left next day for Sydney where we were met on arrival by a large number of leading Zionists. The strain of the last few weeks was telling on me and I was completely exhausted by the time we brought our guest to the Hotel Australia.

In the afternoon of the same day a meeting of the Zionist Council was held with full attendance of its members, amongst whom were several who also served on the executive and committee of the Overseas Jewish Relief Fund. Ida Silverman addressed the meeting for more than an hour. It was a highly emotional oration displaying her Zionist ardour and her dynamism and made a tremendous impact on all present. When she concluded, Rabbi Max Schenk, who on the day before had

returned from Perth, where he had been invited to launch the appeal for the Overseas Jewish Relief Fund, moved that the *Keren Hayesod* committee carry on with its plans and discard the suggestion of a united appeal. This was carried with only two abstentions.

The Overseas Jewish Relief Fund started its campaign in June and decided to intensify its effort during July and August, the time allocated by the Federation Executive for the Sydney *Keren Hayesod* Campaign. Full-page advertisements appeared concurrently in the Jewish weeklies soliciting the support of the community for both funds. Two days before the official opening of the *Keren Hayesod* campaign the leaders of the Overseas Jewish Relief Fund summoned the community by individual telegrams to attend a public meeting in support of its own drive which was to be held within forty-eight hours of the *Keren Hayesod* opening function. These tactics did not divert us from carrying on with our original campaign programme: on the contrary, they proved to be a strong challenge to our co-workers and helpers to make the *Keren Hayesod* drive the greatest success possible. Ida worked hard addressing a record number of parlour meetings and gatherings of every Jewish organisation and communal institution. She thrilled her audiences with her forceful presentation of the Jewish position in the world and, in particular, her analysis of the situation in Palestine. Her message was delivered with deep emotion, she had many of her listeners in tears, and everyone present was deeply moved by her oratory. The outcome was a great financial success which augured well for the *Keren Hayesod.* The Overseas Jewish Relief Fund also did remarkably well.

As Commissioner of Australian *Keren Hayesod,* I attended to matters which were connected with Ida's mission in Australia whilst Sasha looked after her personal needs during her stay in Sydney. Ida acquired the habit of not eating before speaking at meetings but was always ravenous afterwards. Her speaking engagements in the evening usually finished after restaurants were closed so Sasha provided her with meals on nearly all such occasions and frequently entertained her friends at our home or at her suite of rooms in the hotel. Thus Ida spent most of her time in Sydney in our company and this resulted in a close and warm friendship between us.

At her request and on the invitation of the respective committees Sasha and I attended the opening meetings of the campaign in Brisbane and Hobart. This was done more for Ida's personal comfort than for the purpose of assisting in the fund-raising effort in these smaller communities. Ida travelled often and widely, campaigning throughout the United States, the Latin American countries and the year before she had been invited to assist in the appeal for the *Keren Hayesod* in Great Britain. We found, however, that she was not always at ease and at times suffered from attacks of nausea and of loneliness, particularly at the beginning of a visit to a new community and Sasha's company was a great help to her on such occasions.

A public farewell for Ida was held in Sydney late in October on her return from New Zealand en route to start the campaign in Melbourne. Sasha and I invited the members of the *Keren Hayesod* executive and committee to an afternoon reception which was attended by the New Zealand Trade Commissioner. The official farewell function given by the community took place in the evening and representatives from every Jewish organisation and institution attended. Farewell messages were received from the committees in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth as well as from Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand. A moving tribute was paid to her in recognition of the great success of her campaign in the face of tremendous difficulties. She received a special ovation from the *Keren Hayesod* workers in Sydney who were elated with the financial result, due to her tenacity of purpose and her deep faith in the destiny of the Jewish people. Ida concluded her Australian campaign in Melbourne and in early December a communal function was held there to bid her farewell and Godspeed on her way home. In response to an invitation from the executive Sasha and I made the journey to Melbourne. One by one the leaders of the community paid enthusiastic tribute to her dynamic personality, her spirited eloquence, indefatigable work and self-denial in the cause of her people. It was a tumultuous ovation which was given her by the entire Jewish community of Melbourne. The next day the three of us left for Sydney from whence Ida was to embark for the United States. On the eve of her departure from Australia I arranged a get-together with the small band of devoted Sydney helpers in the campaign to be with Ida

in the last hours of her stay with us. It was an intimate but also a sad occasion for all of us to say goodbye to her. Ida, who was keenly interested in the building of synagogues in the settlements founded by *Keren Hayesod*, asked us to raise a sufficient sum to build a synagogue in appreciation of her Australian effort. With the help of Fanny Reading and Rieke Cohen who were also present, I managed to raise from a few friends a certain amount towards this object. The next day we saw Ida leave our shores. To Sasha and to me her visit was at times a great strain, but it was a very rewarding experience.

CHAPTER

# 19

# *Dreams and Realities*

FROM LATE 1944 and throughout 1945 events at home and abroad began to move rapidly as the war drew to a close. On the one hand it became apparent to me and others of similar mind that our political activities in Australia could have far more benefit to the Zionist movement than was generally allowed; on the other, the need for funds became even more pressing and we redoubled our efforts to raise the means of translating our dreams into realities.

The *Yishuv* continued to be a cauldron of unrest, disturbances and terrorist acts as a result of the Palestine Government's stringent adherence to the policies of the 1939 White Paper. The Palestine administration retaliated by making mass arrests and taking severe punitive measures which enraged and infuriated even more the Jewish inhabitants. In November 1944 two Palestinian Jewish boys assassinated Lord Moyne, the British Resident Minister in Cairo. The news of the assassination cast a gloom on the *Yishuv* and caused deep consternation to the Zionist leaders and the free Jewries, including that of Australia. It filled us with horror and a sense of shame; but the extraordinary courage of the two young accused standing trial did not fail to project to the world the terrible plight of the Jews in Europe and the very difficult and harassed position of the *Yishuv*. The general shock of the assassination and of the subsequent trial found its echo also in Australia and strengthened our determination to follow the official Zionist line, demanding a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine.

In April 1945 the Australian Government announced that Dr.

H. V. Evatt, Minister of External Affairs, would attend the San Francisco Conference as head of the Australian delegation. The Conference was convened in May to draft a Charter for the United Nations. At the suggestion of the Department for Zionist Policy the Australia-Palestine Committee decided to present a petition to the Prime Minister, Mr. John Curtin, and to Dr. Evatt urging the support of the Australian Government for the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. Bishop Pilcher and Professor Woodruff in their capacities as Chairmen of the Australia-Palestine Committees in Sydney and in Melbourne, also acted as petition Chairmen with B. Burgoyne Chapman as Honorary Secretary. The signatories to the petition were heads of Churches, Parliamentarians Federal and State, civic and political leaders. It was due to the dynamism and devotion to our cause by Mr. Chapman, who travelled interstate at his own expense to obtain signatures, that the petition received an impressive number and was duly presented to the Prime Minister. On the eve of his departure for San Francisco a Zionist deputation called on Dr. Evatt requesting his support for Zionist ideals. A statement from Mr. Peter Fraser, Prime Minister of New Zealand, saying that Jewish aspirations for Palestine must not be forgotten, was shown to Dr. Evatt asking him to make a similar public statement. He promised us his Government's full support but stated that he "believed in deeds and not in statements of intention" and that he would translate in deeds his sympathy with Zionist aspirations when the time arrived to prove it. I had occasion later, in the crucial days of decision, to remind him of his promise.

The Hon. Abram Landa left soon afterwards for London and the Zionist Executive arranged a farewell luncheon for him which was attended by many of his Parliamentary colleagues and Ministers of the State Government as well as by the leaders of the Jewish community. He was adequately briefed on our public relations activity with a view to making it known to our Zionist leaders in England and acquainting them of our efforts to enlist the official support of the Australian Government. We suggested that contacts should be made with officials of the Australian Commonwealth and especially with Dr. Evatt who was due to visit London after the San Francisco Conference. Unfortunately, Abe Landa did not succeed in meeting leading

members of the Jewish Agency which was very disappointing to him and to us in Australia. It seemed that opinion abroad regarded the Australian continent as too remote and Australian Zionism as too inconsequential to influence in the slightest the course of Jewish-Zionist history. This attitude was the same as that shown by David Ben Gurion during his stop-over in Sydney in 1941 when he had snappily replied to my question about what we in Australia could or should do to further Zionist political aims. This passive attitude persisted throughout the political struggle in the pre-State years. Most of the Zionist leaders in Australia too held the same negative view and looked condescendingly on those of us who believed that the Australian Government could make a worth-while contribution to the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. We who held these positive views persisted in our effort to seek every opportunity for personal contact with members of the Commonwealth Government and in particular with Dr. Herbert Vere Evatt.

The defeat and unconditional surrender of Germany in June 1945 brought to light the ghastly and nightmarish conditions of concentration camps like Bergen-Belsen and others in the area liberated by the victorious Allied armed forces. The horrifying sight of the unburied dead jumbled up with the still living but terribly emaciated bodies of the inmates of these camps sent waves of shock, disgust and indignation through the civilised peoples of the world and left the free Jewish communities stunned at the incredibly beastly cruelties perpetrated against our people in the lands occupied by Nazi Germany. The fact that six million Jews were done to death in the most fiendish way was for the human mind impossible to grasp and left us bewildered and utterly dejected. To those of us whose kith and kin were trapped and had died in this murderous cauldron the tragedy was so much greater and the more difficult to comprehend.

It is not within the purview of these pages to describe the gloom and the despair of that period except to record them as a background to what took place in the following months and years in our Zionist struggle for a Jewish Palestine and for the safeguarding of the Jewish future. The impact of the tragedy of the holocaust in Europe on my own mind I am just incapable of putting into words. I often lay awake at nights stirred and

torn with emotion. It spurred me on to greater daring and a bolder conception of our Zionist tasks which account for my conduct and lone-handed action in the coming months.

The election of the Labour Government in England in July 1945 raised high Zionist hopes for the abolition of the 1939 White Paper and the establishment of the Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. This was in accordance with the pledges and pronouncements made by the British Labour Party at its conference in December 1944. It then adopted a Palestine Plan reading in part:

> "There is surely neither hope nor meaning in a Jewish National Home unless we are prepared to let the Jews, if they wish, enter this tiny land in such numbers as to become a majority. There was a strong case for this before the war and there is an irresistible case for it now after the unspeakable atrocities in the cold-blooded calculated German Nazi Plan to kill all the Jews of Europe. . . .
>
> ". . . Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in . . . the Arabs have wider territories of their own . . . they should not seek to exclude the Jews from this small area of Palestine which is less than the size of Wales."

During the following months President Harry Truman, successor to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who died in April 1945, made an announcement in favour of a Jewish State in Palestine. Our disappointment and dismay was thus the greater when Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, announced in September the decision of His Majesty's Government to continue in Palestine the policy of the MacDonald White Paper restricting Jewish immigration to 75,000 in five years as from 1939. This shock announcement in face of the appalling conditions of the concentration camps reverberated throughout Jewish communities the world over and had its adverse impact on the general public, especially in the United States. Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the leaders of the *Yishuv* and Rabbis Dr. Stephen Wise and Abba Hillel Silver, co-Chairmen of the American Zionist Council, declared that this policy would be fought to the end by Palestine Jewry.

In contrast to the British attitude the Australian Government, in the same month of August 1945, decided to issue Certificates

of Entry to Jewish persons wishing to join relatives residing in Australia. A letter to this effect was written by the Hon. Arthur Calwell, then Minister for Immigration, to Alec Masel, President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. This was the beginning of a considerable Jewish immigration into Australia, whose Jewish population was more than doubled in the two decades from 1946 to 1966. They came from Shanghai, from countries of the Far East and the Near East, from England, from South Africa and from the continent of Europe. The Australian Jewish Welfare Societies have given and are still giving invaluable service in bringing immigrants to Australia and in assisting as much as possible their integration into the fabric of Australian society.

Whilst these developments were taking place we continued our Zionist fund-raising activities and, to some extent, reorganised the structure of the Zionist State Council.

In December 1945 we celebrated in all States of Australia the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Balfour Declaration coupled with the celebration of Dr. Weizmann's seventieth birthday (27th November). At the well-attended meeting in Sydney, at which Horace Newman was Chairman and I the principal speaker, a resolution was enthusiastically carried supporting the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine.

In the same month Dr. Lowy convened in Melbourne an Australian Conference of the Jewish National Fund with a view to consolidating the fund's position in the Commonwealth. The formation of a Federal Executive with a Federal office was decided upon and Dr. Leon Jona became its first President. The establishment of an autonomous Federal body was instrumental in making the Jewish National Fund the most popular and the strongest Jewish organisation in the country. Dr. Kurt Frankel, its first Federal Director, and Steve Gerstl, who succeeded him, were both exceptionally gifted and capable organisers and it was in large measure due to their devotion and zeal that the Jewish National Fund became a model organisation for all Jewish communal institutions in Australia.

The twelfth Australian Zionist Conference was held in Melbourne late in January 1945. A very comprehensive programme was planned and a record number of over a hundred delegates

attended. The proceedings generated much enthusiasm and the deliberations throughout bore witness to the fact that many people were at last becoming aware that we had reached a crucial stage in our Jewish history as well as testifying to the remarkable progress the Australian Zionist movement had made in recent years. It was the established rule that the venue of the Federation Executive rotated between the cities of Sydney and Melbourne and the Conference decided that the seat of the Zionist Executive for the next term should be transferred to Sydney. Rabbi Max Schenk was elected President, A. J. Chorley, Treasurer, and Horace Newman, Honorary Secretary; Dr. Machover retained the position of Chairman of the Department for Zionist Policy and myself Australian President of the *Keren Hayesod.* The news that the British Government had approved the formation of the Jewish Brigade was received with deep satisfaction by the Conference.

Dr. Samuel Sambursky, head of the Institute of Physics at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who arrived on a fund-raising mission for the Hebrew University, addressed the Conference on the University's vital contribution to the war effort in the Middle East and made a profound impression on the delegates. Dr. Sambursky left for Sydney soon after the Conference and an appeal committee was organised with Alroy M. Cohen as President, myself Campaign Director and Braham L. Moses Honorary Secretary.

In February, 1949, Rabbi Max Schenk accepted an invitation from the Jewish National Fund in Jerusalem to go to London to assist in the fund-raising campaigns for the Joint Palestine Appeal (J.P.A.) in England. Max was given leave of absence from the Zionist Federation and left Australia at the end of March.

. . . . .

The Zionist State Council of N.S.W. was reorganised and its constitution amended on the principle that a central Zionist Committee be formed to consist only of representatives from organisations whose members were *Shekel* holders and in this way declared their acceptance of the "Basle Programme". At the annual meeting of the reconstituted Zionist Council held early in March, a new executive was elected with Horace Newman as President. I did not join the executive because in my view it

was a mistaken policy to exclude from the central committee and from the executive leaders of synagogues and other communal institutions whose members were not obligated to purchase the *Shekel*. I was strongly of the opinion that in that most crucial period of Zionist history it was unwise to reduce our numbers and thereby weaken our forces by insisting that only such organisations which enforced the purchase of *Shkolim* as a condition of membership would be eligible for representation on the Zionist Central Committee. Nevertheless I remained a member of the central committee, because as President of the *Keren Hayesod* I was entitled to attend meetings of the executive if and when I wished to do so. In his capacity of President of the N.S.W. Zionist State Council, Horace became Acting President of the Zionist Federation in the absence of Rabbi Max Schenk who was overseas.

The Central Zionist Committee under the new leadership continued to be active. The seventh Annual Ball of the Jewish National Fund Queen Competition was held in mid-May and at the end of that month a State Zionist Conference was convened at which the *Shekel* Drive for 1945 was discussed and a programme of future activities worked out. At that time the J.N.F., WIZO, and Youth Aliyah were contemplating holding appeals for funds in the coming months. The Zionist Executive was faced with the difficult task of persuading the leaders of these three Zionist funds to avoid a clash and not to have their appeals at the same time. We succeeded in drawing up a programme which was agreed to by all concerned. Priority was given to a combined Youth Aliyah-WIZO Campaign to be held in June and July to be followed by the appeal of the J.N.F. Mrs. Adolphine Shwimmer (now Mrs. Bernstein), a prominent Zionist leader and Youth Aliyah worker, then residing in Wellington, New Zealand, was invited to visit Australia to help in the combined appeal. Ida Wynn, President of Federal WIZO, was the driving force in organising and conducting the drive for funds in all States of Australia. In N.S.W. an influential and energetic executive and committee was formed. Reca Stone, wife of Professor Julius Stone, was elected President and Friedl Levi, the Youth Aliyah representative in Australia, was the dynamic force behind the local appeal. Adolphine Shwimmer addressed many meetings in Sydney and in the other State

capitals. She worked very hard for the success of the combined campaign and whilst in Sydney she often called on me for guidance and help in soliciting donations from individuals. She was most grateful for the encouragement I gave her and talked about it when Sasha and I, in later years, visited Israel where she had made her permanent home and married Dr. Peretz Bernstein, the well-known publicist, writer and leader of the General Zionists. The total amount raised in Sydney for the combined appeal was £18,000.

The "SOS Land for Liberty" Campaign of the Jewish National Fund was organised by the indefatigable Shlomo Lowy of the J.N.F. Head Office, Jerusalem. He succeeded in enlisting several recent arrivals to serve on the campaign executive and committee together with the older members who for many years past had worked for the two principal Zionist funds, the *Keren Hayesod* and the J.N.F. Horace Newman, who was President of the J.N.F. of N.S.W., was also President of the campaign with myself as Campaign Chairman. Mrs. Irma Lindheim of the United States arrived late in July to open the "Land for Liberty" Campaign in Sydney. After intensive preparatory activity the campaign was officially opened with a banquet at the Paddington Town Hall on 27th August. It was a grand opening, the hall was packed to capacity, and it was a great financial success. Mrs. Lindheim delivered stirring addresses in her many public appearances in Sydney, appealing more to the intellect than to the emotions of her audiences.

Irma Lindheim leaned strongly towards the ideology of *Hashomer Hatzair*, the left wing of the Labour Zionist movement. At her request we invited a number of young Jewish intellectuals most of whom were students at the University of Sydney, to be addressed by her. At the first meeting she gave an introductory short address on general Zionist topics and invited questions from her listeners. A number of the students formed themselves into a discussion group and after several meetings with Irma Lindheim during her stay in Sydney, they organised a small Zionist Society at the University. Later, during our struggle against "Bevinism" in England, they formed the Zionist "Action Committee" with Eugene Kamenka and the brothers David and Philip Wolfers at their head. On Sunday afternoons in Hyde Park they attracted large numbers of the

general public who usually gather to listen to the open-air speakers—most of whom are the "soap-box" type orators. The "Action Committee" speeches soon received unwelcome attention from a small group of hecklers who created some disturbance. Whereupon the N.S.W. Jewish Board of Deputies stepped in and asked the students to stop holding their Sunday afternoon sessions.

On 1st July 1945 the Herzl-Bialik memorial meeting in Sydney was organised by the Central Zionist Committee to serve also as a public demonstration of our determination to persevere in and further strengthen our Zionist effort. The 1945 campaign for the sale of *Shkolim* was proclaimed as a principal task in the coming months. A number of strongly worded resolutions were adopted affirming: 1. Our avowed pledge to secure for Palestine its reconstruction as a Jewish Commonwealth; 2. To strengthen our organisational structure and our financial resources towards achieving this aim.

The meeting produced great enthusiasm and stimulated an increased effort for the Youth Aliyah-WIZO drive as well as for the "SOS Land for Liberty" Campaign of the Jewish National Fund. It was characteristic of the enthusiasm and Zionist fervour of that period that simultaneously with the struggle for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine a supreme effort was also made for the practical task of Zionism, the task of fund-raising in all its forms for the maintenance of Zionist institutions in Palestine.

CHAPTER

# 20

# *Ernest Bevin's Palestine Policy*

In 1945 the British Government made known its decision to continue with the policy of the MacDonald White Paper of 1939 restricting Jewish immigration into Palestine. This decision caused great upset and turbulence in the Jewish world.

A National Emergency Conference was called in the United States and a special conference of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and the Board of Deputies of British Jewry condemned, in the very strongest terms, the new policy of the British Labour Government. The Department for Zionist Policy of the Australian Zionist Federation under the chairmanship of Dr. Machover, undertook a very active campaign to give public expression to our indignation at the British Government's decision. Under Machover's guidance the Department for Zionist Policy drew up a comprehensive programme for political action with the full approval of the communal and Zionist leadership of Sydney and Melbourne.

The action taken was: 1. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry sent cables of protest to President Harry Truman and to Prime Minister Clement Attlee of which copies were forwarded to Dr. Evatt who was in London at the time. 2. The Zionist Federation cabled to Abram Landa in London to contact Dr. Evatt to acquaint him with the position and to convey to him our request to intercede with the British Government on our behalf. A cable was also sent to Dr. Evatt by our good friend Percy Cleary, M.P., President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. 3. The Australia-Palestine Committee at a meeting of Australian citizens held in mid-October, and presided over by

Bishop Pilcher, adopted a resolution for submission to the British Government, urging them to allow 60,000 Jews from the Displaced Persons' camps in Europe to enter Palestine immediately. The committee held a similar meeting at the University of Sydney at which Bishop Pilcher and Professor Julius Stone were the speakers. 4. A mass Zionist rally was organised by the Central Zionist Committee on 21st October voicing our dismay and protesting vehemently against the British Government's decision. The same day was also proclaimed a Day for Solemn Prayer and a combined service was held at the Great Synagogue, organised by Rabbi Porush who was assisted by Ministers from all other congregations. 5. Rabbi Max Schenk as President of the Zionist Federation and Alec Masel as President of the E.C.A.J., accorded an interview by the Prime Minister, Mr. Ben Chifley, the successor to Mr. John Curtin who had died recently, told him of the grief and sorrow which the British policy in Palestine had caused the Jewish citizens of the Commonwealth of Australia. 6. On the decision of the Zionist Federation, Silva Steigrad and I organised, on 12th November, a communal reception for Abram Landa on his return from London, in recognition of his services to our cause whilst in England. At the same meeting a welcome-back was given to Faye Schenk who had returned to Australia recently. The meeting carried a resolution that Palestine must be Jewish. 7. Burgoyne Chapman travelled interstate and assisted Sam Wynn, President of the Victorian Zionist Council, in efforts to organise meetings of protest by the Australia-Palestine Committee and by Jewish and Zionist organisations on similar lines to what had been done in Sydney.

Following the outburst of world public opinion which rose to near fury in November, Ernest Bevin announced in the House of Commons that a joint British-American Enquiry Commission on Palestine would be appointed to investigate the position of the Displaced Persons' camps and the Palestine problem and report back to the two Governments at an early date. In December the British Government decided to bring the detainees back from Mauritius to Palestine. The E.C.A.J. submitted a written statement to the Prime Minister, Mr. Chifley, to be forwarded to the British Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, setting out the views—and the disappointment—of Australian Jewry,

at the announcement made by the British Labour Government to continue in Palestine with the White Paper policy of 1939.

In the midst of this intense political agitation time was taken to conduct local activity and to celebrate a family event. On 5th September Sasha and I celebrated our silver wedding. We intended it to be a private family occasion but it was turned into a semi-public social function arranged by our friends and Zionist associates to pay us tribute for services we may have rendered to the cause of our people. We were inscribed in the Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund and were presented with a testimonial on a parchment roll bearing the signatures of all those who came so unexpectedly to honour us. It was an expression of comradeship and friendliness which my wife and I deeply appreciated.

In the same month the Central Zionist Committee, in conjunction with the *Tarbuth* Cultural Organisation and the Union of Sydney Zionists, gave a farewell reception to the talented and popular Palestinian pianist Pnina Salzman who was in Australia, accompanied by her mother Lea, on a concert tour for the Australian Broadcasting Commission. In November the Central Zionist Committee celebrated the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration which celebration attracted a very large attendance. Marcell Sigalla, who was then appointed General Secretary of the Zionist State Council, organised the very successful function.

The executives of the Zionist Federation, the Central Zionist Committee and the N.S.W. Jewish Board of Deputies, met in December to discuss unified action on behalf of Palestine. The *Yishuv* decided on passive resistance to meet British determination to enforce its policy on Palestine by the might of its army and police force. The combined meeting of our communal leaders issued a statement declaring our solidarity with the *Yishuv* in its difficult struggle. I suggested to the meeting that we should engage the services of an influential public relations consultant and lobbyist in the person of Dr. Frank Louat and that we demonstrate in a practical way our solidarity with the *Yishuv* by a greater fund-raising effort. It was considered necessary to establish a public relations fund and Paul Ungar undertook this task. In mid-December a mass meeting was held by the J.N.F. at which Faye Schenk and Dr. Kurt Frankel, Federal

Director of J.N.F. in Australia, were the principal speakers. Late in December we organised a mass meeting to celebrate twenty-five years of *Keren Hayesod.* Abram Landa, Faye Schenk and Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman addressed the meeting, generating immense enthusiasm.

In the latter part of 1945 the position of the Jews in Palestine deteriorated further as a result of their grim resistance to British enforcement of the White Paper policy. The searches for arms made by British soldiers in the settlements of Givat Hayim, Rishpam, Shfatyim and many others were often accompanied by shootings, killings and the wounding of many of the settlers who offered resistance. These acts of violence by the British armed forces infuriated the entire *Yishuv* and brought brutal retaliation by the terrorist Stern Gang and the *Irgun.* Many British Tommies were killed and wounded as a consequence.

Because of the despair and the rebellious behaviour of the tens of thousands of Displaced Persons in the camps of Europe on the one hand and of the bitter struggle of the Jews in Palestine on the other, President Truman of the United States, after receiving a report from his personal representative, Averell Harriman, suggested that one hundred thousand Displaced Persons be allowed to enter Palestine. The suggestion, however, was rejected by the British Government. The Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry on Palestine was then appointed and given the task after instituting a thorough investigation in Europe and in Palestine, of reporting on its findings to both Governments within a period of four months. Ernest Bevin, British Foreign Secretary, told the twelve members of the committee that his Government would carry out the committee's recommendations if they were made unanimously.

The Anglo-American Enquiry Committee comprised six members each from the two countries with Judge Sir John Singleton of England and Judge Joseph C. Hutchinson of America as co-Chairmen. After a briefing by the State Department in Washington, early in January 1946, they heard evidence from Jewish and Arab leaders in Washington, New York and London. The committee then split up into four groups to visit the camps in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland where they examined the position of the Displaced Persons, of whom the

overwhelming majority clamoured to go to Palestine. The members of the committee from Europe travelled to Cairo and Jerusalem where they resumed the hearing of testimony from Jews and Arabs. After exhaustive investigations the committee went to Lausanne to hammer out the unanimous report to be submitted to the Government of the United Kingdom and to President Truman.

The report contained three basic recommendations: 1. That certificates for a hundred thousand Displaced Persons to enter Palestine be issued immediately. 2. That Great Britain continue to administer the mandate over Palestine pending a Trusteeship Agreement to be drawn up by the United Nations. 3. That the White Paper of 1939 be set aside and its land and immigration regulations be revoked. It confirmed the position of the Jewish Agency but it cautioned that it must resume dealings with the Mandatory Power with whom it had broken off relations as a measure of passive resistance. It is important to note that the report did not recommend the disbanding of the *Haganah*, the Jewish Home Guard.

Despite Bevin's promise to carry out the committee's recommendations if they were made unanimously, the British Government ignored and discarded the committee's report. Prime Minister Attlee stated in the House of Commons that His Majesty's Government would allow one hundred thousand Displaced Persons to be brought to Palestine on condition that the *Haganah* was disarmed and disbanded. This would have left the Jews of Palestine defenceless and in the light of the sad experiences of twenty-five years of the mandate and especially of the Arab riots of 1936-39 the *Yishuv* and the Jewish people outside Palestine could not allow this to happen. President Truman welcomed the recommendation that one hundred thousand certificates be issued immediately but offered no ready assistance to implement the committee's report. At the Labour Party's Conference held in Bournemouth in May, Bevin asserted that "the American agitation for the admission of one hundred thousand Jews to Palestine is because they do not want too many of them in New York". This statement caused deep resentment and indignation in the United States and in Great Britain.

In the one hundred and twenty-day period of the Anglo-

American Committee's investigations and compilation of its report the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand, as did Jews all over the world, awaited with calm determination the result of the committee's findings. It was also an exceptionally busy time for the Zionist Executive in Sydney. In January 1946 I arranged for supplements to be published in the Jewish weeklies on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Keren Hayesod* which contained messages from Ben Chifley, Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Peter Fraser, Prime Minister of New Zealand, from many leading Government and civic personalities and Church dignitaries, as well as from Dr. Chaim Weizmann and many Jewish leaders both local and overseas. All messages acclaimed the achievements of the Jewish National Home with the financial assistance of the *Keren Hayesod.*

In the following months the Central Zionist Committee organised a very successful meeting on the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Dr. Theodor Herzl's *Judenstaat* (Jewish State) and this was followed by two other functions. The first was to bid farewell to Dr. and Mrs. Shlomo Lowy who were to return to Palestine after a highly successful stay of six years in Australia and the second was to welcome Mrs. Ida Wynn of Melbourne on the occasion of her re-assuming the position of Federal President of Australian WIZO after a prolonged illness. The task allotted to me was to organise, on behalf of the Zionist Federation, a reception to Dr. Evatt on the occasion of his departure for London and Paris to attend the Peace Conference. He made a statement on this occasion that Australia would be represented on any United Nations Trusteeship Agency dealing with Palestine and that he would see to it that "justice and fair play for the Jewish people shall prevail". This public statement by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs in the presence of Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentarians was received with much enthusiasm by all who attended. The Federation Executive in its minutes of 29th April recorded appreciation and thanks for my effort in organising this successful function.

An Australian conference of Jewish Ministers which was held in March in Sydney to deal with religious matters adopted a number of resolutions including one which stated that the

Jewish people were inseparably associated with Eretz Israel, the ancestral Holy Land, and asked for unrestricted immigration of Jews to Palestine.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry, at the request of the Department for Zionist Policy of the Zionist Federation, submitted a memorandum to the Anglo-American Enquiry Committee in which it stated that Australian Jewry throughout the years had supported the concept and struggle for a Jewish National Home and that the late General Sir John Monash was the first Honorary President of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand. It referred to the many documents and cables which the E.C.A.J. had sent to the authorities in favour of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. The Zionist Federation cabled to the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem suggesting that either Saul Symonds the President, or Horace Newman the Vice-President, of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry should proceed to Jerusalem to give evidence before the committee. However the committee departed before there was time to arrange the journey. At its conference held in April 1946 the Executive Council of Australian Jewry incorporated a suitably worded resolution demanding free immigration to Palestine on behalf of the Australian Jewish community.

The 1946 *Keren Hayesod* appeal was planned to take place in the months of May and June with Captain Shimon Hacohen of Palestine as emissary. Captain Hacohen served in World War II with the Palestine Port Operating Company of the Royal Engineers and was the first Jewish officer of such a company in the ports of Haifa and Tel Aviv. The company was later attached to the British Expeditionary Force and he and two other Jewish officers were taken prisoners by the Nazis in Greece on 29th April 1941. Shimon arrived in Sydney in mid-April where he remained for several weeks conducting a rather difficult campaign in New South Wales.

Because of the depressed state of mind in the community as a result of the Jewish position in Palestine and in Europe and also on account of the current United Jewish Overseas Appeal and other Refugee Relief Fund Appeals, the *Keren Hayesod* drive at that time was no easy task. Shimon did a splendid job through hard work and persistence and managed to obtain a fairly good financial response under most adverse circumstances.

The slogan of the appeal was to settle in Palestine one hundred thousand survivors of Hitler's concentration camps, as proposed by President Truman. As a *Sabra* (Palestinian born) and a prisoner of war it was incomprehensible to Shimon that Jews living in freedom in this great country could be as complacent about the Jewish position in the world as they appeared to him to be and he was very angered by it. We received short notice from Jerusalem of Shimon's arrival and I decided to call a meeting of the committee at very short notice. The meeting was held at the residence of a prominent WIZO Executive member and was very poorly attended. Shimon, for whom this was his first Zionist fund-raising assignment, was upset and bewildered and remarked jokingly to us that if this was going to be the attitude of the Jews in Sydney he would cable to his friends in Israel to fly out to Australia a few members of the *Irgun* to teach us a lesson. Our hostess took him seriously and was really disturbed that he might carry out his threat.

The campaign was opened officially at a dinner given by Horace, his wife Diddy, Sasha and myself at the Savarin Restaurant. Shimon addressed a large number of meetings in public halls and in private homes and accompanied by myself or by some other member of the committee made numerous calls on individuals. On one such occasion we visited an office building in the city where several Jewish businesses were located. A colleague on the appeal committee, who was a tenant in the building, directed us to an office where a Jew from Germany, a refugee from the Nazis and a recent arrival, conducted his business. There were a number of employees in a fairly spacious office and we asked to speak to the proprietor. We introduced ourselves and Shimon explained to him the purpose of our visit and what the *Keren Hayesod* stood for. The man, speaking with a thick German accent, told us that he was not interested in Palestine. Shimon who was not easily put off told him of his experiences as a war prisoner in Germany and appealed to him to help fellow Jews in Germany who were not lucky enough to have escaped to Australia. Obviously annoyed the man told us that he was now an Australian citizen and that his only duty was to Australia. We started to walk out of the office when Shimon quietly told him what he thought of the attitude of such a Jew. The man flew into a rage shouting

at us in a shrill voice that he was as good a Jew as he was a good Australian. He continued shouting even when we were out of the building. Later that day Rabbi Dr. Porush telephoned me saying that the Jew, who was known to him, came to see him in a state of great upset demanding an apology from us, otherwise he threatened to initiate court proceedings. Shimon agreed to apologise on condition that he made a contribution to the *Keren Hayesod* or to any other Zionist fund.

On another occasion whilst lunching at the *Tarbuth* Restaurant someone suggested that there were many present who may not have contributed to the appeal. Shimon got up and delivered an impromptu address calling on the diners to fulfil their duty to *Keren Hayesod* if they had not as yet done it.

His Australian experience stood him in good stead and he was given similar assignments for *Keren Hayesod* in later years. He campaigned in London and in the counties of Great Britain with much success. Whilst in Australia Captain Hacohen met several fellow officers of the Australian Army with whom he had served in Bardia and Tobruk during the battles in the Western Desert and in North Africa.

The report of the Anglo-American Enquiry Committee on Palestine was received by the *Yishuv* and the Jews outside Palestine with mixed feelings. The findings and recommendations gave cause for both praise and censure from the Jewish point of view. After the publication of the report we waited with feelings of anxiety for the reaction of the British Government and of world public opinion. If the one hundred thousand Displaced Persons were to be allowed to enter Palestine as soon as practicable and the unjust provisions of the Malcom MacDonald White Paper of 1939 were to be annulled there was hope for the Jewish National Home to continue to make progress either under the British Mandate or under a Trusteeship Agreement of the United Nations. With the announcement of Prime Minister Attlee in the House of Commons that the one hundred thousand certificates would be issued only after the disbandment of the *Haganah* and the reorganisation of the Jewish Agency, the British intention of solving the Palestine problem in favour of the Arabs became obvious.

The Committee of Enquiry debated this issue at great length



Author and his Family.



*Left to right*: Shlomo Lowy, Faye Schenk, Rivka Lowy.

and came to the conclusion that to disarm the *Haganah* and to dissolve the Jewish Agency would bring the entire *Yishuv* on the side of the terrorist Stern Gang and the *Irgun* and it would take several years, at best, to carry it out and it would most likely never be achieved. When, later, on 29th June the one hundred thousand strong British Army initiated military operations against the Jewish Agency and the *Haganah* with the arrest of Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), Rabbi Fishman, I. Greenbaum, Dov Joseph, David Remez (Ben Gurion was then in Paris as observer to the Peace Conference) and other members of the Jewish Agency and the *Va'ad Leumi* (the National Council of Jews of Palestine) as well as many hundreds of inhabitants, it became abundantly clear that the British Government had decided to ignore the findings of the committee and to carry on with the gross injustices embodied in the regulations of the White Paper. It was in fact a declaration of war on the *Yishuv* and an attack on the Jewish position everywhere.

This action of His Majesty's Government brought the Jewries of Palestine and of the Diaspora to a pitch of intense anxiety and frustration. It caused the Stern Gang and the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* to increase their acts of violence and terror culminating in the bombing, on 22nd July, of the British Army Headquarters and the local Government offices in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem with over two hundred casualties. The consequence of this brutal attack by the *Irgun* was that General Barker, commanding officer of the British forces, proclaimed a day and night curfew on Tel Aviv lasting several days with house to house searches by the army and the police in order to "track down the terrorists and destroy them". After one hundred days of this operation and the shock treatment of the *Yishuv*, the Jewish leaders were released from their detention at Latrun and Arab and Jewish spokesmen were invited by Ernest Bevin to attend a conference in London to discuss the Palestine problem.

At no other period of our history was greater unity achieved by the Jewries of the world than in this epoch of the difficult and bitter struggle of the *Yishuv* against the far superior military might of the British forces in Palestine. World Jewry demonstrated its loyalty to the cause of the *Yishuv* with its unequivocal condemnation of British policy in Palestine which barred the

entry of the survivors of Hitler's death camps to their Promised Land and enforced this unjust policy by the mailed fist. It is to the credit of the Jewish citizens in Great Britain and those residing in other countries of the British Commonwealth that they remained steadfast in their loyalty and support to the Jewish community in Palestine, severely censuring the policy of the British Government. It shed much lustre on the Jews of England and it will indeed remain a glorious chapter in the annals of British Jewry that it demonstrated its protest against Bevin's policy in a march by hundreds of Jewish citizens to Trafalgar Square in London led by the valiant Jewish leader and Labour Member of Parliament, Mr. (later Sir) Barnett Janner, and other prominent leaders of Anglo-Jewry.

Mass protest meetings were staged by Jewish communities in other parts of the British Commonwealth. In Sydney a Mass Protest Rally was held in June 1946 under the slogan "Bevin or Balfour", where Dr. A. Patkin of Melbourne outlined the British Government's ruthless conduct in Palestine and its effect on the Jewish future. The meeting adopted a unanimous resolution expressing its vigorous protest and demanding the immediate release of the *Yishuv's* leaders from detention at Latrun.

The following month the Central Zionist Committee, in conjunction with the members of the Zionist Federation Executive residing in Sydney, convened an emergency meeting which communal leaders were also invited to attend. It discussed the punitive measures imposed by the British authorities on the entire *Yishuv* as a result of the acts of retaliation perpetrated by the *Irgun*. The meeting adopted enthusiastically a programme of intensive action in the field of public relations and decided that the Zionist Executive should meet daily in order to keep a vigilant watch on the situation in Palestine. It further decided to send cables expressing our solidarity with the *Yishuv* and to arrange for a deputation to be received by the Prime Minister. In August the Zionist Executive despatched a cable to Dr. Evatt in Paris where he was attending the Peace Conference, with a plea to intervene with the British Government for the release of the Jewish leaders and for the discontinuance of the deportation of "illegal" immigrants arriving in Palestine. At the same time cables were sent by Bishop Pilcher, Professor Clunies Ross and Reverend E. J. Davidson to Attlee, Hugh Dalton,

Greenwood and Churchill protesting against deportations of immigrants from Haifa to Cyprus.

Retaliatory acts of brutality and violence inflicted on the British by the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* caused Palestinian and Diaspora Jewry deep sorrow and dismay. The outrage of the King David Hotel explosion in Jerusalem which caused the loss of many lives was condemned by the *Yishuv* as senseless killing and was profoundly deplored by the Jewish people the world over. The E.C.A.J., in a public statement expressed its abhorrence of these acts of terror and declared its sympathy with the victims.

The twenty-second Zionist Congress was scheduled to be convened late in 1946 in Basle. The Zionist Federation Executive comprising members from all Zionist parties was authorised to act as the territorial Electoral Board and appointed me as *Shekel* Commissioner. An intensive *Shekel* Drive throughout the country resulted in the sale of six thousand *Shkolim* which entitled Australia to three delegates and the requisite number of deputy delegates to Congress. The Zionist Executive, by secret ballot, selected the three candidates in this order: 1. Dr. Machover; 2. myself; and 3. Samuel Wynn. The three of us belonged to the party of General Zionists: two other Zionist parties in Australia, the Labour Zionist (*Poale Zion*) and the *Mizrachi,* decided to put up their own candidates which made it necessary to hold an election by *Shekel* holders. The *Poale Zion,* unable to find a suitable candidate from its local members, nominated as its candidate Mr. Sprinzak, the noted Labour leader of Palestine.

A keenly fought election, held in September in all States of Australia, resulted in Dr. Machover, Mr. Sprinzak and myself being elected delegates and Sam Wynn deputy delegate. Ida Wynn was greatly upset by the election result and urgently requested the Federation Executive to ask Dr. Machover, who was leaving Australia permanently for London, to resign in favour of her husband. The request was strongly supported by the Zionist State Council of Victoria on the grounds that Sam Wynn had rendered long and dedicated service to the Australian Zionist movement. Dr. Machover refused to accede to this request with the result that I was the only resident of Australia to attend the Congress at Basle as an Australian delegate. Machover was included in the panel of judges elected

to the Congress Court and because of a long list of complicated disputes lodged by many countries the Court was sitting for nearly the entire duration of Congress and he attended hardly any of the sessions.

At the Federal Election held at the end of September 1946 a Labour Government was returned for another term of office with Mr. Ben Chifley remaining Prime Minister and Dr. H. V. Evatt Minister for External Affairs and Attorney-General. This victory for Labour was providential for the Zionist movement in Australia and indeed for the world Zionist movement in this crucial period of Jewish history.

On his return from the Peace Conference in Paris the Zionist Federation Executive tendered a luncheon to Dr. Evatt. Rabbi Max Schenk presided, Silva Steigrad introduced our guest and a vote of thanks was proposed by myself. It was a very successful function and was attended by several Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentarians, Federal and State. Dr. Evatt spoke on the procedures at the Peace Conference and stated again that in any solution of the Palestine problem the just claims of the Jewish people must find their fulfilment. At this time Dr. Evatt had been elected Deputy Prime Minister and we extended our felicitations and good wishes to him.

A Plenary Session of the Zionist Federation Executive was held in September at which members from other States attended. It was the last occasion that Dr. Machover was present and the appreciation of the Zionist movement to him for a good job done was adequately recorded. Horace and I paid tribute to the invaluable service he had rendered to our movement in Australia during the six years of his sojourn in the country. He had been actively associated with the Zionist movement since its beginnings, had a thorough knowledge of contemporary Jewish history and was conversant with Zionist affairs. In the critical years from 1942 until his departure from Australia he had inspired much of our political activity as Chairman of the Federation Department for Zionist Policy.

Early in his service in Australia Rabbi Schenk showed his involvement in community affairs and from the pulpit criticised the Government of N.S.W. and the British Medical Association of this State for their refusal to permit medical practitioners who had graduated in certain European universities to practise

their profession in this State. The refugee doctors who wished to carry on with their profession in this country were required to enrol at an Australian School of Medicine and pass the examinations provided for the ordinary medical student. This imposed great hardship on the older person with a European diploma who had practised his profession for many years and had come to these shores as a refugee without any other craft or skill with which to earn a livelihood. Max Schenk's criticisms of the local authorities was resented by a section of our community on the ground that he retained American citizenship and it was in bad taste as a "guest" in this country to criticise his "host". Moreover, since his arrival in Australia in 1939 Max had identified himself completely with the local Zionist movement and had taken a very active part in the Zionist life of Australia. On being elected President of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand he had accepted an invitation to undertake a mission for the Jewish National Fund in Great Britain. This act was disapproved by some members of the Board of Management of his congregation but Max was a courageous fighter for the principles in which he believed and would not be restrained from living up to these beliefs. He decided to return with his family to America and in October 1948 resigned his position as the Chief Minister of Temple Emanuel and also his position as President of the Zionist Federation. Horace Newman, as President of the Zionist State Council, became Acting President of the Zionist Federation.

The twenty-second Zionist Congress was due to be opened on 9th December and Sasha and I had a busy time arranging affairs at home and preparing for our departure. Sam Wynn left a week before us and accompanied by Ida he came through Sydney en route for England. Ida was very distressed seeing Sam off travelling on his own and followed him a few weeks later, having arranged a rendezvous with him in Palestine. A few days before our departure the Zionist Federation, in conjunction with several other local organisations, tendered us a luncheon at which we were formally farewelled and bidden Godspeed. There were many speeches complimenting me on my communal and Zionist activities which moved us deeply and for which we were grateful.

We left Sydney in mid-November by Catalina flying-boat on our first visit to Europe since 1932, a lapse of fourteen years; years heavy with tragedy and disaster for the human race and, in particular, for the Jewish people. Our hearts were filled with sadness and with feelings of deep anxiety knowing as we did that most of our dearest relatives had perished in the European holocaust and that our first encounters with the few members of our family who survived were going to be moments of deep shock, overflowing with sadness, and of extreme excitement.

Our two sons, Theo and Herbert, with Diana, Theo's bride of a few months, as well as several friends and colleagues came to see us off at the flying-boat base at Rose Bay, Sydney. The Catalina left the jetty punctually at midnight. After ploughing over the surface for several hundred yards she lifted her nose towards the sky and presented the passengers with a brilliant view of the skyline of Sydney glittering by night. A short distance out of Sydney the flying-boat encountered violent electrical storms and our passage grew more and more turbulent as we flew towards the border of Queensland. The weather cleared a few hours later and we enjoyed the experience of our first long-distance flight. It took us nearly five days to reach London, arriving on a bleak afternoon and we had our first glimpse of the devastation its brave people had suffered during the terrible years of the war.

On arrival in London we were met by my brother Harry and his family and driving to the hotel in the West End we looked over a large part of the terribly scarred metropolis in the darkness of night. We stayed in London a few days, spending the time with my brother and other relatives who lived in England. Sasha and I were awed by what we saw of the widespread destruction showered on it from the air by the Luftwaffe.

On one occasion Harry drove me through a street in the north-west of London and pointing to an empty plot of ground told me that it was the place where his home had stood before the air raids. His wife, Golda, and their three sons of school age, were evacuated to Oxford early in the war and he remained at work in the East End of London staying with his family at weekends. One night he came home to prepare a parcel of clothing to take to the family and left the house for a short time during a blitz only to return and find his home razed to the ground by

the blast of a heavy bomb explosion: he escaped being blown to pieces by a matter of a very few minutes.

Before leaving London I called at 77 Great Russell Street where the offices of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organisation were situated and I found the dinginess of the rooms and the atmosphere of this, for Zionists, hallowed place depressing and very disappointing. The only senior official who found the time to see me was Joseph Linton, then private secretary to Dr. Chaim Weizmann, who years later became Minister to Australia for Israel.

CHAPTER

# 21

# *Twenty-second Zionist Congress*

THE CITY OF BASLE was the cradle of the Zionist Congress: it played host to Dr. Herzl's first Congress in 1897 and was destined fifty years later to accommodate the last Zionist Congress before the rebirth of the State of Israel. Of his impressions of the first Congress Dr. Herzl wrote a prophetic entry in his diary saying, "If I were to sum up the Congress in a word—which I shall take care not to publish—it would be this: in Basle I founded the Jewish State. If I spoke this out aloud today I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty years, everyone will perceive it."

It was with a feeling of intense excitement and with a degree of exultation that we arrived at Basle airport a few days prior to the opening of the Congress. A short while before we landed a charter plane had arrived from England bringing delegates and spectators to the Congress and a large number of young people wearing blue and white armbands were awaiting our arrival. Amidst the din and the elbowing in the crowded Customs Hall Sasha and I managed to have our luggage cleared and reached an information counter in an adjoining hall. After waiting some time whilst a young attendant wearing the Congress insignia made exhaustive enquiries we were given the address of the hotel where our accommodation had been booked for the duration of the Congress. It was a small but comfortable place in the centre of the town where the South African delegation was also staying. This proved to be advantageous as I had an opportunity to discuss with them such Zionist and general Jewish communal problems as our two countries had in

common. From enquiries made at the Congress office, I was able to locate the lodgings of Dr. Machover and of Isaac Gottlieb of Wellington, New Zealand.

Three hundred and eighty-three delegates and a number of deputy delegates represented eighty-one countries at the Congress. In addition there were several hundred visitors who came as observers. As is usual at such international meetings, there were constant comings and goings at the many offices set up for the convenience of delegates and visitors. The *Stadt Casino* was at once a cauldron of excitement, a melting pot of a large variety of Jewish types characterising our dispersion over the globe and a Babel of tongues. Most conspicuous was the presence of large numbers of young people who came from the Displaced Persons' camps in Germany and Austria. Some were employed by the organisers of the Congress as ushers and messengers and others came to plead the cause of the *Shaarith-Hapletah* (the survivors of the holocaust) who wanted to be taken out of the camps and brought to Palestine. They gathered in the corridors in smaller or larger groups debating and gesticulating excitedly amongst themselves. At times the atmosphere was charged with electricity, and tragedy seemed to be hovering over the ante-rooms of the concert- and dance-halls where the sessions of the Congress were held.

Wherever Zionist congresses are convened the departments and institutions of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organisation take advantage of the presence of Zionist leaders and *Askanim* (voluntary workers) from the four corners of the earth to exchange news and information. *The Keren Kayemeth le Israel* (J.N.F.) arranged a World Conference in Basle a few days before Congress and invitations were sent to Isaac Gottlieb and myself to attend. Similarly the Youth Aliyah held a conference during the sessions of Congress and we were asked to be present as representatives of Youth Aliyah in Australia and New Zealand. It was my first appearance in an official capacity at such world assemblies and I gained valuable experience.

Above all, my first meeting with the directors of world *Keren Hayesod* was a memorable experience. For nearly fifteen years I had been Australian Commissioner of *Keren Hayesod*, in which capacity I had been in frequent communication with the Head Office in Jerusalem. It was understandable that I should look

forward keenly to meeting the personalities with whom I had worked for many years and with whom I had a community of interest. In response to a note received from Leo Herman, secretary to the Board of Directors, I called at the temporary office of the *Keren Hayesod*. There I met Dr. Arthur Hantke and Leib Jaffe, co-Chairmen of the Board of Directors, and Mr. Herman. I was received most cordially and immediately was made to feel as one belonging to the family of *Keren Hayesod*. A couple of days later I was invited to a small and intimate reception to Dr. Weizmann. There were about twenty guests present who, like myself, were *Askanim*. We were introduced to Dr. Weizmann who asked some of us about conditions in our respective communities and later addressed us on the history and importance of *Keren Hayesod*. A reception on a larger scale was held in between sessions of Congress for delegates associated with *Keren Hayesod* work in their home countries. This meeting was addressed by Leib Jaffe, in Yiddish, because the presence of many delegates from Latin American countries and from Europe made the Yiddish language indispensable. Like many others I was called upon to speak briefly and my effort to speak the Yiddish language was rather a poor one.

During our stay in Basle and our subsequent visit in Jerusalem Sasha and I spent much time in the company of our friends of the *Keren Hayesod* Head Office. Leib Jaffe, a poet and a sensitive personality who radiated warmth and friendliness, Arthur Hantke, the methodical and matter of fact German Jew, were both easily accessible and always glad to see us. We formed a close attachment with them and with the other senior officials of the *Keren Hayesod* which was the treasury of the Jewish Agency and of the World Zionist Organisation. It was this bond of comradeship which inspired and sustained me making it possible for me to serve its cause for the rest of the days of my working life. Thus it is that after thirty-five years I am still active in my capacity as President of the *Keren Hayesod* United Israel Appeal in the State of New South Wales.

At our first meeting Dr. Hantke looked at me, as I thought, rather quizzically. Later, when our association became more intimate, he told me what had been the source of his puzzlement and amusement when he saw me for the first time. From read-

ing my correspondence and from the reports he received about me from the many emissaries who visited Australia for the *Keren Hayesod*, he imagined that I was a rather tall and husky person. My height is barely 5 feet 6 inches and I am of slim build and he was amused to find that my physical shape was so different from what he imagined it to be.

The twenty-second Zionist Congress opened on 9th December 1946, with great solemnity and decorum reflecting the sombre mood of the assembled delegates. The Congress met against the background of the tragic and fateful events which had occurred in the seven years since the twenty-first Congress was held on the eve of the outbreak of World War II. In his autobiography *Trial and Error* Dr. Chaim Weizmann writes:

> "It was a dreadful experience to stand before that assembly and to run one's eye along row after row of the delegates finding amongst them hardly one of the friendly faces which had adorned past Congresses. Polish Jewry was missing—Central and South East European Jewry was missing—the German Jewry was missing. The two main groups represented were the Palestinians and the Americans: between them sat the representatives of the fragments of European Jewry together with some small delegations from England, the Dominions and South America."

The ravages of the war years, the plight of the Jews in the Nazi inferno in Europe, the rigorous enforcement of the terms of the 1939 Palestine White Paper and the consequent refusal of the British authorities to admit the survivors from the Nazi slaughter into Palestine, the deportation of the "illegal" immigrants to camps in Cyprus and terrorist acts in Palestine all cast a shadow of gloom on the Congress. As later events proved I was privileged to participate in what was a crucial and historical Congress.

One of the main issues debated was the question as to whether, and on what terms, the leaders of the Jewish Agency should take part in the London Conference called by the British Government to discuss with the Jews and Arabs a possible settlement of the Palestine problem. The adjourned London Conference on Palestine was to be held in January 1947, and

the question of Jewish participation was submitted to the Zionist Congress for decision.

The structure of the World Zionist Organisation is based on the party system and important Zionist issues are thrashed out in the party rooms and decided in the party Caucuses. I had been elected as a delegate on the platform of General Zionism and on arrival in Basle I joined the World Confederation of General Zionists. It soon became obvious to me that in contrast to the other parties the World Confederation was a loosely knit group with no strict party rules or discipline; moreover, its members differed widely in outlook and behaviour. This applied equally to the leadership and to the rank-and-file. Attending the party meetings and listening attentively to the debates I found it incongruous and disturbing that the views of the delegates were so divergent. This divergence of views was especially notable in the discussions concerning participation in the London Conference.

The party leadership consisted of Dr. Israel Goldstein as President, Peretz Bernstein, Yitzchak Greenbaum and Moshe Sneh of Palestine, Rabbi Dr. Abba Hillel Silver and Dr. Emanuel Newman of the United States, Professor Selig Brodetsky and Dr. Nahum Goldman of England. All of them were later elected by the World Zionist General Council members of the World Zionist Executive. The most outstanding and dominating figure was Rabbi Silver who was one of the greatest and most powerful orators of the Congress.

The problem of the London Conference was debated at great length and Dr. Weizmann was invited to address one of our meetings. His address made a strong impact on the delegates but did not change the views held by the leaders of our party nor of most of the rank-and-file. No unanimity could be achieved and it was left to the delegates to record their votes in the plenum of Congress in accordance with their personal convictions in this difficult yet vital issue.

The group opposing Jewish participation in the London Conference were also at variance about the re-election of Dr. Weizmann as President of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organisation. A refusal to negotiate a Palestine solution with the British Government would imply that our only means of resisting the 1939 White Paper was to condone and even to

encourage the terrorists in Palestine in the hope of forcing the British to repudiate it. Dr. Weizmann condemned terrorism in Palestine in the strongest possible terms and it was argued by the "activists" that, if elected, Dr. Weizmann would be forced to go to the Conference and negotiate with the British authorities on Ernest Bevin's terms. The question as to whether or not to send delegates to the Conference in London was thus coupled with the issue of the presidency of the World Zionist movement. The discussions and intensive negotiations between the leaders of the Zionist parties failed to achieve an agreed policy and this crucial issue came up for decision by the plenum at the final session of the Congress. It was an all-night sitting and in an atmosphere of indescribable tension delegates were asked to vote whether "to go, or not to go, to London". Dr. Abba Hillel Silver led the group opposing the sending of delegates to London and in a masterly oration presented his argument to Congress. Dr. Weizmann, whose eyesight was failing badly, was led on to the platform and in an impassioned address answered his opponents. He turned and dramatically pointed his finger in the direction of Dr. Silver saying, "It is easy to condone terrorism in Palestine when one is sitting in Cleveland in the United States." The Congress was in uproar and the atmosphere in the hall was electric. Dr. Weizmann, obviously tired and depressed, but deeply moved, left the Congress and soon afterwards left by air for London without waiting for the decision by Congress which, by a small majority, voted "not to go to London". The resolution adopted by Congress read

> "That in the existing circumstances the Zionist Movement cannot take part in the Conference. If a change should take place in the situation the General Council of the Zionist Organisation should reconsider the matter and decide whether the Executive is to participate in the Conference or not."

This meant that it would rest with the British authorities to open the way for negotiations.

After the vote was taken the sitting continued throughout the night and concluded the business of Congress with the singing of *Hatikvah* (Song of Hope—the Jewish National Hymn) somewhat later than 10 o'clock in the morning. The dispersed dele-

gates did not then envisage that we were to meet for the next —twenty-third—Congress in Jerusalem, the capital of the reborn State of Israel.

Congress did not elect a Zionist Executive but invested the Zionist General Council with the authority to carry out this task. I was elected a deputy member of the General Council (Actions Committee) which met immediately after Congress and I remained in Basle to attend its sessions. Before the opening of the council meetings the World Confederation of General Zionists, like the other parties, met in conference to discuss its attitude on issues to come before it and to put forward proposals to the General Council. I took my seat in the first row of chairs facing the head table where Dr. Silver, in the chair, Dr. Nahum Goldman, Yitzchak Greenbaum and other giants of our movement were sitting. I overheard some of the things they discussed among themselves and was not at all edified by their imputations and mutual recriminations. The disrespectful treatment in my hearing of Dr. Stephen Wise by some of his compatriots and of Dr. Weizmann by several of his colleagues depressed me greatly.

Before leaving Basle for Antwerp I had a brief meeting with Moshe Shertok (Sharett) and I reported to him on our political activities in Australia and in particular our relations with the Australian Labour Government. Later, in London, I had a further opportunity to meet members of the newly elected Zionist Executive, and reported in greater detail on the Zionist effort in Australia.

From Basle Sasha and I went to spend some time with our relatives in Belgium and from there we travelled to London where we arrived about the middle of January 1947. Our original plan was to stay in England for about two months and then to continue our journey to Palestine so as to spend the Passover Festival in Jerusalem. In accordance with the Congress resolution the Zionist Executive did not participate in the Conference on Palestine between the British and Arabs which was held in January and February 1947. Members of the Zionist Executive however, did enter into informal talks with members of the British Government at the time of the Conference. On several occasions I came to the office of the Jewish Agency at 77 Great Russell Street to hear the latest news on these talks. Several times

I met there Dr. Moshe Sneh who was a member of the executive whilst he waited for Mr. Ben Gurion to return from the British Foreign Office where the informal talks were held.

On 7th February the British Government submitted its proposals, which became known as the Bevin Plan, to the Jewish Agency. The plan provided that the British Government be given the trusteeship over Palestine for five years with a view to preparing the country for independence. Further, that Jewish immigration be allowed at the rate of four thousand per month for two years but that after this period the question of immigration should be determined by the High Commissioner in consultation with an advisory council which was to be set up in the interim period.

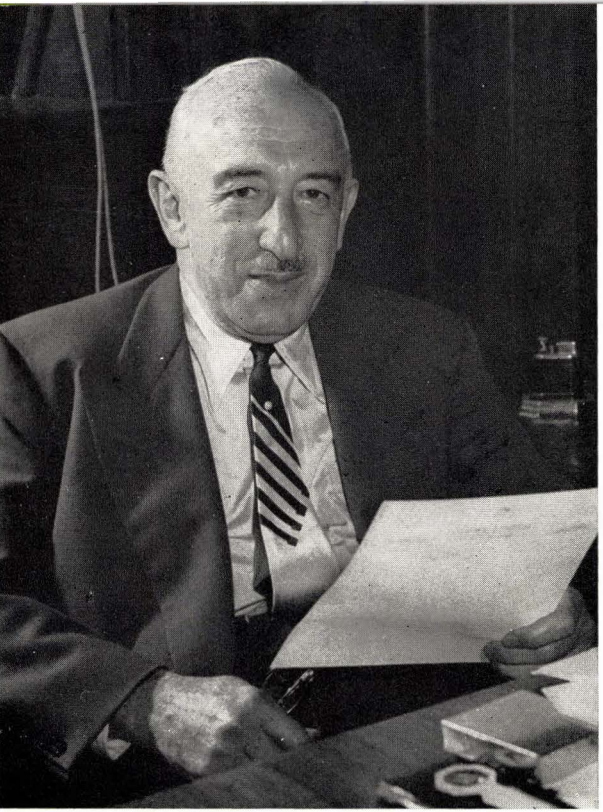
The Jewish Agency did not accept these proposals and in a memorandum containing its criticisms of the Bevin Plan submitted alternative proposals to the British Government. The Agency's memorandum listed three vital points for any settlement of the Palestine problem: 1. Freedom of Jewish immigration. 2. Freedom to purchase land for settlement in any part of the country. 3. Freedom to develop the Jewish National Home to become eventually an independent Jewish State.

When it became known that the Foreign Secretary was to make a statement on the Palestine issue to the House of Commons on 18th February there was a run on tickets for the visitors' gallery in the House of Commons. It was only through the good offices of our friend, Mr. (later Sir) Barnett Janner, M.P., that Sasha and I obtained visitors' tickets for the afternoon session. We were told to be in the queue early and, after waiting for some time in the cold of the English winter were admitted into the building where Barney was waiting for us. In the gallery we were seated next to Rabbi Kopul Rosen, a leading Zionist and internationally renowned educational and public figure. The visitors' and diplomatic galleries were packed to capacity when Mr. Bevin started to speak. He blamed the Jews for England's failure to carry out the terms and obligations of the Palestine Mandate. The Foreign Secretary spoke with obvious bitterness when he said that the Jews were forcing their way to the "front of the queue". He asserted that the Mandatory Government had neither the power nor the authority to hand over the country—whole or partitioned—to the Jews or

to the Arabs and that his Government had decided to submit the Palestine problem to the next regular meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. At the conclusion of Mr. Bevin's statement we left the House of Commons feeling that it spelled the end of a chapter in our history—a chapter which had started thirty years before with the Balfour Declaration—and that it could be the beginning of a new and, perhaps, happier era for the Jewish people.

The inclemency of the English winter was aggravated by the fact that early in 1947 life in England was very austere. Like many other countries in Europe, Great Britain was licking the frightful wounds inflicted upon it by the last war. The scars of these wounds were still fresh and visible everywhere but especially so in the city and the East End of London. There was still rationing of food and fuel but it was the severe shortage of meat, eggs and particularly of coal which affected us mostly. The menu at our West End Hotel consisted of powdered egg and frozen fish. There was no heating in the rooms and lifts were operated only from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and then from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. On the first Sunday morning Sasha came in for breakfast at 10 o'clock and was served a fresh sole tastily broiled in butter. The next Sunday she came in at the regular breakfast hour and ordered a fresh sole assuming that this was the regular menu on Sundays. Our waiter told her that she could have only frozen fish fillets. Asked why he had served her fresh sole on the previous Sunday, the waiter replied: "Madam, you came late last week and as an act of courtesy I served you *my* breakfast." A hotel notice to guests read: "Please treat our staff with courtesy; they are scarcer than guests."

During our stay in London we attended a session of the Zionist Conference of Great Britain and Ireland which was addressed by Dr. Weizmann. He looked weary and depressed and spoke in the strongest terms against the terrorist acts in Palestine as he abhorred all violence. It was at the time when the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* held Justice Williams and Major Collins captive as hostages for Dov Gruner who had been condemned to death by hanging. Someone in the audience was constantly interjecting and hurling abuse at Dr. Weizmann. Very little notice was taken of him by the audience and when he con-



Norman Schureck.



Mr. S. Kessler with Rabbi Brodie.

tinued for some time Dr. Weizmann good-humouredly asked the interjector to let him speak. I learned later that he was a crank who made a nuisance of himself regularly at Zionist meetings. The incident was typical of many situations at our meetings at home.

At a meeting in London with Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), Berl Locker and Dr. Nahum Goldman, members of the newly elected World Zionist Executive, I reported on the situation in Australia and on the activities of the Zionist Federation. I told them about the close and friendly relations we had with members of the Australian Government and especially with Dr. Evatt who was in sympathy with Zionist aspirations. I told them of the existence of the Australia-Palestine Committees composed of Cabinet Ministers, Parliamentarians, Church dignitaries and civic leaders of all parties and persuasions. Under the guidance of the Department for Zionist Policy, the public relations arm of the Zionist Federation, the committee was doing extremely valuable work in promoting favourable public opinion for Zionist political aims and for the understanding of the stand of the *Yishuv*. I pointed out that as citizens of Australia we could be only partially effective in creating a favourable climate for the work we were doing for the world Zionist movement and for the *Yishuv*, because the Government and the general Australian community did not regard us as authoritative spokesmen for the Jewish Agency or for Palestine Jewry. I suggested, therefore, that it was essential for a highly-placed member of the Jewish Agency Executive to visit Australia to put the Zionist case to the Governments and peoples of Australia and New Zealand.

They asked me a few questions and then showed no response whatever to my proposal and Moshe Sharett passed over to an entirely different subject. The World Zionist Executive, he told me, was extremely anxious to acquire the German colonies which were established in Palestine by the Templars which were still their property. The Templars who settled in Palestine many years before, had remained German nationals and as enemy aliens were deported to Australia during World War II. The executive was then negotiating the purchase of the Sarona Colony near Tel Aviv but the leader and most of its members were in Australia and the sale had to be authorised by them.

The acquisition of these colonies was of paramount importance for political and agricultural reasons. It was vital to locate the leader in Australia in order to conclude the negotiations and I was asked, on my return to Australia, to undertake this task with all possible speed. On my visit to Palestine a few weeks later, Dr. A. Granot (Granovski), Chairman and Managing Director of the Jewish National Fund, Jerusalem, unaware of my London meeting with the members of the executive, sought to entrust me with the same mission on behalf of the J.N.F., the financial arm for land purchase and land redemption of the Jewish Agency of Palestine and the World Zionist Executive. Dr. Granot mentioned that the leader of the Sarona Templars was a Mr. Wagner who, to his knowledge, was residing "somewhere" in Australia.

Sasha and I were scheduled to leave London for Palestine in mid-March. Some weeks earlier the English press published an announcement by the authorities to the effect that visas for travel to Palestine which were issued before that date would have to be endorsed by the appropriate Government agencies in London. We were the holders of British passports issued by the Australian Government which entitled us to enter Palestine without visas. The new regulation however, stipulated that even travellers with British passports had to obtain official endorsement for permission to enter Palestine.

For the duration of the Zionist Congress the *Irgun* observed a truce of a sort in Palestine but terrorist acts were intensified when the negotiations in London proved abortive. When the time came for us to book our flight to Palestine the news reached London that martial law had been imposed on Tel Aviv. Happily for us Rabbi Kopul Rosen telephoned one morning late in March to say that martial law and the economic squeeze were being lifted by the Palestine administration. I immediately set out to have our passports endorsed for permission to enter Palestine but I found such endorsement difficult to obtain. I was sent to at least a dozen offices in the various Ministries, climbing countless staircases (lifts were inoperative) until I was led into a spacious and well-furnished suite of rooms in the Foreign Office building in Downing Street. I was received courteously by someone who was obviously a senior officer, to whom I repeated my request for an endorsement of our passports. He

tried to explain to me that it was dangerous to travel to Palestine and advised me not to risk endangering our lives. I told him that I was a life-long Zionist and had made the long and tiring journey to represent the Australian Zionist movement at the Congress in Basle and that I wished to visit Palestine before my return to Australia at whatever risk it might entail. He did not attempt to dissuade me further but asked, rather curtly, for our passports and endorsed them for one entry into Palestine.

The same afternoon I called at the Air Terminal to book our flight for Palestine. Whilst waiting at the desk for the ticket-clerk to complete our bookings I inadvertently overheard a conversation at a neighbouring desk between a young American and another booking official in which the name of Ida Silverman was mentioned. I became rather curious and I asked the young man whether I had heard him correctly giving the name of Ida Silverman to the clerk. He told me his name was Holzer and he was on a short visit to London en route to Palestine together with his mother-in-law, Mrs. Ida Silverman of Providence, Rhode Island, in the United States. Sasha and I met Ida at the Air Terminal and we travelled together to Palestine. Ida had made a brief stop-over in London to address an important fund-raising meeting of the *Keren Hayesod.* It was a happy coincidence to meet again so unexpectedly whilst on our way to Palestine. During the flight we recalled the difficulties and set-backs as well as the triumphs of her successful campaign in Australia.

CHAPTER

# 22

## *State of Siege*

FROM LYDDA we drove directly to Jerusalem. At the airport and on the way to the ancient city it was noticeable immediately that the country was in a state of siege. There were military patrols and many check posts on the road. Our car was stopped several times by soldiers and military police who asked for identification documents. In Jerusalem we were taken to the Eden Hotel and welcomed by the proprietor who remembered us from our last visit exactly fifteen years before. One could not help but notice the contrast between the atmosphere in the streets and the calm mood prevailing indoors. In the hotel, guests as well as staff went about their business in the normal way but once outside the scene was completely changed. There was a feeling of tension in the air, people walked at a brisk pace as if they were hurrying away from something they were eager to avoid. The centre of the city was fenced off with barbed wire and armed soldiers with fixed bayonets stood guard outside the buildings. The scene resembled a battlefield with soldiers on the alert awaiting imminent attack by the enemy. At first Sasha was somewhat frightened and remarked that, perhaps, the official in London had been right when he strongly advised against a visit to Palestine at the present time. She soon cast off such trifling fears and enjoyed our stay to the full, displaying much courage and fortitude in some very awkward situations and serious incidents during our stay in the country.

The day after our arrival in Jerusalem we called at the office of the *Keren Hayesod* which is in the right wing of the Jewish Agency building (*Sochnut*). We were warmly received by Leib

Jaffe and Dr. Arthur Hantke, the co-Managing Directors, and were introduced to the Treasurer, Mr. A. Ulitzer, and to the other members of the staff. They all knew me by reputation and I was made to feel completely at home and, as they put it, I was regarded as a member of the *Keren Hayesod* family. We also called on Shlomo Lowy at his office in the Jewish National Fund wing of the Agency building. Rivka and Shlomo received us with great delight: the strong ties of friendship which had been forged during their wartime stay in Australia remained as firm and as untarnished as they had been before their return to Palestine.

For nearly the entire period of our visit the inhabitants of Jerusalem were living under a curfew imposed by the military authorities. During the first few days the curfew hours were between 5 p.m. and 7 a.m.; thus we had to remain indoors for fourteen hours a day. Fortunately there were many interesting people staying in the Hotel Eden and the guests formed small groups to discuss the events of the day. Amongst the important guests were Rabbi Dr. Abba Hillel Silver and Mr. James G. McDonald of the United States who, immediately before the war, was League of Nations High Commissioner for German Refugees. After the re-emergence of the State of Israel, he was appointed first United States Ambassador to Israel. He was on a visit to the country together with his wife. On a couple of occasions we saw David Ben Gurion, who was ill at the time, brought on a stretcher from hospital to confer with Dr. Silver and other members of the Jewish Agency Executive in one of the private rooms of the hotel.

For the most part Rabbi Silver kept to his room and only occasionally came down in the late hours of the evening when Gershon Agronsky (later Agron), the editor of the *Palestine Post*, wanted him for an interview. Mr. Agronsky had a special permit from the authorities to come to the hotel during the curfew hours. Several of the guests, myself included, often crowded around the table to listen to the conversation between Dr. Silver and Agronsky. On one such occasion Dr. Silver remarked angrily that he could not understand why the Jerusalemites stood for this terrible treatment by the British. If, he said, the entire population of Jerusalem defied the curfew decree and walked into the streets no harm would happen to

them. I was sitting behind his chair listening and was flabbergasted by such talk. I leaned towards him and in the hearing of all I said, "Dr. Silver you are our recognised leader, so why do you not take the lead and walk outside with us in defiance of the bayonets of the soldiers outside and in this way set an example to the inhabitants of Jerusalem?" I received an icy, stony look but no answer.

In the time since our first visit to Palestine fifteen years earlier, the Jewish National Home had made gigantic progress despite the vicissitudes of the policy of the Mandatory Power and in the face of Arab violence and intransigence. The new Jerusalem, in contrast to the walled-in old city, had expanded to a degree that was almost unrecognisable. King George Street in 1932 consisted of a very few buildings, most of which were then in the course of construction. It had no pavement and the road was strewn with pebbles and broken rock whereas now it formed a complete thoroughfare with handsome, stone buildings and a well-patronised shopping centre. The extent of this development was even more noticeable in the all-Jewish city of Tel Aviv and to a somewhat lesser degree in the city of Haifa. Still more amazing was the pace of expansion and development that had taken place in the countryside as we observed during our visits to many of the *Kibbutzim* (communal settlements) and *Moshavim* (co-operative settlements) in the north and south of the country.

The Lowys invited us to spend the first days of Passover with them at a *Kibbutz* and afterwards to tour the Galil in the north. We accepted gladly. Shlomo informed the *Kibbutz* and we received a cordial invitation from the secretary of the settlement to be the guests of the *Kibbutz* together with their dear friends, Shlomo and Rivka Lowy.

We left Jerusalem by car on our way north, and were stopped several times by army patrols and at road-blocks when our identification papers were checked and the car searched. After considerable delay we reached Shaar Hamakim, a *Kibbutz* of the *Hashomer Hatzair*, the left wing Labour Group, located about fifteen miles north of Haifa. Our car stopped atop a wooded hill and we were led into the confines of the settlement. The place overlooked a valley and as we entered the settlement it was a wonderful sight to behold. The place was obviously

preparing for the coming festival, the children were neatly clad and the adults were hurrying to their huts to wash and to change their clothes. We were met by several friends of the Lowys and after a few short words of welcome were taken to our rooms and asked to change if we wished to join the *Kibbutz* in the performance of *"kitzur Haomer"* (the cutting of the sheaf; the ceremony being a traditional offering of the first barley crop in ancient Palestine which was performed with much pomp in the precincts of the Temple). This was in accordance with the Biblical precept of "offering the first fruit" and in the dispersion it is symbolically performed as a prayer of the "counting of the Omer" which commences on the second night of Passover and continues for the seven weeks until the day before the Pentecost Festival.

It was an unforgettable experience to watch the cutting of the straw sheaves which was followed by the children's dancing in the open fields until the twilight. It was our first experience of this ceremony and we truly felt as if transported back into ancient days when the "offering" was performed in the Temple Court to the playing of the cymbals by the Levites and the dancing by the Israelites. I was overwhelmed and intoxicated with ecstasy as we took the tortuous path back to the settlement where we assembled in the large dining hall for the *Seder*. All the members of the *Kibbutz* from the age of four or five and several guests were seated at tables and participated in the recital of the *Haggadah*, though in a different version from the traditional one read by Jews elsewhere. The master of ceremonies asked each member in turn to read several verses and I was asked a couple of times to read some portion of it. After the austere meal the younger as well as several of the adult members went outside and continued dancing in the open until the dawn. The Lowys, Sasha and myself were completely exhausted and on leaving the dining hall retired to our rooms. I fell asleep as soon as my head touched the pillow, to awake late next morning. We noticed that most of the male members of the settlement were away and we learnt afterwards that they had left the *Kibbutz* for the day to visit a nearby prison where several of their members were kept as terrorist suspects.

The majority of the members of the settlement hailed from Yugoslavia and their elders came from Zagreb. Shlomo had been

a student at the University at Zagreb earning his living by giving lessons in Hebrew. The older members of the settlement who had been his pupils and whom he had also prepared for *aliyah* to Palestine held Shlomo in reverence and great affection. Rivka, herself a native of Yugoslavia and a pupil of Shlomo, married him afterwards and they left together for Palestine. Shlomo and Rivka consequently were looked upon as belonging to the *Kibbutz* and were always welcome to visit there. Shlomo was regarded by the *Kibbutz* elders as their teacher and mentor and they were always happy to consult him about their problems. During our two days' stay in the *Kibbutz* and on a second visit some years later I was invited to listen in to their discussions and learned to admire their idealism and unbounded devotion to the cause in which they fervently believed.

On the third day we left Shaar Hamakim in the morning to continue our journey northward. We made a short stop at *Kibbutz* Merchavia where my brother Oscar had stayed for a short time as an Australian soldier in World War II. We then called at Afula to visit a first cousin, Pnina Bomse (née Freilich) the sole survivor of a large family of my father's younger brother who perished in the holocaust. After visiting Dan, Tel-Hai and Metula we returned via Tiberias, Safed and Nazareth to Haifa and Tel Aviv. Travelling through Galilee there was hardly any sign of the stringent army regulations restricting the movements of the civilian population as was the case between Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. The roads were free of road-blocks and only before entering Safed were we stopped by an army patrol to check our travel documents. Our passports carried the signature of the Duke of Gloucester who at the time was Governor-General of Australia. The Tommy who inspected our passports was unaware of this and was puzzled that "the Royal Members of the Australian Monarchy should carry the same titles and names as those of the Monarchy of Great Britain". Sasha was amused by his ignorance and lectured the young soldier—he seemed to be but a boy of sixteen—on the relationships of the component parts of the British Commonwealth.

On our way to Haifa we visited Naharia and in passing Acre we were directed away from the street leading to the historic Acre prison where many young Palestinian Jews were interned. We remained a couple of days in Haifa staying at a hotel on

the Carmel which was managed and staffed by German Jews. We enjoyed the panoramic view of the city and of the harbour of Haifa and visited the Ahuza Children's Home which was sponsored and supported financially by the Australian WIZO. In recognition of Australia's effort it was named the Ida Wynn Children's Home as a tribute to the leader of WIZO in Australia.

In contrast to Jerusalem the all-Jewish city of Tel Aviv showed little or no outward signs of being in a state of siege or of being held down in any way by the might of the military. We were fairly free to move about because the curfew, when imposed, was restricted to the period from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Despite the unrest and the grimness of the position in the country we found life in Tel Aviv exciting and enthralling. In the ten days of our stay in the city we were constantly on the move visiting the many offices and institutions of the Jewish Agency, of the *Va'ad Leumi* and of the municipality.

In addition to purely Zionist matters I was interested to learn how we could help the economy of the *Yishuv* in a tangible way. In 1944 Norman Schureck, Horace Newman and I registered an Australia-Palestine Trading Company to promote a two-way trade between the two countries. Whilst in Tel Aviv I made a number of enquiries towards this end and I came in contact with some of the economic leaders of the country like Van Hoofien, then Chairman of the Bank Leumi, Dr. Foerder, then Chairman of Rassco, and Mr. Schenkar, then President of the Chambers of Manufactures Association. Mr. Schenkar, already advanced in years, was the founder of Lodzia, the large textile enterprise in Holon near Tel Aviv. He invited Sasha and me to visit his factory and his car called for us at the hotel one morning shortly after the lifting of the curfew. We then went to his home and he joined us on the journey to Holon. Strong military patrols were guarding the exits of Tel Aviv proper and we were stopped several times for a thorough search at road-blocks on the short run from Tel Aviv to Holon. Later that day we learnt that Dov Gruner and the other condemned *Irgun* prisoners had been removed from the jail in Jerusalem to the fortified prison in Acre and the military feared violent reprisals by the *Irgun* Commandos.

On one of our visits to Ida Silverman at the hotel an elderly Jew from Kfar Vitkin came to ask her for further financial

assistance to complete the construction of their synagogue. Ida introduced her visitor to Sasha and me with a view to getting our further support for the synagogue projects in which she was keenly interested. The elderly man was a recent immigrant from Poland and in telling us of his origin and of his standing and occupation in his native city of Lodz he showed Sasha several photographs which he carried on him. Amongst them was one of a group of men and one of the group resembled what we thought was a close relative to Sasha. In answer to our query about the picture, and about the particular person in the group he told us that we could not possibly know him. It was, he said, a picture of a conference attended by members of the Association of Jewish Manufacturers in Poland of which he was the President. The person in the picture who interested us was a member of the association by the name of Landau who lived in Lvov (Lemberg). At this Sasha nearly collapsed. It was her younger brother Bernard who, with his wife and children and all the members of her family who remained in Poland, had perished in the catastrophe of World War II.

We returned to Jerusalem for the remainder of our stay in the country. One early morning we awoke to the rumble of vehicles and the marching of soldiers and looking out from between shutters we saw military vehicles and tanks followed by military patrols. Later that morning we learnt that Dov Gruner had been hanged in the Acre prison and that the whole country was in a state of emergency. The curfew hours were extended from dusk to dawn and movement was again restricted to the hours of daylight. Our days, however, were fully occupied with visits to the various offices of the Jewish Agency in connection with my Zionist work and with discussions concerning our political activities in Australia.

In addition to meeting with old friends and colleagues I also had occasion to discuss our problems with several members of the World Zionist Executive and with some of the senior officials of the Jewish Agency. Eliezer Kaplan, Treasurer of the Jewish Agency, and Dr. Kurt Blumenfeld, one of the directors of *Keren Hayesod*, were amongst them. I called on Julius Simon, President of the Palestine Economic Corporation (P.E.C.), to enquire about possibilities of Australian investments in Palestine. Mr. Simon was very much interested and he paid

me a return visit at the hotel and suggested a visit to their Dead Sea works. My association and friendly contacts with the Palestine Economic Corporation in later years had their origin in these early discussions with Julius Simon. Mr. Hoofien and Dr. Aaron Barth of the Bank Leumi also met me in Jerusalem prior to our departure for Australia. Before our discussion got under way, however, they had to leave hurriedly for Tel Aviv because a daylight curfew had been imposed suddenly on travel between that city and Jerusalem.

In the evening we spent the time in the hotel chatting with many of the guests from abroad or from the country who happened to be visiting Jerusalem. We had the pleasure on these occasions of meeting Dr. Rachel Kagan, a well-known identity of the Old City of Jerusalem, Chaim Levanon, who later succeeded Israel Rokach as Mayor of Tel Aviv after the emergence of the State of Israel, and other notable residents of Jerusalem. We exchanged experiences of Jewish life in the different countries and under vastly varying circumstances.

A few days before our departure I received a message from the Jewish Agency to say that Major Michael Comay was leaving for Australia that evening and that he wished to see me most urgently. A short while afterwards he came to the hotel and told me that he was going to Australia and New Zealand on a political mission and that he had been advised to call on me to be briefed on the Zionist position in Australia and of our contacts, if any, with the Australian authorities. It was late afternoon and he still had to collect his air tickets from the B.O.A.C. office which was inside the barbed wire fence in the city. Michael asked me to accompany him and give him the necessary information on our way there. I told him as much of our political activities and of the general Zionist and Jewish position in our part of the world as time permitted. The briefing was perforce incomplete and I told him that he would get all possible information and every assistance from Horace Newman, President of the Zionist Federation. I sent a cable to Sydney informing Horace of Michael's visit and of his mission to Australia. On our return to Australia a week later he had already completed his political task and remained in Sydney a few days at the invitation of the Youth Aliyah Committee and

I had an opportunity to be present at a farewell luncheon given in his honour by the Zionist Executive.

Ida Silverman when in Jerusalem stayed in the home of Shalom Horowitz, a well-known advocate and a notable collector of the arts. Mr. Horowitz was out of the country and he invited Ida to stay at his home in his absence. We visited her on several occasions and had an opportunity to inspect and admire the beautiful home and the magnificent collection of art objects. Mr. Horowitz bequeathed the house and the unique and very valuable art collection to the *Keren Hayesod* in Jerusalem. Named Beit Shalom (House of Shalom) the house is being used for special occasions and official receptions.

Shortly after our arrival in Palestine I had written to the office of the Weizmann Institute in Rehovoth asking for the privilege of a meeting with Dr. Weizmann. I received a prompt reply from his secretary stating that he would be glad to see me and suggesting a date for an appointment which I confirmed. A couple of days before our appointed time I received a note to say that Professor Weizmann was indisposed and was unable to see me that day. At the same time I was asked to indicate the date of my departure from Palestine, which I did. In due course I was advised that Dr. Weizmann would see me at noon on the day of my departure.

Sasha and I left Jerusalem in the morning to keep the appointment at Rehovoth and on arrival were ushered into Dr. Weizmann's office by his secretary who told us that Mrs. Vera Weizmann was expecting guests for lunch and that we could not stay longer than thirty minutes. I found Dr. Weizmann much more relaxed than he was at the Congress in Basle or at the Zionist Conference in London. He wanted to know about the Jewish community in Australia, about the Zionist position and Zionist activities generally. I gave him a brief outline of Australian Zionism and of the Jewish community being under the impression that there was not sufficient time for a more detailed survey. But Dr. Weizmann kept asking more and more questions and then turned to a discussion of the situation in the *Yishuv* and of the tragedy of European Jewry. The secretary came in several times to remind him that there were guests at his home but he ignored her until Mrs. Weizmann telephoned to say that Mr. and Mrs. Gestetner of London had arrived and requested

him to come home. Our conversation lasted ninety minutes and on telling him of my personal close relationship with Dr. Evatt he replied: "I wish the same could be said of our relationship with Mr. Bevin in England."

As we were about to leave I asked when, in his opinion, would a Jewish State in Palestine be established. He said rather gloomily that it would not happen in his time but that it could happen in ten or twenty years. Our meeting took place in early May 1947 after the Special Session of the United Nations which was convened on 24th April and concluded with the setting up of UNSCOP—United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. I then said, "Dr. Weizmann, I am deeply persuaded that the Jewish State will come into being in your lifetime and that you will be its first President." He looked at me and said in Yiddish, "*Fun eier mohl in Got's oiern*—from your lips into God's ears." On this note Sasha and I took leave of our beloved leader who was one of the principal architects of the Jewish State.

On our return home I soon found myself caught up again in the strong current of Zionist activity which had continued during our absence overseas and was spearheaded by Horace Newman, Rabbi Max Schenk and Silva Steigrad. The Youth Aliyah-WIZO Campaign was in progress with Mrs. Ilse Warburg, Raddai of Haifa, as the emissary. Michael Comay, accompanied by Horace Newman as President and Marcell Sigalla, the General Secretary of the Zionist Federation, was received in Canberra by Mr. Chifley, the Prime Minister, Mr. Arthur Calwell, then Minister for Immigration, and Dr. Evatt, as the official envoy of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. After his visit to Canberra Michael flew to Wellington where he called on Mr. Peter Fraser, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, on the mission entrusted to him by the political department of the Jewish Agency and the executive of the World Zionist Organisation.

In response to a request by the campaign executive of Youth Aliyah-WIZO in Sydney, Michael addressed a meeting in an appeal for financial support by the Jewish community to the fund-raising drive. In the course of his address and at his press conference he spoke of the difficult position of the *Yishuv*, of British policy and of terrorism in Palestine. Michael carried out his political task with great credit to himself but as a consequence of his public utterances he, albeit unwittingly, left a

most unfortunate legacy behind which caused the Australian Zionist movement and the Jewish community in this country great embarrassment. *Smith's Weekly*, an anti-Semitic tabloid, published a report that funds were being raised by Jews in Australia for the purpose of financing the terrorists in Palestine who were killing British soldiers. The paper quoted from an address supposedly made by Major Comay and launched a trenchant attack on Youth Aliyah. The posters which were displayed at the sales stands of the paper throughout Australia, carried in bold print the heading "AUSTRALIAN JEWS FINANCING TERRORISTS IN PALESTINE—KILLING BRITISH SOLDIERS". The Zionist Executive was thrown into a state of turmoil and after protracted discussions decided to issue a libel writ against the paper. The statutes of Australia did not provide for group libel and an individual had to be found on whose behalf Court action could be taken. The courageous and gracious woman leader Dr. Fanny Reading, in her capacity of Youth Aliyah Vice-President, volunteered to be the plaintiff and proceedings were instituted against the publishers and editor of *Smith's Weekly*.

Two years later, in May 1949, the case was heard by Mr. Justice Herron of the Supreme Court. Dr. George Landauer of *Aliyah Hadasha* and head of the Youth Aliyah Department of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, came to Australia to give evidence on behalf of Youth Aliyah. The case was lost as Mr. Justice Herron ruled that the article did not incriminate Dr. Reading personally and it was regrettable that there was no law on our statute books against group libel. He deferred payment of costs, which according to the legal advisers was most unusual.

The task of locating Mr. Wagner, the spokesman of the Sarona Templars, had been impressed on me by Moshe Sharett and Dr. Granot as of great urgency. As soon as we were able to settle down to a normal routine I set out to find his whereabouts. The Templars who had been brought to Australia from Palestine for internment during the war had been released and granted permission to stay in the country. As I surmised that they would come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Immigration I went to Melbourne to enquire from the department about Mr. Wagner's whereabouts. Mr. Arthur Calwell, then Minister for Immigration, whom I knew quite well, was overseas

and I could not obtain any useful information from the officials of his department. In company with Dr. Kurt Frankel, then Federal Director of J.N.F. in Australia, I played a detective's game lasting all day until we found Wagner in a dilapidated cottage in a suburb of Melbourne. He was cautious at first and reluctant to answer our call at his door; but I explained to him the purpose of our visit and he promised to discuss the proposition of the Jewish Agency with the other members of the Sarona Colony who remained in Australia. It appeared that after their release from internment the members dispersed and were living in smaller groups in different parts of the country. I reported my findings to Jerusalem but I did not hear about the matter again. I learned afterwards that Mr. Calwell was keen to see that the Templars remained in Australia because of their high reputation as colonists and that the Australian authorities had undertaken to negotiate with the British administration in Palestine the question of the liquidation of their property.

My experience at the Zionist Congress in Basle which I had attended as a delegate for the first time, my personal contact with world leaders of the Zionist movement, and our visit to Palestine during the most crucial period of the *Yishuv's* struggle for independence; all these spurred me to continue Zionist work in Australia with vigour and determination. I was strengthened in the belief that those were days of Jewish destiny and of historical justice for our people and I was resolved that Australian Jewry should have a part in the shaping of this destiny and of our national revival.

CHAPTER

# 23

## *The Local Scene*

THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT in Australia continued to be vigorous and made further rapid progress on the local scene. In November 1946 Bernard Hammerman became President of the Union of Sydney Zionists and Dr. Aaron Patkin was elected Chairman of the Victorian State Zionist Council. In the same month Malcah Weinberg of WIZO Head Office in Tel Aviv arrived on her first visit to this country.

Shimon Hacohen completed his Australian *Keren Hayesod* campaign at the end of 1946 and the Zionist Federation held a farewell function bidding him Godspeed and expressing appreciation for the tireless and hard-working effort he put in to bring about the success of his campaign in Australia and New Zealand. Shimon's task had been a difficult one but he was rewarded for his labours with good financial results. Representatives of Zionist organisations and communal institutions joined in the tribute paid to Shimon and our son Theodor, as Secretary of the Jewish National Fund in New South Wales, spoke on behalf of the fund.

In February 1947 Ehud Lederberger, the British Youth leader, arrived from Palestine. He was the first Youth *Shliyach* to come to Australia and he remained for an extended period carrying out the task of youth work with much success. It was during this period that the *Hachshara* training farm was established near Melbourne and many young *halutzim* (pioneers) have received their training for *aliyah* to Israel at this centre.

The Central Zionist Committee held its annual meeting early in April and adopted a number of recommendations to be sub-

mitted to the Australian Zionist Conference. A new executive was elected with Horace Newman as President, Simon Advokat, Vice-President, A. Van Roijen, Honorary Treasurer, and Ray Jerdan, Honorary Secretary. Paul Ungar was elected a second Vice-President some time later. The Union of Sydney Zionists held its annual meeting in 1947 earlier than usual and elected Athol Burns to succeed Bernard Hammerman, his brother-in-law, as its President.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry* (E.C.A.J.) Con-

* The Executive Council of Australia Jewry is the supreme organ of the Australian Jewish community with authority to speak in its name and to represent Australian Jewry in and beyond the Commonwealth of Australia. The councillors are elected by the Boards of Deputies in each State and the venue of the Council alternates every two years between Sydney and Melbourne. It is administered by a Committee of Management comprising the councillors of the State in which it is at the time located. For many years Sydney D. Einfeld was the President when the Committee of Management had its seat in Sydney. He is an outstandingly capable administrator, popular and respected leader and enjoys a high reputation in international Jewish councils on which, in rotation with Maurice Ashkanasy, Q.C., of Melbourne, he represented Australian Jewry on many occasions. For a long period President of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, Sydney Einfeld rendered invaluable service to the cause of Jewish migrant integration into the life of Australia. He was for one term a Labour Member of the Federal Parliament and is now a member of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales; he has always striven to uphold the good name of Jewry. The Australian Jewish community is fortunate in having had throughout the years many Jews in public life who were proud Jews and who added lustre to the Jewish name. Currently these include Abram Landa, N.S.W. Agent-General in London, Sam Cohen of Melbourne, a Labour Federal Senator, and Asher Joel of Sydney, a Member of the N.S.W. Legislative Council, all of whom identify themselves with the Jewish community and with the cause of Israel. Sydney Einfeld's public image was cultivated and nurtured on Jewish soil and when he ventured into politics he still remained the leader of the Australian Jewish community.

The most important function of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, apart from representations to Government and civic authorities in Australia and to Jewish international bodies overseas, is that of public relations. Outstanding work in this field was done by Bill Wolfensohn, Harry Goldstein, Victor Smith and Gerald Falk of Sydney and Isi Leibler of Melbourne. For many years a councillor and a member of the Committee of Management, I was Chairman of the Committee of Overseas Jewry and of the Israel Committee on several occasions and Treasurer in 1965-66.

Close collaboration exists between the E.C.A.J.'s Committee of Management and the executive of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand in all matters affecting the State of Israel. Whenever the Zionist

*footnote continued on p. 174.*

ference was convened in April in Melbourne and a resolution was passed urging the Australian Government to support Jewish aspirations in Palestine and was forwarded to the Government in the name of the Australian Jewish community of which the E.C.A.J. was the spokesman. The Committee of Management of the E.C.A.J. was transferred to Sydney and Saul Symonds was elected President with Horace Newman Vice-President.

The thirteenth Australian Zionist Conference was held in Sydney from 31st May till 6th June 1947, and one hundred and two delegates and thirty-six deputy delegates representing all States in the Commonwealth attended. Those were crucial days of decision with the Jewish fate in the balance. A month earlier the United Nations Assembly met in Special Session at Flushing Meadow and, after a fortnight's deliberations, appointed an eleven-member Special Fact-Finding Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in which Australia was included. I reported to the Zionist Executive in Sydney on my experiences in Palestine and my discussions with leaders of the Jewish Agency in London and in Jerusalem and I addressed the Zionist Conference in closed session. Bishop Pilcher and Rabbi Max Schenk addressed the Conference on a note of hope and of deep faith for the Jewish future in Palestine. The mood of the Conference was a mixture of depression because of the terror and the police rule in Palestine and of hope as a result of the attitude of the United Nations Special Assembly. The political resolutions of the Conference were carried with great enthusiasm and in an atmosphere of high expectation. The Conference elected Horace Newman President and myself Treasurer and *Keren Hayesod* Commissioner; the latter position was later conferred on Sam Wynn in Melbourne.

Executive deems it necessary to issue a public statement or to approach the Australian Government with regard to Israel it follows the procedure laid down by the E.C.A.J. on channels of communication, that all public statements or approaches to the Federal Government be made by the E.C.A.J. If the Committee of Management disagrees or declines to take such action the Zionist Executive is entitled to act on its own and it is to the credit of the leadership of both the E.C.A.J. and the Zionist Federation that, in my recollection, no occasion for separate action by the Zionists has ever arisen. The Australian Jewish community is undoubtedly amongst the best organised and most closely knit communities of our time and the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand has contributed much to this happy state of affairs.

Later the same month, the Federal Council of the Jewish National Fund elected Alec Breckler of Perth, Western Australia, Federal President of the Australian J.N.F. Alec's election to this senior position was one of the principal reasons for the fund's tremendous growth and progress in Australia. His fair-mindedness, devotion and sincerity enhanced by his qualities of leadership proved to be of great benefit to the cause of the Jewish National Fund within and beyond the confines of the Australian continent. He was greatly assisted by his wife Hanna, a devoted Zionist and keen worker for Israel.

Within a few days of the Zionist Conference and his election as President of the Zionist Federation, Horace was given four months' leave of absence as he left on an extended business trip overseas. Horace also occupied the position of President of the Central Zionist Committee and the constitution of the Zionist Federation provided that the President of the Zionist Council in the State where the Federation Executive was located should, in the absence of the Federation President, be Acting President of the Federation. The last Zionist Conference therefore stipulated that Horace relinquish the Presidency of the Zionist State Council of New South Wales. There was, however, no time for Horace to implement this decision as he departed from Australia soon after the Conference, whereupon the executive of the Zionist Federation appointed me Acting President of the Federation and the Central Zionist Committee appointed Paul Ungar Acting President of the Zionist State Council of N.S.W.

Another item of interest was the Herzl-Bialik memorial meeting held in July 1947, under the auspices of the Zionist Federation and the Central Zionist Committee. Silva Steigrad delivered the oration to a densely packed audience and depicted dramatically the explosive position of the *Yishuv* during the sessions of UNSCOP held in Jersualem.

In late July we received a cable from the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem urging the sale of ten thousand *Shkolim* in Australia. The executive of the Zionist Federation took immediate steps for an intensive *Shekel* Drive throughout the country and a Jubilee National *Shekel* Board was formed. The same month Rabbi J. L. Zlotnik arrived from South Africa to lead the Jewish National Fund Campaign under the slogan "Land for the Survivors of European Jews". Silva Steigrad and I were the joint

Appeal Presidents. The adverse publicity resulting from the hanging of the British sergeants made the initial effort for the drive very difficult. We organised a dinner at a small restaurant at which the Zionist stalwarts attended; Rabbi Zlotnik's spirited address and the good financial result of the function were encouraging omens for the coming events of the campaign. The Rabbi's scholarly addresses, which he often interspersed with Jewish humour, were very popular and were drawing good audiences with excellent financial results. This despite the fact that the Overseas Jewish Relief Fund launched its appeal in Sydney, as it did the year before, in the month of July with a target of £30,000. Sasha volunteered for the task of providing Rabbi and Mrs. Zlotnik with kosher meals on the Sabbath for the duration of their stay in Sydney because they would not travel on Sabbath and the distance to the only kosher restaurant in Sydney was too great.

On the completion of the campaign in Australia the Zionist Federation farewelled Rabbi and Mrs. Zlotnik at a function held in Sydney early in December 1947. The Rabbi and his wife endeared themselves to all with whom they came in contact during their stay in the country. We were indeed sorry to see them leave us.

The Zionist Federation decided to hold a Jewish State Appeal for the *Keren Hayesod* in the early months of 1948. The Australian committee of the Friends of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem planned to hold an appeal at the same time and Mr. Bernard Cherrick, then head of the Organisation and Information Department of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, arrived in the beginning of February to conduct the appeal. To avoid the two appeals clashing it was agreed to hold a combined appeal with Cherrick as its leader.

The appeal had been conducted under the heading "Jewish State Appeal-Emergency *Keren Hayesod* Campaign". The appeal in N.S.W. was planned to take place during the months of February to April and the target for Australia was £250,000. Saul Symonds, the President of the E.C.A.J. and of the N.S.W. Jewish Board of Deputies, had agreed to be the Australian President of the Jewish State Appeal. Bernard Cherrick was a powerful and popular speaker and a most competent campaigner and at the opening meeting a considerable sum was raised. Messages

of greeting from world Zionist leaders were received, including one from Dr. Weizmann, stating that "States are not given—only an opportunity for their creation."

At one of the meetings of the campaign committee a visitor came into the room stating that he was from London where he actively participated in the work of *Keren Hayesod.* As Chairman of the meeting I invited him to take a seat and to stay with us during our deliberations for the forthcoming appeal. After the meeting he asked Horace and myself to accompany him to the Hotel Australia, where he was staying, for a chat. He told us that his name was Abraham Wix, that he was a director of a tobacco company with interests in Australia and that he had arrived that day by air from London and was leaving for Melbourne next morning. In answer to his question as to what he could do to help our appeal I told him that the most effective way to boost our appeal would be to make a sizeable opening contribution; whereupon he remarked that he would ascertain in Melbourne the financial position of his firm and on his return to Sydney a few days later he could, perhaps, present us with a cheque for £1,000. The campaign executive was scheduled to hold a luncheon meeting on the day of his return to Sydney and I invited him to attend. Mr. Wix came to the luncheon meeting and in a generous mood he increased his contribution to £2,000, which was a useful curtain-raiser for the appeal. It was then unknown to us that the family Wix in London ranked amongst the top contributors to Zionist funds and that they were generous benefactors to educational and scientific institutions in Palestine and, later, in Israel. On our subsequent visits to Israel my wife and I met Abe Wix, a frequent visitor in the country, on several occasions.

The *Keren Hayesod* in Australia received several large contributions from overseas donors during the war. One such occasion occurred in 1942 during the *Keren Hayesod* Campaign conducted by Dr. Michael Traub. One morning I was telephoned from the office of the Zionist State Council to say that a lady visitor called to enquire as to who was in charge of the *Keren Hayesod* office and that she wished to present a cheque for £3,000 to the fund. The visitor was told that I was President of the Zionist Council and the Australian Commissioner of *Keren Hayesod.* She could not wait for me to arrive at the

office and said that she would call again. The visitor left no address and did not give her name. Some time later we received a letter from Mrs. Gestetner from an address in a country town near Sydney with a cheque for £3,000. The contribution was made in the name of Sigmund Gestetner of London. This was a considerable sum at the time for Australia. Years later I received a call from Mr. Gestetner requesting me to meet him at the office of Goldberg Advertising in Sydney. He told me he carried a message from Dr. Weizmann to Zionist leaders to initiate or to intensify the political work in their respective countries. Mr. Gestetner, and after his untimely passing, Mrs. Gestetner took a leading part in the work of the Jewish National Fund in England and were large contributors to Zionist funds and educational institutions in Israel.

After the launching of the Jewish State Appeal in Sydney in February 1948, Jack Brass arrived as the delegate designated by the *Keren Hayesod* in Jerusalem. In the latter part of 1947 we had asked the Head Office in Jerusalem to find a suitable emissary for the *Keren Hayesod* appeal the following year. Jack was at the time taking part in the Joint Palestine Appeal (J.P.A.) drive in the United Kingdom and as Abe Wix told us, it was at his expense that Jack came to Australia for the campaign. The arrangement for Bernard Cherrick to lead the joint appeal for *Keren Hayesod* and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was made in Australia after Bernard's arrival in Sydney and was approved by the two Head Offices in Jerusalem. Bernard proved to be an effective speaker and a vigorous campaigner and his good team work with Jack Brass was responsible for excellent financial results throughout Australia. The larger and more important meetings were addressed by Bernard Cherrick whose time for the Australian visit was restricted. Jack addressed many of the parlour and smaller public meetings and stayed on to complete the drive in Australia and New Zealand. The total financial result of the campaign was £250,000 which was the target we set for Australasia. This magnificent result was undoubtedly due to the extraordinary enthusiasm of our workers and the unique historic events of that time. Jack left New Zealand in June 1948 for the United States where he remained for some time. Unfortunately he was killed in an air disaster over Bulgaria on the return flight to Israel.

A successful drive for "Aid for Israel" combined with *Magen David Adom*, which is the equivalent of the Red Cross, was held throughout Australia for gifts in money or in kind. On 21st August "Israel Day" was celebrated in all synagogues throughout the Commonwealth of Australia and further contributions to the Jewish State Appeal were requested. The financial result of the appeal, however, was negligible.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry which held its third Conference in May was transferred to Melbourne and Mr. Maurice Ashkanasy, Q.C., was elected President. A suggestion was made by the Committee of Management to impose a self-tax for the Jewish State Appeal. This, however, proved to be impracticable.

The Zionist movement in Australia, and especially in Melbourne, suffered a grievous loss in August 1948 by the passing of Ida Wynn and Solomon Wertheim. Mr. Wertheim, a veteran Zionist, was born in Russia and came to Melbourne in the early days of the Australian Zionist movement and was renowned for his devotion and indefatigable work for Zionist fund-raising and in particular for the Jewish National Fund. Ida Wynn was one of the principal architects of Federal WIZO in Australia and was instrumental in building it up to become the largest and most influential Zionist organisation in the Commonwealth. Ida was a capable and dynamic woman Zionist leader and in the few years of her sojourn in Melbourne made a notable contribution to the Australian Zionist movement in general. Rabbi Max Schenk and I flew to Melbourne to attend the funeral representing, officially, the executive of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand.

We in Sydney and the Australian Zionist movement as a whole, sustained an additional set-back at the time because Rabbi Max Schenk tendered his resignation as a member of the executive of the Zionist Federation. He decided to leave Australia and to return with his family to the United States whence he had come nine years before to take up the position of Chief Minister of Temple Emanuel in Sydney. Max and Faye each made an important contribution to the Zionist movement in Australia and to the life of the Sydney Jewish community. They rendered invaluable service to the cause of Israel, which they championed with vigour and great eloquence in their contacts

with the Christian clergy and in their numerous lectures to Jewish and non-Jewish audiences throughout Australia. The Zionist Executive deeply regretted their departure, which took place early in 1949. In my capacity as President of the Zionist State Council of New South Wales, as well as being one of his closest friends and co-workers, I organised, with the assistance of some members of the congregation, a testimonial dinner in their honour. This was held at the Paddington Town Hall on the eve of their departure and was well attended. Many tributes were paid by the leaders of the community to Max and Faye, valiant fighters for Jewish national resurgence on our ancient soil of Palestine and for Jewish survival in the lands of the Diaspora.

In October 1948 Mrs. Rebecca Sieff of London, President of world WIZO, arrived in Sydney on a tour of Australia as "goodwill ambassador for Israel" and to conduct, at the same time, a fund-raising drive for WIZO. Rieke Cohen, President of Australian WIZO, called on me to assist in the organisation as well as in the practical work of getting financial support for the drive in Sydney. Rebecca Sieff left Sydney for Brisbane and on arrival found that no committee existed to organise her campaign. Late one night she telephoned me in a state of great anxiety pleading that I go to Brisbane next morning to help form a committee. I found it impossible to leave at such short notice and she returned to Sydney the next day.

In early November Rabbi Kopul Rosen of London arrived in Sydney on a fund-raising mission for *Mizrachi*, the Zionist religious party. The Zionist State Council of New South Wales had no advance knowledge of his visit and as President of the Council I found the position most embarrassing for the two appeals, WIZO and *Mizrachi*, to take place simultaneously. We did what we could to avoid a clash and it was arranged that the two personalities should not hold meetings at the same time in the Jewish communities of Sydney and Melbourne. In early November a communal dinner was held for WIZO with Mrs. Sieff as guest of honour. At the end of November a public meeting was organised with Rabbi Kopul Rosen as guest speaker. It reflected the spirit and enthusiasm of that period that both functions were highly successful.

A few days earlier, on 23rd November, the Jewish National Fund Coronation Ball took place and was well patronised by

the younger people as well as by many adult members of the Jewish community. Thus three major fund-raising functions were successfully held in the short period of a fortnight which was no mean achievement for a community of the size and of the structure of Sydney.

The Zionist State Council of New South Wales in December 1948, for the first time, held an election among *Shekel* holders for representatives to be elected to the Central Committee by postal vote. The visit of Rabbi Kopul Rosen was instrumental in forming a *Mizrachi* Zionist organisation in Sydney and, as a result, there were three party lists competing in the election. The General Zionist list with Horace and myself at the head, the *Mizrachi* list headed by Rabbis Dr. I. Porush and Dr. E. Berkovits, and the *Poale Zion* list with Silva Steigrad and Mr. Markham heading it. It was a keenly fought election, with extensive publicity in the Jewish papers, lasting several weeks. The election resulted in the two longer-established parties, the General Zionists and *Poale Zion* each getting the same number of representatives on the Zionist Council. At the first meeting of the newly constituted State Council, in December 1948 I was re-elected President, Horace and Silva Steigrad, Vice-Presidents and Paul Ungar, Honorary Treasurer.

Mrs. Kate Gluckman, who for many years was President of the Jewish National Fund in South Africa, arrived early in April to assist the *Keren Hayesod* appeal after Professor Brodetsky's short Australian visit. Kate had a pleasing personality and was of a gentle disposition, making friends easily. She was an experienced public speaker and co-operated readily with the organisers and workers of the campaign. This was particularly pleasing to Horace and myself on account of an early incident during her visit. Kate travelled by air from Israel and arrived in Sydney during the period of the Easter Agricultural Show, at which time the city is always crowded with visitors from the country. On being advised of the date of her arrival we had found it impossible to secure accommodation for her at any of the city hotels. With great difficulty the office of the Young Men's Hebrew Association (Y.M.H.A.) was persuaded to reserve for her one of the guest rooms which were stictly reserved for members of the club. When Horace and I met Kate at the air-port we told her of the difficulty. Kate was tired from the long

flight but she insisted that we try again to find a room in one of the larger hotels. On our way from the airport we called at many hotels in the city and suburbs but to no avail. We finally arrived at the club where nearly all the members of the committee were waiting to meet her. The plane in which she had travelled arrived in the evening and the hour was fairly late when we arrived at the Y.M.H.A. rooms. Kate was taken to her room and soon joined us in the dining room where dinner was ready. We left the club at nearly midnight with Kate still unhappy about accommodation. I had had hardly more than three hours' sleep when the telephone rang. Kate was crying and begged me to come to the club immediately. When I arrived she was walking around in the dark grounds still dressed in her travelling outfit. She was panicky and asked me to book her return flight home the very same morning. After remaining with her for some time and being unable to calm her, I called for Horace very early in the morning but neither of us could soothe her and she disregarded our pleadings to go to her room and get some sleep which she badly needed. We stayed with her until a reasonable hour of the morning, when we rang for Friedl Levi, the Chairman of Youth Aliyah and a member of the Appeal Executive, to come and stay with Kate in the hope that she would be of some comfort to her and relieve her obviously distressed state of mind. We left the club promising Kate to contact the overseas air companies to arrange her return flight. We met them again at lunch and to our immense relief we found Kate completely composed and the two ladies firm friends. We never heard another complaint from Kate and the whole incident was soon forgotten. She visited the Jewish centres of Australia and left for Israel in mid-June. We arranged a farewell function in Sydney at which tribute was paid to her in recognition of the splendid job done and of the success of her Australian mission on behalf of *Keren Hayesod.*

In 1949 Dr. Shlomo Lowy, who had left Australia three years previously, returned for a short visit to stimulate greater interest in and effort for the Jewish National Fund and to consolidate the Federal organisation which he had helped to establish during his earlier sojourn here. At the time of his visit in Sydney, Dani Agron, son of Gershon Agron(sky) of Jerusalem, the well-known proprietor and editor of the English daily the

*Palestine Post* which later became the *Jerusalem Post*, arrived in Australia. Dani was connected with aviation in Israel and he was the representative in Rome of the Jewish Agency during the period when the State of Israel was born. The owners of the converted war planes described in a later chapter contacted Dani in Rome offering the sale of the converted Lancasters or their charter to the Jewish Agency for the transport of refugees from Europe to Palestine. Dani came to Australia to investigate the possibility of purchasing disposal machines for export to Israel. He had my address and came to see me on his arrival in Sydney. My wife and I met his family on our visit to Jerusalem in 1947 and we were happy to extend hospitality to him. He stayed in the same hotel as Shlomo and we met frequently during their sojourn in Sydney. Dani remained in Australia for some time visiting the other States and Canberra and left the country without achieving his aim because the Commonwealth Government refused to grant an export permit for disposal goods which could be used for purposes of war.

Malcah Weinberg-Schalit, a member of the WIZO World Executive, arrived from Israel to attend the third Conference of the Australian WIZO held in Sydney in September 1949. The Conference lasted several days and its grand opening was addressed by Dr. Evatt, Harry Levin, Consul-General for Israel, and Bishop Pilcher. Horace and I spoke at one of the sessions on the subject "The Future Task of Zionism—after the Emergence of Israel". The Conference was very successful and fruitful as it generated widespread interest within and beyond the Australian Jewish community. Malcah stayed with her brother, Dr. Maurice Schalit and his internationally-known wife Ruby, and remained in Australia for quite some time. She visited every Jewish community in the Commonwealth stimulating a greater interest in, and increased practical work for, WIZO in Australia. Malcah retained a deep personal interest in the affairs of Australian WIZO and in later years made further contributions to the growth of WIZO in Australia.

In 1949, after much preliminary discussion and prodded by our colleagues from Melbourne, the General Zionists of Sydney decided to form the "Zionist Organisation of N.S.W." Unlike Melbourne, where the Zionist party spirit was strongly entrenched, the party ideologies were frowned upon by the

majority of the Zionists in Sydney. The "Victorian Zionist Organisation" which existed for many years was the party organisation of General Zionists in Melbourne. Following this precedent in our sister State, we chose the name "Zionist Organisation of N.S.W." The inaugural meeting, which was held in October 1949, was addressed by Dr. Aaron Patkin and Joseph Solvey of Melbourne. This brought a strong protest from the leaders of *Poale Zion*, who objected vigorously to the choice of the name and attacked the Zionist leadership in articles published in the Jewish weeklies. For some time Horace and I were the butt of sharp criticism and attack from the leaders of *Poale Zion*, and the Zionist Executive decided to take disciplinary action against the party and its leaders for the unwarranted and damaging personal attacks on the Zionist leadership of N.S.W.

The fourteenth Australian Zionist Conference was held in Melbourne in mid-November 1949. It was two and a half years since the last Zionist Conference met at the end of May 1947 and in the intervening comparatively short period Jewish and Zionist history had undergone a thorough and complete transformation. The thirteenth Zionist Conference met at a time of extreme crisis and of terror for the *Yishuv* and in an atmosphere of growing doubts for the Zionist cause. The fourteenth Zionist Conference on the other hand was permeated with a spirit of elation and of Zionist fulfilment because the Jewish State was—in Dr. Herzl's visionary words—"here for everyone to perceive". For several weeks before Conference the Zionist Executive met frequently to deliberate on what the future scope, function and activity should be in the changed circumstances in which the Zionist movement found itself. After much heart-searching and serious discussion a comprehensive programme of activity was drawn up for submission to Conference. Most of the time of Conference was given over to deliberations on the future functions of the Zionist Federation which were formulated in appropriate resolutions and unanimously adopted. The Conference was addressed by Harry Levin at the opening and Horace and I were the speakers at the public session. It was resolved that the seat of the Federation Executive be transferred to Melbourne and Sammy Wynn was elected President with Dr. F. R. Benfy, Honorary Treasurer. The Department of Public Relations, with

Horace Newman as its Chairman and that of the *Keren Hayesod* with myself as Chairman were left to be administered from Sydney. Joe Solvey as the President of the Victorian Zionist Council became Vice-President.

The years immediately before and after the foundation of the State of Israel were years of immense Zionist effort and activity throughout the Jewish world including Australia. Fund-raising work and the strengthening of the Zionist movement in the years 1946 to 1949 were pursued as resolutely and purposefully as was the political struggle for our rights to national independence and for Jewish Statehood in Palestine. The Australian Zionist movement, though geographically distant and in many respects isolated from the large Jewish centres overseas, played its full part in these vital and historic years for the Jewish people.

CHAPTER

# 24

## *Dr. Evatt's Vital Role*

THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE on Palestine started its work in Jerusalem on 16th June 1947. On the same day three members of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* who were captured during an attack on the Acre prison were sentenced to be hanged. On previous occasions the *Irgun* command had threatened to hang a British officer for every *Irgun* member hanged by the British. Following the sentences imposed upon the three *Irgunists*, two sergeants in British Intelligence were kidnapped in Nathanya and held as hostages by members of the *Irgun*. A strict curfew was imposed on Nathanya and environs by the British Administration and rigorous action was taken by the Army including house to house searches. All efforts by the *Irgun* and by the leaders of the *Yishuv* to save the three youths from the gallows failed and on 23rd July the three *Irgunists* were hanged. Carrying out their threat of retaliation the two British sergeants were hanged by the *Irgun* the next day. This act of retaliation by the *Irgun* was condemned in the strongest possible terms and constituted a black day for the Jews of Palestine and for all Jewries throughout the free world. While making an all-out effort to save the *Irgunists* from hanging the *Haganah*, at the same time, co-operated with the British Military Intelligence to find the sergeants held as hostages by the *Irgun*. The *Haganah* was the para-military force of Palestinian Jewry for defence against hostile attack but it never resorted to acts of terror or aggression in order to attain national aspirations. The *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, on the other hand, was a super-patriotic fighting group having as its primary aim the ousting of the British and

the achievement of Jewish national independence in Palestine.

At the request of the Zionist Federation of Australia the Executive Council of Australian Jewry sent a cable to the British Government protesting against this inhuman treatment of the unfortunate refugees. The Zionist Federation Executive also sent a sharply worded protest to the Minister for Commonwealth Relations in London against the arrests on 5th August of municipal leaders and the leaders of the Revisionist Party in Palestine. The arrests of the Mayors of Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan and Nathanya were a reprisal for the hanging of the two British sergeants by the *Irgun*.

In the month of August the *Exodus 1947* arrived in Haifa with over four thousand five hundred refugees and the British authorities refused to allow them to land. On this occasion the British Government decided to return the entire human cargo to Marseilles from whence they came. They were returned in three transports one of which was the *Runnymede Park* with the largest number of the deportees on board. They refused to disembark in France and declared that they would only leave the ship in Palestine. The French authorities showing their sympathy with the refugees refused to take them off the transport by force. The deportees then decided to go on a hunger strike. The stubborn refusal by the refugees to disembark and the equally stubborn refusal by the British to allow their entry into Palestine and the British intention of returning them to Germany brought to world attention once more the terrible injustice of British policy on Palestine. Protests were sent to London from Jewish communities in all parts of the world including the *Yishuv*.

The UNSCOP Report was completed on 31st August 1947 for submission to the regular United Nations Assembly which was scheduled to meet in September at Lake Success. It contained the unanimous recommendation that the British Mandate over Palestine should be terminated and that the country should be given its independence. As regards the future government of the country, it placed before the Assembly two plans. The majority report by seven members recommended the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab States with Jerusalem and Bethlehem to be internationalised, and the two separate political units to form an economic union. The minority plan signed by

three members (Australia abstained) recommended an independent Federal State of Palestine to be governed by Jews and Arabs in accordance with the numerical strength of the population of the country. As the Arab population was in the majority it would have meant that Jewish immigration would be stopped altogether or, at best, greatly restricted and that the Jews would remain a permanent minority.

The World Zionist General Council was in session in Zürich at the time the UNSCOP Report was published. It adopted a resolution that on preliminary consideration the Zionist Council regarded the majority report as an earnest effort to arrive at a practicable solution of the Palestine problem. Horace Newman, President of the Zionist Federation, was at that time on a visit to Europe and went to Zürich to meet Moshe Sharett to inform him of the Zionist position in Australia and of the public relations efforts by the Australian Zionist Federation. Sharett impressed on Horace that the Zionists in Australia should continue their political work to the utmost.

On receiving the news of the completed report by UNSCOP in my capacity as Acting President of the Zionist Federation I called a meeting of all Zionist leaders to acquaint them with its contents. Rabbi Zlotnik, a South African visitor on a fund-raising mission for J.N.F., addressed the meeting and analysed the two plans recommended by UNSCOP. It was obvious to us that the Jewish Agency would favour in principle the majority report and we decided to seek our Government's support of its adoption by the United Nations Assembly. The announcement was then made that Dr. Evatt was to go to New York to attend the forthcoming United Nations Assembly as leader of the Australian delegation. I asked Abram Landa to make an appointment for a meeting with Dr. Evatt and we both went to Canberra to see him. On our arrival in Parliament House we were told by Dr. Evatt's secretary that a conference was being held in Canberra of British Commonwealth Government representatives to discuss the terms of the Japanese Peace Treaty and that Dr. Evatt was Conference Chairman. He left word to say that he would see us in the afternoon.

At our interview I was sufficiently bold to ask the Minister why Messrs. John Hood and S. L. Atyeo, the Australian representatives on UNSCOP, had abstained from voting on either

of the two recommendations. I then reminded him of his repeated promise to support our cause when "the time comes". "Surely," I said, "this time is now." We pleaded with him to support the Zionist case, expressing the hope that he would remain true to his reputation as a champion of the smaller nations, a reputation he had gained at San Francisco when the Charter of the United Nations was drafted. Dr. Evatt listened to us attentively and then asked me whether the Jewish Agency would agree to an extra-territorial arrangement with the British, a kind of "enclave" in order to maintain British forces in a Jewish State. I told him that not being a member of the Jewish Agency I could not answer. We left Dr. Evatt with the confident feeling that the Australian Government would support the recommendation to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab States.

Whilst strolling along the corridor of Parliament House after we left Dr. Evatt's office, I noticed signboards on several doors with the names of the various British Commonwealth delegations who were attending the conference on Japan. I looked in at the room of the New Zealand delegation and in reply to my enquiry was told that Mr. Peter Fraser, the Prime Minister, together with his staff, was about to leave Canberra for home. On my return to Sydney I read in the evening papers that Mr. Peter Fraser, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, was stopping overnight in Sydney and would leave for Wellington, New Zealand, the following day. It occurred to me that it could be of great importance and might prove most valuable if I could meet Mr. Fraser during his stay in Sydney in order to ask his Government's support for the UNSCOP majority report at the United Nations. The problem was how to arrange it.

I remembered that Mr. Gordon, the deceased father of Mrs. Sol Einfeld, had been a close personal friend of Mr. Fraser. I telephoned Sol and asked him to arrange an interview with the New Zealand Prime Minister. Sol, who was then a member of the Zionist State Council and of the Central Zionist Committee, said that he did not know Mr. Fraser and that it would be of no avail for him to try to arrange a meeting. Whereupon I called the Hotel Australia and was told that the Prime Minister with several of his officials was staying there. I asked to be connected with one of the Prime Minister's officials as a matter of urgency. After a moment I was asked my name and

the purpose of my call. I replied that I was the Acting President of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand and that I would greatly appreciate it if a short interview could be arranged with the Prime Minister to discuss the question of Palestine which was shortly to come up for decision at the United Nations. After a pause the voice on the other end of the wire said, "This is Mr. Fraser speaking and I would be glad to meet you if time permits." He went on to say that he had a crowded day ahead of him in Sydney and after a few seconds of silence, he said, "Yes, I would very much like to see Mrs. Gordon, the widow of a very great Jewish friend of mine." He said, further, that his secretary would telephone Mrs. Gordon in the morning to arrange a visit when I could be present for a chat with him. Mr. Fraser asked me if I knew Mrs. Gordon and if I could perhaps find her address for him. I said that I would certainly do so and would telephone him again soon.

I was very excited as this was far more than I had hoped for. I called Sol Einfeld immediately telling him what had taken place and asking for the address of his mother-in-law. Sol told me that it would be best to give his address and that he would arrange for Mrs. Gordon to stay at his home for the day. I rang the hotel asking for the Prime Minister's suite. An official announcing himself as the New Zealand Trade Commissioner in Australia answered my call. He knew of my earlier conversation with the Prime Minister and I left Sol's address with him. He told me that an appointment would be made in the morning with Mrs. Gordon for a visit from Mr. Fraser and suggested that I ascertain the appointed time for the visit from her. I could hardly sleep that night in anticipation of developments next day.

Sol telephoned next morning to tell me that Mr. Fraser would be at their home at eleven o'clock. I arrived a little earlier and was told that shortly before a message had come from the Prime Minister to say that official business unexpectedly made it necessary to delay his visit until two-thirty in the afternoon. Sol was President of the Young Men's Hebrew Association (Y.M.H.A.) and he had to attend an official luncheon at the clubrooms. I accompanied him to the Y.M.H.A. rooms but the speeches lasted longer than usual and I left without Sol so as to be on time for Mr. Fraser's visit. A message came again to say that the Prime Minister had been further delayed and that

he would come at five o'clock. I waited at the appointed time outside Sol's apartment and punctually at five an official car drew up and Mr. Fraser, together with the Trade Commissioner, stepped out. I waited a little and followed them into the house.

On this occasion there were many people in the room including Sol's close relations and several youngsters, the grandchildren of Mrs. Gordon, who had come to meet the distinguished visitor. Mrs. Gordon introduced them all to Mr. Fraser and his companion and then asked them to sit down. She then introduced me to the Prime Minister. After a short chat with Mrs. Gordon and with the members of her family Mr. Fraser called me to sit next to him. He talked for some time telling me of a visit to Palestine, the Middle East and North Africa made in his early youth and of his meeting with Ben Gurion for whom he had a great admiration, in Auckland in 1941. He then turned to the subject of Palestine and the UNSCOP Report, on which he was fairly well informed. At this stage I put the question to him point blank: "Mr. Prime Minister," I said, "I know you are a good friend of the Jews. Will you instruct your representative at the United Nations to vote for a Jewish State in a part of Palestine?" His answer was prompt: "Yes, I will, as I consider it my duty as a Christian." I then asked him if I was permitted to convey this information to our leaders in Jerusalem and New York. His answer was in the affirmative. He chatted with me a little longer quite oblivious of the other people in the room. After having been reminded several times by the Trade Commissioner that he had an official dinner engagement at Government House he stood up again and exchanged some conversation with Mrs. Gordon and the family. He then bade farewell to all present and shook hands with me warmly wishing my "cause" every "success". It was a truly exciting and memorable day and when I arrived home I telephoned my colleagues on the Zionist Executive telling them what had taken place in Canberra and of my conversation with Mr. Fraser. We cabled the information to the executives of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem and to New York.

At our interview in Canberra with Dr. Evatt, Abe Landa asked to be included in the official Australian delegation to the United Nations Assembly. Dr. Evatt said that this would not be possible but expressed the view that it would be useful if

one of us would attend the Assembly as an observer. I considered Abe's presence at Lake Success essential and he agreed to go to the United States for a period of one month. I put to the Zionist Executive the proposal that Abram Landa, M.L.A., proceed to New York to be there at the time when the UNSCOP Report was dealt with by the United Nations General Assembly. This was agreed to and on 18th September we tendered a farewell to Abe at a cocktail party held in the rooms of the Pickwick Club at which were present the Hon. James McGirr, Premier of N.S.W., and his lady, the Hon. Clive Evatt, Minister for Housing, and Mrs. Evatt, Mr. J. R. Renshaw, M.L.A., and Mrs. Renshaw, Mr. W. F. Sheahan and a number of other Parliamentarians. There were also in attendance the members of the Zionist Executive and leading members of the Jewish community.

In his book *The Task of Nations*, Dr. Evatt described the events at Lake Success which led to the decision of the second General Assembly of the United Nations on 29th November 1947 in favour of the majority report of UNSCOP for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab States. Dr. Evatt was defeated by Dr. Aranha of Brazil in the election for the presidency of the Assembly in 1947. However, Dr. Evatt, at the suggestion of Dr. Aranha, then agreed to be a candidate for the chairmanship of the *Ad hoc* Committee on Palestine to which position he was elected unanimously. The *Ad hoc* Committee was comprised of representatives of every member nation (fifty-seven at the time) of the United Nations. Dr. Evatt had gained fame as an international figure since the San Francisco Conference of 1945 and he was a sincere believer in, and a keen supporter of, the ideals of the United Nations as an effective instrument for world peace. Dr. Evatt wrote that he was "quite alive to the fact that the Palestine job was 'the hot potato' in the Assembly and that quite a few of the delegates were expressing the opinion and perhaps the hope that the proceedings of the Committee would end in deadlock and the whole problem would be returned once more to the doorstep of the United Kingdom . . . it seemed to me that if the United Nations could reach a fair and just solution of the Palestine problem it would greatly increase its own power and prestige, it would make history well worth making." It was undoubtedly his

great skill as a tactician and his world stature as a statesman that made it possible for the *Ad hoc* Committee to reach a conclusion and to bring its recommendations to the current General Assembly for decision.

The general debate of the Committee occupied seventeen meetings. It had before it the majority and minority reports of UNSCOP as well as a proposal by the representatives of Saudi Arabia and Iraq for a Unitary Arab State over the whole of Palestine in which the rights of the minorities would be sufficiently protected. This would have been the death knell of any Jewish hopes for the future of Palestine to an even greater extent than a Federated State as proposed by the minority report. Dr. Evatt was extremely fair as Chairman, allowing delegates to speak without any restriction on time provided that the discussion was kept as closely as possible to the problem of the future government of Palestine. At his suggestion the Committee decided that the Jewish Agency and the Arab Higher Committee be allowed to participate in its deliberations on an equal footing with the other delegates.

After closure of the general debate the future procedure of the Committee's business came up for consideration. It was agreed to appoint two sub-committees to deliberate on the practical details of implementing the two proposals before the Committee; sub-committee 1 was to recommend a detailed scheme for the partition plan and sub-committee 2 was to recommend a detailed scheme for the Unitary State proposed by the Arab countries. The question now arose as to how many persons should serve on each sub-committee. Several proposals were made and eventually it was agreed to leave both the number and the nomination of the members of the two sub-committees to Dr. Evatt's discretion. He discharged this special responsibility with the utmost care and determined that there should be nine members on each sub-committee, after asking members to indicate if they wished to serve on either. He then nominated the countries who had spoken in favour of partition to serve on sub-committee 1 and those who favoured the plan of a Unitary State to serve on sub-committee 2. Dr. Evatt made public his determination accordingly.

Dr. Evatt writes of "pressures and counter pressures which were exerted by delegates and interested groups" with which

as Chairman he had to contend. As one illustration of this he describes the following incident. On the evening on which he announced the composition of the two sub-committees he attended a dinner given in his honour by the Australian Society of New York. During the function he was "repeatedly bombarded with messages from one of the delegates" who asked to see him "in connection with the composition of one of the sub-committees". Dr. Evatt further writes: "I saw the delegate at the close of the dinner party and he said that his country was dissatisfied with the composition of sub-committee 1 and asked me to exclude two countries and to replace them with two others. I pointed out to him that both countries whom he wished to add had declared that they did not want to serve on either committee but that those I had nominated had both wished to serve on sub-committee 1, their delegates being very active supporters of partition. I pointed out that the decision had been made, that the announcement had been given to the press and that the affair was finished. This did not satisfy the distinguished delegate who saw me. He was very persistent and I turned him down. I flatly declined to make any change and I told him that I would not submit to any interference in the performance of my duty to the Committee. He disappeared from the scene and I heard no more about the matter."

For obvious reasons, no names are given by Dr. Evatt. I am reliably informed, however, that the distinguished delegate represented the United States and that the two countries to which he objected were those of Guatemala and Uruguay who were members of UNSCOP and had been keen advocates of partition. The repeated messages from the delegate to Dr. Evatt were carried by Allan Dalziel, private secretary to Dr. Evatt who had literally to crawl through the hall filled with the guests attending the dinner.

The task of the partition sub-committee was complex and its work extended over four weeks. The reports of both sub-committees came before the *Ad hoc* Committee on 19th November and, as the closing session of the General Assembly was set for 29th November, Dr. Evatt was determined that the *Ad hoc* Committee should complete its work by 25th November. The reports of the two sub-committees and the numerous amendments to these reports proposed by members of the *Ad hoc*

Committee had to be disposed of and the vote taken on that date for submitting the final recommendations to the General Assembly. Dr. Evatt tells of the reluctance of several delegates to commit themselves and of their desire to defer the decision to the following year. He says: "I sensed the temptation and danger of delay and at one stage it was almost heartbreaking to notice the drift towards delaying manoeuvres. I opposed delay with everything I had." The proceedings of the last week were held amidst mounting tension and the partition plan came up for the historic vote by the *Ad hoc* Committee on the afternoon of 25th November. The vote was taken by roll-call in alphabetical order. The first three countries to vote were Afghanistan voting "against", Argentina, "abstain" and for Australia Dr. Evatt voted from the chair "yes". There was great applause. The final vote was twenty-five for, thirteen against with seventeen abstentions which included New Zealand. Dr. Evatt was given much praise by delegates for his absolute fairness as Chairman and for his strenuous efforts in steering the proceedings of the Committee and bringing its work to a successful conclusion. There was excitement and great emotion at the end of the proceedings and the Jewish leaders present showed profound gratitude towards Dr. Evatt.

The attitude and behaviour of the New Zealand delegate, Sir Carl Berendsen, throughout the deliberations of the *Ad hoc* Committee were, to say the least, non-committal and even unfriendly towards us. In mid-October we received a cable from the Jewish Agency in New York signed by Michael Comay in which we were asked to contact the New Zealand Government requesting that suitable instructions be given to their delegate at Lake Success as a matter of utmost urgency.

Immediately, I booked a call by overseas telephone to my friend Louis Phillips of Auckland, the elder statesman of New Zealand Zionism, who I understood was fairly well-known to Mr. Fraser. I told him about the Jewish Agency cable and also of my meeting with the Prime Minister in Sydney and of his unequivocal promise to support the partition plan recommended by the majority report of UNSCOP. Louis flatly refused to take any action, asserting that the New Zealand Government would strictly follow the policy line of the United Kingdom. All my pleadings with him were of no avail and in the end he told me

to call Isaac Gottlieb of Wellington who was the President of the New Zealand Zionist Council. After considerable delay I was connected with Isaac's business house in Wellington and was told that he was on his way to Auckland. Not knowing where to contact him in Auckland I again telephoned Louis Phillips who told me that Isaac had called at his office since my last conversation with him and had agreed, on his return to Wellington in a couple of days, to ask for an appointment with the Prime Minister. It was obvious to me that our friends in New Zealand were hedging about making an approach to their Government and I decided to put through a call to the Prime Minister myself. It was afternoon and as New Zealand time is two hours in advance of Sydney I was apprehensive that the office of the Prime Minister might soon close and I asked the telephone exchange to speed up my call. However, it was more than two hours before my call came through. Mr. Fraser was on the line and he apologised for the delay. He was very cordial and told me that when advised of my call he guessed its purpose and before speaking to me he got in touch with Sir Carl in New York to ascertain the position. I told Mr. Fraser that our people in New York were greatly concerned about Sir Carl's attitude and in view of his sympathetic understanding of our cause and his promise to me in Sydney I asked him to be good enough to instruct his delegate to support the partition plan. Mr. Fraser assured me again of his Government's support and that he would instruct Sir Carl to act accordingly. A few days later we received an official letter from the Prime Minister confirming our conversation and stating that he had given "suitable instructions to Sir Carl Berendsen". I sent copies of the Prime Minister's letter to Louis Phillips and Isaac Gottlieb.

On 11th November we received a further cable from Comay in New York again asking for our intervention with the Government in New Zealand. I considered that another approach to the Prime Minister would be inadvisable as it would do us no good but could, perhaps, irritate him after sending his official letter saying that he would suitably instruct his delegate at Lake Success. We advised New York by cable to this effect. The voting in the *Ad hoc* Committee with New Zealand abstaining, was most disconcerting. If the voting was the same in the Plenum of the Assembly where a two-thirds majority was re-

quired the partition plan could be lost by one vote. We were most apprehensive and on learning the result of the vote in the *Ad hoc* Committee I called Isaac Gottlieb in Wellington on 26th November asking him to call urgently on the Prime Minister to point out that New Zealand's vote in the Assembly was crucial and to request Mr. Fraser's intervention with his delegate in our favour. Isaac was received by the Prime Minister and was told to convey to us in Australia his absolute assurance that "all will be well" in the final vote. The dramatic decision of 29th November was made by thirty-three votes in favour, thirteen against with nine abstentions. On this occasion the New Zealand delegate voted in favour whilst Great Britain abstained.

About ten months later, in October 1948, I read in the press that Mr. Fraser was in Sydney on his way to Paris to attend the third United Nations General Assembly as the head of the New Zealand delegation. It was on a Jewish High Festival and after attending the morning service at the Great Synagogue, I asked Horace Newman to walk with me to the Hotel Australia where we might see the Prime Minister of New Zealand. Mr. Fraser was staying there and in answer to our enquiry we were told that the Prime Minister would receive us. We talked with him for some time and he explained to us Sir Carl Berendson's reasons for abstaining in the *Ad hoc* Committee of the United Nations but knowing that on instructions from his Government he would vote in favour of partition in the Plenum of the Assembly.

Abe Landa returned from the United States at the end of October and on 3rd November gave a detailed report to the Zionist Executive of the proceedings and of the discussion of the UNSCOP recommendations in the General Assembly of the United Nations and in the *Ad hoc* Committee. During his stay in New York Abe frequently wrote to me and sent me several cables about his experiences at Lake Success. He was deeply disappointed because, as it seemed to him, there was little appreciation of Dr. Evatt's importance and of his influence in shaping the policy of the United Nations towards arriving at the favourable decision on the problem of Palestine. Abe was present at a meeting between Dr. Weizmann and Dr. Evatt and after he left New York en route for Australia he received a telegram from Arthur Lourie, then a member of the Jewish

Agency delegation to the United Nations, informing him of a meeting between Dr. Evatt and Moshe Sharett which had taken place on Abe's insistence.

Horace Newman returned from overseas in mid-November. He visited Palestine on his way home and because of his position as President of the Zionist Federation the executive of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem gave a luncheon in his honour in order that he could report fully on Zionist activities in Australia. Whilst Horace was overseas the executive of the Zionist Federation decided to hold functions in all States celebrating the fiftieth Jubilee of the Zionist movement. The Zionist Federation in conjunction with the Zionist State Council of N.S.W. arranged a banquet on 30th November which was attended by the representatives of the Prime Minister of Australia and of the Premier of N.S.W. bringing the greetings of the Commonwealth and State Governments. It was a festive occasion in which the synagogues and all communal organisations and institutions participated. It was also a unique event because this celebration of the fiftieth year of the Zionist movement and of the Basle Programme formulated at the first Zionist Congress coincided with the decision by the United Nations on the previous day to establish a Jewish State in a partitioned Palestine. This historic coincidence illustrated poignantly Dr. Herzl's prophecy after the first Congress in 1897 that the Jewish State would be a fact as would be seen by all in fifty years time.

The United Nations decision of 29th November was an occasion of great joy and happiness. The executive of the Zionist Federation sent telegrams of congratulation to the Zionist State Councils of Australia and to the Zionist Council of New Zealand and the Federation Executive was requested to prepare a detailed report of our political activities for the records to be kept in the archives of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem. Cables were also sent to the executives of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organisation in Jerusalem and New York. Messages expressing our gratitude were sent to Mr. Ben Chifley, Prime Minister of Australia, and to Mr. Peter Fraser, Prime Minister of New Zealand. A cable conveying our congratulations and grateful thanks was despatched to Dr. Evatt who was returning on the S.S. *Matsonia* from the United States. Early in December a Thanksgiving Service was held at

the Great Synagogue in Sydney at which Rabbi Dr. Porush and Ministers from other congregations officiated; the beautiful Synagogue was filled to capacity.

A special plenary meeting of the Zionist Federation was held in Melbourne at which it was decided that a J.N.F. forest be planted in Palestine in honour of Dr. Evatt. On 18th December the Zionist Federation gave a dinner reception to Dr. Evatt paying tribute to him for the skilful way in which he had conducted the meetings of the *Ad hoc* Committee on Palestine so that it was made possible for the United Nations Assembly to arrive at the decision for the partitioning of Palestine into Jewish and Arab States. The representatives of the Zionist organisations who spoke to the toast of our guest of honour thanked him most deeply for his friendship and sympathy toward the cause of Zionism and the Jewish people. Dr. Evatt, profoundly moved, thanked Horace Newman, the Chairman, and all speakers for the tribute paid to him by the Jewish community. He emphasised again that "what I did to bring about the decision for setting up a Jewish State in a part of Palestine was not an act of favour to the Jews but because I firmly believe in the justice of the Jewish case."

CHAPTER

# 25

# *After the Decision*

THE HISTORIC DECISION of the General Assembly of the United Nations on 29th November 1947 evoked great rejoicing by the Jews of Palestine. This, however, was tempered by the fact that a campaign of terror was launched immediately by the Arab forces. On 30th November, the day following the adoption of the resolution by the United Nations, eight Jews were killed on the road from Haifa to Jerusalem. Amongst the victims was the recently wed bride of Shimon Hacohen who had been the *Keren Hayesod* delegate in Australia the previous year.

In defiance of the United Nations decision, the Arabs intensified their aggression with brutal acts of violence, murder and looting of Jewish property. These acts of terror soon spread over the entire country and grew in intensity day by day. The Palestinian Arabs were reinforced by the infiltration from neighbouring Arab countries of organised armed bands, thus increasing the Arab fighting strength in all parts of Palestine. The outrages in Jerusalem, which was virtually besieged from December onwards, were numerous and of particular severity. They began with an attack by an Arab mob burning and looting the commercial centre and the adjoining streets. The assaults on the Jewish inhabitants of the Holy City continued and at the beginning of February 1948 the offices of the *Palestine Post*, an English-Jewish daily, were blown up, killing four people and injuring twenty. On 22nd February a terrific explosion occurred in Ben Yehuda Street, the centre of Jewish Jerusalem, which shook the entire city; and fifty-two people were killed and many

more wounded. An attempt was made on 11th March to blow up the Jewish Agency building. The explosion occurred in the courtyard outside the wing occupied by the *Keren Hayesod* offices, killing thirteen people and injuring more than fifty. Among the fatally wounded was our dear friend and mentor Leib Jaffe, the veteran Zionist and Director of *Keren Hayesod*, who was found buried in the debris of his office.

Because of the grave position in the country and the Arab defiance which was aggravated by British hostility, the Palestine Commission appointed by the United Nations for the implementation of the partition plan was made ineffective. The delegate of the United States then proposed that the Security Council convene a special General Assembly to re-examine the Palestine question with a view to establishing a temporary trusteeship for the whole of Palestine. Dr. Evatt, who at that time could not leave Australia to attend the Special Assembly which was convened at Lake Success on 16th April, sent a strongly worded message. In it he opposed the trusteeship plan which he said was not only "inadmissible and indefensible in itself but represented a complete abandonment of the decision of the previous Assembly". Dr. Evatt went on to state that "in my opinion the United Nations decision has been gradually undermined by intrigues against the Jews" and further that "the only considerations that should influence the United Nations were those of justice and fair dealings to all concerned".

Dr. Evatt's message was broadcast throughout the world. The trusteeship proposal was not accepted by the Special Assembly and the decision by the General Assembly of 29th November 1947 remained substantially unchanged.

With the announcement of the British Government on 22nd February 1948 excluding Palestine from the sterling area and blocking one hundred million pounds sterling of Palestine funds, the transfer of Zionist funds from Australia, which were transmitted through London to Palestine, was stopped. The remittance of Zionist funds to Palestine until then had not presented a problem for us in Australia despite the fact that exchange control regulations severely restricted the transfer of funds overseas. The sudden stoppage of transfer of moneys meant that funds raised by Zionist appeals in 1947 and early in 1948 were accumulating and held in our accounts with the local banks.

It was my task, as Treasurer of the Zionist Federation, to find ways and means to remit our funds in kind and in commodities suitable for export to Palestine. The export from Australia of essential foodstuffs and of many items of primary products, as I soon learned, was impracticable. All essential primary products were controlled by Boards established by the Government and were sold in the first instance on long-term contracts to Government agencies in the United Kingdom. This involved us in complicated and time-consuming enquiries and negotiations with little or no results. To quote a few instances: At the urgent request of the Jewish Agency, transmitted to us by the *Keren Hayesod* in Jerusalem, we obtained from one of the large exporting companies an offer of several thousand tons of sorghum for animal and poultry feeding. After long and protracted negotiations the transaction fell through because of transport and shipping difficulties.

On another occasion we received information from the firm of Hallenstein and Michaelis of Melbourne that one of their well-established customers in Palestine wished to place an order for a shipment of leather which could be supplied if we were able to pay for it in Australia. A representative of the firm met me while I was on a visit to Melbourne and I told him that we would make available funds to pay for the order provided we received instructions from Jerusalem. We submitted the proposal in detail to the *Keren Hayesod*, involving us in an exchange of cables and lengthy correspondence and it took some considerable time for the transaction to be concluded.

Also, we received a cable from Jerusalem seeking information about the possibility of purchasing 30,000 to 40,000 groundsheets which the Jewish Agency required for the large number of immigrants arriving in the country. A member of our *Keren Hayesod* committee happened to introduce me to a cousin of his from England who came to Australia on an official and confidential mission to buy army disposals for a friendly Government. I told our friend about the enquiry for ground-sheets and he undertook to make the necessary contacts for us. I also asked our colleagues in Melbourne to make enquiries from army disposal centres in Victoria. The outcome of it was that the groundsheets could have been bought at a reasonable price for export but it was impossible to ship army disposal goods via the Suez

Canal to Palestine. The only possibility was to have them shipped to a port in Europe for reshipment to Haifa. Our friend was willing to buy them for us and to have them included with the other consignments of disposal goods shipped to the country of destination in Europe for transhipment to Haifa. I advised Jerusalem of the position giving full particulars of our investigations and of the offer made by our friend. This was the last I heard of the matter. However, we were successful in shipping reasonable quantities of certain categories of goods such as tinned foodstuffs, processed cheese and other similar articles. These transactions were made in most cases between shippers in Australia and Israeli merchants. On instructions from *Keren Hayesod* in Jerusalem we paid for the goods against the shipping documents.

Our enquiries about the ground-sheets from army disposals and possibly the headlines in the daily papers featuring the Arab war of aggression, caused me to become personally involved in a variety of strange and interesting negotiations. Rabbi Max Schenk telephoned me one day in April 1948 saying that a discharged Australian flying officer had come to see him during a service at the Temple Emanuel in connection with Lancaster aircraft which his firm converted into transport planes and that he was sending him to see me. At our home the visitor told me that he had served during the war as a pilot with the Royal Air Force in the Middle East and he was stationed for some time in Palestine. On his discharge he returned to Australia and together with other demobilised flying officers formed a company acquiring war planes and converting them to transport and passenger aircraft. He went on to tell me that the company had several converted Lancasters on hand and asked me if the Jewish authorities in Palestine would be interested, if an export licence was granted, to buy one or more of these planes. If no export licence could be obtained the Australian company would make them available under a charter agreement for the transport of immigrants from European ports to Palestine. The proposition seemed to me to be feasible and interesting and I promised to submit the offer to the Jewish authorities in Palestine. I asked him to make available to me full particulars of the aircraft and of the proposal which, after consultation with Horace Newman, I airmailed to the Jewish Agency in

Jerusalem, asking them to let me know by cable whether the proposal was of interest to them.

The rumour soon spread amongst similar groups of discharged army and air force men who became dealers in army disposals that the Jews were buying war disposal goods for Palestine. It is still a mystery to me how my name, address and telephone number came to be known to some of them. Within a day or two of the visit to my home by the ex-flying officer I received letters and telephone calls offering a variety of army disposals at unbelievably low prices. Large quantities of Sherman tanks capable of being converted into bulldozers were offered at from £100 to £150 each: new army uniforms and army greatcoats were from £1 to £2 and army boots of all sizes 10/- a pair. I was bombarded with these and similar offers and I had great difficulty in convincing the would-be suppliers of these army disposals that we were not buyers and we were not interested in the purchase of army goods.

One dealer, the owner of a Greek coffee shop in the city with a plush office in an upper floor of the same building, pestered me for some time with an offer for two supposedly recently-constructed sea-worthy corvettes of which the armour had been dismantled, at £12,500 each. To my protestations that we did not buy any kind of army disposals and my pleas to be left in peace, he retorted that he knew for certain that the Jews were buying war materials to fight the Arabs in Palestine. It was only after I threatened to call the police that he ceased to pester me.

The Jewish Agency office in Jerusalem was slow in answering my letter containing the offer of the converted Lancaster aircraft. After a lapse of about four weeks I received an airmail letter from a representative of the Jewish Agency residing in Rome stating that the Jewish authorities were interested in the offer but they considered it impracticable to negotiate the transaction from such a distance. On conveying the much delayed answer I was invited by the ex-flying officer to meet his partners at a city office. On arrival I was introduced to two younger men who, I was told, were discharged officers from the Royal Australian Air Force. There was present also an older man who was the occupier of the office and who was financing the venture. They asked me about the financial standing of the




Announcement of death of Leib Jaffe.



Moshe Sharett with author.



Jerusalem after 1948 fighting.



Opening of Hadera paper mills. Speaker Mr. Joseph Mazer. Next to author, present Premier, Levi Eshkol.

Jewish Agency which they conceived to be a business enterprise. I explained what the Jewish Agency stood for and at their request I gave them the address in Jerusalem and that of the Agency's representative in Rome. Some time later I learned that the company flew one or more of their planes to Palestine and to Rome and made some kind of a deal with our people, but I was never informed what actually transpired.

With the establishment of the Jewish State in May 1948, the shipment of goods purchased with our funds was also prohibited. The Jewish Agency in the meantime sent urgent requests to transmit to Jerusalem funds which were vitally needed. On one occasion, in October 1948, when I called on the Prime Minister, who was also the Commonwealth Treasurer, in Canberra, I put to him our request to be permitted to transfer our funds which had been collected for the express purpose of settling people in Israel from the Displaced Persons' camps. Mr. Chifley told me to see Dr. Coombs, the Governor of the Commonwealth Bank in Sydney, and in my presence advised Dr. Coombs by telephone that I would come to see him. Next day I was received by Dr. Coombs and I outlined to him our purpose in fund-raising and the uses to which the money would be put. Dr. Coombs asked me to submit our request in writing addressed to the Exchange Control. This I did and about one week later I received a telephone message from the Exchange Control asking me to call. I asked Horace Newman to come with me to the Commonwealth Bank for the interview. The official in charge of the Exchange Control received us very cordially and after further questioning about our funds told us that our application would be favourably considered. A short while later we received official advice of permission to remit a substantial amount during the period of a calendar year to Israel.

CHAPTER

# 26

## *The Birth of the State*

On Friday 14th May 1948 the State of Israel was proclaimed in the Museum of Tel Aviv at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, which corresponds to midnight Sydney time. The exciting news reached us on Saturday morning when it was broadcast through the Australian radio network and was carried in the headlines of the Australian morning papers. The Australian Jewish community, like all Jewish communities the world over, was electrified by the unprecedented historic phenomenon of the re-emergence of the sovereign Jewish nation and of the re-establishment of the State of Israel 1,879 years after the destruction by the Romans of the Second Jewish Commonwealth. A great wave of rejoicing spread throughout the Jewish world. Jews attending Sabbath services in the synagogues offered special thanksgiving prayers to the Almighty for the blessing and the privilege of our generation to have witnessed the modern miracle of the rebirth of Jewish Statehood.

Several days before the proclamation of the State the Zionist Federation received a cable from the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem advising us to hold a suitable celebration on Saturday evening 15th May when it was expected that the Jewish State would be proclaimed after the abolition of the mandate and the withdrawal from Palestine by Great Britain on that day. At its meeting on 12th May the Federation Executive decided to invite key workers and communal leaders to attend a high tea on Saturday evening at the Maccabean Hall. Because of the short notice four hundred such invitations were sent by telegram. Walter Magnus the caterer was asked to provide for two

hundred and fifty guests and on receiving the news of the Declaration of Independence this number was increased to four hundred, the maximum seating capacity of the Maccabean Hall.

By seven in the evening there were over four hundred people in the hall and the doors had to be closed against further entry with several hundred remaining outside. Short addresses were delivered by Horace Newman, Abram Landa, Jack Brass and myself giving expression to our overwhelming joy and pledging unstinting support to the *Yishuv* in the hard struggle which lay ahead. There was continuous and unbridled cheering and the speeches were often drowned by tumultuous applause. After the formal speeches Horace and I remained on the platform whilst the guests were removing tables and chairs for dancing and singing which continued until a late hour. Horace managed occasionally to make himself heard with words of jubilation and congratulations whilst I called out at frequent intervals *"Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov!"* (good luck). This was echoed by the multitude crowding the hall who shouted back at us in resounding voice *"Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov!"* To future generations these emotional outbursts may appear banal and not worth recording; for those of us who lived through this unique experience of a nation reborn, of seemingly forlorn hopes and dreams of nineteen centuries suddenly becoming reality, the exuberance and exhilaration of that day had deep significance and meaning. The declaration of Jewish sovereignty and independence evoked the same reactions throughout the entire Jewish world. In Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, in New York and in all other Jewish communities, people danced in the streets celebrating throughout the night and the following day. There was great rejoicing in spite of the certain knowledge that the *Yishuv* was facing grave danger, grim days and great calamities, having to defend its newly-born independence against the onslaught of six Arab armies poised on its borders for invasion of that part of Palestine where the Jewish State was established.

The re-emergence of the Jewish State after nearly two thousand years in exile is universally regarded and is often referred to as a modern miracle. It came into being as a result of an extraordinary chain of circumstances and historical drama throughout the centuries. The last episode was the advent of political Zionism and the creation of the Zionist movement by

Dr. Theodor Herzl at the end of the nineteenth century. The miracle was wrought by a combination of efforts by some of our greatest sons and historical figures as well as by the collective will of our people. This synthesis of effort was seen in every aspect of Jewish national resurgence, in the present era of our national revival finally leading to the rebirth of Jewish peoplehood and Statehood. The decision of 29th November 1947 by the United Nations to establish a Jewish State in a part of Palestine was the culmination of such a concentration of effort. In the first place, it was due to the individual efforts made by the great leaders of our generation such as Dr. Chaim Weizmann, David Ben Gurion, Abba Hillel Silver, Moshe Sharett and many others. But in the final event it came to pass because of a combination of the collective effort of the leaders with the Zionist and Jewish rank-and-file who laboured hard and tirelessly to influence the people and Governments of their respective lands and who enlisted support for the just historical claims of the Jewish people.

The Australian Jewish community, spearheaded by the Zionist movement and its leaders, played its part in this collective effort and was instrumental in enlisting the support of the Government and people of the Commonwealth whose role in some respects was crucial in influencing the decision of the United Nations in November 1947. Dr. Evatt often stated in his public addresses that he came to know and understand the problem of Palestine when he came face to face with it at the United Nations where he was convinced of the justice of the Jewish claim. We on our part made strenuous efforts to acquaint the Government with the problem and to present our case to Dr. Evatt as the Minister for External Affairs. We remained in contact with our Government after the birth of the State of Israel until the arrival in Australia of its diplomatic representatives about fifteen months later. In those intervening months there were important representations on behalf of Israel to be made to the Prime Minister and to Dr. Evatt in particular. In the months of September and December 1948, when Dr. Evatt was attending the United Nations in Paris, Horace and I were received by Mr. Chifley, the Prime Minister, to discuss the admission of Israel to the United Nations and its recognition by the Australian Government.

With the proclamation of the Jewish State Israel's War of Independence began for its territory was invaded immediately by six Arab armies. Whilst its valiant sons and daughters had to fight against unbelievably great odds to defend their newly-won country, the leaders of the *Yishuv* faced the herculean task of building up the machinery of state from the very foundations. The British authorities left Palestine stripped of any of the essential requirements of modern society such as communications and organised manpower for keeping law and order. The provisional Government of Israel had the tremendous dual tasks of defending itself against the enemy from outside and of constructing the vital services of the State within. In addition to these tasks it set itself the goal of the "ingathering of the exiles". The first law enacted by the provisional State Council was the "Law of Return" guaranteeing to every Jew free entry into the country. In the first four weeks of the establishment of the State a greater number of immigrants came into Israel than in any other similar period since the mandate. Whilst Diaspora Jewry could not lend effective support to the young State in its performance of the two-fold duties of defence and of upbuilding, it could and was expected to lighten Israel's enormous financial burden of taking in the vast stream of immigration and absorbing it into the country.

The Arab invasion and the grim fighting immediately following the proclamation of the State had its sobering effect on the Jewish communities outside Palestine including the Australian. While planning a mass rally to celebrate the coming into being of the Jewish State steps were also taken to rally Australian public opinion in support of Israel. The Zionist Federation sponsored the buying of time on one of the commercial broadcasting stations to disseminate news of the War of Independence in Israel. The mass meeting to celebrate the Jewish State was held in June and the large Paddington Town Hall was packed to capacity. The speakers were Bishop Pilcher, the Rev. Mr. E. J. Davidson, Abram Landa, Rabbi Porush, Rieke Cohen and myself. Horace Newman presided.

The meeting resolved: 1. to extend to Israel every possible material aid for the upbuilding of the State; 2. to express our deep gratitude to the Australian Government for its sponsorship

of Jewish Statehood; and 3. to call on our Government to grant recognition to the State of Israel.

Our contact with Israel was, however, disrupted and direct mail to Tel Aviv was not possible. Therefore it was decided to ask a student from Palestine, Eliyahu Sadovsky, who was studying at the University of Melbourne and was about to return to Israel via the United States, to contact the Jewish Agency offices in New York and in Tel Aviv on our behalf. We were extremely anxious to render as much material aid as possible to the *Yishuv* in its unequal war with the Arabs and in the absorption of immigrants from Cyprus and the Displaced Persons' camps in Europe. We had funds available from recent Zionist appeals, which were deposited with local banks and could not be remitted to Israel. Soon afterwards we received advice from Michael Comay that he had been appointed Director of British Commonwealth Relations at the Foreign Ministry of Israel.

Because of the disruption in our communications with Jerusalem during the months following the establishment of the Jewish State and the outbreak of the War of Independence Zionist activity was greatly restricted. Contact with the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem was partly resumed in late July but because the transfer of funds to Israel was not permitted yet our fund-raising efforts had slackened.

With the cessation of the fighting and the triumph of Israel's young and poorly-equipped army over the well-armed Arab forces our contact with the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem was restored. We resumed our activity in the field of public relations and specifically with the problem of recognition of Israel by the Australian Government.

Sydney D. Einfeld, M.L.A., who was then Senior Vice-President of the E.C.A.J., addressed many Labour Leagues on this issue. The United Nations General Assembly in Paris then discussed the Peace Plan submitted by Count Bernadotte to cede to the Arabs the territory of the Negev, the southern part of Israel, which was included in the Jewish State by the decision of the United Nations of 29th November 1947. The Federation Executive strongly suggested to Jerusalem that I should go to Paris as an observer and to assist the Israel delegation if and when it was deemed necessary. Dr. Evatt favoured the idea of

my presence in Paris. As it turned out the Australian delegation strongly defended Israel's case against granting territorial concessions to the Arabs and the Assembly rejected the Bernadotte Peace Plan. In September, Horace and I were received in Canberra by the Prime Minister and Mr. Arthur Calwell, then Minister for Immigration. In addition to the question of Israel's recognition we also requested the Government to encourage and promote trade relations with Israel.

In January 1949 several Governments, including those of the United Kingdom, France and New Zealand, granted *de facto* recognition to the Government of Israel. At the same time the Australian Government accorded "full" recognition to Israel and a few days later the United States Government announced its decision to extend *de jure* recognition after having granted *de facto* recognition to the provisional Government of Israel on 14th May 1948, within hours of the proclamation of the State of Israel. Whilst the United States was the first Government to accord it *de facto* recognition, Australia was the first of the Western nations to grant it *de jure* recognition. When asked whether full recognition meant *de jure* and *de facto* recognition Dr. Evatt answered that this was so. In his statement Dr. Evatt said ". . . the legal basis of Israel is unassailable. It rests on the decision of the United Nations Assembly of 1947 which contemplated the coming into being of the new State and its subsequent recognition as a member of the United Nations. Moreover, the territorial boundaries of Israel were fixed by the decisions of 1947 and these boundaries must remain until they are altered, either by the General Assembly or by the agreement of Israel with the other States and peoples directly concerned." He went on to say ". . . the distinction between *de facto* and *de jure* recognition which may have application in cases of Governments brought into existence as a result of internal revolution has no application to the present case. The *de jure* or legal foundation in this case is the Assembly decision operating in relation to the termination of the previously existing Mandate" (*The Task of Nations*—The Fourth Phase, by Dr. Evatt).

To my question as to why the Government used the words "full recognition" he replied laughingly "because nothing could be fuller than full".

About a month earlier, in November 1948, the Zionist Federation adopted a resolution to request the Australian Government for its support of Israel's application for admission to the United Nations. Mr. Moshe Sharett, Israel's Foreign Minister, in a letter from the *Hakirya* in Tel Aviv, expressed his Government's appreciation of our efforts on behalf of Israel. In a letter we received from Jerusalem in January 1949 the Jewish Agency expressed its appreciation to Dr. Evatt for his skilful handling of the issue at the United Nations in the defence of Jewish rights.

Local Zionist activity was also resumed with the reopening of communication with the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organisation in Jerusalem. In September a public rally was held under the slogan of "Israel Speaks—Past Achievements and Future Plans". Speakers were Rabbi Dr. Harry Freedman, Joe Solvey (in Yiddish), both of Melbourne, and myself. Horace Newman was in the chair. There was great enthusiasm as a result of Israel's decisive victories over the Arabs.

With the restoration of the lines of communication with Israel and with the progress made in consolidating the foundation of the young State, the Zionist Federation decided to discontinue the news service of events in the *Yishuv* which it broadcast over a Sydney commercial radio station. This news service, which was a regular feature for several months, became very popular and was listened to eagerly by a large cross-section of our community as well as by others. The decision to discontinue the broadcasts caused much disappointment and even resentment in some quarters. The Zionist Executive, because of the considerable expense involved, discussed the matter at several of its meetings and resolved to cancel the contract with the broadcasting station. Because of the popular demand, however, Horace and I were given authority by the Zionist Executive to make a final decision. After careful investigation we decided to continue and to extend the news service until the middle of 1949.

The Zionist State Council at that time was involved in a serious controversy concerning the Jewish Board of Deputies of New South Wales. Since its inception the Board in Sydney, as was the case with the Melbourne Board, had been financially embarrassed, finding it impossible to raise the funds for adminis-

trative requirements. As an easy way out it was suggested that a levy of 5 per cent should be imposed on the funds raised by its affiliated organisations. The Zionist State Council through the media of the United Israel Appeal and the Jewish National Fund was the largest fund-raising organisation affiliated to the Board of Deputies. If the suggestion of a 5 per cent levy was to be accepted the Zionist funds would have had to provide by far the greatest part of the Board's financial needs. The Zionist Deputies of the Board vehemently objected to the levy on the grounds the Zionist funds are raised from the Jewish public for Israel and could not be used for purposes of the local community. We contended that such action on our part would be legally and morally indefensible as it would mean the misuse of trust funds. After long and heated discussions the suggestion of a levy was rejected by a majority vote of the Deputies. This controversy did not enhance the popularity of the Zionists with the leading figures of the Board and as President of the Zionist State Council I was often the victim of this unpopularity.

In November 1948 Dr. Evatt was elected President of the fourth General Assembly of the United Nations and the Zionist Federation sent a cable of congratulation to Paris which he acknowledged with sincere appreciation. On his return to Australia in December the Zionist Federation arranged a dinner in his honour which the two Victorian leaders, Maurice Ashkanasy, the President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, and Sam Wynn, President of the Victorian Zionist State Council, attended. In his address Dr. Evatt gave an account of the proceedings of the General Assembly in Paris which dealt with the problem of the Israel-Arab conflict and he restated Australia's attitude on the boundaries of Israel which was reflected in the resolution introduced by Australia in the General Assembly opposing the Bernadotte Peace Plan. With regard to the rejection of Israel's application for admission to the United Nations, Dr. Evatt said that this was only temporary and that Israel's admission was certain to be effected at the next General Assembly to be held next year.

Professor Selig Brodetsky of Leeds, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland, arrived in Sydney in February 1948, to conduct the first *Keren Hayesod* United Israel Appeal in Aus-

tralia. He was accompanied by Rabbi C. L. Heilpern who had been for some time the Jewish Agency representative at the refugee camps in Cyprus. It was the first major Zionist appeal in Australia since the establishment of the State of Israel and it was held in the period of mass immigration into Israel. From October 1948 the rate of immigration was immense and the Jewish Agency laid its plans to bring three hundred and thirty thousand refugees from the camps in Germany, Austria, Italy and Cyprus and also from those of Aden during 1949. In that year the migration to Israel of the entire Jewish community of the Yemen numbering 45,000—which became known as the "Magic Carpet" operation—and of nearly the entire Jewish community of Bulgaria which then numbered 40,000 were effected. The cost of this movement reached astronomical figures and the *Keren Hayesod* was charged with the task of raising the largest possible amounts from the Jews of the world. The Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand set itself the target of £300,000 to be raised in 1949 in both countries.

To achieve this ambitious goal Professor Brodetsky, a member of the executive of the Jewish Agency and the foremost Jewish Zionist leader of Great Britain and the British Commonwealth, was invited to inaugurate our campaign. Professor Brodetsky had a very tight schedule for his Australian visit. As President of the British Board of Deputies he was anxious to attend its monthly meetings without fail as far as it was humanly possible. Thus he planned his visit to Australia to take place between two successive meetings of the Board, leaving London immediately after the one and returning on the day of the next. On arrival in Sydney, at a reception held at our home, he called me aside asking for the programme arranged for his Australian tour. On glancing through the typed schedule he noticed that we had left out a visit to one of the capital cities which had only a small Jewish community and that we had left him a day or two free from speaking engagements to enable him to rest and to see something of the country. He insisted that we cancel the free days and that instead we arrange a visit to the community which had been omitted.

Our distinguished emissary drove himself very hard and we could not but admire his dynamism and his dedication to the task for which he came. He drove himself and those who worked

with him to ensure the success of his mission. Professor Brodetsky stayed in Sydney for one week and addressed large appeal functions, held meetings with leaders of Zionist and of local Jewish organisations and was received by the leaders of our State Government and of the City of Sydney. Despite this busy schedule he insisted on visiting some of the sights of our beautiful city and its surroundings. Horace and I, often accompanied by our wives, were always at his side. He once remarked that in all his travels and numerous visits to Jewish communities in many parts of the world it was his first experience of "Zionist Twins", meaning Horace and myself.

Since he was a member of the executive of the World Zionist Organisation and of the Jewish Agency we deemed it important that he call on Mr. Chifley, the Australian Prime Minister. We arranged an appointment and, accompanied by Abram Landa and myself, Professor Brodetsky visited Canberra and was received by the Prime Minister. He conveyed the appreciation and thanks of the Jewish Agency to the Australian Government for what it had done and was still doing in supporting Israel at the United Nations and especially for its *de jure* recognition of the Government of Israel. Mr. Chifley was extremely friendly and in the discussion he evinced keen interest in Israel and its affairs about which he was well informed.

Taking this opportunity I asked the Prime Minister for an extension of the permit to transfer funds to Israel and he again referred me to Dr. Coombs, the Governor of the Commonwealth Bank. As on the previous occasion, I was asked to submit a memorandum on the aims and objects of the United Israel Appeal to the Exchange Control of the Commonwealth Bank and to apply for permission to remit funds to Israel. A permit for the transfer for a further large amount was granted for 1949. Since then, an annual permit has been granted on a formal application made to the Exchange Control by the Zionist Federation. The permit is automatically renewed without further intervention by the Treasury of the Commonwealth Government. From 1956 onwards the amount raised for Israel by our Zionist funds was substantially increased and, accompanied by Horace, I called on the Exchange Control to advise the officer in charge of this fact. We submitted our formal application for a permit

to transfer an increased amount which was granted and is still being granted year by year.

Whilst in Canberra we called on Mr. Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration, who received Professor Brodetsky most cordially. Our visit to Mr. Calwell had another motive. Immigration into Palestine (*aliyah*) ranked high on the Zionist programme and was given much emphasis in our publicity. The Australian immigration policy enunciated by Mr. Calwell was to attract a large European immigration into the country. This policy was widely publicised abroad and in Australia and received much public attention at the time. We were concerned lest our *aliyah* publicity might clash with the official Australian policy on immigration into this country and that, as a result, Zionist activity generally might be looked upon with disfavour by the Australian Government. We explained the Zionist position to Mr. Calwell and assured him that nothing more than a token immigration of young Australians into Israel could occur. The Minister who, as usual, was well informed told us that his department was well aware of the position and that there was no objection to our activity if it was carried on with a measure of discretion. Mr. Calwell very courteously showed us around that part of Parliament House where the ministerial offices were situated and introduced Professor Brodetsky to other members of the Government who happened to be available.

For the time of Brodetsky's stay with us Rabbi Heilpern was amiable and friendly and showed no sign of animosity towards our emissary or towards the committee. He accompanied Brodetsky to every meeting and was always asked to speak before Professor Brodetsky was called on to deliver the main address. However, as soon as Brodetsky left Australia Rabbi Heilpern completely changed his attitude towards us. He became morose, resentful of Brodetsky and hostile to Horace and myself. As, in the main, I was responsible for the arrangements of the campaign, chairing of meetings and for fund-raising generally, I received the full measure of his anger. We were exceedingly embarrassed but carried on the campaign as best we could under the circumstances. In the meantime we were advised from Jerusalem that Mrs. Kate Gluckman, the well-known woman Zionist leader from South Africa, had accepted an invitation to come to Australia to assist in the drive. Rabbi

Heilpern meanwhile had left for Melbourne. When told of Mrs. Gluckman's expected arrival he appeared subdued and more co-operative and fulfilled speaking engagements at appeal meetings. Soon after Kate's arrival, he broke every contact with the committee and tendered his resignation in an abusive letter which he published in the Jewish press. He left the country shortly afterwards and was not seen or heard of again by any member of our committees in Sydney or Melbourne.

The Zionist Federation continued its public relations activity for Israel until the arrival in Australia of Israel's diplomatic representatives in late July 1949. Horace and I carried on with the task of public relations as far as Israel was concerned and in recognition of our work the Zionist Federation at its February meeting resolved to inscribe us in the *Sefer Hamdinah* (Book of the State) which had been introduced by the Jewish National Fund to log the names of those who had rendered memorable service to the State of Israel.

Dr. Evatt, who was to leave soon for New York to preside over the United Nations Assembly at Lake Success, strongly recommended that Abe Landa and I be present at the deliberations of the General Assembly. He told us that Israel's final boundaries and its application for admission to the United Nations would surely be a feature on the Assembly's agenda and, based on previous experience, they were likely to meet with opposition from certain quarters. He therefore considered our presence at Lake Success of some importance. We advised Israel's Foreign Ministry in Tel Aviv and the Israeli delegation at the United Nations of Dr. Evatt's suggestion but we were told that in the view of the Government of Israel our attendance was not necessary. We decided that in my official capacity as President of the Zionist State Council I could not act contrary to the view expressed by the authorities of Israel but that Abe should go to New York in a private capacity. We told Dr. Evatt of the position and he accorded the Hon. Abram Landa official status as observer with the Australian delegation at the United Nations. Abe made the trip and subsequently we received letters from Abba Eban, then Israel's Ambassador to the United States, and from Arthur Lourie, a member of Israel's delegation to the United Nations, acknowledging Abe's significant co-operation and valuable assistance at Lake Success.

On 11th May 1949 Israel was granted admission to the United Nations. This was celebrated later in the month at a public meeting at the Paddington Town Hall where Dr. Shlomo Lowy of Jerusalem, who had come on a visit on behalf of the Jewish National Fund, and Abe, who had just returned from the United States, were the principal speakers. There was great jubilation in the crowded hall and both speakers received a rousing ovation. Abe and Shlomo addressed a meeting of the Federation Executive the day before in which Abe reported on his experiences at Lake Success. At this meeting the executive decided to inscribe Dr. Evatt in the *Sefer Hamdinah* and recorded its grateful thanks to Abe for the devotion and selfless services he had rendered to the cause of Israel.

Dr. Evatt returned from the United States in July 1949. At a press interview he was asked what he considered the most significant achievement of the United Nations Assembly under his Presidency. In reply, he hesitated to single out any one incident as the most significant achievement but added: "If I were asked what I considered the most significant moment of my Presidency of the Assembly I would say it was the admission of the new State of Israel as the 59th Member of the World Organisation."

On 24th July the Zionist Federation arranged a dinner in his honour at which we paid him homage and expressed deep appreciation for what he had done to make possible the United Nations decision of November 1947 and more recently the admission of the State of Israel to United Nations membership. Rieke Cohen in her address as President of the Australian WIZO said to him that he was the "instrument of God for the rebirth of the Jewish Nation". Dr. Evatt, visibly moved, thanked the Chairman and all the speakers for their warm expressions of gratitude to him for doing what, he said, was his duty. In his address he gave an outline of Israel's struggle in the United Nations and of the manoeuvres by certain delegations to prevent or at least to defer Israel's admission. Speaking of Australia's unfailing support for Israel, Dr. Evatt said "because we stand for justice we stand for Israel". He paid a glowing tribute to Dr. Weizmann, President of the State of Israel, and said that he had had two private meetings with him in New York and that he knew him from his appearance before the *Ad hoc*

Committee in November 1947. Dr. Weizmann, he said, was "a man on whom real greatness was stamped". Dr. Evatt further remarked how happy and proud the Jews of Australia, who did so much for Israel in the critical period, must feel and made warm reference to the work done by Horace Newman, Abram Landa and myself. He remembered for a long time what Rieke Cohen said about his being an "instrument for the rebirth of the Jewish Nation" and he often made reference to it.

In later years, when he was Leader of the Federal Opposition and after he resigned this office to become Chief Justice of N.S.W. I often had the pleasure of being invited to lunch with him and on these occasions he would be reminiscent about events during Israel's struggles at the United Nations and ask about two Jewish women leaders who were keen workers for Israel. He referred to Rieke Cohen and Agolda Goldberg, another leader of WIZO who, with her husband, Frank Goldberg, met Dr. and Mrs. Evatt on a voyage from London to Australia at a critical period of the struggle at UNO and who had pleaded for Israel's cause with him.

Israel's first envoys to Australia and New Zealand who arrived in Sydney at the end of July 1949 were Harry Levin, Consul-General, his wife Ruth and Gabby Doron, Consul, and his wife Fay. It was an occasion of tremendous interest, pride and enthusiasm and an event of the greatest significance for the Jewish communities in the two countries. For those of us who had participated actively in the struggle for Jewish Statehood, their presence was particularly rewarding.

In the weeks following the arrival of the Israeli Diplomatic Mission the Sydney Jewish community showed great eagerness to extend hospitality to its members. Invitations were showered upon them by organisations as well as by individuals, of whom many had never before been interested in the Jewish national idea and had taken no part in the struggle for Jewish Statehood, but were now eager to bask in the reflected glory of the existence of the State of Israel. To the Zionists it was pleasing to see the change of attitude by the doubters and disbelievers in the possible re-emergence of Jewish nationhood. To Horace and myself it was rewarding to find the reality of the State of Israel projected into our very midst and that it was readily accepted with great pride by all sections of the Australian

Jewish community. As a result, the Zionist image was greatly enhanced and the prestige of the Zionist movement reached its zenith. It also entailed for us much more intense activity for the cause of Israel. We had a busy time attending the numerous public functions and private receptions given in honour of the Israeli representatives in Sydney.

The implementation of the United Nations decision of November 1947 for the internationalisation of Jerusalem came up for decision at the fourth General Assembly of the United Nations convened in October 1949 at Lake Success. At the signing of the Armistice Agreements between Israel and the Arab States the old city of Jerusalem was occupied by Jordan, as was the rest of that part of Palestine which was allocated for the setting up of an Arab State. New Jerusalem however was held by Israel. It was evident that Jordan intended to stay put and Israel was just as determined to make New Jerusalem the capital of the State of Israel and the seat of its Government. On 11th September 1949, replying to a question in Parliament, Dr. Evatt stated Australia's attitude: "That as an adherent to the principles of the United Nations it stood by the decision of the General Assembly of November 1947 for the internationalisation of Jerusalem." The Palestine Conciliation Commission in November 1949 submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations a plan for the internationalisation of Jerusalem and Bethlehem and Mr. John Hood, Australia's delegate to the United Nations, formulated the resolution for internationalisation which was carried by thirty-eight votes with fourteen against and seven abstentions. There was deep resentment and strong protest in Jerusalem and throughout the Jewish world and the Government of Israel vowed to defend its Eternal City. Australia's strong support for internationalisation and the fact that Australia was instrumental in presenting the resolution to the General Assembly was particularly upsetting to the people of Israel. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry in a resolution presented to Dr. Evatt asked for the integration of Jerusalem into the State of Israel.

At the request of Harry Levin the Zionist Federation refrained from public relations activity as far as it concerned Israel's foreign policy and its dealings with the Government of Australia. Since the arrival of the diplomatic mission this was



Author being entertained in Israel on his 70th birthday.
*Left to right*: Dr. Joseph Burg, Minister for Welfare, Moshe Sharett (Chairman, Jewish Agency), author and his wife, Dr. Israel Goldstein (Chairman KH-UIA).



Members of Zionist Federation Executive at Plenary Session, Sydney, August 1957.



Dinner to Dr. H. V. Evatt, 24th July 1949.



Dr. H. V. Evatt congratulating Moshe Sharett on Israel becoming 59th member of United Nations.

clearly the function of Israel's representatives accredited to the Government of Australia. Horace and I as citizens of Australia were thus restrained from continuing the contacts which we had maintained till then with members of the Australian authorities and with civic leaders. Harry kept us in the dark about his official business and his relationship with officials of the Australian Government. This for the reason, as he once stated publicly, that he came to represent the Israeli Government to the Government of Australia and to the Australian people but not to the Jewish community of Australia. Dr. Evatt on one occasion, noting my disinclination to talk about Israel's political problems, asked me whether Zionist interest in Israel was waning. He looked askance when I explained that Israel's foreign affairs were now the exclusive concern of Israel's diplomatic representatives.

The day on which the Australian-sponsored resolution on the internationalisation of Jerusalem was submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations was a Saturday, when Commonwealth Ministers usually leave Canberra to return to their home States for the week-end. Harry Levin was most anxious to contact Dr. Evatt in Sydney but the address and telephone number of the Minister's private residence were not in the telephone directory. He rang me in the early morning of that Saturday asking for Dr. Evatt's private telephone number, and told me of the business he urgently wanted to see him about. It happened that on that morning I had an appointment to see the Minister but Harry told me not to broach the subject to him. I spent nearly two hours with Dr. Evatt at his home without touching on the problem of Jerusalem at the United Nations. On the Monday morning Harry telephoned and agitatedly asked me urgently to call on Dr. Evatt requesting him to avert the passing of the resolution on Jerusalem as proposed by the Australian delegate to the General Assembly. The Minister was at a conference in the morning so, accompanied by Horace, I called at his Sydney office in the early afternoon. We pleaded desperately for the withdrawal of the resolution and we told him that a Jewish State without Jerusalem as its capital was unthinkable and if forced, the people of Israel would fight for it. I dared to say to him that the loss of Jerusalem would undo all the good that had been done and the wonderful support

given by Australia and by himself in particular for the establishment of the State of Israel. Dr. Evatt, taken aback, told us that we came too late to see him for the vote on the resolution was already taken and had been adopted by the General Assembly. Then, speaking quite sternly, he asked why it was that though I had seen him on the Saturday morning, when there might have been a chance for John Hood—the Australian delegate—to reconsider his attitude, I had said nothing to him about it then. I could not answer. The historic fact is that Jerusalem remained the capital of the State of Israel and has since become the seat of its Government and of its Legislature, the Knesset, Israel's Parliament.

The Commonwealth Government in November 1949 announced the appointment of Mr. O. C. W. Fuhrman, O.B.E., as its First Minister to the Government of Israel. The announcement was received with gratification by the Australian Jewish community. The fact that its first diplomatic representative was of the rank of Minister was considered a mark of esteem for the young State. There were, however, serious misgivings in certain Jewish quarters about the appointment of Mr. Fuhrman who previously had been Australia's representative in Shanghai.

It was rumoured that at the time the Jews of Shanghai had been seeking entry to Australia Mr. Fuhrman had shown bias against an influx of Jews into the Commonwealth. I was prevailed upon to bring this to the attention of Dr. Evatt who, as Minister for External Affairs, was responsible for the appointment. I was assured, however, that Mr. Fuhrman was a capable diplomat of great integrity and that he would be an unbiased and worthy representative to the State of Israel. On my visits to Israel during his term of service I had an opportunity to learn at first hand that he was respected and held in high esteem for his fair-mindedness in his relationship with Israel's Foreign Office and was praised by all those private citizens with whom he came in contact. In 1952 Horace and I were in Israel at the same time and we had the pleasure of being invited to lunch by Mr. Fuhrman. He spoke warmly of the Israelis and told us how pleasant a time he had in the country.

CHAPTER

# 27

# *Zionist Fulfilment*

THE CHIFLEY LABOUR GOVERNMENT was defeated at the General Federal Election in late December, 1949, and the Coalition Government of the Liberal-Country Parties was formed with Mr. (later Sir) Robert Menzies as Prime Minister. This marked the end of our formal and fruitful relationship with a friendly Government which had made a significant contribution to the rebirth of our ancient nation and the establishment of the modern State of Israel. However, I was privileged to enjoy the continued personal friendship of Dr. Evatt—that great and distinguished son of the Australian people. This change of government was propitiously timed for Horace and myself because public relations on behalf of Israel and contact with the Australian Government became, from then on, the task of the diplomatic representatives of the State of Israel and were no longer a function of the Zionist movement. It is a notable fact, for which the Jewish people will be eternally grateful, that the new Government retained a sympathetic attitude towards the State of Israel. Sir Percy Spender, then Minister for External Affairs, stated in December 1950 that the Australian Government had changed its stand on the internationalisation of Jerusalem. It is, moreover, a remarkable fact that on all vital issues which came before the United Nations concerning the State of Israel, the Australian Government was consistent in giving its support for Israel.

With the fulfilment of the major basic objectives of the Zionist movement, the creation of the Jewish State, the Zionist content was emptied of much of its idealism. There was, moreover, no

longer the need to fight against the mistaken views held by a large section of world Jewry and by some of the gentile nations that as Jews we were only a religious but not a national entity. On the other hand, we realised, in the words of Dr. Chaim Weizmann, first President of the State of Israel: "A State is not given, it is only an opportunity." To make the young State viable was surely the task not only of the Jews in Palestine but of Jewries the world over. The persistent hostility of the Arab States and their stubborn refusal to come to peace terms with Israel obliged the *Yishuv* to maintain large forces for the security of the State. Mass immigration posed the most serious problems, financially and otherwise, to the Government and people of Israel, and in the eighteen months following the proclamation of the State the Jewish population increased by almost 50 per cent, from 650,000 to over 1,000,000 people. The extreme shortage of food, housing and every other basic and essential commodity indispensable to civilised society imposed well-nigh insurmountable obstacles to the building up of the country. All of this constituted a challenge to the Jews of the Diaspora as it did to the Jews of Israel. In particular, it was a challenge to the world Zionist movement, the parent organisation responsible for the coming into being of the State of Israel.

The birth of the State of Israel posed an embarrassing and perplexing problem for me in a personal sense. It caused me pangs of conscience as my Zionist allegiance conflicted with the fact that I continued to live in Australia and did not seek self-fulfilment as a Zionist in the Jewish State. I was troubled with these thoughts for some considerable time and as my situation contained many complexities and difficulties I finally succumbed to the realities of life in which I and my family found ourselves. I am persuaded that the same position applied to many a staunch Zionist who remained in the Diaspora and did not pack up and go to Israel on the emergence of the State. The compromise I made with my conscience was to resolve to devote most of my time, energy and resources in service to the cause of Israel whilst living in Australia and, moreover, to spend some time in Israel every year. When the State was reborn in May 1948 I was fifty-five years of age and under the circumstances this compromise was possibly the only reasonable one.

In the years since the emergence of the State I have endeavoured conscientiously to carry out this resolution to the best of my ability. Since 1950 my wife and I have paid regular visits to Israel where we have remained from four to ten weeks every twelve months.

Moshe Sharett visited Australia in 1957 for the United Israel Appeal and it was my good fortune as President of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand and of the United Israel Appeal in New South Wales to be closely associated with him in the campaign. On his return to Israel he gave many lectures on his experiences in Australia. During my visit to Israel later that year I was told that he often praised the work I did for Israel in Australia and, moreover, that during an ideological debate at a Mapai Conference, in refuting Ben Gurion's assertion that only a Jew who settled in Israel could be a Zionist, Moshe pointed to my friend and colleague Sam Wynn of Melbourne and to myself, stating that no better Zionists were to be found in Israel. This evaluation of Sammy and myself, coming from such an eminent Israeli and world Jewish leader as Moshe Sharett, was a source of much gratification to me but, more important, satisfied my conscience over the decision I had taken.

For almost two decades since the early 1950's I have shared with Horace Newman the honour of being President of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand whenever the seat of the Federation Executive was located in Sydney. We were both elected Life Members of the executive of the Zionist Federation, an honour also bestowed in New South Wales on our associate and friend, Paul Ungar, who for several years was Federal President of the Jewish National Fund in Australia. Moreover, since 1940 I have occupied the position of Chairman and soon after of President of the Zionist State Council of New South Wales for a long period. Pride of place, however, should be given to the position of President of the *Keren Hayesod*-United Israel Appeal which I held in New South Wales for more than thirty years, during which time I was repeatedly elected by the Zionist Conference as Commissioner or President of the Australian *Keren Hayesod*. It was this practical task which to me was always the most rewarding Zionist function I was able to perform.

Let it be said that it was not the easiest and most enchanting of Zionist tasks and many a devoted Zionist shied away from it. The Jewish people are reputed to be charitable and good givers. Still, when the Jew is asked to give year by year on the basis of a self-imposed tax, which is the principle laid down for contributions made to the *Keren Hayesod*, it is not easy for him to comply. There are a few who give freely and generously, but they are the exception. For thirty-four years since Dr. Shein's visit to Australia for the *Keren Hayesod* in 1933 I have been in the forefront of this work in New South Wales and only by trial and error did I become immune to the set-backs and personal indignities one is bound to meet in the path of this kind of duty.

Apart from Zionist fund-raising being a practical way for Diaspora Jewry to participate in nation building in Israel, it has another aspect of great importance to the Jews living outside Israel. It is, in a considerable measure, an effective antidote to the eroding forces of assimilation which constitute a serious threat to our survival as Jews in the *Galuth* (Diaspora). In the early years of *Keren Hayesod*, leaders such as Dr. Weizmann, Shmaryahu Lewin, Berthold Feiwel and Leib Jaffe, emphasised the great educational value of their fund-raising work as a contributing factor to the spreading of the Zionist ideal in the five continents of the globe. Even today the work for the *Keren Hayesod*-United Israel Appeal remains invaluable as an instrument for making Diaspora Jews Israeli-minded thus helping, in some degree, the effort to ensure Jewish survival in the Diaspora. It is also an important component in the effort to form a bridge between Israeli and other Jews and in this way to help to preserve the unity of the Jewish people.

Apart from fund-raising and my special interest in working for *Keren Hayesod*, I came to realise that, important and vital as this was, much more was necessary for the economy of Palestine and later, for the State of Israel. At the end of World War II, my friends Norman Schureck and Horace Newman and I formed the Australian Palestine Trading Company in order to promote trade between the two countries. On my visit to Palestine in 1947 I had investigated the possibility of importing goods from Palestine and I offered the services of our trading company to Mr. Tishbi and other officials of the Foreign

Trade Institute of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv. When he visited Palestine later that year Horace placed an order with the Foreign Trade Institute for a consignment of a selected list of goods to test the Australian market for these products. As a consequence of the Arab fighting in Palestine after 29th November 1947, and of the War of Independence after the proclamation of the Jewish State, our initial attempts for the promotion of trade with Palestine were interrupted.

On my visit to Israel in 1950 I resumed enquiries about establishing a paper manufacturing industry, the prospects of which I had discussed in 1947 with Julius Simon of the Palestine Economic Corporation (P.E.C.). At the office of the Foreign Investment Authority of the Israeli Ministry of Trade and Industry I learned that an American industrialist was interested in such a project. On my visit to New York the following year I called at the offices of the Palestine Economic Corporation and Aaron Barroway, one of its directors, introduced me to Joseph Mazer of the Hudson Pulp and Paper Corporation, initiator of the paper mill project and later Chairman of Directors of the American-Israel Paper Mill in Hadera, Israel. I undertook to raise a reasonable sum towards the projected paper mill from Australian investors including myself. On my return to Australia I called on Dr. Coombs, Governor of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, requesting permission for an Australian investment in Israel which had as its object the creation of employment for immigrants to Israel. The transfer of foreign currency from Australia was still greatly restricted and Josef Linton, then Israeli Minister for Australia, advised me to apply for the transfer of only a nominal amount if my application was to be successful. Prior to my approach to the Commonwealth Bank I ascertained the amount I would be able to raise from prospective investors in Australia and I mentioned this to Dr. Coombs. I was again advised to make a formal application to the Exchange Control of the Commonwealth Bank setting out the details of the project and the reasons for asking permission for this investment from Australia. I submitted my request in a memorandum to the Exchange Control and the permission was granted for the amount I asked for. A hitch occurred, however, which caused several of the would-be investors to withdraw and only about half of the amount for

which the permit was granted was paid up. The Hadera Paper Mill has outgrown its early teething difficulties and has become a highly-developed, prosperous and important industrial enterprise. The paper mill investment blazed the trail for further Australian investments in Israel, of which the Australian Wool Industry in Ashdod is the most important. It was established by Leo Fink of Melbourne and a group of his business associates and friends and was an entirely Australian investment on a considerable scale. The major part of the capital was raised from Melbourne investors and I was the only one from Sydney on its Australian Board of Directors.

The Australian Zionist Federation has as one of its objects the promotion of trade between Australia and Israel. Leading members of the Zionist Executive had also made efforts in their respective businesses to encourage the importation of Israeli goods. For several reasons, and in particular because of the lack of shipping facilities, trade between the two countries was very slow and this problem presented difficulties for the Israeli commercial attachés who were appointed to Australia at a later period. With the subsequent establishment, however, of a direct shipping line between Eilat and Australian ports plying at regular intervals the volume of trade between our two countries is increasing steadily.

On my visit to Israel in December 1964 to attend the twenty-sixth Zionist Congress in Jerusalem I was contacted by Dr. Kurt Mendelsohn, the economist and honorary secretary of the Israel-Australia Chamber of Commerce which had just then been established, who invited me to attend a meeting of the committee of the Chamber and asked me to bring along other Australian visitors who I considered to be of importance. I went to the first meeting with my friends Paul Ungar of Sydney and Leo Fink of Melbourne. We were asked to establish reciprocal Australia-Israel Chambers of Commerce in Melbourne and Sydney. Leo Fink was confident that Melbourne could establish such a Chamber and I promised, with Paul's help, to investigate the possibility of forming a Chamber in Sydney. Other meetings were held by the interested parties in Israel which included the managements of the Bank Leumi of Israel and the Zim Navigation Company and ourselves. At these meetings we were joined by Horace Newman and Bernard Ferster of Sydney and

Maurice Slonim of Melbourne. Our Melbourne colleagues promised to establish an active Chamber but asked for a considerable financial subsidy from Israel to engage a full-time organising director and for an appropriately equipped office. We, from Sydney, decided to wait and see what would be done in Melbourne and to take our cue from them.

Dr. Mendelsohn wrote to me in Sydney imploring me to undertake the formation of an Australian Chamber whereupon Paul Ungar joined me in inviting a number of leading businessmen to a luncheon for the purpose of putting before them the proposal for an Israeli Chamber. Several of our guests agreed to form a provisional committee with a view to investigating the practical means of establishing a Chamber in Sydney and I was asked to act as convenor of the committee. We met several times to discuss the prospects as well as the objects of the proposed Chamber and, in the meantime, I enquired from our colleagues in Melbourne about their position. I was told that no subsidy would be forthcoming from Israel and that they could do nothing more about the matter.

After several months I called on Mr. A. J. R. Birch, the Director of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, to consult him on the project. He told me that the Council of the Chamber had decided recently to encourage the formation of national divisions along similar lines to the policy adopted by the London Chamber of Commerce. He strongly advised me to begin the formation of an Israel division of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce and after we had made sufficient progress we should be free to establish an independent Australia-Israel Chamber. Our committee agreed to such an arrangement; but Dr. Mendelsohn was not in favour of it.

When I visited Israel again in January 1966 to attend the sessions of the Zionist General Council I explained the position to a meeting of the Israel-Australia Chamber in Tel Aviv at which Mr. Yoffe of the Bank Leumi, Mr. Lewinson of the Zim Navigation Company and Dr. Mendelsohn were present. It was agreed that I proceed with the formation of the Israel Division of the Sydney Chamber. The committee in Sydney authorised me to go ahead with arrangements and on my invitation twenty companies agreed to become members of the division. John

Wars, a member of the provisional committee, consented to be Chairman and a permanent committee was set up, utilising office and administrative facilities provided by the Sydney Chamber. The Israel Division, under the very capable chairmanship of John Wars, has functioned efficiently from the start with much benefit to the development of trade between Australia and the State of Israel and there is great promise for the future.

At the sixteenth Zionist Conference in October 1953 I was elected President of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand in my absence from Australia on a visit to Israel to attend meetings of the Zionist General Council. The records show that it was a period of intensive Zionist activity and of lively ideological controversies. One of the difficult tasks with which I was faced was the problem of Zionist party appeals. The sixteenth Zionist Conference carried the resolution that there should be only one party appeal in each year and that the four Zionist parties, the General Zionists, *Poale Zion*, *Mizrachi* and Revisionists, should hold their appeals in rotation every fourth year. The *Mizrachi* opposed the resolution and in defiance of the conference decision invited Rabbi Mordechai Kirshblum of New York, the world *Mizrachi* leader, to visit Australia to conduct an appeal for the *Mizrachi* Party fund in 1954, the year allocated to the General Zionists. The leaders of *Mizrachi* in Australia, Leibler and Feiglin, who were also members of the Federation Executive, resided in Melbourne and I travelled there to persuade them to desist from holding their appeal that year, but to no avail. On his arrival I met Rabbi Kirshblum at the airport in Sydney and I found him most reasonable and co-operative with the result that we used his visit instead to boost the United Israel Appeal in Australia. Rabbi Kirshblum was a delightful and effective speaker and captivated his audiences with his large reservoir of anecdotes and Jewish stories.

The positions I held in the Zionist movement naturally involved me in making numerous speeches at public meetings, in long and animated discussion at business meetings and in frequent conversation with prospective donors to Zionist funds. This quite apart from normal social conversation and vocal demands of private business activity. From 1952 I began to be

frequently troubled by hoarseness or by a weakness of voice without any apparent cause. After medical treatment my voice improved only for the disorder to recur at periodic intervals. The complaint became chronic but medical tests and biopsies showed pathological negative results. The disorder, however, did not cause me to slacken my routine activities except to use speech sparingly and to avoid smoking and other throat irritants.

During the months of 1955 the condition of my larynx deteriorated progressively and when I attended the session of the Zionist General Council in Jerusalem early in September that year the pitch of my voice was practically no more than a whisper. On examination by a throat specialist at the *Hadassa* Hospital I was advised to have another biopsy at the hospital. However, I was scheduled to leave for home within the next few days and I decided not to delay my departure but to attend to this minor surgical incision of my larynx in Sydney. Because of the precarious financial position of the Jewish Agency as a consequence of the large number of immigrants from Morocco the General Council appointed a committee of eight members in which I was included to devise ways and means of raising additional funds for *Keren Hayesod* as a matter of great urgency. The Australian annual United Israel Appeal had just concluded and I promised to endeavour to raise in Australia soon after my arrival home a further 25 per cent of our *Keren Hayesod* income that year. After the concluding session of the General Council, which happened to be at noon, Berl Locker, who presided over the sessions, invited several of the leaders to lunch at his home and he included Israel Dunski of South Africa and myself. There were about ten guests present and I was seated between Dr. Nahum Goldman and André Blumel of France. Dr. Goldman, noticing my hoarse voice, and not having heard me speak at the sessions asked me if my voice was hoarse from *not speaking*. On my return to Sydney I urged my colleagues on the Federation Executive to launch an emergency drive for additional contributions to the 1955 United Israel Appeal. My executive in Sydney approved this plan but our colleagues of Melbourne opposed it and I was obliged to make a trip there to get their approval. It was a snap campaign and the total raised throughout Australia was twice the amount I had promised to Jerusalem. After the campaign a biopsy of

my voice box was taken and the pathologist once more reported a negative result.

The twenty-fourth Zionist Congress was scheduled to be convened in Jerusalem in April 1956. By agreement of the four Zionist parties no election for delegates was held and each party had the same number of delegates as were elected to the twenty-third Zionist Congress and I was again one of the delegates. Sasha and I planned to leave Australia during the first week in March and to travel by air via the United States and Europe to arrive in Israel a few days before the opening of the Congress on 24th April. The condition of my voice did not improve and Dr. Max Brenner, a friend and colleague on the Zionist Executive, urged me to call in another ear, nose and throat specialist for consultation. He arranged an appointment with the specialist who, on examination of my throat, told me that he suspected malignancy but that he could only make a diagnosis with any degree of certainty by another biopsy and his own pathological tests. We were booked to leave the next day for the United States and after much upset and discussion with my medical advisers it was decided that I should go to Rochester, Minnesota, for an examination at the Mayo Clinic.

We arrived in Rochester on 10th March and after a complete physical overhaul and thorough examination lasting several days a biopsy was taken and on the pathologist's report the diagnosis was a malignant tumour of my larynx. It came as a great shock to Sasha and myself when the surgeon told us that the only sure way to save me was the surgical removal of my voice box. Noting our shock at his diagnosis he told me bluntly it meant "either life without a voice box or a voice box without life". He thought my malignancy was too far advanced for any hope of a cure by cobalt radiation treatment. Dr. Erich, the surgeon, was to leave for his vacation in a couple of days and I decided to enter hospital the following day for the operation. After the shock of hearing about the seriousness of my condition I soon recovered and remained composed and reconciled to my fate of having to live without speech.

The night before the operation I sent off about thirty postcards to the family and close friends in Australia and to relatives and friends in many parts of the world. Sasha, on the other hand, was stunned and distressed and spent sleepless nights at the

Kahler Hotel adjoining the Mayo Clinic. She telephoned our children in Sydney and Theodor was a tower of strength to his mother speaking to her each day by long distance telephone. Rabbi Max Schenk, our dear friend, hearing of my operation, flew over from New York to visit us. My head and the upper part of my body were swathed in bandages and my mind was still fogged from the heavy pain-killing drugs. Faintly I heard him speak to Sasha to whom his visit was a very great comfort. After my discharge from the hospital I remained for about ten days at the Kahler Hotel to recuperate sufficiently to be able to make the flight to New York.

A doctor at the Mayo Clinic gave me a few lessons in oesophageal speech which most laryngectomies acquire. We stayed in New York for some time before returning to Australia and I continued to take lessons in speech therapy from a teacher who was attached to a hospital and was a laryngectomy himself. We took an apartment in a private hotel which made it possible for me to exercise oesophageal speech in the privacy of our rooms. It was this determination as well as the encouragement from my family and friends which helped me to overcome my disability to some extent and to continue a normal routine of life in my business, Zionist and communal activities.

My place as a delegate to the Zionist Congress was taken by Nathan Jacobson of Melbourne who was a deputy delegate of the General Zionists from Australia. I completed my second term of two years as President of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand: Horace Newman chaired our meetings and a microphone was provided for me to speak at executive meetings or to deliver short addresses at public meetings whenever I deemed it advisable.

Dr. Erich of the Mayo Clinic told me that the laryngectomy was a complete success but hinted that possibly a glandular operation might be necessary at a later stage. In January 1957 I felt a slight swelling of the glands on the side of my neck and I reported this to my doctor. The glandular operation was performed by a well-known surgeon in Sydney and I had no further occasion to worry on this account. My disability as a laryngectomy, therefore, did not deter me from performing practical Zionist tasks or functions for Israel which I continued to carry out for several years. In July 1963, having attained the

age of seventy, I retired from an active life in business but not from Zionist and communal activity. The Zionist Federation, in conjunction with the Sydney Jewish community, arranged a communal dinner to pay tribute to Sasha and myself for the service we may have rendered to Israel and to the local Jewish community. On our visit to Israel in March 1964 honour was paid to Sasha and myself by the *Keren Kayemeth le Israel* who marked my seventieth year by laying the corner stone for a watchtower in our names on a beautiful hillside near Haifa overlooking the Mediterranean. The *Keren Hayesod* held an official reception at Beth Shalom in Jerusalem which was chaired by Israel Goldstein and attended by the senior staff of the Head Office including Woolf Perry, Morton Berman and our dear friend Moshe Ussiskin. Among the special guests invited were Moshe Sharett, then Chairman of the executive of the Jewish Agency, Dr. Josef Burg and Yigal Allon of the Government, Leo Dulzin of the executive of the Jewish Agency and Dr. Shlomo Lowy of the Head Office of the *Keren Kayemeth le Israel.* During the session of the Zionist General Council held in Jerusalem on 16th-23rd March 1964, the World Confederation of General Zionists of the Dr. Emanuel Newman Group arranged a reception at the Zion House, Tel Aviv, in our honour. Rabbi Dr. Max Nussbaum, then President of the Zionist Organisation of America, spoke in complimentary terms of my work and extended the good wishes of the World General Zionists to Sasha and myself on my having reached the seventieth year. Maurice Ashkanasy, President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, and Leo Fink, both of Melbourne, who were at the time in Israel, honoured us by their presence.

At the ceremony of laying the corner stone of the watchtower in our names in Kerem Maharal, which was presided over by Jacob Tsur, the Chairman of the *Keren Kayemeth le Israel*, and was attended by John Hood, Australian Ambassador to Israel, there were present our relations and friends residing in Israel and several visitors from Australia. I was most gratified and deeply moved that there was also present a group of the original settlers from Lesko, my native town in Galicia. I had left Lesko in 1913, returning there only for short visits to my parents, but on such occasions I met with the Zionist youth who seemed to regard me as their inspirational mentor for having pioneered

Zionism in the township and the surrounding smaller towns. A large number of them settled in Palestine after World War I and formed an association of all who came from Lesko and the nearby district to Palestine. On my visits to Israel as delegate to the Zionist Congresses and as a member of the Zionist General Council, I came in contact with them again. It was extremely pleasing to me that so many of them attended the event on Kerem Maharal, which later became the Australian project centre of the Jewish National Fund.

On our visits to Israel Sasha and I were the recipients of the usual courtesies which the Head Office of the *Keren Hayesod* extends to *Askanim* from abroad. Because of my long and close collaboration I was treated as a confidant in matters concerning the United Israel Appeal in Australia. I have striven to act in such a way as was, in my judgment, in the best interests of the fund and this I believe was appreciated by the leaders of the *Keren Hayesod* in Jerusalem and by most of my colleagues on the executive at home. Perhaps it was in recognition of this that at the suggestion of the Head Office I was elected a member of the World Council of the *Keren Hayesod* which recently came into being. This possibly also accounts for the fact that I have served uninterruptedly for more than thirty years as Chairman of the fund in my home State of New South Wales, and that on several occasions I was elected Commissioner or President of the Australian Federal *Keren Hayesod.* Eventually, at my earnest request, a new Chairman was elected to succeed me in 1967 in the person of Louis Klein, a very gifted younger man and successful industrialist who came from England to settle in Australia soon after World War II. His deep-seated Jewishness and fine organising ability make him exceptionally suited for the task he is fulfilling with great credit.

CHAPTER

# 28

# *The Jewish Future*

POLITICAL ZIONISM having attained its primary goal with the establishment of the Jewish State, a debate on the future of Zionism was the logical outcome. Since the principal aim of Zionism was the creation of a sovereign Jewish State and since the Jewish State now existed was there any further need for a Zionist movement? Different answers to this question have been given by David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, on the one hand and Dr. Nahum Goldman, President of the World Zionist Organisation and of the Jewish Agency on the other; their standpoints are diametrically opposed.

Ben Gurion asserted that with the emergence of the State of Israel there was no longer a basic need for the continued existence of a Zionist movement. His argument was that the Zionist movement could be likened to a scaffolding which was necessary for building the State, but having served its purpose it should be discarded.

Dr. Goldman went as far as to say that the Zionist movement was of even greater importance than before and that, if there was no Zionist movement in existence, there would have been the need to create it after the State was established. He maintained that since there was no peace with Arab neighbours and since the State was not economically independent, Israel could be secure only if it had the full support of the Jewish people; the Zionist movement was the instrument to channel world Jewry's support for Israel. Dr. Goldman further argued that the survival of the Jewish communities in the Diaspora was more seriously threatened than before the establishment of the State,

not because of external danger but by the threat of disintegration through assimilation. Zionism, in partnership with the State of Israel, Dr. Goldman asserted, had a better chance to ensure the future of the Jewish people.

My interpretation of Zionism coincided with the views expressed by Dr. Goldman, namely that the Zionist movement was a means to an end, a means for Jewish survival. The creation of a Jewish State was, to my belief, its first essential and, therefore, had prior call on our efforts and demanded our undivided devotion towards its attainment. A strong and well-organised Jewish community was a second line of defence against our disappearance as a people, and obliged the Zionist to share fully in this vital communal responsibility. It was this belief that prompted me to identify myself with every phase of Jewish communal endeavour in New South Wales and beyond. I responded to almost every call made to the Sydney Jewish community for material support by the numerous religious, educational, social and charitable institutions as well as to the many non-Zionist appeals for Jewish relief overseas. But only to give from one's resources was, in my view, not enough, and was certainly no substitute for the duty of taking a personal part in the affairs of the community. It was this basic concept of an overall, personal identification with the communal effort which induced me to take an active part in the formation of the Jewish Board of Deputies and, furthermore, was the reason why as President of the State Zionist Council I insisted that the Council should become an affiliate of the Board. There was strong opposition to this on constitutional grounds, but together with other colleagues of the executive we recommended constitutional amendments which were adopted and enabled the Council to affiliate.

Because of my strong Zionist tendencies my motives for desiring to serve the local Jewish community were often suspected in some quarters and this did not make the path of duty easy for me. It was only after the establishment of the State of Israel that my participation in the life of the Jewish community was made easier and that my participation in the leadership of the general Jewish community became possible. As a member of the executive of the Board of Jewish Deputies I was elected Chairman of Overseas Jewry reporting to the Board at its monthly

meetings on important Jewish events overseas, including events in Israel. After having been twice defeated I was elected Honorary Treasurer and then together with Sydney D. Einfeld I was for many years Vice-President of the Board. Horace Newman's term of office of more than nine years as the Board's President was a record for New South Wales. In November 1966, Sydney D. Einfeld, Horace Newman and myself were elected the first Honorary Life Members of the Jewish Board of Deputies of New South Wales with permanent seats on the executive. The resolution adopted by the Board read:

> "*WHEREAS:* The Constitution of the N.S.W. Jewish Board of Deputies provides for the appointment of persons as Honorary Life Members
> Each of: Sydney D. Einfeld, M.L.A., Esq.,
> Max Freilich, Esq.,
> Horace B. Newman, Esq. has over a period of many years occupied Senior Honorary Offices of the Board with Dignity and Distinction and have by their Diligence and Ability and Dedication furthered the interest of Jewry in many spheres and have represented the Australian Jewish Community with World Jewry, as a result of which the Reputation and standing of the Community in this State has been Enhanced and Improved: The Executive and Members of the Board desire to honour the said persons by appointing them the first Honorary Life Members of the Board."

From my firm belief that the first commitment of the Zionist was for Jewish survival it follows that the Zionist movement should be fostered and maintained as a vital force to help safeguard the Jewish future. Comparative statistics are not available but from personal observations it would seem that in the free countries greater numbers belong to Zionist Youth movements of various ideologies since the founding of the State than before. Moreover, by example, the Zionist Youth has influenced the formation of youth groups around the synagogues and Jewish student clubs on the campus of many universities. Another manifestation of the strengthening of Jewish consciousness in the life of Jewish communities is the growth of the Jewish Day School movement since the establishment of the Jewish State.

In both instances these developments were encouraged and helped along by the Zionist territorial organisations in their respective countries. If it were true that the creation of the State did not arrest the trend of assimilation in the free and more affluent lands it was also probably true that without the emergence of the State of Israel and without the existence of a virile Zionist movement assimilationist tendencies would have assumed far greater proportions.

There were, throughout the centuries, prophets of doom who had predicted Jewish oblivion. In modern times there were those who spoke of the "vanishing Jew" or the "vanishing American Jew". If there was any meaning in the lessons of history, as I believe there is, the four thousand years of Jewish history invalidates the notions of Jewish obliteration. The creation of Israel, it was often said, was not intended to add another small Levantine State but to secure the continuity of the Jewish nation. By accepting the view that the inherent principle of Zionism and its primary aim were the historic unity of the Jewish people and Jewish survival in its totality then there is a need for the Zionist movement to safeguard the Jewish future in the Diaspora and in the State of Israel alike.

# *Conclusion*

SINCE concluding these memoirs several months ago, the 6-Day War of June 1967 between the Arab States of Egypt, Jordan and Syria and Israel has taken place resulting in the speedy victory of Israel's armed forces. The Israeli feat of arms in inflicting a crushing defeat on the Arab armies far superior in numbers of men and weapons found an echo of deep astonishment and utmost admiration throughout the entire world. For the Jews its impact was as profound and challenging as the outcome of the war was incredible.

The grave test for Israel and very serious threat to her existence became manifest with the closing by Egypt of the Straits of Tiran, blocking the entrance of Israeli shipping to the Gulf of Aqaba, Israel's life line of communications. Israel regarded this as an act of aggression, an attack on her independence and war with the Arabs was therefore unavoidable. The World Zionist Organisation issued an appeal which was sent to Jewish organisations throughout the world "calling upon our brethren to demonstrate the unity and strengthen the covenant between the Diaspora and Zion. . . . We call upon you to rise as one man in order to ensure the safety of Israel and its defence."

Jewish communities the world over responded spontaneously and with utmost speed, rallying to Israel's side with financial and practical support. In Australia, as in other countries, a state of emergency was announced by the leaders of the Jewish community and Jews of every social and economic strata and of all congregations voluntarily came forward in response to the Emergency Appeal for Israel. Several hundred volunteers offered their services for civilian work in Israel to replace the workers in the fields and factories who were called up for Army service.

The rallying points of this response were the Zionist offices in all capital cities of Australia and, according to the reports, this was done also in all other parts of the Jewish world. The same spontaneity and eagerness to aid Israel in her hour of the

greatest trial since her war of Independence in 1948 was evident wherever Jews lived from the largest to the smallest communities of the free world. This unprecedented solidarity of the entire Jewish people was a source of greatest encouragement to the people of Israel and an important factor in bolstering the morale of the entire *Yishuv*, including its fighting forces.

If there had been any need for proof of the validity of the assertion that the Zionist Organisation still had a vital role to play for securing the future of Israel—and the Jewish future as a whole—the events in recent weeks provided it. It is true to say that in the recent emergency all manner of Jews, those with Zionist affiliations and those without, came forward to offer their support and to volunteer for service in Israel. But the Zionist movement was its inspiration and the Zionist organisation served as the cadre for channelling this support to Israel's benefit.

It will be realised that since the State of Israel now exists many of the vital Zionist tasks of the pre-State era were taken over by appropriate Government agencies of the sovereign State. Under the circumstances it is natural that the Zionist movement, which had never enjoyed a full measure of popularity, lost some of its content and importance.

The State of Israel, on the other hand, has been accepted by the Jewish people almost in its totality and is giving to every Jew much pride and personal dignity. By its extraordinary achievements the young State has won acclaim from many of the nations of the world.

A vital lesson of recent events, in my view, was that the sovereign Jewish State is a most effective instrumentality for Jewish unity; thus it is fulfilling the hopes and aspirations envisaged by Dr. Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement. It is also true to say that the emergency of the 6-Day War was an involvement of the entire Jewish people and not only of the Zionist adherents. Moreover, the Jewish position has changed radically since the first Zionist Congress met at Basle on 29th-31st August 1897, exactly seventy years ago. The leitmotif for the creation of the World Zionist Organisation was the *Judennot* and the Jewish problem then was the terrible physical plight of the large Jewish masses in Eastern and Central Europe. It is possible, therefore, to draw the conclusion that the

Zionist Organisation is now redundant and should henceforth disappear from the stage of Jewish history.

Even the staunchest and most hardened Zionist would agree that in the present circumstances the structure of the World Zionist Organisation, its party system and many of the ingredients of its constitution ought to be modified substantially in accordance with the changed world situation. But it is my firm belief that should this happen and in this way change completely the present form of the Zionist Organisation, then some other framework would of necessity have to be found for a movement with identical aims and functions to those of the Zionist Organisation to take its place as the force for uniting world Jewry, thus ensuring the continuity and survival of the Jewish people.

# *Index*


Abrahams, Leonard, K. C., 58
Abrahams, Les, 47
Advokat, Simon, 173
Aeroplanes, purchase of for Israel, 183
Agron, Dani, 182-183
Agronsky (Agron), Gershon, 161
"Aid for Israel" drive, 179
Alexander, Morris, K.C., M.P., 39-40
American-Israel Paper Mill, 227
Anderson, Sir Francis, 94
Anglo-American Commission of Enquiry on Palestine, 135, 136, 137
  impact of report on Australian Jewry, 140-141
Anti-Zionism in Australia, 17-18, 20-21, 38, 56-59, 96-99, 108-110
Appeals clash, 103-105
Arab riots, 11
  terror campaign, 200-201
Aranha, Dr., 192
Ashkanasy, Maurice, Q.C., 173, 179, 213
Atyeo, S. L., 188-189
Auckland Zionist Society, 4
Australia-Israel Chambers of Commerce, 228-229
Australia-Palestine Committees, 94-107, 113, 132-133
Australia-Palestine Trading Company, 165, 226-227
Australian Friends of the Hebrew University, 64
*Australian Jewish Chronicle*, 11, 14, 15, 18-19
*Australian Jewish Forum*, 86
*Australian Jewish Herald*, 44, 75
Australian Jewish Welfare Society, 64, 104
Australian post-war attitudes to Jewish migrants, 126-127
Australian support for Israel, 210-223
Australian Wool Industry, Ashdod, 228
Australian Zionism, overseas attitudes to, 125

Balfour Declaration, 3, 100, 127, 134
Bamberg, A., 2
Bamberg, Enid, 2
Bamberg, Mrs., 40
Barroway, Aaron, 227
Barth, Dr. Aaron, 167
Bartley, Alderman J., 103
"Basle Programme", 128
Baume, Eric F., 9
Ben-Avi, Itamar, 39-40
Ben Gurion, David, 83-85, 125, 208, 236
Benfy, Dr. F. R., 184
Bension, Ida, 54-55, 68, 72, 79
Bension, Rabbi S., 68
Bentwich, Professor Norman, 64, 72
Berendsen, Sir Carl, 195, 196, 197
Berkovits, Dr. E., 181
Berlin, Rabbi Meier, 27
Berman, Morton, 234
Bernadotte, Count Folke, 210
Bernstein, Peretz, 152
Bevin, Ernest, 133, 135, 136, 141, 155-156
Bloom, Harold, 100
Blumel, André, 231
Blumenfeld, Dr. Kurt, 166
Bomse (*née* Freilich), Pnina, 164
Brass, Jack, 178, 207
Braude, Max, 14
Breckler, Alec, 29, 175
Breckler, Cecil, 29
Breckler, Mrs. Fanny, 29
Breckler, Hanna, 175
Brenner, Dr. Max, 232
British Labour Party conference, 1944, 126
Brodetsky, Professor Selig, 116, 152, 213-216

Brodie, Rabbi Israel, 4, 10, 30, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 52-54
Bureau of Jewish Affairs, 99
Burleigh, Mrs. S., 77
Burns, Athol, 173

Calwell, Hon. Arthur, 127, 169, 211, 216
Cantor, Mr. Justice, 8, 31, 41
Carol of Rumania, 60
Cazalet, Col. Victor, M.P., 112
Central Zionist Committee, 129, 137, 142, 172-173
Chapman, B. Burgoyne, 113, 124, 133
Cherrick, Bernard, 176, 178
Chifley, Hon. Ben, 133, 137, 144, 198, 208, 215
Chorley, A. J., 119, 128
Cleary, Percy, M.P., 132
Cohen, Alroy M., Q.C., 64, 81, 128
Cohen, Mrs. Alroy M., 65
Cohen, Bernard, 1
Cohen, Rabbi Francis L., 9, 15, 21, 37
Cohen, Harris, 39, 41
Cohen, Mrs. Harris, 26
Cohen, Israel, 2, 3
Cohen, Judge J. J., 13, 64
Cohen, Maurice, 75
Cohen, Rieke, 39, 40, 43, 46, 49, 57, 95, 104, 119, 122, 180, 209, 218
Cohen, Sir Samuel (S.S.), 3, 9, 11, 51, 56, 58, 63, 68, 71-72, 78, 86, 90, 104-105
Cohen, Senator Sam, 173
Cohen, Vera, *see* Emanuel
Comay, Michael, 167-168, 169, 195, 210
Coombs, Dr., 205, 215, 227
Cornfield, Mrs. Victor, 39
Cowan, Bernard, 67, 75
Crewe, Hon. Marquis, 112
Crick, Alderman, 72
Curtin, Hon. John, 90, 124

Dalziel, Allan, 194
Danglow, Rabbi J., 44
Davidson, Rev. E. J., 142-143, 209
de Berg, Maurice, 32, 35, 41
Deputations to Commonwealth Government, 114-115, 124, 169, 188, 205, 211, 216
de Vahl Davis, Gerald, 86, 91-92, 100, 117, 118
Diaspora Jewry, 226, 236-237, 239
  response to Israel in 1967, 241
Displaced persons, 135-136
Dix, Joseph, 13
Doron, Gabby, 219
Dunski, Israel, 231

Eastern Suburbs Synagogue, 16, 33, 34
Ebban, Abba, 217
Executive Council of Australian Jewry, 102, 132, 133, 138, 173-174, 179, 187
Einfeld, Sol, 190-191
Einfeld, Mrs. Sol, 189
Einfeld, Sydney D., M.L.A., 173, 210, 238
Einstein, Professor Albert, 91
Ellinson, L., 4
Emanuel, Vera L., 1
Epstein, Elias, 24, 27
Ettinger, Mark, 8, 10, 11
European Jewry, committee to rescue, 112-114
  conditions of, 50-51, 60, 69, 102
Evatt, Hon. Clive, Q.C., 192
Evatt, Dr. Herbert Vere, 100, 114, 115, 123-124, 132, 137, 142, 144, 169, 183, 188-195, 197-198, 199, 201, 208, 210-211, 212, 213, 217, 218-219, 220, 221
*Exodus, 1947* (ship), 187
EZRA, 9

Fadden, Sir Arthur, 85
Fairfax, Lady, 94
Falk, Gerald, 173
Falk, Rabbi L. A., 6, 16, 19-20, 32, 33, 58, 62, 111
Feiwel, Berthold, 226
Ferster, Bernard, 228-229
Fink, Leo, 228
Fischel, Dr. W. J., 81-82
Fischman, Y., 27
Frankel, Dr. Kurt, 127, 134, 171
Franklin, Miles, 41
Fraser, Hon. Peter, 84-85, 90, 124, 137, 169, 189-191, 196-197, 198

Freedman, Rabbi Dr. Harry, 135, 212
Freeland League Committee, 111
Freilich, Aaron (father), xv
Freilich, Diana (daughter-in-law), 146
Freilich, Golda (sister-in-law), 146
Freilich, Harry (brother), 146-147
Freilich, Dr. Herbert (son), 146
Freilich, Max, *passim*
Freilich, Oscar (brother), 33, 164
Freilich, Sasha (wife), *passim*
Freilich, Theodor (son), 10, 65-66, 146, 172, 233
Freilich, Yetta (mother), xv
Friends of the Hebrew University, 64, 101, 176
Friends of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra, 55
Fuhrman, Mr. O. C. W., O.B.E., 222-223
Funds, problem of transfer to Palestine, 201-202, 215-216
Fund-raising campaigns, 63-64, 78-79, 95, 178-185, 205
Fund-raising clashes, 118-119

Gardiner, Ray, 63
German Jewish Relief Fund, 30-31, 32, 51, 64
German Jewry, plight of, 41, 45
Gerstl, Steve, 127
Gestetner, Mr. and Mrs. Sigmund, 178
Gluckman, Mrs. Kate, 181-182, 216-217
Goldberg, Mrs. Agolda, 54-55, 219
Goldberg, Cara, 65
Goldberg, Frank, 219
Goldberg, Leon, 38
Goldman, Dr. Nahum, 86, 152, 154, 157, 231, 236
Goldstein, Albert, 34
Goldstein, Alexander, 2, 3, 8
Goldstein, Harry, 173
Goldstein, Dr. Israel, 152, 234
Goldstein, Rev. S. A., 4
Gordon, Mrs., 189, 190
Gottlieb, Isaac, 4, 149, 196, 197
Goulston, Edna, 2
Goulston, John, 46
Granot, Dr. A., 158
Great Synagogue, 9, 38, 42, 55, 57-59, 133
Green, Ann, 38
Green, Ben, 4
Green, Elias, 38
Green, Israel, 51, 105
Green, Simon, 33, 34, 38
Greenbaum, Yitzchak, 152-154
Greenwood, Right Hon. Arthur, 116
Gruszka, Dr. S., 96-97, 103
Gurevich, Rabbi Joseph L., 15

Habonim, 12
Hacohen, Capt. Shimon, 138-140, 172
Hadera paper mill, 227-228
Hammerman, Bernard, 93, 172
Hantke, Dr. Arthur, 150, 161
*Haoved*, 99
Harris, Alfred, 20, 21, 97
*Hashomer Hatzair*, 130
*Hebrew Standard*, 17-18, 20, 56, 91-92, 96-98, 108
Hebrew University, 68, 81-82, 128
Heilpern, Rabbi C. L., 214, 216-217
Heiman, Max, 4
Heller, E., 99
Herman, Leo, 150
Herrman, Berthold, 13
Herzl-Bialik Memorial meetings, 87, 131, 175
Honig, Camille, 78
Hood, Sir John, 188, 220, 222, 234
Hook, Jack, 94-95
Horowitz, Shalom, 168
Horwitz, Israel, 14, 16, 18, 57, 97, 98
Huberman, Bronislaw, 55
Hyman, Lt.-Colonel Arthur W., 41, 47, 86

Ida Wynn Children's Home, 165
*Irgun Zvai Leumi*, 141, 158, 186
Irwell, Henrietta, 11
Isaacs, Rae, 71
Isaacs, Sir Isaac, 12, 18, 42, 56, 91-92, 96-99, 108-110, 114
Isaacs, Mrs. Zara, 71
Israel, State of, 206-207, 208-211, 214-218, 224, 226, 227-229
Israel Diplomatic Mission in Australia, 219-224

*Ivriah* Journal, 53
Ivriah Women's Zionist Organisation (*see* WIZO), 39, 40-41, 54

Jacobson, Nathan, 233
Jaffe, Leib, 150, 161, 201, 226
Janner, Sir Barnett, 142, 155
Jerden, Ray, 173
Jerusalem and Partition Plan, 220-222
Jewish Advisory Board, 72, 99, 101, 108-109
Jewish Agency, 19, 71, 140-141, 155
Jewish Army, 85-86, 90, 116
Jewish Board of Deputies, 37, 101-102, 212-213
Jewish Brigade, 128
Jewish Club, the, 13
Jewish Community, Development of, 9
Jewish Congregational Advisory Board, 37, 78-79
Jewish Education, 14-15
Jewish Folk Centre, 86
Jewish National Fund (J.N.F.), 13, 30, 39, 43, 47, 50, 51, 54, 60-61, 65, 67, 73, 74-75, 95, 101, 103-105, 106, 111, 117, 118, 127, 130, 149, 175-176, 180-181
Jewish Police Force, 87
Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 39
Jewish War Memorial, 54
Joel, Asher, 173
John Monash Recreation Hut, 71-72
Jona, Dr. Leon, 44, 60, 66, 73, 74-75, 80-81, 85, 127
Joseph, Dr. Bernard, 86-87

Kadimah Jewish Club, 37-38, 41
Kagan, Dr. Rachel, 167
Kahn, Alec H., 41, 44, 47
Kahn, Isaac, 63
Kahn, Louis, 24
Kamenka, Eugene, 131
Kaplan, Eliezer, 166
Katz, Rev. W., 105
Kerem Maharal, 234
*Keren Hayesod*, 2-4, 32-36, 53, 55, 61-64, 90-93, 95, 118-122, 137, 138-140, 176-178, 213-215, 235
Kessler, Samuel, 6, 7, 13, 16, 20, 31, 38, 44, 47, 55
King George V Forest, 45-46
Kirsner, Rabbi C., 16, 45
Kirshblum, Rabbi Mordechai, 230
Kish, Colonel Fred, 74-75
Klein, Louis, 235
Kresner, Harry, 38

Lancaster bombers, sale of to Israel, 203-205
Landa, Hon. Abram, M.L.A., 12, 18, 44, 91, 92, 114, 115, 124-125, 133, 135, 173, 188, 191-192, 197, 207, 209, 215, 217-218, 219
Landau, Bernard (brother-in-law), 166
Landau, Celia (sister-in-law), 10
Landau, Leah (mother-in-law), xix
Landau, Osias (father-in-law), xviii
Landauer, Dr. George, 170
Land Sale Ordinance, 73
Lazerson, Dr. Maurice, 9, 45, 86, 95, 98
Lederberger, Ehud, 172
Leibler, Isi, 173
Levanon, Chaim, 167
Levi, Friedl, 77, 95, 103, 129, 182
Levin, Harry, 183, 184, 219, 220-221
Levine, Rev. Nathan, 15-16
Levy, Sir Daniel, 13
Levy, Rabbi E. M., 42-43, 46, 49, 51, 53, 56-59, 78, 93
Lewin, Shmaryahu, 226
Liberal Jewish Movement, 79-80
Lieberman, W., 55
Lindheim, Mrs. Irma, 130
Linton, Josef, 147, 227
Lipson, Sam, 81
Locker, Berl, 157, 231
London Committee for Relief of Polish Refugees, 81
London Conference on Palestine, 151-153
London, Elsa, 39, 41, 43
Lord Mayor's Comforts Fund, 70-72
Lord Rothschild Relief Fund for War Victims, 78
Lourie, Arthur, 277
Lowenthal, A. M., 3
Lowy, Rivka, 72, 162, 164
Lowy, Dr. Shlomo, 68, 72-73, 75,

94, 95, 99, 103, 104, 105, 127, 130, 137, 161, 162, 163-164, 182, 218
Luber, Cecil, 49, 60, 63, 65, 66, 79, 87, 93

Maccabi Soccer team, 68
MacDonald White Paper, 67, 73, 126, 132
Machover, Dr. J., 81, 101, 103, 106, 111, 116, 118, 128, 132, 143-144, 149
*Machsikei Hadass*, 45
*Magen David Adom*, 179
Marks, Jean Marcus, 3
Marks, Marcus, 35
Marks, Percy J., 3, 6, 31
Martin, Hon. C. E., 91, 94, 110, 112
Masel, Alec, 4, 75, 86, 87, 90, 91, 110, 112, 114, 116, 119, 133
Mass meetings in Sydney, 17, 30, 87, 113, 133, 134-135, 142, 209-210
Mazer, Joseph, 227
McDonald, James G., 161
MacDonald, Ramsay, 19
McGirr, Hon. James, 192
McKell, Sir William, 91, 92, 94
Melbourne Jewish Community, growth of, 45
Melchett, Lord, 17, 45, 72
Melzer, I., 4
Mendelsohn, Dr. Kurt, 227
Menzies, Sir Robert, 85
Mestel, S., 4
Michaelis, Sir Archie, M.L.A., 44
*Misgav Ladach* hospital, 9, 26
*Mizrachi*, 181, 230
  synagogue, 45
  Palestine Fund, 68
Monash Recreation Hut, 78
Monash, Sir John, 4, 8
Montefiore, C. G., 56
Montefiore Home, 9
Morris, A., 53
Moses, Braham, 81-82, 128
Moses, Philip, 45-46, 47, 49, 55, 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 72, 75, 89, 93, 99, 104, 116-117
Mossinson, Dr. B., 61
Moyne, Lord, assassination of, 123
Myers, Sir Michael, 12

Nathan, Alfred H., 34
Nathan, Simone, 11
National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror, 112-113
National Council of Jewish Women, 9, 21, 26, 33, 39, 54, 71-72, 77
Newman, Diddy, 139
Newman, Dr. Emanuel, 152
Newman, Horace B., 18, 48-49, 61-62, 66, 70, 72, 76, 81, 92, 93, 97, 99, 100, 101, 105, 106, 110, 113, 115, 119, 127, 128, 129, 130, 138, 139, 144, 145, 165, 167, 169, 173, 174, 175, 177, 181, 183, 185, 188, 197, 198, 199, 203, 205, 207, 208, 209, 211, 212, 215, 216, 217, 219, 221, 222, 233, 238
New South Wales Jewish (*see under* Jewish)
New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 13
New Zealand, attitude to partition, 195-198
*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, 4
North Shore Congregation, 105
Nuremberg Laws, 51
Nussbaum, Max, 234

Operation "Magic Carpet", 214
Orchert, Samuel, 35-36, 44, 46
*Ort-Ose*, 45
Overseas Jewish Relief Fund, 118-120, 176

*Poale Zion*, 181, 184, 230
Poland, conditions in, 28
Poliakov, Mr., 32
Polish Jewish Relief Fund, 64
Porush, Rabbi Israel, O.B.E., 77-78, 87, 93, 97, 117, 133, 140, 181, 199, 209
Palestine, 11, 50, 65, 73, 126, 132-137, 141, 160-171, 195
Palestine Economic Corporation, 166-167, 227
Palestine Restoration Fund, 2
Palestine Symphony Orchestra, 55
Parkes, Sir Alfred, 42
Passfield White Paper, 16-17, 19
Patkin, Dr. Aaron, 47, 92, 115, 142, 172, 184

Patkin, Benzion, 68, 87
*Patria*, S.S., 82
Peel Commission, 60
Perlzweig, Rabbi Maurice, 74-75
Perry, Woolf, 234
Phillips, Orwell, 3, 9, 34, 58-59
Phillips, Louis M., 4, 20, 33, 34, 195, 196
Pilcher, Bishop C. V., 94, 95, 100, 103, 113, 124, 133, 142 174, 183, 209
Prudential Assurance Co., 51
Public Relations Activities, 106, 113-115, 132-134, 142, 209-210

Queen Competitions, 117, 129

Rabinovich, A., 53
Rathbone, Eleanor F., M.P., 113
Ravdel, Norman, 36
Ravitch, Melech, 31
Reading, Dr. Fanny, 3, 9, 25-26, 29, 104, 119, 122, 170
Reading, Marchioness of, 72
Reading Dr. Stanley, 21
Reconstruction of East European Jewry Appeal, 32
Refugee doctors, treatment of, 144-145
Renshaw, J. R., 192
Robinson, Max, 4
Rosen, Rabbi Kopul, 155, 158, 180, 181
Rosenburg, Alan, 44
Rosenfeld, Julius, 3
Rosenfeld, Mrs. Julius, 8
Rosenthal, Newman, 44
Ross, Sir Ian Clunies, 94, 113, 142-143

Sadovsky, Eliyahu, 210
Salas, Max, 4
Salas, Mrs., 5
Salzman, Pnina, 134
Sambursky, Dr. Samuel, 128
Sampson, I. K., 3, 13
San Francisco Conference, 124
Sanger, Dr. H., 79
Schalit, Dr. A. M., 64, 183
Schalit, Malcah Weinberg-, 183
Schalit, Ruby Rich-, 77, 183
Schenk, Faye, 80, 134, 135, 179-180
Schenk, Rabbi Max, 68, 79-80, 93, 95, 106, 115, 118, 119-120, 128, 129, 133, 144-145, 169, 174, 179-180, 203, 233
Schoken, Mr. S., 83
Schureck, Norman, 61-63, 66-67, 70, 71, 75, 78, 81, 85, 87, 89, 93, 99, 100, 165, 226
Scullin, Hon. J. H., 17
Selby, David, 35
Sharett, Moshe, (*see also* Shertok), 188, 208, 212, 225
Shaw Report, 13
Sheahan, W. F., 192
Shein, Dr. Benzion, 31-36, 45, 61, 62, 63-64, 65
Shekel drives in Australia, 43-44, 50, 53-54, 67, 87, 111-112, 128, 131, 143, 175
Shertok, (Sharett), Moshe, 154, 157
*Shomrim* Organisation, 72
Shwimmer, Mrs. Adolphine (Bernstein), 129-130
Sieff, Mrs. Rebecca, 180
Sigalla, Marcell, 134, 169
Silver, Rabbi Abbo Hillel, 126, 152, 153, 154, 161-162, 208
Silverman, Ida, 118-122, 157, 165-166, 168
Simon, Julius, 166-167, 227
Simpson, Sir John Hope, 13
Sir John Monash Forest Appeal, 30, 32
Slutzkin, Mrs. L., 9, 26
Smith, Victor, 173
*Smith's Weekly*, 16, 57, 170
Sneh, Moshe, 152, 154
Snider, Hon. Sam., 85
Sokolow, Dr. Nahum, 19, 45, 51
Solomon, Louis, 20
Solvey, Joseph, 184, 185, 212
Spender, Sir Percy, 223
Sprinzak, Mr., 143
*Stand Up and Be Counted*, 110
Steigrad, Silva, 31, 38, 41, 43, 44, 46, 47, 49, 51, 55, 57, 60, 62, 66, 78, 81, 85, 92, 103, 106, 117, 118, 133, 144, 169, 175, 181
Steinberg, Dr. I. N., 86, 101, 111
Stevens, Hon. B., 65
Stone, Professor Julius, 97-98, 110, 133

Stone, Reca, 103, 129
Street, Mrs. Jessie, 113
*Struma*, S.S., 95-96
*Struma*-Herzl-Bialik protest meeting, 96-98
Symonds, Morris, 3, 8, 11, 13, 16, 20, 21-22, 23, 24, 25
Symonds, Velda, 33
Symonds, Saul, 3, 9, 31, 38, 72, 88, 99, 114, 138, 174, 176
Sydney Jewish community, growth of, 45
*Sydney Morning Herald*, 92
Sydney Zionist Centre, 37
Szold, Henrietta, 26

*Tarbuth*, 14-15, 72
Templar Colonists, 157-158, 170-171
Temple Emanuel, 80
Thanksgiving Service for Israel, 198-199
Trades and Labour Council of New South Wales, 98
Trade between Australia and Israel, 226-229
Traub, Dr. Michael, 87, 89-93, 94, 95, 98, 106, 177
Truman, President Harry, 127, 135, 136
Tschernichowski, Saul, 27
Tsur, Jacob, 234

Ulitzer, A., 161
U.N. *ad hoc* committee on Palestine, 192-195
Ungar, Paul, 106, 134, 173, 175, 181, 225, 228
Ungar, Ruth, 117
Union of Sydney Zionists, 3, 6, 8, 12, 16, 19, 31, 32, 38, 39, 41, 44, 55, 60, 89, 99, 172, 173
  Ladies Auxiliary of, 8
United Emergency Committee for European Jewry, 102, 108
United Israel Appeal, 213-214, 230, 231
University Zionist Society, 9
UNSCOP, 169, 174, 186, 187-189
Ussishkin, Menahem, 27
Ussiskin, Moshe, 234

Van Roijen, A., 173
Victorian Zionist Organisation, 184

Wagner, Mrs., 170
Wailing Wall incident, 9
Wakehurst, Lord, 72
Warburg, Felix, 17
Warburg, Ilse, 169
Wardi, Dr. Chaim, 68
Warsaw Ghetto commemoration, 117
War surplus materials for Israel, 203-205
Wauchope, Sir Arthur, 50
Wedgwood, Hon. Camilla, 96, 97, 103
Weinberg, Malcah, 172
Weizmann, Dr. Chaim, 16-17, 19, 45, 67, 91, 116, 126, 127, 137, 150, 153, 156, 168-169, 197, 208, 224, 226
Wertheim, Solomon, 43, 54, 179
Wise, Dr. Stephen, 86, 91, 126
Wix, Abraham, 177, 178
WIZO, 11, 39, 54, 77, 87, 95, 101, 103-104, 180, 183
Wolfensohn, Bill, 173
Wolfers, David, 131
Wolfers, Philip, 131
Woodcock, Lucy, 100
Woodhead Commission, 60
Woodruff, Professor H. A., 94, 113, 124
World Confederation of General Zionists, 152, 154
World Jewish Congress, 86, 91
World Zionist General Council, 188
World Zionist Organisation, 19, 152
Wynn, Ida, 87, 95, 103, 129, 137, 143, 179
Wynn, Sam, 54, 79, 87, 133, 143, 174, 184, 213, 225

Yarmovsky, M., 55
Yiddish culture in Sydney, 13
Young Men's Hebrew Association, 18, 33, 54
Young Zionist League, 35, 36, 38, 41
Youth Aliyah, 68, 72, 101, 103-104, 117, 129, 149, 169
Youth *Shliyach*, the first, 172
Youth work, 172

Zanders, Mr., 99
Zeitlyn, Elsley, 81
Zeltner, M., 4, 44

Zionism, 2-3
future of, 236-243
Zionist Action Committee, 130-131
Zionist activities in Australia, 31, 44, 72, 103, 212, 226
Zionist World Congresses, 44-45, 50, 143, 145, 148-159, 232
Zionist Conferences in Australia, 4, 10, 13, 40, 52-53, 60-61, 65-66, 74-75, 87, 116-117, 127-128, 174, 184-185, 230
Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand, 4, 43, 53, 66, 73-77, 80-81, 85, 132, 202-203, 212, 217, 218-219
controversy with the Board of Deputies, 212-213
Zionist Movement, 99, 198, 242-243
Zionist parties, 143, 181, 230
Zionist sentiments in Australia, 8, 9-10, 18, 95
Zionist State Council of N.S.W., 66, 93, 100, 111, 112, 117, 128-129, 181, 183-184
Zionist Youth Council, 95
Zlotnik, Rabbi J., 175-176



THE AUTHOR

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.
CANBERRA, A.C.T.

17th May, 1957.

This letter will serve to introduce my friend, Mr. Max Freilich, of Sydney, Australia, who is visiting abroad for health reasons, and who is a distinguished member of the Jewish community in Australia.

I have known Mr. Freilich for many years and have always admired and respected his splendid work in the community, especially in relation to the welfare of his fellow men. Mr. Freilich has always taken a prominent part in matters relating to the Jewish community, in which he holds office in a number of leading national bodies. He is a business man in Sydney who gives much of his time in an honorary capacity to matters aimed at promoting international goodwill and understanding. He is a keen supporter of the United Nations and I have had the privilege of his friendship over many years, during which he has always shown himself to be a keen student of Australian and world affairs and a man whose character and conduct are of the highest order.

I would appreciate any facilities or courtesies which may be extended to Mr. Freilich during his visit overseas.

(H.V. EVATT)
Leader of the Opposition.