

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH QUARTERLY

MAGAZINE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN JEWRY

END OF AN ERA

Michael Danby:
Seven Terms, Not Out

THE 'WHITE REPLACEMENT' MYTH

The ideology that influenced
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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL LAUNCHES FRESH ATTACK ON ISRAEL

IN THIS EDITION

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THE HON MICHAEL DANBY MP

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NOTES ON A MASSACRE

It is still difficult to make sense of what transpired in Christchurch on 15 March. The wasting of human life, the desecration of a place of worship, the depraved urge to kill and kill and kill.

We have all seen footage of the cache of weapons of war that were deployed against a civilian community. We saw the military garb that the gunman chose to wear during the attack. We have heard him refer to the “firefight”, suggesting the terrorist convinced himself that he was carrying out some sort of military operation, that he was engaged in some heroic battle. Perhaps he did so to justify the act in his own mind as something reasonable and necessary. But this was no battle. It wasn’t a firefight. It was a massacre.

The Jewish people are familiar with what it means to be gunned down in cold blood. To have the solemn invocations of prayer interrupted by the sound of hostile fire. To have your most

sacred place, the place where you congregate with your friends and family, reflect, stand in hushed prayer appealing to the Almighty for the health of loved ones and the good of the world, turned into a slaughterhouse.

After the attack, amid the calls for unity and civility to counter this murderous evil, there have been familiar attempts to use a tragedy to settle old political scores. A speaker at a vigil in New Zealand declared before the gathered masses, “some group is behind [the terrorist] and I’m not afraid to say it, I feel Mossad is behind this.” A panellist on ABC’s The Drum suggested that Australia’s warm welcome to the Israeli Prime Minister during a state visit in 2017 contributed to the massacre. While in perhaps the most bizarre turn of all, a Palestinian student activist badgered a heavily pregnant Chelsea Clinton insisting that her criticism of Omar Ilhan’s antisemitism was the cause of the Christchurch attack.

The ideology that actually drove this terrorist has long been reported on and analysed by the ECAJ. It was invoked to justify the massacre of African-

American worshipers at a church in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015. It was invoked by the Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik in 2011. And it was cited again by the terrorist who massacred Jewish worshipers in a synagogue in Pittsburgh just last year. We must understand this latest atrocity not as an aberration but as the latest poisonous outgrowth of a demented belief system. This was a crime of rare scale and a crime against our common humanity. The ECAJ continues its analysis of this phenomenon with Julie Nathan’s piece on the “White Genocide” myth that influenced the Christchurch terrorist. This edition also features Associate Professor Philip Mendes writing about the “Sam Cohen Affair”, in which the moderate, social democrat aligned with the pro-Communist view of Soviet Jewry. Peter Wertheim looks at the significance of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Australia, Josh Kirsh discusses a student delegation’s visit to Auschwitz, and we examine

Amnesty International’s latest anti-Israel campaign.

This edition’s feature is the looming departure from the Australian Parliament of Michael Danby, the indefatigable 7-term Member of Parliament whose unerring commitment to universal human rights and the cause of Israel has made him a legend in our parliament, and a revered figure among the Australian Jewish community. Read Mr Danby’s reflections on his time in office and hear from the leaders of the Australian Jewish community who had the distinct honour of working with him over the years.

Alex Ryvchin



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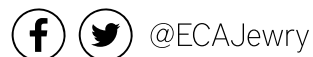
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END OF AN ERA

Michael Danby reflects on a stellar
parliamentary career

By Michael Danby

It's a miracle that I was born in Australia. As I said in my first speech, my grandmother, Margarette and grandfather, Bruno, were murdered by the Nazis in Auschwitz. Hauptman (Captain), Bruno Danzinger, Iron Cross First Class, 151 Regiment of Heavy Artillery, was actually the head of the German equivalent of the RSL, in his native Rostock. His brother was killed on the Western Front in the First World War, fighting for the German Reich.

On that theme, let me skate forward to 2013 to the brief 6 months I was junior Arts Minister, in the Gillard Government, and had been sent to Germany to supervise with indigenous leaders the return of our Aboriginal remains. It was the most poignant moment of my parliamentary career to stand and speak on Anzac Day in the Commonwealth War Graves in Berlin, with our indigenous delegation, in front of 700 plus international diplomats, soldiers and others of the Bundeswehr.

On that solemn occasion, I reminded them of the honour with which my Australian grandfather was treated in stark contrast to the criminal abuse my grandparents suffered at the hands of the German State. I stood there as their guest. An

Australian Minister, "one of those people," was back as a Minister in a foreign government; a reproach from history of the dark, but recent European past.

It's a miracle that I won pre-selection. Not being from a prominent political family and hated by the Socialist Left for my decades of pro-Israel activism, I was also opposed by my predecessor and a ghastly gang of what would today be Corbynistas. We won. We, a team of middle ranking union officials, led by a then very junior Bill Shorten, and hundreds of local Labor moderates. We beat them. I was selected, and then elected for the marginal seat of Melbourne Ports. So the story of 21 years in parliament began.

Of course, being a deeply ingrained social democrat I tried to work within the ALP and Parliamentary system, but I was always a maverick, having been involved in politics since I was 17. In 1998 I was the first Jewish MP in 12 years in Federal Parliament. Right away in 1999 with then Opposition Leader Shimon Crean, I organised the first parliamentary visit to Israel in more than a decade. That was the beginning of a total change in atmosphere in Federal Parliament.

Since those times, thanks to the wisdom of the philanthropists who support the Rambam Fellowship, nearly 150 MPs have visited Israel. I estimate I've organised over 200 meetings of the Friendship Group or the Falafel Faction in those 20 years. 21 years in Federal Parliament means I am the longest serving Jewish MP in Australian History. Of wider significance to Australia, these visits to Israel have had an important transformative effect on our national politics. You don't have to explain to Australian MPs and Senators issues like Iran, Jihadism, counter terrorism, the extremism of Erdogan, of Hezbollah and Hamas' role as terrorist organisations and threat. From an Australian Jewish viewpoint, perhaps my most difficult days in Canberra were with former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, when he expelled the Mossad station chief in Canberra. This happened after the head of the Mossad, Meir Dagan, used Australian passports for the targeted assassination of the Hamas quartermaster, Mahmoud Al-Mabhouh, in Dubai. My office received a torrent of anti-Jewish hatred when I dissented from Rudd's decision even though I explained that I thought Israelis were wrong to have used such passports, Dagan

having given Australian security an undertaking that they wouldn't be misused. Removing Israeli security liaison would disadvantage Australia, publicly stated. My views have been subsequently vindicated with analysis showing that apparently 90% of the exchange of information between the two countries benefit Australia. Now security relations are restored, for instance Jerusalem did the right thing in alerting Australia to the plot to blow-up an Etihad flight from Sydney.

On the other hand, my years long campaign to try to get the Australian Government, especially the over-adulated, retired Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, to condemn Iranian ballistic missile testing has not been successful. This is despite a Senate Select Committee which I orchestrated, recommending that the Australian government should speak out against this dangerous Iranian aggression. Even those who don't agree with President Trump's decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), such as European Presidents and Prime Ministers Macron, Merkel and May, have condemned the Iranian rocket firings. Not Australia.

My worst political mistake was in all probability supporting Rudd for all those years between our election in

1998 and his election as PM in 2007 and not backing Kim Beazley. However, Kevin Rudd did honour his promise to fund the fortification of Jewish schools all over Australia. Every parent and grandparent can be assured that all of our children can freely attend to their education in the best of safety the Australian Government can provide. This is a great legacy.

Most importantly, I want to destroy the ABC/Fairfax stereotype that if you are involved with Israel or the Jewish community, you are a narrow self-interested fanatic. The Age actively censored me between the years 1998-2010. Despite offering them nearly 200 articles, they were all 'spiked', but I did get them published elsewhere. This is the anti-Israel Left's new modus operandi-deplatforming. Yet I'm proud of the two decades of hyper political activity that ignored and worked past these impediments that I have pushed through my parliamentary pulpit. I can do no better than to conclude with the words of my mate, Greg Sheridan, The Australian's esteemed Foreign Editor:

"But while Danby has been important in Australia's Israel debate, his effect on politics has been much broader. Because he doesn't just drift into parliamentary committees but

consciously fashions them to advance his issues, and because he is at heart always an activist, he has used the opportunities of parliament's committees to secure big results. He used his position on the electoral affairs committee to secure much simpler and more automatic registration of voters on the electoral roll and helped gain support for these reforms with the Senate crossbench. Perhaps hundreds of thousands more people are entitled to vote at each election as a result.

"Most significant of all has been Danby's activism on human rights and national security. The causes he supports, such as the Tibetans, or the Muslim Uighurs in western China, or the Baha'is, or the Darfuris, don't lead to promotion, lavish grants or remunerative post-politics career opportunities". (My political energy was directed at virtue, not virtue signalling).

Sheridan continues:

"Although he briefly served as a Parliamentary Secretary in the Gillard government, Danby's talents would have been wasted, or misapplied, as a generic minister for potholes and drains or some such. I thought he reached the zenith of his public influence when he was Chairman of the Foreign Affairs,



Defence and Trade Committee. Very much like a powerful US congressman, he would call witnesses to highlight issues and achieve outcomes. His committee got Huawei to talk about the role of the Communist Party committee in its headquarters. It got the vice-president of the Chinese National People's Congress to testify about the South China Sea.

"When Danby was a member of the treaties' committee, he was a central player in getting Labor to oppose ratification of a mutual extradition treaty between Australia and China. He gave powerful speeches about the unreliability of the Chinese legal system, pointing, for example, to its higher than 99.6 per cent conviction rate. This was one of the most significant moments

in our recent history when the Australian polity registered in the starkest manner its objection to the operation of Chinese government law on Australian territory.

"A decade ago, with only the tiny resources of a backbencher's office, Danby staged in Melbourne a big international conference on human rights in North Korea. For two days in Melbourne, somebody cared about the unspeakably foul wickedness of the North Korean gulag. There was absolutely no political pay-off for Danby in this. It was at heart an expression of human solidarity. On another occasion, Danby introduced me to an activist for free trade unions in China. A Labor Party politician actively supporting free trade unions in China – now there's an idea.

"I have known Danby for more than 40 years and have greatly enjoyed his humour and his connoisseur's delight in ideological eccentricities, the strange and florid plants to be observed if you journey far enough into the labyrinths of political obsession. There is a Yiddish word perhaps designed to describe such as Danby. He is a mensch."

“

The work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives and the dreams shall never die

”

Ted Kennedy



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“The Jewish community has been blessed with numerous outstanding MPs over the years, and has had the support of many true friends on both sides of the chamber. Yet Michael was exceptional. In addition to looking after his constituents and advocating on a whole range of worthy causes, he has always been committed to speaking out against antisemitism and in defending the national rights of the Jewish people. He always did this with strength and moral clarity. The Jewish community owes him much gratitude. I wish him every success in the future.”

ANTON BLOCK

*President, Executive Council
of Australian Jewry*

“Michael Danby’s retirement from Federal politics is sad news for his many friends and supporters. Since becoming the member for Melbourne Ports, Michael has proven to be a politician with genuine convictions who places principle above all other considerations, even the advancement of his own career. On parliamentary committees and in the media, he has been a fearless champion for many human rights causes, most especially those which have not been fashionable or popular, or which have attracted the ire of powerful interests. Michael never took a backward step in his passionate advocacy for Israel and the Jewish people, calling out prejudice and falsehoods emanating from any quarter, especially among Australia’s purported intellectual leaders. For this Michael won the respect and affection not only of the Jewish community but of fair-minded Australians of all backgrounds. Australia needs more conviction politicians of wit and intelligence like Michael. His departure from the Federal parliament will leave a great void.”

PETER WERTHEIM AM

*Co-CEO, Executive Council
of Australian Jewry*

“My association with Michael precedes his time in the Australian Parliament. Then and since, he was, always and everywhere, an indefatigable supporter of and passionate advocate for, human rights and in particular the rights of Jews and of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. He was tireless in publicising those issues and causes he held dear, often at considerable personal expense and no doubt at some cost to his political advancement. His departure from the Parliament after a great innings will be a significant loss, including to the level of public discourse on important and defining topics. We all wish him well for the future.”

ROBERT GOOT AM SC

*Immediate Past President, Executive
Council of Australian Jewry*

“When I think about everything Michael has done for our community and in defence of Jewish human rights and national rights, often at great personal cost, I wonder: has one individual done more for Australian Jewry than Michael Danby? I think not. And for that we owe him a tremendous debt. I will always recall with fondness and pride working alongside Michael on so many vital issues for the community, from saddling up to fight media bias on Israel to exposing and countering antisemitism in Australian politics. Michael was always across the issues and could present his arguments with charm, wit and rigour. I will cherish that Michael launched my first book in Melbourne and will always be grateful to him for his advice, his leadership and the example he set of fearlessly standing up for what is right. I wish him many, many more years of contribution to public life.”

ALEX RYVCHIN

*Co-CEO, Executive Council
of Australian Jewry*





“A stauncher and more passionate advocate for Israel and the Jewish people than Michael Danby would be hard to find. Let alone someone who has stood up publicly and in the Australian parliament consistently, over seven parliamentary terms. Michael was always a delight to work with and a reliable insider to consult and to learn from.

And on a personal level, Michael was simply a mensch.”

DR RON WEISER AM

Past President, Zionist Federation of Australia and Honorary Life President of the Zionist Council of NSW

“Michael was untiring and passionate in supporting those causes close to his heart, always said what he thought, had an unreserved love for Israel and the Jewish people and at times was refreshingly unorthodox and not politically correct!”

JILLIAN SEGAL AO

Deputy President, Executive Council of Australian Jewry

“During his 20 years in Federal Parliament, Michael Danby has always energetically, and unequivocally, argued that Australia’s national interest lies in supporting and building close ties with democratic Israel. His staunch advocacy within the ALP and parliament for Israel and Australian Jewish community interests has been very significant, while his long standing involvement in the Australia-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group has contributed to that body’s prominence. His efforts on other worthy human rights causes, such as the Tibetans, the Uighurs, and North Korea, as well as his commitment to maintaining and strengthening the crucial Australia/United States alliance, have been commendable priorities in his widely respected parliamentary career.”

**MARK LEIBLER AC
& COLIN RUBENSTEIN AM**

*Australia Israel Jewish Affairs Council
National Chairman & Executive Director*



“Throughout his political life, in particular during his 21 years representing the residents of Melbourne Ports in the Australian Parliament, Michael Danby has been a passionate and dedicated activist for many causes of importance to both the Jewish and broader communities. Michael is well known for the vocal role he has played as an advocate for the State of Israel and the Jewish community in the Australian Parliament. Michael embodies the spirit of Tikun Olam, providing a voice for victims of discrimination and oppression around the world. I had the privilege of Michael’s advice and experience as a student politician, and he has encouraged many younger members of the community to become actively involved the political sphere. I am sure that the end of this stage in his career will not see the end of his contribution as an activist, and I wish him all the best for his future endeavours.”

JENNIFER HUPPERT

President, Jewish Community Council of Victoria

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“For 20 years both Australian Jewry and Israel itself have been fortunate to have Michael Danby as an MP who was a tireless warrior who never hesitated to go to the barricades in support of the Jewish people and the Jewish nation-state. He did so fearlessly and in a principled and selfless manner. The NSW Jewish community salutes Michael for his two decades of stellar service to the Australian people and his outstanding support of our community.”

LESLI BERGER & VIC ALHADEFF
President and CEO, NSW Jewish
Board of Deputies

“During his seven terms in Parliament Michael has been a staunch ally of Israel and the Jewish community of Australia. His willingness to stand up for his principles and to advocate for these causes has provided great support to the Australian Jewish community and Israel. His contribution both to the Australian Parliament and to our community has been enormous.”

SHARENE HAMBUR
President, Zionism Victoria

Antisemitism **SEE IT? EXPERIENCE IT? REPORT IT.**

WHY REPORT IT?

As the elected representative national body of the Australian Jewish community, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), liaises with government, the media and law enforcement to help keep our community safe.

It is vital therefore that we have accurate data on antisemitic incidents, whether vandalism of property, verbal abuse, online threats, leaflets or posters, or acts of violence.

WHERE TO REPORT IT?

Incidents of antisemitism occurring in Australia can be reported directly to Julie Nathan, the ECAJ Research Officer, and author of the annual Report on Antisemitism in Australia.

Report antisemitism to: julie@ecaj.org.au



Executive Council
of Australian Jewry Inc.

THE FAR RIGHT AND THE “WHITE REPLACEMENT” MYTH

By Julie Nathan

Little more than a year ago, far-right activists in Australia could reasonably accurately be divided into three ideological groupings: civic patriots, nationalists and racists. Whatever they might be said to have in common, these groups differed fundamentally in their beliefs about race, religion and citizenship. But now, something far more sinister is going on. There has been a move further to the right by the civic patriots and nationalists, and a general convergence around the racist myth of “White Replacement.”

In 2019, the far right began its activities with a rally on St. Kilda beach in Melbourne, protesting so-called “African crime.” The “Reclaim St. Kilda” rally was organised by two well-known far-right figures, Blair Cottrell and Neil Erikson—both Hitler-admirers and anti-Muslim campaigners. Some of those at the rally were openly neo-Nazi, displaying Hitler salutes and flaunting a Nazi SS helmet. The rally was addressed by Senator Fraser Anning, who has stated he would bar Muslims from migrating to Australia. However, the participants were not all white supremacists. In attendance were also some Vietnamese-Australians who had been violently attacked by

Sudanese-Australian youth.

Such political exploitation of racism and religious bigotry is nothing new. It preys on fears about non-European immigration into Australia, and attempts to revive the old “White Australia” conviction that Australia should be almost wholly, if not fully, composed of those of European ethnicity and Christian culture. Even indigenous Australians are air-brushed out of the picture. Variants of this kind of “nativist” populism are percolating in Australia, and throughout the world.

What is new is the concept of “White Replacement” (sometimes called “White Genocide”) which claims that there is a global Jewish plot to “import” non-Europeans—especially Africans, Asians and Arabs—into Europe, North America and Australasia for the express purpose of “destroying” European culture, and subjugating and decimating those of European ethnicity.

Those who subscribe to the “White Replacement” myth believe that in this way, people of ethnic European background will become a minority group, outnumbered and dominated in countries where once they were a majority of the population. This is the kind of feared “replacement” that the marchers at the 2017 “Unite the

Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, were referring to when they chanted, “Jews will not replace us!” It is the mirror opposite of the claim often made by far-left antisemites that Jews are an integral part of the “White oppressor” establishment.

The “White Replacement” myth is yet another mutation of classical antisemitism, the paranoid fantasy about a world Jewish conspiracy. The Working Definition of Antisemitism adopted by the 31-nation International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance describes it as:

“
making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective - such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions
”

One advocate of the “White Replacement” conspiracy is Sherron Burgess, former leader of the anti-Muslim groups “Reclaim Australia”

and the “United Patriots Front,” and one-time campaigner with Blair Cottrell. Burgess later became openly antisemitic. He has referred to Jews as “leeches” who “control 75% of the entire world’s wealth ... They run the governments of the world.” Burgess openly espouses and promotes the “White Replacement” myth: “Zionist Jews who run the Central bank/EU/UN flood White nations with hordes of Islamists to implement #WhiteGenocide”; and, “If your religion involves flooding all White Countries with mass Immigration to wipe out an entire race ... You might be a Jew!”

Burgess also advocates Nazism: “Revolution then National Socialism or death is the answer”; “Race War”: “RAHOWA [Racial Holy War] is going to be a great day of racial awakening and vengeance for our people”; and racial violence: “Support your local Nationalist FIGHT CLUB. Society is decaying the Zionist globalists are robbing us blind and flooding migrants into our nation’s – the WAR is coming, BE READY!!!”.

The neo-Nazi group Antipodean Resistance, which began in October 2016 and became inactive online in late September 2018, blamed Jews for non-white immigration in its propaganda posters, although it did not specifically espouse the “White Replacement” myth. However, from the seedbed of Antipodean Resistance a new group, calling itself Identity Australia, emerged in October 2018, intent on opposing non-European immigration and promoting the myth of “White Replacement.” An Identity Australia sticker bears the words: “Identity Australia: Reject Your Replacement.”

The online output and street activity of Identity Australia bears a close resemblance to that of

Antipodean Resistance, but Identity Australia appears to have learned the lesson that open support for Nazism and for the extermination of Jews and homosexuals, as espoused by

the antisemitism at its core.

If Identity Australia represents a retreat from crude Nazism to a more generic white nationalism, Cottrell and Erikson have evolved in the



Antipodean Resistance, is a turn-off for most people. Identity Australia instead seeks to appeal more broadly to the ordinary “white Aussie.” Its discourse is shorn of Nazi ideology and imagery, and aims to appeal simply to “white” xenophobic nationalism, all the while concealing

opposite direction. Initially, they downplayed their antisemitism, describing their strategy as “Muslims now and Jews later.” In one online exchange, first publicly exposed in February 2016, Erikson said to Cottrell: “My personal opinion is stick to the Muslim shit and Cultural

Marxism for max support do Jews later you don't need to show your full hand." Cottrell responded: "Yeah good advice and that's my current attitude as well. It will take years to prepare people for the Jewish problem. If any of us came out with it now we would be slaughtered by public opinion."

Cottrell is now less cautious. His leadership of the Lads Society has demonstrated how difficult it is for the groups he is associated with to paper over their Nazi core. The Lads Society was formed in Melbourne in September 2017, and seems to be little more than a front for Antipodean Resistance. The leader of the Lads Society in Sydney, formed in April 2018, is Mark McDonald, former leader of the Nazi group Squadron 88, which in 2014 and 2015 was responsible for letterboxing antisemitic leaflets in Sydney suburbs with large concentrations of Jewish residents. Nevertheless, Cottrell uses a slightly more nuanced term for "White Replacement"; he calls it "Ethnic Replacement."

Online there has been a notable increase in articles on websites and posts on social media espousing and promoting the "White Replacement" myth, in Australia and overseas. David Hilton (a.k.a. Moses Apostaticus) often promotes the "White Replacement" conspiracy in his articles published on the far-right XYZ website. Hilton also organised antisemitic posters in Brisbane and Sydney in November 2017. The potential for violence which such online posts portend was graphically demonstrated in the United States in October 2018 by Robert Bowers, who wrote on Gab, a Twitter-like platform which is a haven for extremists and racists, "Screw your optics, I'm going in." Shortly afterwards, he entered the Tree of



Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and murdered eleven Jews. Afterwards, Bowers told police that he was motivated by his belief that "the Jews" were "committing genocide to my people."

Chillingly, these words were echoed by another Gab user, an Australian named Ryan Fletcher, who wrote, "I think its about time to say 'fuck your optics I'm going in'." Fletcher has a dark history of calling for the murder of Jews in Australia and worldwide, and of posting images of Jews being killed, on his Gab account. Fletcher subscribes to the myth: "#White gentiles are waking up to the agenda of #ZOG (which is #WhiteGenocide)." "ZOG" stands for "Zionist Occupied Government," a term used to insinuate that "the Jews" control the United States and other Western governments. Fletcher also writes articles for XYZ.

The activist far right, in its opposition to "non-white" immigration and multiculturalism, originally focussed their venom at Muslims and then at Africans. With the open adoption of the "White Replacement" myth, it is likely that the far right will continue to target those two communities while increasing the rhetoric that it is "the Jews" who

stand "behind it all." Their message will be - and, indeed, already is - that since this is being orchestrated by "the Jews" as part of a "Jewish plot" to destroy the West, the Jews need to be eliminated, one way or another. Doubtless, then, any problem with Muslims or Africans or any other non-European group, will be considered either manageable or at an end.

Ominously, many in the far right are claiming that 2019 will be the year that Australia is "taken back" are openly talking about sparking a "Race War." It is unlikely that calls for a "Race War" will be taken up by masses of people. Australians in general have traditionally been too sceptical of zealots on a mission of any kind, to be receptive to extremist calls for violence from any quarter. However, the scope for a lone, indoctrinated fanatic like Bowers, or a conspiratorial group of people like him, to wreak murder and mayhem in Australia should not be underestimated. Will political and civil society leaders adhere to the standards of zero-tolerance for racism, and incitement to violence, in actions as well as words? Time will tell.

This article was published on ABC Religion and Ethics.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HAS LOST ITS MORAL WAY WITH REGARD TO ISRAEL

By Alex Ryvchin

Amnesty International has unveiled a new campaign to pressure digital tourism companies such as Booking.com, Expedia, Airbnb and TripAdvisor to delist properties held by Israelis living in the West Bank, and calling on governments to pass legislation that would result in the total boycott of those living in Israeli settlements.

It is just the latest attack in a long war waged by Amnesty and other once-respectable human rights organisations intent on turning public opinion against Israel and bringing about its economic and political isolation.

The origins of this lie in an infamous non-governmental organisations forum of the UN World Conference against Racism held in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001. The conference lives long in the memory for the appalling racism that marred an event convened for the very purpose of combating such conduct. Posters displayed Jewish caricatures and Nazi icons, and participants circulated copies of the anti-Semitic fabrication, Protocols of the Elders of Zion. US congressman Tom Lantos called it "the most sickening display of hate for Jews since the Nazi period". The UN's human rights commissioner, Mary Robinson, told the BBC "there was a horrible anti-Semitism present".

Against this backdrop, the conference of more than 1500 representatives of international NGOs adopted a resolution that defined Israel as a "racist, apartheid state", and called for the launch of a "global solidarity campaign" targeting governments, UN agencies and civil society to achieve the "complete and total isolation of Israel".

This co-ordinated attack on Israel's very existence and legitimacy, including through various forms of boycott, divest and sanctions campaigns on campus, and among trade unions, government and civil society, became the vehicle through which new generations of thought leaders would be exposed to the characterisation of the Jewish state as a uniquely wicked, unjust project that had to be unwound for the good of humanity. Amnesty was a key player in Durban and in the adoption of the resolution, and has been at the forefront of the campaign ever since.

In 2002, following an Israeli military operation in the West Bank city of Jenin in response to the Passover massacre in Netanya, in which a Palestinian suicide bomber murdered 30 civilians during a celebratory feast, Amnesty accused Israel of carrying out war crimes and massacres of Palestinian civilians. The allegations, promptly reported by

the BBC and other news outlets, placed the Palestinian civilian death toll at more than 500. But 52 Palestinians died, the majority of them combatants, along with 23 Israeli soldiers, in fierce urban combat.

False allegations of a massacre made by Amnesty lubricated the machinery of the political campaign against Israel, leading to street protests, campus hearings, reams of condemnations and anti-Israel resolutions across civil society and government.

In 2015, Amnesty was forced into a humiliating admission that it had lobbied the Australian government to accept murderous Lindt Cafe terrorist Man Haron Monis as a genuine refugee.

Last April, Amnesty's secretary-general called Israel's democratically elected government "rogue". In 2010, the head of its Finnish branch called Israel a "scum state". Its British campaign manager has likened Israel to Islamic State and been condemned for his attacks on Jewish parliamentarians.

Perhaps as revealing as Amnesty's fixation on Jews living on the "wrong" side of a long-defunct armistice line has been its relative silence on the disturbing trend of rising anti-Semitism. In April 2015, Amnesty UK rejected an initiative to "campaign against anti-semitism in the UK", as well as "lobby the UK government to tackle the rise in anti-Semitic attacks

in Britain” and “monitor anti-Semitism closely”. It was the only proposed resolution at the annual general meeting that was not adopted.

The skewed morality revealed by Amnesty’s obsession with Israel reflects a broader decline in the non-governmental sector. Whereas groups such as Amnesty and Human Rights Watch once led the struggle against Soviet tyranny and actively defended the rights of political prisoners, today they serve an increasingly narrow political agenda, one aligned with anti-Western, anti-capitalist forces. Amnesty’s apparent contempt for Israel, its ho-hum attitude to anti-Semitism, and its inordinate condemnations of democracies all stem from this malaise.

Of course, the settlements are a point of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Indeed, the parties identified settlements as a final status issue in the historic Oslo Accords signed between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel in 1993. It was agreed that the questions of which settlements will be annexed to Israel and which will be dismantled or transferred to Palestinian sovereignty are to be resolved in direct negotiations in the context of a final peace agreement.

But the pursuit of peace is not aided by Amnesty’s political manoeuvres and attempts to isolate Israel, which perpetuate conflict by other means.

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DESTINATION: OCCUPATION

LEARNING THE LESSONS OF AUSTRALIA’S RECOGNITION OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL, SEVENTY YEARS ON

By Peter Wertheim

January 29, 2019 marked the 70th anniversary of an obscure and long-forgotten event in the history of Australia’s international relations: the day Australia recognised the State of Israel. The issue generated intense behind-the-scenes controversy, and ultimately open disagreement, between the then Labor government, led by Prime Minister Ben Chifley and Foreign Minister, “Doc” Evatt, and its sister Labour government in Britain.

Seventy years later, following the passing of a resolution at the recent ALP National Conference supporting recognition of a Palestinian State, it is worth recalling what the controversy was about and understanding why it still matters.

Palestine under a League of Nations mandate and had fought a bitter insurgency by Jewish forces for three years until Israel was established in 1948.

At the end of World War II the British government, anxious to appease the Arab leadership and protect its strategic interests in the Middle East, announced that it would bar entry into Palestine to tens of thousands of Jewish Holocaust survivors who were desperate to escape Europe and leave behind the traumas they had endured.

The British enforced this policy with exceptional ham-fistedness and brutality. The Defence Emergency Regulations introduced by the UK in September 1945 suspended habeas corpus in Palestine, established military courts and imposed the death sentence merely for carrying weapons. The British troop presence was massively increased to 100,000.

Protests from the Jews already living in Palestine were ruthlessly suppressed, giving rise to an open Jewish revolt against the British authorities, characterised by acts of barbarity on both sides. Among some people, the high emotions generated by these events have still not dissipated.

On 29 November 1947, the UN General Assembly voted by 33 votes to 13 with 10 abstentions in support of the partition of the British Mandate of Palestine into a Jewish State and an Arab State, giving international endorsement to the principle of ‘two States for two peoples’. Of itself, this was not an act of recognition, as neither State yet existed. The British Mandate government continued to function until mid-May 1948.

On the day of Britain’s departure from Palestine, the Jews proclaimed their independence, and the new Jewish State of Israel came into existence the following day, 15 May 1948. Israel was immediately confronted with a full-scale military invasion by the armed forces of five neighbouring Arab League states. Trygve Lie, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, described the combined Arab assault as “the first armed aggression which the world had seen since the end of [World War II]”.

It was a closely-fought war, with Israel staring defeat in the face at the time of the short-lived armistice in June 1948.

The US extended de facto recognition to Israel within hours of its proclamation of independence. The USSR recognized Israel de jure

RECOGNISING ISRAEL ~ 1949 ~

In the late 1940s, political attitudes towards Israel in Australia were almost the mirror opposite of what they are today. Back then, support for the Zionist cause came mainly from the Labor side of politics, whereas the conservatives were the source of most of the opposition to it.

Conservative views were shaped largely by traditional feelings of loyalty to Britain, which had ruled

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on May 17. Many other states followed suit.

Britain, however, withheld recognition, and urged Australia and other Commonwealth countries to do likewise. The British government sought to avoid any action which might incur the hostility of the Arab states and imperil Britain's control of the Suez Canal and access to Middle East oil.

The British were also working behind the scenes to have Britain's client state, Transjordan, take over certain areas of Palestine earmarked by the UN partition plan for an Arab State. They further sought to detach the Negev region in the south of the country from Israel's territory. If successful, the latter ploy would have reduced Israel's already small land area – one-third the size of Tasmania – by about 60%. Israel's eventual success in repelling the Arab military invasion put an end to this scheme, but in the early months of the war the situation on the ground remained fluid.

In cablegrams from Australia to Britain, Evatt and officials in Australia's Ministry of External Affairs expressed their disapproval of Britain's prioritisation of its strategic interests over its obligation not to undermine implementation of the UN's partition resolution. At least one other Commonwealth government evidently shared those misgivings. On May 24, South Africa broke ranks and extended de facto recognition to Israel.

A key argument that persuaded Australia to delay recognition of Israel was that until the outcome of the Arab military invasion was decided, the capacity of Israel's provisional government to control its territory remained in doubt.

The existence of a government exercising control over its territory is both a legal requirement of statehood under Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933) and a practical imperative. Although recognition of a putative new State is a political decision at the discretion of each of the world's existing States, it would be futile and potentially embarrassing to recognise such a State if its purported government is incapable of asserting its authority over its own territory.

Israel's military position vis-à-vis the Arab military invasion was not the only factor that bore on this question. The viability of Israel, as with any State, also depended on its provisional government being the only source of coercive power within its territory.

This too was put to the test early in the war. On 22 June 1948, David Ben-Gurion, as head of Israel's provisional government, ordered the newly-formed Israel Defence Forces (IDF) to fire upon and disarm fighters belonging to a separate Jewish militia, the Irgun, who were unloading weapons for themselves from a ship off the beach in Tel Aviv, the Altalena.

Whilst the ship surrendered without returning fire, there were gun battles on the beach and in parts of Tel Aviv. Sixteen Irgun fighters and three IDF soldiers were killed. After the shelling of the Altalena, more than 200 Irgun fighters were arrested on Ben-Gurion's orders. Most of them were released several weeks later, with the exception of five senior commanders, who were detained for more than two months. The Irgun was disbanded and its members were absorbed into the IDF.

By November 1948, it was also evident that Israel had broken the back of the Arab invasion and would repel its enemies. Israel had proved its viability as a State, but at a high price. Ultimately, more than 6,000 Israelis, 1 percent of the population, were killed.

The Australian government was fast losing sympathy for Britain's continuing requests that it not recognise Israel. On 19 November 1948, the Australian delegation at the UN stated:

By every practical test, whether in respect of its capacity for self-defence, its governmental organisation, its control of all forms of administration within specified areas ... the fact that the Government of Israel is a reality must now be clearly recognised by everybody.

More than two months went by before Australia recognised Israel. Britain recognised Israel de facto on 13 May 1949 but delayed de jure recognition until 28 April 1950.

RECOGNISING PALESTINE ~ 2019 ~

If Labor today were to apply the same criteria to recognition of a Palestinian state that it applied to recognition of Israel, "Palestine" would fail on each and every one of them. In particular, due to the schism within the Palestinian national movement, there is no Palestinian entity that exercises "control of all forms administration within specified areas" that comprise the territory claimed by the Palestinians, namely the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The internal divide between the secular nationalist movement among Palestinians, represented by the PLO and Palestinian Authority (PA) which

controls parts of the West Bank, and the theocratic movement, represented by Hamas which controls the Gaza Strip, has resulted in internecine violence on many occasions.

Hamas remains committed not only to the violent destruction of Israel but also to the expulsion or extermination of its Jewish population, as is vividly described in the Hamas Charter. In its rocket attacks and tunnelling operations against Israeli population centres, Hamas openly asserts that it makes no distinction between Israel's military and Israeli civilians, including infants and the elderly. It rejects all agreements entered into by the PA with Israel.

All attempts at internal reconciliation between the secular and theocratic Palestinian movements have failed and the differences between them appear to be intractable. They are at loggerheads on the most basic questions, not only concerning peace with Israel and other issues of foreign and domestic policy but also on the essential nature of a future Palestinian State, and the basic rules by which it will governed.

Hamas refuses to relinquish its arms to the PA and to place its operatives under the PA's command. The PA is too weak to force Hamas to do so. The Palestinians have never had their "Altalena" moment.

Thus, for reasons which are entirely internal to Palestinian society, there is no reasonable prospect for the foreseeable future of any Palestinian government being formed which would exercise effective control over both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and would have the capacity to give effect to any agreements purportedly entered into by



"Palestine", including any peace treaty that might be negotiated with Israel.

Quite apart from the absence of a coherent Palestinian government which is capable of exercising effective control of its territory, there is also the matter of the appalling human rights records of both the PA and Hamas in their treatment of their own people. Human Rights Watch, which usually focuses its criticisms on Israel, recently accused the PA and Hamas of developing "parallel police states" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

It has sometimes been argued that there are many countries with bad human rights records which Australia recognises, and that this consideration should therefore not be a barrier to recognising a Palestinian state. The argument is based on false logic.

Whilst Australia does not withdraw recognition of existing States solely because their governments are poor at governance, commit human rights atrocities and attack and threaten their neighbours, neither does Australia (or any other democracy) initiate recognition of a putative new State while it engages in such behaviour.

On the contrary, the practice is that

recognition is withheld until the behaviour ceases, and the putative new State binds itself legally not to repeat the behaviour: European Council (EC) Guidelines on the recognition of new States in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, 16 December 1991; EC Declaration on Yugoslavia, 16 December 1991; Opinions of the EC Arbitration Commission on Yugoslavia (1991-3). These policy requirements are in addition to the legal criteria for statehood set out in the Montevideo Convention.

The fact that 137 of the 193 states of the United Nations have recognised a Palestinian state does not cure any of the defects of the Palestinians' claim to statehood, whether those defects are legal or diplomatic or failures to respect the human rights of their own people.

Recognising a Palestinian state in these circumstances would therefore not help to end the conflict with Israel, but would almost certainly inaugurate a new and bloodier phase of that conflict, at the likely cost of many more lives than the conflict has claimed thus far.

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THE SENATOR SAM COHEN AFFAIR

By Associate Professor Philip Mendes

During the period from 1960-62, Sam Cohen, a long-time Jewish Council to combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism activist and President, was involved in two public brawls which brought both the Council and the Jewish community to national media attention. Firstly, there was Cohen's controversial selection ahead of veteran Jewish communal leader Maurice Ashkanasy for the ALP Federal Senate ticket. This provoked a backlash from critics of the Council both within the Jewish community and the ALP. Secondly, Cohen's subsequent speech in the Federal Senate, which appeared to minimize the extent of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, provoked enormous criticism from the Victorian Jewish peak ruling body - the Jewish Board of Deputies (VJBD).

This paper attempts to uncover why Cohen, who was a moderate social democrat who enjoyed good relationships with many mainstream Jewish leaders, chose to align himself with an arguably radical pro-Communist view on the question of Soviet Jewry.

So let me begin by saying a bit about the political life of Sam Cohen. Sam was born in Sydney in 1918 to Russian Jewish migrant parents. His prime political influence was his

mother who instilled in him a life-long political concern for the cause of the poor and the underprivileged. His political views were shaped by the great events of the time such as the Depression, the Spanish Civil War, and the rise of Fascism in Europe. His Jewish background influenced him to a specific concern with Nazism and Anti-Semitism, and a determination to struggle against their revival. It was that concern that led to his long-term involvement in the controversial Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism.

But he was also Chairman of both the VJBD and ECAJ Public Relations Committees from 1950-52, and Chair of the famous community's anti-German Migration Campaign Committee. Cohen was forced by circumstances at that time to make a choice between continuing in those roles, or alternatively staying with the Jewish Council. Roughly, the VJBD moved right as the ALP and Council moved Left. He chose the latter, probably due to a range of factors such as personal friendships and political allegiances. He was also Secretary of the first United Israel Appeal, Vice-President of the Friends of Hebrew University, and closely associated with the Jewish Welfare Society and the Montefiore Homes for

the Aged. As we shall see, his conflict with mainstream Jews was solely over attitudes to the Soviet Union.

Cohen joined the Labor Party in 1946, and became a member of the Left-dominated Victorian ALP Executive in 1961. He was elected as a Senator for Victoria to the Commonwealth Parliament in 1961, and took his seat in July 1962. He served three terms including a period as Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Education before dying prematurely during the 1969 election campaign.

Cohen was a mainstream social democrat, not a Marxist or Communist. He never called for the abolition of capitalism, or even for a radical redistribution of income. His parliamentary activities focused on three issues: extending Commonwealth responsibility for education funding; human rights such as opposition to the death penalty and rejecting racial discrimination in Australia and elsewhere; and promoting international peace and cooperation as in proposing Australian recognition of Communist China and opposing Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. On his passing, a Senator Sam Cohen Memorial Lecture was

inaugurated by his friends (none of them left-wing radicals) including Julius Stone, Zelman Cowen, Saul Same and Isador Magid to commemorate the friendship he forged between the Australian labour movement and the State of Israel.

To understand what happened in 1960-62, we need to look first at what the Council stood for, and how it responded to Soviet anti-Semitism.

PART ONE: THE JEWISH COUNCIL AND SOVIET ANTI-SEMITISM 1948-1962

The Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism - Australian Jewry's preeminent left-wing organization - was established in 1942 to counter the growth in anti-Semitism associated with pre and post-war Jewish immigration, and the impact of Nazism.

The Council was always influenced by the Communist Party and its sympathizers, but in its early years enjoyed broad communal support. It campaigned vigorously in favor of the creation of the State of Israel, and with considerable foresight against the immigration of former Nazis to Australia. By 1948, the Council had become the official public relations representative of the Victorian Jewish community. During the Cold War, the Council lost support in the Jewish community due to its perceived pro-Soviet bias, and particularly its defense of Soviet anti-Semitism.

Western attitudes towards Soviet anti-Semitism had long reflected the general Left/Right polarization. Supporters of the Soviet Union including many Jews claimed that anti-Semitism had been legislatively abolished, and that Russian Jews

were experiencing equal rights for the first time in their history. Conservatives, in contrast, claimed that the Soviet Union had brutally suppressed Jewish religious observance and Zionist activities, and all forms of Jewish collective or national expression.

The Soviet Union's actual record prior to 1948 appears to have been mixed. However, between 1948 and 1953, Stalin implemented a vicious anti-Jewish campaign. The remnants of Yiddish culture in Moscow were eradicated, the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were murdered, and virtually all prominent Jewish artists, scientists, and intellectuals were purged.

Stalin's anti-Jewish obsession culminated in the Czech Slansky show trial of 1952, and the Doctors Plot of 1953 when six prominent Jewish doctors were arrested and accused of plotting to kill Stalin and other Soviet leaders. It appears that at the time of Stalin's death, he was on the verge of implementing a plan to deport a large proportion of the Russian Jewish population to Siberia. There has been some conjecture as to whether these events were widely known in the West until Khrushchev's secret speech in February 1956. However, they were widely reported in the capitalist press at the time, and many Jewish Communists later admitted they had strong suspicions, but were reluctant to break Party solidarity.

From 1948 till Khrushchev's anti-Stalin revelations of 1956, the Jewish Council essentially subscribed to the thesis that anti-Semitism and communism were a contradiction in terms, and that any suggestions to the contrary reflected either temporary aberrations arising

from the continuing existence in Eastern Europe of popular pre-communist prejudices, or alternatively manifestations of Cold War propaganda. As reflected in its name, the Council believed that fascist or right-wing regimes presented the sole threat to Jewish well-being and security.

The Council, therefore, responded to the Slansky Trial and the Doctors Plot by denying that any anti-Jewish manifestations per se were involved. Instead, the Council maintained that these events reflected hostility to Zionism, and the polarisation of the Cold War.

Sam Cohen's role in this drama was a minor, but complex one. As an ally of the hardline Soviet supporters such as Judah Waten, Sam Goldbloom, Norman Rothfield, and Joseph Redapple, he argued in defence of the Council line. However, as a non-communist, he mounted a more subtle defence based on opposition to the Cold War, rather than ideological loyalty to the Soviet Union.

Following Stalin's death, conditions temporarily eased for Soviet Jews. Thousands of Jewish political prisoners were amnestied, the imprisoned doctors were released, and diplomatic relations were restored with Israel.

However, Nikita Khrushchev's ascent to power in 1955 halted the brief "thaw" or period of liberalization. Khrushchev not only refused to restore the Jewish cultural institutions destroyed under Stalin, but also took active measures to hasten Jewish assimilation. Under his rule, the number of synagogues was rapidly reduced, the baking of matzos and the performing of circumcisions were greatly restricted, and virulent public campaigns were conducted

against the Jewish religion and its practices. In addition, Khrushchev gave vent to his own anti-Jewish prejudices in meetings with foreign communists and dignitaries.

Perhaps of most concern was the active scapegoating of Jews as alleged “speculators and illegal traders in State property”. A disproportionate number of offenders convicted of such economic crimes were Jewish. The Jewish origins of such offenders were also given considerable press publicity, and Jews were far more likely to receive death sentences.

In February 1958, the Council acknowledged for the first time the extent of Soviet anti-Semitism. Council President Sam Cohen expressed the Council’s sorrow at the “cruel fate of a number of Soviet Jewish writers and cultural workers; by the restricted opportunities available to Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union; by the manifestation of anti-Jewish feeling in some countries of Eastern Europe; and by the sharpness of the Soviet Bloc’s attitude to Israel in her present difficulties”.

However, the Council believed that public protests against the Soviet Union would only exacerbate the Cold War, and ultimately worsen (rather than improve) the situation of Soviet Jewry. Nevertheless, the Council did proceed in later years to condemn particularly blatant manifestations of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union such as the publication of violently anti-Semitic articles and books, and the banning of Matzos baking for Pesach.

In contrast, the official Jewish leadership (represented in the state and national peak roof bodies) argued that only the force of international public opinion would persuade the Soviet authorities to cease their repression of Jewish life and culture. This view was increasingly supported

by many prominent left-wing personalities including writers Bertrand Russell and Francois Mauriac, peace activist Linus Pauling, and US civil rights leader Martin Luther King. It would appear that Khrushchev was sensitive to Western criticism, and that such protests did lead to an improvement in the conditions of Soviet Jewry.

Regardless of the merits of the respective positions, the conflict between public protest and (at best) private friendly representations over Soviet Jewry was to be at the centre of the Sam Cohen Affair.

PART TWO: THE COHEN/ ASHKANASY PRESELECTION BATTLE: THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

The battle between ECAJ President Maurice Ashkanasy and Jewish Council President Sam Cohen for a winnable seat on the ALP’s Federal Senate ticket for the 1961 election has sometimes been described as a struggle for Jewish organizational pre-eminence within the ALP. However, it would appear that the decision to preselect Cohen had little to do with internal Jewish communal affiliations and faction fights, and far more closely reflected the individual merits and broader political alliances of the two candidates.

The most significant factor was that the left-wing Central Executive (CE) of the Victorian ALP controlled the Party’s pre-selection process. This meant that Cohen had an immediate headstart over Ashkanasy since his views on communism and unity tickets were commensurate with those of the Executive. In contrast, Ashkanasy was already regarded as a public critic of the CE.

Cohen’s preselection provoked

considerable controversy both within the Jewish community and the ALP, and some attempts were made during the 1961 federal election by right-wing Jewish critics of Cohen and the Council to discredit his candidacy which mirrored similar earlier attacks on Council activists Norman Rothfield and Sam Goldbloom when they were preselected by the ALP for House of Reps seats in 1958. The Jewish community was divided in its response to Cohen’s preselection.

PART THREE: LEIBLER VERSUS COHEN: THE SOVIET JEWRY CAMPAIGN

In 1962, Isi Leibler and the Victorian Jewish Board Deputies launched a campaign against Soviet anti-Semitism that was ultimately to have not only national, but also international political ramifications.

Born in Belgium in 1934, Leibler arrived in Australia with his family in 1939. Influenced by his father Abraham, who was President of the VJBD from 1954-56, Leibler initially rose to prominence in the right-wing religious Zionist group B’nei Akiva. After commencing a Master of Arts at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Leibler returned to Australia in 1957 following his father’s premature death. Influenced by Israeli officials such as Shaul Avigur, and local anti-communists such as Frank Knopfelmacher and Bono Wiener, Leibler soon initiated a campaign for Soviet Jewry.

The publicly stated objective of the campaign was to raise the question of Soviet anti-Semitism at the United Nations as a means of placing international pressure on the USSR to both cease discrimination against its Jewish population, and/or allow those who wished to do so to emigrate. An associated objective was to conclusively

marginalize those groups within the Jewish community such as the Jewish Council who were unwilling to publicly break with the Soviet Union.

Leibler’s campaign sharply divided the Jewish community. His strongest support came from the VJBD Executive. Opposition came from a number of sources, and reflected two particular concerns.

Firstly, many Jews rejected in principle the notion of a public political campaign (as opposed to behind the scenes lobbying) on behalf of Soviet Jewry. Some feared the possible ramifications for the Jewish community of being placed in the public political limelight. Many within the Zionist movement followed what they believed to be the Israeli viewpoint in regarding Soviet anti-Semitism as a matter to be principally resolved by broader East/West negotiations directed at ending the Cold War.

Others were concerned to end the public political brawling within the Jewish community. Whilst still critical of the Jewish Council, they believed that Cohen (who was after all known to be a strong supporter of Israel) should be granted appropriate recognition by Jewish communal institutions and organizations.

THE PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIR

In early 1962, the VJBD urged the Sydney-based Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) to raise the question of Soviet Jewry at a federal parliamentary level. However, when the ECAJ refused and instead made direct representations to the Soviet Embassy, the VJBD Public Relations Committee took action on its own, approaching Liberal Party MPs to raise the matter in Parliament.

In order to secure the support of the

Federal Liberal Government, Isi Leibler approached Mr Haworth, the Liberal Member for Isaacs (the Victorian electorate with the largest proportion of Jewish voters in Australia) to raise the matter of Soviet anti-Semitism before the House of Representatives.

Leibler’s decision to approach the Liberal Party, rather than the ALP with which the Jewish community had traditionally enjoyed a “special” relationship due to Dr Evatt’s support for the establishment of Israel, and Arthur Calwell’s support for Jewish immigration, would later cause considerable controversy.

Academic Rodney Goultman later alleged Leibler had jointly engaged in a conspiracy with Bundist Bono Weiner (who had been expelled from the Labor Party following his attempts to expose Council activist Sam Goldbloom as an alleged secret member of the Communist Party) and anti-Communist Frank Knopfelmacher to discredit Cohen. But this was a very public and open attack mirroring earlier campaigns against the Council as noted above.

In defense of Leibler, it can reasonably be argued that an approach to the Liberal Party was necessary since only the Federal Government rather than the Opposition had the power to raise the matter at the United Nations. Moreover, it does appear that the ALP was approached - albeit without success - in an attempt to secure bipartisan support for the proposed resolution.

In my opinion, Leibler’s strategy justifiably provoked criticism from the ALP and its supporters. Firstly, Arthur Calwell had unequivocally denounced anti-Semitism in his address to the 1960 Jewish Council Annual Dinner. There is, therefore, reason to believe that further lobbying may have

provoked a more positive response from the ALP leader.

Secondly, Leibler’s close cooperation with the anti-labor publications, The Bulletin, The Daily Telegraph, and News Weekly no doubt provoked considerable suspicion within the ALP. It is questionable as to what extent Leibler chose these narrowly right-wing allies because he had no alternative, or rather because he and his VJBD supporters felt most comfortable with and shared their anti-communist beliefs.

Thirdly, there is little doubt that the primary motive of the Liberal Party in initiating this motion was not to defend human rights per se, but rather to assert its anti-communist credentials, and if possible, also divide the ALP.

Noticeably, all the speakers chosen by the Liberal/National Coalition Government (except for Haworth) were hardline anti-communists known for their extreme hostility to the ALP, rather than their sincere opposition to racial or religious discrimination. In fact further proof of the Liberal Party’s political opportunism on this matter was provided when the Australian representative who raised the question of Soviet anti-Semitism at the United Nations simultaneously voted against a resolution calling for economic sanctions against apartheid South Africa.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, it does appear that Leibler’s actions were legitimate, motivated principally by a zealous concern for the rights and fate of Soviet Jewry, and most importantly successful. It is also, of course, possible that if Leibler had paid more attention to the sensitivities of the ALP, the entire campaign would never have proceeded.

In Parliament, the motion on Soviet Jewry was initiated by Mr Haworth

whose speech was assisted by Isi Leibler. Haworth had never previously spoken in Parliament on either racism or Jewish community issues. He presented a relatively balanced and dispassionate account of the travails of Soviet Jewry. He referred, for example, to the restrictions on Jewish religious observance, to the incitement of anti-Semitism in the Soviet media, and to the singling out of Jews for alleged economic crimes.

However, Haworth also made two explicitly political references. Firstly, he expressed the “surprise and concern of many of his electors” that Syd Einfeld (the ALP MP and ECAJ President) had not himself brought the matter before Parliament. Secondly, he criticized the Jewish Council “for joining with the local communists in attempting to rubbish these grave charges brought by official Jewry”.

Haworth’s description of the plight of Soviet Jewry was then supported by both Einfeld and Liberal MP William Wentworth. Einfeld strongly supported the raising of the matter at the United Nations.

The debate was subsequently extended to the Senate, and media reports quickly suggested that the Liberal Party would use the Senate debate to embarrass Sam Cohen. If Cohen remained silent, this would appear to confirm allegations that he and the Jewish Council condoned Soviet anti-Semitism. However, Cohen could not support the motion without appearing to retract his long-held view that such matters could only be resolved within the broader context of the Cold War. In short, Cohen was left in a no-win situation.

The debate in the Senate was initiated by Liberal Senator Hannan who accused the Soviet Union of attempting to “exterminate the

Jewishness of its 2,500,000 to 3,000,000 Jews”. Reference was made to the removal of Jewish leaders, to the closure of synagogues, and the disproportionate execution of Jews for economic crimes.

Sam Cohen’s response to Hannan was passionate, emotive, contradictory, and overly personal. He drew a distinction between the Soviet treatment of Jews as individuals as opposed to Jews as a religious group or collective. According to Cohen, “It is fair to say that the Russians make a strong case as to the equality which Jewish citizens enjoy in civic matters”. Cohen quoted various statistics regarding individual Jewish achievements in the Soviet Union to support this assertion of civil equality, although he acknowledged that that these statistics did not necessarily “disprove some of the allegations that Senator Hannan has made”.

Cohen then added: “I do not find it necessary to defend the Russian system. That system apparently suits the Russian people, and the Jewish community of Russia must work out its own destiny in that system. It does no service whatever to the cause of humanity - to the cause of world Jewry - to speak in the exaggerated way that Senator Hannan spoke to-night, with little regard for balance or decency”. Cohen also noted that anti-Semitism existed in many countries including the emergence of fascist groups such as the League of Rights and social discrimination in Australia, Nazi groups in Britain, and the revival of Nazi propaganda in Germany.

In contrast to the proposed motion which advocated international pressure on the USSR at the UN to change its policies, Cohen believed that the interests of Soviet Jews would be best served by international dialogue and peace. Cohen also

accused Senator Hannan of insincerity, suggesting that his speech was prompted not “out of a real desire to help Jewry in Russia”, but rather as part of “a spiteful campaign levelled largely against me”. Cohen declared that whilst he was “fully in support of any condemnation of such discrimination as may exist against Jewry in Russia”, he would “not be a party to making a political football out of human suffering”.

Cohen’s speech provoked enormous criticism within the Jewish community, and can reasonably be criticized on a number of counts. Firstly, Cohen appears to have seriously underestimated the extent, nature and seriousness of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Secondly, Cohen’s comparison of Western Nazi groups with Soviet anti-Semitism was spurious since the former represented marginal viewpoints, whereas the latter reflected official government policy.

Thirdly, there is little doubt that the Soviet Jewry motion reflected baser political motives including the embarrassment of Senator Cohen and the ALP. Nevertheless, it still should have been possible for Cohen to unequivocally defend the rights of Soviet Jews on human rights grounds to be free from either persecution or forced assimilation, regardless of whether or not he supported the actual motion to raise the matter at the United Nations.

The Australian Jewish Herald responded with a dramatic front page Editorial emotively headlined “J’Accuse”, employing imagery borrowed from the infamous Dreyfus case, in an attempt to paint Cohen as a traitor to the Jewish people.

The Editorial written by Sam Lipski accused Cohen of “attempting to sabotage the efforts of democratic governments to raise the persecution

of his fellow Jews before the conscience of the world...”, and concluded “Senator Cohen does not speak for Australian Jewry. His support will come from a small fellow travelling minority - the Jewish Council. They are discredited outcasts. Australian Jewry supports any move the Government is able to take to raise a matter of human suffering at the United Nations”.

Lipski’s Editorial caused enormous bitterness amongst Cohen and his supporters, and Lipski apologized many years later in his 2015 book on Soviet Jewry, acknowledging that the language used had unfairly suggested Cohen was an ally of anti-Semites.

Cohen wrote that his viewpoint had been “grossly and viciously misrepresented”, and that he had been subjected to “threats, libels, and character assassination”. Cohen clarified that he did not believe “Russian Jewry should be left to its own fate”. However, he argued that closer contacts between Western and Eastern Jewish leaders, rather than anti-Soviet campaigns, would best assist Soviet Jewry.

In early November 1962, Soviet anti-Semitism was successfully raised by the Australian Representative at the United Nations General Assembly. The Australian delegate, Mr Douglas White, demanded that the Soviet Union permit any Jews wanting to leave the country to do so. Reference was made to official manifestations of anti-Semitism in the USSR including restriction of Jewish religious observance, and a disproportionate number of death sentences for economic offenses passed on Jews.

The Soviet delegate Mrs T.N.Nilolaeva, replied that reports of such discrimination in the Soviet Union were “cold war absurdities”. She said such “slandorous and false

calumnies” had been introduced solely to embarrass the Soviet Union. There was no discrimination against Jews or any other nationality or group within the USSR.

According to Isi Leibler, the United Nations intervention had significant international repercussions. The President of the World B’nai B’rith, Mr Laibl Katz, sent a cable congratulating Leibler on his success. In addition, the Israeli Government, which had been equally divided between supporters of the Soviet Jewry campaign and those who believed Israel should look after its own geo-political interests and not alienate the USSR, elected to support the campaign. Emissaries were sent to Australia to instruct the Zionist movement to support Leibler.

PART FOUR: CONCLUSION - LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE SAM COHEN AFFAIR

For Sam Cohen, the affair effectively ended any support he retained within the VJBD. However, at the same time it seems to have had little if any significant impact on his political career. But for his sudden death, he almost certainly would have held a prominent Ministry in the first Whitlam Government. Despite his statements during the 1962 parliamentary debate, he did speak out in later years on behalf of Soviet Jewry. In 1964, for example, he issued on behalf of the Victorian Branch of the ALP, a powerful criticism of the notorious Soviet anti-Jewish tract, Judaism without embellishment.

The Affair more generally caused enormous public conflict and acrimony within the Jewish community and the ALP, and led to substantial changes in the political culture of Australian Jewry. This was not the first time the Jewish community had become embroiled in

a major national political controversy. The earlier campaign against large-scale German/Nazi immigration in the 1950s had led to considerable public conflict with the Federal Liberal Government. However, that campaign had largely been conducted with the support of the ALP, the Jewish community’s traditional political ally.

In contrast, the Soviet Jewry campaign involved an alliance with political conservatives and anti-communists who had not traditionally been regarded as friends of rallies of the Jewish community. Even more importantly, it provoked open conflict with the ALP, the party of Calwell and Evatt which had long been revered by many Jews for its support of Jewish immigration, and the creation of the State of Israel. Overall, the campaign suggested a realignment, or at least, major reappraisal of traditional Jewish political allegiances and lobbying strategies.

The campaign certainly exerted a key influence on the lobbying strategies of Australian Jewry. From this time onwards, Jewish leaders began to speak out increasingly publicly and loudly in defense of Jewish interests including support for Zionism and the State of Israel. In addition, the campaign undoubtedly enhanced the profile and status of Isi Leibler who went on to attain international Jewish recognition as one of the key leaders of the Soviet Jewry struggle.

A form of this text was delivered in a speech to the Australian Jewish Historical Society.

UNDERSTANDING ANTISEMITISM

Australian student leaders visit Auschwitz

By Joshua Kirsh

Oftentimes talking about antisemitism is in the abstract, particularly in Australia. The discourse relates to big ideas and big concepts about equity, racism and fair play. It's not hard to make people care about how Jewish people are treated; it takes no time at all to develop a conceptual agreement about antisemitism as a bad thing.

The why is not hard. It's the how, when, where, and what, that has held us back from extending truly and fully the promise of political action on campus against antisemitic prejudice.

This was in many ways the sentiment from which AUJS' tour of Warsaw and Krakow in January of this year emerged. In our view, the way to start these discussions, and have them in a fulsome and productive way, was to take student leaders to the places where many of the modern myths and manifestations of antisemitism have emerged. It is hard to have conversations about why stereotypes about Jews being at the head of a global conspiracy are harmful without explaining where those stereotypes lead.

We approached many leaders about joining us on the trip, which we hoped would start a bipartisan

coalition to fight antisemitism on campus. We found bright, engaged young people with varying degrees of knowledge on the topic and a variance of experience with us and the Jewish community. We asked them to come to the issues with an open mind and a readiness to learn, and to their eternal credit, they did.

The who of antisemitism found its way into our programming in a twofold way: not just in discussions about who perpetrates antisemitism, but who its victims are. At every point along our trip, we encouraged hard discussions about our feelings and perspectives. Our participants learned from the educators and facilitators on the trip, but also from us about what it means to be Jewish students in today's Australia, with our own variety of political affiliations and views, but our unifying determination to make everyone feel included on campus.

Our trip took the where and when of antisemitism out of dystopian stereotypes and into the realm of "normal society". A great strength of our trip was that we were able to explain that whilst the narrative of European Jewry has been largely focussed on the impact of the

Holocaust, many have ignored the vibrant Jewish life that existed in

places like Poland before the war. Seeing how active and bright the community was in the many years that they lived in relative security in Europe underscored why Jewish communities do not take our security for granted, why we know it to be a contemporary and not an historical phenomenon, and how we can preserve these communities by not waiting until it is too late to act against prejudice.

Our work on campus has related in many ways to what we should understand antisemitism to be. Our journey through Poland exposed our participants to the myriad ways that social exclusion, fear, and mistrust had negative impacts on Poland's Jewish population. It gave us room to talk about all of the ways that antisemitism manifests in contemporary Australia, and it gave us the space to have those conversations outside of the polarised and partisan world of politics.

At the end of our trip, we circled back to how we all as students could participate in depoliticising the conversation around antisemitism and achieving better outcomes for

Jewish students. Already some of our participants have started the process of ratifying the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism in

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their student representative bodies; most recently by the University of Western Australia's Student Guild Council. Others have continued our ongoing dialogue about antisemitism, and we have found many new partners in the fight to keep our campuses safe.

We know that antisemitism is a big concept. We know that many student leaders have little to no exposure to it, have little understanding of its shape or its impact. By immersing them in many of the foundational ideas of how antisemitism exists, permeates, and

ultimately perpetuates violence against Jews, we have brought these leaders closer to a sensitive and nuanced understanding of antisemitism and how to fight back against its creeping rise.



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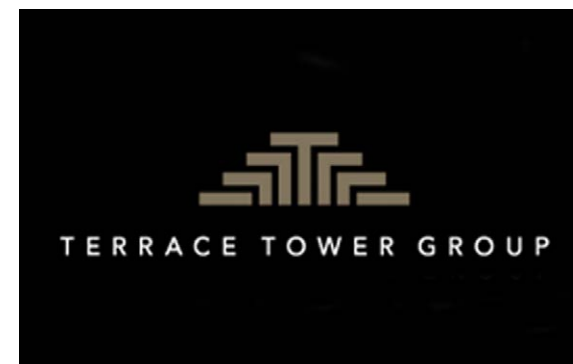
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IN PICTURES

ECAJ IMPACT

A sample of our leadership and advocacy
- at home and abroad.



ECAJ co-CEO Peter Wertheim and Interfaith Representative Jeremy Jones with Catholic Bishops.



ECAJ co-CEO Peter Wertheim at one of Facebook's Singapore offices, together with other representatives from South-East Asia.



ECAJ co-CEO Alex Ryvchin on ABC News discussing Pope Pius and the opening of the Vatican's Holocaust-era archives.



ECAJ co-CEO Peter Wertheim with Nitza Loewenstein from SBS Hebrew, following an interview about the St Kilda far-right protest.



ECAJ co-CEO Peter Wertheim on Sky News discussing comments likening Australia's treatment of asylum seekers to the Holocaust.



ECAJ Public Engagement Officer Samantha Khavin with Maria Anthony, Treasurer of the Federation of Pontian Associations of Australia at the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations Genocide Convention.



ECAJ Public Engagement Officer Samantha Khavin with other community leaders at the 101st birthday celebration of Bahauallah.



ECAJ co-CEO Alex Ryvchin presenting to Liberal Party members about debunking common myths about Israel.



ECAJ President Anton Block with Australia's Ambassador to Israel, Chris Cannan.



ECAJ co-CEO Alex Ryvchin speaking about Jewish identity, Soviet Jewry and Zionism to students at Perth's Carmel School.



ECAJ Public Engagement Officer Samantha Khavin with Senator Eric Abetz, together with other Jewish and Christian Zionist leadership.



ECAJ Public Engagement Officer Samantha Khavin, Digital Strategy Manager Lynzi Bennun and NSW Jewish Board of Deputies Public Affairs Officer Heath Sloane at the inaugural Young Jewish Professionals Retreat.



ECAJ Research Director Julie Nathan speaking at a Sydney synagogue on antisemitism.



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