

Continuities, Discontinuities and Contingencies: Anti-Alienism, Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism in Twentieth Century South Africa.¹

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For many years now scholars have commented on the continuities, discontinuities and contingencies of antisemitism through the ages: pagan and early Christian antisemitism, medieval and modern antisemitism, modern antisemitism and Nazism and, more recently, antisemitism and anti-Zionism.² While these debates are general in their focus, it is apparent that continuities, discontinuities and contingencies are also discernable within national polities. This paper explores the South African case in the twentieth century. More specifically, it examines the emergence of anti-alienism at the turn of the century; the ‘Jewish Question’ in the 1930s and early 1940s, and anti-Zionism during the latter part of the century. It will

¹ I wish to thank Richard Mendelsohn and Millie Pimstone for their valuable comments.

² See, for example, Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel. A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135-425*, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, London, 1996; Gavin Langmuir, *Towards a Definition of Antisemitism*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990; and Robert Wistrich, ‘Anti-Zionism as an Expression of Antisemitism in Recent Years’, in Yehuda Bauer (ed), *Present Day Antisemitism*, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Vidal Sassoon Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Jerusalem, 1988. For an examination of the connections between antisemitism and Nazism see Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites. Trials in Emancipation*, Cambridge University Press, New York, pp. 67-90.

be argued that while continuities are apparent between these various manifestations of hostility, there are also significant discontinuities. Importantly, each phase of hostility is embedded within specific contingencies, including distinguishable cultural patterns and political moments.

Anti-Alienism

By the early twentieth century a widespread anti-Jewish stereotype had evolved against the backdrop of a large influx of eastern European Jews – mainly from Lithuania – beginning at the time minerals were discovered in the late nineteenth century. The newcomers attracted substantial hostile attention: in the interior as itinerant peddlers, in particular in the southern Cape Colony as traders in the ostrich feather industry; on the diamond fields as fortune-seekers associated with illicit diamond dealing; in the mining town of Johannesburg on the Witwatersrand as ‘Peruvians’, associated with the seamier side of the city’s life, including the illicit liquor trade and prostitution, and as mine magnates or cosmopolitan financiers on the Witwatersrand, bent on dominating the country.³

The image of the manipulative and dishonest Jew that evolved by the early twentieth century must be seen in the context of urbanization and modernization. For the alienated and landless Boers – those constituting the incipient ‘poor white’ problem – the Jewish store was, at least for some observers, a symbol of greed and dishonesty. Instead of being appreciated for his services, the itinerant Jewish trader and the small shopkeeper were blamed for corrupting a rustic world of innocence and harmony. In the

³ See Milton Shain, *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa*, Charlottesville and London, 1994.

urban centers, antipathy was driven by competing merchants – the established English-speaking mercantile class – who considered Jewish trading patterns repugnant. An English weekly, *The Owl*, best captured these sentiments in its comments about Jewish hawkers on Cape Town’s Grand Parade:

The fact is Cape Town at the present time is full of those Polish Jew hawkers, who live in dirtier style than kaffirs and existing on about half a crown a week rob the tradesman of his due. They don’t pay rent, rates or taxes, yet they are allowed to sell goods just the same as if they kept a store. Respectable Europeans should order these people from their doors. That is the only way to put them down. Let these people do manual work.⁴

Far more sinister than the trader was the image of the Jew as part of a network of international finance, a trope well known at this time in Europe. The notion of the cosmopolitan financier found fertile soil in South Africa where mining magnates or ‘Randlords’, among whom Jews were disproportionately represented, were such a prominent feature of society. It made little difference that these Jewish financiers had largely assimilated and were Jews in name only. Their presence was particularly highlighted in England by the pro-Boers at the time of the South African War (1899-1902). Letters to the press and cartoon caricatures of corpulent and semitic-looking financiers adorning the pages of *The Owl* and the *South African Review* reveal that these ideas percolated into South Africa.⁵

⁴ 23 January, 1897.

⁵ See Shain, *The Roots*, ch. 3, *passim*.

The conspiratorial view of international finance was most clearly enunciated by J. A. Hobson, the *Manchester Guardian*'s correspondent in Johannesburg. His sentiments were succinctly captured in his book, *The War in South Africa*, which postulated the war being fought in the interests of a "small group of international financiers, chiefly German in origin and Jewish in race."⁶ These ideas were consolidated after the war, this time in connection with the controversial importation of Chinese labor to replace the dwindling reserves of African labor in the mines. Increasingly the alien plutocrats or 'Hebrew Goldbugs' were portrayed as responsible for the scheme, while poems and satirical compositions alluded to a Jewish-Chinese takeover of Johannesburg.⁷

It was in this climate that 'Hoggenheimer' – a quintessential Jewish parvenu based on a stage character⁸ – became a household name and a visible component of the anti-Jewish stereotype, complementing the 'Peruvian' image. In the eyes of the antisemite, it was the dishonesty of the 'Peruvian' which enabled him to achieve plutocratic prominence. Hoggenheimer, allegedly the *eminence grise* of South Africa, merely symbolized on a higher plane the machinations of the Jewish peddler and of the illicit diamond and liquor dealers.

During the First World War the anti-Jewish stereotype was embellished with the Jew being identified as military 'shirker' and - after the Russian Revolution - as a subversive Bolshevik. Thus a 'Russian-Jewish' conspiracy was the way leading newspapers depicted the heady days of March 1922, the so-called Rand Revolt.⁹ By the mid-1920s, newspapers

⁶ J. A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa. Its Causes and Effects*, Nisbet, London, 1900, p.189.

⁷ See Shain, *The Roots*, ch. 3, *passim*.

⁸ 'The Girl from Kays', by Owen Hall was first performed in London before coming to South Africa in 1903. See Shain, *The Roots*, pp.62-63.

⁹ See Shain, *The Roots*, ch. 5.

began to question the potential for eastern European Jews to integrate into South African society. ‘Unassimilability’ became the new catchword, an idea influenced directly by nativist ideas from the United States as well as by a new domestic segregationist discourse in which race and culture were conflated.¹⁰

The anti-Jewish stereotype was thus intimately bound up with the local stresses and upheavals engendered by South Africa’s ‘mineral revolution’. For many categories of the social spectrum – the impoverished farmer, the unemployed worker, the competing merchant, the frustrated businessman and the fearful worker – the stereotype served as a psychological cushion. It was a universal scapegoat in an age of turmoil. Most importantly, the Jew appeared to be the beneficiary of transformation and change. On the principal of *cui bono* (who benefits), it was presumed that the Jew, seemingly at home in the city, was the *eminence grise*.

Antisemitism: The ‘Jewish Question’, 1930-1948

Given the evolution of the anti-Jewish stereotype, it was no surprise that the full spectrum of the English and Afrikaans press welcomed the Quota Act of 1930 which set out to curtail eastern European Jewish immigration.¹¹ The Act heralded, in Todd Endelman’s terms, the transformation of ‘private’ into ‘public’ or programmatic antisemitism. That is to say antisemitism moved from relatively benign cultural and

¹⁰ See Saul Dubow, ‘Race, Civilization and Culture: The Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse in the Inter-war years’ in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, Longman, London and New York, 1987.

¹¹ See the *East London Daily Dispatch*, 3 February, 1930; *Die Burger*, 30 January, 1930; *Sunday Times*, 2 February, 1930; *The Cape*, 7 February, 1930; *The Daily Representative*, 10 February, 1930; *Ons Vaderland*, 1 February, 1930 and *Cape Argus*, 8 February, 1930.

literary stereotyping to the public arena, with demands for political action.¹²

The transformation was initially seen in the formation of the South African Christian National Socialist Movement – better known as the Greyshirts – under the leadership of Louis T. Weichardt. At its peak the movement had 2000 members and its success inspired a number of similar organizations to mushroom across the country. Although inspired by Nazi forms and racist or *volkisch* discourse, the substantive message of South Africa’s fascist movements related to the South African experience: Jews had fomented the Boer War, inspired blacks against white civilization, controlled the press, exploited Afrikaners, dominated society and so forth. Against the backdrop of drought, depression, and rapidly increasing black economic competition, these fascist clones, with “a marked preference for the language and symbolism of Nazism”, devoted themselves “to attacking that oldest of scapegoats, the Jew.”¹³ Indeed a variation of the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* appeared in 1934, leading to a libel action against *inter alia* Johannes von Moltke, the Eastern Province leader of the South African Christian/Gentile National Socialist Movement (the Greyshirts) breakaway group.¹⁴

Anti-Jewish ideas rapidly permeated the mainstream of Afrikaner nationalism, exacerbated by the influx of German-Jewish refugees in the wake of Hitler’s ascent to power. The groundswell of anti-Jewish feeling prompted demands for the ending of Jewish immigration. These

¹² Todd M Endelman, ‘Comparative Perspectives on Modern Anti-Semitism in the West’ in David Berger (ed), *History and Hate. The Dimensions of Anti-Semitism*, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1986.

¹³ Patrick J. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1991, p.13.

¹⁴ Furlong, pp.44-45. For an account of the trial see Hadassah Ben-Itto, *The Lie that wouldn’t die*, Vallentine Mitchell, London, 2005.

developments galvanized the ruling United Party to introduce stiffer educational and financial requirements for purposes of immigration. These were to take effect on 1 November 1936 and resulted in an interim increase in German-Jewish immigration. By the end of October well-attended meetings, led by a group of Stellenbosch University professors, protested against the arrival of the *Stuttgart* carrying some 537 German-Jewish immigrants.¹⁵ At that very time, Weichardt predicted that “our party is about to make a strong and rapid advance. Everywhere our meetings are crowded and our message is eagerly welcomed by the people.” He was especially encouraged by the:

extent to which the intelligentsia and the working classes are embracing the ideals of National Socialism. Large numbers of professional men, university professors, lecturers and students, civil servants, school teachers, etc. belong to the Party, if not in the open, at any rate as secret members. The workers, too, despite all attempts of the Jews to catch them with the poisoned bate of Communism and Bolshevism, are everywhere getting their eyes opened.¹⁶

Fringe sentiment was gradually integrated into the core of the political program of the opposition Purified National Party which – at least in some quarters - was calling for special action against recent Jewish arrivals, including restrictions on property rights and on access to the professions. These arguments were predicated upon Jewish ‘unassimilability’ and fears of Jewish power and domination. In an obvious response to flourishing antisemitism, coupled with a private Bill introduced by Malan to restrict

¹⁵ Edna Bradlow, ‘Immigration into the Union, 1910-1948. Policies and Attitudes’, unpubl. PhD diss., University of Cape Town, 1978, p.266.

¹⁶ *Fascist Quarterly*, October, 1936.

Jewish immigration and stiffen naturalization laws, the United Party introduced an Aliens Act in 1937, designed to restrict Jewish immigration – particularly from Germany – without mentioning Jews by name. Immigrants were to be permitted entry by a Selection Board on the grounds of good character and the likelihood of assimilation into the European population.

The Act failed to satisfy the Purified Nationalists; for them any Jewish immigration was unacceptable. Thus the party leader, Malan, was able to summarize a whole corpus of anti-Jewish discourse in a speech to a Stellenbosch audience in April 1937:

Coalition and Fusion were to a great extent the result of Jewish organization. The Jews did everything in their power to keep the Afrikaner from uniting, as they feared that South Africans would rise from their lowly and insignificant position to save South Africa for the South Africans.... Throughout the world the Jews availed themselves of democratic institutions for their own profit and that was why they joined the Labourites. There is yet another aspect of Jewish Communism in South Africa. The Jews oppose discrimination because they fear discrimination against them. In South Africa this means miscegenation”¹⁷

The ‘Jewish Question’ was now a central plank in the political platform of the Radical Right. Malan, under pressure from the far-right Greyshirts, focused increasingly on the Jew as an explanation for the Afrikaners political misfortunes. It was Hendrik Verwoerd, however, who stood at the vanguard of anti-Jewish agitation. In a major editorial in *Die Transvaler*,

¹⁷ Furlong, p.65.

the newspaper he edited, he summarized the whole corpus of antisemitic discourse: Jewish domination in business and the professions, the unassimilability of Jews, Jewish alienation from the Afrikaners, questionable Jewish commercial morality, and the use of money by Jews to influence government through the English-language press.¹⁸ Obviously the ‘Jewish Question’ was no longer the concern solely of fringe fascist groups; it was now firmly entrenched within mainstream white politics.

Malan’s Purified Nationalists predictably stressed the ‘Jewish Problem’ in the 1938 general election campaign. Party propaganda was underpinned by an insistence on the prospect of Jewish domination. The election year also saw the emergence of a new paramilitary authoritarian movement, the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB). Born out of the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek, the *Ossewabrandwag* attacked so-called ‘British-Jewish-Masonic’ imperialism and capitalism, ‘British Jewish’ democracy, ‘Jewish money-power’ and ‘Jewish disloyalty’.¹⁹ But it was also the association of Jews with communism that concerned some detractors. For instance, Eric Louw, a leading Afrikaner Nationalist and inveterate antisemite, attacked international Jewish communism together with liberalism, which he saw as a cover for communist ends.²⁰ This association of Jews with international communism had also been evident in the Greyshirt propaganda, which identified the Jews as an “Oosters Semitiese ras” (Eastern Semitic race) and as a menace or peril to Afrikaners.²¹

¹⁸ 1 October, 1937.

¹⁹ Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism. The South African Experience 1910-1967*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1980, p.130.

²⁰ Hansard, 24.2.1939. Cited in A Van Deventer, ‘Afrikaner Nationalist Politics and Anti-Communism, 1937-1945’, unpubl. Ph D diss. University of Stellenbosch, 1991.

²¹ Van Deventer, p.273

The rhetoric of protest and opposition was thus riddled with racist assumptions and antisemitic generalizations. Jews were aliens, disloyal and bent on exploitation or subversion. Hostility was driven largely by Afrikaner intellectuals, some of whom had studied in Germany, where they imbibed views of the corporate state, an idealist worldview, and a sense of exclusivist nationalism. These ideas propelled a powerful republicanism rooted in notions of divine election, a leitmotif within the Afrikaners' civil religion.²² Like their European counterparts on the Right, Afrikaner nationalists were opposed to liberalism, Marxism and laissez-faire capitalism. The last, associated with British imperialism, was exemplified in Hoggenheimer who was "English-speaking, imperialist, and clearly Jewish."²³ Nationalist sentiment, in other words, sharpened perceptions of the Jew as a quintessential alien. For the far Right Afrikaner, he symbolized all that was foreign and oppressive. Moreover, as English speakers for the most part, Jews were political enemies.

But the Jew did help to consolidate an all-embracing Afrikaner identity, understood in terms of cultural unity, national roots, and opposition to the foreigner. In this way antisemitism helped in some way to cover or paper over class divisions and antagonisms within Afrikaner society. The Afrikaner's inferior status in society and his poverty could be explained in racial or national terms. By employing this discourse of race to exclude and denigrate Jews, the Afrikaner was in turn elevated. Consequently, it is no coincidence that antisemitism continued to suffuse specifically right-wing Afrikaner political discourse and programs – this despite the upturn in the economy from the mid-1930s. And it is also no coincidence that the

²² T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom. Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1975, p.21.

²³ Moodie, p.15.

‘Jewish Question’ was tied to internecine Afrikaner struggles, employed according to prevailing needs and power games.²⁴

Antisemitism was given further impetus following the South African parliament’s decision to support the Commonwealth war effort to resist Germany in 1939. A powerful antiwar movement was orchestrated by the OB in which the appeal of fascism and with it the rhetoric of antisemitism was strong. A range of major National Party publications issued in the early 1940s demonstrated the formative influence of Mussolini and Hitler or the exclusive nature of an insurgent Afrikaner nationalism in which the Jew had no place.²⁵ Certainly the OB saw the Jews as a specific racial grouping in South Africa.²⁶ However, the struggle against Hitler gradually eroded the warm reception accorded to Nazi and fascist ideas. By 1942 mainstream National Party leaders, including Malan, Verwoerd and Strijdom, “were unequivocally rejecting National Socialism as an alien import into South Africa, and endorsing parliamentary democracy”.²⁷ Nonetheless, as late as 1944, an investigation into antisemitism, demonstrated a wide-ranging hostility towards Jews.²⁸ Indeed, the Jewish tragedy in Europe was minimized in Nationalist newspapers. However, ultimate knowledge of the ‘Final Solution’ demonstrated unequivocally the logical culmination of anti-Jewish bigotry.²⁹

²⁴ Van Deventer, p.283. Of course Afrikaner nationalism was not monolithic. For a microcosmic look at internecine struggles within Afrikaner nationalism at this time in the ‘Mecca of Afrikanerdom’, see Joanne Louise Duffy, ‘Afrikaner Unity, the National Party, and the Afrikaner Nationalist Radical Right in Stellenbosch, 1934-1938’, unpub. PhD diss., Oxford University, 2001.

²⁵ Shain, *The Roots*, p.148.

²⁶ See Van Deventer, p.277

²⁷ Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners. Biography of a People*, Cape Town, p.444.

²⁸ See Albrecht Hagemann, ‘Antisemitism in South Africa During World War !!: A Documentation’ in *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*, Volume 4, New York.

²⁹ Sharon Friedman, ‘Jews, Germans and Afrikaners: Nationalist Press reactions to the Final Solution’, unpub. dissertation, BA (Hons.) UCT, 1982.

The 1930s had clearly witnessed a sea change in the nature and character of antisemitism. Hostility had moved (in Endelman's terms) from the 'private' or ideational sphere into the 'public' or party political realm. The transformation was unquestionably related to specific traumas in the 1930s: the intensification of 'poor whiteism' following the impact upon South Africa of the world depression, the emergence of Nazism in Europe and – most importantly – the rise of an illiberal, anti-modernist and exclusivist strain within Afrikaner nationalism. That is why 'public' antisemitism in South African was an essentially, but not exclusively, Afrikaner phenomenon and why it appealed across the whole spectrum of Afrikaner nationalist opinion.

Anti-Zionism

The 'Jewish Question' rapidly disappeared after the war. The Greyshirts and the far right New Order disbanded and the ban on Jewish membership of the Transvaal National Party was lifted in 1951.³⁰ In 1953 Prime Minister D. F. Malan returned from a visit to Israel full of praise and admiration for the 'Jewish people'. The National Party seemed to wish to put the tensions and excesses of the 1930s and 1940s behind it. A new Afrikaner bourgeoisie – well educated, confident and more optimistic than their forebears – enjoyed the economic fruits of racist exploitation and political power. They developed very rapidly a respect for enterprise and material success.

³⁰ The National Party was organized along federal lines with each party maintaining an autonomous structure.

The very scaffolding that had underpinned the Afrikaners' sense of inferiority was thus removed as they began to experience power and social mobility. Within a decade of coming to power a broad Afrikaner middle class had appeared.³¹ A sense of competition with and fear of the Jew dissipated. A postwar consumerist culture meant the erosion of rural values and a newfound respect for the city. No longer was it an alien and inhospitable place. Most significantly, however, the impetus of exclusivist Afrikaner nationalism waned. English speakers, including Jews, were necessary for the apartheid project. As whites, they were to have a rightful and welcome place. In the postwar South African world, color was the cardinal divide and the greatest source of Afrikaner fear. Antisemitism was relegated to occasional uttering on the part of the far right, including instances of Holocaust denial in the 1970s.³²

At this time, however, a new source of hostility began to emerge around the question of Zionism, driven essentially, but not exclusively, by the minority Muslim population.³³ In apartheid South Africa the views of this community were largely unknown to the whites, including Jews.³⁴ Jews certainly were unaware that common episodes and events were viewed in distinctive and predictably different ways. From the earliest days of the Mandate, for example, Muslims took a very different view to Jews.³⁵ For

³¹ Giliomee, p.490.

³² Milton Shain, 'South Africa', in David Wyman (ed), *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1996.

³³ The 553585 largely Sunni Muslims in South Africa (1,4 percent of the total population according to the 1996 Census) are essentially a part of the Coloured and Indian population. They are the descendents of political prisoners, brought to the Cape by the Dutch rulers from the Indonesian islands in the seventeenth century, ex-slaves, nineteenth century Indian immigrants and the offspring of black/white relationships. See Ebrahim Moosa, 'Islam in South Africa', in Martin Prozesky and John de Gruchy (eds), *Living Faiths in South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1995.

³⁴ Interaction in apartheid South Africa took place only in the labor and economic spheres; in the social context the racial divide was virtually absolute. Relationships, moreover, were based on a master-servant or employer-employee categories inherent in the apartheid framework.

³⁵ As early as 1925 *Muslim Outlook* criticised Jewish capitalists forcing Arab peasants off the land. See, for eg. *Muslim Outlook*, 18 April 1925.

them, the Israeli War of Independence was a catastrophe (*Nakba*),³⁶ exacerbated by further Israeli victories against Arab forces, culminating in the Six Day War.³⁷ In short, South African Muslims shared in the humiliation of their Muslim ‘brothers and sisters’. Jews, on the other hand, unquestioningly empathized with the Jewish State, fully supported till recent times by the ‘white’ owned and Eurocentric media.

Although ‘Zionism’ was a term of opprobrium and Israel was seen to be an aggressor state,³⁸ the Muslim communal leadership was largely quiescent until at least the late 1960s. They were increasingly be challenged by a younger generation of Muslims, galvanized by the charged political atmosphere of the 1970s. Inspired by new radical teachings and the 1976 African student uprising in Soweto, and buttressed by Khomenism and the international Muslim struggle against imperialism, this generation read the writings of Abdul-A’la Mawdudi (1903-1979) and Sayyid Qubt (1906-1966).³⁹ For them, secularism, the West and deviant Arab regimes were all targeted. A fortnightly newspaper, *Muslim News* (latter titled *Muslim Views*), and other Muslim publications increasingly vilified Zionist “intrusion” and commented on “The Tragedy of Palestine”.⁴⁰ Muslims were warned about “Zionist designs” and were

³⁶ Muslims protested outside Cape Town against the “...occupation of Palestine by the Zionists” See Muhammed Haron “The Muslim News (1960-1986): Expression of An Islamic Identity in South Africa,” in Louis Brenner (ed), *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Hurst & Company, London, 1993, p.222.

³⁷ In an article “Barbarity of the Jews” (*Muslim News*, 14 July 1967) it was stated that: “1948 and 1967 show that despite centuries of wandering in Europe they [the Jews] have not lost their barbaric tendencies which previously incurred the wrath of God”. See also *Muslim News*, 28 July 1967.

³⁸ See, for eg, *Muslim News*, 28 July 1967 and Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence*, p. 85. For further details see Margo Bastos, “Muslim Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism since the Second World War, with special reference to ‘Muslim News/Views’”, unpubl. MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2002.

³⁹ See Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa. The Muslim Youth Movement*, University of Cape Town Press, Cape Town, chapter three, *passim*; and Desmond Charles Rice, ‘Islamic Fundamentalism as a Major Religiopolitical Movement and its Impact on South Africa’, unpubl. MA diss., University of Cape Town, 1987, pp.438-52. The writings of Mawdudi and Qubt were serialised in the *Islamic Mission*, a newsletter started by the Claremont Muslim Youth Association. See *Islamic Mirror*.

⁴⁰ *Muslim News*, 23 August, 1963. See also, for eg. *Muslim News*, 22 May 1964.

familiarized with *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁴¹ The equating of Zionism with Racism in the United Nations in 1976 was hailed as a victory for the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and a defeat for the United States and Israel.⁴² For a community, characterized by one commentator as “Zionophobes”, this was an inspiring moment.⁴³

By the late 1970s, a Palestinian Islamic Solidarity Committee had been established in Durban⁴⁴ and the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) had embarked on a thorough training schedule, including study programs, special camps and manuals, all linked intricately with international Islamic resurgent literature and tapes. Zionism, secularism, capitalism and communism were all identified as threats.⁴⁵ Impetus was added by the success of the Iranian Revolution in 1979; the writings of Ali Shari’ati (1933-77) and the Ayatollah Khomeini were now included in MYM reading lists. In 1980, the radical group, Qibla, was founded. Patently inspired by the overthrow of the Shah in Iran and palpably informed by global perspectives on the potential for challenging the South African state from a Muslim perspective, it spoke of an ‘Islamic Revolution in South Africa’.

Muslim demonstrations against Israel and Zionism on the campuses of the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand at the time of the 1982 Sabra and Shatilla massacres in Lebanon⁴⁶ revealed an intensification of Muslim anti-Zionism and a new determination for action among the younger generation. The growth of radical Islam was especially

⁴¹ *Muslim News*, 10 April 1971.

⁴² *Muslim News*, 28 November 1975.

⁴³ Ibraheem Mousa, interview in T. Hoffman and A. Fischer, *The Jews in South Africa. What Future?*, Jonathan Ball, Cape Town, p.173.

⁴⁴ Haron, “*The Muslim News*,” p. 223.

⁴⁵ Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence*, p.140.

⁴⁶ See *Varsity Official Student Newspaper of the University of Cape Town*, 41 (9) August 1982.

evident in the objection of some Muslims to being part of the broad based anti-apartheid coalition, the United Democratic Front (UDF), which was founded in 1983. They were concerned that the UDF included non-Muslims, communists, ‘amoral’ secularists and Zionists⁴⁷ and would lead to a dilution of Muslim identity. Of particular concern was the Zionist question. By the 1980s, ‘progressive’ South Africans shared a powerful mood of anti-colonialism, embroiled in a third-world *Weltanschauung*. Within this framework the illegitimacy of Zionism was an important component, especially given the fact that South Africa had close ties with the Jewish State. This mindset was capitalized upon by Qibla which identified Zionism as the “citadel” of imperialism. For some observers, Jewish and Zionist manipulation was even responsible for apartheid.⁴⁸ Efforts by Jews – including charitable deeds - in the anti-apartheid struggle were questioned.

By the late 1980s, Muslims were increasingly visible in anti-apartheid protest marches. But once the ban on illegal organizations had been lifted by President F. W. De Klerk in 1990, they focused also on Bosnia, Kashmir and ‘Palestine’.⁴⁹ The embassies of the United States and Israel were regular targets of anger and Israel’s links to the United States always noted. Muslims equated the struggle for liberation in South Africa with the Palestinian struggle: both were revolutions against colonial settler states dominated by the United States.⁵⁰ The “arch-enemy of Islam” and the “root cause” of problems in the Middle East was Israel. “The Zionists, through their servants, the Americans, have manipulated the situation in

⁴⁷ These “Zionists” would have been progressive Jews, such as those belonging to Jews for Justice in Cape Town, an anti-apartheid grouping of Jews that supported the Zionist idea.

⁴⁸ Ebrahim Rasool, interview in Hoffman and Fischer, *passim*.

⁴⁹ Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism: an Islamic perspective of interreligious solidarity against oppression*, One World, Oxford, 1997, p.224.

⁵⁰ *Muslim Views*, April 1990.

the Middle East to such an extent that they have succeeded in leaving the Middle East totally defenseless,” explained *Muslim Views*.⁵¹ Hostility gained apace after the Gulf War of 1991, evident in on-going conflict between Jewish and Muslim students at the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand, and in solidarity meetings for Bosnian Muslims at which American and Israeli flags were burned.⁵²

A visit in May 1994 by Yasser Arafat kept the Middle East firmly in focus. Speaking in a mosque in Johannesburg, the Palestinian leader called on South African Muslims to join the struggle to liberate Jerusalem. “Jihad will continue ... you have to fight and start the jihad to liberate Jerusalem, your sacred shrine”.⁵³ One year later on *al Quds* day, placards were displayed outside the Israeli embassy in Cape Town reading “Kill a Jew and Kill an Israeli” and “Jewish Blood”.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1996 was reported by *Muslim Views* - in the terminology of Hizballah - as “a miracle from God”.⁵⁵ By then the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was undoubtedly the central concern of Muslims in South Africa. The Jewish State was a focus of evil and a conspiratorial center, rooted in the Zionist movement. Such sentiments were articulated at an international Muslim conference ‘Creating a New Civilisation of Islam’, held in Pretoria in April 1996. Speakers referred to Jews as “a powerful economic force” and blamed Zionists for “all evils in society”.⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² See Allie A Dubb and Milton Shain, ‘South Africa’ David Singer and Ruth Seldin (eds), *American Jewish Year Book*, The American Jewish Committee, Philadelphia, 1994, p.375.

⁵³ Milton Shain, ‘South Africa’, in David Singer and Ruth Seldin (eds), *American Jewish Year Book*, The American Jewish Committee, Philadelphia, 1996, p.357.

⁵⁴ ‘South Africa’ *Antisemitism World Report 1996*, Institute for Jewish Policy Research and American Jewish Committee, London, 1996, p.311.

⁵⁵ *Muslim Views*, May 1996.

⁵⁶ ‘South Africa’, *Antisemitism World Report 1997*, Institute for Jewish Policy Research and American Jewish Committee, London, 1997, p. 356.

This was the context within which ‘People Against Gangsterism and Crime’ (PAGAD), a Qibla inspired vigilante movement, emerged.⁵⁷ Building upon mounting despair as law and order broke down in the aftermath of apartheid’s demise and the loosening of the police state, and activated by a prior history of gangsterism in the ‘townships’, PAGAD appeared to provide solutions. Against a background of unemployment and poverty, Muslims joined regular marches to the homes of known drug dealers. Islam was the only solution! When voices were raised against PAGAD’s activities, these were blamed on “global conspiracy”. And when a document, “The Threat of Fundamentalist Islam”, was released by the ruling African National Congress (ANC), one Fu’ad Rahman responded in the columns of *Muslim Views* that the document was a product of “the Israeli intelligence network known as Mossad”. The ANC government, he claimed, “is heavily influenced and controlled by Zionists”- an idea that would hardly have had traction in South Africa. Mossad, continued Rahman, “working hand in glove with the CIA (American intelligence), due to their extensive surveillance on Muslims here, knew about PAGAD before PAGAD knew about PAGAD.”⁵⁸

Rachman’s conspiratorial outlook knew no bounds, reflecting an increasingly paranoid cast of mind: South Africa’s moral collapse was linked to the (apostate) Jewish mining magnate Harry Oppenheimer, the “South African equivalent to the American moneymonger known as Rockefeller [sic] who due to his wealth and ‘owning’ America, dictates American policy”. Oppenheimer was accused of being a Zionist,

⁵⁷ According to Esack several militant elements within Qibla formed the core of Pagad. See Esack, “Pagad and Islamic Radicalism,” p. 9. See also, Anneli Botha, ‘Pagad: A Case Study of Radical Islam in South Africa, *Terrorism Monitor*, Volume 3, Issue 17 (September 8, 2005).

⁵⁸ *Muslim Views*, March 1997.

manipulating American President, Bill Clinton, and defining his anti-Islamic policies. “This is why America (used and under control by the zionist conspiracy) has ousted the popularly voted in FIS-government in Algeria and replaced it with a puppet yes-boss dictator,” noted Rachman. In his view South Africa was also being manipulated by “zionists” whom, he alleged, in addition to controlling the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, had “infiltrated major ANC-government structures with so-called white liberals sitting in key positions.” The Oppenheimer family, he maintained, “dictates global economy trends due to the wealth of all South Africans they have usurped.... He [Oppenheimer] is also linked to a major zionist structure, conspiring to dictate world policy due to owning the world’s wealth”. Rachman even blamed the demise of the National Party which relinquished power in 1994 on the “zionists”, and ensured readers that the Zionists would similarly make the ANC incapable of governing. This would ensure “greater money control on the wealth of the nation”. Muslims were not only informed of the evil machinations of Oppenheimer and his ‘zionist’ cohorts, but knew that all those opposed to PAGAD were under the influence of “Zionists”⁵⁹

Muslim attention on events in the Middle East was again evident after a bomb blast at a mosque in the small town of Rustenburg in January 1997. Members of the community suggested that Israel’s Mossad intelligence agency was behind the bombing. A vociferous march on the Israeli embassy was led by Qibla culminating in the by now ritual Israeli flag burning. A similar march took place in Johannesburg, organized by the Islamic Unity Convention (IUC), which had been founded in 1994 by

⁵⁹ *Muslim Views*, March 1997. See also *Muslim Views*, April 1997, “How the Media manipulates the truth about Terrorism” for evidence of conspiracy theories explaining how the West demonizes Islam. Similarly *Muslim Views*, August 1997, “Israel’s attack on Christianity” in which the Western media are accused of helping to establish Zionism.

Achmat Cassiem, an anti-apartheid activist who had spent a number of spells in jail, including Robben Island, as a political prisoner. This Islamist movement claimed to be a union of 200 groups.⁶⁰ A few months later, Muslims held pro-Hamas demonstrations outside a Pretoria mosque and placed a full-page advertisement in the *Pretoria News* criticizing that newspaper's "biased and one-sided version of events in the Middle East". The advertisement appealed to President Nelson Mandela to take account of the "facts" of hostile attacks on the people of Palestine.⁶¹ Clearly the Muslim community was now 'hot-wired' to events in the Middle East.

The hostile mood was exacerbated by the breakdown in the Israeli-Palestinian Oslo peace process. In this atmosphere, even an invitation to the New National Party mayor of the Cape Metropolitan Council, the Reverend William Bantom, to attend an international mayoral conference in Israel in May 1998, led to fierce debate and heavy pressure on the mayor from Muslim organizations (supported by the ANC provincial caucus) not to accept.⁶² In the context of such tensions, it was quite predictable that the Israeli Jubilee celebrations in Cape Town were marred by Muslim protestors, led by Qibla. "One Zionist one bullet" and "Viva Hizbollah and Hamas" were chanted by about 70 protestors outside the Jubilee venue where placards equating Zionism with apartheid were held aloft.⁶³ A letter to the *Cape Times*, the Secretary General of the MJC, Sheikh Achmat Sedick, claimed that it was appalling for any South

⁶⁰ Farid Esack, "Pagad and Islamic Radicalism: Taking on the State?," *Indicator SA*, 13 (14) Spring 1996.

⁶¹ Milton Shain, 'South Africa', in David Singer and Ruth Seldin (eds), *American Jewish Year Book*, 1998, The American Jewish Committee, Philadelphia, 1998, p. 402.

⁶² Milton Shain, 'South Africa', in David Singer and Ruth Seldin (eds), *American Jewish Year Book*, 1999, The American Jewish Committee, Philadelphia, 1999, p. 413.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

African to share in the celebration of Jews and Zionists on the occasion of the Jubilee.⁶⁴

The mood was further inflamed when the South African government refused to issue a visa to Sheik Ahmed Yassin, spiritual leader of Hamas.⁶⁵ A telephone interview from Kuwait with Yassin was broadcast on a Cape Town Muslim radio station and relayed live to a public meeting in Gatesville, a predominantly Muslim suburb in Cape Town. Yassin denounced all Zionists as terrorists. Qibla protested against the government's decision to deny Yassin a visa outside the gates of parliament. Once again an Israeli flag was burned, while other flags were hurled into the street for protestors to "clean their shoes". Marchers chanted slogans such as "Death to Israel" and "One Zionist, one bullet", the latter echoing the well know refrain of the Pan Africanist Congress, "One settler, one bullet". Commenting on the burning of the Israeli flag, Sheikh Ebrahim Gabriels of the MJC said they "did not recognize the Israeli State which was founded illegally on Palestinian land".⁶⁶

The by now well-organized Muslim community continued to explain its views on Zionism in terms of conspiracy theories, built upon notions of a "New World Order" and the scapegoating of Muslims.⁶⁷ Zionists were at the core of global problems, again evident in the Second Intifada when calls were made on the South African government to cut ties with Israel.⁶⁸ Widespread demonstrations accompanied the new uprising⁶⁹ and laid the foundations for further radicalization. Anger reached its apogee just before

⁶⁴ 5 May 1998.

⁶⁵ Minister of Justice, Dullah Omar and Minister of Provincial and Constitutional Affairs, Valli Moosa, met with Hamas spiritual leader, Sheik Ahmed Yassin while in Saudi Arabia in April 1998.

⁶⁶ *SA Jewish Report*, 22 May 1998.

⁶⁷ *Muslim Views*, August 1998.

⁶⁸ *The Citizen*, 14 October 2000.

⁶⁹ *Business Day*, 16 October 2000.

and during the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances (WCAR) in Durban in August 2001. Aided by what was palpably huge international support, the occasion turned into an extension of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and an opportunity to portray Israel and the Zionist ideology as evil incarnate. Durban became a “byword for racism and anti-Semitism”, in the words of Irwin Cotler, the former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, who had attended the conference.⁷⁰

Given the temper of the times, it is not surprising that many Muslims, following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon, took conspiratorial ideas further. Zionist connections with the USA were invariably identified.⁷¹ To be sure, what was in essence a political conflict over disputed territory was for many turning into a cosmological struggle, informed by a conspiracist cast of mind.⁷² This was well captured in an interview conducted in September 2004 with a young Cape Town Sheikh, Mogamat Colby, studying at the al Azar Institute in Cairo. The Sheikh referred to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and noted that Jews controlled the “economic systems in the world ... all our land, all the means of the radio stations, the newspapers, the televisions – they are controlling all these things - and this is how they have full control over the whole world.”⁷³

⁷⁰ *National Post* (Canada), 12 September, 2006.

⁷¹ *Muslim Views*, September 2001.

⁷² Only a few days after the Durban conference – perhaps even inspired by the conference – Sheik Gamaldien of Cape Town wrote a letter ‘The Golden Calf of Judaism’ to the *Cape Argus* in which he quoted with approbation the *Protocols*. He reminded readers that the *Protocols* had been banned under the apartheid regime – a form of endorsement presumably - and that they clearly provided an explanation for Zionist and Israeli actions (*Cape Argus*, 6 September, 2001).

⁷³ ‘Voice of the Cape’ Radio Interview, 10 September, 2004.

Continuities, Discontinuities and Contingencies

By examining particular moments of hostility towards Jews through the twentieth century, it becomes apparent that the purveyors of hate changed caste over time. Anti-alienism - or hostility towards the eastern European Jewish immigrants - emanated essentially from the white English-speaking merchant class and from Afrikaner farmers; the 'Jewish Question' in the 1930s and early 1940s - built upon classic anti-Jewish motifs - was very much the concern of the (white) Afrikaner Right; and hostility towards Zionism emanates largely, but not exclusively, from the Muslim community which by and large falls within the 'non-White' category of the old apartheid order. The English-speaking community never bought into the 'Jewish Question' and antisemitism among the Afrikaners effectively disappeared once the National Party gained political success in 1948.

In each of the phases of hostility, it is apparent that perceptions of the Jew were informed at least in part by ideas and intellectual traditions from beyond South Africa. This is hardly surprising. The period of anti-alienism was an age of increasing literacy, improved communications and large population migrations, specifically between Britain and South Africa. The penetration of European ideas - including the deeply-rooted anti-Jewish stereotype - was inevitable, and a vaguely racial definition of 'Jewishness' ensured that those traits traditionally associated with Jews would be ascribed to their co-religionists in South Africa.

The impact of European ideas was particularly apparent in the 1930s. The Radical Right manifestly shared many fascist ideas, evident in the 'shirtist' movements, the OB and the New Order, and in the penetration into South

Africa of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Local antisemites were well connected to a nexus of international antisemitism, demonstrable in the *Protocols* trial in 1934.⁷⁴ One of those charged, von Moltke, claimed he was inspired by Hitler's 'revolution' but even more influenced by Hamilton Hamish Beamish, a well-known Irish-born antisemite who had found his way to the Cape Colony as a member of the Ceylon Mounted Infantry during the Boer War before returning to England (via Rhodesia) where he founded the antisemitic *Britons* in England.⁷⁵ Von Moltke was acquainted with Beamish's writings, and the Irishman gave supporting testimony at the trial.⁷⁶

Muslim anti-Zionism also displayed features of the conspiratorial cast of mind and it too was influenced by ideas from abroad. Intricate Muslim international networks shared ideas of hatred and fantasy, including Holocaust denial.⁷⁷ The success of the Jewish state, despite its pariah status for many, had to be explained. The groundwork was well laid in a global literature that demonized Jews, Israel and the United States. All this connected smoothly to the *Protocols*, facilitated by the Internet with its hate-filled sites including a South African site which links swiftly to international sites.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ See Milton Shain, 'Humpty Dumpty was Pushed: Anti-Jewish Conspiracies and the South African Experience', Seventeenth Jacob Gitlin Memorial Lecture, Cape Town, 2005, pp.10ff.

⁷⁵ Beamish founded the Judaic Publishing Company, renamed Britons Publishing Company in 1922, which was noted for its antisemitic propaganda. In 1920 he published *The Jews' Who's Who*, allegedly exposing Jewish financial and political interests. See Gisela Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939*, The Macmillan Press, London, 1978, p.2, and pp.22-23. For Beamish's southern African exploits, see Barry Kosmin, 'Colonial Careers for Marginal Fascists. A Portrait of Hamilton Beamish', *Wiener Library Bulletin*, XXVII, nr. 30/31, 1973-74.

⁷⁶ See Beamish's evidence in Mark Lazarus, *The Challenge*, The Mercantile Press, Port Elizabeth, 1935, pp. 77-97.

⁷⁷ Holocaust denial became the subject of on-going legal dispute between the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and Radio 786, a Muslim Radio station. Following the opening of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre in 1999, a series of articles in Muslim Views raised questions about the nature of the Holocaust and directed readers to classic denial literatures, including Arthur Butz's *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*. See Milton Shain, Humpty Dumpty was Pushed, pp. 20 ff.

⁷⁸ See for example: Islam.co.za

As important as the impact of ideas from outside on domestic discourse about Jews and Zionism, were the specific contingencies within which these ideas operated and resonated: anti-alienism during the upheavals of the ‘mineral revolution’ and the demonstrable power of mining capital; antisemitism during the 1930s and early 1940s during a period of heightened Afrikaner ethnonationalism; and anti-Zionism in a highly charged and hospitable political milieu at a time of radical transition.⁷⁹

Although Muslims identified with the notion of *Nakba* at the time of the Israeli War of Independence, and although they shared in the humiliation of Arab defeats at the hands of Israeli forces, it was only from the 1970s that a younger generation, operating in a different political milieu, began to find explanations for their condition in radical Islamist literature. South African Muslims increasingly viewed the plight of fellow Muslims in the world through a South African template, fed by radical Islamist thought from abroad. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and American ‘machinations’ in the Middle East in particular informed a sense of common victimhood, exacerbated by a second-class status in apartheid South Africa.

Notwithstanding the importance of contingent factors, the rhetoric and motifs of hostility to Jews through the century had much in common. The target - Jew or Zionist – was identified as responsible for the evils of the day: at the turn of the century for undermining standards and for nefariously manipulating society; in the 1930s and early 1940s, for threatening to dominate and to control society; and in the late twentieth

⁷⁹ Of course this paranoia, as Peter Pulzer reminds us, is persuasive - be it “against Jews or Freemasons, Jesuits or Trotskyites” - because it has “some relation to ascertainable fact and to a hard core of genuine evidence. The charges against the chosen villain may be embellished by the most lurid fantasy, vast invalid conclusions may be drawn from trivial or isolated facts – but if there were *no* Jewish international bankers, if the Masons were *not* a secret society, if there had been *no* Communist sympathizers in the United States Foreign Service, the myths about them would lose their point”. See Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria*, (Revised Edition), Peter Halban Publishers, London, pp.14-15.

century, for malevolently orchestrating global affairs and oppressing Palestinians in a quest for domination. In this sense radical Muslims in South Africa shared much with Hobson and with the Afrikaner Radical Right of the interwar years. Like the Hobsonians and the ‘Shirtists’, they evolved fantasies to cope with and understand their world. In the case of Muslims, the added experience of living under a centrally controlled, authoritarian and manipulative apartheid regime exacerbated beliefs in conspiracy and intrigue.

It is tempting to note that Hobson’s Boer War, von Moltke’s *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and Rachman’s conspiracies each have a bearing on what Daniel Pipes refers to as the great ‘radical utopian ideologies’ of our century – that is to say Leninism, Fascism and Islamism. Each of these ideologies, argues Pipes, harnesses ideas of world domination. They are each informed by a ‘world conspiracy ideology’, an attempt to dominate the world.⁸⁰ And yet, ironically, each of these ideologies sees others - and more specifically the Jew - as conspiring to challenge them and plotting to dominate the world. In short, we have what psychologists commonly refer to as projection. Thus Hobson’s understanding of imperialism captivated Lenin who refined the idea of ‘monopoly capitalism’ and its threat as a part of the communist worldview; the *Protocols* in turn informed Hitler and Nazism and served - in the classic phrase of Norman Cohn – as a ‘warrant for genocide’; and Islamists understand their struggle in apocalyptic terms that relate directly to the *Protocols*. Israel or the Jewish State serves as the locus of their fantasy. Hobson and the radical-left of 1900, and the Afrikaner Radical Right of the 1930s, had no

⁸⁰ Daniel Pipes, *Conspiracy. How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where it Comes From*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1999, p.21.

such tangible and available target. The historical hand has moved on. But the 'hidden hand' of the Jew remains.