

**“REPORTING ON THE HOLOCAUST IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN EXAMINATION
OF PRESS COVERAGE AND MEMORIALIZATION IN THE AFTERMATH OF
WORLD WAR II”**

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Dedication

**This dissertation is dedicated to
my beloved grandmother of blessed memory**

Maureen Mary Steyn

(1938-2022)

Abstract

Until recently, little scholarly work has focused on the development of Holocaust memory in South Africa, particularly regarding the extent to which the Holocaust has been ‘domesticated’ – refracted through a local lens – in this country. This dissertation seeks to add to a broader scholarly effort to explain how a country with its own fraught racial politics engaged with the Nazi past.

This study provides a detailed analysis of how different newspapers in South Africa reacted, transmitted, and engaged with the news of the liberation of the Nazi Concentration camps, the subsequent Belsen Trial, and the International Military Tribunal. It also uncovers how the Jewish community established commemorative practices and disseminated knowledge of the Holocaust between 1945 and 1960. This is achieved by examining the most widely circulated newspapers marketed towards different segments of South African society, as well as Jewish community records, and archival material.

Newspaper coverage of the Holocaust in South Africa reflected the ethos of each publication and their stance on the war. How these publications reacted to and reported on the Holocaust greatly influenced how they engaged with and understood the Belsen Trial and the International Military Tribunal. Early Jewish commemoration of the Shoah reflected the community’s need to rebuild its communal identity in the wake of social and political upheaval both locally and abroad.

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List of Abbreviations

DP	Displaced Person Camp
DRC	The Dutch Reformed Church
IMT	The International Military Tribunal
JNF	The Jewish National Fund
JWA	The South African Jewish War Appeal
NEUM	The Non-European Unity Movement
POW	Prisoner of War
SABC	South African Broadcast Corporation
SAJBD	South African Jewish Board of Deputies
SAPA	South African Press Association
SAZF	The South African Zionist Federation
SS	The Schutzstaffel
UDF.....	Union Defence Force
UNO	The United Nations Organisation
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Glossary

Beth Din	A rabbinical court in Judaism that handles religious and legal matters within the Jewish community.
Hashomer Hatzair	Labor Zionist, secular Jewish youth movement founded in 1913 in the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, Austria-Hungary.
Herenvolk/Herrenvolkism	The concept of a superior race or group of people who dominate or rule over others. This concept was used to describe Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa. Herrenvolkism and Herenvolk ideas were also used to refer to this group.
Landsmannschaftn	An organization formed by people from the same town, shtetl, or region, of Eastern Europe.
The Destruction of European Jewry	The persecution and mass murder of the six million European Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933-1945. Interchangeable terms include Shoah, Mass Murder of European Jewry, the Martyred Jews of Europe, and the Genocide against/of the Jews.
The Revolutionary Zionist Socialist Youth of South Africa	A political organization founded in South Africa during the apartheid era. It aimed to promote the principles of Zionism, socialism, and revolutionary activism within the Jewish community of South Africa. The organization advocated for social justice, equality, and solidarity with oppressed groups, both within South Africa and globally.
The tenth of Teveth	The tenth day of the fourth month in the Hebrew calendar. It is denoted as a fasting day in Judaism.
Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah/Yom Hashoah	Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day, known colloquially in Israel and abroad as Yom HaShoah and in English as Holocaust Remembrance Day, or Holocaust Day. It is observed as Israel's day of commemoration for the six million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust.
Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa	Translates to Jewish Combat Organisation. It was an underground armed organisation, formed in the Warsaw Ghetto on 28 July 1942. Cells were also founded in ghettos in Białystok, Będzin, Częstochowa, Kraków, and Sosnowiec.

Introduction

The Covid epidemic and the recent war in Gaza provided ample demonstration of a striking tendency: the frequent invocation of Holocaust analogies in public discourse. Connecting the Holocaust to our daily experiences is by no account a new phenomenon. This has not escaped the notice of historians. For the past thirty years, they have written extensively about the development of Holocaust memory in different countries. Scholars are particularly interested in ‘nativization’, a term coined by Michael Berenbaum in 1990 to denote the process whereby certain representations of the Holocaust are highlighted to fit into a nation’s ideological, political, cultural, and political aims.¹ This process has been observed and studied by scholars in many countries around the world.

As elsewhere, South Africans have invoked the Holocaust in a multitude of ways. Until recently, relatively little work explored the development of Holocaust memory in South Africa, and the extent to which it has been ‘nativized’ in this country. This dissertation seeks to investigate how Holocaust memory took root in South Africa from the liberation of the concentration camps in April 1945 until December 1960. This is achieved by investigating the nature of press coverage, what forms it took, how it was received, and the extent to which it was incorporated into South African public memory. In seeking answers for these questions, it builds on the work of Shirli Gilbert, Roni Mikel Arieli, and other scholars.

Shirli Gilbert, in her article on the legacies of the Holocaust in apartheid South Africa, traced the shifting patterns in how the Holocaust was invoked before and during the formative years of apartheid.² In the 1950s, it was commonplace for the Holocaust to be compared to the local situation in South Africa by the Jewish community, and local anti-racist organisations. However, during the 1960s the Holocaust morphed into a more Jewish-specific event and the community stopped connecting it to local circumstances. Gilbert connects this development to the entrenchment of the apartheid regime. While Gilbert does pay some attention to when and how the Holocaust was invoked by the general population, her focus is on the Jewish community.

¹ Michael Berenbaum, “The Nativization of the Holocaust” in *After Tragedy and Triumph: Essays in Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

² Shirli Gilbert, “Jews and the Racial State: Legacies of the Holocaust in Apartheid South Africa, 1945–60,” *Jewish Social Studies* 16, no. 3 (2010): 32.

Gilbert has also written about how South Africans used the symbol of Anne Frank to understand their history and politics, providing some insight into how Holocaust memory emerged amongst white South Africans during the early days of apartheid. She does this by examining the 1957 production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, a stage play developed by famed playwrights Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. She claims “the apartheid government’s policy of separate development had a strong impact on the elements that were included in the local production. In opposition to the American version, which deemphasized Anne Frank’s Jewishness and focused on the universal messages of her diary, the local production reintroduced Anne’s Jewishness, and focused on the historical context in which the diary was written.”³ Whilst the director Leonard Schach and producer Minna Schneier did identify Anne as a Jewish person living in Nazi-occupied Holland, they did not mention Nazi perpetrators or the inhumane conditions under which Jews lived. Gilbert claims that, “this was purposefully done to ensure that no parallels could be drawn between the Holocaust and apartheid as the community’s focus was more on exposing the mostly white audience to the threat of anti-Semitism and the need for a strong Israel than exposing uncomfortable parallels.”⁴ The play functioned as one of the ways for a white non-Jewish audience to engage with the Nazi past during apartheid. This dissertation will explore other episodes and mechanisms that served a similar function.

In her PhD dissertation, Roni Mikel Arieli devoted an entire chapter to how anti-apartheid struggle icons linked the Holocaust to local circumstances.⁵ Similarly, she probed the reception and impact of the Eichmann trial in South Africa. In her subsequent book, *Remembering the Holocaust in a Racist State: Holocaust Memory in South Africa from Apartheid to Democracy 1948-1994*, Arieli focused on the apartheid years.⁶ Despite her initial assertion that “the book will examine how the racially managed South African society engaged with the racial persecution and extermination of European Jewry,”⁷ her primary focus was on how white South Africans engaged with the Shoah during apartheid. There is

³ Shirli Gilbert, “Anne Frank in South Africa: Remembering the Holocaust During and After Apartheid,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 26, no. 3 (2012): 366–393.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 366–393.

⁵ Roni Mikel Arieli, “Remembering the Holocaust in a Racial State: Cultural and Discursive Aspects of Holocaust Memory in South Africa from Apartheid to Democracy 1948-1994,” (Unpublished PhD dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2019).

⁶ Roni Mikel Arieli, *Remembering the Holocaust in a Racist State: Holocaust Memory in South Africa from Apartheid to Democracy (1948-1994)* (Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2022).

⁷ Arieli, *Remembering the Holocaust in a Racist State*, 1.

little discussion of the Jewish community's reaction to the news of the Holocaust in the immediate post-war period.

Michael Green's Masters' thesis "South African Jewish Responses to the Holocaust 1941–1948" provides some insight into how the South African Jewish community reacted to news of the Holocaust.⁸ Analyzing news coverage in three Jewish newspapers and the records of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Green described how the Jewish community was aware of the Holocaust from 1941 onwards. He argues that in the immediate post-war period, the Jewish community's focus was threefold: (1) relief efforts for survivors; (2) the establishment of a Jewish homeland, and (3) the racial politics in South Africa. Green's thesis, however, is restricted to three Jewish publications, all in English. No mention is made of the widely read Hebrew newspaper, nor does he account for any localized commemorative or memorial efforts.

Milton Shain's chapter "South Africa" in David Wyman's *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* also addresses the South African Jewish community's response to news of the Shoah.⁹ He argues that "the community was deeply aware of the catastrophe which had overtaken the Jews of Europe and tried to assist them in many ways. The Holocaust also strengthened the community's resolve to establish the state of Israel."¹⁰ He also states that "by 1947, the Holocaust was firmly rooted in the consciousness of the community [and that] the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising played a major role in the community's commemoration of the Holocaust."¹¹ Whilst most of the article focuses on the Jewish community, Shain does offer some insight into how other communities dealt with the news. Writing about the Afrikaner community, he states that "instead of acknowledging the horrors of the Nazis, they concentrated on the suffering of the German people."¹² As we will see later, this is a fair reflection of how Nationalist newspapers engaged with the Holocaust in the immediate postwar period. This does not mean that news of the Holocaust was absent from the papers of the Nationalist newspapers; instead, they presented a strikingly different interpretation of events in Europe.

⁸ Michael A. Green, "South African Jewish Responses to the Holocaust 1941–1948" (Unpublished Master's dissertation, UNISA, 1987).

⁹ Milton Shain, "South Africa," in *The World's Reaction to the Holocaust*, eds. David Wynman and Charles Rosenzweig (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Shain, "South Africa," 676.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 678.

¹² *Ibid.*, 677.

Shain's analysis of how Black and white English-speaking communities dealt with the destruction of European Jewry does not reflect upon some of the differences within the coverage in their respective publications. He states that "these communities did not share the Jewish community's sensitivities about the Destruction of European Jewry. They only handled the Jewish tragedy indirectly by appropriating it to highlight racial discrimination in South Africa."¹³ Whilst Black publications did use the Jewish tragedy to shed light on the suffering that black people faced in the country, this dissertation will show this is not the only way in which they engaged with the Holocaust. They acknowledged the major differences which existed between the Holocaust and segregationist politics in South Africa. They understood and actively sought to convey lessons from Nazi persecution to their readers. And they also tried to humanize the tragedy in similar ways to the Jewish Press. By contrast, I will demonstrate that the coverage in the English-speaking press did not make a connection between racial discrimination in South Africa and the Holocaust. Instead, they used film, photographs, and first-hand accounts, to shed light on the horrors committed in the camps, albeit for different reasons.

Other scholars have also looked at segments of the population. Sharon Friedman's dissertation "Jews, Germans, and Afrikaners – The Nationalist Press Response to the Final Solution" provides some insight into how the Afrikaner community responded to news on the Holocaust and the Nuremberg Trial.¹⁴ In her dissertation, she examines three major Afrikaans newspapers, two of which were the official newspapers of the Cape and Transvaal branches of the National Party. She discovered that these newspapers intentionally suppressed or dismissed reports emerging from the liberated concentration camps about the mass murder of Jews. In their coverage of the Nuremberg Trial, these newspapers dismissed the judicial process as the victor exacting vengeance against their defeated enemy.

Joanna Schacter's thesis "World War Two and the Holocaust in Black South African Discourse: 1938–1987"¹⁵ provides insight into how Black South Africans engaged with the Holocaust. She examines the references to the Holocaust and Nazism in *Ilanga Lase Natal*

¹³ Shain, "South Africa," 680.

¹⁴ Sharon Friedman, "Jews, Germans, and Afrikaners – The Nationalist Press Response to the Final Solution," (Unpublished Hons dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1982).

¹⁵ Joanna Schacter, "World War II and the Holocaust in Black South African Discourse: 1938-1987," (Unpublished Master's dissertation, McGill University, 2018)

and by the African National Congress (ANC) between 1938 and 1987. She discovered that references to Nazism were present in black political discourse from as early as 1933, and that, in the post-war period, the press made frequent comparisons between South Africa and Nazism. Schacter's focus on one publication and one anti-apartheid organization provides limited insight into how Black South Africans understood and engaged with the plight of European Jewry and the Nuremberg Trial. This dissertation will attempt to fill the gap in the historiography by looking more broadly at how different segments of the population reacted to the Holocaust and the Nuremberg Trials.

In his Master's thesis, Samuel McNally "Tracing Hitler, The Rise of Nazism, and the Final Solution: Observations from the *Cape Times* 1933–1945" observed that the coverage of the persecution and mass murder of Jews, and the Nuremberg Trial was affected by South African anti-Semitism.¹⁶ McNally indicated *the Cape Times* covered the persecution of Jews extensively, and that from June 1942 onwards it provided its readership with some knowledge of the genocide in progress, although the paper did not fully believe the reports they were publishing. All doubt was removed for the paper when they received reports about the camps from trusted sources. Thereafter, it provided its readers with extensive coverage of the liberation of the camps. McNally also provides an overview of the Belsen and Nuremberg Trials, both of which were extensively covered in the *Cape Times*. As we will see, coverage in other Liberal newspapers wasn't dissimilar to the *Cape Times*, but there were differences in the coverage. A prime example is the *Cape Argus*, which included specific mention of Jewish suffering much earlier than other newspapers.

Tracey Petersen, in her PhD thesis "Teaching Humanity: Placing the Cape Town Holocaust Centre in a post-apartheid State" also provides insight into the development of Holocaust memory in South Africa. Petersen's thesis echoes Shirli Gilbert's work in arguing that "the Holocaust came to occupy a central place in the [Jewish] community's identity and that how it was commemorated and memorialized was divorced from local circumstances at least from the 1960s onwards."¹⁷ Petersen offers some insight into the emergence of Holocaust consciousness in South Africa post-1994 through the establishment of the Cape

¹⁶ Samuel McNally, "Tracing Hitler, the Rise of Nazism and the Final Solution: Observations from the *Cape Times* 1933–1945," (Unpublished Master's dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2009).

¹⁷ Tracey Petersen, "Teaching Humanity: Placing the Cape Town Holocaust Centre in a Post-apartheid State," (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of the Western Cape, 2015).

Town Holocaust Centre (CTHC), highlighting the role of survivors in commemorative efforts. Using archival records and personal interviews, Petersen discovered that survivors only started sharing their experience with the broader public in 1985. Petersen also traces the development of Holocaust education and its reception in South Africa stating, “the Holocaust came to occupy a more central role in the post-apartheid as the National Department of Education wanted to use it as a way to teach students about the history of human rights without having to deal with uncomfortable memories of apartheid.”¹⁸ Through unpacking the reception of Holocaust memory amongst students and teachers who participated in Holocaust education programmes Petersen uncovers that “a significant number of both students and teachers who were surveyed indicated that they had derived some lesson(s) from their participation, and in many cases applied or conflated it with the history of apartheid.”¹⁹

Tali Nates, in her chapter “New Developments on Holocaust and Genocide Education in South Africa,” traces the emergence of Holocaust memory, education, and its reception in South Africa.²⁰ In the article, she claims that “until 1994, interest in Holocaust memory was mainly confined to the small Jewish community of the country”²¹ and that “the 1994–1995 *Anne Frank in The World* traveling exhibition was the first time the broader community engaged with the Holocaust.”²² Nates does not cite any of the literature around the development of Holocaust memory in South Africa, nor does she account for the impact of the 1985 exhibition organized by the then Holocaust Memorial Council, which saw widespread public participation. Instead, she reinforces the narrative that there was little to no broad public engagement with the subject amongst the public. This dissertation uses primary sources to prove this assertion is wholly incorrect. South Africans from different racial groups regularly interacted with and showed interest in the Holocaust from 1945 onwards.

¹⁸ Petersen, “Teaching Humanity,” 242–243.

¹⁹ Petersen, “Teaching Humanity,” 281. In 2012, Petersen conducted a research project to gauge the impact of Holocaust education with 400 high school learners in Cape Town who had participated in an education programme at the CTHC. Petersen also unpacks two other research projects conducted by the Gauteng Education Department and Mthente Research and Consulting Services on behalf of the CTHC in 2009 and 2012, respectively.

²⁰ Tali Nates, “New Development in Holocaust and Genocide Education in South Africa: The Case Study of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre,” in *Conceptualizing Mass Violence*, eds. Navras J. Aafreedi and Priya Singh (New York: Routledge, 2021).

²¹ Nates, “New Development in Holocaust and Genocide Education in South Africa,” 116

²² *Ibid.*, 116

As we will see, the Holocaust first received significant airing in public life in South Africa in 1945. Since then, it has been invoked for diverse reasons. The Jewish community invoked the Holocaust to draw attention to the devastating consequences of anti-Semitism, whilst anti-racist movements used it to draw parallels between Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa, and to warn of the consequences of unchecked prejudice. During the transition to democracy, the Holocaust offered a template for commemorating and memorializing apartheid, whilst discussions of Nazism were used to facilitate debate about peace and reconciliation within South Africa. Institutional developments played a role in this process. Holocaust memory grew rapidly after the establishment of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre in 1998 with sister centers in Durban and Johannesburg in 2008 and 2015, respectively. Equally important was the inclusion of the Holocaust in the national high school history curriculum in 2009.

Despite this long history of invoking the Holocaust, no formal longitudinal study has been conducted on how ordinary South Africans responded to the Holocaust and Holocaust memory, nor has any in-depth research been conducted on the role of survivors in the construction of Holocaust memory in the country during the first decade and a half following liberation. This dissertation seeks to address the gap by building on the foundation laid by Gilbert, Arieli, and Petersen by examining the construction and evolution of Holocaust memory between 1945 and 1960. It aims to uncover exactly how and why the Holocaust became so prominent in a country thousands of miles away from the sites of persecution. It will also seek to uncover how different racial groups within South Africa transmitted and understood the Holocaust and the subsequent International Military Tribunal (IMT). This dissertation will also examine how the South African Jewish community reacted to the news on the camps as well as how they commemorated and memorialized the destruction of European Jewry between 1945 and 1960. This dissertation seeks to add to the current debate on how and why countries with their own fraught racial pasts engaged and continue to engage with the Nazi past and whether that past impacted the transmission and reception of Holocaust memory amongst black South Africans.

Literature Review

The review below surveys the literature on the emergence and development of Holocaust memory in the English-speaking world. This will provide a point of comparison with the development of Holocaust consciousness in South Africa between 1945 and 1960.

Theoretical Framework and Concepts in Memory Studies

The establishment of Yad Vashem in Israel and the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris in the 1950s is cited by many scholars as the catalyst for the development of Holocaust consciousness internationally.²³ However, it was only in 1988 with the publication of James Young's book – *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* – that the study of Holocaust memory, and the development of a distinct subfield, first emerged.²⁴ He argued that Holocaust memory is shaped by changing political and cultural climate and that the ways in which the Holocaust is remembered is tied to specific cultural and political factors within each national context. In *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1989), Young put his theories into practice by examining Holocaust memorials in Europe, Israel, and the Americas to uncover how Holocaust memory is represented in those spaces. Young's theory – which drew heavily on Maurice Halbwachs theory of collective memory – sparked a new way of thinking about Holocaust texts, museums, and memorials as a collective memory that is constantly reconfigured and reformed in response to the changing present.

To account for how the sharing of memories takes place, Jan and Aleida Assmann developed the concept of cultural memory, which they defined as “a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that is obtained through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation.”²⁵ As such, cultural memory is the formalization of an individual's memories across generations in a metaphorical sense through group-specific cultural formations such as texts, sites, and memorials, including institutional communication such as recitation, practice, and

²³ For more information on the establishment of the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, see David Cesarani, and Eric J. Sundquist (eds.), *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence* (London: Routledge, 2012).

²⁴ James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narratives and the Consequents of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

²⁵ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, “Collective and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (Spring–Summer, 1995): 125–133.

observance. These develop a shared past reinforced and reconstructed in time and space. The concept is more focused on cultural identity than on cultural characteristics. This idea is more clearly expressed in the Assmann's concept of memory culture, which they define as "compliance to a social commitment."²⁶ This impetus for remembrance is important as it provides a core around which a community's identity is built. Thus, cultural memory is the constant interplay between the cognitive, the social, and the material within bounded cultures such as a nation-state or a religious sect.

In the era of globalization, people no longer solely define themselves through their national or ethnic identities. Instead, they have started to incorporate global concerns into their everyday experiences and understanding. Sociologists Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider coined the term *cosmopolitan memory* to explain this process. They theorized that:

The nation state as the container for memory is slowly cracking and an increasing number of people are becoming internally globalized. The Holocaust is a prime example of this. It has provided the foundation for a new memory culture, in which memories of a specific historical event have transcended national and ethnic boundaries. Memories of the Holocaust facilitated the formation of transnational memory cultures, which in turn influenced global human rights politics. These memories do not replace national memory formation; rather they exist at their horizons.²⁷

Holocaust memory is not the same across the world. Rather, it is a constant mediation between global and local concerns. Whilst Levy and Sznaider's theory provides a new way of thinking about global memory, their approach is unidirectional in which the Holocaust is absorbed into a nation's culture. However, they do not account for how other traumatic events inform Holocaust memory and how they in turn are informed by it.

The accessibility to information afforded by the internet has, according to American historian Alison Landsberg, "created a new form of public cultural memory, which she calls prosthetic memory. Prosthetic memory is the process whereby an individual who is unconnected to a historical event takes on board deeply felt personal memories from a

²⁶ Aleida Assmann, "Memory, Individual and Collective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, eds. Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

²⁷ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memory Unbounded: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 1 (2002): 87–106.

mediated version of that event at an experiential site such as a movie theater or museum. These personal memories could shape that person's subjectivities and politics."²⁸ However, this process can only take place when the individual viewing these memories is receptive to its message.

Marianne Hirsch's concept of post-memory refers to the relationship that the generation born after a cultural trauma, or "hinge generation", has with the memories of the generation which directly experienced those events. "These memories can be so deeply transmitted that they seem to be one's own memory, and so have the potential to displace that individual's own memories."²⁹ Hirsch also differentiates between different structures of transmissions, which she divides into familial post-memory, which can be defined as "the direct transmission of memory from parent to child" and affiliative post-memory, "the horizontal transmission of memory from the literal second generation to others of their generation who seek a connection with that past."³⁰

Michael Rothberg's concept of *multidirectional memory* posits a new way of understanding memory frameworks, not as "a zero-sum game in which memories crowd each other out in the public sphere."³¹ Instead, he posits that "memory works productively through negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing."³² Thus, historical events such as the Holocaust and slavery cannot be separated because they inform each other. He also cautioned against the notion that collective memory and group identity are intrinsically linked. He says that "the boundaries between identity and memory are jagged. Groups do not share established acts of remembrance; rather these acts emerge because of their interaction with memories of other groups."³³ These ideas can be observed quite clearly when examining the dominant language used when speaking about the Holocaust. Words such as 'concentration camps', 'slave labor', all emerged from earlier forms of cultural trauma. This is especially true in the South African context. Given the local resonances of the word concentration camp and the significance of the slave trade in the country, it is unsurprising that the Holocaust

²⁸ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

²⁹ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Post-Memory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

³⁰ Hirsch, *The Generation of Post-Memory*, 35–36.

³¹ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

³² Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3.

³³ *Ibid.*, 5.

would evoke such strong responses from different parts of the public in South Africa. Rothberg's theory will be used to explain how different racial groups within South Africa nativized the news of the Holocaust.

Whilst the theories discussed above highlight the role of reception in both the movement and reception of memory, the theory of transcultural memory offers a potential way to observe and analyze the reception of memory. Transcultural memory does not just refer to the "productive connections of memories that were considered as distinct and belonging to different groups; it can also be seen as the movement of mnemonic archives across spatial, temporal, and social, but also linguistic and medial borders as well as the mixing of memories in contexts of high cultural complexity."³⁴ Transcultural memory scholars maintain that memory is fundamentally transcultural; it does not belong to one group or place, but has its own history of travel and translation.

Memory scholars turned to the reconceptualization of collective memory as the starting point to study the process of reception. Wulf Kansteiner suggested that "collective memory should be conceptualized as the result of the interaction among three types of historical factors: the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artefacts according to their own interests."³⁵

Kansteiner's conceptualization of collective memory is useful in uncovering the construction of Holocaust memory as it does not rely on "psychological or neuropsychological theories about the relationship between the individual and the collective. Instead, it focuses on social, political, and cultural factors at work."³⁶ His attention to reception also allows us to understand how major historical events like the Holocaust can and does transcend their physical and cultural boundaries. As Astrid Erll states, "No mediation of

³⁴ Astrid Erll, "Travelling Memory," *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011): 4–18.

³⁵ Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (May 2002): 179–197.

³⁶ Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

memory can have an impact on memory culture if it is not ‘received’ – seen, heard, used, appropriated, made sense of, or taken as an inspiration by a group of people.”³⁷

Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, Tea Sindbæk Andersen, and Astrid Erll contend that context is “important in studying reception as the representation of a given past often emerges as the result of earlier mediation of that past.”³⁸ The authors suggests that “any analysis of reception should take into account the cultural templates and schemas as well as the power dynamic which are present within a given media culture.”³⁹ Whilst a memory may be present in each society, it does not mean it will be internalized, especially when it entails different histories, such as cultural traumas. By contrast, sociologist Slawomir Kapralski posits that “the Holocaust cannot be remembered; it can only be commemorated.”⁴⁰ He suggests that we treat Holocaust memory as “an *anamnesis*; a contextually conditioned re-collection of something that does not necessarily form a permanent part of our stock of memories but can be consciously commemorated.”⁴¹

Contextual Studies of Holocaust Memory: Holocaust Memory in the United States

Whilst Young and other theorists who followed his lead have focused on conceptualizing cultural and social modes of remembering, others have focused on the tangible theme of how Holocaust memory has developed in other countries. The focus has mostly been on Western countries, with a considerable proportion focused on the American experience.

Leon Jick was the first scholar to argue that American Jewry did not begin to speak about the Holocaust in a sustained and systematic way until the 1960s. In an article published

³⁷ Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, Tea Sindbæk Andersen and Astrid Erll. “Introduction: On Transcultural Memory and Reception,” in *The Twentieth Century in European Memory: Transcultural Mediation and Reception*, eds. Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, Tea Sindbæk Andersen and Astrid Erll (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

³⁸ Törnquist-Plewa, Sindbæk Andersen, and Erll, “Introduction,” 6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁰ Slawomir Kapralski, “Jews and the Holocaust in Poland’s Memoryscapes: An Inquiry into Transcultural Amnesia,” in *The Twentieth Century in European Memory: Transcultural Mediation and Reception*, eds. Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, Tea Sindbæk Andersen and Astrid Erll (Leiden: Brill, 2017)

⁴¹ Slawomir Kapralski, “Jews and the Holocaust in Poland’s Memoryscapes,” 171

in the 1981 *Yad Vashem Studies*, he stated “[the Shoah was] a barely mentioned remembered, rarely mentioned event, of interest only to a limited circle of survivors.”⁴²

Peter Novick built upon this claim in his 1999 study *The Holocaust in American Life*.⁴³ Though others had repeated Jick’s claim since 1981, Novick’s book was particularly influential. Novick offered several theories for why the destruction of European Jewry only started to gain prominence in the 1960s. He claimed, “between the 1940s and early 1960s, the leaders of the American Jewish community consciously downplayed the Holocaust as they were more concerned with the foundation of the state of Israel, assimilating into mainstream society, and supporting America during the Cold War.”⁴⁴ His argument that Holocaust memory was dormant until the 1960s became an accepted truth and was picked up by scholars from various disciplines.

Novick’s claims were amplified in Norman Finkelstein’s book *The Holocaust Industry* (2000). Finkelstein is also credited with entrenching the narrative that American Jewry did not engage with the Holocaust until the 1960s stating that “the real reason for public silence on the Nazi extermination was the conformist policies of the American Jewish leadership and the political climate of post-war America.”⁴⁵ Echoing Novick and Finkelstein, Alan Mintz, attributes the rise in Holocaust consciousness in America in the late 1960s and 1970s to the lessening of Cold War inhibitions, the capture and trial of Eichmann, the 1967 Six Day War in Israel, the major success of the miniseries, *Holocaust*, and subsequent film and stage productions.⁴⁶

This approach has since been challenged by several scholars. Hilene Flanzbaum argued that “although the Holocaust was not thought about or spoken as it is today, that does not mean that there was a lack of awareness.”⁴⁷ Throughout her book, she traces how

⁴² Leon Jick, as quoted in Hasia Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust 1945-1962*, (New York, New York University Press, 2009).

⁴³ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). For similar claims see Deborah Lipstadt statement that “the Holocaust hardly featured in Jewish communal or theological agendas throughout the 1950s and most of the 1960s” in Deborah Lipstadt, “AMERICA AND THE MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST, 1950-1965,” *Modern Judaism* 13, no. 3 (October 1996): 195–214.

⁴⁴ Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 1–15.

⁴⁵ Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry* (New York: Verso Books, 2000), 21.

⁴⁶ Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

⁴⁷ Hilene Flanzbaum, *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

American Jews, and later the public, invoked the Holocaust to suit their unique purposes. And in 2009 American historian Hasia Diner published *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, a direct rebuttal of Novick's and Finkelstein's arguments. To dispel the myth of silence, she begins by uncovering the reasoning behind the community's desire to commemorate the destruction of European Jewry, stating that "their desire to remember was born out of an obligation to remember the victims and survivors, confront the guilty, and make a difference to the new set of realities present in the United States." Diner provides proof of their efforts post-war by analyzing the multiple ways in which the community laid the foundation of Holocaust memory in the country through word, deed, and action. She does this by tracing how the community sets the boundaries of both memorialization and commemoration. Firstly, she looks at the publication of religious texts and the erection of memorials. Secondly, she looks at how the community memorialized the Holocaust and established organisations designed to support survivors and fought alongside each other to ensure the survivors received reparation for their suffering. They established research institutes, and research projects, and gathered remnants of the Holocaust to ensure, as historian Solomon Bloom states, "to know everything there is to know about the Holocaust."⁴⁸ They also published and encouraged the publication of books to ensure the world knew about what happened to European Jewry.

Many others have since contributed to dispelling the "myth of silence." Lawrence Baron, in his article "The Holocaust and American Public Memory 1945-1960" states "The extermination of the Jews was remembered in significant ways... [Through] the Nuremberg Trials, Christian and Jewish theological reflections, pioneering scholarly publications, and mass-media portrayals."⁴⁹

Margarete Feinstein, in her article on the creative work in the Displaced Persons camps in occupied Germany, states that "far from being silent, the survivors spoke openly about their experiences in the camps, they critiqued the Jewish leadership of the ghetto, held

⁴⁸ Solomon Bloom, as quoted in Hasia Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust 1945-1962*, (New York, New York University Press, 2009), 90.

⁴⁹ Lawrence Baron, "The Holocaust and American Public Memory, 1945-1960," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 17, no. 1 (2003): 62-88.

the kapos accountable for their actions, and set about trying to get Germany to pay for the crimes committed against them.”⁵⁰

Similarly, David Cesarani, in his edited collection *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, uncovered a large body of work that had been produced in the immediate postwar period.⁵¹ Mark Smith, Laura Jockusch, and Margarete Feinstein do this by looking at the scholarly and artistic work that was produced in the DP camps by survivors, partisans, and survivor-historians. Other authors such as Rachel Deblinger and Beth B. Cohen have looked at the development of Holocaust memory in the DP Camps. Alan Rosen and Michael Staub trace how the Shoah shaped public discourse in America by looking at the work of psychologist David Boder and the reanimation of the field of personality studies in the 1950s.

Holocaust Memory in Britain

David Cesarani provides an interesting counterpoint to both Peter Novick and Hilene Flanzbaum’s theories. Writing about the development of Holocaust consciousness in Britain, he argued that “the public was so overwhelmed by the news report following the liberation of the camps and the survivor account soon after the war”⁵² that the public was afflicted by what he called “compassion fatigue.”⁵³ Essentially there was an information overload and there was no space for new research to gain traction. It was only in the late 1960s and 1970s when Holocaust consciousness in Britain was reawakened by the capture, trial, and execution of Adolf Eichmann. This does not mean the Holocaust was meaningful or meaningless in Britain during this time, but rather as Andy Pearce argues, “it was a period of cultural construction in which British society considered what meaning it wanted to affix to the Holocaust.”⁵⁴ Dan Stone’s phrase “the domestication of violence”⁵⁵ also provides an important insight into how the Holocaust was framed in Britain in the immediate post-war years. He states that “the horror which took place during the Holocaust was domesticated to make the narrative more bearable.”⁵⁶ Familiar cultural narratives were used to make the

⁵⁰ Margarete Myer Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945-1957* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁵¹ Cesarani and Sundquist, *After the Holocaust*, 1

⁵² *Ibid.*, 5

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Andy Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁵⁵ D. Stone, “The Domestication of Violence: Forging a Collective Memory of the Holocaust in Britain, 1945-6,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 33, no. 2 (1999): 13–29.

⁵⁶ Stone, “The Domestication of Violence”, 15.

destruction of European Jewry more palatable to the British public. For example, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising featured in efforts to advocate for a Jewish state in Palestine.

Holocaust Memory in Canada

Scholars studying the development of Holocaust memory in Canada have not reached a consensus on when the Holocaust became a part of Jewish and public discourse. Franklin Bialystok, writing about Holocaust memory within the Canadian Jewish community states “For twenty years following the war, Canadians knew very little about the Holocaust. The amnesia was not limited to the non-Jewish population. It was widespread in the Jewish community as well.”⁵⁷ According to Bialystok “the community knew about the Shoah and recognized that it was an unparalleled tragedy but did not want to engage with it lest it produced a collective trauma. Instead, they focused on responding to the aftermath of the Holocaust.”⁵⁸ Like their southern neighbors, the Canadian community provided financial support for survivors in Europe, facilitating their immigration and absorbing them into the local community.

Between 1960 and 1973 the Holocaust came to occupy a more central place in the community’s collective memory due in part to the rise of anti-Semitism, the Eichmann Trial, the Six Day, and Yom Kippur wars, as well as criticism of the state of Israel in the wake of the wars. Many Canadian Jews felt that without Israel, Jews would once again be in a vulnerable position, which was a precondition for the occurrence of the Holocaust. Thus, from the early 1970s, the security of Israel and Holocaust memory became intertwined. During this period the Holocaust entered public discourse through film and TV. The 1970s also saw the establishment of the Holocaust Remembrance Committee, which was responsible for education and commemoration.

Whilst Biaylstok demonstrated that the public, and to a lesser degree the Canadian Jewish community said little about the Holocaust in the immediate post-war, he does provide examples of how survivors in collaboration with *landsmanshaftn*, and to a limited extent

⁵⁷ Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press, 2000).

⁵⁸ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 6.

community leadership, developed several commemorative events and memorials from as early as 1948.

Norman Erwin, in his 2014 PhD thesis “Confronting Hitler’s Legacy: Canadian Jews and Early Holocaust Discourse, 1933-1956” dismisses Biaylstok's claims that the community remained silent during the 1940s and 1950s. Instead, he contends that “the Jewish community was deeply affected by the Holocaust and as a result, it was an important part of Jewish discourse and shaped the community’s identity from the war years until 1956.⁵⁹ Using both secular and Jewish Press, as well as communal records, Erwin demonstrates how the community reacted to the news of the Holocaust and recognized its importance to the global Jewish community. They “utilized this memory to support liberal international governance projects which would make the world a safer place for Jewish people such as the UN and the Genocide Convention.⁶⁰ In the 1950s, feeling threatened by the rearmament of West Germany and the Cold War, ‘Canadian Jewry drew on the image of the victims of the Holocaust as heroic martyrs as a way to draw attention to the threats facing Israel and the rise in anti-Semitism.⁶¹

Similarly, Jason Chalmers demonstrated ' how the Holocaust was “Canadianized” through the creation of the national Holocaust monument. He showed that Holocaust memory emerged through survivors who felt alienated by their experiences, and by their encounters with Canadians. In response, they developed their own distinct culture and communities. During “the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, the memory of the Holocaust spread throughout the Jewish community starting with survivor’s families and then moved on to the broader community until the 1980s when it entered national discourse.”⁶²

Magdalena Kubow, in her article “Kanada? The Canadian Jewish News and the Memory of the Holocaust in Canada,”⁶³ claims that “it wasn’t survivors who were the driving force behind Holocaust memory but rather the Canadian Jewish News (CJN).”⁶⁴ She also

⁵⁹ Norman Erwin, “Confronting Hitler’s Legacy: Canadian Jews and Early Holocaust Discourse 1933-1956,” (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Waterloo, 2014)

⁶⁰ Erwin, “Confronting Hitler’s Legacy,” 22

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 178

⁶² Jason Chalmers, “The Canadianisation of the Holocaust: Debating Canada’s National Holocaust Monument” (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Ottawa, 2013).

⁶³ Magdalena Kubow, “Kanada? The Canadian Jewish News and the Memory of the Holocaust in Canada,” *Holocaust Studies* 19, no. 3 (2013), 131–160.

⁶⁴ Kubow, “Kanada?” 131

argues that “Holocaust memory crossed over into public discourse decades earlier than was previously claimed.”⁶⁵ She argues that “from its inception in 1960, the CJN intimately linked the Holocaust to local and international Jewish concerns, thereby bridging the gap which existed between survivors and the established community.”⁶⁶ The CJN created a new common identity around the twin concerns of the Holocaust and the state of Israel. She also argues that “the Holocaust entered mainstream Canadian discourse in 1965 rather than the 1980s with public invocations of the Holocaust from the government. This trend continued into the 1970s aided by survivors who were now starting to speak more openly about their experiences.”⁶⁷ The 1970s also saw the Canadian Jewish community consciously intertwine the memory of the Shoah with other forms of racial hatred. Holocaust memory followed slightly different patterns in Canada than elsewhere in the English-speaking world.

Holocaust Memory in Australia

The development of Holocaust memory in Australia is an under-researched topic with scholars asserting that the Jewish community and the broader public were quiescent during the early post-war years. Judith Berman’s article “Australian Representation of the Holocaust” presents a not-dissimilar picture to Canada. She states that “the development of Holocaust consciousness in Australia was survivor-centric and led. Survivors took it upon themselves to create Holocaust centers and museums in response to the widespread publication of Holocaust denial in the country in the late 1970s.”⁶⁸ The survivor-centric approach also impacted the way in which the Holocaust was presented and taught in Australia. All the museums that she studied only focus on a narrow history of the Holocaust and do not deal with any aspect of Australia’s own troubled history. The rationale is that “including other instances of genocidal violence may relativize and threaten the Holocaust’s uniqueness.”⁶⁹

Steven Cooke provides an interesting analysis of the development of Holocaust memory in Australia by examining a temporary exhibition on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

⁶⁵ Kubow, “Kanada?” 140-141

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 141

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Judith Berman, “Australian Representation of the Holocaust: Jewish Holocaust Museums in Melbourne, Perth and Sydney 1984–1996,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 13, no. 2 (1999), 200–221.

⁶⁹ Berman, “Australian Representation of the Holocaust,” 209.

staged in Melbourne in 1961. Cooke claims that the exhibition functioned “as a site of meaning-making wherein the representations of the Holocaust was shaped by local concerns.”⁷⁰ Its focus on three main themes – the Holocaust, Jewish life in Australia, and Israel – revealed the contestations within “the community’s desire to remember the Holocaust whilst asserting that survivors had fully assimilated into the broader Australian community and the redemptive narrative of life in Israel.”⁷¹ The exhibition also functioned to educate the broader Australian community about the Holocaust in the wake of the Eichmann Trial. David Ritter, in his essay on the Australian response to the Eichmann Trial, states that the hearing “marked a threshold in awareness and understanding of the Holocaust in Australia.”⁷²

Methodology

This dissertation adds to the existing literature on Holocaust memory by analyzing the construction and evolution of Holocaust consciousness in South Africa from 1945 until 1960. In doing so, it will seek to unpack the extent to which the Holocaust was “nativized” in the immediate post-war period. It does this largely by examining a variety of different newspapers using a broad range of keywords to identify relevant newspaper articles.⁷³ This involved a combination of digital word searches and physical perusal of the newspapers and news clippings on microfilm.

It is beyond the scope of this research to include an analysis of every single newspaper in South Africa which may have carried news of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps. Instead this dissertation examine newspapers with the widest circulation figures in the 1940s in the three major metros in South Africa.⁷⁴ These include the: (1) *Rand Daily Mail*, *Cape Times*, *Cape Argus*, and *Sunday Times*, which were English-language pro-war, pro-government liberal newspapers; (2) *The Bantu World*, *Ilanga*, and *Umteteli wa Bantu* which were white-owned newspapers marketed towards middle- and working-class black readers, *Inkundla ya Bantu*, an independent newspaper, *The Cape*

⁷⁰ Steven Cooke, ““A Modern Chamber of Horrors?” Temporary Holocaust Exhibitions as Sites of Memory: The 1961 Warsaw Ghetto Commemoration Exhibition, Melbourne,” *Holocaust Studies* 24, no. 4 (2018).

⁷¹ Berman, “Australian Representation of the Holocaust,” 210

⁷² David Ritter, “Distant Reverberations: Australian Responses to the Trial of Adolf Eichmann,” *Holocaust Studies* 13, no. 2–3 (2007): 59-86

⁷³ Primary search words: Concentration Camps, Dachau, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Bergen Belsen, Nuremberg trials, Anne Frank, Primo Levi, survivors, South African Jews commemorate, Red Army, Soviet Army, Maidanek, Majdanek. Secondary search words: Nazis, Polish underground, International Military tribunal.

Standard and *The Torch* which were geared towards politically active coloured and Indian readers; and (3) *Die Burger*, *Die Transvaler* and *Die Vaderland*, which were Afrikaans Nationalist newspapers.

A note on these newspapers

The White Liberal Press

The Cape Times is an English language liberal newspaper, whose readership consisted of liberal white middle-class Capetonians. In the 1930s and 1940s, *The Cape Times* was a staunch supporter of the United Party and its leader, Jan Smuts. It was also strongly in favour of close ties with Britain and unity amongst the white population.⁷⁵ It was therefore strongly in favour of South Africa's decision to join the Allies.⁷⁶ *The Cape Argus*, whilst also a regional liberal newspaper, differed from the *Cape Times* in that it espoused the ideals of multiracialism. However, it too was pro-British and therefore pro-war. Its readership also comprised of white English-speaking liberals and reflected the opinions of that segment of the population.

The Sunday Times was a national publication that espoused a more centrist to right viewpoint. In opposition to the *Cape Argus*, it was an ardent supporter of segregation and constantly played on white fears of "the black peril."⁷⁷ As a result, its readership consisted of more conservative white English-speaking South Africans. It was an ardent supporter of the war, which it demonstrated through engaging in a battle of words with anti-war Afrikaans newspapers. Its sister publication, the *Rand Daily Mail*, published in Johannesburg, was more left leaning. It too was a staunch supporter of the war effort and strongly pro-government but did not engage in 'the black peril' narrative like *The Sunday Times*. Consequently, its readership consisted of the white middle class in Johannesburg.

⁷⁵ Gerald Shaw, *The Cape Times: An Informal History*, (New Africa Books, Cape Town: 1999)

⁷⁶ For more information on the division between pro and anti-war newspapers in Cape Town see – Sarah-Jane Walton, "Remembering and Recollecting World War Two: A South African Perspective." (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Cape, 2014 2014.)

⁷⁷ Denzyl Janneker, "From apartheid to democracy: Shifting news values of journalists at the *Sunday Times* Newspaper," (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Kansas 2009)

Black and Coloured newspapers

During the 1940s, most newspapers marketed towards Black people were operated by white-owned companies such as the Argus Publishing Company which ran the Bantu Press Conglomerate. Les Switzer has described this as the “captive press.”⁷⁸ The most widely circulated newspapers at the time were *The Bantu World* and *Ilanga*, published in Johannesburg and Durban respectively. Both publications were aimed at the Black middle class. Whilst the editorial staff of the papers were given some degree of editorial freedom, rarely if ever did the editors openly challenge the views of the newspaper owners. Another Bantu Press publication, *Umteteli wa Bantu*, published in Johannesburg, was also widely circulated, was geared towards the Black mineworkers, and covered the political and social activities of the Black community.

In addition to focusing on Bantu Press publications, this section will look at a popular independent Black newspaper *Inkundla ya Bantu*, and how its coverage may have differed from white-owned newspapers. This section will also examine coverage in *The Cape Standard*, an independent newspaper founded in 1936 by the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), and *The Torch*, a more radical publication started by NEUM in 1946. It was geared towards the coloured and Indian communities and sought to keep them informed about social, political, and economic matters that affected Coloured and Indian people in South Africa.

The Afrikaner Nationalist Press

Die Burger was founded in 1914 and published in Cape Town as a mouthpiece for the Cape Branch of the National Party and served to promote the cultural, social, and political aims of the Afrikaners. Its staunch stance against the war reflected the ideals of Afrikaner ideology, which was to break ties with Britain and establish an independent country. I

Die Transvaler was founded in 1937 and published in Johannesburg as the mouthpiece for the Transvaal branch of the Nationalist Party, under the editorship of Hendrik Verwoerd. Verwoerd was also the editor of *Die Waarheid - The Truth* newspaper, the mouthpiece of the South African Gentile National Socialist Movement more commonly

⁷⁸ Les Switzer, “*Bantu World* and the Origin of a Captive African Commercial Press in South Africa in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol 14, No.3, pp 351-370, Taylor and Francis, 1988

known as the Greyshirts. *Die Transvaler* also served to promote Afrikaner Nationalism. However, it was more extreme in its views than *Die Burger*. It was a staunch opponent of the war and extremely critical of the United Party government.

Die Vaderland was founded in 1934 by JBM Hertzog and published in Johannesburg. It was the first daily Afrikaans newspaper in the city. It was a fervent supporter of the National Party, except for the period between 1934 and 1939. Following the decision that South Africa would join the war, the newspaper advocated neutrality.

The Jewish Press

The South African Jewish Chronicle is a weekly publication which was established in Cape Town in 1902. Making it the first and oldest Jewish newspaper in South Africa. The publication was headquartered in Cape Town during and after the Holocaust but was distributed nationally. It was a staunch Zionist newspaper that kept the South African Jewish community informed of local and international issues that affected them.

The South African Zionist Record was first published in Johannesburg in 1908 and was the official newspaper of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF). As the mouthpiece of the SAZF, it served to keep the Johannesburg Jewish community informed of the federation's activities, as well as local and international news.

The Jewish Herald was a weekly English-language newspaper published between 1937 and 1986 in Johannesburg. It was the official newspaper of the New Zionist Organisation of South Africa, a revisionist Zionist movement founded in the late 1930s. It ran until 1986 when it merged with the *South African Jewish Times*.

Barkai (Morning Star) was a monthly Hebrew language literary journal established by Jack Rubik, a Lithuanian teacher who immigrated to South Africa in 1930. He established in the paper soon after his arrival to motivate the local community to keep the Hebrew language and culture alive. A staunch Zionist, he believed that Zionism and Hebrew went hand in hand. The paper was shut down following his death in 1973.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ For more information on the South African Jewish press see – Nathan Berger, *Chapters from South African History: Jewish and General: Johannesburg*, (Kayor Publishers, Johannesburg: 1982)

The Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter One looks at how the pro-war liberal English press, the Black press, and the Nationalist portion of the Afrikaans press understood and engaged with the news emerging from the liberated Nazi concentration camps between April and November 1945. This chapter will demonstrate that the reading public were aware of the persecution and genocide of European Jewry. While news of the liberated camps flooded the pages of most South African newspapers, the reportage reflected the particular ethos and political orientation of each newspaper. The liberal press filtered the news through a local lens. Using photographs, films, eyewitness accounts and parliamentary reports, they reinforced the image of Germany as the enemy, the necessity of the war, and lambasted the Nationalist Party for their calls for neutrality and their support of Germany. The Black press was the first to recognize the potential lessons of the Holocaust for South African society. These newspapers inextricably connected it to racial discrimination in South Africa and the dangers fascism posed to black people, both locally and abroad. Their discussions on the camps were used to highlight the persecution black people endured in segregationist South Africa. However, they made it clear that the two systems of oppression were not the same. The Afrikaans nationalist press initially dismissed the reports as Allied propaganda designed to discredit Germany. When forced to confront that the reports were true, they insisted that atrocities had been committed on both sides. When they could no longer combat the mountain of evidence, they simply ignored the reports and shifted attention to the suffering of the German people.

Chapter Two looks at how the South African press reported on the International Military Tribunal (IMT), more commonly known as the Nuremberg Trial. The trial captured the attention of the liberal press. It devoted extensive coverage to the trial from the signing of the London Charter to the sentencing and execution of the defendants. Most of the reports are featured on the front pages of the paper(s). Understandably, the focus of most reports was on the actions and reactions of the defendants to the proceedings, which meant that the actual events weren't always explained in detail. Despite this, the liberal press still provided their readership with some knowledge about the persecution and mass murder of European Jewry when this was relevant to the trial. The Black press' coverage of the trial was very sporadic and limited. Each publication chose to highlight certain aspects of the trial which corresponded to their specific ethos. The Black press saw the trial as a watershed moment for the eventual liberation of black people everywhere. Here, for the first time, the leaders of a

nation were standing trial for crimes committed against its citizens. The Afrikaner Nationalist Press treated the Nuremberg Trial much as it did the Liberation of the camps. It dismissed the IMT as mere victor's justice. It also intentionally stoked anti-British sentiment by making comparisons between British and Nazi concentration camps. It took every opportunity to disparage the proceedings and draw its readers' attention to the suffering of the German people. At the end of the trial, some publications were forced to admit that the proceedings had been justified. However, they quickly turned their readers' attention to the dangers of communism.

Chapter three examines how the South African Jewish English- and Hebrew-language press transmitted and interpreted the news of the destruction of European Jewry. It also explores how the press treated the Belsen Trial and the International Military Tribunal. The Jewish press interpreted the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps differently to the non-Jewish press, focusing more on survivors and less on victims, presenting a Jewish state as the essential next step, and seeking to raise funds for survivors and for Zionist activity. The community's response to the Holocaust was greatly influenced by the social and political situation in South Africa. Memories of pre-war anti-Semitism in South Africa, particularly during the influx of Jewish refugees from Germany in the 1930s, and the knowledge that the historical centers of Jewish life in Europe had been destroyed by the Nazis deeply affected South African Jews. Like Jewish communities elsewhere, they believed that establishing a Jewish state was the answer to the Holocaust and other ills that plagued Jews in the diaspora. Coverage of the Belsen Trial was limited and sporadic with some newspapers not publishing a single article on the trial. The Nuremberg Trial received similar coverage to the non-Jewish Press, however, with far greater emphasis on the persecution and mass murder of European Jews.

Chapter Four looks at the early commemorative work of the South African Jewish community from 1945 to 1960. The first decade and a half after the war was a formative period for the community. Devastated by the loss of their spiritual and communal wellspring in Lithuania, the community engaged in commemorative work to try and make sense of what had occurred and to forge a new communal identity in the wake of the social and political upheaval in South Africa and abroad. The commemorative practices in South Africa placed a large emphasis on the heroic deeds of the Warsaw Ghetto and chose to commemorate it separately from the annual Jewish Day of Mourning reserved for those who had perished. It

was only in the early 1950s with the establishment of Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah (Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day) that the two days were combined in South Africa. Between 1945 and 1955 it was common practice for communal leaders, prominent Jewish politicians, and religious leaders to connect the Holocaust to South African and global political themes. As apartheid became more entrenched the community began conceptualizing the Holocaust as less of a universal human tragedy and more of a Jewish tragedy. Outside commemorative days the community highlighted the destruction of European Jewry in other ways including through academic research, poetry, survivor testimony, educational programmes, the establishment of memorials, and setting up memorial bursaries in remembrance of South African Jews who helped German Jews to flee Nazi Germany.

Chapter 1

The Destruction of European Jewry in the South African Non-Jewish Press

Following the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps in Western Europe by the British and American Armies, the South African public was inundated by news stories exposing the horrors committed by the Nazis within the camps. Whilst the liberal newspapers reported on Eastern camps liberated by the Red Army, more coverage was afforded to the Western camps. This chapter will examine the print and film coverage of the liberation of the camps and the subsequent Belsen trial to uncover how the public responded to the Holocaust. It also seeks to uncover how the initial press coverage helped construct South African Holocaust memory between 1945 and 1946.

The liberation of the concentration camps did not provide the public with the full scope of Nazi atrocities. The media from English-speaking countries mostly focused on Western concentration camps liberated by the British and American Armies. Until recently many scholars also believed that the specific fate of Jews was obscured in this early coverage. They cite three main reasons as the cause. Firstly, “the scale and immediacy of the catastrophe meant that it was nearly impossible to make any real sense out of the situation, and consequently to construct coherent narratives.”¹ Secondly, the Western camps were so terrible that people could not imagine worse camps existing elsewhere. Lastly, liberals in America and Britain sought to unify all groups of victims into one thereby obscuring the distinct fate of the Jews under Nazism.²

Many scholars now agree that most people were aware of the special nature of Jewish suffering.³ In the South African context, the media published numerous articles about Jewish

¹ Antero Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust in the British, Swedish and Finnish Press, 1945-1950*, (Palgrave: London, 2011)

² More information on how Jewish persecution was obscured: Dan Stone, *The Liberation of the Concentration Camps: The End of the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, (Yale University Press, London: 2015), Hannah Caven, “Horror in Our Time: Images of the Concentration Camps in the British Media, 1945”, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 21, no. 3 (2001), pp. 230-231, Laurel Leff, *Buried by The Times: The Holocaust and America’s Most Important Newspaper*, (New York: Cambridge University Press: 2005)

³ See Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe 1945-1965*, (Cambridge University Press, London: 2004), Toby Haggith, “Filming the Liberation of Bergen-Belsen”, in *Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in Film and Television since 1933*, Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman, eds, (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), Sarah Coats, “Belsen, Dachau 1945: Newspapers and the first draft of history,” (unpublished PhD: Deakin University, 2016), Lawrence Baron, “The Holocaust and American Public Memory: 1945-1960,” In *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Volume 17, Issue 1, SPRING, Pages 62–88

persecution in Germany, as well as the Nazi concentration camp system since at least 1939.⁴ Some newspapers even went as far as to favorably compare the internment camps for the German nationals in South Africa to the Nazi camps of Dachau and Buchenwald following reports that the detainees in South African camps were complaining about the conditions.⁵ As will be demonstrated later, these earlier reports subsequently provided the public with an understanding of the specific nature of the persecution Jews faced in concentration camps.

However, we cannot impose the knowledge we possess of the Holocaust today on to or into the past.⁶ To truly uncover how the public in South Africa responded to the Holocaust, we need to use the conceptual frameworks and historical context which existed at the time to analyse how it was understood then. This chapter will therefore use Lawrence Baron's conceptualisation of Holocaust victims as "any group that experienced discrimination, incarceration, liquidation, or sterilization because it supposedly posed a biological, cultural, political, or social threat to the Aryan race"⁷ to arrive at more rounded conclusions about the South African response to the genocide.

Allied governments knew about the existence of the camps, and the Polish underground and Jewish organisations reported on what was happening there since at least 1942.⁸ However, their claims about the Nazis' plan to annihilate European Jews and other 'undesirables' were only broadly accepted once photographs and reports from the liberated camps were released to the public. The news stories of the liberation of the Western concentration camps appeared in South African liberal newspapers within days of each camps' liberation.

⁴ See *Rand Daily Mail*, January 5, 1939; *Sunday Times*, February 11, 1940:11, *Cape Times*, January 22, 1940, *The Star*, June 30, 1942. Also see Sharon Friedman, "Jews, Germans and Afrikaners: Nationalist Press Reaction to the Final Solution" (Honours diss., University of Cape Town, 1982).

⁵ See *Sunday Times*, 21 January 1940: 12

⁶ This point is made by David Cesarani, "How Post-war Britain Reflected on the Nazi Persecution and Mass Murder of Europe's Jews: A Reassessment of Early Responses," in *Jewish Culture and History*, Volume 12, issue 1-2, 2010, Pages 95-130

⁷ Lawrence Baron, "The Holocaust and American Public Memory: 1945-1960," In *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Volume 17, Issue 1, SPRING, Pages 62-88

⁸ See Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's "Final Solution,"* (Penguin Books: London, 1982), Louise London, "The Agenda of British Refugee Policy, 1938-1948 in *The Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust*, (Palgrave: London, 2020), Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945*, (Free Press: New York, 1987)

South African Liberal and Centrist newspapers – like their British and American counterparts – all followed a similar pattern in their reports. They expressed dismay and disgust at what they were witnessing and tried to bring this across by publishing first-hand accounts and photographs from the camps with extended captions. The rationale, as stated by the *Rand Daily Mail* was “for the public to gain the most vivid impression of the barbarity of the regime now being crushed by the Allied Army.”⁹ The *Cape Argus* similarly called for the dissemination of reports from the camps that “revealed the true nature of Nazism... [and] the horrendous depths to which the ‘poor Germans’ had allowed themselves to descend too in their treatment of their fellow human beings.”¹⁰ The paper also openly apologised for its dismissal of earlier reports from former prisoners of the Nazi regime as an exaggeration, the only English publication to do so.

The coverage of the liberation of the camps was extensive. Starting with the liberation of Buchenwald on 11 April 1945, articles on various aspects of the camps appeared almost daily. However, they were rarely published on the front page. Generally, they were published on page 3 in daily newspapers, and pages 6 to 10 in the weeklies. The exception is the editorials, which appeared on pages 2 and 6, respectively. Ten editorials specifically about the concentration camps were published between April and September 1945. The editorials followed trends within the news itself. Immediately following the war, they were focused on the revelations from the camps and the irrefutable proof provided by the Allied soldiers, war correspondents, and official government sources.¹¹ They condemned the evils of Nazism and repeatedly highlighted the righteousness of the war. For example, the *Sunday Times* wrote that “the revelations from the camp should erase the last traces of uncertainty, the last lingering to forgive and forget and the last trace of pity for the German people.”¹² Editors also condemned the Afrikaner press for not publishing reports on the camp as well as the Nationalist Party’s support of Nazi Germany and their refusal to visit the concentration camps.¹³

News about the camps only appeared on the front page when it was referenced in articles about the war at large, in coverage of former prisoners of war who had escaped or

⁹ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 24, 1945:1

¹⁰ *Cape Argus*, April 19, 1945: 2

¹¹ *Cape Times*, April 18 and 21, 1945:2; *The Star*, April 23, 1945:2

¹² *Sunday Times*, April 22, 1945:7

¹³ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 23, 1945: 2; *Cape Argus*, 20 April 1945:2

survived the camps, and in reporting on the trial of Joseph Kramer, the former commander of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Belsen. The rare exception was a small article published in May about the destruction of Belsen by the Allies.¹⁴ Reports were often published amid news from other theatres of war or battles the Union Defense Force (UDF) took part in. Rarely if ever were reports from the camp published with local news. The exception was the *Sunday Times* which tended to publish stories about the camps and local reactions together.

The initial reports from the camps rarely mentioned the unique fate of Jews under Nazism, nor did they refer to any other ethnic victim group. They described the former prisoners by their nationality, as anti-Nazi Germans, as political prisoners, as slave labourers, or as prisoners of war. For example, the *Sunday Times* published a photo from Ohrdruf, one of the Bergen Belsen subcamps, with the following caption: “Nazi SS death camp...the courtyard was littered with the bodies of slave labourers.”¹⁵ In the image below it, the caption reads: “Russian ‘slave’ workers at [unclear] camp.”¹⁶ As such, they were relying on conceptual frameworks established in the 1930s of the camps as a place where political prisoners were held. This is also observed in a report by British journalist Christopher Buckley in which he dismisses the theory that the Nazis imprisoned people for racial reasons: “even the racial interpretation, however, does not fit the facts.”¹⁷

The White Liberal press in the immediate postwar period

This does not mean that the destruction of European Jewry was completely missing from the press. The persecution Jews faced under Nazism was frequently written about in connection with the San Francisco Conference held between 25 April and 26 June 1945 in which the establishment of a Jewish homeland was one of the topics discussed. One of the reasons frequently cited for the establishment of such a homeland was so that Jews would never again have to fear “deliberate extermination without the means to save it.”¹⁸ Letter writers concurred with the views in the letter column that “Jews, having already lost one-third of their world population should be given back their homeland.”¹⁹ The debate around the

¹⁴ *Rand Daily Mail*, May 22, 1945:1

¹⁵ *Sunday Times*, April 29, 1945: 10

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 29, 1945: 3

¹⁸ *Sunday Times*, August 26, 1945:1

¹⁹ *Rand Daily Mail*, May 24, 1945:2

creation of a Jewish state generated lots of input from the newspapers' readership. Several letter writers cited the intentional destruction of the Jews of Europe as the reason they should be given their own homeland, with one reader asking "if the survivors of the concentration camps should really be expected to go back to their Kovnos, their Rigas or their Eastern Europe. How can people be expected to survive and prosper on a soil saturated by the blood of their kin?"²⁰

Initially, no mention was made of the fact that Jews were specifically targeted for annihilation in most of the publications under review. The exception was the *Cape Argus* which mentioned the persecution and mass murder of Jews soon after the liberation of the camps. In an article published on 27 April 1945, the paper dedicated an entire article to the fate of Dutch Jewry. The author recounted the liberation of the camps, and the records found therein. These records indicated the number of Dutch and German Jews who had been transported to death camps in Poland. The article also contained survivor testimony which detailed the operation of the camp.

Following liberation, the number of Jewish victims cited in the news varied throughout the year. Between April and July, the number most frequently mentioned by both Jewish community leaders as well as journalists was five million victims.²¹ Journalists and letter writers often did not give a precise figure; instead, they gave vague descriptions such as "millions and millions of Jews had been murdered", or "a considerable number of Jews perished in the camps."²² Between August and October, as the war trials started and more evidence emerged, the numbers most frequently cited were 5 million, 5.2 million, 5.7 million, and 6 million victims.²³ By the end of the year, as the case was presented at Nuremberg, the number remained constant at 6 million and would remain so for the rest of the trial.²⁴

The next time Jewish persecution featured prominently in the liberal news was during the trial of Vidkun Abraham Lauritz Jonsson Quisling, the former head of the collaborationist government during the German occupation of Norway. Quisling, whose name became

²⁰ *Rand Daily Mail*, September 27, 1945: 6. For more letters from readers citing the Holocaust as a reason for the creation of a Jewish homeland see *Cape Times*, September 28 & 4 October 1945

²¹ *Rand Daily Mail*, May 9 and May 14, 1945; *Sunday Times*, April 22, 1945

²² *Rand Daily Mail*, May 10, 25 and June 28, 1945; *Sunday Times*, July 27, 1945

²³ *Rand Daily Mail*, August 20 & 26, September 27, and October 6, 19 & 30, November 23, December 3, 1945: 9

²⁴ *Cape Times*, December 15, 1945, File 529A: The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

synonymous with the word ‘traitor’, was tried for high treason for his collaboration with the Nazi regime during World War II. For the duration of the trial from 20 August to 10 September 1945, reports appeared almost daily and were printed on the front page with supplementary articles published on page 4 or 5. The role Quisling and his collaborationist government played in the deportation of Norwegian Jewry was an important part of the trial.

The Liberal press reported with regularity on the role the collaborationist government played in the persecution, imprisonment, and deportation of Jews. The reports also included detailed testimony by survivors in which they describe their imprisonment in Grini concentration camp and the torture they endured there, as well as their deportation to Auschwitz.²⁵ The trial gave the South African public their first glimpse into how a collaborationist government participated in the Final Solution.²⁶

The terms used by the liberal media and its readership to describe the mass murder of Jews varied greatly following the liberation of the camps. The term used to describe the genocide was influenced by what was happening during that specific time. In April there was no mention of the mass murder of Jews. The first mention of a specific phrase to denote the Holocaust appeared in May in an advert for the New Zionist Organisation’s memorial service to commemorate “the five million Jews murdered.”²⁷ Following the end of the war in Europe, the liberal press published numerous articles recounting the rise of Nazism in which the persecution of Jews featured prominently. These articles also included several on the Nazis’ genocidal plans against the Jews and other ‘undesirables.’ For example, both Joseph Goebbels’ and Hermann Goering’s statements about the “coming massacring of Jews, liberals, and communists” were included in articles on Goering’s arrest.²⁸ The next time a specific phrase was used was in a report on the 15th Annual Conference of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in which the author stated that a memorial service was held for “the Martyred Jews in Europe.”²⁹ In June the phraseology changed to include the perpetrators of

²⁵ *Rand Daily Mail*, August 23, 1945: 1

²⁶ For more information on the Norwegian Government’s role in the Holocaust, see Bjarte Bruland, “Collaboration with the Deportation of Norway’s Jews: changing views and representations,” in Roni Stauber(ed), *Collaboration with the Nazis: Public Discourse after the Holocaust*, (Routledge, London: 2011).

²⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, May 9, 1945: 2

²⁸ *Rand Daily Mail*, May 11, 1945: 2

²⁹ *Rand Daily Mail*, May 25, 1945: 4

the murders with the New Zionist Organisation being quoted as holding a memorial service for “the millions of Jews murdered by the Nazis.”³⁰

In July and August, the press focused on what happened to Jews from specific countries or regions. This was partly inspired by the rebuilding of the Warsaw Ghetto, the publication of several books and memoirs from survivors, journalists, and academics, and the Quisling Trial. The phraseology changed several times with three phrases being used consistently: “the Jews who perished or were slain,”³¹ “massacre of the Jews,”³² and the “murdered Jews of Europe.”³³

In September, as the Belsen Trials got underway, the focus shifted to the survivors of the genocide, who needed a permanent home. The most consistent phrase used during this time to denote the Holocaust was “the persecuted Jews of Europe.”³⁴ This phrase was used in reference to both the survivors and victims of Nazi persecution between 1933 and 1945.

In October, when the indictment against the 24 Nazi leaders was made public, and throughout the trial, the most common term used by journalists to describe the Holocaust was “the extermination of the Jews.”³⁵ The word ‘extermination’ was only used when speaking about Jewish victims. In articles where other victim groups were mentioned, Jews were spoken about separately. For example, in an article about the war in Greece, the paper states that “38 000 Jews were exterminated, 500 000 Greeks were sent to concentration camps, and 48 000 were shot or murdered.”³⁶ It seems by this point that the press was slowly becoming aware of the unique fate of Jews under Nazism. This may be attributed to reports on the conditions at the Death Camps, survivor testimony as well as book reviews on the subject which were published during this period.³⁷

South African liberal newspapers also published few photographs from the camps. Most of the photos published came from two camps: Buchenwald and Bergen Belsen, and

³⁰ *Rand Daily Mail*, June 28, 1945:5

³¹ *Rand Daily Mail*, July 2, 1945:6

³² *Rand Daily Mail*, July 28, 1945:4 *Rand Daily Mail*, August 20, 1945:6

³³ *Rand Daily Mail*, July 2, 1945:6 *Sunday Times*, July 29, 1945:7

³⁴ *Rand Daily Mail*, September 28, 1945:6

³⁵ *Rand Daily Mail*, October 6, 19 & 18, December 14 & 21; *Sunday Times*, October 28, November 18, 1945

³⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, November 18, 1945:5

³⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, February 24, 1945, April 25, 1945, June 25, 1945

their subcamps. One photo came from Soltau, a town close to Bremen where prisoners were taken from a train and massacred in the woods nearby. Another photo came from Altenkirchen, a town in Germany where slave labourers were held. Photographs were mostly published on the front page, except for the *Sunday Times* which published them on page 7 to 10 alongside articles about the camps. All the other papers, except the *Cape Argus*, published photos on the front page without accompanying articles. The editor's decision to publish the images on their own may be due to their shocking nature. The scenes depicted compelled readers to look at the images. The extended captions included provided some context as to what was being depicted. The editors would provide more information on the inside of the paper by using the camp's name in a headline on page 3 to provide more details. The editors also published photos of what is now known as the death marches with articles below them about how the camp officials would be punished.³⁸



The *Cape Argus* in contrast often included photographs above their reports. However, in most cases the photos were unrelated to the camp being discussed.³⁹ For example, in the 23 April 1945 edition of the paper, a photo from Bergen Belsen was published above an article about the British Members of Parliament's visit to Buchenwald. The haphazard placement of photographs suggests that the papers were more concerned with the inner workings of

³⁸ *Rand Daily Mail*, May 16, 1945:1; *Cape Argus*, April 18, 1945

³⁹ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 24, 1945:1- 3

Nazism rather than establishing the difference between camps or survivor testimony. As such they became “general markers...and representation of war and atrocity used to tell the broader story of liberation.”⁴⁰ This attitude is reflected in an editorial published on 19 April entitled “The True Nature of Nazism” in which the editor uses the terms prison and concentration camp interchangeably to establish the culpability of the German people for the atrocities committed.⁴¹

The Argus was also the only publication to publish photographs of perpetrators in the first few weeks after liberation. It published a photo of both Joseph Kramer and several female guards from Belsen⁴² The photos of perpetrators chosen by the publication provides insight into how the paper went about justifying the war and demonizing the Nazi regime using photographic evidence. The photo of Kramer shows him hunched in a corner with his face turned away from the camera appearing dark and evil with the caption “...the commander of Belsen camp.... seen here under guard with his ankles chained.”⁴³ The photo appeared amid an article about delegations from Britain and America visiting Buchenwald. Kramer’s inclusion in the article sought to provide readers with the opportunity to study the faces of the people who had committed these atrocities. Showing him in shackles also sought to reassure the public that the perpetrators had been caught and would be punished.

Similarly, the photo of the female guards that appeared in the paper shows them in profile looking menacing with the extended caption describing their “brutality as equal to that of their male counterparts.”⁴⁴ These women were seen as having betrayed their femininity by actively choosing to engage in such horrific acts. They served as conclusive evidence of the wickedness and deprivation of the Nazi regime – that women could be turned into such monsters.⁴⁵

The first letters about the camps appeared in newspapers within a few days of the first photos being published. On 21st of April 1945, L.F wrote to suggest that a fund be created to

⁴⁰ Barbie Zelizer, “Covering Atrocity in Image.” (1998)

⁴¹ *Cape Argus*, April 19, 1945

⁴² *Cape Argus*, April 24, 1945: 1

⁴³ *Cape Argus*, April 23, 1945

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ For more on Nazi female preparators see Antony Rowland (2011) “Reading the Female Perpetrator,” *Holocaust Studies*, 17:2-3, 145-161,

support the survivors of the atrocity⁴⁶. Other letters soon followed, such that by the end of May the papers had published ten letters collectively. Letter writers thanked the papers for publishing these pictures and implied that it was their duty, and more so the duty of the South African government, to visit the camps and see for themselves what had happened there.⁴⁷ The writers believed that South African government officials needed to visit the camps themselves to witness the atrocities firsthand, to counteract Afrikaner Nationalists who were still defending Germany and dismissing the evidence as propaganda.

Even though articles about the camps were published amongst other war stories, the visual nature of Holocaust images drew readers attention.

As details from the camps were still emerging, newspapers quickly turned their attention to who was guilty. Was it only the Nazis, or Germany as a whole? For the editors of liberal newspapers, the answer was clear at the time. Germany as a nation was guilty of the atrocities. In one of its first reports on the liberated camps, the *Rand Daily Mail* published an account by the famed Australian journalist Osmar White about his time at Buchenwald.⁴⁸ White wrote “we are in the heart of Germany – the diseased heart of a diseased nation... what I saw today moved me to the conviction that civilisation can never again trust Germans as they are to determine their own social or political destiny.”⁴⁹ Similarly, in response to the discovery of Buchenwald, an editorial in the *Cape Times* pontificated that “it must be a long time before the Germans are given a free hand over even their own minorities again... Buchenwald and other torture camps are a warning about the possibilities of perversion in German nature which our peacemakers must not be allowed to forget.”⁵⁰

The press and the public also dismissed the claims that ordinary Germans did not know or were unable to do anything about it. In an editorial entitled “They did not know!”⁵¹, the editor of the *Cape Argus* dismisses claims by the German people that they did not know about the concentration camps and recounts numerous ways in which knowledge about the camps were disseminated within Germany. The papers also published a series of articles in which German citizens were shown to be either forced to visit the camps, help bury the dead,

⁴⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 21, 1945: 2

⁴⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 23, 1945: 2

⁴⁸ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 18, 1945: 3

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Cape Times*, April 18, 1945

⁵¹ *Cape Argus*, April 26, 1945

or view footage from the liberated camps, such as the image below which was published on the 26th of April 1945 with the following caption.⁵²



JUSTICE IS COMING: The first shadow of approaching retribution falls on the S.S. guards captured by British troops at the Nazi death camp at Belsen as they are forced, at the point of the bayonet, to load the bodies of their victims into lorries, to be carried away for decent burial. This picture, received by radio last night, shows well-fed German women complacently looking on. But the corpses are thin.

The South African government cautioned the public against branding the entire German nation to be guilty of the atrocities. Prime Minister Jan Smuts was quoted as saying, “to brand the whole German people as outcasts, without discrimination between guilty and innocent... would mean going the Nazi way.”⁵³ Members of the public agreed with these sentiments, with many of them producing reasons why the German people may have remained silent. The most common reason readers thought Germans remained silent was the fear that they themselves would be arrested and sent to a concentration camp. For example, in a letter by O.P. Wilson, he cites an article from the paper in which a POW states, “whilst interviewing ordinary Germans, they were afraid to speak in case he was a spy.”⁵⁴ Ordinary Germans would be less inclined to speak up against the regime for fear of retribution.

⁵² *Rand Daily Mail*, April 26, 1945: 1; *Cape Argus*, April 23, 1945

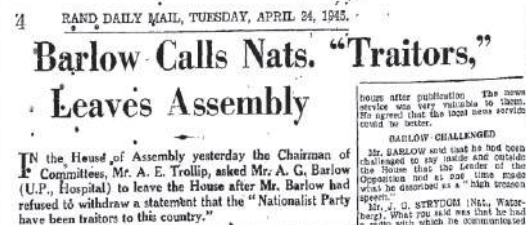
⁵³ *Sunday Times*, July 22, 1945: 13

⁵⁴ *Sunday Times*, May 9, 1942:3

Amidst the reports on German guilt, newspapers also started using the camps to lambast the Nationalist Party for their calls for neutrality at the beginning of the war and their support for the Nazi party. Numerous articles, editorials, letters, and cartoons, such as the one below were published criticising the Nationalists for their dismissal of the reports and calling them to visit the camps and see that the pictures published were true.⁵⁵

SEE NO EVIL

By Bob Connolly



In April 1945, readers also started to connect the scenes from the camps with South African history. Many readers expressed dismay at Nazi concentration camps whilst claiming that the concentration camps established by the British during the South African War (1899-1902) had been swept under the rug. In a letter entitled “Murdered by Poison, Glass, and Fish Hooks” the reader states that “if the graves of Belsen contain 30,000 who died in the last few months, what [about] the 260,000 women and children who were murdered in concentration camps through poison, glass, and fish hooks being inserted into their food?”⁵⁷ The editor wrote a response in which he dismissed the reader’s claims stating that, “the loss of life” during the South African war was due to the mismanagement of the camps, “and not because of an orchestrated programme of murder.”⁵⁸ Other readers claimed that if the newspapers had not obscured the truth about the British camps, people may have been more inclined to believe what they were reading about the Nazi camps.⁵⁹ The analogies between the concentration camps systems were influenced by an enduring mythology surrounding the

⁵⁵ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 23, May 22, 1945: 2; Cape Times April 22, May 11 and May 17, 1945, See *Sunday Times*, April 22, 1945:5

⁵⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 24, 1945: 2

⁵⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 28, 1945: 3

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 25, May 1945:4

British camps. In the wake of the South African War, emerging Afrikaner nationalists crafted a narrative of suffering to forge a new Afrikaner identity, casting the British as the enemy. By the 1930s these myths were firmly entrenched in the historical consciousness of the Afrikaner population. Consequently, when the Nazi atrocities received such prominent coverage in the liberal newspapers these myths were redeployed to discredit the British.⁶⁰ The same tactic was used in the Nationalist Press' coverage of the liberated camps.

There were also some connections made with racial issues in South Africa, with readers writing in response to the Minister of the Interior's statement that he wanted the government to keep track of name changes so that people did not change their race. The result was that some readers wrote letters to ask whether "the Minister wanted to use the yellow badge introduced by the Nazis to label Jews."⁶¹ Beyond this brief mention, the liberal press and their readership did not make any connections between Nazi and South African racial policies. They did, however, suggest that the Holocaust should serve as a lesson to humanity. However, what that lesson was remained unclear.

In May and June 1945, newspapers started advertising films depicting the liberation of the camps. Soon after, reports appeared with accounts of the images shown and how the audience reacted. The press made sure to mention that none of the footage had been edited, that they came from legitimate sources, and that it was positive proof of what had taken place.⁶² The *Cape Times* said that "the films were very detailed and a hundred times more powerful than the written word."⁶³ The constant reiteration about the veracity of the footage was due to atrocity propaganda used against Germany during World War I, which was later proven to be false. The films were also used as a counterpoint to the Nationalist Party and the Afrikaans media, all of which cited this as the deciding factor for them not to publish the reports. For example, on the 24th of April 1945, the same day the liberal media printed photos from the camps, the editor of *Die Transvaler* wrote that "there just wasn't enough space in the paper to report the story, and that they weren't going to publish unsubstantiated reports."⁶⁴ In part, the films were used as a political tool to prove that the government had made the right decision by siding with the Allies and that the Nationalists were wrong to

⁶⁰ For more information on the mythology of the British camps see - Elizabeth Van Heyningen, "Costly Mythologies: The Concentration Camps of the South African War in Afrikaner Historiography" *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34 (3), 2008: 495–513.

⁶¹ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 30, 1945: 2

⁶² *Rand Daily Mail*, May 15 and May 17, 1945: 3; *Cape Argus*, May 1, 1945: 3

⁶³ *Cape Times*, May 17, 1945

⁶⁴ *Die Transvaler*, April 24, 1945: 2

support Germany. The editors and many readers reiterated the necessity of viewing this footage with some letter writers even suggesting that the Afrikaner community and the National Party should attend a special screening with the proceeds to be given to the survivors.⁶⁵

The coverage of the films did not last long. Soon attention turned to the mop up operations at the camps.⁶⁶ Reports started appearing about how the liberating Armies were helping former prisoners to adjust to life after the camps. Photos of soldiers playing with child survivors soon emerged with captions lauding the work being done.⁶⁷ Stories about survivors marrying soldiers and the destruction of Bergen Belsen earned an article and a photo, respectively, on the front page.⁶⁸

The early reports in effect weren't focused on the victims or survivors of Nazi tyranny as we know it today. Rather, it served "as an illustration of how low the enemy had sunk and served to legitimize the righteousness of the Allied war efforts and reinforce the image of the German nation as the enemy."⁶⁹ It should come as no surprise that the Press and some members of the public would react in this way to news about a country with which they had been at war for more than five years.

During July and August, the number of articles about the camps dropped to three or four a month with most of them focusing on the capture of former guards and camp commanders. By August, the news was dominated by the upcoming Belsen Trials in which forty- six former guards and the commander of the camp, Joseph Kramer (dubbed the "Beast of Belsen"), were tried for atrocities. In September, the news was dominated by the trial with details from the proceedings and the public's reaction printed almost daily.⁷⁰ In contrast to the news about the camps, articles about the trial appeared on the top half of the front page. The newspaper covered the trial in exhaustive detail, complete with reactions from members of the public. The reports also included photographs from the trial with extended captions.

⁶⁵ See *Rand Daily Mail*, May 24, 1945: 2; *Sunday Times*, July 29, 1945: 9 for articles on the editors urging people to go see the film. See *Rand Daily Mail*, September 3, and September 27, 1945: 4&4

⁶⁶ See *Rand Daily Mail*, June 30, 1945: 1

⁶⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, June 6, 1945: 3 See *Cape Argus*, April 27, 1945 for a photo about prayer services conducted at Belsen by Allied Army officials.

⁶⁸ See *Rand Daily Mail*, July 23:1 and June 22, 1945:1, respectively

⁶⁹ Antero Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust*, 25

⁷⁰ See *Cape Times*, September 18 &19, 1945: 1.

Whilst there were 47 defendants on trial, the paper only focused on two: Josef Kramer and Irma Grese. For example, in an editorial the editor of the *Cape Times* wrote about the trial that “Kramer and his kind merit no mercy...”⁷¹ In a photo from the trial which depicts all 47 defendants, only Kramer and Grese are identified by name. Kramer was featured prominently in the news because he was the commander of the camps, and he embodied the public’s perception of a Nazi through his physical features and his behaviour.

BELSEN HORROR CAMP TRIAL SCENES: Above: Some of the women accused in the dock at Luceneberg, where 45 prisoners, including Josef Kramer, the camp commandant, are being tried for murder. No. 9 is Irma Grese, known as “the Blonde Beastess.” Below: The lay-out of the court room. Defending counsel are seated in front of the dock.

Grese’s prominent role in the coverage of the trial was due to several factors. Firstly, even though she was not the highest-ranking female guard on trial, she was the lead female defendant and was charged on both counts of the indictment: murder and ill-treatment of prisoners. This led the press to believe that she had a more prominent role in the camp. Secondly, her physical attractiveness and her young age stood in stark contrast to her heinous crimes. This was commented on in every report published that mentioned Grese from before the trial even began. For example, in July she was called an “attractive blond SS woman who had more evidence taken about her than any other woman on trial.”⁷² The press often reported on the emotional reactions of the defendants. As the details of Grese’s crimes emerged, they noted that Grese, unlike the other defendants, showed no remorse for her actions. Instead, “she apparently remained unaffected by the evidence given during the trial, thus giving the impression that she was indifferent to victims’ suffering.”⁷³ Grese, therefore, represented the extreme deviance of the Nazi regime through her crimes. However, she also “transgressed those boundaries by being a young, beautiful unrepented woman.”⁷⁴ To reconcile her actions and behaviour, she was labelled the ‘Beastess of Belsen.’

The Belsen Trial was the first time the public read about the conditions in the camps from the defendants, the survivors, as well as the liberating army. It also provided the first glimpse into how a concentration camp operated and how the system disintegrated near the

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Rand Daily Mail*, July 31, 1945:1

⁷³ Sarah Coats, “Belsen, Dachau 1945: Newspapers and the first draft of history,291

⁷⁴ Tom Clarke, “The Beautiful Beast” Why Was Irma Grese Evil? (Department of Sociological Studies: University of Sheffield, 2012)

end of the war, including the Death Marches. Letter writers were drawn to these details, but expressed frustration at how long the trial was taking. For example, Jack Ketch wrote, “the trial of the greatest monster in history has taken nearly three weeks and is still not over...if it takes three weeks to hang Kramer how long will it take to hang Hess?”⁷⁵ Other letter writers expressed their opinion on the righteousness of the trial with W.H. Browne stating, “punishing these brutes is not a matter of revenge but just common justice.”⁷⁶ Overall, the readership of the liberal press was well informed of the trial, and obtained more insight into how the camps operated, and the unique fate of the Jews within the concentration camp system.

The Black press in the immediate postwar period

Even though Black newspapers contained numerous reports about the war in general and the experiences of African, Black, and coloured soldiers, coverage of the liberation of the camps and its aftermath was sporadic and appeared more often in articles written in the vernacular than those written in English. Between May and September 1945, very few direct references were made in English articles about the camps or victim groups. When references were made, they were often connected to the struggle against racism and discrimination in South Africa., *The Bantu World* made the most direct references to the camps and victims in general in articles written in Southern Sotho. They made no mention of the situation in South Africa. Like the Liberal press, articles about the war in general were published on the front page. Articles about the camps were rarely seen on the front page except when it was connected to the war at large or how punishment would be dealt out to those who had committed the atrocities. For example, following the American Congress’ report on the concentration camps, the *Bantu World* published a short report on their recommendations for punishment. Reports on the camps were printed on the back pages of the paper amongst articles about the war in general. Unlike the Liberal press, no first-hand accounts of the camps were published.

The first explicit reference to the camps was published in the first week of May 1945. On the 5th of May 1945, the *Bantu World* published a photo taken at Bergen Belsen on page

⁷⁵ *Rand Daily Mail*, September 21, 1945:1

⁷⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, November 22, 1945: 6

two with the caption “WHAT SOUTH AFRICA HAS BEEN SAVED – Mass Grave in Belsen Camp” with an extended caption underneath.⁷⁷ The headline and the accompanying caption were written in a similar vein to the Liberal press. The image was presented as proof that the Nazis were inherently evil and that the democracies of the World had to stand together to defeat it. As with similar images in the Liberal press, the intent was to reinforce the righteousness of the war and the sacrifices that had to be made. However, the caption also expressed hope that the war would change the circumstances of black South Africans: “at San Francisco the United Nations are laying the foundation stone for the post-war world...the building will take time and if some get impatient...Look but for a moment at this picture...it might have been you...in a common grave in a concentration camp.”⁷⁸ Here, and in the headline, the editor suggested to his readers that they should be thankful that the Nazis were defeated, otherwise they may have suffered the same fate. Later in the War News section, the paper published a report entitled “another German torture camp” in Sesotho in which it recounts the atrocities committed at Nordhausen and Buchenwald.⁷⁹ The articles made specific mention of the “25000 Jewish slave labourers” who were found there, as well as the number of people who perished at both camps.⁸⁰ At the end of the article, the author again reinforces the righteousness of the war stating that “the Allied Army is now sweeping across Germany to free all the people Hitler has oppressed.”⁸¹

The Bantu World was the only South African newspaper to publish a photograph of a survivor and a perpetrator together. Other publications only published photos of victims, or perpetrators being forced to bury victims. In the image below, a survivor identified as a Russian slave labourer from an unnamed concentration camp identifies a former guard as the person who beat the inmate. No further explanation is given, and the image is not remarked upon again.

⁷⁷ *Bantu World*, May 5, 1945: 2

⁷⁸ *Bantu World*, May 5, 1945: 2

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*



Ilanga Lase Natal and *Inkundla ya Bantu* tended to focus on the dangers of Nazism at home and abroad. References to Nazism and its effects were found in articles about the social and political upliftment of the black community. For example, in an editorial in March 1945, the editor of *Inkundla ya Bantu* wrote, “While black men are fighting in Italy for the four freedoms...in South Africa, the government continues to make laws against the black man which the Nazis could not improve upon.”⁸² In *Ilanga Lase Natal*, R. R. R. Dhlomo (the editor), in reference to the African Charter wrote, “the same people who deplored and fought against the Nazis for the same evil legislation, practice and preach it to the maximum against the black people.”⁸³

Their coverage of the camps was mainly in editorials; both publications expressed dismay at black people, even veterans of the war, not being allowed to watch the concentration camp film. In the 26th of May 1945 edition of *Ilanga Lase Natal*, Dhlomo strongly opposed this stance, writing “And now we learn that the film showing the horrors of the Nazi camps is not for Natives and children under twelve...I believe it is unjust for African soldiers who fought alongside whites and witnessed these things [not to be allowed] to witness what they had defeated and to thereby share in the whole victory.”⁸⁴ He goes on to state that “someone high up thought that if Africans were to see these films, they would realize that Europeans with their civilization and Christianity (1933–1945 brand) were capable of committing far worse deeds than Shaka.”⁸⁵

⁸² *Inkundla ya Bantu*, May 17, 1945: 1

⁸³ *Ilanga Lase Natal*, May 19, 1945: 14

⁸⁴ *Ilanga Lase Natal*, May 26, 1945: 15

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

This is not the first instance in which the Black press connected racial policy in Germany and in South Africa. In fact, it was quite common for the newspapers to make references to Nazism and the danger this ideology posed to Black people. For example, in an editorial on the African Charter, the editor of *Bantu World* stated that “there are gems of Nazism in the national life of the country and it must be stamped out if the African people are to avoid the suffering and evil inflicted on Europe.”⁸⁶ Similarly, in *Ilange Lase Natal*, Dhlomo writes that “it is strange that South Africa has fought against racialism but has citizens that openly venerate the Nazis without repercussions.”⁸⁷ Articles on the pass laws also referenced Nazism and “how the government should not become the monster they have just defeated.”⁸⁸ Articles on the topic were published in almost every edition during the period under review. It was, however, the first time that the Holocaust was mentioned in connection to local circumstances and the editorial staff’s hope for a better future.

The connection between the two was emphasized by the editor’s decision to publish the “Along the Colour Line” column beneath the photograph below. First published in the 1930s by the editor Victor Selope-Thema (under the pen name “Wayfarer”), the column was typically satirical and focused on racial discrimination and social upliftment.

⁸⁶ *Bantu World*, April 15, 1945: 4

⁸⁷ *Ilange Lase Natal* May 26, 1945: 2

⁸⁸ *Bantu World* June 30, 1945: 4



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In the article below entitled “Bishops and Colour,” Wayfarer challenges the views expressed by a reader of a white daily who said that “the Bishops of the Anglican Church should not be telling Black people that they are the same as white people.”⁹⁰ Instead, the bishops should instill the fear of God into them and the dignity of labour.”⁹¹ In response, Wayfarer argued that “if he [the writer] is so sure that white people are physically and mentally superior to black people they wouldn’t need the protection of a colour bar.”⁹² He ends off by asking “how is this way of thinking any different to that of Hitler?”⁹³ Here Wayfarer is clearly referencing the laws and policies that the Nazis had to put in place to ensure that Jews were removed from public life and later ‘taught the dignity of the law’ in the concentration camps.

On 16 June 1945, two articles appeared in the paper in Sesotho in a general news section about the war in which the author wrote about an American colonel showing photos of Dachau and Buchenwald. No further commentary is offered. The next article appeared on 23 June 1945, also in Sesotho, this time with two photos shown below. This article was the most substantial report on the camps in the publication. In the article, the author started by stating that “they had already touched on the German torture camps”, indicating that their

⁸⁹ *Bantu World*, May 5, 1945: 2

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Bantu World*, May 5, 1945: 2

⁹³ *Ibid.*

readership was aware of the facts.⁹⁴ He went on to say that “the Germans did not imprison their enemies, they imprisoned their own citizens.”⁹⁵ The author described the image shown below of a female survivor of Bergen Belsen and her physical condition during liberation.⁹⁶ This image was the only photo published that depicted a singular survivor soon after liberation in any of the publications under review. This, along with the detailed description, suggests that the editors wanted to create a personal connection to the atrocities which had been committed so far away by putting a human face to what had occurred. This is underscored by the editor’s choice to publish a more graphic image from Belsen, which depicts Allied soldiers burying victims, on the same page.



The article recounted other atrocities committed by Germans. Specifically, against the Herero-Nama in Southwest Africa, stating that “what the Germans has done to their own citizenry was done to the blacks of Southwest Africa. The Germans drove them out, arrested boys, and shot women and children.”⁹⁸ In this way, indicating that because the Germans were not stopped the first time, it allowed them to commit atrocities against their own people. The author again reinforced the righteousness of the war at the end of the article stating, “Thank goodness the Germans were stopped and did not invade our country.”⁹⁹ He also actively encouraged readers to look at the two images The Herero-Nama Genocide was a recurring theme in the South African press during the preceding decades, most often in relation to missionary work and land restitution issues. In the 1930s, during Britain’s policy of appeasement, the possibility of returning Germany’s African colonies was debated. In

⁹⁴ *Bantu World*, 23 June 1945: 16

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Bantu World*, 23 June 1945: 10

⁹⁷ *Bantu World*, 23 June 1945:10 & 16

⁹⁸ *Bantu World*, 23 June 1945:10

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

response, the black press argued that the “‘Herero-Nama Genocide and the ongoing persecution of German Jews demonstrated that Germany was unfit to govern colonies.’”¹⁰⁰ Consequently, it is not surprising that the black press would again invoke the genocide when the Nazi atrocities were revealed.

The Belsen Trial was covered mostly in Sesotho in the “News of the War” page of the *Bantu World*, a section which contained news from all theatres of war. This section was typically published on page 13 and 16 of the publication. In-depth news of the trial only appeared in two editions: 29 September and 6 October 1945. However, the paper devoted multiple columns on two separate pages to recount what took place at the trial across multiple days. Witness testimony, documentary evidence and arguments from the prosecutor were all reprinted in full. This served the purpose of providing the readership of *The Bantu World* with information in their native language on how a concentration camp system operated and how many people had perished at the camp. Unlike the Liberal press, the *Bantu World* devoted almost no space to Irma Grese. Her name only appears once in its coverage of the trial. She is described as having assisted Kramer to imprison, kill and torture people.¹⁰¹ For this paper, Josef Kramer was the main culprit. His role as commander of Auschwitz and later Bergen Belsen meant that he was personally responsible for the atrocities committed there.

Umteteli wa Bantu covered the war in detail. Like other publications, it used the terms ‘Nazi’ and ‘German’ interchangeably.¹⁰²

The paper did not publish any photographs of the camp. However, it did provide its readership with some insight into the atrocities committed in the concentration camps. The first article of the camps appeared in the paper following the death of Hitler and Mussolini, in the 5 May 1945 edition of the paper.¹⁰³ In the editorial, the editor recounted the deeds committed by the two dictators and briefly mentioned that “countless numbers of people have perished...or suffered unbelievable agony in the Nazi concentration camps.”¹⁰⁴ The lesson to be learnt from the demise of the dictator, continued the editor, was “that there is no room for tyranny in the world.”¹⁰⁵ In an article on the same page recounting Hitler’s career, the writer

¹⁰⁰ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 28 November 1938:1

¹⁰¹ *Bantu World*, December 1, 1945: 5

¹⁰² See *Umteteli wa Bantu*, May 12, 1945:1

¹⁰³ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, May 5, 1945:2

¹⁰⁴ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, May 5, 1945:2

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

mentions all the groups which were targeted by the Nazis in Germany and were later sent to concentration camps. Special mention is made of the discrimination and persecution reserved for Jews, with the writer stating “There followed an orgy of wrecking, looting and the torture of Jews...”¹⁰⁶ No further mentions of victim groups are made, and the focus shifts back to the war. The editor expressed the hope that in the postwar world “black people would be allowed entry into South African civil society.”¹⁰⁷

In the War News section, the paper offered its first and only in-depth report on the camps. The report, written in isiXhosa, recounts what witnesses encountered when they entered Nordhausen and Buchenwald. The report makes specific mention of the Jewish slave labourers who were found there, and the torture they endured in Nordhausen, as well as how the American Army forced German citizens not only to visit the camp, but also to help bury the dead.

No further articles about the concentration camps appeared in this publication until 29 September 1945 when it reported on the Belsen Trials in depth. As more details about the innerworkings of the camps were revealed, articles appeared which included details about the specific fate of Jews in the camps.¹⁰⁸ The paper also published the outcome of the Trial, along with details about the upcoming Nuremberg Trials. Here again, the press paid scant attention to Irma Grese, mentioning her only twice during the proceedings. Interestingly, unlike the *Bantu World*, the paper refers to the “Beastess” moniker given to her by the press as well as her age.

Letter writers quickly responded to this coverage of the liberation of the camps and the trials. Several letters were published comparing the disenfranchisement of Black people by the white minority government and Afrikaner Nationalism to Nazism. Readers also made mention of the atrocities committed by the Germans. In a letter to the editor entitled “Never Again,” the reader lists the numerous wars Germany was involved in in the past and ends the letter by saying “Every time Germany is victorious, they commit unspeakable atrocities. But every time they are defeated, they say never again.”¹⁰⁹ Some readers, such as Mr D. T. D.,

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Joanna Schater, *World War Two and the Holocaust*, 21 \

¹⁰⁸ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, October 6, 1945: 1

¹⁰⁹ *Bantu World*, 9 June 1945:10

even compared rogue elements within the anti-racist movement of “using the tools and tactics of the Nazis to create animosity between the black and white community by sowing dissent amongst black people to gain power.”¹¹⁰ He cautioned the community against following these self-styled leaders and told them to trust in the national bodies which sought to improve the lot of the community. D. T. D.’s opinion reflects that of the editors, who promoted the idea that full entry into civil society could be achieved through a mediated, level-headed process.

The Coloured Press in the immediate postwar period.

The Cape Standard rarely published news about the war on the front page. An exception was the 8th of May 1945 edition when the end of the war in Europe was announced on the front page. In fact, the newspaper did not print much news about the war in general. When news about the war made it into the paper, it was usually published on page five and beyond. However, the paper did highlight the contribution of coloured soldiers to the war effort, and printed profiles on soldiers who were fighting on the front lines. Like the *Bantu World*, the *Cape Standard* connected Nazism to local circumstances. For example, the front-page story in the victory edition was entitled “European War Ends: Nazism Defeated but its Seeds Still Remain.”¹¹¹ In the article, the writer asks, “What is the lot of the coloured people now that the war has ended? Will it remain the same or will meaningful change come?”¹¹² Here again there was hope that the war would bring about meaningful change for the coloured and Black population, if only the elements of Nazism present in the country could be dismantled.

The paper did not publish any articles or photographs of the camps during the first few months after liberation. The camps were invoked to highlight racial prejudice in South Africa. For example, in an editorial published on page two on 24 April 1945, the editor encouraged members of Parliament, especially those with “Herenvolk ideas” to visit the camps to see what happens in a country where one group seeks to dominate another.¹¹³ He went on to write that “the concentration camps weren’t created for war, or to house prisoners

¹¹⁰ *Bantu World*, 12 May 1945: 9

¹¹¹ *Cape Standard*, May 8, 1945: 1

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Cape Standard*, 24 April 1945: 2

of war but only for one purpose to accommodate Germany's opponents to Hitler's rule."¹¹⁴ Another editorial followed nearly a month later on 22 May 1945 entitled "The Cult of Hatred."¹¹⁵ Here again, the editor called out the Nazi elements in the country, specifically "the *Ossewabrandwag*¹¹⁶ who are using similar tactics to the Nazis to ensure that any attempt by non-Europeans to free themselves from bondage is stopped."¹¹⁷ The editor also lamented the government's decision to continue their segregationist policies saying that "the true lesson of the horror camps cannot be told because equal rights have not been granted to every race. An ideal which they [Black people] had been fighting for."¹¹⁸ Repeatedly, the editors of the paper would invoke the Nazi past to draw attention to what was happening in South Africa. The editors also published stories about the dangers that Nazism and 'Herenvolkism' posed to the Black population of the country.¹¹⁹

Only two letters from readers were published in late May and early June. Both emphasised the need for the world to pay attention to what was happening in the country and act so that what had happened in Europe would not be repeated in South Africa. Kay-Bee, hoped that "the fearful atrocities committed at Buchenwald and other Nazi camps have stirred the ideology of white South Africa" and then went on to say, "the camps should serve as an eye opener to those who say they want peace but forge ahead with their segregationist policy." He called on the US delegation which toured and reported on the camps to come to South Africa to "see what they were fighting for."¹²⁰

Similarly, Abraham C's letter, entitled "Horror Films," which was published in the 12 June 1945 edition of the paper, criticized the call by some Nationalist newspapers to establish a fund for Germans displaced by the war and to discourage people from viewing the concentration camp films. In the letter Abraham asks "to whom must we show goodwill? The German brutes? No sir, I say treat the Germans justly and make every effort to bring to light

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Cape Standard*, 22 May 1945: 6

¹¹⁶ Die Ossewabrandwag was an alt-right-wing Afrikaner Nationalist organization with strong ties to national socialism. For more information see <https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/site/q/03lv02424/04lv02730/05lv02996/06lv02997.htm> accessed 11 March 2024

¹¹⁷ *Cape Standard*, 22 May 1945: 6

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Cape Standard*, July 17, October 2, 1945: 7 & 10

¹²⁰ *Cape Standard*, 29 May 1945: 2

all their brutal acts.”¹²¹ He asked, “if a film about Windermere, a township on the outskirts of Cape Town and the harsh conditions under which the mostly coloured and black residents lived should be censored too.”¹²² He connected what was happening there to the situation in Europe, and ended by saying that “the younger generation should see these films so that the scenes can make an impression on their minds. So that if another group like this should emerge, they won’t allow it to gain power.”¹²³

The next substantial report on the camps was published in July 1945 under the headline “The O. B Whitewashes Nazi Methods: The True Nature of the Concentration Camps”, wherein the author dismissed the assertion by the *Die O.B* (the official newspaper of the Ossewabrandwag) that people died of malnutrition at Dachau. The author provided multiple sources, including the South African parliamentary report, on the living conditions and cruelty visited upon the inmates by the guards. The newspaper may have published this report to dispel any notions that the reports from the camps were merely propaganda designed by the Allies to disparage the enemy.

The Afrikaans Nationalist Press in the immediate postwar period

The *Burger* was the first Nationalist anti-war newspaper to publish anything on the liberation of the camps, but its coverage was limited, sporadic and was placed on the back pages of the paper. The paper also did not print any photos of the camps. On 21 April 1945, some five days after the first reports were published in the English papers, the newspaper reprinted a SAPA-Reuter’s article about a South African Prisoner of War – identified only as Cannonier James -- experiences in a concentration camp.¹²⁴ The paper offered no commentary on his testimony. This report was followed by a condensed version of a Reuter’s report on Bergen Belsen in the 23 April 1945 edition along with a news report which stated that “1,100 Nazi prisoners had been burnt by SA troops.”¹²⁵ Despite printing this report, the paper adopted a skeptical approach. For example, when it reported on the South African parliamentary discussion on the topic, the paper referred to the “supposed atrocities

¹²¹ *Cape Standard*, 12 June 1945: 2

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Die Burger*, April 21, 1945

¹²⁵ *Die Burger*, April 23, 1945

committed in Germany.”¹²⁶ On 28 April 1945, the paper printed a condensed version of the British parliamentary delegation report on Buchenwald on page two.¹²⁷ Interestingly the paper included a column in heavy print midway through the article about the increase in the price of butter in Pretoria.¹²⁸ This was to indicate to its readership that it did not take the matter too seriously. The only article about the camps to appear on the front page of the paper was an article entitled “Hitler kon nie weet nie” which suggested that Hitler was not aware of everything that happened in the camps.¹²⁹

The newspaper skepticism increased when in May 1945 it was revealed that a previous report about the former Prime Minister of France Leon Blum dying in a labour camp was false. The paper’s review on the concentration camp footage which was being shown in South Africa at the time also conveyed its skepticism. In opposition to the English-language press which praised the film for providing clear irrefutable proof of the atrocities, *Die Burger* felt that the images shown were too fleeting, such that one could not get a proper look at what was being shown. The paper also cast aspersions on the authenticity and the impact of the film stating, “the techniques used in these films aren’t as impactful as other propaganda films produced during the war.”¹³⁰ Thereafter, no further articles about the camp were published. Instead, the paper focused on the pain and suffering that the German people faced because of the Allied bombings.

The editors of *Die Burger* also felt that the stories which were emerging from the camps were merely Allied propaganda designed to discredit Germany. In its “Buitelandse Oorsig” column, it provided a psychological analysis of how one country could influence their population’s opinion of another country to suit their own national interest. The writer then went on to trace how the images of various European nations have changed over the past decade. “The image that the Allies were promoting of Germany right now was in their best interest. If Germany were needed as an ally again, the image would change again.”¹³¹ This, in effect, cast doubts on the overwhelming evidence that was coming out of the camps. The newspaper also published articles about the threat of communism both locally and

¹²⁶ *Die Burger*, April 25, 1945

¹²⁷ *Die Burger*, April 28, 1945

¹²⁸ Sharon Friedman, *Jews, Germans, and Afrikaners*, 32

¹²⁹ *Die Burger*, April 23, 1945

¹³⁰ *Die Burger*, May 17, 1945

¹³¹ *Die Burger*, May 12, 1945

internationally with one article stating that “the Russians were a far more dangerous enemy than the Nazis had been.”¹³²

The newspaper did not publish any letters related to the camps. However, several letters were published which called for the establishment of a fund to relieve the distress of the German people.¹³³ In an editorial on 16 May 1945, the editor did not expressly endorse the opening of a fund, but said that “the treatment being received by German women and children were unchristian-like and that they should be helped.”¹³⁴ The calls for the establishment of such a fund and the publication of these letters suggest that the paper still had a lot of sympathy for the plight of the German people. This was amplified in reports on the destruction of historical sites in Germany. Whereas the Liberal press was publishing photos of the concentration camps, *Die Burger* was publishing photos of destroyed sites in Germany and photos of starving German children and women.¹³⁵ The readers would therefore have been given the impression that only German people were suffering. The focus on German suffering can be understood through the close cultural and intellectual ties between Afrikaners and Germans that developed during the 1930s. Afrikaner Nationalists greatly admired Nazi Germany’s policies and strongly empathized with Germany’s position under the treaty of Versailles drawing parallels to their own experiences after the South African war. Consequently, when images of German women and children became available, Afrikaners were inclined to equate this suffering with the experiences of Boer women and children.¹³⁶

In contrast to *Die Burger*, *Die Transvaler* remained silent on the topic for more than a week after the liberation of the camps. The first mention of the liberated camps appeared in an editorial in the 24 April 1945 edition of the paper. The editor justified the silence on the topic by claiming that “the reports were merely atrocity propaganda designed to divert the public’s attention from the government’s bad record.”¹³⁷ The report went on to say that they have not received instruction to suppress the news, they just did not feel that it was important enough to publish. “The pro-war newspapers published these reports because of their

¹³² *Die Burger*, May 8, 1945

¹³³ *Die Burger*, May 15, 1945

¹³⁴ *Die Burger*, May 16, 1945

¹³⁵ For more on how the National Party initially denied the Holocaust in their newspapers see- Shain M., Lamprecht A., “A Past that Must Not Go Away” In Roth J.K., Maxwell E., Levy M., Whitworth W. (eds) *Remembering for the Future*. (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2001)

¹³⁶ For more information on Nazi Germany’s foreign policy in South Africa see Robert Citino, *Germany, and the Union of South Africa in the Nazi Period*, (Greenwood Press: New York, 1991)

¹³⁷ *Die Transvaler*, April 24, 1945

propaganda value.”¹³⁸ Twenty-four hours later the paper stated that “due to an American communique one cannot deny that atrocities had been committed in Germany. Everyone will condemn these deeds”¹³⁹ However, the editor concluded that “atrocities committed by both sides should be brought to light and that photos from the Boer concentration camps and Russian gulag be printed too so that the accusers themselves may not seem blameless.”¹⁴⁰ The inclusion of Russian gulags is indicative of the anti-communist sentiments amongst Afrikaner Nationalists.¹⁴¹ This viewpoint was echoed in the political section of the edition, in which a report about the parliamentary discussion on the camps was printed under the headline “Alleged German Atrocities.”¹⁴²

In May, *Die Transvaler* started prominently displaying the correspondence between Eric Louw (Nationalist Member of Parliament) and Mr. L Karowsky (a Jewish reader), in which Karowsky urged that “a Parliamentary delegation be sent to the German and Russian concentration camps to see for themselves what had taken place, the cost to be covered by the public.”¹⁴³ In response, Louw wrote that “the money would be better spent on distributing free copies of Emily Hobhouse’s book *The Brunt of the War*”, and a report on the conditions in the concentration camps for women and children during the Anglo- Boer war.”¹⁴⁴ Comprised of testimony from women who survived the camps, Hobhouse’s book is credited as being partly responsible for establishing the main features of the camps’ mythology, particularly the focus on unending anguish endured by the internees, their loss of home and the brutality of the camps’ staff.¹⁴⁵ Louw’s suggestion is not surprising given the interest generated by the liberation of the camps in contrast to a perceived lack of interest in the South African war.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Die Transvaler*, April 25, 1945

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ For more information on the development and evolution of anti-communist sentiment amongst Afrikaners see Andre van Deventer, “Afrikaner Nationalist Politics and Anti-Communism 1937-1945,” (Unpublished Master’s dissertation, Stellenbosch University: 1991)

¹⁴² *Die Transvaler*, April 25, 1945

¹⁴³ *Die Transvaler*, May 1, 1945

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ For more information on Emily Hobhouse and the mythology of the British concentration camps see Elizabeth Van Heyningen, “The Concentration Camps of the South African (Anglo-Boer) War, 1900–1902.” *History Compass* 7, no. 1 (2009): 22–43.

During the next few weeks as more evidence was being brought to light, *Die Transvaler* continued explaining away the Nazi atrocities by questioning the motivations of the Allies. For example, stating in an editorial that “the British did not publish these reports out of sympathy but because they wanted to create an atmosphere in which the world would accept a hard peace which would incite hatred and lead to a third world war.”¹⁴⁶ The paper took it a step further than other publications, actively endorsing the creation of a fund to support the German people.

The paper continued to publish articles about the destruction of Germany and the suffering of the German people. It also warned its readers about the threat of communism in South Africa. In September, the publication did not publish any articles on the Belsen Trials. The paper's attitude towards the trials was expressed in a political column in the 13 September 1945 edition. The author claimed that mass graves were being prepared in Germany for prospective victims of starvation: “if some hostile observers were to uncover these graves sometime in the future, they may be able to accuse the Allies of atrocities and will be able to provide photographic evidence. Doesn't this prove how unjust the conclusion people came to when they saw pictures of alleged atrocities at the concentration camp?”¹⁴⁷ “Of course,” he continued, “the Allied propagandists have ascribed the conditions found in the camp to German cruelty. In fact, these cases of death and starvation were due to the collapse of the German government's communication system. The allies should therefore be more careful with these conclusions.”¹⁴⁸ The author was suggesting that the trials were unjust because the commanders and staff of the camp did not deliberately kill the inmates, but that they had died due to a breakdown in communication. He also suggested that had the Allies not bombed the country so severely, prisoners may not have died.

Die Vaderland, another prominent Afrikaans daily, took a similar stance. It also did not publish any detailed reports on the camp. Its first article related to the camps appeared on 24 May: a SAPA Reuters story about the experiences of two French journalists who were imprisoned in Buchenwald. Alongside the article it published photographs of the camp under the heading “the British say they have found this”¹⁴⁹ and placed Eric Louw's question in

¹⁴⁶ *Die Transvaler*, May 18, 1945

¹⁴⁷ *Die Transvaler*, September 13, 1945

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Die Vaderland*, April 24, 1945

parliament about the Siberian concentration camps next to it. The heading and the inclusion of Louw's question indicate that the publication both questioned the validity of the photos and simultaneously questioned why the government was only highlighting the atrocities in the German camps. The next day the publication supported the move to send a delegation to the camps, but echoed Eric Louw's view that the delegation should also visit Russian to "see the millions of Germans in Russian Labour camps[whose] skeletons will never tell their story to western eyes."¹⁵⁰ It also supported the idea that the camp films should be banned for teenagers. The paper included an article in the same edition indicating that Josef Kramer was wanted by five countries for war crimes, but then devoted several editorials to the suffering and losses of the German people. It also published several photographs of destroyed monuments in Berlin.¹⁵¹ The paper questioned the Allies' motivations and actions stating that "Britain is no better than Germany. In a comparable situation, they would treat Ireland the same way Germany treated Holland and Belgium."¹⁵² The paper did not offer its readership any information about the Belsen Trials.

Despite the overwhelming evidence available by September 1945 on conditions in the camps, the readership of the Afrikaans press was ill-informed of what had taken place. They would have had a vague impression that some atrocities had taken place in Germany but that these were exaggerated by the pro-war press. The papers were so anti-war and anti-British that they could not accept the evidence being presented without recognizing that the war had been justified.

Conclusion

The South African media's encounter with the Holocaust reflected the ethos of each publication, their readership, their opinion about the war, and South Africa's involvement in it. When the first reports of the camps emerged, the Liberal press was horrified and dismayed by the revelations. Even though they reported on the Nazi's treatment of marginalized groups and the camps before and during the war, the reports and images were now coming from what they considered legitimate sources and were far worse than they could have imagined. Despite their shock and dismay, articles about the camps rarely if ever featured on the front page. However, images from the camps were often printed with extensive captions. The

¹⁵⁰ *Die Vaderland*, April 25, 1945

¹⁵¹ *Die Vaderland*, May 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 1945.

¹⁵² *Die Vaderland*, May 14, 1945

motivating factor behind this editorial decision was presumably due to the visceral nature of the photos which caught readers' attention. From the outset, readers actively engaged with the facts about the Holocaust with some immediately using it to highlight the current situation in the country such as the connection between South Africa and Nazi Germany's racial policies and histories such as the concentration camps which were in operation during the South African War.

Similarly, the Liberal press domesticated the news and used it for their own needs. Using images, film, eyewitness and parliamentary reports, these newspapers reinforced the image of Germany as the enemy, presented this news as proof-positive of the necessity of the war, and lambasted the Nationalist Party for their support of Germany. The specifically Jewish nature of the victims was not intentionally obscured by the Liberal press. Initially the press referred to all prisoners by their nationality or as former slave labourers. The main reason for this omission was the press' reliance on a conceptual framework which characterized the of the camps as political enemies of the Nazi regime rather than identifying groups who were specially targeted. The massacre of the Jews was most frequently written about in connection with the San Francisco conference which took place around the same time. The Holocaust was cited as the specific reason for establishing a Jewish homeland.

The next time the persecution and mass murder of Jews would feature prominently in the Liberal press was during the trial of Vidkun Quisling. During this trial, the persecution, imprisonment, and deportation of Norwegian Jewry was reported on regularly. The Press' reports on the trial provided the South African public with their first glimpse of how collaborationist governments aided the Nazis in the Final Solution.

The way in which the Liberal press described the Holocaust changed overtime in line with global events. The first time the Liberal press used specific terms to reference the Holocaust occurred in July and August with three phrases being used interchangeably: "The Jews who perished/slain," "the massacre of the Jews" and "the murdered Jews of Europe." As more evidence emerged and the war trials got underway, the more clinical "the extermination of the Jews" was used most frequently. In contrast, when Jewish community organisations were cited in the news, the terms they used were "the Martyred Jews in Europe," "the Jews murdered by the Nazis," and "the five million Jews murdered."

In contrast to the news about the camps, the Belsen Trials were prominently featured on the front page. Here, for the first time, the public was presented with evidence about how a concentration camp operated and how that system disintegrated near the end of the war. The press also presented the public with figureheads to embody all the atrocities that had been committed at Belsen: Josef Kramer, and Irma Grese. Whilst both Kramer and Grese were represented as the extreme deviance of the Nazi regime, Kramer's physical features and behaviour during the trial fit the narrative of the monstrous male concentration camp guard, whilst Grese was singled out by the press because she transgressed the boundaries of what was expected of beautiful young woman at the time by both her crimes and her unrepentant attitude. To reconcile this transgression, the press fashioned her into the "Beastess of Belsen." Readers responded swiftly and angrily to these reports with several letters to the editor mentioning Kramer by name and calling him a monster.

The Liberal press argued that the Holocaust presented a set of lessons, and that these lessons should be learnt, but the exact nature of these lessons was not explicitly indicated.

The Black press's coverage of the camps was sporadic with a few in-depth reports being published within the first three months after liberation. No first-hand accounts were published during this time. The largest proportion of reporting on the camps connected it to racial discrimination in South Africa. The press also reinforced the war's necessity and the sacrifices that had to be made to stop Nazism. They also remained hopeful that in the post-war world, Black people would be allowed entry into South African civil society.

The press recognized and constantly referred to the danger Nazism posed to Black people both locally and abroad. The discourses about the camps were often used to shed light on what the Black population were enduring under segregationist South Africa, including similar laws being promulgated in the country and the potential outcomes of such policies. However, the editors were clear to say that the two were not completely comparable. Despite the sporadic reporting, the readership of the Black press was well informed and actively engaged with the Holocaust and Nazism, with some readers comparing it to situations in South Africa. Some readers even adopted the terminology to call out rogue elements in their own ranks.

Reporting on the Belsen Trial was sporadic but in-depth, with the papers devoting several columns to recount multiple days of the trial. The paper provided their readership with extensive knowledge of how a concentration camp operated, how many people had perished and the unique fate of Jews in the camp. Articles published in English on the front page were used to bring attention to the plight of Black people in South Africa. To the Black press and its readership, the lesson of the camps was clear: When one group is allowed to dominate and discriminate against another group, the outcome can be deadly.

The coverage of the liberation of the camps in the Afrikaans press was also sporadic and limited. However, unlike the other publications, initially none of the Nationalist papers embraced the news. When more evidence emerged from various sources confirming the earlier reports, they were forced to believe it. They used slightly different methods to diminish the reports and focus the attention of their readers elsewhere.

Die Burger obscured the reports by placing them in the back pages of the newspaper or publishing unimportant news in the middle of a report to distract readers. *Die Transvaler* simply did not publish anything on the camp until it was called out on it. It responded by saying that there was more important news to report on. *Die Vaderland*, the only nationalist paper to publish photos from the camp, made their derision clear with headlines such as “alleged atrocities” and “the British said they saw this.” These headlines were repeated in the other Afrikaner nationalist papers.

All three papers also questioned the motivations of the Allies claiming that this was Allied propaganda designed to discredit Germany. When forced to face the fact that the reports were true, they said that the atrocities from both sides should be brought to light. *Die Transvaler* and *Die Vaderland* prominently published the correspondence between Eric Louw and Mr. Karowsky, with *Die Vaderland* endorsing Louw’s call that the delegation should visit Russia and several sites in Europe.

When it could no longer combat the mountain of evidence, the papers simply ignored the reports and focused on the suffering of the German people. Instead of publishing photos of the concentration camps, they published photos of destroyed historical sites in Germany as well as pictures of malnourished women and children to elicit sympathy. To this end they

also supported the establishment of a fund to assist the German people for whom they felt kinship.

Similarly, the Belsen Trials were either not reported on at all, or the press claimed that the defendants did not intentionally kill prisoners but that they had died of starvation. Thus, by the time the Nuremberg Trials started, readers of the Afrikaner nationalist press were relatively ill-informed about the nature of German crimes during the war.

Chapter 2

The International Military Tribunal (IMT) in the Non-Jewish Press

The mass murder of European Jewry was not the focus of the International Military Tribunal (IMT) for major war criminals – more commonly known as the Nuremberg Trial. Instead, “the conspiracy to wage an aggressive war was the focus of the trial. The Allies constructed war crimes and crimes against humanity as acts committed as a part of the plans for global domination rather than an independent action.”¹ Despite this assertion, Michael Marrus and other scholars argue that “while the Destruction of European Jewry was not the central issue of the trial, evidence of the Genocide was a running theme throughout the trial and was included in every count of the indictment.”² The Nazi’s genocidal programme was so all encompassing that the Allies could not prosecute other crimes without mentioning the destruction of European Jewry. Whilst other scholars such as Donald Bloxham and Erich Habere agree that mass murder of Jews was present, they contend that “the war crimes trials did not adequately conceptualize the Nazis genocidal programme. Instead, it draws attention away from victims onto more universal symbols of suffering. In effect obscuring the unique fate of the victims and minimizing the Holocaust.”³

This chapter does not seek to add to the debate, but rather seeks to examine how the South African press responded to the Nuremberg Trial. It will look at the ways in which the press conceptualized the Trials, how they and the public understood it, and the meaning that the press ascribed to it. It will examine how the press reported on the dimensions of the trial relating to the destruction of European Jewry.

¹ Michael Marrus, ‘The Holocaust at Nuremberg’, *Yad Vashem Studies*, 26, (1998), 5–41, 5, Michael Bazylar, “The Holocaust at Nuremberg: What the Record Reveals,” *Loyola of Los Angeles International and Comparative Law Review* 39 (2017): 35-62

² Marrus, ‘The Holocaust at Nuremberg’; Alexa Stiller, “The Mass Murder of the European Jews and the Concept of ‘Genocide’ in the Nuremberg Trials: Reassessing Raphaël Lemkin’s Impact,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*, Vol. 13: 1 (2019)

³ See Erich Haberer, “History and Justice: Paradigms of the Prosecution of Nazi Crimes.” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19, no. 3 (2005): 487-519, Donald Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

The Liberal press and the Nuremberg Trials

The International Military Tribunal (IMT) captured the attention of the Liberal press in South Africa. Whilst newspapers reported on other trials taking place in Germany, the coverage devoted to these trials did not come close to the amount of space dedicated to the Nuremberg Trials. The press saw the Nuremberg Trials as a glimpse into the innerworkings of the Nazi regime and as the means to prevent future conflicts by criminalizing wars of aggression. However, most often the trial was reported as a court drama. The press was fascinated with the behaviour of the defendants and their interactions with each other. The fascination with the defendant's behaviour is understandable. The Trials presented "the first opportunity for people to study the men who had brought human misery on an unimaginable scale. It was also the first time they were seeing their chief enemies."⁴ This focus on individuals and their courtroom behaviour, however, sometimes came at the expense of explaining what was happening in the case.

The first article relating to this issue appeared on the 10th of August 1945 and covered the signing of the International Military Tribunal Charter. The article commented on the significance of the charter and quoted the Chief US Prosecutor R.H. Jackson's statement that "the charter is a step forward in fixing individual responsibility for warmongering - wherever the people - as an international crime."⁵ The article went on to state that "the first trial will take place at Nuremberg and that each defendant will have the right to defend themselves."⁶ In August and September, attention shifted to the details surrounding the upcoming trial: the choice of prosecutor for each signatory of the charter, as well as how evidence and witnesses were being gathered by the prosecution. The papers also covered other details such as the SS men repairing the Palace of Justice, how the defendants would be put to death should they be found guilty, and the IQ and psychiatric evaluation that the defendants were undergoing.⁷

In October, with the release of the indictment, attention shifted to who the defendants were and what crimes they would be tried for. All the papers printed summaries of the

⁴ Antero Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust in the British, Swedish and Finnish Press, 1945-1950*, 79.

⁵ *Rand Daily Mail*, August 10, 1945:1

⁶ Antero Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust in the British, Swedish and Finnish Press, 1945-1950*, 79

⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, August 10, 1945:1

⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, August 23, 1945:1, August 18, 1945:1, September 1, 1945:1, September 17, 1945: 1, November 18, 1945:1

charges in their reports on the first session of the Tribunal.⁸ The *Rand Daily Mail* was typical in including a section with the subheading “5.700,000 Jews have Disappeared” which detailed the implementation of a policy designed to exterminate the Jews of Europe.⁹ Continuing on page eight, the paper focused on the atrocities committed by the Nazis against different victim groups as well as the number of people who perished. Under a section entitled “Racial Groups Exterminated,” the article mentioned “the systematic and deliberate Genocide against religious and national groups in particular Jews, Poles and *Gypsies* [sic].”¹⁰ The article concluded by outlining the persecution of German Jews before the war.

The *Rand Daily Mail* also included a “Who’s Who” article to inform its readership who the men were and what role they played within the Third Reich as well as their detailed involvement. Once the defendants were known to the public, articles regularly appeared on various aspects of their lives. For example, Rudolf Hess's claim that he was suffering from memory loss appeared on the front page of the paper.¹¹ The newspaper also reported on the suicide and published the will of Robert Ley, the leader of the Nazi Labour Front. In his will Ley stated, “that God had forsaken the Nazis because they persecuted Jews.”¹² The *Cape Times* deemed it “of peculiar significance,” evidence of “his complete recantation of Nazi ideology and his denouncement of anti-Semitism, the first authentic denunciation by a Nazi leader.”¹³

When the trial finally opened on 20 November, two themes dominated the narrative in the Liberal press. Firstly, newspapers noted the educational function of the trial. Here, for the first time, the public would be exposed to the innerworkings of the Third Reich and how its leadership knowingly and purposely plunged the world into war. The press made sure to stress that the accused would be judged using their own records and not that of the Allied countries.¹⁴ Secondly, the Press stressed the historical and legal value and significance of the Trial. As the editor of the *Cape Times* wrote a few days after the start of the trial, “The foundation is being laid for a wider and bolder conceptualization of justice, a system of law under which evildoers will not easily escape retribution because they call themselves patriots

⁸ *Rand Daily Mail*, October 19, 1945: 1

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Rand Daily Mail*, October 19, 1945: 8

¹¹ *Rand Daily Mail*, October 22, 1945:1

¹² *Cape Times*, October 29, 1945

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Sunday Times*, November 25, 1945:9

while brutes and savage call themselves statesmen.”¹⁵ The guilt of the Nazi leaders had already been confirmed as far as the Liberal press was concerned. The Trial's main function was to serve to prevent future conflict through the criminalization of war. The Liberal Media viewed the establishment of the IMT as essential to maintaining world peace.

On the second day of the trial, the Liberal newspapers published an abbreviated version of Judge Robert Jackson's opening address. The article includes a section entitled “The Persecution of Jews.” The report included Jackson's argument that “the Nazis were fanatically committed to the annihilation of all Jewish people...the persecution of the Jews was a manifestation and culmination of the Nazis plan.”¹⁶ The article went on to outline Jackson's argument about why the Nazis invaded Poland and its other neighbours. Kim Priemel argues that this representation of the Holocaust is reflective of Judge Jackson's understanding of Nazi policies. Jackson saw “the atrocities and extermination as a part of the Nazi's broader plan to throw the world into turmoil and ensure German supremacy over Europe not as a crime in and of itself.”¹⁷ The evidence was filtered through a popular understanding of what took place rather than the evidence speaking for itself. This popular understanding shaped how the genocide was understood by the press and the public alike.¹⁸

Beyond presenting the loftier ideals of the trial, in many ways the press treated the Trial as a drama. On the opening day, for example, only one-third of the front-page article in the *Rand Daily Mail* was related to the proceedings. The rest of it, which extended to page eight, included how the defendants – more especially the men who were deemed the main actors, such as Herman Goering, Rudolf Hess, Von Ribbentrop, and Schacht – reacted. For example, “Hess wants picture taken”¹⁹ which appeared in the middle of an article about how the war had been started intentionally. The rest of the coverage on the war of aggression continued in the same vein with revelations from the trial printed almost daily.

The coverage of each count of the indictment was not reported equally. One example can be seen in the case where the film *Nazi Concentration Camp* – “compiled under the

¹⁵ *Cape Times*, November 24, 1945:1

¹⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, November 22, 1945:1

¹⁷ Kim Christian Priemel. “Beyond the Saturation Point of Horror. The Holocaust at Nuremberg Revisited.” *Journal of Modern European History* 14, no. 4 (2016): 522–47

¹⁸ Donald Bloxham, “From Streicher to Sawoniuk: The Holocaust in the Courtroom,” In D. Stone (Ed.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (Palgrave, London: 2004)

¹⁹ *Cape Times*, November 23, 1945:1

direction of Edgar Ray Kellogg from motion pictures taken by Allied military photographers as the Allied armies in the West liberated the areas in which these camps were located”²⁰ – was shown in the court on 29 November. When the Press reported on it the next day, the following subheadings appeared: “Goering Holds head in hands, Schacht turns head away.”²¹ However, none of the papers described what the court saw in the film. The focus on the defendants meant that readers did not always get the full picture of what was happening at the Trial. Consequently, the public at the time did not know what the Tribunal saw in the film and what the purpose of the film was. This was not distinct to newspapers in South Africa. Writing about the concentration camp film, Lawrence Dougals argues that the reason journalists did not recount scenes from the film was because “they wanted to reinforce an understanding that the images spoke for themselves of the defendant’s guilt. That they were personally responsible as functionaries of the Nazi regime for the countless atrocities committed in pursuit of their quest for global domination.”²² Antero Holmila claims that “it may be that the film was meant to prove the defendant’s guilt, but what the supposed guilt was all about remained fuzzy for the readers.”²³

On 14 December, the court moved to focus on the Crimes Against Humanity charge. In the first session, various aspects of the extermination of European Jews were brought to the fore. In some papers the focus of the report was on the intentional destruction of European Jewry. For example, in the *Cape Times*, the headline read “6,000,000 Jews Murdered....,”²⁴ in which the newspaper recounted how the Jews of Europe were systematically killed in the concentration camps as well as in the Warsaw Ghetto. On the same day, the *Rand Daily Mail* published an article about the SS documents which revealed details about the concentration camps and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The focus of the article, however, was about the treatment of Allied Soldiers in the camps rather than the genocide against Jews. This is not to say that the reports did not provide readers with the facts

²⁰ International Court of Justice, *Nuremberg Trial Archives the International Court of Justice: custodian of the archives of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg*, 2018

²¹ International Court of Justice, *Nuremberg Trial Archives the International Court of Justice: custodian of the archives of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg*, 2018

²² Lawrence Douglas, “Film as Witness: Screening Nazi Concentration Camps before the Nuremberg Tribunal,” in *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 105, No. 2, 1995, pp. 449-481 Also see Christian Delage, “The Judicial Construction of the Genocide of the Jews at Nuremberg: Witnesses on Stand and on Screen in David Bankier and Dan Michman (eds.), *Holocaust and Justice: Representation and Historiography of the Holocaust in Post-War Trials*, (Berghahn Books: Jerusalem: 2010)

²³ Antero Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust*, 78

²⁴ *Cape Times*, December 14, 1945: 1

about the Final Solution. However, it was not as prominent as the reports on Allied Soldiers. Both papers also reported on sensational material, for example, that the head of a former prisoner from Buchenwald had been cut off and preserved. The *Rand Daily Mail* published a picture a fortnight later.²⁵

In January 1946, extraordinary testimony about the extermination of the Jews was heard by the court. Otto Ohlendorf's and Dieter Wisliceny's testimony was printed in the press. All the Liberal papers reported that "under Ohlendorf's direction, 90,000 people were liquidated in Russia – men, women, and children. The same story also noted that Adolf Eichmann was responsible for the death of five million Jews."²⁶ Wisliceny's testimony confirmed that "the Jewish Question had been handled in three phases: Until 1940 there had been planned emigration of Jews. From then until 1944 the plan had been to concentrate them in ghettos. From then on, under Himmler's orders the race was to be exterminated."²⁷ Thereafter, Wisliceny laid out "how under Adolf Eichmann's orders, Jews from Hungary had been transported to Auschwitz and how he had personally arranged the transport of Greek and Macedonian Jews to Auschwitz."²⁸ Wisliceny's and Ohlendorf's testimony enabled readers to understand that the Holocaust encompassed most of Europe. Their testimony also revealed how central Auschwitz was to the Final Solution. After these revelations, the reports on the Trial moved to the back pages as the press focused on local news. However, when crucial details emerged from the Trial, they were published on the front page.

In February, the Russian Prosecutor Justice Lev Smirnov presented the case for the charge of Crimes Against Humanity. Despite the Russians' reluctance to separate the suffering of the Jewish people from other Soviet citizens, they still provided a lot of detail about the Nazi persecution of Jews. The persecution of Jews was a part of almost every report published on the Crimes Against Humanity charge because they were so frequently mentioned by the prosecution.²⁹ Curiously, the Liberal press did not publish anything on testimony from partisans, Abram Suzkever and Samuel Rayzman, or survivor Seweryna Szmaglewska. Instead, they focused on Joachim von Ribbentrop's intention to call high ranking British officials as witnesses. "By omitting these first-hand accounts in favour of

²⁵ See *Rand Daily Mail*, December 28, 1945:1

²⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, January 4, 1946: 7&4

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Rand Daily Mail*, February 15 & 20, 1946:7 & 7

publishing reports on the defendants rather than the victims led to the public being deprived of first-hand accounts from the persecuted population about the Nazi's genocidal programme."³⁰ They also missed the chance to put names and faces to the Trial, which until this point, had been document-based and from the perpetrator perspective. However, by the time the prosecution rested their case in February 1946, the public had been presented with a broad picture of the Holocaust, albeit centered on Hitler.

Even though the reports were moved to the back pages of the paper, the press did not lose its enthusiasm for the trial. The newspapers continued to share the major details, including the examination of the defendants and their defense. As a result, more details about the persecution and mass murder of Jews were made available to the public. However, this was not the main thrust of the articles. For example, during the cross-examination of the editor of *Der Stürmer*, the press reported on Julius Streicher's statement that "the Nazis planned to implement their solution to the Jewish question internationally."³¹ However, the newspapers did not go into any detail or provide any further explanation. They swiftly moved to other details in Streicher's testimony.

Further details about the Final Solution emerged during Hermann Goring's, Joachim von Ribbentrop's, and Ernst Kaltenbrunner's defense. Documentary evidence about the numbers of Jews and other victim groups were published on the front page of the newspaper along with details of their personal involvement. During Kaltenbrunner's defense, the testimony of Rudolf Hoess, former commander of Auschwitz, was published. The front-page article contained "details about the operation of the camp, that Hitler had decided on the extermination of the Jews in 1941, that a code of silence had been implemented amongst the guards as well as the number of people who had been murdered in the camp."³² The publication of his testimony was the most detailed report published in South Africa on the massacre of the Jews in Eastern Europe. It also represented one of the few times when the Holocaust was the centre point of the article.

³⁰ Caroline Sharples, "Holocaust on Trial: Mass Observation and British Media Responses to the Nuremberg Tribunal, 1945–1946" In Sharples, C., Jensen, O. (eds) *Britain and the Holocaust. The Holocaust and its Contexts*. (Palgrave Macmillan, London: 2013)

³¹ For information about the newspaper see - Bytwerk, Randall. *Julius Streicher: Nazi editor of the notorious anti-semitic newspaper Der Sturmer*. Cooper Square Press, 2001.

³² *Rand Daily Mail*, April 16. 1946:1

The next time a comprehensive report on the persecution of Jews emerged was during closing arguments in July, in which the British and American prosecution summarized the details which emerged during the Trial. Here again, the systemic nature of the genocide was described, Sir Hartley Shawcross, the Chief British prosecutor at Nuremberg was quoted as saying that “two-third of Jews in Europe were exterminated...The murders were conducted like some mass production industry in the gas chambers and ovens of Auschwitz and Buchenwald.”³³ The article went on to outline the involvement of each individual in different aspects of the genocide.

In September, as the case ended, the Liberal press started to speculate what sentence each defendant would receive. They also reported on the fact that this was the longest trial in human history. The Trial predictably dominated the news the day after the verdict was reached. The newspapers provided an overview of the trial, the sentence each defendant received, as well as their role in the Nazi party along with their photograph. In their editorials, all the papers agreed that justice had been done and again lauded the historic nature of the War Crimes Tribunal.³⁴ Due to the prominence of the persecution and mass murder of Jews in the judgement, it featured strongly in the reports. Once again, the readership was made aware that “the Nazis persecution of Jews was consistent, systematic, inhumane and that six million had perished because of the extermination programme.”³⁵

On 17 October, the Press reported on the hanging of the defendants as well as their last words.³⁶ For the rest of the year, the Liberal press published articles on the details surrounding Goering’s suicide, as well as on other trials which were to take place at Nuremberg.

Reader engagement was high during the year-long trial. In November, letter writers were concerned about the length of the Trial with one reader saying that “it is estimated that there are 50,000 Nazis to be tried. If only half of them were caught it would take about 870 years to get through the job at the present rate...If it wasn’t such a sad affair, it would be a

³³ *Rand Daily Mail*, July 27, 1946:1 & 4

³⁴ See *Cape Times* and *Rand Daily Mail*, October 2, 1946:1 & 7

³⁵ *Rand Daily Mail* and *Cape Times*, October 1, 1946; Kim Priemel, “War Crimes Trials, the Holocaust, and Historiography, 1943–2011,” in S. Gigliotti & H. Earl (Eds) *A Companion to the Holocaust*, (Wiley-Blackwell, New Jersey: 2020).

³⁶ See *Cape Times* and *Rand Daily Mail*, October 17, 1946: 1

pantomime.”³⁷ Some readers also commented on the lack of information on the Trials in the leading Afrikaans newspapers. In January, and throughout the rest of the trials, letters from South African veterans who were Prisoners of War in Italian camps appeared in which they asked, “if the people had forgotten the atrocities committed by the Italians, why weren’t they being put on trial alongside the Germans.”³⁸

Following the sentencing of the defendants, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) – a strong detractor of the trials – asked the government, and particularly the Prime Minister, to intervene and ask the court for mercy for the defendants. The request caused an outcry in the Liberal press with a flurry of letters published. So many were sent to the *Rand Daily Mail*, that they published a collective sample under the headline “Readers Perturbed by DRC ‘Mercy’ Plea.”³⁹ Most of the letter writers were outraged by the Church’s request, with one writer Dawie Couzyn saying “the emotional shock I suffered upon reading the Church’s request has permanently estranged me from the DRC.” Other writers lambasted the Church for their audacity asking, “how many times during the six-year long war did the church raise its voice on behalf of the millions of victims murdered at the instigation of these archfiends?”⁴⁰ Only one writer agreed with the church’s proposal but said that “because it is unlikely that this would happen. There should be a country wide prayer service for them instead.”⁴¹ The very next day, the paper published another letter in which the writer says that “the DRC should send Dr Malan instead to ask for mercy,” which the writer says, “would be a labour of love for the National Party Leader.”⁴² This high level of engagement on this particular matter confirms that at least a portion of the readership of the Liberal press had followed the coverage closely and was invested in the process.

³⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, November 30, 1945: 6

³⁸ *Rand Daily Mail*, January 29 and August 17, 1946: 8

³⁹ *Rand Daily Mail*, October 7, 1946: 6

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Rand Daily Mail*, October 1946: 8

The Black press and the Nuremberg Trials

The Black press treated the Nuremberg Trials in much the same way as they did the liberation of the concentration camps. The focus was on the perpetrators rather than the victims. However, unlike the Liberal press, the coverage was much less detailed. Unsurprisingly, each paper chose to highlight certain aspects of the trials which corresponded to their ethos and readership.

Umteteli wa Bantu's coverage of the Trial was limited and very sporadic. It was the first black publication to publish anything on the Trial and the only paper from the Black press to print a photo. In a front-page story on the 27th of October 1945, the paper informed their readers that "twenty-four (24) leading Nazis will be charged with mass murder before the United Nations War Crimes Tribunal in Nuremberg."⁴³ It then went on to list the defendants and the charges they will be tried for and even included extracts from the indictment. Even though the indictment had been available for two weeks before this article was published, the paper only cites one count of the indictment, that of Crimes Against Humanity. The particular attention to "overcrowding, systemic undernutrition, beating, kicking and so forth"⁴⁴ – was highly deliberate. These self-same acts (which the paper frequently commented on) were perpetrated against Black people in South Africa. The editor's decision to include these details linked what was being seen as crimes in Europe to what Black people were enduring in South Africa.

The next article to appear was nearly a month later. It also appeared on the front page under the headline "Trial of Nazi War Criminals Begins: Eleven to Die for Belsen Horrors."⁴⁵ The editor's opening statement noted "that the Nazi persecution of Jews were planned to exterminate them and that their master plan was to become masters of Europe."⁴⁶ The article ends off by stating that "Josef Kramer and his co-defendants had been found guilty of mass murder and sentenced to death."⁴⁷ This was the first article in the context of the Trial to mention the Final Solution. Perhaps the inclusion of Jackson's statement was intended as a warning of what could happen if prejudice and discrimination were left unchecked in South Africa.

⁴³ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 27 October 1945: 1

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

In the first edition of 1946, the photo below was published with a caption identifying the defendants and that they were on trial for war crimes.⁴⁸ No further mention of the Trial was made in this issue. Thereafter, the Trial was only mentioned in the World News section of the paper in both English and Sotho. The articles in English mentioned the persecution and mass murder of Jews and other victim groups, but often only in passing.⁴⁹ For example, it noted when Julius Streicher had a heart attack during the Trial.⁵⁰ The exception being an article in April 1946 in which the newspaper published a front-page article entitled “Nazi Murders.” The article contained the key details of Rudolph Hess's testimony as the commander of Auschwitz. The article drew its readers attention to the number of Jewish victims who had perished at the camp, mentioning it three times in the short article stating that “more than 2,000,000 Jews were destroyed in the camp.”⁵¹ It then went on to break down the numbers according to nationality. The articles in Sotho, by contrast, provided much more detailed statistical information about the trial and the defendants.



⁴⁸ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 5 January 1946: 1

⁴⁹ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 26 January 1946: 1; *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 30 March 1945: 12

⁵⁰ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 26 January 1946: 1,

⁵¹ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 20 April 1946:1

The only time the editors overtly expressed an opinion on the Trials came at the conclusion. In the 5 October 1946 edition, in an editorial entitled “Nuremberg,” the editor calls “the conclusion of the trial the second last chapter in the history of Nazism.”⁵² The last chapter was the hanging of the defendants on 16 October 1946, which ended the history of Nazism. He went on to write that “it is not necessary to recount the deeds committed by these men as they cover every form of baseness and horror. From the concentration camps to the persecution of the Jewish people and other races.” However, for the editor the real crime of these men was against the soul of Germany. “They had turned this once God fearing, democratic, enlightened nation into disciples of Hitler and his doctrine whose only purpose of life was to die for their Fuehrer. This poison would take generations to be fully eradicated. Until then the German people would suffer for the crimes committed by these men.” Here again, the editor took the position that the Nazi party was completely responsible for the atrocities committed in the camps. In his view, the German people had been co-opted by force and propaganda to fulfil the mission of the Nazi party and who would now suffer the consequences of their leaders’ actions. This article corresponds with the view that there was a separation between Germans and Nazis. In the paper’s opinion, the Nazis had corrupted the German people through their ideology and manipulated them into becoming war mongers. No letters were published during this period which directly addressed the Trial although letter writers continued to make references to the dangers of fascism in South Africa.⁵³

In the *Bantu World*, the first article about the IMT appeared on 24 November 1945 which outlined the first day in court and the reading of the indictment. The article was originally published by SAPA-Reuters, and as was typical of coverage in the Liberal press, it did not miss an opportunity to describe how the defendants looked, behaved, and interacted with each other. It even had a subheading – “Hess chews gum” – which describes what he was doing while the charges were being read out. The fact that Emmy Goering was going to testify against her husband was also included in the article. No mention was made of any victim group.

The next article to appear was on the first count in the indictment, Crimes Against Peace. The paper published an extract from Sir Hartley Shawcross’ opening statement to the

⁵² *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 5 October 1946: 1

⁵³ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 24 August 1946: 8

court. In the piece, Sir Hartley is quoted as saying, “Perhaps their guilt as murderers and robbers is less important and of less effect to the future generations of mankind than their crime of fraud – fraud by which they put themselves in the position to do their murder and their robbery.”⁵⁴

The next time the Trial was mentioned in the publication was nine months later in the 7 September 1945 edition with a short article on page four under the “News in Brief” section. The article announced that “the Trial had ended” and provided statistical information about it and that “it was the longest trial in history.”⁵⁵ It also provided details about the upcoming sentencing. Here again, the paper makes no mention of the genocide. Two weeks later, the paper announced in a front-page article that the sentencing had been postponed and that the execution of those sentenced to death would take place in secret.

In October, the paper offered its opinion on the Trial. In an editorial entitled “The Nuremberg Verdict,” the editor lauded the Trial for setting an historic precedent for national and international law.⁵⁶ The Trial “would be permanently significant because it exposed the innerworkings of the Third Reich, its operational structure, and its planned war of aggression.”⁵⁷ However, the editor cautioned his readership and the United Nations Organisation about becoming complacent, stating that “even though these men have been condemned there are still millions in the world who espouse the ideas of Nazism. If they aren’t stopped, the world could descend into chaos once again.”⁵⁸ This statement is telling when one considers what was happening in South Africa at this time. Not only had the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, also known as the Ghetto Act, recently been passed,⁵⁹ but some South Africans who espoused the ideals of Nazism were again active in political life and were beginning to strongly advocate for *apartheid*. The editorial also made sure to mention that the Trial was not conducted in the spirit of revenge, but rather of justice. The editor ended by asking if “all the nations of the world will come together to build

⁵⁴ *Bantu World*, 8 December 1945: 1

⁵⁵ *Bantu World*, 7 September 1946:4

⁵⁶ *Bantu World*, 12 October 1946: 4

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ This act sought to limit the areas in which Indian South Africans were allowed to live and/or own land. For more information about the act see - <https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/site/q/03lv01538/04lv01646/05lv01813.htm> (accessed 20 March 2024)

a better life for all regardless of race and colour or will the old hatreds prevail?”⁶⁰ For the author, the Nuremberg Trials were a seminal moment in which the world could either choose to build a more equitable society or it could continue along the same path. The author’s expression of faith in the UN Charter suggests that he still held out hope that Black people would gain protections based on the principles it espoused. *Bantu World* published a front-page article on the day the defendants were hanged. The article described the last words and action of each man as well as the lack of response from the German public. Thereafter no further articles appeared.

The *Cape Standard*’s coverage of the Trial was limited, but like *Umteteli wa Bantu*, it intimately linked the Trial to what was happening in South Africa at the time. Unlike *Umteteli*, the *Standard* was more forthright in its comparisons. The first article on the subject, entitled “Once a Quisling,” was published in April and was an extract from the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department Bulletin.⁶¹ The author condemned those who were traitorous during the war in South Africa, as well as in India. “Right now,” wrote the author, “psychologists are collecting data on Quislings, including the unconscious minds and dreams of the accused at Nuremberg to develop a theory on how one becomes a Quisling.”⁶² The author went on to say that there are quislings in South Africa who must be dealt with. The author is clearly referencing the Nationalists who openly sympathized with the Nazis throughout the war and who wanted to emulate Nazi ideology in South Africa. For the author then, the guilt of the Nuremberg defendants was already established. A study of their psychological makeup could therefore be used to develop a theory that could pre-empt the emergence of a similar movement in South Africa. This research was later used to inspire the development of Authoritarian Personality Theory, “a psychological syndrome which is characterized by deference to authority, aggression toward outgroups, and strict adherence to cultural conventions.”⁶³

⁶⁰ *Bantu World*, 12 October 1946: 4

⁶¹ *Cape Standard*, April 26, 1945:2; See Vidkun Quisling, Shoah Resource Centre, The international school for Holocaust Studies for an explanation on the origins of the use of Quisling as another word for traitor.

⁶² *Cape Standard*, April 26, 1945:2; See Vidkun Quisling, Shoah Resource Centre, The international school for Holocaust Studies for an explanation on the origins of the use of Quisling as another word for traitor.

⁶³ To find out more about the theory of Authoritarian personality see Pettigrew, T. F. ‘The authoritarian personality.’ In G. Ritzer & J. M. Ryan (Co-Editors). *Concise Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology*, (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2011)

The newspaper was also of the opinion that the Trial had been completed fairly and that justice had been served stating “that Nuremberg had gone from the place where toys were made to the place where racist laws were made against the Jews to the place where the Nazi criminals had received their just rewards.”⁶⁴ The paper also thought the Trial was blazing a new trail for international justice.⁶⁵ Only two letters were published which obliquely referenced the trial, both published in the same edition. The first letter, by J. Pember, mentioned “the political machinery that was using Nazi ideology and methods to subjugate Black people” in South Africa.⁶⁶ The second letter, entitled “The Road to Peace,” by Kay Bee, a regular correspondent of the paper, described the educational merits of the trial and the benefits it could have for South Africa stating “why only educate Germans, educate white South Africa. The powers of the desires of individual power must not be allowed to sabotage peace.”⁶⁷

Similarly, the Non-European Unity Movement’s more radical publication *The Torch* connected the events of the trial (and indeed Nazism) to the events in South Africa. In an editorial entitled “Learn now or Perish,” the editor condemned the Anti-Indian bill which had passed the House of Assembly the previous week, stating that “not since the Anti-Native bill of 1935/6 has there been such a brutally clear exposure of the Nazi mentality...[to] permanently enslave the non-European population of South Africa...the German Nazis are still on trial at Nuremberg. Yet the leaders of this country have seized the torch of Nazi ideology and are brandishing it high for all the world to see.”⁶⁸ The paper did not stop their comparison there. In an editorial in May entitled “The Police,” the editor bluntly stated that “the sadistic fury and depraved bestiality of the police against the non-European community can only be compared to the Nazi storm troopers who terrorised Germany and Nazi occupied Europe.”⁶⁹ The paper also critiqued the opinion that the Nuremberg trial represented a seminal moment in world history for all. Writing under the pen name Dr Pangloss, in the op-ed column entitled “X-Ray of The News,” the author cited an article from the *Cape Times* which said that “henceforth the law recognizes no wholly irresponsible ruler in the world. If an absolute ruler cannot be tried in his own country, he may still be arraigned before a higher

⁶⁴ *Cape Standard*, October 4, 1945: 6

⁶⁵ *Cape Standard*, October 18, 1945: 1, November 5, 1945: 1

⁶⁶ *Cape Standard*, January 15, 1946: 9

⁶⁷ *Cape Standard*, January 15, 1946: 9

⁶⁸ *The Torch*, April 4, 1945: 4

⁶⁹ *The Torch*, May 20, 1946: 4

jurisdiction.”⁷⁰ The author responded sarcastically: “Of course non-Europeans must not take this so very literally. After all there are no more absolute rulers. They will all be hanged one of these days. Then we will see peace.”⁷¹ The tone can be attributed to the fact that, at the time, a South African delegation was attending the Peace Conference organized by the United Nations Organisation (UNO) even while racist and discriminatory laws were being enacted in South Africa. The author used the Trial to convey the message that while the Nazi leadership was being brought to justice, other leaders and politicians were building a society inspired by Nazi ideology.

The conviction of 19 defendants provided vindication and hope for the editors of *The Torch*. In a scathing editorial in the 7 October 1946 edition entitled “For Crimes Against Humanity,” the editor pointed out that “the Nuremberg Trial has created a feeling of unease in the country. A new precedent has been established. National leaders can now be sentenced to death for war crimes and crimes against humanity. No South African reading the lengthy judgement could fail to notice the many similarities between the statement and the colour bar system in place in the country.”⁷² The author expressed his hope that South Africans, especially the ruling class, would be cognizant of what could happen should they allow themselves to continue down the path of prejudice and discrimination. He also issued a stern warning to Afrikaner Nationalists stating that “even as the Nazi leaders stand condemned today so too will the Herrenvolk face judgment. Its laws and its technique of exploitation all constitute gross crimes against humanity.”⁷³ In a subsequent article on the passive resistance movement, the author credited the people in Europe for the outcome of the Trial stating, “Europeans are aware of the evils of the Herrenvolk doctrine, it has been their pressure which forced the judges to carry out the death sentence on some of the defendants.”⁷⁴ Through the inclusion of this statement, the author seems to be suggesting that South Africans too should apply popular pressure on their own government. In a subsequent editorial entitled “Oppressed Majority,” the editor implored “the UNO to intervene in South Africa to help the oppressed non-European population who are the victims of a Herrenvolk system.”⁷⁵

⁷⁰ *The Torch*, October 7, 1946:4

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *The Torch*, October 28, 1946: 4

The final two mentions of the trials appeared in the *Roamer* column of the newspaper. The column contained short factoids of news from around the world. The first one, which appeared on 21 October 1946, was a rumour that the Nazi leaders had not really been hanged but that straw dummies were hung instead.⁷⁶ In the last article to appear on the subject, the author cited *Die Burger*, which reported that “the Nuremberg judges had received several disturbing letters with vulgar language.”⁷⁷ The author then asks, “how many of those letters bore the South African postmark.”⁷⁸

The Afrikaans Press and the Nuremberg Trials

The Afrikaans Press treated the Nuremberg Trials in a comparable way to the liberation of the concentration camps but expressed it in diverse ways. Despite the National Party adopting a more moderate approach during the latter part of the war in response to the imminent Allied victory, this stance was not reflected in the coverage of the IMT in the Nationalist newspapers.⁷⁹ They all outright rejected the War Crime Tribunal and once again called the motives of the Allies into question. They claimed that “the Trial was merely a way for the Allies to get vengeance and asked who the Allies were to sit in judgment of the Nazis, when they had and were still committing atrocities.”⁸⁰ The Nationalist Press continued this rhetoric throughout the Trial in a continual attempt to minimize and draw attention away from the atrocities committed by the Nazis and stoke the flames of anti-British sentiments amongst the Afrikaner population.

Die Burger provided its readership with full factual coverage of the Trial. However, the paper used every opportunity it could to convey its disapproval, dismissing the trial as an act of vengeance. It also frequently compared the atrocities of the Nazis to the actions of the British during the South African war to undermine the British’s moral credibility to prosecute the Nazis. Like the Liberal press, the main thrust of its reportage was on the defendants themselves. However, unlike the Liberal press, they included more comprehensive coverage of the defendant's case.

⁷⁶ *The Torch*, October 21, 1946: 4

⁷⁷ *The Torch*, October 28, 1946: 4

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ For more information about the evolution of the Nationalist Party policies during the war see – John Lawrence, “Influence of the National Socialist Ideology on the South African National Party 1939-1945,” (unpublished Master’s dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1989)

⁸⁰ See *Die Burger*, November 20, 1945, & *Die Transvaler*, November 22, 1945

The first article on the Trial appeared in *Die Burger* in October after the indictments were made public. The paper devoted a lot of space to critiquing the Trial by questioning the right of the Allies to try the Germans. The paper started by publishing an imaginary defense they created for the defendants on each of the charges. Writing about the Crimes Against Humanity charge, the paper stated that “the Germans weren’t the ones who invented the use of concentration camps as a weapon of war and don’t hold the patent on using them as a means of retaining their power.”⁸¹ The article concluded that “the Allies were as guilty of the crimes they were prosecuting the Germans on and that the only reason the defendants were on trial was because they lost the war.”⁸² The paper then turned their attention to the judges stating “Germany is accused of capital crimes and deporting Poles, Jews and Russians. These criminals are now appearing before judges appointed by nations who dropped the atom bomb and are in the process of expelling ten million Germans from their homeland.”⁸³ The paper used various devices to turn attention away from the atrocities committed in the camp and continued to emphasize the suffering of the German people and downplayed German atrocities.

The next article on the Trial appeared in the 27 October 1945 edition. *Die Burger* printed the entirety of the will of Dr Robert Ley, leader of the Nazi Labour Front who committed suicide whilst incarcerated at Nuremberg. In the testament, Dr Ley stated that “God had forsaken the Nazis because they persecuted the Jews.”⁸⁴ The paper offered no commentary on the first denouncement of anti-Semitism by a prominent Nazi leader.

When the Trial began, *Die Burger* persisted in its criticism of the court proceedings: “international law does not recognize the category of war crimes, there is no international court or procedures to deal with this matter. Therefore, the crimes being tried at Nuremberg and the methods being employed were a victor imposing their will on the losers.”⁸⁵ The article concluded by stating that “the summary execution of the accused without a trial would at least have been an honest attempt at administering primitive justice, whereas the trial only gave the appearance of civilized justice.”⁸⁶ In the opinion of the paper, Nuremberg was the

⁸¹ *Die Burger*, October 19, 1945

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Die Burger*, 27 October 1945

⁸⁵ *Die Burger*, November 20, 1945

⁸⁶ *Die Burger*, November 20, 1945

creation of retroactive legislation designed to exact retribution on a vanquished enemy. To add credence to its opinion on the Trial, the paper emphasized opposition to the proceedings from elsewhere in Europe, and particularly in Britain. It also downplayed the significance of the Trial stating that “the trial was threatening to turn into a fiasco now that the public has started to lose interest in the proceedings...the only reason the proceedings are continuing is because so much progress has been made that retreat is no longer an option.”⁸⁷

On 21 November 1945, *Die Burger* published a front-page report recapping the first day of the trial. Like the Liberal press and Black press, they also included lengthy descriptions of how the defendants reacted to the charge sheet and how they pleaded. However, unlike the other publications, they did not include extracts from Justice Jackson’s opening statement. The following day, the paper again published a front-page report under the headline “Legality of The Trial Against the German Leaders disputed by Advocate,” in which the defendants’ lawyers entire argument about the legality of charges were recapitulated. This included the argument that the category of war crimes did not exist during the war and that it should not be applied retrospectively.

When the prosecution’s case started on 23 November 1945, the paper moved its report on the Trial to the top half of the second page where it would remain unless the news was related directly to the defendants or the defense's case.⁸⁸ The paper did provide some information about the piles of Nazi documents obtained by the Allies.

In addition to reporting on atrocities committed by the Nazis, *Die Burger* continued to highlight the suffering of the German people. On 24 November, the paper published a photo of a German woman collecting firewood on the front page with the caption “old woman collects firewood in Unter den Linden, Berlin,”⁸⁹ and went on to explain how the people of Berlin were suffering because of the Allied bombardment. Below the photo, the paper published an article recapping the defendants' lawyers' argument against the inclusion of certain documents procured by the prosecution at the end of the war. On page two it included references to the persecution of Jews for the first time.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Die Burger*, December 1, 1945:1

⁸⁹ *Die Burger*, November 24, 1945: 1

⁹⁰ *Die Burger*, November 24, 1945

On 30 November 1945, the paper reported on the American presentation on the annexation of Austria, and at the end of this article it included a paragraph on the Nazi concentration camp film. It recounted that the footage was obtained from Dachau, Buchenwald, and Bergen Belsen. Despite mentioning that the Crimes Against Humanity count would be presented next, the paper did not include any mentions of it until the 5th of December when it did an overview of Sir Shawcross's case. For the first time since the start of the Trial, the paper included an in-depth report on the genocide against the Jews, which was published under the headline: "The So-Called Crimes Against Humanity."⁹¹ The article's tone left readers in no doubt that the writer did not believe any evidence being presented.

Despite its skepticism, the paper provided its readership with in-depth coverage of the *Einsatzgruppen* and the massacres which took place in Eastern Europe. For example, on 3 January 1946, the paper published "Mass Murder of Jews Described," an article that reported on the testimony of Hermann Friedrich Grabe, a German engineer who described how the SS massacred the remaining Jews in Dubno, Poland in October 1942, as well as the activities of the SS in other areas of Nazi-occupied Europe. The paper offered no commentary on the proceeding. On 4 January 1946, the paper again published a detailed report of the SS General Otto Ohlendorf's testimony in which he described the methods employed by the *Einsatzgruppen* to massacre Russian Jewry. The paper surprisingly also included Otto's statement that "they stopped using gas vans because his men found it unpleasant," thereby providing their readership with evidence of the regime's use of poison gas for mass extermination for the first time.

Despite the evidence already presented on the mass murder of European Jewry, the paper continued to trivialize the Trial by turning it into a court drama with the accused and their families cast in the role of victim. Several reports appeared on the toll the Trial was taking on the dispirited defendants and their families. It also continued to disparage the aims of the Trial. Writing about the aims of the trial in the Foreign Overview opinion column, which expressed opinions about world events entitled "Nuremberg Trial Takes a Wrong

⁹¹ *Die Burger*, December 5, 1945: 2

Turn,⁹² the author expressed the opinion that “the Allies aim of stimulating German nationalism through the trial has not come to pass, instead it has been dampened.”⁹³

On 16 April 1946, *Die Burger* published its first article solely on the mass murder of European Jewry. Entitled “The Obliteration of Jews,” the article included extracts from Rudolph Hess's testimony about the inner workings of Auschwitz from the arrival of prisoners to their murder.⁹⁴ He described the methods used to murder thousands of people at Auschwitz and Treblinka including the fact that the camp(s) had been intentionally hidden to avoid detection. This article was the first time the paper did not include dismissive language or grammar to indicate to readers that they should not believe the testimony which was being presented. As the Trial progressed more mentions were made of the genocide against the Jews.⁹⁵ Yet the paper offered no commentary on the evidence presented, nor did it publish any letters from readers about the Trial.

It was only in October 1946 when the Trial ended that it returned to the front pages of the publication. Here again, the paper took the opportunity to voice its opposition to the Trial stating that “Nuremberg only affirmed the right of the winner, and winners are always right, even if they are also aggressors. The double ironic injustice of the future may therefore be that aggression and crimes may go unpunished, just because the culprits happened to be on the winning side.”⁹⁶ The next day the paper issued a warning about the unintended consequences of the Allied occupation of Germany stating that “if Hitler’s fanatical plans for Germany was the result of the Treaty of Versailles, what will the result of Nuremberg be with occupation and oppression enshrined in it? The revenge of a trampled Germany will be terrible unless it is kept under control forever.”⁹⁷

Even at this junction, the paper did not change its viewpoint. As a fierce opponent of South Africa’s participation in the war and the mouthpiece of the National Party, the paper’s stance is understandable when one looks at the policies of the party throughout the war. *Die Burger* was such a firm supporter of Germany and its policies that admitting that the war was

⁹² *Die Burger*, 9 April 1946

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Die Burger*, 16 April 1946

⁹⁵ *Die Burger*, 30 April 1946

⁹⁶ *Die Burger*, October 1, 1946

⁹⁷ *Die Burger*, October 2, 1945

justified would be admitting that the United Party had been correct to enter the war and that they had been wrong all along. This about face would have detrimental effects for the Party's voter base, which had grown exponentially during the 1943 election, in the wake of conservative Afrikaners dissatisfaction with the Four Freedoms and the New Deal.⁹⁸ It also presented a moral obstacle. Whilst the paper could not be seen to condone mass murder, it also could not be seen as being supportive of the Trial. To overcome this obstacle, the paper downplayed evidence of genocide, used editorials and other opinion columns to voice opposition to the Trial, and sought to focus readers' attention on whether the Allies had the moral and legal authority to put the Germans on Trial.⁹⁹ It also continued emphasizing the suffering of the German people and even proposed that the 1946 Christmas Fund be donated to Germany.

Die Transvaler, like *Die Burger*, voiced its opposition to the Trial from the outset. In wake of the signing and publication of the IMT Charter, the paper published a report in which it critiqued the new developments in international law brought about by the Charter. It dismissed the new laws as "victor's justice which will allow the victors to ascribe the misdeeds that they are guilty of to those who they have defeated."¹⁰⁰ However, the paper did not stop there. Similarly, to *Die Burger*, it drew a comparison between the actions of the Nazis and those of the British military leadership during the South African war, stating that "there is almost no difference between the British military's actions then and those of the German military who now stand accused at Nuremberg."¹⁰¹ As Sharon Friedman rightly pointed out, "by invoking the memory of the Anglo-Boer war it was a sure-fire way to elicit an emotional response from the Afrikaner community for whom the war was still a fresh memory in 1945."¹⁰² By comparing the actions of the British during the South African war to the actions of the Nazis, the newspaper sought to prove that the British could not stand in judgement of the Nazis since they had committed the same actions and were not brought to trial. In effect, this also minimised the atrocities committed by the Nazis and stoked anti-British sentiments amongst the Afrikaner population. The paper would consistently hold this position throughout the Trial.

⁹⁸ For more information see - <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/four-freedoms> (accessed 20 March 2024)

⁹⁹ *Die Burger*, 5 October 1945, 19 October 1945, 12 December 1945, 1 October 1946

¹⁰⁰ *Die Transvaler*, August 31, 1945

¹⁰¹ *Die Burger*, October 22, 1945

¹⁰² Sharon Friedman, *Jews, Germans, and Afrikaners*, pg. 50

Although it marked the start of the Nuremberg Trials on 21 November, *Die Transvaler* did not publish any of the details from the Trial until a week later. However, this does not mean the paper was silent on the matter. On the contrary, it took this opportunity to reiterate its opposition to the trial. On 22 November 1945, it published a report in which it claimed that “the traditional values of the British were being violated. The fact that the defendants were condemned as guilty by all is contrary to the accepted principles of justice.”¹⁰³ For the next two days, articles appeared in which the motives for the trial were once again brought into question. The paper saw it as purely victor’s justice which would set a precedent for future victors of war to punish their enemies.¹⁰⁴

In December, the paper completely ignored the evidence being presented on the concentration camps as well as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It only reported on the British presentation of their case dealing with the count of aggressive war and their critiques thereof. Instead, *Die Transvaler* took the opportunity to continue making direct comparisons between the British and the Germans. In the 6 December edition of the paper, it compared Germany’s actions to those of the British during the South African war stating, “instead of pursuing the peaceful path of arbitration Britain chose to go down the warpath.”¹⁰⁵ It also condemned them for “now standing in judgement of the leaders of National Socialism who are accused of breaking the moral code of mankind.”¹⁰⁶ The paper saw the Trial as a travesty of justice being conducted by a country which had committed similar atrocities.

The Trial did not feature in the paper again until October 1946 when judgement was handed down on the defendants. Here again, *Die Transvaler* took the opportunity to reiterate its main arguments against the Trials. Firstly, it lambasted the Allies for “the profound hypocrisy at being proud of this mockery of justice.”¹⁰⁷ Secondly, it argued that “the Nuremberg Trials had set a precedent which would lead to more horrific wars in the future in which leaders would unleash awful weapons rather than be condemned by their conquerors at the end of the war.”¹⁰⁸ Thirdly, it drew attention to the Allies' misdeeds whom the paper thought “could also be put on trial for inciting an aggressive war and Committing Crimes

¹⁰³ *Die Transvaler*, November 22, 1945

¹⁰⁴ *Die Transvaler*, November 23 & 24, 1945

¹⁰⁵ *Die Transvaler*, December 6, 1945

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Die Transvaler*, October 2, 1946

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Against Peace.”¹⁰⁹ Lastly, it again drew parallels between the atrocities committed by the Nazis and those committed by the British. It reasoned that “logically Chamberlain and Milner should also be put on trial and sentenced for their role in the 1899 war against the Boer republics as they committed the same kind of atrocities the Nazi leaders are being tried for today.”¹¹⁰

It also for the first time admitted that “those who were put on trial deserved everyone's deepest disapproval and condemnation for the crimes they committed during the war.” Despite this pronouncement, the newspaper published front page pictures of the Von Ribbentrop and Goering families with the captions, “One day soon they will be fatherless.” It also took this opportunity to comment on the atrocities committed by the Russians stating “Aren't the Russians just as culpable? Didn't they invade Poland and deport Poles and Germans to Siberia? Shouldn't Stalin or Molotof be tried for incitement, aggression, and Crimes Against Humanity as well?”¹¹¹ This deflection of the Trial was a typical response from the paper which lost no opportunity to bring Russia's actions to light. On 3 October, it printed an extract from *Pravda*, the official newspaper of the Communist party in the USSR below a cartoon indicating that “Nuremberg was a warning to all those who wanted to flame new conflicts or war against the freedom loving nations of the world.”¹¹² It concluded by stating “you've heard the bells of Nuremberg ring. If it rings again, it will be ringing for you.”

On 9 October, despite never having published a single photo from the Nazi concentration camps, the paper published a photo on its front page of the Krugersdorp concentration camp cemetery in which new gravestones had been erected for those who perished at that camp along with the caption: “Rest in Peace.”¹¹³ This photo sought to again reinforce the notion that the British were just as guilty of committing atrocities as the Nazis. For the rest of the year, the paper continued expressing its sympathy for the suffering the Germans had to endure, even publishing an article about the conditions in Germany. In December, the paper came as close as any Nationalist paper would to admitting that they had been wrong about the Nazis. Stating in the 30 December 1946 edition that “the republicans

¹⁰⁹ *Die Transvaler*, October 2, 1946

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Die Transvaler*, October 2, 1946

¹¹² *Die Transvaler*, October 3, 1946

¹¹³ *Die Transvaler*, October 9, 1946

had been hopeful that their ideals were finally going to come true, but their judgement was clouded by what was happening both in the country and elsewhere.”¹¹⁴ It concluded by referring to the change in the Nationalist Party policies by stating that “the Party had now reached a turning point and would regain their strength. In contrast the imperialists were now faced with shattered ideals and insolvable problems.”¹¹⁵ By returning to its main talking points at the end of the article, the paper sought to deflect their readers’ attention away once again from the outcomes of the Nuremberg Trial and onto what they perceived as a greater threat: Communism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, how South African publications conceptualised and represented the International Military Tribunal was once again influenced by their stance on the war and how they understood the destruction of European Jewry.

The Liberal press was primarily interested in exploring the innerworkings of the Third Reich and its leadership which purposely plunged the world into war. Its fascination with the defendants meant that it unintentionally obscured certain aspects of the Trial. The Liberal press understood the Trial as a mechanism for the criminalisation of war and to ensure world peace, and its understanding of the Holocaust was influenced by how Judge Jackson conceptualized the Nazi crimes in his opening statement. He saw the genocide against European Jews not as a crime in and of itself, but rather as a part of the Nazis' plans to throw the world into chaos and reign supreme in Europe. Despite this understanding, the press still provided its readership with key details about the persecution and mass murder of European Jews, including how the Nazi ghetto- and concentration camp system functioned. Reader engagement was relatively high during this period. Readers commented on the Trial's length and the absence of details in the Afrikaans newspapers. Following the sentencing, readers were outraged by the Dutch Reformed Church’s call for clemency.

The Black press covered the IMT in much the same way as it did the liberation of the camps. Like their liberal counterparts, they focused more on the defendants than the victims.

¹¹⁴ *Die Transvaler*, December 30, 1946

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

However, they did provide their readers with some details about the persecution and mass murder of European Jewry. These newspapers compared the atrocities committed against Jews in the camps to those committed against Black people in South Africa. Whilst they maintained that the Trial was a major milestone, they cautioned the world not to become complacent given that there were other leaders around the world building societies inspired by Nazi doctrine.

The Nationalist Press treated the IMT much like it had the liberation of the camps. It stated outright that the Trial was mere victor's justice. It also intentionally stoked anti-British sentiment by comparing the atrocities committed by the Nazis to those committed in the British concentration camps. *Die Burger* was the only Nationalist paper to provide in-depth coverage of the Trial. However, it gave more prominence to the defendants and their case than it did to the prosecution. Like all the other Afrikaans papers, it took every opportunity to denounce the proceedings. It also drew their readers' attention away from the Trial by focusing on the suffering of the German people. At the end of the Trial, *Die Transvaler* was the only paper to come close to admitting that it had been wrong in its assessment of the Nazi's culpability. However, it quickly turned its readers' attention to the dangers of Communism.

Chapter 3

The Destruction of European Jewry and the IMT in the South African Jewish Press

This chapter examines how the South African Jewish press reported on and understood the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, as well as the International Military Tribunal (IMT). We will track this through the coverage in the most widely circulated English and Hebrew newspapers in the country. Three of the five publications under review were distributed nationally and thus reflected the opinions of a more geographically diverse audience. The community's response to the Holocaust was influenced by memories of pre-war antisemitism, particularly the political maelstrom precipitated by the influx of Jewish refugees from Germany in the 1930s. With the knowledge that the historical centres of Jewish life in Europe had been destroyed by the Nazis, the South African Jewish community threw their energies into supporting the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

Reporting on the Holocaust in the Jewish English Press

Coverage of events related to the liberated concentration camps in the South African Jewish press was more limited in some publications than in the non-Jewish press. Few images from the camps were published. No publication mentioned any victim groups besides Jewish survivors. The relative lack of coverage possibly relates to the fact that the non-Jewish newspapers were publishing these reports and certain Jewish publications did not feel the need to republish them. When the Holocaust was referenced, it was most often in the context of the need to establish a Jewish state. The focus was overwhelmingly on providing relief to the survivors and the establishment of a Jewish homeland which could provide shelter and safety to the global Jewish community.

From Persecution to Mass Murder

Like the Liberal press, Jewish newspapers expressed dismay and shock when the revelations of the atrocities committed by the Nazis became public. Unlike the Liberal press, these newspapers contextualised mass murder within a longer history of Nazi persecution of Jews. And unlike the secular news, the focus was on the survivors and the victims, not the

perpetrators. In a front-page editorial entitled “Nazi Bestiality Exposed,”¹ the *Chronicle* stated that “in a world supped full with horror during the last few years the revelations of the Nazi Concentration Camps...have come as a profound shock.”² The editor went on to provide his readers with an overview of the plight of European Jewry stating that “whilst they do not know what proportion of the people found within the camps were Jewish, the Jews were the Nazis first victims. How many thousands perished at the hands of these cruel tyrants over the past twelve years will never be known.”³ The *Record’s* article on the persecution of German Jewry appeared two days after the fall of Berlin on 4 May 1945. In a two-page article entitled “Hitler’s Only Victory”⁴ written by T. K., the author recounted the persecution that German Jews faced from 1933 onwards. In the opening paragraph, the author described the scale of the destruction wrought upon German Jewry stating “There are no Jews in Berlin to celebrate the fall of the Capital of Nazism. Hitler has won one battle... In Germany, he has achieved their complete liquidation.”⁵ He went on to lay out the road to the genocide from persecution to mass murder stating that Hitler’s “campaign started with insults and humiliations and ended in murder. Hundreds of thousands of Jews in Germany perished by his hand, making him the most ignominious and brutal tyrant of history.”⁶ The article was bookended by two images. The first image showed the first arrests in the Jewish quarter in Berlin with the caption “1933!”. The second image (the first from a liberated camp published in this paper) is entitled “1945! Scene of Horror: Thousands Died Here,”⁷ and showed hundreds of victims from an unnamed camp lying in rows awaiting mass burial. These images were used to provide a visual representation of how quickly the Nazis moved from persecution to mass murder.

Liberation Outside the Camps

The first article on liberated slave workers appeared in the *Zionist Record* on 13 April 1945 under the headline “Jews Liberated in Conquered Germany”⁸ which chronicled several war factories in Ludwigshafen, Germany. The article also cited survivors who stated that

¹ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, April 27, 1945: 1

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Zionist Record*, May 4, 1945:12-13

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Zionist Record*, April 13, 1945:5

“there are still thousands of Jewish slave workers in Germany and that they are being moved around constantly within the Reich.”⁹ This is one of the earliest mentions of Death Marches published in any of the South African publications under review.

The *South African Jewish Chronicle* also provided its readership with information about the liberation of smaller groups of slave workers from sites outside the camps. For example, in a piece about the liberation of Dachau, the *Chronicle* published an article about 1,200 Jewish women slave workers at a weapons factory near Leipzig who were liberated by the Allies.¹⁰ Articles of this nature would appear frequently in the paper.

In contrast, the *Jewish Herald* at this point chose to publish an article from the perspective of several repatriated Palestinian POWs. In the article, an unnamed POW provided a first-hand account of his internment at a camp near Lublin. He states that , “Within three days from the 12 to 15 December 1942 all 23,000 were liquidated.”¹¹ He also provided a second-hand account obtained from a French paramedic about the liquidation of 100,000 Łódź Jews and how what was termed the Sosnowiec Hospital instead “consisted of three rooms a bathroom, a gas chamber and a crematorium for the Jews of the town.”¹² His use of the word “liquidation” provides insight into how perverse the language of the Nazi regime had become by the end of the war. The *Herald’s* choice to publish an account from the perspective of a soldier is indicative of how the paper would continue its coverage of the Holocaust.

News of the Liberated Camps

The *South African Jewish Chronicle* published its first article on the liberated camps on 20 April 1945. The article entitled “Horrors of German Concentration Camps: Gruesome Discoveries”¹³ written by a special correspondent from the Jewish Telegraph Agency provides an overview of the discoveries made by the Allied Army at Buchenwald, Bergen Belsen, Nordhausen, Westerbork as well as survivors liberated from a train near Magdeburg. The article appeared on the inside pages of the paper under the fold. The author mentions

⁹ *Zionist Record*, April 13, 1945:5

¹⁰ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, May 4, 1945:218

¹¹ *Jewish Herald*, April 13, 1945:4

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, April 20, 1945: 2

Jewish prisoners three times in the article. However, for most of the extensive piece it uses the same phraseology employed in the non-Jewish publications. For example, when speaking about Nordhausen, the article mentions that 25,000 slave workers had been liberated by the American Army.¹⁴ The lack of reference to Jewish prisoners may be explained by the fact that at this point the press did not know if the survivors were Jewish or not.

The *Record's* coverage of the liberation of Bergen Belsen started by referring to the International Red Cross' negotiations with the German authorities to release some 3000 Jewish internees being held at the camp. An in-depth report was published nearly a week later in the 27 April 1945 edition under the headline "45, 000 Jews found in Bergembelsen: Many survivors in other concentration camps."¹⁵ Several articles dealing with different aspects of the Holocaust were clustered together. Unlike the secular news, the main thrust of the article was on the survivors, not the victims. Quoting a report from Geneva the article states that "90 percent of the survivors are Jewish. 15% received better treatment than the rest because they were classified as exchange candidates."¹⁶ Exchange candidates were Jewish internees who were selected to be exchanged for German prisoners of war, although very few such swaps were made. The next article in the cluster was connected to a report by a member of the South African War Appeal, Mr Leo Feit, on the surviving Jews in different areas in Western Europe. Citing unnamed sources, Mr Feit states that "26,000 were found in Theresienstadt, 40,000 in Austria and 53,000 were found in Bergembelsen including those who had been sent from there to Auschwitz."¹⁷

The Jewish press also provided its readers with insight into the concentration camps and killing centres in Eastern Europe. The *Chronicle* wrote in a front-page editorial that "the camps located in Germany did not tell the full story when it came to the Jews. From all over Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe, Jews were sent to Maidanek, Treblinka [sic]and Oswiecim camps in Poland, where they were exterminated in specially constructed gas chambers."¹⁸ The editor went on to explain that "these camps were liberated by the Russians some time ago but did not receive adequate publicity and therefore did not make much of an

¹⁴ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, April 20, 1945: 2

¹⁵ *Zionist Record*, April 27, 1945:5

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, April 27, 1945:1

impression on the minds of the public as Belsen and Buchenwald.”¹⁹ In the editor’s view, the non-Jewish press obscured information about the camps in Eastern Europe and therefore people did not know much about that aspect of the Holocaust. However, as demonstrated in the earlier chapters, the non-Jewish press did report on this aspect of the concentration camp system, but the reports were sometimes dismissed, misunderstood, or obscured for political reasons.

The *Record* took a slightly different tack when writing about the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. In the 4 May 1945 edition, the paper published a full-page report entitled “Extermination of European Jewry during the war: Estimated loss of 4,000,000.”²⁰ The article focused mostly on the Holocaust in Poland and the Baltic States. The author began by tracing the emergence of the Nazi’s persecution of Jews. He traced how German Jews were slowly removed from the social, political, and economic life of Germany and how that system was applied to different countries as the Nazis swept across Europe. Next, he wrote about how the ghettos were set up in Poland and how Polish Jewry, weakened by the wholesale plunder and harsh conditions, tried to restore some semblance of life in the ghettos. Thereafter, the author moves on to the liquidation of the “Jewish Question” in Poland and the Nazi’s motivations.

The *Record* provided its readership with first-hand accounts from survivors liberated from Dachau, Auschwitz, Kaufering and Nordhausen in its V-E Day edition. These testimonials contained in-depth information about the harsh conditions’ survivors endured in the camps including beatings, lack of food and working long hours, as well as information about the Death Marches. It also contained the testimony of Jews who were in hiding.²¹ This series of articles was one of the earliest reports which contain first-hand accounts from survivors in situ from any of the newspapers under review. It is also the only series which included testimony from hidden Jews.

The *Jewish Herald* published its first report about the Destruction of Eastern European Jewry in June. In its 8 June 1945 edition, the *Herald* devoted half a page to the report of the State Commission to investigate German atrocities. The article details the

¹⁹ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, April 27, 1945:1

²⁰ *Zionist Record*, May 11, 1945:3

²¹ *Ibid.*

destruction of the Latvian and Russian Jewish communities from 1941 onward. It describes the liquidation of the Riga ghetto and a series of mass shootings in both Latvia and the areas of Russia which were under German occupation. The page also contains an article about medical experiments conducted at Auschwitz. Entitled “Women slaves tell of Oswiecim Horror,” several survivors detailed what happened to them upon their arrival and the medical experiments they were subjected to during their imprisonment.²² They also described how some “10,000 people were gassed per day and how children and infants were done to death by the SS.”²³ This article is one of the most comprehensive accounts of what happened in a killing centre.

Jewish Resistance

The *Jewish Herald's* coverage of the Holocaust reflected the paper's ethos. As the official newspaper of the New Zionist Organisation, it chose to focus more on the resistance movement than it did on the atrocities committed in the camps. For example, in a full-page article entitled “Betari led Anti-Nazi Underground in Vilna”²⁴ published in the 20 April 1945 edition, the paper wrote about the heroic deeds of *Paole Tsiyon*, *Zionist Socialist* and *Ha-shomer Ha-Tsa'ir* Zionist groups who conducted anti-German activities throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. Whilst the article does provide some information about the deportation of Jews from the Vilna Ghetto, the focus was on the Revisionist Zionist resistance fighters, chief among them Josef Glazman, the Lithuanian resistance leader.

The *Zionist Record* also reported on Jewish resistance and uprisings in the ghettos. In an article published on 4 May 1945, the author extolled the bravery of young Jews who fought against the Nazis both inside and outside the ghettos and camps stating: “The resistance of the Jewish population reached its climax with the battles of the Warsaw and Bialystok ghettos and in the various camps.”²⁵ The author was scornful of those who did not fight stating: “But the bulk of Jewry remained helpless and were led like sheep to slaughter.” The separation between those who fought and those who did not or could not was a prominent feature of early reporting on the Holocaust in the South African Jewish press. The

²² *Jewish Herald*, June 8, 1945: 5

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Jewish Herald*, April 20, 1945:7

²⁵ *Ibid.*

importance placed on Jewish fighters was reinforced through the images included in the article. The piece also included statistics compiled by famed statistician Jacob Lestchinsky on the number of Jews who had perished during the war as well as those who survived in the camps and the refugees who fled before the war. From his calculations, he estimated that 4 million Jews had perished.

The *Record* also provided its readers with more in-depth coverage of rescue efforts by various resistance movements across Nazi Occupied Europe. In the 17 May edition, it published a two-page report on the Jewish underground railroad for children which operated in a town at the French–Spanish border. The article provided an in-depth account of how the movement under the direction of “Tante Giselle” smuggled hundreds of children to Spain where they received immigration certificates and transportation to Palestine. The *South African Jewish Chronicle*, by contrast, did not publish any articles about resistance. Instead, the paper chose to focus its attention on the establishment of a Jewish State and providing relief to survivors. This is evidenced by the fact that the newspaper published numerous articles on these topics during the period under review.

Survivors, the Establishment of a Jewish State, and the New Jew

The Jewish press typically did not dwell on the atrocities committed in the camps. Whilst they did provide their readers with information about the atrocities, the focus was more on finding a haven for survivors and coordinating relief efforts – a task which the Jewish media felt was the responsibility of the community. This viewpoint was expressed strongly in an article published in the *Chronicle* on 27 April 1945 entitled “A Vital Task.” The author wrote about the urgency to establish a Jewish state in Palestine not only to right a two-thousand-year-old wrong but also to provide shelter and safe haven to the thousands of survivors who endured Nazi tyranny.

The South African Jewish community was not alone in their efforts. The Jewish National Fund, an international organisation founded in 1901 to buy and develop land for Jewish settlement in Ottoman Palestine took out large advertisements in the *Chronicle* to campaign for funds to help the survivors. The advertisements are very militaristic in tone, often featuring Jewish military personnel. In the advertisement below one sees both male and female settlers holding farming equipment and looking into the middle distance. The caption beside the photo reinforces the idea of the freedom fighter, stating that “These have found

freedom...But now freedom must be found for the hundreds of thousands of Jews in Europe.”²⁶ The motifs used in these ads are indicative of the efforts by the Zionist movement to create the “new Jew.” “The new Jew was portrayed as a powerful conqueror who was both physically and mentally strong through their development of the Land. They were also seen as having honour, dignity, and self-respect as opposed to the Diasporic Jews who were seen as weak and bookish with a lack of honour and self-respect which invited attack from gentiles.”²⁷



The *Chronicle* also published articles about survivors advocating for the establishment of a Jewish state. Entitled “Buchenwald Survivors,”²⁹ the article relays a letter written by survivors of Buchenwald to the British Parliamentary Commission who were scheduled to visit the camp. In the letter, the survivors write that the Jews in Buchenwald were the last left of Continental Jewry. They implored the Commission to “throw open the gates of Palestine. Make it possible for these people, after the inexpressible horrors they have

²⁶ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, May 4, 1945: 211

²⁷ For more information about the development of the New Jew within Zionist thought see Reuven Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism: The Fall and Rise of a Controversial Idea*, Oxford University Press, (New York: 2012)

²⁸ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, May 4, 1945: 211

²⁹ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, May 4, 1945:210

endured, that the rest of their lives are worth living within a Jewish community.”³⁰ The letter ends off by saying “give them a chance!”³¹

The *Zionist Record* also published comparable articles on the desire of survivors to immigrate to Palestine. In the 13 April 1945 edition, an article published under the headline “Jews of Western Europe eager to go to Palestine,” the author notes the number of Jews who remained in Belgium and France, their economic hardship, and their petition to the Allied governments to be granted unrestricted access to immigrate to Palestine.³² In *The Herald*, an extract from a letter written by an aid worker stationed at Belsen was published in which the author wrote about the conditions in the camps and the need for survivors to be allowed to go to Palestine stating, “The people are hungry. Is it physical hunger? At this stage of my work, I must demand that they be rescued now...it is as bad as the original horrors of the concentration camps. They should be told about the Anglo-America Palestine discussions.”³³

As the end of the war approached, the Jewish press looked back at the toll the war had taken on the world and tried to plot the way forward for the world Jewry. The *Chronicle*, in its victory edition, published an editorial entitled “VE- Day and After.”³⁴ Here the editor expressed his thankfulness that “the persecution and suffering which has accompanied the 68 months of war are now over.”³⁵ He went on to say that “victory has been tainted by the painstaking anxiety about the future. If we want to ensure that the world does not plunge itself back into a bloody war, we must put in the effort to create a world in which human liberties, freedom of thought, belief and oppression are safeguarded for all time. These liberties should be extended to all if we want to have long-lasting just peace.”³⁶ The ideal of liberty for all would become a recurring theme in *The Chronicle’s* discourse of the Holocaust.

The *Zionist Record’s* V-E Day edition published on 11 May 1945 had a slightly different tone to that of the *Chronicle*. Its focus was squarely on the suffering of the Jewish people and the uniqueness of their suffering. In the editorial entitled “The Victory,” the editor expressed his gratitude to “the brave men and women who by faith and courage caused the

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Zionist Record*, April 13, 1945:5

³³ *Jewish Herald*, August 10, 1945:

³⁴ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, May 11, 1945:1

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

downfall of German tyranny.”³⁷ Just like the non-Jewish Press, the *Zionist Record* saw the war as the epitome of resistance against evil. He went on to state that “the place of the Jews in the war was unique. The problems, the tragedies, the horror, which the war has caused in our midst, are of a special category and cannot be put together or be classified on an equal footing with the other nations of Europe.”³⁸ Whilst the editor cited the uniqueness of the Holocaust, he cautioned against seeing it as a “problem” specific to Nazism. Instead, it pointed to a wider problem of global antisemitism, which could, in his opinion, once again bring modern civilization to the brink of collapse. To forestall this problem, the editor issued an appeal to the international community to allow the Jewish people to join the nations of the world by establishing a homeland.

The *Chronicle’s* V-E Day editorial also brought up other another theme: the heroic fighter. The editor highlighted the point that “for six and a half years Jewish people bore the brunt of Nazi fury *alone* out of proportion to their numbers without weapons, without the right to self-defence, with consideration from the apathetic onlookers the world over.”³⁹ Now that the war has ended the world should be compelled to recognize the survivors right to self-determination and self-defense.

Avinoam J. Patt claims that “this militaristic attitude emerged from the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The Uprising was transformed into the defining symbol for Jewish resistance, Jewish sacrifice, and Martyrdom which in the post-war period became a part of the struggle for the creation of Israel.”⁴⁰ This was demonstrated in an article published alongside the launch of the South African Zionist Federation’s (SAZF) manifesto. The manifesto set out the goals that the SAZF wanted to help achieve in the post-war world in honour of the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. These included the establishment of a Jewish state, the right for any Jewish person to live there, and the creation of laws to protect Jewish citizens in every country around the world.

The Federation used the image of the fighter stating, “We mourn the millions of Jews specially singled out for *extermination* and *Martyrdom*. We mourn the *defenders* of the

³⁷ *Zionist Record*, May 11, 1945:1

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, May 11, 1945:2

⁴⁰ Patt, Avinoam J. "The Jewish Heroes of Warsaw: The Meaning of the Revolt in the First Year after the Uprising." *American Jewish History* 103, no. 2 (2019): 147-175.

ghettos of Europe. They will not be forgotten by us.”⁴¹ Curiously, the manifesto, contrary to the editorial, separated the terms extermination and martyrdom. The separation may reflect the Zionist Federation’s conceptualization of the Uprising. In his detailed account of the Uprising, Dan Kurzman states that “the Revolt signaled the beginning of an ironclad militancy rooted in the will to survive, a militancy that was to be given form and direction by the creation of the state of Israel. A symbolism taken up by the Zionists from May 1944.”⁴² The language used in the manifesto expressed this militancy. It speaks to the attitude the South African Jewish community had to adopt in the face of rising antisemitism, that is the urgency of assuming “additional deeds of those who lived and died for the ideals of Zionism to ensure the future of Israel.”⁴³

The placement of a full-page advertisement for the Liberation Campaign of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) on the opposite page does not seem like a coincidence as it echoed the same sentiment as the article. Here the image of the fighter/militant is strongly reinforced with survivors, soldiers from the Jewish brigade and chalutzim all marching ahead in military formation with the headline “These MUST HAVE Land...” This type of advert would appear frequently in *The Chronicle* in the immediate post-war period with the same configuration of survivors, soldiers, and pioneers.⁴⁴



⁴¹ Patt, "The Jewish Heroes of Warsaw:" 147-175.

⁴² Dan Kurzman, *The Bravest Battle: The 28th Infantry Division in World War II*, New York: Harper & Row, 1976)

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, May & June 1945

⁴⁵ *South African Jewish Chronicle* May 11, 1945: 225 & June 22, 1945:315

Unlike *The Chronicle*, the *Record* also included messages from the Jewish Agency in Palestine, the Executive Council of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), and the Chairman of the Federation. All echoed a similar message: thanking God for the Allied victory and the defeat of Nazism, expressing deep sadness at the tragedy which had befallen European Jewry, and calling for the establishment of Israel as a safe harbour for survivors to be rehabilitated both physically and emotionally. The Chairman of SAZF went a step further when he called for the community to “care for all those who return from the battlefield, help heal the sick and provide succour to the needy. None shall need to ask all shall be given to enable everyone to live a life of peace and hope. Let’s give thanks that our generation has been allowed to build a world where all men are free.”⁴⁶ His message seemingly points to the four freedoms as espoused by Roosevelt and could perhaps be an oblique reference to the political and social situation in South Africa, although this was never specifically mentioned.

The V-E Day issue of the *Chronicle* also included reflections by Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz, the Chief Rabbi, in which he too looked back at the persecution European Jewry faced during the war. He too pondered on the question of whether the “broken and battered remnants of European Jewry can re-establish themselves in their previous countries of residence or whether the seeds of antisemitism which found such fertile ground in Nazi-occupied Europe would continue to flourish despite their dislike of Nazism in the post-war period.”⁴⁷ To forestall the problem and to show that the Jews of Palestine could care for themselves, Rabinowitz wrote on the many improvements made by Jews in Palestine.⁴⁸ He issued an eloquent plea to the world to “throw open the gates of Palestine to the Jewish victims of the war as the one compensation for all their suffering.”⁴⁹ Allow us, he wrote, “to take them into our homes to make room for them in our own country. Give us our Jews and we will do the job.”⁵⁰

The Plight of Survivors

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Zionist Record*, May 11, 1945:11

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

In May 1945, Jewish newspapers started publishing lists of survivors. These appeared in the back of the newspapers and contained basic information about each survivor and the family members they were looking for. Alongside these lists were printed letters from survivors seeking to be reunified with their remaining family. For example, the *Record* published the names of survivors with ties to the South African Jewish community under the headline “relatives of South African Jews amongst Buchenwald survivors”⁵¹ The papers also regularly featured short articles about the remnants of Jewish communities in Europe and those in liberated camps. For example, in the 18 May 1945 edition, the paper published articles on the remnants of the Jews of Prague as well as an article about the survivors who remained in Dachau and the Allach subcamp.⁵²

The *Chronicle* also reported extensively on how the Board of Deputies responded to news from Europe. For example, the Biennial Congress of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, held on the 1st of June 1945, discussed the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Jewish community overseas amongst other issues affecting the community. Here for the first time, the community leadership started speaking about the effects of the Holocaust on the local community. Under the headline “The Jewish Tragedy”⁵³ the report reiterates the view that ‘European Jewry had been at war since 1933 and that they struggled against the Nazi fiend for six long years.’⁵⁴ The report goes on to mention whilst ‘the Allied victory is something to be thankful for, now is the time for service not for celebration. The remnants of European Jewry now need immediate succour and relief.’⁵⁵ It cautioned that ‘the community should not just be focused on the immediate needs of the survivors but that they should work towards creating a world in which they are free people in terms of the Atlantic Charter.’⁵⁶

As Michael Green argued in his work on Jewish responses to the Holocaust “In the latter part of 1945, South African Jewry continued to support and organize relief for survivors in Europe, but the worsening situation in Palestine and Britain’s continued adherence to pre-war policies regarding the mandated territory commanded more attention in the Jewish press.”⁵⁷ This shift in attention can be seen in the *Chronicle*. For example, in an editorial

⁵¹ *Zionist Record*, May 4, 1945:12

⁵² *South African Jewish Chronicle*, May 18, 1945:240

⁵³ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, June 1, 1945:289

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Green, “South African Jewish responses to the Holocaust 1941-1948.”143

published about the Potsdam Conference entitled “Fateful Hours,” the editor stated that “After the harrowing experiences of European Jewry and the continued destitution of the survivors, a sense of burning desperation prevails and the need for a speedy remedy grows hourly.”⁵⁸ To demonstrate the desperate need for a homeland, the paper published a report on the desperate situation survivors in Displaced Persons Camps (DP) found themselves in. Entitled “Plight of Jews in Camps in Germany: an urgent appeal to the Potsdam Conference,”⁵⁹ the author wrote about the deplorable conditions in the DP camps and their call for the leaders now meeting at the conference to open the doors of Palestine to “enable the survivors of the Nazi terror to return to a normal life.”⁶⁰

The *Zionist Record* frequently published reports on the struggles survivors faced as displaced persons both inside and outside Germany. This included photographs, for example, of a mother and her two children next to an article about child survivors seeking to go to Palestine. The inclusion of this specific photograph suggests that the *Record* wanted to create a more personal connection between their readers and the survivors by showing them the dire conditions women and children lived in in the Displaced Persons Camps. In contrast, the 1 June 1945 edition of the *Record* published a photograph of male survivors smiling below an article about the resettlement plan the Jewish Agency submitted to the British Government for consideration. The paper’s choice of image again speaks to the emotion they wanted to evoke. The image of the survivor as either a fighter or a victim depended on the message the publication wished to convey.



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⁵⁸ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, July 27, 1945:373

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Zionist Record*, May 17, 1945:3 & June 1, 1945:3

The *Record* also started publishing more comprehensive first-hand accounts by survivors from different regions including a series of articles by Mordecai Lichtenstein in which he wrote about his life before and during the Holocaust. His third article covered his time at Auschwitz and provides an in-depth description of the workings of the camp from the perspective of a survivor.⁶² Lichtenstein's descriptions of the selection process and the death marches are some of the most vivid descriptions published in the Jewish press. In September *the Record* published the extracts from the journal of Dr. Z Grinberg's – a doctor from Kovno –which detailed the fate of Lithuanian Jewry. Grinberg's account provides an insight into life in the Kovno Ghetto.⁶³ Grinberg's account provides insight into the progression of the persecution and mass murder of the Jews of Lithuania, a topic which personally affected many South African Jews.

The *Jewish Herald* began to publish more reports about survivors and their plight in post liberation Europe in mid-May. In its 17 May 1945 edition, it devoted an entire page to an article about a survivor who wanted to come to South Africa. Entitled "Jewess travels to union on a Nazi passport."⁶⁴ Here the indomitable spirit of the fighter is again at the forefront. Curiously the article contained more information about the survivor's struggles to reach South Africa than it does about her imprisonment in three concentration camps. In June, July, and August it devoted multiple articles to the plight of survivors in DP camps. For example, in the 22 June 1945 edition it published an article on a typhus outbreak at Terezin in which it states that "the largest group [of survivors] liberated by the Allies, face extinction if they don't get medical assistance soon." The article recounts how typhus entered the camp through the arrival of prisoners from Buchenwald in April 1945. Similarly, in August the *Herald* reported that the survivors of Belsen: were "still living in deplorable conditions."⁶⁵

Relief for survivors

On the home front, the SAJBD, under the auspices of the South African Jewish War Appeal (JWA), was trying to coordinate local relief efforts for survivors in the DP Camps.

⁶² *Zionist Record*, July 20, 1945:13

⁶³ *Zionist Record*, September 14, 1945:12

⁶⁴ *Jewish Herald*, May 17, 1945:3

⁶⁵ *Jewish Herald*, August 10, 1945:376

While their efforts had been fruitful, by mid-July 1945 a sense of apathy was purportedly permeating the community. This lack of interest was the main topic of discussion at a mass meeting held by the SAJBD in Cape Town which the *Chronicle* reported on. In the full-page article, Leon Segal, the chairman of the board, was referenced as lamenting “the terrible apathy amongst the community evidenced by the fact that such a small number of people had attended the gathering.”⁶⁶ He further stated that “for the past three years the community had not given as much as they could have and that they should wake up and do something about alleviating the suffering and distress of those who had survived the holocaust. The South African community through the JWA had committed to providing 30 000 garments and 10% of the amount of the Joint Distribution Committee annual budget.”⁶⁷ This was the first time the word Holocaust had been used to denote the mass murder of European Jewry in any newspaper under review.

The leaders of the community believed that this sense of indifference stemmed from the sheer number of people who had perished. To dispel this sense of apathy, Segal and later Leo Feit, the treasurer of the Appeal, gave the community more updated information to allow them to fully comprehend the tragedy which had befallen the Jews of Europe.⁶⁸ Feit provided an overview of the number of survivors in various communities and insight into their emotional and mental state, a subject which was not expounded on in the non-Jewish Press. Most reports focused on the physical well-being of survivors. Speaking about those who endured medical experiments in the camps, Feit stated that “These young boys and girls are total wrecks and require their own special attention.”⁶⁹ He recognized both the importance and the tremendous effort it would take to rehabilitate those who had survived the Nazi terror. Feit’s report represents one of the most substantial reports on the Holocaust and its aftermath published in the *Chronicle* during this period. For the rest of the year, the paper continued reporting on the plight of survivors and the urgent need to establish a permanent settlement for them in Palestine. The *Zionist Record* did not publish any reports on the activities of the JWA, although it did publish advertisements for its clothing drives. The advertisements appeared in the publication regularly, appealing to the community to donate their surplus clothing to the “hundreds of thousands of Jews released from Nazi bondage.”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*

⁶⁹ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, July 27, 1945:376

⁷⁰ *Zionist Record*, June 1, 1945: 3

Attention to the South African context

The Jewish press referenced racial discrimination in South Africa in its discussions around the Holocaust. On 1 June 1945, for example, the *Chronicle*, in reporting on the Board of Deputies, made explicit reference to the rise of both antisemitism and racism in South Africa: “the defeat of Nazism does not mean that racial hatred is eliminated. The fight for freedom must go on and we must take our stand on the principle that racialism, no matter against who is a challenge towards a peaceful world.”⁷¹ the newspaper similarly reported that the Secretary General of the Board Gustav Saron explicitly acknowledged the hardships black South Africans faced. In his outline of a programme to combat antisemitism, Saron was quoted as stating that “the community could and must not be indifferent to the lot of ‘non-Europeans’.”⁷²

Unlike the non-Jewish Press, the Jewish press did not comment on the nature of coverage offered in the Nationalist press. However, the *Jewish Herald* did comment on and contradict the *Zionist Record*'s claim that the NP had not made antisemitic remarks during recent Parliamentary debates.⁷³

The lack of response during this period is a curious omission. A rare exception came nearly a year after the liberation of the first concentration camp in Western Europe. Nationalist MP Karl Bremer, himself of German descent, stated during a Parliamentary debate on European immigration to South Africa in March 1946 that “in fifty to a hundred-year historians would not be writing about the alleged atrocities committed against the Jews by the Nazis. Instead, they will be relating the story of the cruelty meted out to the Germans by the Allies, at the end of the war.”⁷⁴ This statement drew sharp criticism from the editor of the *Chronicle* who wrote that “I am aghast at the fact that the concentration camps, the pogroms, the gas chambers, the shooting squads, terror and slavery should be thought nothing in comparison with the alleged ill-treatment of these torturers by those who only by the will of God and the courage of their faith in humanity narrowly averted the dire fate which Jews

⁷¹ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, June 1, 1945:289-290

⁷² *South African Jewish Chronicle*, June 15, 1945:303

⁷³ *Jewish Herald*, May 4, 1945:5

⁷⁴ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, March 29, 1946:194

were unable to escape...is Dr Bremer's heart so small that the compassion he feels for the Germans defeated in a war they start, leaves no room for even an expression of sympathy with Jews who mourns their murdered millions?"⁷⁵ Blatant denial of the Holocaust, coupled with the expression of sympathy for the German nation, may have been what spurred the publication into action.

Why was the Jewish press otherwise loath to comment on the Afrikaans press? The lack of response was most likely two-fold. Firstly, it may have reflected low expectations. After years of Afrikaner antisemitism and pro-German sympathising, Jews and the Jewish press may have expected the Afrikaans press to ignore or dismiss evidence of the Holocaust. Secondly, the Jewish press felt no need to justify the war, nor did it need to disparage the National Party for political reasons like the Liberal English press.

The Hebrew Press

The coverage of the Holocaust in the Hebrew press was limited to a few articles that were published from April 1945 onwards. However, the articles which did appear were distinct from those present in other South African publications. As a literary journal, *Barkai* offered poetic and literary responses to the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. The publication would often invoke biblical figures and tales when depicting the Holocaust. Unlike the English-language Press, it did not give many statistical details. Generally, the names of camps weren't mentioned, nor did it publish any photographs of victims. Like the English-language Jewish press, *Barkai* also called for the establishment of a Jewish state and saw it as the answer to global antisemitism. *Barkai* also afforded equal coverage to both victims and survivors.

The first article on the liberated camps appeared on the front page of the May 1945 edition of the journal. Entitled "Mihama and Peace," the author wrote about the liberation of Jews from Nazi tyranny and the ongoing war in Japan.⁷⁶ He recounted the origin of Jewish persecution in Germany stating that "when they came to destroy us, the world remained quiet. We were the first ones to be held captive in the camps from 1933 onwards."⁷⁷ He described the Holocaust as an unfathomable disaster. "Men and women perished and were killed,

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Barkai*, May 1945:1

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

destruction the likes of which was never seen... dead and burned, picture that? ‘Slaughter’, images of horror in the Diaspora. Weep Israel!”⁷⁸

In the lead-up to the World Zionist conference, the editor of *Barkai*, Jake Rubik, penned an open letter to Chaim Weizmann, the president of the organisation, lamenting the division amongst the various Zionist movements. Published in the June 1945 edition, the letter spanned two pages. Rubik made an impassioned plea to Weizmann for the democratization of Zionism to create a united Jewish state. The state is an urgent need for “our people who were slaughtered wholesale in those difficult and cruel years [and] our people still today - the remnant of the exile waiting out of despair in exile.”⁷⁹ He worried about the rise of antisemitism in South Africa, writing that “a third of European Jewry had been destroyed and the clouds of darkness can be seen in our own country.”⁸⁰ Rubik claimed that “assimilation is the root of antisemitism, and proposed mass immigration as a solution to the problem.”⁸¹

Barkai also highlighted acts of Jewish resistance during the war. In the June 1945 edition, an article written by Warsaw ghetto survivor Hillel Seidman recounted his experiences before and during the uprising. The main thrust of Seidman’s article was to provide a factual account of what had occurred, including recounting how different political factions stood together against the Germans.⁸² The placement of Seidman’s article just after Rubik’s call for unity suggests a deliberate decision by the editor to highlight how the Jews of Warsaw stood together against a mighty enemy.

In the July edition, the *Barkai* published a full-page article on the testimony of "Alia" a survivor of the Vittel detention camp in Nancy, France. The camp was used by the Germans to house enemy aliens including Jews who held passports from various countries. The young woman’s testimony described how she came to the camp in 1943 and how the Gestapo and the Jewish police rounded up some 270 Jews and deported them to Drancy. She also described “how on the day of the deportation many inmates decided to commit suicide

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Barkai*, June 1945:1-2

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Barkai*, June 1945:1-2

⁸² *Barkai*, June 1945: 5

instead of being deported.”⁸³ Her testimony is one of the only articles which appeared in the South African press which provided details on the Holocaust in France.

In August, *Barkai* published a letter written by a German Jew who managed to escape Germany via Brussels to Amsterdam after Kristallnacht. He describes the invasion of the Netherlands and the introduction of laws against Jews stating, “At first everything remained the same then we were told we could not go out after 8 o’clock and we had to wear the star of David.”⁸⁴ He also described various deportations of Jews from Amsterdam stating “They gather everyone...at night and then they were sent to a central camp in the Netherlands before being sent to Poland.”⁸⁵ The article also contained information about the Dutch resistance and how they helped Dutch Jewry (including the author) by “procuring false papers for some Jews or by providing them with shelter and food.” The author also describes how he was helped by the resistance to escape to Spain where he remained until the end of the war. Here again, using survivor testimony *Barkai* provided its readership with information which was not readily available in other newspapers.

The September edition of *Barkai* contained the most references to the Holocaust. It is also the first edition which contained statistical information about victims and survivors. In a front-page editorial entitled “If I Forget You,” the editor wrote about the situation facing survivors in post-war Europe.⁸⁶ He started “by lamenting the suffering of the scattered remnants of European Jewry endured in the Displaced Persons (DP) camps whilst the gates of Palestine remained closed to them.”⁸⁷ He called for the British government to open the gates of Palestine so that the survivors could live in peace. He ended by expressing his belief that despite the setbacks the Jewish people will prove victorious in the end.

In a subsequent article, the anonymous author lamented the destruction of Jewish life, culture, and language in European centres, and included a photograph of survivors with the following caption “a nation that had been destroyed.”⁸⁸ The author focused on the

⁸³ *Barkai*, July 1945: 5

⁸⁴ *Barkai*, August 1945:9

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Barkai*, September 1945: 4

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

challenges survivors faced and compared their fate to the situation for Germans in Germany: “even today Jews are more opposed than the German-Nazis in Germany.”⁸⁹



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The author also demanded “revenge in the name of the martyrs and innocents who had been done to death. For the centres which had been destroyed.”⁹¹ This is the only article to appear in the Jewish press that proposed avenging the genocide. The author ended by stating that “there is no future for Jews in Europe. Instead, they should create their country where they do not face the dangers of antisemitism.”⁹² The idea that Israel was the solution to global antisemitism was a viewpoint that frequently featured in the *Barkai*.

The Belsen Trial and International Military Tribunal (IMT) in the Jewish Press

The *South African Jewish Chronicle* was the only Jewish publication under review that published anything about the Belsen Trial. While it did not cover the Trial in any depth,

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Barkai*, September 1945: 5

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

it did provide some insight into how the Jewish community understood the Trial. For the *Chronicle*, the Belsen Trial was seen as the first step towards acknowledging the unique nature of Jewish suffering under Nazism.

The *Chronicle* noted the start of the trial on 21 September 1945. Entitled “Jews and Belsen,” the article stated that “no mention had been made of the fact that most of the victims of Belsen and Auschwitz were Jewish.”⁹³ It also noted that “the Jewish aspect is expected to be brought to light during witness testimony.” The paper itself did not publish any witness testimony from the trial. The next article about the camp again appeared in the “News in Brief” more than a month after the start of the trial. Entitled “British Board of Deputies statement on Defence of Kramer,” the newspaper joined the Board in condemning Josef Kramer’s lawyer’s description of the inmates of Auschwitz as “dregs of the ghettos of Central Europe – People who have little idea of what to do with their lives.”⁹⁴

The last article on the Trial appeared after its conclusion in November 1945. In a front-page article entitled “Beast of Belsen,” the paper criticized the length of the Trial but acknowledged that it was necessary to ensure that all evidence was presented, and that the accused were allowed to present a defense. The author expressed the view that “the length of the trial and the publicity generated detracts from the deeds committed by these men and instead creates an air of sympathy around them.” This is a view which is supported when examining the secular coverage of the Trial: the accused became the main subject of reports whilst their crimes became secondary.⁹⁵

While the *Zionist Record* did not publish any reports on the Belsen Trial, it did publish reports on other post-war trials. In the 13 April 1945 edition, it published an article on the first trial of Dutch collaborators held in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. The Dutchmen on trial were charged with “assisting the German authorities in deporting Jews to Death Camps in Poland.”⁹⁶ The only witnesses available to the prosecution were children who had been hidden by their parents during the war. They described “how the accused men led the German

⁹³ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, September 21, 1945:502

⁹⁴ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, October 29, 1945: 617

⁹⁵ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, 23 November 1945:649

⁹⁶ *Zionist Record*, April 13,1945:5

authorities to their hiding places and assisted in rounding up their parents.”⁹⁷ The *Record's* ad hoc coverage of war trials would continue until the start of the Nuremberg Trial.

The Jewish press's coverage of the Nuremberg Trial was sporadic and limited with only the *Zionist Record* and the *Jewish Chronicle* providing some limited reporting. In contrast, the *Jewish Herald* only published a poem on the Trial at its conclusion. The *Jewish Chronicle* was the first of the two Jewish papers to publish an article on the Trial. In a 31 August 1945 editorial entitled “War Criminals,” the editor noted the indictment of the defendants, and stating that “the Trial is not an act of vengeance by the victor over the vanquished but rather it is justice being served. Whilst some may call for clemency, sometimes to show mercy is to show weakness. It is therefore right that these men should account for murder and torture they inflicted and should be punished for their misdeeds.”⁹⁸

The author also wrote about “how the Nazis tested the world's reaction to their plans for world domination by persecuting the weakest members of their population, the Jews and when they saw the world did not react, they moved ahead with their plans.” The author expressed the hope that “The trial and its outcome will show the world that one stands up against persecution no matter who the victims are.”⁹⁹ This is the only article which appeared in connection to the Trial.

The *Chronicle's* lack of coverage might suggest that it felt the Nuremberg Trial was not the community's most important concern during this period. They instead focused their attention on the plight of survivors still living within Displaced Persons camps. This view is supported by the significant increase in the number and length of articles published by the *Chronicle* on conditions within DP camps and the relief effort organized by the local community. A case in point is on 1 October 1946 when the verdict was being handed down. Instead of covering the trial, the *Chronicle* published a lengthy article about the significant progress the Jewish War Appeal had made since the liberation of the camps.

The *Zionist Record's* coverage of the Nuremberg Trial was a bit more substantial than that of *The Chronicle*. Although it only published a few articles, all of them contained details

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *The South African Jewish Chronicle, August 31, 1945: 441*

⁹⁹ *South African Jewish Chronicle, August 31, 1945:441*

from multiple sessions of the tribunal. *The Record*, like the non-Jewish press, however, chose to highlight specific aspects of the proceedings which were in line with the newspaper's ethos and the interest of its readers. *The Record's* report focused on questions of Jewish victimhood and resistance.

The first article on the Trial appeared on 7 December 1945 entitled "The Nuremberg Trial Goering's part in Extermination of Jews Schacht wants to call Jewish witness."¹⁰⁰ The article recounts the evidence by the American prosecution on the Nazi's plans to annihilate the Jews of Europe particularly Herman Goering's role therein. The inclusion of this section sought to reinforce the intentionality of the Nazi regime's murderous campaign against the Jews of Europe. This intentionality is reinforced by a quotation from a special report authored by the Norwegian government which made specific mention of the crimes against humanity stating that "as a crime against humanity special mention must be made of the cruelties and miseries which were inflicted on the Jewish population of Norway. Measures to deal with the so-called Jewish problem was one of the main policies of the Nazi programme."¹⁰¹ The intentionality of the Genocide would be a continuous theme throughout the *Record's* coverage.

The next article appeared in the 21 December 1945 edition, entitled "Evidence of Nazi Persecution and Looting at Nuremberg Trial." The article recounted the evidence presented to the court across multiple days. In a paragraph entitled "Starvation Plan," the paper quoted Major Walsh's introduction of German documents including extracts from Hans Frank's diary which "indicated a calculated plan to starve millions of Jews to death by cutting them off from food supplies."¹⁰² The paper also reprinted abstracts from the Stroop Report which detailed the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto and the Uprising. The relentless resistance offered by the Jewish and Polish battle groups featured prominently. The intentionality of the genocide was again reinforced by the inclusion of an article about an address by the Anglican Bishop of Pretoria broadcast on the SABC entitled "South Africa – a Vision for the Future."¹⁰³ The bishop, after referring to "Hitler's appalling and planned massacre of the Jews," spoke about the increase in antisemitism in South Africa.¹⁰⁴ The

¹⁰⁰ *Zionist Record*, December 7, 1945: 9

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*

¹⁰² *Zionist Record*, December 21, 1945:6

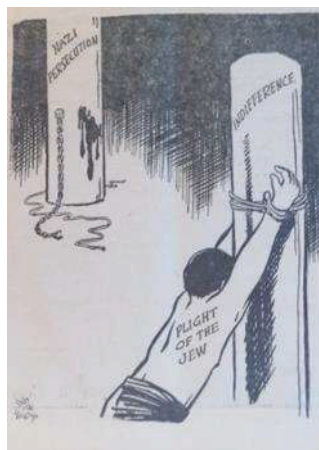
¹⁰³ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

Bishop stated that “no one supposes the Jews are perfect as a race much like the British or Afrikaner. For those who are inclined to antisemitism, they should ask themselves if...it may not be due to the persecution the Jews faced in recent times.”¹⁰⁵ This address took place within a larger local debate around manifestations of antisemitism in South Africa.

The next article appeared in the same edition three pages later. Entitled “Revelations at Trial of War Criminals: Nazi Plot to Collaborate with Leaders,” the article referenced arguments presented to the court on 7 December 1945 about the propaganda campaign organized by Alfred Rosenberg’s Foreign Affairs Bureau in the Middle East, Norway, and Rumania. Whilst the title only mentions Arab leaders, most of the report focused on the collaboration between the Nazis and the Quisling party in Norway and Rumanian antisemites. The *Zionist Record* was the only South African publication under review which mentioned the Nazi propaganda campaign in the Middle East.

The next report on the Nuremberg Trial appeared on 11 January 1946 in a full-page article entitled “What did the Nazis do in Lithuania: Grim details revealed at Nuremberg.” The article detailed the persecution and mass murder of the Jews of Lithuania, Poland, Hungary including a cartoon (pictured below) which showed the Jews of Europe, having been released from the chains of Nazi persecution now tied to the indifference of the world. It was a powerful metaphor when read in conjunction with the accompanying article.



The cartoon reminded readers that survivors in the DP Camps were still suffering and were being refused entry into Palestine.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

The article represented one of the most in-depth reports published in the *Record* of the persecution and mass murder of Polish and Hungarian Jews. (Despite the phrasing of the headline most of the article was devoted to the Holocaust in Eastern Europe.) After a brief overview of the Kovno Ghetto, the article detailed the mass murder of the Jews in Galicia and Hungary, including the negotiations to free Jews in exchange for food supplies for the German army.

In February, the *Zionist Record* published a two-page opinion piece by Lithuanian Jew and war correspondent S.J. Goldsmith. Entitled “The Reckoning in Nuremberg: My Impressions of the Courtroom,” it was the only article to feature a photo of Nazi perpetrators and the only purely opinion piece on the Trial to appear in the Jewish press.¹⁰⁶ In the first half of the article, Goldsmith reflected on the courtroom and the figures therein rather than the Trial itself from his perspective as a Jew. He started off the article by writing about how he and other Jewish people present at the Trial felt like they were representatives of the Jewish people at large. He then went on to sketch his impressions of some of the defendants in the dock. At the end, he posed a simple yet striking question: “I wonder how they can pay for all they have perpetrated. What are these twenty heads worth?”¹⁰⁷ Goldsmith reflected on the inclusion of the genocide against the Jews of Europe in the IMT and the practical implications of its inclusion. He stated that the indictment is the “first international document which sets out in plain language that Jews as Jews were victims of the Nazis not because of their nationality.”¹⁰⁸

The last article on the Trial in the Jewish press appeared in the *Record* on 15 March 1946. It contained evidence presented to the court on 28 February 1946. Entitled “Nuremberg to take evidence from Vilna Jewish Writer,”¹⁰⁹ the half-page article detailed the testimony of three key witnesses for the prosecution: Abrahams Sutzkever, Samuel Reizman, and Seweryna Szmaglewska. Abrahams Sutzkever gave testimony on the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto and the work of the sonderkommando. The article also contained the testimony of the only two Polish witnesses to testify at the Trial: Samuel Reizman and Seweryna

¹⁰⁶ *Zionist Record*, February 1, 1946:17

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Zionist Record*, March 15, 1946:12

Szmaglewska, who spoke about their experiences at Treblinka and Auschwitz respectively. At no point during the Trial did the press include any testimony by the defendants.

Conclusion

When the news of the liberation of the concentration camps reached South African shores, the Jewish press reacted with shock and dismay at the scale of devastation wrought upon European Jewry. However, they did not dwell on the atrocities that had been committed but rather sprang into action to assist the remnants of European Jewry. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies immediately started coordinating communal relief efforts and within weeks started shipping aid to Europe. The press and the community also ramped up their advocacy for the establishment of a Jewish state as a haven for the survivors and as the answer to stopping global antisemitism.

The Jewish press, unlike its non- Jewish counterparts, described the trajectory of Nazi persecution from 1933 until 1945. It also shared the news of what took place in the camps in the east such as the killing sites of Majdanek and Treblinka, as well as the Holocaust in Russia and Latvia. The press did not just rely on news reports, but also highlighted survivor testimony soon after liberation. The press also sought to reunite survivors with relatives in South Africa publishing lists of names from various camps regularly. Unlike the Liberal press, the Jewish press also highlighted Jewish resistance and rescue efforts. The discourse around this resistance also brought into focus the idea of the “new Jew”, the idea of an assertive and active people fighting for its own future.

The Jewish press did not cover the Belsen Trial in any depth. Most of the publications under review did not offer any coverage at all. In the few articles which did appear, the consensus was that it was a necessary yet lengthy procedure. Coverage of the Nuremberg Trial was sporadic with only a few publications reporting on the Trial. The press, however, was firmly of the opinion that the Trial was not vengeance but justice. Understandably the overwhelming focus was on the facts around the destruction of European Jewry. It also provided more information on the intentionality of the Holocaust and highlighted the voices of survivors through the inclusion of witness testimony.

Chapter Four

Commemorating the Holocaust in the Post-War World 1945-1960

Broadening the focus beyond the immediate postwar years, this chapter will examine how the South African Jewish community commemorated the Destruction of European Jewry in the first decade and a half following the end of the war. To achieve this, we will examine news coverage of Holocaust remembrance and commemoration in the Jewish and non-Jewish South African media, but also draw on archival collections and Jewish communal records.

The South African Jewish community was deeply affected by the tragedy which befell their European brethren. The spiritual and communal wellsprings of Lithuanian Jewry had been destroyed. As a result, the community had to forge a new communal identity in the wake of changing political and social situations both locally and abroad. As we will see, The Holocaust was central to this new communal identity. Some scholarly work has focused on the formation of Holocaust commemorative practices within the Jewish community.¹ Arieli, for example, focused primarily on the establishment of monuments and memorials in South Africa before moving on to the Eichmann Trial.² Gilbert and Petersen provide an overview of Holocaust commemoration as a response to apartheid. This chapter seeks to provide an overview of how the South African Jewish community honoured and remembered their fallen brethren during the first decade and a half after the war. As we will see, the community was anything but silent. Different organisations and local communities engaged with the memory of the Holocaust to varying degrees throughout the period under review. How the community conceptualized the Holocaust changed over time and was influenced by social and political changes both locally and abroad.

Commemorating the Destruction of European Jewry, 1945-1949

Between 1945 and 1949 the Holocaust was commemorated in a more localised fashion. Whilst there were some communal commemoration projects, most activities were organised at a local level as the community tried to grapple with the immensity of the Holocaust. Evidence of the first such practices appeared mere months after the end of the

¹ See the work of Shirli Gilbert, Roni Arieli, and Tracey Petersen

² Arieli, *Remembering the Holocaust in a Racial State* pg.1; Petersen, *Teaching Humanity*, pg. 30; Gilbert, *Jews, and the Racial State*, pg. 57

war. By the end of the decade, local practices started to merge and by 1960 almost all commemorative events were being organized by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in collaboration with local organisations.

The first local efforts to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust were advertised in the Jewish press in October 1945. The advertisement below, for example, appealed to the community “to contribute to planting a forest as a tribute to the millions who died for the cause of our people during the dark days of the Hitler’s regime.” The campaign was named the Balfour Day Tree Drive. The inclusion of Balfour Day suggested that the Martyr’s Forest was another way in which the community could contribute to establishing a Jewish state. The campaign continued for several years and always coincided with Balfour Day. The 1947 campaign took on a more sombre mood. The imagery of the advertisement changed completely. It contained a solid black background with an abstract drawing of two ghostly figures emerging from the darkness with a simple message below “Plant trees in our Martyrs Forest.”³



The Holocaust was also commemorated in poetry. In October 1946 the *Jewish Herald* published the poem “And There Was Justice” by famed American poet Paul Eldridge. The poem recounts the persecution and mass murder of European Jewry and their murderers being brought to justice. The editors of the *Herald* included a text box which recounted the

³ *Zionist Record*, November 1, 1946, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁴ *Zionist Record*, October 26, 1945 & November 1, 1946, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

sentence handed down to each defendant at the Nuremberg Trial and ended by saying “and thus with a sigh of satisfaction the world will forget.”⁵

Despite (or perhaps because of) the pessimistic view expressed, the *Herald* continued to publish articles in commemoration of the destruction of European Jewry. In September 1946, its front-page article entitled “Lest We Forget” contained the drawing seen below which shows Jewish triumph over Nazism.⁶ Here the image of the fighter, the scholar and children are shown together all looking to the future with the image of the scholar holding the Balfour Declaration



An Annual Day of Mourning for the Six Million Martyred Jews of Europe

The South African Jewish community hosted three days of mourning in 1942, 1943, and 1945. The commemorations were advertised in secular and Jewish newspapers. In 1946 and 1947, however, there does not seem to be any indication that the South African Jewish community gathered to commemorate their fallen brethren. Instead, the community chose to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The decision to only commemorate this anniversary could be related to the ongoing struggles facing survivors in DP camps and the

⁵ *Jewish Herald*, October 4, 1946:

⁶ *Jewish Herald*, September 7, 1946

need to establish a Jewish state. Perhaps the community also wished to project strength during this unsettling time both in South Africa and abroad.

The first post-war Jewish Day of Mourning was held in Johannesburg and Durban in 1948. However, unlike during the previous ceremonies, it was mostly a Jewish affair.⁷ In Johannesburg the Jewish Guild took the lead in organizing a mass meeting in memory of the Jews of Lithuania. Representatives from the SAJBD and the S.A. Zionist Federation were present. The keynote speaker for the event was Alte Sudarsky, who provided aid for Jewish refugees in Shanghai. The SAJBD held its own Jewish Day of Mourning at Coronation Hall, Randburg. The event was advertised in some non-Jewish newspapers especially the *Rand Daily Mail* which advertised the event for two weeks.⁸ Most people who attended were members of the community. The keynote speakers were prominent Zionists and communal leaders. Similarly in Durban an event was organized by the Jewish Club. It was not as widely advertised outside the community and as a result only local Jews attended the event. Rabbi M Swift from Johannesburg was the keynote speaker. The tone of the speeches given at the Day of mourning differed greatly to that of the Warsaw commemorative event.

In 1949 the Chief Rabbinate of Israel declared the tenth of Teveth as the annual day of fasting and prayer for the six million who perished during the Holocaust. Following this lead, in Cape Town, the *Beth Din* informed the community about the commemorative date and stated that “special memorial prayers should be intoned at the morning or afternoon services on Tuesday, 11 January 1949 for the six million who perished at the hands of the Nazis and for all those who have fallen in the war for the liberation of Israel.”⁹ The inclusion of those who had fallen during Israel’s war of independence was distinct to the Cape Town commemoration. In Johannesburg, the ceremony was held on 11 January at Coronation Hall. The commemoration was advertised in the local non-Jewish and Jewish newspapers and was reported on after the event.¹⁰ However, it was a mainly Jewish affair, and survivors weren’t officially a part of the programme.

⁷ SAJBD, Report of the Executive Council Aug 1947-July 1949, Berman Policy Archive, <https://www.bjpa.org/bjpa/search-results?Publication+Date=1940&search=Executive+report> accessed 19 December 2023

⁸ *Rand Daily Mail*, December 11, 1948

⁹ *Cape Times*, January 8, 1949, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

¹⁰ *The Star*, January 12, 1949; *Rand Daily Mail*, January 12, 1949, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

During the ceremony, only the six million victims of the Holocaust are mentioned. Most of the keynote speakers addressed a recurring theme: the present political and social situation in South Africa and the role of Jews in society. For example, in his keynote, prominent Jewish MP and member of the Zionist Federation M. Kentridge lamented the fact that the day of mourning did not attract as big a crowd as the 1942 and 1945 days of mourning. He stated that a “spirit of self-satisfaction has gripped both the non-Jewish and Jewish populations. This complacency is dangerous.”¹¹ He referenced the “duty of the Jewish community to South Africa and calls on those assembled to arouse their national consciousness to fight against the destructive tendencies in their midst.”¹² Kentridge’s speech came soon after the election of the National Party to power on their platform of *apartheid*. His reference to destructive tendencies in the country was a direct reference to the National Party’s plans to reshape the South African social landscape. The image of the new Jew also briefly appeared in the proceedings. H. Sonnabend, a member of the SAJBD, stated that “the Jews would no longer die as they had in Germany. When they died it would be on the battlefield like was the case at present in Israel.”¹³

The Cape Town community did not hold a commemoration in January 1949 but did organise an event the following December. At that event, Chief Rabbi Israel Abrahams urged his audience to see the Jewish tragedy as a broader human tragedy. He encouraged them to use the lessons of the Holocaust to unite and fight against despotism, totalitarianism, and materialism so that such a crime would never again be allowed to happen. Similarly, a December commemoration in Johannesburg called for unity against fascism.¹⁴

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in Jewish commemorative practice

Like their American and Canadian counterparts, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising played a significant role in the community’s commemorative practice during the first decade after the

¹¹ *South African Jewish Times*, January 14, 1949, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Rand Daily Mail*, January 12, 1949: 10

¹⁴ *The Star*, December 30, 1949, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

war. In Johannesburg, several community organizations hosted commemorations in 1946. Other metros in the country merely reported on commemorations held in Poland.¹⁵ One of the largest in Johannesburg was organized by the Club of Polish Jews at Coronation Hall on 29 May 1946. The Club was a central organization for all Polish Jews in the city. Advertisements for the commemorations appeared in major newspapers both Jewish and non-Jewish for several weeks before the event. The advert included a call to action that stated it is the “duty of every Jew to come and honour the heroes of the Warsaw ghetto.”¹⁶

All the speakers at the event were prominent Zionists and from the Orthodox community such as Rabbi Michel Kossowsky who was the vice-president of the Zionist Federation. The SAJBD was represented by its chairman S. M Kuper. The event did not receive any coverage in local newspapers. Consequently, we do not know much about the content or focus of the programme. What can be uncovered however, is how the community conceptualized the Holocaust at this point. Unlike in America, in South Africa up until 1951, the Uprising was commemorated separately to the Jewish Day of Mourning.¹⁷ The advertisements by the United Hebrew Institution seen below are examples of how some community organisations even separated those who had perished during the Uprising from those who had perished at camps and killing sites.

<p style="text-align: center;">קלוב פון פוילישע אידן in Johannesburg A MEMORIAL EVENING will be held at the CORONATION HALL TO-NIGHT (WED.), at 8.15 on the occasion of the Third Anniversary of the Heroic Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. The following will participate: Cantor S. Mandel, Rabbi M. Kossow- sky, Mr. M. Shur and Mr. R. Shallit. At the Piano: Mr. B. Raikim. Chairman: Adv. S. M. Kuper (Chair- man of the S.A. Jewish Board of Deputies). ADMISSION FREE. It is the duty of every Jew to come and honour the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">UNITED HEBREW INSTITU- TIONS OF SPRINGS Memorial Service</p> <p>A Memorial Service for our fellow Jews who have perished during the 1943 uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto will be conducted by the Rev. M. L. Altschuler at the Synagogue TO- DAY (Thursday) at 6 p.m. Please attend in your numbers.</p>
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¹⁵ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, May 4, 1946, April 28, 1947, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.
¹⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, May 29, 1946: 4
¹⁷ For more information about American Jewish commemorations of the Holocaust see Shaul Magid, “The Holocaust and Jewish Identity in America: Memory, the Unique, and the Universal.” *Jewish Social Studies* 18, no. 2 (2012): 100–135.

Similarly, in an article recounting what it called the Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto, the *Herald* declared the Uprising to be the “most glorious Jewish chapter of the war.”¹⁸ In the full-page article, the author recounted “how desperate the inhabitants of the ghetto were to survive the Nazi onslaught that they took up arms to save their own lives.” He went on to outline what led to the revolt and how the Polish underground supplied the ghetto fighters with arms to fight against the Nazis. He also described the battle in detail and stated that “this glorious battle will be remembered by all mankind.”¹⁹ The Uprising was seen as a turning point in the Nazi onslaught against European Jewry. This is evidenced by the photo published above the article which showed a group of men with their arms raised with a scornful caption below stating, “Jews being rounded up to be led off to slaughter...the ghetto battle put an end to this.”²⁰

In 1947 the Uprising was again a prominent feature of communal remembrance. The *Jewish Herald* highlighted the Uprising during its Jewish National Heroes Week. One article was written by one of the few survivors of the uprising, David Wdowinski, leader of the Central Committee of the Revisionist movement in Poland. Wdowinski reflected on his experiences in the ghetto through the prism of the death anniversary of Ze’ev Jabotinsky. He recounted the creation of the ghetto and how they learned about the fate of Lithuanian Jews in 1942. He described how many inhabitants of the ghetto gathered to commemorate Jabotinsky: “How ironic that the largest Jewish community in Europe would gather to paid tribute to the great Jews of our generation shortly before they were liquidated.” He ended the article by musing on what he calls “the folly of the Jews of Europe who did not pay heed to Jabotinsky's words that the diaspora should be liquidated before they liquidate you.”²¹

In 1947 several commemorations were again held around Johannesburg. The Club of Polish Jews and the United Hebrew Congregation of Springs held a commemoration for the fourth anniversary of the “*Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*” at Coronation Hall and the Great Synagogue respectively.²² The Club of Polish Jews commemoration included an

¹⁸ *Jewish Herald*, September 7, 1946:6

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ *Ibid*.

²¹ *Jewish Herald*, July 25, 1947, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

²² *Rand Daily Mail*, May 14, 1947: 6

extract from “Ghettograd,” an account of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.²³ Here again the commemoration was not mentioned in the press.

In 1948 the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) sought to centralize commemorative activities like it had done for the survivor relief efforts at the end of the war. The SAJBD set up a sub-committee to coordinate memorial services and lecture series to ensure that important dates were properly commemorated. It also took over the annual commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising from the Club of Polish Jews. Held on 19 April at Coronation Hall, the SAJBD invited Rabbi Moses Weiler, the founder of Reformed Judaism in South Africa as well as M. Kentridge to give a keynote. This commemoration was much more inclusive yet a wholly Jewish event.

The ceremony included speeches in English and Yiddish, songs from the ghetto and ended with the Partisan Song. Over 2,000 members of the community attended. During his keynote, Kentridge invoked biblical and modern pogroms stating, “Jewry has submitted to persecution and massacre with resignation.”²⁴ He cited Hayim Nahman Bialik's poem “The City of Slaughter” about the 1903 Kishinev pogrom as the catalyst for the ‘germination of self-defence, courage and resistance which reached its zenith in the Warsaw Ghetto.’²⁵ He addressed the subject of a Jewish collaborationist group in the ghetto who worked with the Gestapo to stop illegal activity. Whilst Kentridge took a dim view of the group, stating, “their moral decay did not stop their ultimate liquidation” He was one of the first South African Jewish leaders to address the subject.²⁶ He ended his speech by encouraging the community to draw inspiration from the heroes of the ghetto and to never forget.

The United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg and the Jewish ex-servicemen’s league held their commemoration on 16 April at the Great Synagogue. On the same day, another commemoration was also held at Temple Israel a short distance from the Great Synagogue. Commemorations were also held in several metros across the country. Most events were held in communal halls such as was the case in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, and

²³ *Rand Daily Mail*, May 14, 1947: 6

²⁴ *The Forward*, April 30, 1948, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.4

²⁵ H.N. Bialik, "The City of Slaughter" in Complete Poetic Works of Hayyim Nahman Bialik, Israel Efros, ed. (New York, 1948): 129-43 (Vol. I)

²⁶ *The Forward*, April 30, 1948, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

Bloemfontein. Smaller communities such as those in Nigel, Pretoria and Krugersdorp gathered in the local synagogue. Various youth movements including the Zionist Youth Movement, and the Revolutionary Zionist Socialist Youth of South Africa (Hashomer Hatzair) also held commemorations.

In 1949, the commemoration was a more unified affair. Only one ceremony was held in Johannesburg. It was attended by over 1,500 members of the community. It was imbued with messages about the newly established state of Israel and the dangers posed to South African Jewry by the newly elected National Party government. Cantor Jacob Lichterman, himself a fighter in the Uprising and survivor of Auschwitz, intoned the “Haskarah.” Rabbi Weiler once again addressed the crowd and called the battle of the Warsaw Ghetto “the birth of the new Jew...whose slogan is no more Treblinkas.”²⁷ Rabbi Weiler, a member of the SAJBD, connected the Uprising to the current conditions for South African Jews in his speech: “We must adopt the spirit of the heroes of the ghetto to fight both internal and external threats.”²⁸ Weiler’s comments come at a time when relations between the Jewish community and the National Party were still tenuous. Despite reassurances by the National Party that they would adopt a more equitable and non-discriminatory policy towards South African Jews, the Party still held antisemitic sentiments and policies. As such the community through the SAJBD was petitioning for the cessation of these policies and actively monitoring the situation for any signs of discrimination.²⁹

In Cape Town there was still no communal day of mourning. The only effort to mark the commemorative day officially was an article with extracts from Rabbi Abraham’s speech and a special service at the Sea Point synagogue. This irked many members of the community. One reader of the *Jewish Chronicle* stated, “Surely the community deserves an explanation for the unpardonable act of omission and ask why the leading institutions have chosen to remain silent on the matter.”³⁰

Reconstructing Jewish Life

²⁷ *The South African Jewish Times*, April 6, 1949, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ For more information on relations between the Jewish community and the National Party see SAJBD Report of the Executive Council for the period AUGUST 1947 to MAY 1949 To be submitted to the Seventeenth Biennial Congress in Johannesburg, May 28th to 31st, 1949

³⁰ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, 11 January 1949: 5

In 1947 the SAJBD acquired some 4,500 books and a large quantity of ceremonial silver from the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Inc., a project which sought to distribute heirless Jewish property recovered in Europe to Jewish communities around the world. While the Board had been collecting newspaper clippings and other literature on the Holocaust, Nazism, and antisemitism, the acquisition of these books and silver spurred the SAJBD to establish a Central Jewish Library and museum in Johannesburg to house these objects in collaboration with the Yiddish Cultural Federation. Interestingly, the SAJBD also sought to include its literature on inter-racial, inter-faith and inter-cultural relations alongside Holocaust literature. The library was officially catalogued and was open to the public interested in learning more about the Holocaust. By the mid-1950s the SAJBD reported that the library proved to be desirable for both the non-Jewish and Jewish public.³¹

In 1954, the ceremonial silver received from the Jewish reconstruction project was featured in an exhibition of Jewish religious art alongside other objects loaned by synagogues and private owners, as well as artefacts on loan by the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem. The exhibition opened in Johannesburg in February, and thereafter travelled to the other major metros of the country for two months. According to the SAJBD executive report, “It was visited by thousands of people, both Jews and non-Jews, from Johannesburg, the Reef and even communities further afield. Wide publicity was given to it by the press and the radio.”³² In her discussion on the construction of Holocaust memory in South Africa, Tracey Petersen suggests that “the inclusion of both South African, Israeli and recovered European Judaica in this exhibition was meant to convey the message that the contemporary communities were proxies for the destroyed communities of Europe and that South African Jewry were the keepers of Holocaust memory in the country.”³³ There were also other dimensions at play. As has been demonstrated above, many Jewish leaders encouraged both non-Jewish and Jewish South Africans to take on the lessons of the Holocaust and not become complacent in the post-war era. Another aspect which Petersen overlooks as possible reasons for their inclusion are that these artefacts aligned with an educational campaign launched by the

³¹ SAJBD, “Report of the Executive Council for the period August 1947 to May 1949 to be submitted to the Seventeenth Congress, Johannesburg, May 28th to 31st 1949,” Johannesburg. BJPA

³² SAJBD, “Report of the Executive Council for the period June 1953 to August 1955, to be submitted to the Twentieth Congress, Johannesburg, September 2nd to 5th, 1955,” Johannesburg, 30. BJPA

³³ Tracey Petersen, *Teaching Humanity*, pg 49-50

SAJBD in the 1940s to teach South Africans about Jewish history and culture to lessen antisemitic sentiment in the country.³⁴

Once the exhibition ended the SAJBD planned to distribute the silver to various Jewish congregations across South Africa to be used in religious ceremonies. However, in October 1954 the SAJBD decided that the silver would be distributed amongst the three metros in the country Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town where they would be used as “the nucleus for a Jewish Museum in each of the cities. As a memorial of the Jewish Tragedy in Europe.”³⁵ The silver donated to the Natal branch of the SAJBD was often used in commemorative events held in Durban. This silver was given more prominence at Yom HaShoah in the early 1950 instead of survivors who were also present.

Survivor Testimony

From as early as 1945, survivor testimony was a part of communal discourse in South Africa. In July 1945 extracts from a letter written by Isaac Erenberg to his parents-in-law in Johannesburg appeared in the *Jewish Times*. Entitled “Jewish Blood Flowed in Torrents,” Erenberg described his experiences in the Lublin Ghetto and an unnamed force labour camp.³⁶ In 1947, Rabbi Ephraim Oshry was invited to Johannesburg by the South African Jewish War Appeal and the SAJBD. “Oshry had been liberated in 1944 and spent 14 months travelling to different Jewish Centres to gather information about what happened to the Jews who lived there, how many of them had survived and to put them in touch with their relatives.”³⁷ During his visit he delivered three keynotes to different organisations within the Johannesburg Jewish community: the Federation of Lithuanian Jewry, United Hebrew Congregation, and the Kupisker Benevolent Society.

³⁴ See the section on educational campaign in the SAJBD, “Report of the Executive Council for the period June 1949 to May 1951

³⁵ SAJBD, “Report of the Executive Council for the period June 1953 to August 1955, to be submitted to the Twentieth Congress, Johannesburg, September 2nd to 5th, 1955,” Johannesburg, 30. BJPA

³⁶ *South African Jewish Times*, July 1945, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

³⁷ *South African Jewish Times*, August 22, 1947; *Zionist Record*, August 22, 1947; *Jewish Herald*, August 29, 1947, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

During his speech to the Federation, Oshry spoke about how they had all gathered to hear the last words from their Lithuanian communities. However, he did not come to just share the last words of their communities but also speak about what remained. He told them about his quest to retrieve children who had been converted and how they were forced to pay to get back the children. He also mentioned their efforts to get these children safely to Palestine stating, “there is no need for tombstones or monuments we only need to see our remnants live on in Israel forever.”³⁸

A series of articles based on Oshry’s research was published in Jewish newspapers between August and September 1947. This provided great insight into the Holocaust in Lithuania, a topic which was of great interest and relevance to the Jewish community. Oshry provided details about what happened to different Jewish communities in Lithuania from the smallest town which contained 50 Jewish families to the large towns and cities with thousands. He also described how the Lithuanian population assisted the Nazis in tracing down and rounding up the Jews.³⁹ Oshry devoted an entire article to the destruction of Kovno – a centre of Jewish learning and culture before the war, and the central city in the region from which most Jewish immigrants to South Africa originated.⁴⁰

As Rabbi Oshry’s visit was ending, another rabbi who had survived the Nazi onslaught came to South Africa on a lecture tour. At only 29 years old, Rabbi Joseph Weinberg had been interned with other rabbis in September 1939 before managing to escape and cross the border to Russia. He travelled for over four years and eventually made his way to Shanghai.⁴¹

In July 1947, the *Jewish Times* published a series of articles based on a lecture by Ziviah Lubetkin, one of the cofounders and the only woman on the High Command of the resistance group Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Jewish Combat Organisation). In the talk, Ziviah relayed how she managed to escape her hideout when the Warsaw ghetto was set on

³⁸ *South African Jewish Times*, September 19, 1947, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

³⁹ *South African Jewish Times*, 22 August 1947 – 28 November 1947:11& 5; *Zionist Record*, 22 August 1947, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁴⁰ *South African Jewish Times*, 19 September 1947, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁴¹ *The South African Jewish Chronicle*, 19 September 1947, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg

fire by the Germans.⁴² Ziviah described how she escaped the ghetto into the forest whereafter she participated in the Warsaw Uprising.

In November 1947 the testimony of Felix Piotrkowsky, a 17-year-old survivor from Łódź, Poland was published in the *Zionist Record* alongside several photographs of him reciting his story. Felix described how the Gestapo and the SS entered Lodz and established the ghetto, how he and his family were deported to Auschwitz, and the daily routine within the camp. One of the pictures shows how he had to rub his cheeks to appear healthier. Felix's testimony is one of the first by a child survivor printed in the South African press.



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Other forms of testimony appeared obliquely in the press. For example, in July 1952 Elizabeth Konijn, formerly of the Netherlands, appealed to the Supreme Court in Cape Town to have her husband, daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren presumed dead. Konijn's submission – described in detail in the non-Jewish Press -- was to enable her to access her husband's sizable fortune held in South Africa. In her testimony, Konijn gives the facts of her husband's deportation to Westerbork and her daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren's deportation to Auschwitz Birkenau. Through this case, more knowledge of the Holocaust was

⁴² *South African Jewish Times*, July 11, 1947, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁴³ *Zionist Record*, November 14, 1947: 14

made available to the public.⁴⁴ Such news stories weren't uncommon in South African newspapers during the 1950s.⁴⁵

Disseminating Knowledge of the Holocaust

Much like their American counterparts, the South African Jewish press was awash with news reports, articles, poems, and short stories on various aspects of the Holocaust and its aftermath. This included early attempts to explain and analyse what had happened. For example, in July 1946, the *Rand Daily Mail* published a review of Polish Jewish novelist and essayist Sholem Asch's book *One Destiny: An Epistle to The Christians*, in which Asch wrote about what went on in the Warsaw Ghetto and other concentration camps throughout Europe.⁴⁶ His book also served as an indictment to the inaction of Christians around the world during the Holocaust. In September 1946, the *Jewish Herald* published an essay written by historian and theologian Joseph Klausner entitled "Why did they kill the Jews: Men without God."⁴⁷ Klausner noted that "you would need thousands of men willing to execute these crimes," and asked "how could a nation such as Germany which had been known as civilised and cultured spawn such cruel executioners?"⁴⁸ Klausner dismissed the notion that the Holocaust reflected a natural outgrowth of antisemitism: "in what country has there not been antisemites? Where have there not been pogroms?" He also dismissed the idea that Fredrich Nietzsche's theory of the "Übermensch" was at the heart of the German self-understanding; "a single pamphlet cannot change the character of a nation."⁴⁹ Instead, "how Germany could commit such horror is to be found in a different sphere. In the soul of the German people – who have lost their God."⁵⁰ Klausner postulated that it was through a lack of religion and morality that the Germans allowed themselves to descend to such depravity stating, "where there is no God there is no reason to ask if something is lawful or not."⁵¹ He ended the article by asking "what the world would be like without God and invokes free thinkers to ponder on the matter."⁵²

⁴⁴ *Rand Daily Mail*, July 3, 1954: 2

⁴⁵ *Rand Daily Mail*, March 30, 1956, July 5, 1956: 4

⁴⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, July 13, 1946: 10

⁴⁷ *Jewish Herald*, September 1946, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

The Jewish press also continued to disseminate new knowledge of the Holocaust through the publication of articles written by scholars. Between 1946 – 1950, Jewish newspapers published at least two articles on aspects of the Holocaust every month. In some cases, these were tied to important anniversaries. For example, following the unveiling of the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial in 1948, the *Zionist Record* published an article by Dr. Itzhak (Ignacy) Schwarzbart, the Jewish representative in the Polish National Council-in-Exile, entitled “Unknown Facts about the Revolt in the Warsaw Ghetto.”⁵³ The article shared details about messages sent by the Jewish underground resistance movement to the Polish Government in exile in London in 1943 and the reaction of the Jewish representatives.⁵⁴ These contained information about the last few days of the revolt and issued a scathing indictment to the world stating, “While the epic heroism is nearing its end and the remnant of Jewish centres in the provinces are being completely wiped out, the free world, the world of justice, remains silent and apathetic.”⁵⁵

In a similar fashion, the Press expounded upon previously unknown aspects of the Holocaust such as the actions of Nazi collaborators. For example, in September 1947, the *Jewish Herald* published an article about the Jassy massacre perpetrated by Romanian government forces in June 1941.⁵⁶ It also provided its readership with information about the physical and psychological effects of the Holocaust on survivors. For example, in August 1947 the *Jewish Herald* published a report entitled “What Hitler did to the mind of Jewish children”⁵⁷ in which the author reported on a study conducted amongst Hungarian child survivors. The study concluded that “children who had survived the Nazi onslaught showed more elevated levels of fear and did not think about the future but were fixated on obtaining food and clothing.” The author ended the article by stating that “it is the responsibility of world Jewry to provide a safe and normal life for these children.”⁵⁸

The press also published reviews of books relating to the Holocaust. For example, the *Jewish Chronicle* published a review of Eva Reichmann’s book *Hostages of Civilization* on the

⁵³ *Zionist Record*, April 23, 1948, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Zionist Record*, April 23, 1948, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁵⁶ *Jewish Herald*, September 12, 1947

⁵⁷ *Jewish Herald*, August 21, 1947

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

social origins of German antisemitism and its consequences.⁵⁹ Similarly, a review of John Hersey's novel *The Wall* based on the story of the Oneg Shabbat was published in the *Rand Daily Mail*.⁶⁰

South African Jewish youth movements were also involved in disseminating knowledge of the Holocaust within their ranks and beyond. In the March-April 1947 edition of their magazine, *Hashomer Hatzair*, included a picture of Mordechai Anielewicz, the leader of the Jewish fighting organisation on its cover to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the Uprising. It also published an article entitled "They Resist"⁶¹ that described the physical and psychological ordeals the inhabitants of the ghetto endured and how this drove them towards mounting a revolt.

Commemorating the Holocaust 1950-1960

As the new decade dawned, and commemorative efforts in most of the country continued to mature with the assistance of the SAJBD. By the middle of the decade, 31 commemorations were being held annually throughout the country with the Board boasting in its 1958 annual report that "Judging from the annual report by the World Jewish Congress, it appears that in South Africa the occasion is better observed than in many other countries."⁶² The Board also created educational programmes and founded institutions to support teaching and learning about the Holocaust. Survivors also started to play a more prominent role in the commemorative days in Johannesburg following the establishment of *Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah* or *Yom Hashoah* in 1951.

While most other metros in the country were holding annual commemorative services from as early as 1947, no official communal ceremonies took place in Cape Town for the first few years after the war. However, the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto was remarked upon in the local press annually.⁶³ The message conveyed was aligned with the rest of the country.

⁵⁹ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, April 21, 1950, File 504.8 The Holocaust Collection, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁶⁰ *Rand Daily Mail*, November 11, 1950: 7

⁶¹ Mabel B. "They Resist," *Hashomer Hatzair*, April-May 1947

⁶² SAJBD, "Report of the Executive Council for the period April 1958 to August 1960, to be submitted to the Twentieth second Congress, Johannesburg, September 1st to 5th, 1960," Johannesburg, 30. BJPA

⁶³ See *South African Jewish Chronicle*, April 20, 1947, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1940-1949, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

Smaller ceremonies were held to commemorate various aspects of the Holocaust. The Claremont Synagogue, for example, sought to honour those who did not manage to escape Nazi Germany prior to the war. During the commemoration, a Sefer Torah was handed over to the schul by Leo Raphaely one of the men responsible for assisting German Jews in gaining entrance into South Africa. The event was presided over by Rabbi Duchinsky, himself a survivor.

It was only in 1952 that the first Communal Day of Mourning took place under the auspices of the Cape Committee of the SAJBD. The ceremony was held at the Zionist Hall on 22 April 1952. The ceremony was dedicated to the memory of the Six Million, the fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto and all those who had died in Israel's fight for independence. The event attracted hundreds. Since this was the first commemoration of its kind in the city, D. Cohen, acting chairman of the Cape Committee, provided context for why those who perished in Israel's war of independence were included in the ceremony stating "[they] gave their lives so there should not be a repeat of the fate which befall European Jewry."⁶⁴ He also raised the question of how Jews were remembering the Holocaust asking whether "they [were] teaching their children about what had happened? Were they doing what they should to preserve the memory?"⁶⁵ He also tied memory of the Holocaust to the new state. "Jews do not erect stone," he intoned, "A beautiful monument was being created in the form of the Martyrs Forest to the memory of the six million Jews who lost their lives in Europe."⁶⁶ He expressed his pride at the contribution of the South African community to the forest. Similarly, Zalman Levy of Johannesburg pointed to Kibbutzim named after heroes as examples of how people have memorialized the heroes of the Uprising. He ended his speech by encouraging those assembled to strengthen the Jewish faith as a tribute to those who had perished. The commemoration also included a one-act play produced by Alice Goldstein and P. Barsky performed by the executive of the Zionist Youth Movement entitled "The Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto."⁶⁷

The 1953 Commemoration represented a shift in the way in which the Holocaust was conceptualized by the Cape Town community. The ceremony was again held at the Zionist

⁶⁴ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, April 25, 1952, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Hall with over 800 in attendance. Unlike the Johannesburg ceremony, the Reform congregation did not play a part in the event. The ceremony included the lighting of six Yahrzeit Candles by communal leaders rather than survivors as was the case in Johannesburg at this point.⁶⁸ Spiritual and physical resistance was at the core of the ceremony. During his speech, B. Padowich a member of the Cape Committee stated that “the Nazi machine tried everything to dehumanise and demoralise the Jewish people but that they never lost their pride and their faith. The Ghetto fighters weren’t the only ones to resist. The great masses went to their death with the prayer of faith (Ani Ma'amin) on their lips.”⁶⁹ Padowich’s speech was the first time that spiritual resistance during the Holocaust was spoken about in post-war commemoration.

Commemorations in other centres across the country followed in a similar vein, albeit with a minor change; the name of the commemoration changed from the Day of Mourning to the Jewish Day of Remembrance. Throughout the 1950s keynote speakers continued to encourage the community to keep the memory of the six million alive. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising still featured prominently. However, unlike in the 1940s when it was seen as an isolated event, in the 1950s, it was understood to be emblematic of a larger spirit of Jewish agency and activism. For example, in the 1958 commemoration in Johannesburg the keynote speaker situated the Uprising within the context of a long history of Jewish heroism. The uprising was also often connected to modern-day conflicts in or against the state of Israel. At the 1957 ceremony, one of the keynote speakers stated that “The modern fighters are inspired by the deeds of their brethren and would fight to rid the world of the modern-day Hitler – Nasser.”⁷⁰ The speaker's comparison of Nasser to Hitler was one of the very rare occasions when such a direct comparison was made by the community in the postwar period.

In the early 1950s, survivors became more prominent at the Day of Remembrance. While speeches were still delivered by communal leaders, survivors were now called upon to light the six memorial candles in Johannesburg ceremonies. R Zygelbaum, a survivor of the

⁶⁸ See *South African Jewish Chronicle*, April 25, 1952, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg. The author mentions that the candles were lit on the stage

⁶⁹ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, April 17, 1953, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1940-1949, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁷⁰ *Jewish Herald*, May 7, 1957, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, was an ever-present figure at commemorations in the city.⁷¹ In Cape Town, the memorial candles were still lit by communal leaders. However, Holocaust survivor Jacob Lichterman concluded the ceremony. By the mid- to late 1950s survivors sharing their testimony became a common feature on the programme. For example, at the 1954 and 1958 commemoration in Johannesburg, Holocaust survivor Anushka Freeman delivered the keynote address where she spoke about her experiences in the camps and encouraged Jewish youth to keep the memory of the six million alive.⁷² In Cape Town, during the 1952 commemoration Holocaust Survivor I Kaplinski described the destruction of the Jews of Vilna in 1942. In Durban survivors were not yet a part of the ceremony. However, they were in attendance. One news report on the 1958 Remembrance Day referred to the survivors stating that “survivors from the camps shuddered as they were reminded of hell they endured in the camps.”⁷³

Another aspect which appeared prominently in speeches and news reports of the commemoration was the absence of Jewish youth. This may have been linked to the fact that by the early 1950s youth groups were holding their own commemorations outside communal events. In 1953, the Zionist Federation Youth Council in Johannesburg held a memorial service for several hundred Jewish young people. It started with representatives of different youth movements in the country lighting Yahrzeit candles in remembrance of the six million. Thereafter, a member of the committee gave a short address in which he stated that “the young men and women who fought against the Nazi machinery had turned a new page in the history of Jewish resistance. They were an example to the youth of today and their fight for an independent Jewish state.”⁷⁴ Here again the emphasis was on resistance, and on linking the spirit of resistance to Israel. The diversity of the event was characterized by performances from several youth groups including Hashomer Hatzair who sang songs from the Warsaw ghetto.

⁷¹ *South African Jewish Times*, April 28, 1956; *Rand Daily Mail*, April 10, 1953; *Zionist Record*, April 7, 1954, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁷² *South African Jewish Times*, April 23, 1954, & April 25, 1958, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁷³ *Hashalom*, April 18, 1958, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁷⁴ *Zionist Record*, May 1, 1953, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg

The youth movements vehemently disagreed with the notion that the youth were uninterested in what happened in Europe. Instead, they stated “it had awoken a determination to consolidate their homeland and to never forget the heroes and Martyrs who had perished.”⁷⁵ Despite this message from the youth, the SAJBD and other members of the community lamented the fact that young people did not attend the official commemoration.⁷⁶ To overcome this problem, the Board, in collaboration with the Zionist Youth Council, arranged a special Day of Remembrance for all Jewish youth in 1960. Over 1,200 Jewish youth attended the event where they were shown objects from the Cultural Reconstruction Project and given a lecture on the importance of remembering the Holocaust.

Educational Programming

In 1954 the SABJD officially opened the Jewish Museum at its headquarters in Sheffield House under the curatorship of Mrs. F. Abt. The museum contained the recovered silver as well as other objects of religious, cultural, and historical significance. It organized educational programmes for secular and Jewish school groups, youth movements and other community groups on the history of South African Jewry. On the Day of Mourning, the Museum arranged special exhibitions of the ceremonial silver not on display during the rest of the year. By 1960, the Museum also became the venue for commemoration services for Jewish youth in the city. During the service, the youth would be shown artefacts which had been recovered as well as listen to lectures on the history and significance of the Holocaust presented by the curator.⁷⁷

In 1953 the Board created an educational programme entitled “The Day of Mourning” which was distributed across the country to all Jewish day schools and rural Jewish communities to teach children over the age of nine about the Holocaust.⁷⁸ It was developed with the input from across the political and religious spectrum including the South African Board for Jewish Education, the Council for Progressive Jewish Education, and the Yiddish

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *South African Jewish Times*, May 21, 1954; *Zionist Record*, May 7, 1954; *Jewish Herald*, May 14, 1954, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁷⁷ For a short report on the activities at the Johannesburg Jewish Museum see “Report of the Executive Council for the period April 1958 to August 1960, to be submitted to the Twentieth second Congress, Johannesburg, September 1st to 5th, 1960,” Johannesburg, 30.

⁷⁸ The South African Jewish Board of Deputies, “The Day of Mourning,” Holocaust commemoration collection, SA Rochlin Archives, 520, 2A

Federation. The programme was distributed to schools until 1960 when it is not mentioned again. This might be explained by the introduction of Holocaust education into Jewish schools, rendering this programme redundant.

The SAJBD also introduced Holocaust education into its correspondence courses for adults on Jewish history. A lesson was centred on the connection of the South African Jewish community to the Holocaust.⁷⁹ The lesson started by describing prewar Jewish communities throughout Europe before moving on to why a day of mourning was held. The lesson also contained reference to those who aided Jews such as the King of Denmark, resistance movements in the Netherlands, as well as ordinary citizens who helped shelter Jews during the Nazi onslaught.⁸⁰ The lesson ended by asking the students what they would do to keep the memory alive. It offered several suggestions ranging from learning Jewish history to learning how to speak Hebrew and Yiddish to understand and connect with all those who perished. The message was unequivocal: students had a responsibility to be active citizens by helping to make the world a better and safer place for everyone.

The Board also embraced the Seder of Remembrance, an initiative driven by the American Jewish Congress which created a text for public and private use to commemorate the six million during Passover.⁸¹ The seder was published in all Jewish newspapers across the country. Like their American counterparts, the Jewish press printed it as a cut-out for people to use during Passover.

Monuments and Memorials

Erecting a permanent memorial was a major part of the communal discourse from as early as 1946. Herman Wald's sculpture *Kria*, pictured below, stimulated this discussion. The sculpture was created following the artist's discovery that he had lost almost his entire family during the Holocaust. It featured a ten-foot muscular figure ripping his garments yet looking up defiantly in the face of his enemies. Wald created the piece as a personal response to the news of the Holocaust. It received significant coverage in the secular and Jewish press in

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ For more information on the creation of the seder text see Hasina Diner, we remember with love and reverence, pg 18.

1946.⁸² In 1950, the SAJBD decided to acquire the piece and placed it in a communal building in the city. The monument stimulated a lot of debate in the community. Many felt that the figure was contrary to the Jewish law against idols, whilst others felt that a living memorial in the form of bursaries should be established to stimulate scholarship on the Holocaust.⁸³ The question of a permanent home for the memorial would be debated until 1953.



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In 1953, the United Council of Hebrew Congregations in Cape Town decided to build a permanent memorial in the city. They established a committee which included members of the Beth Din and the Chevra Kadisha of Cape Town and Wynberg. Despite the newly formed Reformed Synagogue having the largest number of survivors amongst its congregants in the city, it was omitted from the planning of the memorial, which caused some division among communal leaders.⁸⁵ All correspondence asking to be a part of the committee was ignored. The congregation was later asked to contribute to the cost of the memorial.⁸⁶

⁸² Herman Wald, *Artist Note*, <https://www.hermanwald.com/pages/FormViewAdd.aspx?id=218> (accessed 11 January 2024)

⁸³ *South African Jewish Times*, December 9, 1949, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1940-1949, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁸⁴ Herman Wald, Kria, <https://www.hermanwald.com/pages/FormViewAdd.aspx?id=218> (accessed 11 January 2024)

⁸⁵ Gwynne Schrire “News of Nazi atrocities emerge” in The Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation from its origins to 2010 web exhibition, <https://humanities.uct.ac.za/kaplan-centre/discover-our-web-exhibitions/green-and-sea-point-hebrew-congregation-its-origins-2010> (accessed 3 January 2024)

⁸⁶ *South African Jewish Times*, October 22, 1954

The memorial was to be sited within the Jewish cemetery. The Committee launched a campaign to collect funds to cover construction costs. By July 1953 enough funds had been amassed to erect the memorial. Made from Table Mountain sandstone and granite, the memorial included a stone torch and flame with the following inscription in Hebrew and English “The Stone Shall Cry out of the Wall. In Loving and Sacred Remembrance of Our Martyred Kinfolk Who Died During the Nazi Terror 1933-1945.” The stone also included other inscriptions that spoke to the need for remembrance: “These things I remember and pour out my soul within me.” Unlike the Johannesburg memorial, this monument did not include an Afrikaans version of the text.

The unveiling ceremony was held on 3 October 1954 at Pinelands No.1. The ceremony drew a large crowd, and several Christian ministers were invited to attend.⁸⁷ The proceedings were covered by several local and regional non-Jewish and Jewish newspapers.⁸⁸ The Ceremony was described as “one of the finest and most emotional communal events in the history of the city. Many people were observed crying for the loved ones they had lost during the Shoah.”⁸⁹ Rabbi Israel Abrahams, in his keynote, characterized the Holocaust as “a tragedy of the world as a whole. Mankind as a whole with few exceptions maintained a conspiracy of silence.”⁹⁰ Abrahams also claims that “had the world stopped the persecution of Jews the world would’ve been saved from the war which cost millions their lives.”⁹¹ He called “the monument and others like it all over the world a signpost to humanity to live in peace and brotherhood with each other.”⁹² The invocation of the Holocaust as a lesson for humanity was not unusual within Jewish communal discourse at this juncture. Rabbi E Duschinsky, a Hungarian survivor who came to South Africa in 1945, spoke in Yiddish about his experiences during the Shoah. He also made a connection to Israel stating that “it is said the stars above Israel is the Six Million.”⁹³ Despite the presence of a permanent memorial,

⁸⁷Gwynne Schrire “News of Nazi atrocities emerge” in The Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation from its origins to 2010 web exhibition, <https://humanities.uct.ac.za/kaplan-centre/discover-our-web-exhibitions/green-and-sea-point-hebrew-congregation-its-origins-2010> (accessed 3 January 2024)

⁸⁸ *The Volksblad*, October 1954; *South African Jewish Chronicle*, October 4, 1954; *Port Elizabeth Herald*, October 4, 1954; *Zionist Record*, October 8, 1954, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁸⁹ *Zionist Record*, October 8, 1954, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *South African Jewish Times*, October 4, 1954; *Zionist Record*, October 8, 1954; *South African Jewish Chronicle*, October 4, 1954; *Jewish Herald*, October 4, 1954; *Die Volksblad*, October 4, 1954

⁹³ *South African Jewish Times*, October 10, 1954, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

the annual Jewish Day of Remembrance was still held in the Zionist Hall for most of the 1950s.

In 1956 the Pretoria Jewish community established its own memorial at the Pretoria West Jewish Cemetery. It was unveiled at a ceremony much like that of other communities around South Africa. However, unlike the template in Cape Town, it was not a memorial stone but rather a “*Sheimos*” a form more often reserved for the proper disposal of religious texts. The decision to conceive the memorial in this way spoke to the community’s conceptualisation of the victims of the Holocaust as holy martyrs. Unlike other unveilings in the country, the Pretoria community also unveiled a memorial to Jewish soldiers from the city that had been killed in action during the war.⁹⁴

In Durban, the first memorial in the city was erected by the Reform Congregation. It was placed in the Reform section of the Jewish cemetery and comprised of a simple Grecian column with a symbolic urn. An inscription placed below the urn in Hebrew and English read “Remember, O God unto Life Eternal the Souls of Our Six Million Brethren Who Lost Their Lives as Martyrs During the Nazi Holocaust 1933-1945.”⁹⁵ This memorial was the only site in South Africa constructed during this period which contained the word Holocaust. It was unveiled at the annual Day of Jewish Remembrance on 11 October 1959 by Rabbi Miller. Hundreds of Durban Jewry attended the event. Later the Durban community included a memorial to the Six Million on an Ohel which had been erected in 1909. It included a much simpler inscription reading “This Ohel is dedicated to the Hallowed Memory of Our Six Million Brothers and Sisters who Perished in the Holocaust.” The inscription only appeared in Hebrew and did not mention the Nazis. Below the dedication, the community included a quote from the founder of Hasidism, Israel ben Eliezer: “Forgetfulness leads to exile while remembrance is the secret of Redemption.”⁹⁶ This served as a poignant reminder for the community to remember The Six Million.

Following the unveiling of the Cape Town memorial, an urgent meeting was called for the Johannesburg SAJBD to discuss its permanent memorial, *Kria*. The discussion was

⁹⁴ *South African Jewish Times*, 18 May 1956

⁹⁵ *Natal Mercury*, October 9, 1959, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁹⁶ DUHC Chevra Kadisha, <https://www.chevradurban.co.za/> (accessed 3 January 2024)

led by Leo Feit, Chairman of the Building Fund for the new Jewish Home for the Aged in Sandringham, Johannesburg. He proposed that the “sculpture be placed in the Garden of Remembrance created to commemorate the Holocaust at the facility.”⁹⁷ The Board agreed, and the memorial was unveiled at the opening of the new facility on 1 December 1957. At the base of the sculpture, the following inscription appeared in Hebrew, English, and Afrikaans. “To the sacred and undying memory of Europe’s Martyred Jews, 1939–1945.”⁹⁸ In his speech, Feit stated that “Jews do not practice charity, we practice social justice. This building stands as a proud monument to the Martyrs.”⁹⁹ In her discussion on the monument Roni Arieli suggests that “the monument was a way for the Jewish community to construct its own distinct national identity through memorialization within the boundaries of apartheid. They did this through framing the Holocaust as a distinctly Jewish tragedy.”¹⁰⁰

Whilst the discussion about where the *Kria* memorial would be placed was still underway, the Club of Polish Jews began to lobby for the creation of another memorial in the city. A subcommittee was formed and in 1955 numerous Jewish organisations including the Board were invited to join the initiative. Members of the committee reiterated the argument that a “living memorial” in the form of bursaries and scholarships should be established rather than another statue. Others argued that “the objects from the Cultural Reconstruction Project should be considered a memorial.”¹⁰¹ By the end of the discussion, it was concluded by the Board that the Club had the right to memorialize the tragedy in their own way and that it was the duty of the Board to support them. The Westpark Jewish Cemetery was chosen as the site and in May 1956 the planned monument was presented to the Jewish press. The committee chose another sculpture by Herman Wald. The artist's statement best describes the monument.

This monument depicts six mighty bronze fists, each five feet high, bursting out of the ground as a protest of the dead, each fist representing one million Jews who perished under Hitler, and each gripping a ram’s horn, the Jewish ritual trumpet, standing twenty feet high. In pairs they create three arches; the arches of trials and tribulations

⁹⁷ “Herman Wald’s ‘KERIAH’,” SAJBD Executive Council, 15 November 1954, 2, SAJBD Reports, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁹⁸ *Jewish Herald*, 1 December 1957, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Roni Arieli, *Remembering the Holocaust in a racist state*, pg 54.

¹⁰¹ “Johannesburg Memorial to the Jewish Martyrs of Europe,” SAJBD Executive Council Meeting, 5 April 1955, 2–3, SAJBD Reports, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

that the Jewish people have all gone through during all the generations of persecution. In the centre there is a flame-shaped Eternal Light, spiraling fifteen feet up. Through the ram's horns, the Dead are blasting out the Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill!" while the centre eternal light is stylized through the medium of the Hebrew lettering, to form a flame which spells in Hebrew "Lo Tirtzach" (thou Shalt Not Kill).¹⁰²



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Before it was even unveiled, the monument drew attention from the public. Though commemorations were frequently noted in the secular and Jewish press, the monument brought Holocaust memorialization in South Africa both locally and abroad into public discussion. It even featured in the *South African Engineer*. In an article entitled "Foundry Drama Has Happy Ending" the magazine stated that "[the monument] is a reminder to more than the Jewish community of the crime of genocide on a scale unmatched since the time of Genghis Khan. It will be the subject of much comment...for its symbolic significance."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Herman Wald, *Artist Statement*, <https://www.hermanwald.com/pages/FormViewAdd.aspx?id=187> (accessed 11 January 2024)

¹⁰³ Herman Wald, *Monument to the Six Million*, <https://www.hermanwald.com/pages/FormViewAdd.aspx?id=187>, (accessed 11 January 2024)

¹⁰⁴ "Foundry Drama Has Happy Ending" *The South African Engineer*, September 25, 1957, File 520.2A: Holocaust Commemoration 1950–1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

On 10 May 1959, the memorial was unveiled with an audience of more than 2,500, including the mayor of Johannesburg. Survivors featured prominently throughout the proceeding. They formed a guard of honour at the commencement whilst Reuben Zygielbaum, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, lit the memorial candles. Mrs. A Freedman, a survivor of the camps, addressed the crowd alongside the mayor and other communal leaders. The event again garnered a lot of attention from the international and local press. The entire event was broadcast on SABC Radio in both English and Afrikaans with commentary. All the local reports focused on similar themes: the scale of the monument and its symbolism, as well as the emotions expressed by those in attendance for the tragedy which had befallen European Jewry.¹⁰⁵ Another theme which was mentioned in all the reports was that the Mayor of Johannesburg himself a member of the community addressed the crowd in Afrikaans.¹⁰⁶

Internationally the event was written up in *The New York Times* which published an article the day after the event entitled “Victims of Hitler Honoured in Africa.”¹⁰⁷ The article reiterated many of the same points written about in the local secular and Jewish Press. However, the last paragraph brought to light a subject not addressed in the local press. Writing about the keynote by the President of the SAJBD Edel Horwitz, the author stated that “the theme thou shalt not forget is inscribed on the monument. A theme which Mr Horwitz dwelt on in his speech. A speech which had wholly unintended but nevertheless ironic applications to the surrounding climate of South African race relations.”¹⁰⁸ By the end of the 1950s connecting the Holocaust to the South African context was no longer present in local Jewish discussions on the subject. By this time the Holocaust had for the most part been removed from the South African context and become a Jewish tragedy commemorated by the South African Jewish community. This was amply demonstrated in the speeches given at the annual Jewish Day of Remembrance.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ See *Rand Daily Mail*, May 11, 1959; *Jewish Herald*, May 11, 1959, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

¹⁰⁶ *South African Jewish Times*, May 15, 1959, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

¹⁰⁷ *New York Times*, May 11, 1959, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Rand Daily Mail*, April 9, 1956; *Port Elizabeth Herald*, April 30, 1954, File 520.2A, Holocaust Commemoration 1950-1959, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

Conclusion

In sum, there was no period of silence on the Holocaust in the South African context. Rather, the first decade and a half after the war was a period when the community crafted a new communal identity with the Holocaust at its core. To this end, they started to create commemorative practices mere months after the liberation of the concentration camps, through the establishment of the South African Martyrs Forest in Palestine. During the mid-to late 1940s, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising played a significant role in how the community remembered the destruction of European Jewry. It was commemorated yearly by most communities around the country. However, it was separated from the annual day of Jewish mourning, which was held to commemorate those who perished.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies played a leading role in crafting Holocaust remembrance in South Africa. In the late 1940s, it centralized all commemorative practices and through its public relations committees organized all remembrance events. It also established a Jewish Museum which blended South African and European Jewish history through the inclusion of objects from the Cultural Reconstruction Project.

The establishment of Yom Hashoah in 1951 changed how South African Jews commemorated the Holocaust. The annual days for commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Six Million, and those who died in Israel's war for independence were combined. The narrative around the victims of the Holocaust also changed to emphasize spiritual and physical resistance. This period also saw the creation of educational programmes for the youth and adults as well as the establishment of several monuments and memorials in the major centres of the country. Survivors became more prominent during the mid-1950s taking a more central role in communal commemorative events. Through their commemorative works, the Jewish community facilitated the wider dissemination of knowledge about the Holocaust to the broader public.

Chapter Five:

Conclusion

The Holocaust in South African Public Discourse 1945-1960

We have observed how different newspapers within South Africa covered the news of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps and the extent to which they refracted this through their own particular lenses. Similarly, we saw how the media and public interpreted the Belsen Trial and the International Military Tribunal (IMT). We also examined the approaches taken by the South African Jewish community in commemorating and memorializing their fallen brethren and highlighted the role of survivors in helping to shape memorial practices.

The Liberation of the Concentration Camps

As we saw, the Liberal press situated the Holocaust within liberal democratic values and responded to the news from the liberated camps with shock, horror, and dismay. Reports by journalists and prisoners of war were published daily but rarely on the front page. Instead, the papers published poignant photographs on the front page with extended captions encouraging their readers to bear witness to the atrocities. This desire to “bear witness” reinforced the righteousness of the war and validated South Africa’s involvement therein. The papers also used the Holocaust to lambast the Nationalists for their calls for neutrality and their support of Germany. Readers reacted with shock and actively discussed the Holocaust, drawing parallels to historical and contemporary political issues in the country. The Liberal press refracted the Holocaust through a local lens by using it to serve its political aims. While the press argued that the Holocaust was a lesson for humanity, the exact nature of this lesson remained unclear.

The Black press also approached the Holocaust through a lens shaped by local political concerns. Few in-depth reports and images were published during the first three months following liberation, and no first-hand accounts were published during the period under review. The press emphasized the necessity of the war, but most reportage on the camps connected them to racial discrimination in segregationist South Africa. The press highlighted similarities between the segregationist policies in South Africa and Nazi Germany and warned of the potential repercussions of radical racial policies.

The Black press recognized and constantly emphasized the danger that Nazism posed to Black people both locally and abroad. Discussion of the camps shed light on the challenges faced by Black South Africans, in particular warning of the danger posed by fascist elements in the country that wanted to emulate Nazi doctrine. However, the editors made it clear that the two situations were not entirely comparable. The Holocaust's lesson for humanity was explicit for the Black press: if prejudice and discrimination were left unchecked, it would have deadly consequences.

The Nationalist press, entrenched within a framework of Afrikaner nationalism and anti-British sentiment, responded to the Holocaust with skepticism, denial, and ultimately, indifference. Initially, the press used derisive headlines to discredit reports and questioned the Allies' motives, summarily dismissing it as Allied propaganda designed to discredit Germany. As more evidence emerged, they intentionally diminished and obscured the evidence through different methods, either by placing this news in the back part of the paper or simply not publishing reports.

When confronted with irrefutable evidence, the papers obscured the evidence by highlighting atrocities on both sides of the conflict and endorsed the call for a delegation to visit Russia to see the crimes committed by Communism. Faced with overwhelming evidence, the papers eventually chose to ignore the reports and concentrated on portraying the suffering of the German people. Two of the three Nationalist papers reviewed did not publish any photographs from the camps but did publish photographs of destitute German women and children. One paper went so far as to caption a photo "conditions in the concentration camps," making a direct comparison between German prisoners of war and Holocaust survivors. The Nationalist papers supported the establishment of a fund to aid the German people, expressing a sense of kinship with them despite the atrocities revealed in the concentration camps. By framing the Holocaust as a distant and irrelevant tragedy, the Nationalist press attempted to shield their readership from uncomfortable truths that challenged their ideological worldview.

The South African Jewish press reacted with shock and dismay when they realized the scale of devastation wrought upon European Jewry. They quickly sprang into action to help survivors. In response to the horrors of the Holocaust, the Jewish community intensified their advocacy for the establishment of a Jewish state, seeing it as a necessary step to ensure the

safety of survivors and as a remedy to global anti-Semitism. It also tangentially connected the Shoah to racial discrimination in South Africa.

Unlike other publications, the Jewish press provided a comprehensive account of the progression from persecution to mass murder in Nazi controlled territory. They also shared news from both Eastern and Western European camps. They did not just rely on official reports but also highlighted survivor testimony to offer a firsthand account of the horror of the camps. They also chose to emphasize Jewish resistance and rescue, shedding light on the bravery and resilience of those who fought against annihilation. Implicit in this discussion was the concept of the "New Jew," which depicted a nation that did not passively succumb to slaughter but actively resisted and fought against its persecutors.

The Belsen Trial

While news about the concentration camps was not prominently featured, the Belsen Trials received significantly more coverage in both the Liberal and Black press. This provided the public with evidence of the atrocities committed in concentration camps and the disintegration of the camp system towards the end of the war. Black newspaper were the only media outlets to emphasize the unique fate of Jews within the camps. The Black press referred to the plight of Black people in South Africa by connecting some of the atrocities committed in the camp to those endured by black people in the country.

Figures like Josef Kramer and Irma Grese were presented as embodiments of the extreme deviance of the Nazi regime. Kramer was depicted as a monster, while Grese was singled out for transgressing societal expectations of beauty and femininity, leading to her portrayal as the "Beastess of Belsen." Readers responded swiftly and angrily to reports about the Belsen Trials, particularly mentioning Kramer by name and labelling him a monster in letters to the editor.

The Afrikaner press either did not report on the Belsen Trials or else claimed that deaths were due to starvation brought about by poor planning rather than intentional killing. This lack of coverage left their readers ill-informed about the operation and demise of the concentration camp system.

The Jewish press did not cover the Belsen trial in any depth. Most publications under review did not offer any coverage at all. In the few articles that did appear, the consensus was that it was a necessary yet lengthy procedure in which the media focused more on defendants than the deeds they committed. Overall, the Liberal and Black press actively engaged with and drew lessons from the Belsen Trials. The Jewish press did not report on the trial and the Afrikaner press either ignored or downplayed the events, leaving their readership uninformed and disengaged.

The International Military Tribunal

The Liberal press and Black press primarily focused on exploring the defendants of the International Military Tribunal (IMT), which unintentionally obscured certain aspects of the trial. Both the Liberal press and Black press understood the trial as an effort to criminalize war and ensure world peace, though they may have had different interpretations of its significance. Despite their focus on the defendants, the Liberal press and Black press provided their readership with key details about the persecution and mass murder of European Jews, including how the Nazi ghetto and concentration camp system functioned. The Black press again made comparisons between the suffering of European Jews and black South Africans. It was also the only outlet to compare the Holocaust to other atrocities, particularly the Nama-Herero genocide. Reader engagement was high during this period for both the Liberal press and Black press, with complaints about the trial's length and commentary on the absence of any details in the Afrikaans newspapers. Following the sentencing, readers were outraged by the Dutch Reformed Church's call for clemency. The Jewish press provided limited coverage of the IMT due to other major concerns such as aiding survivors and establishing a Jewish state. However, when covering the trial, there was a strong emphasis on the intentionality of the Holocaust and the inclusion of survivor testimonies.

The Afrikaans Nationalist Press rejected the trial as mere victor's justice and stoked anti-British sentiment. They also focused more on the defense than the prosecution, denouncing the proceedings and drawing attention away from the trial by again focusing on the suffering of the German people. At the end of the trial, the *Transvaler* was the only Nationalist newspaper to come close to admitting Nazi culpability. However, they quickly turned their readers' attention to the threat of Communism.

Remembering the Destruction of European Jewry in South Africa

In the South African context, there was no period of silence within the Jewish community regarding the Holocaust. Instead, the first fifteen years after the war marked a period of active community engagement in shaping commemorative practices. Almost immediately after the liberation of concentration camps, commemorative practices began, exemplified by the establishment of the South African Martyrs Forest in Palestine. During the mid- to late 1940s, the annual commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising emerged as a significant event, observed by most communities nationwide. However, it was distinct from the annual day of Jewish mourning, which honoured those who perished. The persistent narrative during the 1940s portrayed the Six Million as having gone to their deaths without protest. This contributed to the separation between the two events.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies played a pivotal role in shaping Holocaust remembrance in the late 1940s. It centralized commemorative practices and organized remembrance events through its public relations committees. Additionally, the Board established a Jewish Museum that integrated South African and European Jewish history by incorporating artifacts from the Cultural Reconstruction Project.

The introduction of Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah or Yom HaShoah in 1951 brought significant changes to how South African Jews commemorated the Holocaust. This consolidated the annual remembrance days for the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Six Million, and those who died in Israel's war for independence. The narrative surrounding the Six Million shifted, portraying them not as passive victims but as spiritual resisters. Educational programs for both the youth and adults were developed, alongside the creation of numerous monuments and memorials in major centres across the country. Survivors assumed a more prominent role in communal commemorative events during the mid-1950s, contributing to the broader dissemination of knowledge about the Holocaust within the public sphere.

This thesis has focused primarily on the major metros of South Africa. However, little research has been done on how smaller towns and cities in the country interacted with the Holocaust both inside and outside far-flung Jewish communities. This dissertation has primarily focused on the English and Hebrew press. It did not explore the Yiddish

publication, the *Afrikaner Yiddische Zeitung*. Similarly, this dissertation has not engaged with how the South African anti-apartheid movement invoked the Shoah in its struggle for freedom, a theme explored in Arieli's work. Her work focused on the African National Congress and its leadership. The global anti-apartheid movement also incorporated the Holocaust and Nazism into their discourse around apartheid. No research has been conducted on whether and how South Africans across the racial spectrum continued to invoke the Nazi past during the apartheid years and the early years of democracy. When did the *Afrikaner* and Nationalist press begin to accept the facts of the Holocaust? When and how did they invoke the Shoah during apartheid? Likewise, the apartheid government's Holocaust denialism has been superficially examined by scholars and deserves further investigation.

This thesis compared the South African response to the Holocaust to other English-speaking countries. Another avenue for research would be to compare South Africa's engagement with the Holocaust with those of other non-English speaking countries, especially in the Global South.

As described in the literature review, the development of Holocaust memory in South Africa has been understudied. This dissertation contributes to the knowledge of the development of Holocaust memory in South Africa by revealing the multifaceted and complex ways in which different racial groups interacted with this tragic period. It is the first study to examine to what extent the Holocaust was nativized in the press in the immediate postwar period. While Jewish reactions have been written about before, it has been superficial. This study examined how Jews came to understand the Holocaust and its aftermath. It demonstrated that South African Jews crafted commemorative practices and spaces to memorialize the Holocaust, often with the help of survivors who spoke publicly about their experiences on numerous occasions in the years after World War II.

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