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Immigrants to Citizens :
Civil Integration and Acculturation of Jews
into Oudtshoorn Society, 1874 – 1999

**Towards fulfilment of the
MA Degree in History,
University of Cape Town 2000**

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(CTZDAN003)**

This thesis was completed with the help of several persons and institutions. I wish to acknowledge, among others :

- The National Research Foundation
- The University of Cape Town's Postgraduate Scholarships Office
- The Kaplan Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, UCT
- The Department of History, UCT
- The C.P. Nel Museum, Oudtshoorn, for their invaluable help in compiling the oral history project.
- The Jewish community of Oudtshoorn, for their gracious help and information.
- All interviewees of the Oudtshoorn Jewry Interviews oral history project, for sharing their memories with me.

ABSTRACT

Coetzee, Daniel, From Immigrants to Citizens : Civil Integration and Acculturation of Jews into Oudtshoorn Society, 1874 – 1999, M.A. thesis, Department of History, University of Cape Town, 2000

The dissertation aimed at providing a model for the study of rural Jewish communities in South Africa during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in particular of the processes of acculturation and assimilation pertaining to Jewish immigrants in a frontier society. Oudtshoorn, an agricultural district in South Africa, was chosen because it possessed the largest rural Jewish community in South Africa (five hundred families) around its peak in the early twentieth century, and had a continuous history of Jewish life from 1874 to the time of the study in 1999.

The first generation of Jews in Oudtshoorn were mostly of Eastern European origin. The study concentrated on the relationship struck by the Jewish community between integration into the receiving society and the retention of a distinct Jewish cultural identity. The dissertation used a roughly chronological framework, pausing at illustrative situations. The study included the push-and pull-factors (especially the ostrich feather economy) which encouraged Jews to come to Oudtshoorn, the South African War, the First World War, economic crisis and the challenge of communal decline, ethnic and political tensions in the Depression years and fascist era, the Second World War, and the Apartheid era. The emphasis is on the development of a civil community, revealing the complexities surrounding minority life, identity and ethnicity in history. These concepts embrace acculturation by immigrants and reaction within the receiving society ; the middleman minority ; and class and ethnic group identity.

The sources include extensive use of local newspapers and oral history based on life-history interviews done with Jews and non-Jews in the 1980s and 1999. Questions covered family

experience, Jewish cultural life and the Jewish relationship with non-Jews. The oral record painted a positive view of ethnic interaction, but newspapers create perspective, so that one emerges with a complex and balanced view of cooperation and competition within the Oudtshoorn civil society. Jews are shown in the context of the twentieth-century ethnic and political divisions of South Africa, and economic competition in Oudtshoorn right through the colonial era into the post-apartheid dispensation.

The study accounts for the retention of Jewish cultural life amid growing integration. Jewish individuals successfully compartmentalized facets of their identity so that they could exercise their economic, political and cultural views shared with non-Jews without endangering or dissolving the Jewish cultural and religious entity. They underwent a complex process of negotiating civil rights with non-Jews, and successfully established the boundaries of the Jewish community and its claims upon its members. Oudtshoorn Jewry not only provide a case study for Jewish life in a frontier society, but also for issues pertinent to minorities in general.

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Bibliography

Abbreviations and Alternative Terms

OB	Ossewabrandwag
OJI	Oudtshoorn Jewry Interviews (Project)
<u>Oudtshoorn Courant</u>	can be identified as the <u>Courant</u> , or the <u>OC</u>
SAP	South African Party
UHI	United Hebrew Institutions
UP	United Party (change to full)

University of Cape Town

1. Introduction

The town of Oudtshoorn, in the Little Karoo region, for a long time had one of the largest rural Jewish communities in South Africa. Little attention has up to now been paid to rural Jewish life in South African Jewish historiography. The major academic focus has been on the large cities. This thesis proposes to fill this gap, and address issues of identity, particularly assimilation and acculturation as they applied to Jewish immigrants who settled in South Africa at the end of the nineteenth century.

Because of its honoured place within the history of the South African Jewish community, and its fame for being the one-time “Jerusalem of Africa”, Oudtshoorn has received some amateur historical attention in the past. The first work was by Leibl Feldman, whose Jerusalem of Africa was written in the 1940s. He was followed by George Aschman, who had grown up in Oudtshoorn, and contributed many small pieces, the most significant being in Saron and Hotz’s The Jews of South Africa : A History (1955). Chief Rabbi Israel Abrahams discussed Oudtshoorn in his The Birth of a Community (1955). Sue van Waart also discussed the Jewish community briefly in her Paleise van die Pluime (1999). From the academy, H. Lückhoff produced an M.A. thesis titled The Little Karoo (1946) for the UCT Department of Geography and Peter Buirski produced a B.A. Honours dissertation at the UCT Department of History titled Aspects of Material Life in Oudtshoorn, 1860-1927 (1983). None of these works, however, provided an investigation of sufficient depth on the Jewish community and the shaping of the Jewish identity in Oudtshoorn. The amateur works, in addition, did not follow academic methods of finding, evaluating and verifying information on a broad scale. As such they either perpetuated old myths and stereotypes, or failed to introduce their readers to the nuances of ethnic group interaction in Oudtshoorn over several decades.

This thesis follows upon a BA Honours dissertation, Class and Capital : Oudtshoorn Jewry 1874-1914, submitted to the UCT Department of History in 1998. It attempts to redress the lack of academic focus on rural Jewish communities and to provide a model by which further investigation of South African Jewry in a rural context can be made. As such, it attempts to use new sources and to test the accuracy of the amateur works. Most importantly, it attempts to balance the previous dependence upon oral sources with the use of primary written sources. Although the memory of former members of the Oudtshoorn community was used through oral

sources, this is not a communal history. The focus is on change over time, primarily the changes the immigrant Jewish community of the late nineteenth century passed through on its way to full citizenship of and identification with the South African and Oudtshoorn communities. As such, the choice of Oudtshoorn is incidental to the study : what it important is to identify trends which affected Jews scattered all over rural South Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This study attempted to use various diverse sources, each with its own benefits and drawbacks. The examination of these sources was informed by the work previously done on Jewish immigrant communities in the United Kingdom, primarily by Bill Williams in his essay “East and West : Class and Community in Manchester Jewry 1850 – 1914” which appeared in The Making of Modern Jewry (1990) and David Feldman in Englishmen and Jews : Social Relations and Political Culture 1840 – 1914 (1994). Both these researchers drew attention to the neglected factor of ethnicity and identity in history. One of their major foci was the changing nature of ethnic identity of immigrant communities over time. They related individual experiences to broader trends in the political and social arena and stressed the interaction between the immigrant group and receiving society which modified both groups. Finally, they shed light on the tensions and complexities within the immigrant group as it sought to adapt to its new circumstances over a period of many years. The ideas and methodology of these studies were followed closely in the Oudtshoorn context.

Oudtshoorn had three newspapers covering the period 1876 onwards. Various governmental records, including magisterial and divisional council records, and synagogue records were available. Two sets of oral history records, one compiled previously by the Kaplan Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town, and another, the Oudtshoorn Jewry Interviews, collected specifically for this dissertation, proved useful. Predictably, there was a dissonance between the written and oral sources. The latter provided a very harmonious picture of ethnic relations, while the former provided a more nuanced and ambiguous relationship between ethnic and religious groups. Memory plays havoc with the past, and as such it is necessary to use oral history only as a supplement to other archival sources. Oral history does, however, lend colour and humanity to research into the past, and was very fitting in the case of Oudtshoorn. In combination, the sources provide a very full and diverse picture of Jewish life in Oudtshoorn over a period of 115 years.

This thesis reaffirms certain conclusions about ethnicity and identity in the context of Jewish rural communities in South Africa. The emphasis of this study lies with the relationship struck between adaptation to new circumstances through assimilation and acculturation, and the retention of a unique and separate Jewish communal identity. The structure of the thesis is chronological. It attempts to show how an immigrant, outsider community entered a new context and changed aspects of its behaviour in order to benefit most from its new circumstances. The chronological flow is punctuated by points in time when the Jewish community was faced with new contexts. By overcoming challenges, or simply adapting to change, the Jewish community was able to progress from being an outsider group towards being accepted as full citizens of Oudtshoorn and South Africa. Some of these challenges or contexts include antisemitism, but also debates over freedom of association, religious freedom, the freedom to participate in the free market economy, and the right to protection from the civic and civil community. One aspect of the Jews' development from immigrants to citizens in Oudtshoorn was the separation between public and private spheres, or civil and ethnic or religious spheres in Jews' lives. This allowed the individuals within the Jewish community to participate fully and independently in the civil society of Oudtshoorn without relinquishing their private practice of their religion and the bonds they formed through a shared past, and shared aspirations (such as Zionism) with fellow Jews. The Jewish immigrant community became diffused as individual Jews developed different and even conflicting affiliations within the civil society, as expressed in their economic and political participation in civil life. Jewish life became increasingly complex as Jews had to fight to save their community against demographic decline and attrition, while still living full and rewarding lives outside their ethnic and religious borders. This was achieved only through a long process of debating and testing issues, and of deciding where Jews would draw the borders between the general society in which they lived their lives and the ethnic or religious sphere which provided them with their most treasured identity. As such, Oudtshoorn provides an opportunity to see how the "South African Jewish citizen" came to be, and what it means to be a Jewish South African.

2. The Pioneer Years : Jewish Arrival and Early Integration c. 1874 - 1899 ¹

2.1 General Introduction

The town of Oudtshoorn is the principal urban centre in the Little Karoo, a semi-arid region of Southern Africa. Its first settlement by Whites dates back to the 1750s, but it was only in the early nineteenth century that the district underwent serious economic development.² By 1848, demand from distant markets had transformed a pastoral economy into an agricultural one.³ Settlement intensified near the confluence of the Grobbelaars and Olifants rivers, where the town of Oudtshoorn was proclaimed in 1863.⁴ A low level of development characterized the Little Karoo into the 1860s,⁵ yet the founding of the town heralded changes that shattered the region's slumber. One was the introduction of ostrich feathers into the *haute couture* of Europe, which created a demand for which Oudtshoorn was uniquely able to cater. The fashion continued for decades, reaching its peak during the Edwardian era.⁶ Another factor was the introduction of lucerne.⁷ Together, feathers and lucerne provided an unrivaled commercial combination. By 1878, the district was "one of the richest in the Colony,"⁸ and with increasing capital in circulation, and a move from subsistence to production for the market, the district was ripe for the expansion of the commercial sphere. By 1880, the first Jewish immigrants were beginning to fill these positions.

Most Jews settling in Oudtshoorn came from Lithuania.⁹ Their arrival was part of the mass migration of Eastern European Jewry from 1880 onwards. A high birth-rate among Eastern

¹ For the purposes of this discussion, the feather era of the Oudtshoorn economy, which lasted until 1914, and which saw the initial stages of Jewish settlement, will be divided into the Pioneer era, that is, up to 1899, and the Boom period, lasting until 1914. This introductory chapter does, however, discuss aspects of the period 1874 – 1914, the whole ostrich feather period, as background to the processes of acculturation under way in the periods before and after the South African War.

² Buirski, P.A., "Aspects of Material Life in Oudtshoorn, 1860 – 1927," BA Honours Dissertation, Department of History, University of Cape Town, 1983, pp. 4-5

³ Buirski, P.A., 1983, p.6

⁴ Godlonton, B.G., for Municipality of Oudtshoorn, Oudtshoorn and Its Farms, Press Advertising & Publishing Co., Cape Town, 1914, p.13

⁵ Lückhoff, H., "The Little Karoo," MA Thesis, Department of Geography, University of Cape Town, African Studies Library, 1946, p.247

⁶ Buirski, P.A., 1983, pp. 15-16

⁷ Buirski, P.A., 1983, pp.18-19

⁸ Standard Bank Archives, INSP 1/1/118, 1878, Johannesburg, p.135

⁹ Oudtshoorn Jewry Interviews [OJI], Barron, Isidore, 1999. Based on his and others' observations, and confirmed by study of surnames and the use of yiddish.

European Jews "created population surpluses,"¹⁰ at the same time that capitalist development eliminated old occupations. Furthermore, the Christian authorities' policies varied from total expulsion of Jews, to constant proscription of Jewish liberties and opportunities. In 1871, the first modern pogrom in Russia took place, to be followed in 1881 by an explosion of anti-Jewish violence. The tempo of emigration was kept up by such violence and a stream of anti-Jewish measures between 1881 and 1911, roughly the period of Jewish settlement in Oudtshoorn. Poverty in the ghettos was also intense, and access to land was a further incentive. Emigration was facilitated by firms who specialised in smuggling Jews out of Eastern Europe.¹¹

Eastern European Jews were largely urbanised by the 1880s.¹² They were over-represented in small, low-profit, marginal enterprises, lacking specialist training and depending on relatively unsophisticated goods.¹³ Many candidates for emigration were small traders or simple craftsmen, and most were familiar with these economic activities. This suggested the role they would take up in Oudtshoorn. Families often sent single representatives out, and these people would then send money back to Eastern Europe to bring relatives or friends over to join them.¹⁴ Most of these early Jews arrived with few possessions. They found the land they entered strange, and the people alien.¹⁵ But recent arrivals also found Oudtshoorn compelling : a rural area, dominated by a small town, with an expanding economy opening up opportunities for outsiders with commercial skills. There was little problem of ethnic competition, since the major producers, the Afrikaners, did not specialise in marketing or distributing their own products. Feathers, soon the dominant agricultural product, was of low sophistication, required little skill to handle, and accommodated small businesses. There also existed an economic void between rural Oudtshoorn and the majority of town-bound, English-owned businesses. Early on, as well, access to land was still possible even for the relatively poor.¹⁶

¹⁰ Ettinger, S. in Ben-Sasson, H.H., A History of the Jewish People, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1976, pp.859-60

¹¹ Johnson, P., A History of the Jews, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987, pp.361-3 ; Löwe, H.D., The Tsars and the Jews, Oxford, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993, p.58, p.86

¹² See Goldscheider, C. and Zuckerman, A.S., The Transformation of the Jews, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1984, for a theoretical background to the conflict and ethnic cohesion facing Jews in Eastern Europe and the processes of modernization which affected them as they emigrated.

¹³ Löwe H.D., The Tsars and the Jews, 1993, p.89

¹⁴ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Nathan Klass was twelve years old when he was sent, alone, to travel to Oudtshoorn. OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹⁵ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. The stories are anecdotal but interesting.

¹⁶ See Coetzee, Daniel, "Class and Capital : Oudtshoorn Jewry 1874 – 1914," BA Honours dissertation, Department of History, University of Cape Town, 1998, esp chapters 3 - 5

At first, some Jews showed a great hesitancy towards moving to a "heathen country" like South Africa.¹⁷ But after a *minyan*¹⁸ had been established in Oudtshoorn, the town itself became more attractive to religious Jews who landed on South African shores. Oudtshoorn's dry climate also made it ideal for sufferers from lung diseases.¹⁹ In 1875 the Government Census recorded three Jews in the Oudtshoorn division.²⁰ Rabbi A.F. Ornstein of Cape Town²¹ recorded that the first *minyan* could be held in Oudtshoorn in 1884, with 30 Jews present, and by 1888 he estimated the population at two hundred to three hundred.²² They added their numbers to a population divided roughly equally between Whites and non-Whites,²³ with land ownership dominated by Afrikaners and the small English-speaking contingent limited mostly to the town mercantile and professional sectors.²⁴ In 1891, 251 Jews (172 male, 79 female) lived in the district, out of a total district population of 25 263.²⁵ This figure rose to 797 in 1904, which constituted only 2.62 % of the Oudtshoorn division's population, but which was far above the 0.81 % average for Jews throughout the Cape.²⁶ By 1912, "non-Christian Europeans" in the Oudtshoorn division officially numbered 798.²⁷

The Eastern European immigrants engaged in small retail enterprises, especially feather dealing. Feathers were not only bought from farmers, but were also generated from their own birds. Around the popular small-scale retail store, small land purchases, stock purchases and speculative dealing built up capital resources.²⁸ This pattern provided many early arrivals with the basis for

¹⁷ OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999.

¹⁸ Birnbaum, P., *Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts*, 1979, p.370. *Minyan* : ten male Jews above the age of thirteen, minimum required for congregational worship, public Torah reading, recitation of certain prayers.

¹⁹ OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999.

²⁰ G42-'76, South African Library, *Census of the Cape, March 1875*, pp.335-7

²¹ Shain, M., *Jewry and Cape Society*, Cape Town, Historical Publication Society, 1983, pp.3-5. Rabbi Ornstein served in Cape Town between 1882 and 1894.

²² Feldman, L., *Jerusalem of Africa*, 1984, p.89

²³ G42-'76, Cape Archives, *Census of the Cape, March 1875*, p.5 : Divisional population in 1865 : 12077, of which 6091 "European", 4846 "Hottentot" and 1140 "Other" ; in 1875 Divisional population 15181, of which 7925 "European," 6037 "Hottentot" and 1219 "Other"

²⁴ Based on INSP 1/1/118 to INSP 1/1/122, Standard Bank Archives, Lists of All Standard Bank Clients with Discount Liabilities for 1880, 1890 and 1900, which includes surnames and identification of professions

²⁵ G6-'92, South African Library, *Census of the Cape ... 1891*, pp. 10-11, 130-1 ; the figure includes all race groups.

²⁶ G19-1904, South African Library, *Results of a Census of the Cape ... April 1904*, p.166

²⁷ UG32'11, South African Library, *Census of the Union of South Africa, 1911*, pp.28, 926, 954, 968b ; They constituted only 2.1 % of the inhabitants of the Oudtshoorn area. The estimate is rather low. Most oral histories place the Jewish population of the whole district at between 1000 and 1500 people. This figure might reflect only those resident in the town itself.

²⁸ See for example OJI, Marcus, Monty, 1999. OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999.

fortunes in later years.²⁹ They were indeed in an excellent position to improve their living standards. The riches of Oudtshoorn increased faster than anywhere in the Cape Colony between 1860 and 1910.³⁰ By 1890 the district was described as "one of the largest and most important in the Colony"³¹ and business in Oudtshoorn was "in a healthy and prosperous condition."³² The effects of the South African War disappeared quickly, and the years immediately following it were the "boom" times, aided by the completion of the railway line linking Oudtshoorn with Port Elizabeth.³³ Soon Oudtshoorn was "the most flourishing farming centre in Southern Africa."³⁴ By 1910, 110 000 ostriches yielded £ 750 000 annually.³⁵ Ostrich feather money was invested in agricultural development,³⁶ but warnings of overproduction were leveled³⁷ and banking circles predicted the imminent collapse of the feather market.³⁸ There were now 277 licensed feather buyers, almost all Jews.³⁹ Competition was heavy,⁴⁰ and high property prices, speculative dealings, unsafe credit, overinvestment and overconfidence proliferated.

A look at the farming industry illustrates why this boom was both possible and essentially flawed. A modest ostrich farm could be started at low cost at times when even low-grade feathers could fetch good prices, even though overproduction helped drive the price per lb down from £6.3.0. in 1875, to a mere £1.12.2 in 1896.⁴¹ Jewish immigrants were therefore part of a race to profit from the feather fashion. Yet, in 1911, 75 % of the district's revenues still came from feathers.⁴² Long-term repercussions were also in the making. The ostrich feather economy severely disrupted rural land ownership. Access to fertile land was the cornerstone of success, and those farmers with regular access to lucerne could get better prices for their feathers, increase their turnover and more easily survive price fluctuations. Lucerne was easy to produce, and commanded cultivated land⁴³ to the virtual exclusion of other products,⁴⁴ yet land was often

²⁹ These early Jewish inhabitants included families like the Kaplans, Aschmans, Stussers, Lazaruses, Morrisises, Sladowskys and Lipschitzes.

³⁰ Buirski, P.A., 1983, p.16, quoting Christopher, A.J., "The Growth of Landed Wealth in the Cape Colony 1860 – 1910 in *Historia*, 22 1 (1977), p.54 : G1-60 Statistical Register of the Cape Colony, 1909

³¹ INSP 1/1/120, 1890, p.229

³² INSP 1/1/120, 1890, p.230

³³ Van Waart, Sue, *Paleise van die Pluime*, Pretoria, 1990, p.83 ; the exact date is 15 February 1904

³⁴ INSP 1/1/253, 1907, p.19

³⁵ INSP 1/1/253, 1910, p.13

³⁶ INSP 1/1/253, 1912, p.13

³⁷ INSP 1/1/253, 1912, p.13

³⁸ INSP 1/1/253, 1910, pp.13-14

³⁹ INSP 1/1/253, 1913, p.13

⁴⁰ INSP 1/1/253, 1913, p.13 ; OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

⁴¹ INSP 1/1/122, 1898, p.32

⁴² INSP 1/1/253, 1911, p.13

⁴³ INSP 1/1/253, 1906, p.15

⁴⁴ Pitcher, S.G.H., "The Ostrich Feather Industry – A Brief History" in *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 1 August 1923, p.3

scattered among small farmers with limited resources and limited resistance to disasters. Ostriches and lucerne advanced subdivision, and the necessity for highly lucrative lines of agriculture such as ostrich farming to make a profit off the small lots, frequently bought on credit or with a mortgaged from a bank.⁴⁵ As time wore on, land prices also rose prohibitively,⁴⁶ and inhibited the entry of new or indigent people into the economy.⁴⁷ There was an increasing concentration of wealth in the top bracket of the economy,⁴⁸ and conditions were increasingly harsh for the poor.⁴⁹ Higher property prices also meant higher rents, and tenants were inevitably forced to capitulate.⁵⁰ Therefore, many small farmers eventually disappeared, and rural dispossession created extensive slums in Oudtshoorn in the neighbourhoods where the poorer Eastern European immigrant Jews settled.⁵¹

2.2 The Jews' Position in the Economy and Interaction with Non-Jews in Business

The Jewish community's considerable dependence upon feathers made it vulnerable to a potential market crash. On the other hand, a system in which speculation was not only acceptable but commonplace, allowed for poor men to enter the industry, as long as they could instill confidence in their client or creditor. Enough people in Oudtshoorn were willing to take the risks for the system to operate for nearly fifty years, and retail encouraged extensive interaction between individuals, which benefited the assimilation of Jews into the general society.

Initially, Jews depended heavily on their co-religionists for help. Wealthier Jews became the centre for small ethnic networks, providing small Jewish enterprises with money and goods, as well as endorsements with banks. Banks were otherwise mistrustful of the new arrivals, believing that

"... the Hebrew fraternity ... in this part of the Colony, are, for the most part, comprised of a very 'shady' and undesirable

⁴⁵ INSP 1/1/119, 1884, p.337

⁴⁶ INSP 1/1/253, 1913, pp.12-13

⁴⁷ INSP 1/1/253, 1909, p.27

⁴⁸ Buirski, P.A., 1983, p.25 : See his Appendix II, p.113, for his methodology.

Buirski's results are, however, to be regarded cautiously, since they are drawn from a sample group of only 344 individuals in 1891, and 336 in 1901, featuring only Standard Bank clients. From personal experience, the Standard Bank records supply insufficient complete balance sheets to allow a table or a graph of this kind.

⁴⁹ Buirski, P.A., 1983, p.38

⁵⁰ Buirski, P.A., 1983, pp.41-55

⁵¹ Lückhoff, H., 1946, p.254 ; for example Vaaldraai, North End, Lower St. John's Street

class of men ..."⁵²

The few important Jewish businessmen acquired influence within the Jewish community, since they were not only the protectors, but also ambassadors for the Jews, and were sometimes the dispensers of access to wealth. This created friction between poor and rich Jews,⁵³ with some poorer Jews acting as "clients" of wealthier ones and becoming indebted to them. Although the endorsement system was more often informed by business sense, rather than pure ethnic solidarity, the intimacy of small groups of Jews in business was certainly a key to their survival in the district's expanding economic web.

Jews also interacted extensively with non-Jews, and this drew immigrants into the fabric of the local community.⁵⁴ These relations were not always pleasant. Jews often became the representatives of unfortunate business practices necessitated by the tough competition, and were resented by a rural population often still unaccustomed to a fully fledged money economy in the 1890s. Small Jewish businesses could survive only through an easy credit policy, and many of the rural population became indebted to the Jewish-owned shop. Furthermore, the uncertainties of ostrich feather deals created endless opportunity for friction, which fed off xenophobia and religiously inspired images of the Jew, most importantly antisemitic notions portraying Jews as parasites or usurers.⁵⁵ One source of tension was a practice which developed under stiffening competition, in which dealers paid farmers for feathers ahead of the plucking, or ahead of the actual feathers having grown.⁵⁶ In many cases there was an extensive overinvestment, both speculatively and in stock.⁵⁷ Obviously, it left the feather buyer in a uniquely difficult position in the interim between the deal and the delivery.⁵⁸ Some of the banks abetted this system.⁵⁹

Speculation in feathers was not the exclusive territory of Jews, but their name was integrally connected to it because of their activity in the feather business and preconceptions about Jewish

⁵² INSP 1/1/121, 1893, p.10

⁵³ Interview with Alex Miller, Oral History Project, Kaplan Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University of Cape Town, 0175, March 1982, p.16

⁵⁴ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. This help involved exchange of loans in times of need.

⁵⁵ See Shain, Milton, *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1994, chapters 2 and 3

⁵⁶ Feldman, L., *Oudtshoorn, Jerusalem in Africa*, p.97

⁵⁷ INSP 1/1/121, 1893, p.83 ; "loose assets" include household furniture, horses and cart

⁵⁸ For examples of court cases, look : Civil Record Books, Magisterial District of Oudtshoorn, Cape Archives, OUD 2/2/1/13-15

⁵⁹ INSP 1/1/121, 1895, pp.15-6

greed.⁶⁰ Jews purportedly suffered equally under the trickery of non-Jews,⁶¹ but in 1892 the Standard Bank inspector noted of the feather business :

"... An unpleasant feature of this trade is the hold which the Jews are obtaining upon the District – the farmers (mostly Dutch) are apparently gradually falling into their hands ..."⁶²

Still, the shopkeepers were useful in lowering the bank's credit risk with the tenant farmers, who formed the majority of debtors in the district. Banks refused many tenant farmers direct loans, but supported the shops, placing the credit risk on the shopkeepers, who attracted clients through liberal advances to the poorer people. Banks therefore only had to deal with the shopkeepers, and pressure them for repayment of debt.⁶³ Given the Jewish role in rural shopkeeping,⁶⁴ it did not bode well for ethnic relations, hinting at loci for xenophobia and anti-alienism.

These agreements between Jews and their clients were voluntary. Yet, because Jews formed the manpower for "grass roots" commercial expansion, there would be a strong connection between them and the vagaries of the new credit system. Partnerships between Jews and non-Jews,⁶⁵ and regular agreements of Jews with non-Jewish firms existed,⁶⁶ but there seems to have been a general hesitancy among non-Jews to "setting up shop" with East European Jews. This might have been out of a preference by Jews for other Jews, with whom they shared similar immigrants' aspirations, religious beliefs and often a common language. On the other hand, many non-Jews held negative perceptions about Jewish honesty, and also feared the disapproval of their own co-religionists should they fraternize with the "Peruvians," or low class East Europeans.⁶⁷ Afrikaners also felt hesitant about entering into trade, an economic sector of which they had very little experience. But by the late 1890s, some Jews were not only viable businessmen but socially respectable and acculturated, and non-Jews formed long-standing arrangements with them. This facilitated the further entry of some Jews into the local Gentile middle class society, even before

⁶⁰ For example INSP 1/1/121, 1895, pp.15-16 ; See Shain, M., The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, 1994, pp.22 – 27, 54-75

⁶¹ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

⁶² INSP 1/1/120, 1892, p.18

⁶³ INSP 1/1/119, 1884, p.338-9

⁶⁴ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. The old road between Calitzdorp and Oudtshoorn had a large number of Jewish shops, serving the densest part of the rural population. This continued well into the 1930s. It was known as the "Yiddishe Gass", the Jewish road.

⁶⁵ INSP 1/1/121, 1897, p.35 ; INSP 1/1/122, 1899, p.40 ; INSP 1/1/122, 1900, pp.37-8

⁶⁶ INSP 1/1/122, 1899, p.72

⁶⁷ See Shain, M., The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, 1994, pp.22 – 27, 54-75

1900. Jews were slowly changing from being mere immigrants to being citizens with interests in the local community.⁶⁸

Several situations allowed for relationships of trust to be built up, and became so common as to be indispensable to the running of the ostrich-lucerne economy. Afrikaner farmers producing feathers often agreed to restrict their sales to particular Jews, in exchange for an advance against the feathers.⁶⁹ Traders and farmers therefore banded together to finance their speculative dealings, and tide them over until the expected feather income paid off. This fostered a sense of mutual dependency, and also meant that non-Jews developed friendships with Jews, or an economic interest in the survival of certain Jewish businesses. Businessmen and bank clients, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, regularly stood in for others whose names were not as "good" with the banks.⁷⁰ Large firms also constantly gave clients goods on credit across ethnic lines.⁷¹ Another source of Jewish and non-Jewish cooperation were tenant agreements.⁷² When established Jews acquired land they often agreed to let more experienced individuals farm it for them. New arrivals also gained access to land by renting it from non-Jewish landlords. In running their farms, they further interacted with Afrikaners and Coloureds on a daily basis. Itinerant Jewish traders would also stay at farmers' homes along their way, kindling familiarity with individuals.⁷³ All this economic interaction led to closer personal relationships between Jews and non-Jews, and also an eroding of communal barriers. By the late 1890s, some Jews were well-known in the district, and turning from strangers into neighbours.

2.3 Jewish Civil Integration in the Town Life of Oudtshoorn until circa 1899

Regarding *Jewish* interaction with the civil activities of the greater community, one has to distinguish between individuals who happened to be Jewish, being active in ways having little to do with their ethnicity or religion, and secondly, the Jewish community, acting explicitly out of a

⁶⁸ See "Coetzee, Daniel, Class and Capital : Oudtshoorn Jewry 1874-1914," BA Honours dissertation, 1998, chapters 4 – 6 and below.

⁶⁹ See for example Gillis, Solomon, INSP 1/1/121, 1894, p.87

⁷⁰ For example Marcus Hotz standing in for Michael Olzwanger, Shopkeeper, Oudtshoorn, INSP 1/1/121, 1894, p.175 – but the records are replete with examples

⁷¹ INSP 1/1/121, 1894, pp. 63-66

⁷² Gillis, Bennie, in Interview, Oral History Project, Kaplan Centre, University of Cape Town, 6070, p.2 : Solomon Gillis provides the example. His son, Ben, recalled that his father had "partners" in Andries Coetzee, a Bezuidenhout and Klaassens, some of whom acted also as "foremen" or farmed on "half share."

⁷³ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. This practice persisted throughout the feather period and beyond.

set of shared interests, beliefs or cultural characteristics. By the late 1880s, with the *minyan* established, one can speak of a Jewish community which could interact with the greater society.

Individuals who happened to be Jewish found different ways into the greater society. One example was Louis Field, an Anglo-German pioneer born in Courland and resident for some time in Cape Town before he became the owner of a large retailing business in Oudtshoorn after 1880.⁷⁴ The process of changing from immigrant to citizen was perhaps less traumatic for the Anglo-Germans than for immigrants fresh from Eastern Europe. Field could fit in relatively seamlessly with the small *bourgeoise*, English-speaking segment of the Oudtshoorn community, even in the early 1880s.⁷⁵ And once Field, a prominent businessman and westernised, Anglophone, Victorian gentleman who happened also to be Jewish, entered civic life, nothing prevented other Jews who followed his example, to be given the same courtesy. Field became active in the Turf Club, his wife in the Choral Society, and he joined non-Jewish Oudtshoornites on many occasions in the social sphere.⁷⁶ Soon he was officer in the Freemasons,⁷⁷ the Chambers of Commerce and Agriculture,⁷⁸ and was elected director of the Cango Tobacco Company.⁷⁹ Another early example of an Anglo-German pioneer was Mark Morris, who opened first a shop and later a hotel.⁸⁰ He soon joined the Turf Club, which together with the Freemasons proved a key site for familiarisation with non-Jews.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Abrahams, I., *The Birth of a Community*, 1955, Cape Town, Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, p.67 ; and INSP 1/1/119, 1887, p.217

⁷⁵ The search for Jewish surnames for this period was begun in 1885 and proceeded to 1899. Although Field and a few other Jews were present before 1885, this starting point was chosen (a) because before 1885 it was highly unlikely that any Jew but the Anglophone Field would have had the capacity, even language skills, to mix with non-Jews and (b) since whatever contact existed, for Field and others, can be revealed as effectively as if 1874, or 1880, had been chosen. Suffice to say, before 1885, recorded contact was very infrequent.

⁷⁶ eg. *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 20 August 1885, "Oudtshoorn Choral Society", p.2 ; 8 April 1886, "Oudtshoorn Turf Club Autumn Meeting," p.2, Field was elected one of the stewards ; 4 February 1886, "Farewell Dinner to J.C. Gie Esq", p.2, S. Goldberg and L. Field undersigned an illuminated address for the Assistant Resident Magistrate, Gie, leaving Oudtshoorn.

⁷⁷ See Katz, Jacob, *Emancipation and Assimilation – Studies in Modern Jewish History*, Harvard, Gregg International Publishers Ltd, 1972, pp. 147-158, for a background on the relationship between Jews and the Freemasons on a broader or international scale.

⁷⁸ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 24 June 1886, "Cango Lodge No 2088", p.2, Elected Treasurer, L. Field ; 2 September 1886, "Public Meeting", p.2, L. Field member of Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, p.2 ; 30 June 1887, "Cango Lodge", p.2, elected officers including L. Field and M. Aschman

⁷⁹ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 31 December 1891, "Cango Tobacco Co. Ltd.", p.2

⁸⁰ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 6 September 1932, p.3

⁸¹ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 18 February 1890, "Turf Club", p.2 ; by this time Morris had presumably been a member for some time, but only at this point did commercial success and social status allow him to be

Anglo-German Jews always composed only a small segment of the Oudtshoorn Jewish community.⁸² Yet, they played a key role in the movement from immigrant to citizen, by proving that Jews could assimilate into Oudtshoorn society to the satisfaction of their critics. Gradually, by the early 1890s, Lithuanian Jews were recorded as being involved in various bodies, including as shareholders of the Cango Tobacco Company or as officers in the Freemasons,⁸³ which even Reverend Woolfson joined.⁸⁴ It is likely that initial bonds were formed through commercial interaction: most of Oudtshoorn's businesses were situated in the town centre, and were somewhat dependent upon one another for products or services. Once people had become familiar with one another in the economy, and newcomers were considered "respectable", nothing prevented Jews from entering civil life.

Some interaction was casual. Rifle shooting and horse racing also interested some Jews.⁸⁵ They participated in the billiard competitions,⁸⁶ and a Sanders played soccer as early as 1890.⁸⁷ "English" sports like football, cricket, and to a lesser degree rugby,⁸⁸ provided some common ground between a few of the Anglophone first generation immigrants and the receiving society. Though Eastern European Jews had little familiarity with these games, a town team provided ideal opportunities for them to develop loyalties and friendships once they had overcome the initial barriers to economic survival and had some free time. Also, by the mid-1890s, the second generation Jews⁸⁹ were beginning to make themselves felt in the town schools. In the Boys'

elected to one of the lower positions in the organisation, the position of steward. Soon afterwards (23 April 1891, p.2) Field was on the committee of the Turf Club.

⁸² See "Coetzee, Daniel, *Class and Capital: Oudtshoorn Jewry 1874 – 1914*," Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1999, Chapters 3, 6. The difficulty of establishing the exact origins of Jewish individuals, and the fluidity of the Anglo-German and Eastern European identities in Oudtshoorn Jews, means that pinpointing Anglo-German Jews is challenging. The Honours dissertation, and chapter 4 of this thesis, posits a movement from Lithuanian to anglicised mode of behaviour among Jews, based on the example set by Anglo-German Jews in Britain, Cape Town and Oudtshoorn.

⁸³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 June 1890, "Cango Tobacco Co. Ltd.", p.2, shareholders included M. Aschman, M. Morris and Wulf Sanders; 1 July 1890, "Cango Lodge", p.2, M. Aschman joined L. Field as officer in the local Freemasons.

⁸⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 June 1895, "Freemasonry", p.2; Jews made up 4 out of the 9 officers elected for that year, including M. Aschman, Rev. M. Woolfson and the brothers Mark and Moss Morris.

⁸⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 August 1891, "Oudtshoorn Rifle Volunteers", p.4

⁸⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 August 1896, "Billiard Handicap", p.2; S. Sacks was one of the winners.

⁸⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 August 1890, "Football", p.2

⁸⁸ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 May 1895, "Football (Rugby)", p.2; a Sanders played for the M to L town practice team. Both S. and M. Sanders also played Association Football at this time (Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 May 1895, "Association Football", p.2).

⁸⁹ That is, the children of the original immigrants.

Public School prize distribution of 1895, Jews were already winning prizes in Dutch,⁹⁰ and soon young Jews were making regular appearances at the top of the schools' academic results.⁹¹ Jewish boys keenly participated in sport and the cadet corps,⁹² later becoming involved in town teams.⁹³ In the rural areas, the Jewish shop often formed the focus of social life for both Jews and non-Jews, if only to talk and play games on summer evenings. These same shops also provided shelter for groups of itinerant traders and other travellers.⁹⁴

Another site available to immigrants eager to display civil integration with other citizens of Oudtshoorn, was that of contribution to charities and funds seeing to town interests. There seems to have been an informal understanding among the immigrants to improve their communal relations with non-Jews in this manner. It certainly worked. In 1891, when the Girls' High School raised money, the chairman remarked that

"... he had found great indifference among the townspeople, but he would like to add that this meeting should not fail to recognise the liberal manner in which the Jewish community responded to the appeal ..."

This was remarkable, since few of the thirteen Jews who contributed, had children in the school.⁹⁵ Other funds were similarly supported,⁹⁶ and the Jews of the town quickly gained a good reputation.⁹⁷ Of special significance to the non-Jews was the Jewish rally to the building of a

⁹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 June 1895, "Distribution of Prizes", p.2 ; Arthur Jacobsohn and Jacob Lazarus in Standard V, both won prizes in Dutch. Between Standards II and VI, seven Jewish boys featured in the first three positions in each class, out of a possible fifteen.

⁹¹ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 December 1896, "Oudtshoorn Boys' Public School – Break-up entertainment", p.2 ; and 21 Dec 1896, "Girls' School Break-up – Distribution of Prizes", p.2

⁹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 18 June 1896, "Oudtshoorn Public School Cadet Corps", p.2 ; the list of officers included Sergeant Harry Kaplan and Corporal Jacob Lazarus, p.2 ; also Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 December 1896, "Oudtshoorn Boys' Public School – Break-up Entertainment", p.2

⁹³ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 1 April 1897, "Football – Rugby", p.2 ; in this case three out of forty-four players at trials were Jewish.

⁹⁴ Oudtshoorn Jewry Interviews, Markus, Monty, 1999 ; also OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. The Kaplan farm, Warmbad, served as the informal meeting place for fifteen to twenty Jews in a given night, attracted by the *kosher* food, the *minyán* provided, and the familiarity with people from Eastern Europe.

⁹⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 March 1891, "Oudtshoorn Girls' Public School – Public Meeting", p.2 ; the contributors were all of the more prominent Jewish shopkeepers and feather buyers, almost the whole committee of the Queen Street Synagogue. Their contributions ranked from 5.5.0. to a mere 0.10.6, but thirteen out of the fifty people on the list, were Jews.

⁹⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 September 1893, "Boys' Public School", p.2

⁹⁷ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 18 June 1891, "Boys' School", p.2, four Jewish firms contributed ; 30 June 1892, "Mauritius Relief Fund", p.2, four Jews contributed

municipal hall.⁹⁸ Jewish immigrants therefore keenly accepted the duties of citizenship and tried to prove their loyalty to and interest in the local community.

Some Jews eventually tried to gain personally from their increased civic profile. Abraham Stusser tried unsuccessfully to stand for the Town Council in 1892, the first Jew to do so.⁹⁹ A recognition that Jews were an important part of town life was, however, dawning among non-Jews. When an emergency town meeting was held in 1892, Reverend Myer Woolfson of the Oudtshoorn Queen Street Synagogue was invited to attend on behalf of the "Hebrew Section" to what was described as "a good representative meeting of the principal inhabitants of the town."¹⁰⁰ On another occasion, when the postmaster left, "some twenty gentlemen representing the leading inhabitants of the town" were selected to present a farewell. Louis Field was one of them.¹⁰¹ Jews joined in the mourning or celebration of events of importance to the town,¹⁰² and their influence in local affairs slowly increased. Supporters' lists drawn up in the 1890s for the Divisional Council elections included most of the prominent Jews at that time, who threw their support behind the candidate Hendrik H. Juta, of the Afrikaner Bond.¹⁰³ Important public meetings by the mid-1890s included many Jewish "gentlemen,"¹⁰⁴ and a message from the town to Queen Victoria was accompanied by several Jews' surnames.¹⁰⁵ When a petition against moving the morning market was drawn up, several Jews contributed,¹⁰⁶ and the Oudtshoorn Agricultural and Horticultural Society had several key Jewish members.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 October 1892, "The Volunteer Drill Hall", p.2 ; twelve out of the 77 contributors on the list were Jews.

⁹⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 August 1892, "Town Council Elections", p.2 ; He polled third, ended last, but still got 41 votes out of 387. This is especially significant since only people who owned property in the municipal area of the town of Oudtshoorn could vote. This meant that any town councillor had to have the support of a considerable base of property owners, i.e. the wealthier and more established segment of the community. For Stusser to have received the votes he did so soon after arriving in Oudtshoorn, meant that he had earned the respect of a section of the established community of property holders.

¹⁰⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 1 September 1892, "Public Meeting – Girls' School", p.2 ; M. Morris was also present in a private capacity. Woolfson was elected onto the provisional school committee.

¹⁰¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 November 1892, "Presentation to Mr. Ralph Henderson", p.2

¹⁰² eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 October 1896, "In Memorium", p.2 ; This is a lesser example, in which the death of Sergeant Bugler Littlejohn, a popular member of the Oudtshoorn Volunteer Rifles, was met with sorrow by the town. Wreaths included ones from Mrs Field and Miss Feldt. Also Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 April 1898, "Obsequies", p.2 ; here wreaths were sent by Mr and Mrs Friedland and Lewin to the funeral of Mrs Wiggett.

¹⁰³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 January 1894, pp. 1 – 2

¹⁰⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 March 1894, p.2 ; here the one arguing for an Oudtshoorn-Nelspoort railway line.

¹⁰⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 June 1897, "The Message to the Queen", p.2

¹⁰⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 1 March 1897, "Notes", p.2

¹⁰⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 January 1895, "Oudtshoorn Agricultural and Horticultural Society", p.2 ; H. Nurick, L. Field, M. Lipschitz and M. Aschman were elected onto the committee.

Louis Field's important business earned him an influential position in the Chamber of Commerce,¹⁰⁸ and he was also part of the dominant "clique" in the Jewish community.¹⁰⁹ The leading Queen Street *shul*¹¹⁰ in 1896 had only 71 members. Yet, synagogue activities were reported with growing interest and in the most positive light by the town newspaper, the Oudtshoorn Courant (or simply the Courant), although most of its readers were Christians. This reflected an acceptance that the Jewish community was an integral part of town life.¹¹¹ Non-Jews had an opportunity to see that the Jews possessed a complex culture, as Yiddish troupes followed the growing Jewish population to the town.¹¹² Local Jews also tried to display their own skills in entertainment, organising variety concerts, to which the Gentile population was keenly invited.¹¹³

Jews were eager to assert their rights even from the earliest years. By the mid-1890s, due to the convoluted nature of feather dealing, it was common for Jews to be part of civil cases, both as plaintiffs and defendants, trusting in the British legal system to uphold their rights.¹¹⁴ They were wary, being a religious minority in a town dominated by members of the Dutch Reformed Church.¹¹⁵ But for the most part the attitudes were positive. For example, when the Courant reported on the formation of an antisemitic party in Germany, it reflected that it was "A

¹⁰⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 25 February 1895, "Valedictory Addresses", p.2

¹⁰⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 December 1895, p.2 ; and Feldman, L., Jerusalem of Africa, p.106 ; At least seven out of the ten members of the Queen Street Synagogue Committee founded in 1888, were still in office in 1895. The 1895 list is, however, incomplete. The newcomers were all prominent businessmen.

¹¹⁰ Rosten, Leo, The Joys of Yiddish, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1972, p.384. *Shul*: centre for Jewish communal life.

¹¹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 October 1896, "Oudtshoorn Hebrew Congregation", p.2 ; Various reports dealing with Jewish communal affairs. At this time the Queen Street Shul or Oudtshoorn Hebrew Congregation (the "English Shul", had an income of £ 872.8.3. and a balance of £ 229.0.6, much of this underwritten by its more prominent and wealthier *bourgeoise* members. This gave them great influence on the committees.

Note: the case study on the "Jewish monopoly" debate will prove the exception to the Courant's tolerance towards Jews.

¹¹² Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 April 1898, "Hebrew Opera", p.2 ; and 21 April 1898, "*Sulameth* or the Love of Jerusalem", p.2 ; this was a yiddish musical or opera, which was attended by large numbers of local Jews.

¹¹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 June 1898, p.4 ; the Jewish Young Men's Association was gathering funds for a School room for the Jewish community, by offering a variety concert to all comers.

¹¹⁴ for example Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 May 1894, "Civil Cases", p.2 ; of 17 cases listed for the session, Jews were involved in 13. Of these, 9 cases involved them as plaintiffs (Ber Lewin featuring 6 times) and 6 cases as defendant (4 cases involving Jacob Olinsky). Most of these cases had to deal with the ubiquitous but troublesome practice of promissory notes.

¹¹⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 31 December 1894, p.2 ; in a census in 1891, presumably done among Whites only, only 1 373 out of 11 573 White people in the Oudtshoorn division, were not members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Most of the majority were Afrikaners. The minority included not only the Jews, but all the English denominations, including Catholicism, Anglicanism and Methodism.

monstrous programme ! Its authors deserve to be put in a lunatic asylum."¹¹⁶ Also, when Rev. Ornstein of Cape Town, the man who had blessed the local synagogue, died, the Courant noted that the news "was received at Oudtshoorn by Hebrew and Christian with universal sorrow."¹¹⁷

Personal relationships gradually developed between the more prominent Jews and the Gentile middle class, whose initial hesitation was eventually overcome by the increasing wealth of some of the new immigrants. When Maurice Lipschitz married a Velenski, the Courant described her as "the eldest daughter of one of our most respected Jewish fellow-townsmen." The wedding was attended by "a large number of friends" and the couple was toasted personally by the Magistrate. Especially welcome to the many Gentile guests was the English used in the Queen Street Synagogue, which served to demystify much about the Jews for the curious Christian onlookers.¹¹⁸ The Gentile reaction to the wedding was extraordinary, given the hesitation with which Velenski had been welcomed into the local Gentile-dominated community only four years earlier.¹¹⁹ But where Velenski had fought for his position, his children slipped into Gentile society much easier, often attending balls and parties.¹²⁰ Marriages within the prominent Jewish families attracted increasing attention as they became more ostentatious.¹²¹ The Luntz-Cohen wedding of 1892 elicited "much interest" even though it was described in the Courant under the heading "Jewish wedding" and had an almost exclusively Jewish guest list.¹²² Another "grand marriage at the Synagogue" set the "town [into] bustle and excitement" and the "Synagogue was densely packed with Jews and Christians to witness the solemn service."¹²³ Identification with local Jews began to slip in, and the bride Ida Katzenelenbogen [sic] was described as an "Oudtshoorn girl."¹²⁴ Also celebrated by both Afrikaners and English-speaking Christians was the wedding of

¹¹⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 July 1895, "Most Tyrannous", p.2

¹¹⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 December 1895, p.2

¹¹⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 March 1891, "Wedding", p.2

¹¹⁹ Velenski's business career in Oudtshoorn is discussed in detail in "Coetzee, Daniel, Class and Capital : Oudtshoorn Jewry 1874 – 1914," Honours Dissertation, University of Cape Town, Chapter 4.2.3. Briefly, his initial arrival in Oudtshoorn was met with suspicion, and he was described as "tricky" and "a shrewd and careful Jew". Soon, however, his spectacular economic success won many friends.

¹²⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 July 1892, "Fancy Dress Ball", p.2 ; also 3 October 1895, "The Children's Fancy Dress Ball", p.2 ; the child participants included Misses Woolfson, Ada Stusser, Bertha Stusser and E. Cohen.

¹²¹ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 June 1897, "Jewish Wedding," p.2 ; at this instance, for example, a hundred guests attended. Larger guest totals were not unusual as the Boom enriched the local Jewry.

¹²² Oudtshoorn Courant, 18 August 1892, "Jewish Wedding", p.2

¹²³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 October 1892, "Jewish Wedding", p.2 ; Fanny Green of George married W. Solomon of Uniondale, and the guest list included many locals, both Jewish and Afrikaner and English, the latter drawn mostly from the merchant class in the town. At this time "Hebrew Wedding" or "Jewish Wedding" was usually used when weddings between Jews were recorded in the Courant. This was later dropped as the Jews became more assimilated.

¹²⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 Sept 1892, "Jewish Wedding", p.2

Isaac Nurich, "one of *our* ostrich feather buyers" to Miss Sanders "daughter of *our* respected townsman, W. Sanders."¹²⁵ And when Moritz Aschman married Katie Velenski, both Dutch and English reports in the Courant read :

"... it goes without saying that all who know Mr and Mrs Aschman, both of whom have been for many years resident in Oudtshoorn, wish them a happy journey through life ..."

To satisfy Gentile interest, a full description of the ceremony and the dresses were supplied.¹²⁶ Jewish guests were likewise invited to Gentile weddings.¹²⁷

Morris Aschman in 1897 tried to get elected to the Town Council. As a sign of the growing confidence of the Jewish community, Mark Morris joined him. Both men were prominent businessmen who had been residents of Oudtshoorn for over fifteen years. Morris even tried to form an election ticket with two English-speakers. The candidates' speeches reflected a wish to represent the interests of the majority of voters on topics like town finances and infrastructure.¹²⁸ In the end Morris failed, but Aschman tied for third place with 118 votes – he lost when a lot was drawn.¹²⁹ Throughout the election, the Courant mentioned nothing about ethnic or religious origins, nor was there apparently any agreement between either Morris or Aschman, or between Jews on whom to vote for. By this time at least thirty Jews had the colonial franchise, which had both gender and, more importantly, property qualifications. A similar number had a say in municipal politics. In Legislative Assembly voting, the majority pooled their support behind a Afrikaner Bond candidate, but no "Jewish bloc" existed.¹³⁰ By 1899, the Jewish community was firmly established. The municipality included the "Hebrew Congregation" when it granted land to

¹²⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 March 1893, "A Jewish Wedding", p.2

¹²⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 25 April 1895, "A Hebrew Wedding", pp.2, 4 ; Aschman had been resident in Oudtshoorn since 1879 (Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 August 1915, p.2) and Velenski's father had arrived in 1886 (See Coetzee, D., *Class and Capital*, Chapter 4.2.3.)

¹²⁷ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 August 1896, "Orange Blossoms", p.2 ; the wedding of H.P. Thomas to Miss H.P. Fourie was attended by B. Lewin and Mr Sanders. Also Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 October 1898, "Fashionable Wedding", p.5, the wedding of David Schoeman to Hester le Roux included gifts from prominent Jews.

¹²⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 July 1897, "Town Council Elections", p.2

¹²⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 August 1897, "The Municipal Election", p.2 ; the two winning candidates received 157 votes each)

¹³⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 October 1897, p.4 ; the estimate of thirty is based on a list of enfranchised men in Oudtshoorn, concerning the legislative assembly. But many of the requirements applied to municipal voting. (The Jews on the list were identified for this thesis on the basis of surname recognition.) In the legislative assembly process, lists of enfranchised supporters formed part of the election campaign. Thirty Jews supported J.H. Schoeman, and one, L. Elliasevitz, De Smit (Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 February 1898, "De Smit for Legislative Council", p.1)

religious denominations, and placed no obstacles in the way of free worship.¹³¹ Jews were involved in projects like the new Queen Victoria Hospital,¹³² but the crowning achievement was when Morris Aschman was brought onto the Town Council in 1899, beginning the involvement of Jews in municipal government which was to last uninterrupted for many decades.¹³³ Twenty-five years separated the arrival of the first Jew and this election.

In general, the integration of the new Jewish community went smoothly, and religious tolerance was observed from the start. But the creation of personal bonds between the immigrants and the long-term residents was more tentative. It required the crossing of language barriers, the need to overcome xenophobia,¹³⁴ and the gradual creation of shared interests and shared experiences. This required effort by the Jews individually and, on occasions, collectively, to improve their relations with non-Jews. It made business easier, gave them security, and as they grew more involved in the affairs of their new home, gave them the opportunity to improve their own lives, and the lives of their fellow citizens. By 1899, it would seem, the Jewish community was accepted by most non-Jewish Oudtshoornites. Individual Jews of moderate wealth were welcome in many civic arenas, especially if they could speak English.¹³⁵ Certain doubts did, however, remain as to the impact that a Jewish influx would have on the community as a whole.

2.4 The Monopoly Debate

Where, a generation before, few if any non-Jewish Oudtshoornites had ever seen a Jewish person, there were by the late 1890s several hundred people among them professing an alien religion and using an alien language. Few Oudtshoornites completely shunned individual Jews, but Jews as a new, vigorous ethnic group affected the established distribution of local economic and political power along ethnic lines. Afrikaners controlled most of the land and provided most of the electoral power. Anglophones were strong in the town's mercantile circles, and the Coloured population had limited access to franchise, and little to the means of production.¹³⁶ A considerable victory margin was available to any political party which could mobilize the rural White population, and in the 1890s this party was the Afrikaner Bond. Therefore, while Jews

¹³¹ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 14 November 1898, "Municipal Notices : Grants of Erven to Religious Denominations", p.2

¹³² *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 26 June 1899, "Naming the Hospital", p.3 ; M. Aschman, elected to the Hospital Board, seconded the naming of the hospital.

¹³³ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 10 July 1899, "Town Council", p.2 ; when Councillor Keyter resigned, Morris Aschman was brought in onto the Council in his place, based on the previous election results.

¹³⁴ The basis for this is discussed extensively in Shain, M., *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa*, pp. 22 - 26

¹³⁵ See Coetzee, D., "Class and Capital," BA Honours Dissertation, 1998, chapters 4 - 6

¹³⁶ Coetzee, Daniel, "Class and Capital," BA Honours dissertation, 1998, chapters 2 - 4

were welcomed as individuals, they were sometimes considered to be problematic as an ethnic group. These feelings surfaced in the 1890s, interrupting the slow civil assimilation of the Jews, even though the Jews apparently never, as a group of Jews, attempted to influence local elections. The Synagogue Committee ensured that their religion could be practiced unimpeded, but otherwise, Jews functioned on an individual basis.

In 1893, the Oudtshoorn Courant published a list of licences issued to named individuals for shopkeeping and feather buying.¹³⁷ The Courant cited the list in proving "what a complete hold the Jews have on the business of the district"¹³⁸ even though Jewish involvement scarcely translated to a takeover of the local economy.¹³⁹ The growth of the Jewish population over the preceding five to ten years, had generated xenophobia. Antisemitism, with its key notions of Jewish domination and conspiracy, therefore received support and effected a slight deviation in the general trend of assimilation of the immigrant Jews as citizens of Oudtshoorn. The situation provided ideal ammunition for the election being contested at the time over the Poor White issue.¹⁴⁰ Afrikaner Bond leaders attributed the "sinking" of the Poor Whites to several factors, including illiteracy and laziness, the subdivision of farms and unproductivity of the farming enterprises. A deep sense of inferiority of the rural people towards the "town" was regarded as a result.¹⁴¹ However, accusing the White electorate of causing their own downfall, was hardly the way to win an election, and the economic crisis made the electorate susceptible to an antisemitic explanation.

Still, it took an outside agent to take the matter further. The pro-Bond paper De Volksbode, quoted the Courant's first comments,¹⁴² and explicitly related Jewish economic penetration to Afrikaner rural poverty. Although it noted that many farmers felt that the Jewish presence was economically beneficial, the paper referred specifically to Oudtshoorn to argue that the real situation was that of Jewish enrichment and land-hoarding at the cost of farmers.¹⁴³ Upwardly

¹³⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 February 1893, "List of Stamped Licences", p.1 ; 51 out of 86 (59 %) of the annual general dealer licences issued, and about 58 out of 62 (94 %) of feather licences, were issued to Jews. They also possessed most of the hawking licences. These calculations are based on surname recognition, and may be underestimated.

¹³⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 February 1893, Note, p.2

¹³⁹ See Coetzee, D., 1998, Chapters 4 – 5

¹⁴⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 February 1893, "Bond Meeting", p.2 ; speaker B.J. Keyter, Member of Legislative Assembly for Oudtshoorn, President of the local Bond and Chairman of the Meeting.

¹⁴¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 February 1893, p.2 ; speech by Rev. A.J.L. Hofmeyer of Prince Albert on Poor Whites in the Oudtshoorn Templars Hall for the Afrikaner Bond.

¹⁴² De Volksbode, 23 February 1893, p.2 (Editorial)

¹⁴³ The example cited was the Velenski purchase of the prominent farm Zeekoegat. Velenski, it was thought, by the purchase of the farm close to the town, not only had control over its future expansion, but also of water rights far beyond his own boundaries.

mobile Jews, the rapid growth of Jewish pupil numbers in the local school, the perceived abuse of clients by rural shops and Jewish treachery and usury was mentioned, as was the practice of paying farmers for feathers ahead of delivery. Even Jewish-sponsored lotteries, an introduction "against the spirit of the [Christian] law of the land" were attacked.

Essentially, the influx of more Jews was seen to threaten the Afrikaner volk : they were strangers with no loyalty to non-Jews, intent only on using Oudtshoorn as a temporary means for improving their position. The Volksbode wrote in apparent ignorance of the growing civil integration of Jews in Oudtshoorn, but it introduced a debate of ethnic versus civic loyalty which would remain with Oudtshoorn. The tension was between those who defined the true Oudtshoornite (as later, the "true South African") along ethnic (especially Afrikaner) or religious (especially Christian) lines, and those who defined it by a shared living space, which engendered mutual dependency and cooperation across ethnic and religious lines. Could the interests of Jews be considered as complementary to the interests of Oudtshoorn, or was the advancement of people who were Jews automatically contrary to the interests of the "true" inhabitants of Oudtshoorn ? The Volksbode editor argued that the only "true inhabitant of the land" was the Afrikaner.

But the Courant provided the forum for an almost immediate reply when it cited the Volksbode directly and included a letter by "Observer". This was a key moment in establishing immigrant Jews as citizens of Oudtshoorn, and not mere outsiders. Here, first, the Volksbode's argument was challenged by a non-Jew. Secondly, although the letter writer deplored the behaviour of many immigrant Jews, he or she did not see the Jewish presence as constituting a conspiracy, nor did the author see Jews as a threat to the district's survival. "Observer" placed the blame on the cupidity of the farmers who "encouraged the Jew in his nefarious practices", and especially of those wealthier landowners who bought up the land and placed the poor Whites and immigrant Jews alike in a position where unscrupulous methods were necessary for survival.¹⁴⁴ Ambiguously, the author referred to "the creature who is slowly but none the less surely eating his way into our very vitals", but the emphasis was less on some Jewish "racial" characteristic, than on the greed of all the various participants in the ostrich feather economy.¹⁴⁵ "Observer's" letter was not entirely a defence of the Jews, but they were depicted as ordinary people.

¹⁴⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 March 1893, letter by "Observer", p.2

¹⁴⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 March 1893, letter by "Observer", p.2

Immigrant Jews' growing status as citizens of Oudtshoorn was further illustrated and enhanced by the response from their own circles. The despised "Peruvians" possessed cultivated allies who were not only vocal but also integrated into the town's middle class. Reverend Myer Woolfson, the anglicised East European Jew, became the primary representative of the Jewish religious community, in the absence of Jewish civic or secular leaders of sufficient prominence. Woolfson wrote directly to the Cape Times, but the letter was reproduced almost immediately in the Courant. He wrote, he stated, against the "false charges ... against the Jews of the place" [Oudtshoorn]. Admitting that the majority of the Jewish community "[came] to this colony in poor circumstances", he denied that they were

"... enriching themselves at the expense of the farmers
or that the poorer farmers have been shamefully treated."¹⁴⁶

"The Jews" could not be accused without distinction of individual cases or proper proof. Woolfson's letter was the most important one written by a Jew in Oudtshoorn's pioneer period, in that it made a direct claim to the Jews' *right* to be accorded the dignity of equal human beings and citizens of Oudtshoorn. They had earned citizenship through their contribution to the town :

"... Many respectable persons have told me that if the
Jews were to give up feather buying, both trade and
commerce in this town would collapse ..."

Certainly, Jews' willingness to perform low-status but key occupations helped Oudtshoorn to flourish. And not only did the Jewish community, through charity and investment, attempt to prevent indigent immigrants from becoming a burden on the general community, but

"... [the Jewish immigrant's] subsequent success [was] mainly
due to his energy, hard work, and perseverance ..."

There was nothing miraculous, nor devious, about Jews. Consequently, the success of some Jews was well-deserved, and balanced not only by many years of toil, but also by many other stories of failure. Furthermore, Woolfson made what was essentially an oath of allegiance, on behalf of the

¹⁴⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 March 1893, letter "Russian Jews in Oudtshoorn" by M. Woolfson to the Editor of the 'Cape Times', p.2

Jewish community, to their new home. It was necessary to counter the perception that Jews "clubbed together" only for the benefit of one another :

"... I am in a position to state that the much-maligned Russian Jew is ever ready to help in a substantial manner towards any charity, no matter what the creed or denomination may be ..."¹⁴⁷

In return, they expected to be treated not as outcasts or foreigners, but as equal citizens willing to devote time and resources to the place where they hoped to spend their lives. Woolfson's letter stated succinctly the aspirations of people who had left Eastern Europe behind, and wanted to be integrated and accepted as citizens of Oudtshoorn.

Several responses followed. One, by F.S. Fischer, was both philosemitic¹⁴⁸ and supportive of Woolfson's assertions. It reflected an attitude probably widespread among Oudtshoorn's Gentiles who had contact with the Jewish immigrants *as people*. Fischer, an Afrikaner farmer, mourned what he regarded to be the defamatory statements being made about Jews. He pointed out that these were probably motivated by a sense of shame, since the Jews were in so many ways superior to the Afrikaner – he mentioned thrift, care and diligence and charity. He attributed Oudtshoorn's recent economic progress almost solely to the Jews' efforts, and implored Gentiles to follow the Jews' example "especially as concerns their religiosity." Fischer's attitudes were explicitly informed by his belief that the Jews were "God's chosen people." Yet he also described them as "friendly and respectful," as well as "honestly and properly" [sic], because he had sheltered "hundreds" of them in his own house. His argument was that, once the Jews were treated as people, one could expect most of them to behave honestly. Trust between Jew and non-Jew was to the benefit of both. He reminded readers that the Jews "form[ed] no opposition to us and do our religion no harm," that the Jews did not form political units, insisted on only the most basic rights, and did not agitate for any other. There were points of friction, but nothing, in his mind, justified the Afrikaner following the example of the "heathen Russian." Jews had to be tolerated, if only "not to sin before the Lord."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 March 1893, letter "Russian Jews in Oudtshoorn" by M. Woolfson to the Editor of the 'Cape Times', p.2

¹⁴⁸ See Shain, M., The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, London, University Press of Virginia, 1994, pp.37-38

¹⁴⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 April 1893, letter "The Jews in Oudtshoorn" by F.S. Fischer, p.3

Jews' road to full citizenship of Oudtshoorn was influenced by such religious attitudes and economic benefit on the one hand, and threatened by the tensions of the local economy :

"... The system [of cash advances and bargaining] is a pernicious one and rotten to the core. As soon as the farmer puts himself into the hands of the feather buyer, he loses his independence, is a serf, and nothing more or less than an ostrich herd ... to his master, the moneylender ..."¹⁵⁰

This statement, an early attempt to encourage farmers to combine to form a central market, depicts the emasculation which many farmers felt in the new dispensation. Unfortunately it was as easy to see Jews as fellow pawns in this great structure, than to accuse them of being its prime cause. At best, the attitude towards Jews was ambivalent. Frequently things came down to personal disposition and individual negotiation between Jew and non-Jew. Some Jewish feather dealers received a bad reputation. Others formed personal understandings, often lasting years. The fact that, for decades, Afrikaner farmers preferred to deal with individual Jews rather than form a central market, as their leaders pleaded them to do, shows that the system worked to mutual benefit. Individual relationships in turn advanced the formation of a shared community of Oudtshoornites. Both antisemitism and the idea of Jews as the Chosen People permeated, but ultimately did not decide the level on which most Jews and non-Jews interacted on a daily basis as ordinary people. Jewish reaction to the Bond's politicking was muted, and reflected a growing confidence as citizens. B.J. Keyter, the Bond Legislative Assembly candidate, was supported openly by prominent Jews, and elected unopposed.¹⁵¹ Similarly, Jews, in their capacity as leading citizens, supported the Bond candidate for the General Assembly in 1893 as the best representative of Oudtshoorn's interests.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 May 1893, "An appeal to Ostrich Feather Growers", p.2

¹⁵¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 April 1893, "Legislative Council", p.1 – committee for the return of Keyter to the L.A. included many English members and also L. Field, A. Stusser, W. Sanders and J. Levy. Also 27 April 1893, "Political", p.2 – Keyter's return was now "beyond a shadow of doubt" because he had been "promised warm support in all the more important sectors"

¹⁵² Oudtshoorn Courant, 18 May 1893, "Assembly Bye-Election", p.2 ; the Jews were A. Stusser, W. Sanders, L. Field, F. Stusser, Lewis Elias, H. Solomon etcetera ; Jutta's nomination was unopposed (22 June 1893, p.3)

2.5 Conclusions

Jewish immigrants to Oudtshoorn began assimilating into the receiving society almost immediately upon their arrival. Their movement from being outsiders or immigrants to being insiders or citizens, was a natural byproduct of economic interaction, which in turn benefited social interaction between Jews and non-Jews. Jews occupied essential positions in the local economy and provided useful services to non-Jews. They also provided social contact to non-Jews isolated from the outside world, and curious about the newcomers. They experienced religious freedom, and antisemitism was marginal enough not to interfere with growing interdependence between Jews and non-Jews. The greatest single impediment to interaction was the language barrier, which took time for the Jews to overcome. Most of them nonetheless acquired the necessary proficiency in the local languages to make themselves understood. A second, lesser challenge was that of social class and poverty. In general, the extremely poor Jews had the most difficulty interacting socially with non-Jews, but this could be overcome, again, if they provided useful economic services. Jews usually first came into contact with non-Jews in the rural setting, where their input in the distribution channels was most needed. The reasonably successful feather buyer, smous (an itinerant pedlar) or small rural shopkeeper could expect some contact with non-Jews, and acquire growing confidence and acceptance from non-Jews around him, but only if he continued to provide useful economic services. The wealthier a Jew became, the more likely he was to orient himself towards the middle-class, town-bound life, or to limit himself to the wealthier class of landowner. Entry into middle-class life depended upon the acquisition of especially English, but also High Dutch or Afrikaans, and secondly upon a good business reputation. This meant building up trust with non-Jewish individuals over a long period of time, a necessity in the volatile ostrich feather economy, and initially expressed itself in economic cooperation between Jews and non-Jews. Social contact beyond that of the host-guest relationship found between farmers and itinerant traders, was the last to develop, and depended upon extensive mutual respect and shared interests, and was greatly determined by economic success. Successful Jews, when at last they were freed from the constant battle for economic survival, devoted time to clubs, societies and committees, and gradually made inroads into civil life independent of economic relationships. In the process they cultivated social and political interests, and embarked upon an active program of asserting their civil and civic responsibilities in the Oudtshoorn community through charity and support of non-Jewish causes.

By the mid-1890s, immigrant Jews were becoming an integral part of the local civil life and the local economy. The wealthiest and most anglicised ones, that is, a small minority, were most integrated into non-Jewish civil life in positions of social interaction, in other words not informed by economic interaction or mutual economic benefit. The Freemasons and sports clubs were good examples. Most other Jews interacted with non-Jews only in an economic capacity. The Jewish elite were so integrated into the local social circles, that most people thought it unreasonable and impractical to exclude them simply because they were of Jewish ancestry. Although the relationship between Jew and non-Jew was characterised by great ambivalence because of political (or ethnic) and economic tensions and the antisemitism that fed on it, Jews could begin to demand civil rights. They did this through emphasising the difference between the Jewish community with its shared religious interests, and the Jewish individuals, with their wide range of interests and behaviour. They could also count upon some non-Jews to defend them. Although philosemitism and antisemitism co-existed, many non-Jews recognised the difference between individual Jews. Many of them appreciated the input Jews made to the general community, and saw the benefit of accepting Jews into the general community, if they met certain criteria of economic success and a good reputation in economic and social dealings, built up over time. Jews were therefore subjected to criticism and judgement by non-Jews, but were not summarily excluded from the civil community. Oudtshoorn's non-Jews needed and respected at least the wealthier and more assimilated portion of its Jewish community. These Jews were well on their way to becoming full citizens by 1900, even though many of their poorer and less assimilated brethren were still excluded from most of Oudtshoorn's non-Jewish society.

3. The Making of a Community : Jews During the "Boom" c. 1899 – 1914

3.1 Class and Acculturation

By 1899 there was significant opportunity for people in Oudtshoorn to interact along class lines and across ethnic divisions.¹ With disparities in wealth and stability, and in some cases entrenched interests and privileges in Jewish communal politics, the tensions between rich and poor, and between newly arrived and established, placed the communal identity and unity of the Eastern European majority so celebrated by Feldman² under strain.³ Oudtshoorn Jewry proved able to adapt rapidly, without losing an awareness of their Jewish background. The Jewish community created a vibrant subsociety which encouraged Jews to form their primary relationships within the ethnic unit itself. Yet, a slackening of the strictly orthodox atmosphere was evident.⁴ Ties with Eastern Europe deteriorated as men brought their families over, and children grew to maturity in the absence of the East European milieu.⁵ Eventually, increasing confidence in dealing with the wider society encouraged immigrants, to varying degrees, to detach themselves from potentially insular East European communal identification and transfer some of their confidence to broader middle class values.

By 1899, compared to the more recent immigrants, the more anglicised and earlier arrivals among the immigrant Jews had staked claim to the established community. The degrading stereotype of the "Peruvian" Jew prevalent in the Cape Colony and beyond,⁶ even led to attempts by the more assimilated Jews to dissociate themselves in social circles from their poorer brethren.⁷ Anti-alienism made Eastern European Jews want to lead an English middle-class lifestyle, especially since those Eastern Europeans who acculturated and came to be classified as "Anglo-Jews," often found life easier and acceptance from non-Jews more prevalent.⁸

¹ See Coetzee, D., "Class and Capital : Oudtshoorn Jewry 1874 – 1914," Honours Dissertation, University of Cape Town, Chapters 4 to 6

² Feldman, L., *Jerusalem of Africa*, 1989, pp.103-114

³ See Coetzee, D., "Class and Capital : Oudtshoorn Jewry 1874 – 1914," Honours Dissertation, University of Cape Town, Chapters 6, 7

⁴ E.g. Oudtshoorn Jewry Interviews, Markus, Monty, 1999. Louis Lazarowitz kept his rural shop open on Saturdays from an early stage, to benefit from the Gentile's weekly wages and Saturday half-day. OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. The Jews tried to keep their shops closed in the beginning, but they soon found that if they did not make use of the Saturday rush to town by the rural community, they could not compete and would go bankrupt.

⁵ Feldman, L., p.108 ; Also OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

⁶ See Shain, M., 1994, pp.22-27, 55-58

⁷ Shain, M., *Jewry and Cape Society*, p.11

⁸ Shain, M., *The Jews in Cape Society*, p.6

These perceptions penetrated to Oudtshoorn, as proved by the attitudes financial institutions took towards the poorer, more recent immigrants as compared to the wealthier ones. Respectability went along not only with money, but with how closely Eastern European Jews conformed to middle-class English lifestyles.

A key issue in Oudtshoorn Jewish communal politics, manifesting itself in the synagogue division, was the differing levels of anglicisation among former Eastern Europeans.⁹ The Oudtshoorn Queen Street Synagogue became known as the "English *Shul*" and ran its services according to the English formalities of London synagogues.¹⁰ The St. John Street Shul¹¹ was soon dubbed the *Griene Shul*, or "Immigrant's Shul" – but the distinction was artificial, since both synagogues were manned almost exclusively by East Europeans. Sometimes, even families divided : the four Wilck brothers sent two representatives to each *shul* so as not to alienate any section of the community.¹²

A situation developed where East Europeans disapproved of one another. The Lithuanian Jewish Barrons went to the Queen Street *shul* "because there was a little more decorum."¹³ The Gillises also attended the Queen Street *shul*, whose members :

"... did not like the bottom ones, the bottom *shul*, because they were *foreigners*, they were a different type of Jew. Many of them could not speak English and there was always a problem between the two, they used to fight ..."¹⁴

The St John Streeters described the Queen Street *shul* as "more like a Church" and "not strict enough."¹⁵ As such, Oudtshoorn experienced a division also visible in other large Jewish centres in South Africa, in which layers of Jewish society adapted in different ways to the larger society, dominated by non-Jews.¹⁶

⁹ See Shimoni, Gideon, *Jews and Zionism : The South African Experience 1910-1967*, Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1980, pp.10-13 for a discussion on the national situation, which closely followed Oudtshoorn's pattern.

¹⁰ Feldman, L., p.90 ; OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. He described the inside and manner of the Queen Street *shul* as "anglicised, looking like an Anglican Church."

¹¹ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999 ; OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹² OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. The brothers continued mutual cooperation on all other fields, and religious strife never figured among them. The division for them was merely for business or practical reasons.

¹³ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999.

¹⁴ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. Solomon Gillis, East European, for example joined the Queen Street *shul* because his wife was English-born. He was elected onto the *shul* committee. This although the family lived across the road from the St Johns Street *shul*. This persisted into the 1960s. OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹⁵ OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999.

¹⁶ See Shain, M., *Jewry and Cape Society*, Cape Town, Historical Publication Society, 1983, pp.11-12, for the situation in Cape Town, where significant congregational splits occurred in 1888 and 1900.

The growth of the general Oudtshoorn middle class by 1900 transformed the Jewish immigrant community immensely. Facilitated by the feather boom,¹⁷ more Jews left poverty behind. With this came some acculturation, as previously poor Jews acquired the trappings of success¹⁸ and established Jews attempted to maintain their social rank. Some travelled extensively to Europe.¹⁹ Some Oudtshoornites adopted the wealthy Western European taste in clothes, food and furniture. They admired the Western European cultural products, and some built "ostrich palaces."²⁰ These homes "set a new standard for comfort and taste in the town and district"²¹ and created a measure to which ambitious men in Oudtshoorn aspired. Some Jews brought back English governesses,²² or English companions for their wives and children, and adopted the high servant ratios of upper-class Victorian and Edwardian England.²³ But not all Jews were so fortunate. Sam Simanowitz, born in 1902, remembered no servants, and had extensive domestic duties.²⁴ Alex Miller, born in 1904, recalled that their house had seven big rooms, but that the family was so large that the boys shared beds, and his sister slept with his parents. They rented their house, and his mother did most of the cooking and cleaning herself.²⁵

3.2 Jews and Afrikaans-speakers²⁶

The path immigrant Jews took from being outsiders to being regarded as citizens, was affected by the acquisition of local languages, which tended to determine which of the local groups they associated with or were assimilated into. The Eastern European immigrants upon their arrival spoke almost no English, and certainly not Afrikaans.²⁷ Often starting as a *smous* or as a small shopkeeper, they found Afrikaans, the language of the majority of their customers, essential for

¹⁷ See Feldman, L., *Jerusalem of Africa*, Chs.2, 6 ; this period reached its height between 1902 and 1913.

¹⁸ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Markus's father worked his way up from walking to a two-horse cart, which his son equated with "buying a Rolls Royce."

¹⁹ For example *Oudtshoorn Courant* 14 February 1910, p.2 Mr and Mrs Sladowsky leaving for Europe by the *Kildonan Castle* ; *Oudtshoorn Courant* 28 April 1910 p.2 Mr and Mrs Herman Lewin leaving for Europe on the *Balmoral Castle* ; *Oudtshoorn Courant* 9 May 1910 p.5 Mr and Mrs A. Stusser and family and Miss Sarah Lax leaving Oudtshoorn for a visit to England by the *Briton* ; *Oudtshoorn Courant* 30 June 1910 p.2 Mr S. Sacks leaving for Europe ; *Oudtshoorn Courant* 11 May 1911 p.2 Mr and Mrs A.P. Velenski leaving for Europe.

²⁰ See Feldman, L., *Jerusalem of Africa*, p.101 ; Abrahams, I., *Birth of a Community*, p.74

²¹ See Aschman, G., "Oudtshoorn in the Early Days" in Saron, G., and Hotz, G., (eds.). *The Jews in South Africa – A History*, p.133

²² Oral History Project. Kaplan Centre. Reggie Kahn, p.6.

²³ Aschman, G., in Saron and Hotz, *The Jews in South Africa*, p.133

²⁴ Oral History Project, D.S. Simanowitz, p.9

²⁵ Oral History Project, Alex Miller, pp. 5-7

²⁶ Here, since the line between High Dutch and Afrikaans is rather blurred around the beginning of the twentieth century, the two terms are used interchangeably.

²⁷ Eg. OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. Speaking of his grandparents.

trading and informal socialising with the rural population.²⁸ Indeed, interaction with Afrikaners was frequent and took place over many years. It was the way by which most Jews shed their image as outsider-immigrants to being regarded as local citizens, or at least neighbours of the people who already lived in the area.

The interaction had an impact on both Jews and non-Jews. A considerable oral tradition surrounding the Jews arose among Oudtshoorn's non-Jews, to which especially Afrikaner children were exposed in subsequent years. The most prominent figure was the *smous*. John van der Veen grew up with a healthy respect for the business initiative and hard work of Jewish feather buyers who passed by the family farm.²⁹ Many Gentiles admired the long process of hard work and thrift which had brought "their" Jews to wealth – there was nothing miraculous about Jewish upward mobility.³⁰ Many Gentiles born after 1910 could remember poor Jews just starting out with peddling, and the hospitality with which their parents met them.³¹ Some farms like Welbedacht were regular stops for Jews who had rooms set aside for them, where they would congregate and receive food, or spent nights talking and telling stories to the Afrikaners, most of whom respected the poverty of the new immigrants, and were only too happy to help.³²

Initially, a lot of the trading between the immigrants and local people was mere bartering, which in itself benefited conversation. The Jews became "the [farmers'] newspaper," and supplied the most necessary goods to isolated people.³³ As a result, they were invited into farmers' homes, and a Jew could trust "to sleep where the sun [went] down."³⁴ Gaaf le Roux's grandparents impressed upon him that "when a Jew comes to you, he eats with you".³⁵ Interestingly, English farmers had a

²⁸ Oudtshoorn Jewry Interviews, Markus, Monty, 1999. Description of Louis / Lewis Lazarowitz's shop and the socialising between Jews and non-Jews. Also the effort his father went through to learn basic Afrikaans. OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. His grandfather was advised to learn, and in turn taught newcomer Jews, two words, "bietjie vere" [some / a few feathers] as essential to start trading. His grandfather further advised people "not to go to the houses where there is no smoke" because of the proliferation of rural schools where they would, of course, find no clients. See Shimoni, Gideon, *Jews and Zionism*, pp.10-12 for a national perspective.

²⁹ OJI, Van der Veen, John, 1999. See Shimoni, Gideon, *Jews and Zionism*, pp. 10-11.

³⁰ OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999. OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. He was particularly impressed by Jews' affinity to hard work : ["... Ek kan jou een ding sê, hulle is nie lui nie ..."]; OJI, Fourie, Piet, 1999. ["... Hulle was besigheidsmense, en hulle was nie bang om te werk nie ..."]

³¹ OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999.

³² OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999.

³² See also Aschman, V., "Oudtshoorn in the Early Days" in Saron, G. & Hotz, L. (eds.), *The Jews in South Africa*, Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1955, p.136.

³⁴ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

³⁵ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. ["... As 'n Jood by jou kom dan eet hy saam ..."] Le Roux also remembered, more hesitantly, how "their" Jew, Kottler, and his grandfather used to get a little drunk together and tell stories. OJI, Fourie, Piet, 1999. Even in the 1930s, this practice persisted, and even though the Fouries were by no means wealthy, Piet's mother would insist that the Jew rest in the house and drink coffee and eat bread with them.

bad reputation compared to Afrikaners as far as hospitality was concerned.³⁶ Another factor was religious : John McLaren's parents entreated him "to treat the Jews well – because they are Israel," and most of the early contacts were marked by religious tolerance.³⁷ Afrikaners were very impressed with the "Jew with the Bible in his pocket", a shared reference which the Afrikaners found tremendously appealing.³⁸ Food laws were a small problem but with the exception of pork, most Jews could easily eat at the table with their Gentile hosts.³⁹

Long-term friendships were formed in this way. Monty Markus's father remained a close personal friend of his first customer, Serfontein, for the rest of his life.⁴⁰ The Le Rouxs and Kottlers did business for many years and trusted one another's "good name" considerably,⁴¹ and Isidore Barron's father passed onto his son the names of all "the families who had been so good to him as a young man, coming here without [the] language."⁴² Reggie Kahn's father even spent holidays with fellow farmers and had many Gentile friends, both English and Afrikaans. He was also very friendly with his Afrikaner farm manager, whose children Reggie herself described as her "brother and sisters"⁴³ :

"... he impressed that we could associate and mix with everybody but when we thought of marriage it was better to be with a person of your own religion. But he did not object to us being friendly with our neighbours ... [he said] Reggie, if they are decent people, play with them but remember, don't fall in love ..."

³⁶ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Herman remembers a community of English farmers living near his grandfather, Abraham Kaplan's farm Warmbad, one of whom had a sign on the gate saying that no Jews were allowed on his land.

³⁷ OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999. The Jews were never referred to as "heathens" or "sinners", simply as Jews or Israel, whom the Afrikaners had to treat well.

³⁸ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

³⁹ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999.

⁴⁰ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Christiaan Serfontein would come to the Markus household for a Saturday meal for years afterwards. Monty knew him as "Uncle Serfontein." The friendship only ended when Serfontein passed away, and Afrikaans was used exclusively between them.

⁴¹ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. Apparently the Kottlers were the Le Rouxs' regular feather buyers, and this relationship persisted through the Slump.

⁴² OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. Including the Van Biljons and the Fullards.

⁴³ Oral History Project, Kahn, Reggie, pp.4, 7, 34 ; He also provided his Afrikaner manager's children with money for higher education, a house in the town so that they could attend school. Later, Kahn financed the boy's tertiary studies and he became a Dutch Reformed minister.

In response to her parents' open-mindedness towards non-Jews, Reggie's mother's funeral was attended by scores of Gentiles.⁴⁴ It was not surprising then, that Reggie acquired Afrikaans easily and could speak it proficiently, nor that she developed a special affinity for the White Afrikaans-speaking community. Other Jews followed the same pattern, were very "friendly with Afrikaans people in the town" and even exchanged social visits.⁴⁵ In adulthood, many Jews remembered that

"... there was always very good feeling and relationship between the Jewish and non-Jewish residents in Oudtshoorn ..."

and that Jews were rarely discriminated against.⁴⁶ Nathan Klass, after a few years in Oudtshoorn,

"... was loved by all the farmers in the district. They knew him, and he knew everybody ..."

and he would take farmers to tea or coffee when they came to town.⁴⁷

Language choice, that is, between English and Afrikaans, became a group signifier, and affected the path which many Jews took from being outsiders and immigrants, to being accepted as citizens of the Oudtshoorn district. This was especially true for rural Jews, who took to farming, and therefore had to know Afrikaans to communicate with their Afrikaner partners, suppliers and foremen and Coloured labourers.⁴⁸ Reggie Kahn's father, for example, owned several lots, and had White farm managers and about two hundred Afrikaans-speaking Coloured workers.⁴⁹ For many rural Jews, English remained a foreign language, quite unnecessary for everyday life,⁵⁰ and as years went by, some "Boerejode" families developed, who spoke Afrikaans as home language and spent most of their time around Afrikaans-speakers.⁵¹ Poorer Jews also tended towards Afrikaans. The relatively poor Simanowitz claimed that Eastern European Jews tended to

⁴⁴ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, pp.8, 12, 23, 35

⁴⁵ Oral History Project, Robert Wolff, p.2 ; also OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. The life-long relationship between Christiaan Serfontein and Markus's father.

⁴⁶ Eg. Oral History Project, Arthur Lewin, p.18.

⁴⁷ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

⁴⁸ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, p.2 : Bennie Gillis's father, for example, ran two farms on half share with Afrikaners by the names of Andries Coetzee, Bezuidenhout and Klaasens.

⁴⁹ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, p.2.

⁵⁰ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. He remarked that his parents could understand a smattering of the English language, enough to grasp the meaning of newspaper reports, but that "they were never at home with the language."

⁵¹ Eg. Oral History Project, B.L. Gillis, pp.20-21 ; acquisition of Afrikaans by Jewish farmers was very important, and gained for them a respect not accorded to the "rough" Jews fresh from Eastern Europe.

socialise more with Afrikaans-speaking Gentiles than with English speakers,⁵² and indeed, many first generation immigrants rarely moved beyond the lower-class Afrikaans-speaking circles. Bennie Gillis's uncle "remained like he was when he came from Russia," "opened a shop in the country and stayed there" knowing only Yiddish and Afrikaans, and unable even to read and write.⁵³ This was in contrast with Gillis's father, whom he claimed "spoke English beautifully" and read English newspapers sent to him from England.⁵⁴

New languages were invariably self-taught, and immigrants had varying success. Dorothy Simanowitz's mother, "spoke Afrikaans like she spoke Polish", a "mixture of languages which only she understood,"⁵⁵ while Monty Markus's father taught himself to write and read Afrikaans and English, spending days reading the newspaper from front to back, though retaining some peculiarities of spelling and pronunciation throughout his lifetime.⁵⁶ Isidore Barron's father similarly studied the newspapers, and through conversation taught himself several languages, including Zulu.⁵⁷ Afrikaans certainly was the language that immigrant children learned easiest, since it was by far the dominant language in Oudtshoorn, and therefore of potential playmates. Young Jews easily picked up "street" Dutch, some only spoke Afrikaans in their homes and often grew up to speak Afrikaans like a mother tongue.⁵⁸ There was even a type of Oudtshoorn Jewish accent which permeated their Afrikaans use.⁵⁹

The language which Jews acquired, had a great effect upon the path which they took from being outsiders or immigrants to being insiders or citizens of Oudtshoorn. Acquisition of English as opposed to Afrikaans, opened a very different world to Jews. English-speakers tended to be oriented more towards the urban middle class. Afrikaans-speakers tended to be oriented towards the rural community. As such, Jews were also exposed to possible tensions and differences between the two groups.

⁵² Oral History Project, D.S. Simanowitz, p.55

⁵³ Oral History Project. Bennie Gillis, p.6

⁵⁴ Oral History Project. Bennie Gillis, p.4

⁵⁵ OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999. Her father told a story of how her mother's customers would sometimes stand helpless as she tried to express herself, very enthusiastically, in her personal code.

⁵⁶ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. One common mistake was to use Yiddish pronunciation when running into apparent homophones for Yiddish words. Markus's father never lost this.

⁵⁷ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. He picked up Zulu during a sojourn in Natal. This besides the several East European languages he had already acquired.

⁵⁸ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Louis Herman, born in the countryside in Oudtshoorn, spoke only Afrikaans to his parents until he went to school.

⁵⁹ OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999. This persisted in both the first and second generations, and was a type of Afrikaans or English with Yiddish inflections.

3.3 Skin Colour

The most significant aspect of identity which an immigrant Jew had to deal with in order to become a full citizen of his new South African home, was the local divisions based on skin colour.⁶⁰ Contact with Afrikaans-speakers invariably meant that the Jew had to negotiate the social division between most White and Coloured users of Afrikaans. Immigrants seeking the benefits bestowed upon those with White skins, quickly had to adopt the manner of other Whites towards non-Whites. And from a very young age, Jewish children had to learn their place in the largely segregated society, and grew up knowing that citizenship was largely determined by skin colour.

Disraeli Simanowitz's childhood playmates were mostly Gentiles, with "one or two Jewish children"⁶¹ and he and his siblings also "learned Afrikaans from the maids" and their Coloured neighbours.⁶² Many Jewish children behaved similarly. Yet, despite childhood fraternisation with non-Whites, most Jews very soon realised the benefits of being considered "White." The majority developed a tacit disrespect for the Coloured community, which many saw as disproportionately criminal, uneducated and fit only as employees. There was extensive socialisation by certain individuals with Coloureds, although marriage was not considered an option.⁶³ However, these Jews were normally on the periphery of their own community. Simanowitz's family was poor, and this awareness made him unusually sympathetic to his Coloured neighbours. His mother believed that the "goy"⁶⁴ had to be treated as a person, without distinction of skin colour.⁶⁵ But like most Jews, Simanowitz eventually considered himself to be above the Coloured. When he became a successful shopkeeper later in life, he never mixed with these people.⁶⁶

Servants, when they were eventually acquired, were almost invariably non-White, and were strictly segregated from the family. Family attitudes towards their domestics differed, but Coloured "respectability" was usually equated with their humility and obedience before Whites.⁶⁷ Reggie Kahn believed that one mark of her own family's respectability was the way they treated

⁶⁰ See Shimoni, Gideon, *Jews and Zionism*, pp. 1-4

⁶¹ Eg. Oral History Project, Disraeli Simanowitz, pp.9-10

⁶² OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999.

⁶³ Oral History Project, Robert Wolff, p.43

⁶⁴ Rosten, Leo, *The Joys of Yiddish*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1972, p.143. *Goyim* : Gentiles.

⁶⁵ Oral History Project, D.S. Simanowitz, p.27

⁶⁶ Oral History Project, D.S. Simanowitz, p.42

⁶⁷ Eg. Oral History Project, Arthur Lewin, p.64

Gentiles and Coloureds, even servants, with "absolute respect," and intimated that many other Jews held the same views, while retaining social segregation.⁶⁸ But she also recalled :

"... I'm frightened to talk, the Jewish men gave babies to the Coloured girls, they should have supported them, they used Afrikaans girls and Blacks ... they used to have children with them and that was a disgrace, and that was before apartheid ..."⁶⁹

This was but an extreme example of the familiarity that developed between Jews and non-Jews, but also of the power skin colour sometimes gave Jews. The usual employer-employee relationship was paternal : the Jew insisted that he treated the Coloured "fairly," while simultaneously insisting that Coloureds were "inferior" and should know their place.⁷⁰ It is fair to say, therefore, that Jews rarely crossed the colour line, if they wanted to be regarded as respectable by other Whites. This stance was copied by immigrant Jews from the Whites already established in Oudtshoorn. They soon accepted the privilege of their skin colour as a matter of fact.⁷¹ The vast majority of immigrant Jews did not speak out against what they perceived to be a majority (White) opinion.⁷² Therefore, it became unthinkable for many in the second generation to have non-White companions past a very young age, or that any other situation than the one they were confronted with, could exist.⁷³

3.4 English and Attitudes towards Britain ⁷⁴

Even if some first-generation immigrants remained satisfied with the rural Afrikaans lifestyle, many developed higher expectations. One of the major objections, which developed among upwardly mobile Jews, was an opinion of Afrikaans-speakers as generally uncouth. Some Afrikaners were accused of being religiously intolerant, insisting on trying to convert Jews. Learning Afrikaans was sometimes economic necessity, but it held little attraction for those Jews who wanted to set themselves apart and emulate their Cape Town and British brethren. Afrikaans sometimes, but not invariably, was associated with low-class Boers and Coloureds, and B.L. Gillis described the Afrikaans of his youth as "High Dutch mixed up like Hottnot taal" [sic].⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, pp.20-21

⁶⁹ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, p.36

⁷⁰ Oral History Project, Arthur Lewin, p.5

⁷¹ See eg. Oral History Project, Robert Wolff, p.6

⁷² Oral History Project, Alex Miller, p.27

⁷³ Oral History Project, Arthur Lewin, pp.18, 48, 64

⁷⁴ See Shimoni, Gideon, *Jews and Zionism*, pp. 10-21 for a discussion on the national or broader situation.

⁷⁵ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, p.4.

Most Coloureds were dispossessed and impoverished,⁷⁶ and Afrikaners were merely the citizens of a provincial backwater of the British Empire who were tending towards ethnic exclusivism.⁷⁷

Ease of language acquisition through frequency of exposure was never the only factor at work. English social life was often perceived as more inclusive than that of the rural Afrikaner. Robert Wolff suggested that Jews got on easier with the English since the English were more liberal and "sort of did not insist that you go to kirk."⁷⁸ From a *haute bourgeoisie* perspective the "Afrikaaner people and the Jewish people ... lived in different circles."⁷⁹ Where exposure to Englishmen was rare for the *smous*, English businessmen increasingly became the neighbours of those Jews who opened shops and moved into affluent town neighbourhoods.⁸⁰ Indeed, many of the local Afrikaners who urbanised and enjoyed upward mobility, inclined towards English middle class culture,⁸¹ and Isidore Barron described Oudtshoorn as "an English-speaking town" before 1914, after which Afrikaans increasingly entered the town from the district. His own family consciously chose English.⁸² So did Reggie Kahn's family :

"... I was brought up in a town where we mixed with everybody, Englishman, Jew, Gentile ; my father spoke English, in those days there wasn't so much Afrikaans ..."⁸³

Some Jews of course already spoke English. Leslie Newman's English-born father, a professional photographer, arrived at the end of the feather period with his educated and anglicised East European wife. Both found it difficult to mix with the majority of Oudtshoorn Jews, especially

⁷⁶ See Feldman, L., *Jerusalem of Africa*, 1989, p.81 and Elazar, D.J., *Jewish Communities in Frontier Societies*, p.145

⁷⁷ See De Klerk, W.A., *The Puritans in Africa*, pp.90 - 122, esp. Hertzog's policies of the *ei*, p.96

⁷⁸ Oral History Project, Robert Wolff, p.6

⁷⁹ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, p.2

⁸⁰ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Because of the Sabbath laws that precluded the use of (especially motor) vehicles on the Sabbath, however, Jews preferred to stay within walking distance of the *shuls* if they could, and this helped with the original concentration of Jews in the St Johns Street and other areas. Oudtshoorn was never that big a town, though, and this practice dissipated. Another factor in the original concentrations was simple poverty.

⁸¹ See De Klerk, W.A., pp.96-97 ; reflected also by a study of social clubs, teams and societies in *The Oudtshoorn Courant*

⁸² OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. He argues that the pivotal point at which Afrikaans surpassed English in the town was the crash of the feathers, at which point the English merchants, professionals and artisans began to decline, having taught the local Afrikaans-speakers to perform many of these functions. His family had acquired Afrikaans in the district, but chose English as its home language and to engage with town businesspeople.

⁸³ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, p.11.

the poorer ones who managed only Yiddish and Afrikaans. Leslie described him as "a good Englishman."⁸⁴

Many Jews went to great lengths to learn English, as a means of identifying with the British Empire. The Empire had an important place in the mind of the first generation Jewish immigrants. Many of them had moved to South Africa through the Jewish charitable institution in London, the Poor Jews Temporary Shelter, and had arrived in South Africa on British ships.⁸⁵ This left an indelible imprint. But even before departure, conditions in the British Empire were seen to differ vastly from Eastern Europe. Gershater quotes a Hebrew journalist in Lithuania in the late 1880s, commenting on opportunities in South Africa :

"... The traveller who comes from our land, tired and weary of the oppressor and of the vicissitudes of life that overcome him at every step, forgets here (in South Africa) his poverty, his squalor, his degradation and his humiliation. He breathes a new life, a life of freedom and liberty, a life of wealth and honour, because there is no discrimination [sic] between a Hebrew and a Christian. Every man attends to his labour diligently and finds a reward for his toil ..."⁸⁶

Abrahams quotes a similar report :

"... In general the Jews [in South Africa] ... dwell in peace and tranquillity and enjoy complete freedom undisturbed. The English flag, on which liberty and equality are inscribed for every individual without distinction of faith or creed, flies wherever foot may tread in the Cape Colony ..."⁸⁷

The Jewish immigrant associated his new-found safety intimately with the "enlightened" rule of the British Empire, in contrast with the terror experienced in Eastern Europe. He felt protected by

⁸⁴ OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999. His mother had been to the Jewish Free School and had received further finishing school education. His father was a sophisticated, free-thinker with "some Communist ideas" who found it difficult to meet people on his level, and mixed mostly with top Gentiles.

⁸⁵ See for example Schrire, Gwynne, "In the Belly of the Whale – The Journey to South Africa 1880 – 1910" in *Jewish Affairs*, Winter 1994, pp. 13-18

⁸⁶ Gershater, C., "From Lithuania to South Africa" in Saron and Hotz, *The Jews in South Africa*, p.70

⁸⁷ Abrahams, I., *The Birth of a Community*, 1955, p.54 ; It is to be assumed, knowing the ambivalent relationship the Boer Republics had with Jews, that both these references concerned the British territories.

British power, and could project his own aspirations upon British successes. He could also recall Jews who, as British citizens, had acquired fame, respect and fortune, and this, together with the flourishing, world-spanning British economy, gave the impression that, "even" for a Jew, anything was possible. The first major opportunity to express that affinity came with the South African War.

3.5 The South African War

The attitudes of Oudtshoorn Jews towards Britain during the South African War, which during the guerrilla phase penetrated well into the Oudtshoorn district, speaks volumes of a formative period in which the East European identity was reshaped and loyalties were asserted. There certainly was strong support for the English among the upper echelons of the Jewish community. For many Jews, the war was essentially the defence of what they had gained since their arrival in Oudtshoorn : property and respect as contributing members of the civil society of Oudtshoorn being the most important. It was the ideal moment to prove that their loyalties lay with the town, and that they were willing to defend it, rather than risk the changes that could be wrought to their legal situation should a Calvinist Boer power gain control. Whether the fears of conquest were rational, in light of the material limitations of the Boer war machine, is not certain. But some kernel of truth existed for such suspicions in the Afrikaner domination of rural Cape districts, and the sympathy many of the Afrikaners appeared to have for the Boers. When the war entered its guerilla phase, a type of "Boerophobia" ensued.⁸⁸

In May 1901 a Jewish refugee from the Transvaal, L.P. Hirsch, was asked to explain why Jews sympathised with England and not the Boers.⁸⁹ His reply formed part of a pro-British propaganda campaign in the Oudtshoorn Courant, but sums up the attitudes which many Jews were exposed to and even exhibited amid the tensions of the war :

"... I sympathise with England because it is the land of the free, there the right of man stands above the written law ... because under her flag race hatred and religious intolerance are things unknown, and the white and the black, and the yellow can live peacefully without being

⁸⁸ Nasson, B., Abraham Esau's War, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.32 ; Nasson's reflections upon the attitudes of the middle class Coloured population of rural Cape towns, have interesting similarities to that of Jews trying to defend property and legal rights gained under the British system.

molested. I sympathise with England in all her struggles, because her hospitable shores are always open for our co-religionists who are made homeless by the terrible hand of persecution in other countries. But I cannot sympathise with the Transvaal, because there bigotry and religious intolerance reigned supreme ..."⁹⁰

Official association with the British and loyalist Afrikaners among the Jewish community was established as early as November 1899, when at a public meeting, Morris Aschman proposed the formation of a committee to handle the wounded and the deprived created by the war. The proposal was unanimously accepted, and Aschman and Reverend Woolfson were voted onto the committee.⁹¹ In March 1900 it was decided to form a Vigilance Committee rallying to the Crown and promising to crush the local [Afrikaner] Bond's pro-Boer influence. The new Committee had seventy-two elected persons serving on it, and among these were twelve Jews – the most influential persons within the Jewish community, and earlier supporters of the Bond.⁹² Prominent Jewish firms also decided in 1901 to close at 2 p.m. daily, so that their employees could join the Town Guards.⁹³ Paranoia was heightened when fighting came to within thirty miles of the town, but the British military effort was largely limited to a volunteer camp in Oudtshoorn.⁹⁴

Local Jews also supported the British war effort and the humanitarian needs generated by the war, in a financial capacity. Mark Morris handled donations lists for the local Widows' and Orphans' Fund, with contributions from prominent local Jews and "proceeds from entertainment given by Jewish ladies and gentlemen."⁹⁵ M. Aschman collected from both English and Jewish persons, indicating that he felt comfortable among both populations.⁹⁶ L. Field & Co., and Sanders and Sons, leading Jewish-owned businesses, were some who donated to fund lists⁹⁷ and

⁸⁹ See Shimoni, Gideon, *Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience*, pp.61-69 for a brief discussion of the national situation.

⁹⁰ "A Jewish Testimony" by L.P. Hirsch, *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 2 May 1901, p.4 ; Compare this statement with the most recent work done on Jewry during the South African War, notably Mendelsohn, Richard, "The Jewish Soldier : Anglo-Jewry at War" in *Jewish Affairs*, Spring 1999, pp.11-19.

⁹¹ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 30 November 1899, p.2

⁹² *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 29 March 1900, p.2 : M. Aschman, Moss Morris, [Samuel ?] Lazarus, Behr Lewin, Abraham Stusser, Goldman, Maurice Lipschitz, Meyer Luntz, N. Sanders, Hildesheimer, Wulf Sanders and Reverend Woolfson

⁹³ *Oudtshoorn Courant* 28 January 1901, p.2 : These included L. Field & Co., W. Sanders & Son, B. Lewin and S. Lazarus & Co.

⁹⁴ Interview with B.L. Gillis, Oral History Project, Kaplan Centre, p.29-30.

⁹⁵ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 18 January 1900, p.2 : Including contributions from B. Kaplan, R. Sodrowsky, J. Nurick, M. Hotz, N. Sanders.

⁹⁶ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 5 February 1900, p.2

⁹⁷ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 26 April 1900, p.2

the Red Cross fund in Cape Town congratulated the "Jewish young men and ladies of Oudtshoorn" for their large contribution.⁹⁸

Individual Jews also joined military organisations. The volunteer town guard was popular, as was the Oudtshoorn Volunteer Rifles, which performed mobile and patrol duties. There were about thirteen to sixteen Jews in the guard, out of a total of about 205,⁹⁹ the balance comprised of an almost equal number of Afrikaners and Englishmen – although English-speakers filled most of the officer positions. Jews rarely rose above the rank of private (Fig. 3A),¹⁰⁰ a fact partly explained by their brief tenure in the organisation : most joined only during the period of crisis between March 1901 and May 1902. The town guards were recruited mostly from the working class with wage employment, and unskilled and semi-skilled sectors, with a sprinkling of merchants and other middle class types to add cohesion and some internal discipline in the companies.¹⁰¹ Jews often joined in groups,¹⁰² and were mostly young men who normally subsisted from peripheral feather dealing or minor employment in shops. Older or more established men limited their participation in the mobile forces, but the duties of the town guard, consisting of drilling and some sentry duty around the town and government installations, allowed them to still tend to businesses. Jewish doctors, lawyers, merchants and feather dealers all served as privates at 1 s. 8 d. per day. There was some ethnic division in the guard, with Jews forming a quarter of No.1 Company, and a third of the Ambulance Company, but few joining the other companies. Jewish officers were elected in the companies where Jews were prominent.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 April 1900, p.2

⁹⁹ DD 7/145, Volunteer Attendance Register, 1890 – 1900, Oudtshoorn Volunteer town guard, Cape Archives

¹⁰⁰ DD 144, Volunteer Attendance Register, 1901, Oudtshoorn Volunteer Rifles, Cape Archives

	Jewish	English	Afrikaans
Of 26 Officers	0	24	2
Of 217 Privates	16	96	105

¹⁰¹ Nasson, B., Abraham Esau's War, pp. 48-49

¹⁰² DD 7/145, Volunteer Attendance Register, 1890 – 1902, Oudtshoorn Volunteer Rifles ; out of sixteen Jewish guards, eight joined on the 28th and 29th of March 1901, and six were demobbed on the same day, 3 May 1902 ; volunteers to the Oudtshoorn Rifles included Aschmans, Cohens, a Feldt, a Katz, a Luntz and Olinskys, all either prominent Jewish families, or those who were to have a long history in the town.

¹⁰³ DD 4/162, Paymaster's Roll, Oudtshoorn Town Guard, circa 1901-2 : prominent Jewish businessmen joined the town guard, including E. Sanders (Sergt), C. Buirski (Corp), H.B. Lewin (Pr), Chaim Sieff (Pr), S. Sanders (Pr), M.P. Vallentine (Pr) (All Co. 1) ; M. Friedland, A. Jacobson, M. Luntz, M.W. Sanders (All Privates, Ambulance Co.)

Many parallels exist here with the Coloured reaction to the Boer invasions.¹⁰⁴ The community effort was led by the propertied and regarded as an assertion of respectability and of civil rights and duties. Especially for immigrants, the "right to bear arms" in defence of what they now perceived to be their home, was an obvious route by which later to claim greater equality with the White population group as fellow citizens of Oudtshoorn. There was a general disdain for the "Poor White" recruits who initially filled the ranks, people whom the rest of the population neither trusted nor had much confidence in, and a further hesitancy by authorities to arm non-Whites made Oudtshoorn's Jews a popular proposition. Although Coloured Oudtshoornites did serve, the overriding criteria by which to decide who was a full citizen of Oudtshoorn, was skin colour, and this type of discrimination worked in favour of the Jews. It was an early indication of where a Jew fitted into Oudtshoorn's "racial" hierarchy, and hinted at how the civil positions of the native Coloured and the immigrant Jewish communities would sharply diverge in future.¹⁰⁵

During the period of crisis, therefore, Jews keenly contributed time and manpower. M. Katz served in the South African Light Horse¹⁰⁶ and S. Sklarchik for one participated in the Oudtshoorn Rifle Volunteers Bawden Cup, a feeder for the town guard.¹⁰⁷ Jewish volunteers were reportedly killed in skirmishes between Scheepers' Boer forces and the town militia,¹⁰⁸ but others were luckier, escaping with mere intimidation or property loss.¹⁰⁹ B.L. Gillis and his father were threatened by armed Boers for their horses (by that time already commandeered by the British) and a rural shop of one Israel was raided for foodstuffs by Boer guerillas who referred the matter of compensation to Pretoria.¹¹⁰ Simon Noll's shops were looted by Boers, but he suffered equally from the limits on movement imposed by Martial Law, which damaged his Uniondale and George enterprises, and for which he subsequently filed compensation claims.¹¹¹ Field & Co. suffered due to the enthusiasm with which the English partner devoted himself to military duties to the neglect of the firm's affairs.¹¹²

¹⁰⁴ See Nasson, B., *Abraham Esau's War*, pp.41-63 for comparison with Coloured community.

¹⁰⁵ Nasson, B., *Abraham Esau's War*, pp. 41-53.

¹⁰⁶ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 11 December 1899, p.2

¹⁰⁷ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 23 August 1900, p.2

¹⁰⁸ Interview with B.L. Gillis, Oral History Project, Kaplan Centre, p.29 : according to Gillis, one Jackie Morris was taken prisoner by Scheepers, and executed

¹⁰⁹ Feldman, L., *Oudtshoorn – Jerusalem of Africa*, 1989, pp.92-93 ; When the Kelmer Jew, A. Y. Ze'ev, was captured with some fellow scouts by Scheepers, Scheepers purportedly threatened to shoot him if he did not eat pork before them. When Ze'ev refused, Scheepers was immensely pleased, revealing that Ze'ev would have been "flogged to death" if he had betrayed his faith.

¹¹⁰ Interview with B.L. Gillis, Oral History Project, Kaplan Centre, p.30

¹¹¹ INSP 1/1/122, 1901, p.80

¹¹² INSP 1/1/122, 1901, p.20

There was material support of the British war effort after Martial Law was declared, although the commandeering practices of the local militia were unpopular. In February 1901 the partnership Lipschitz and Aschman had their horses and one of their three lucerne fields confiscated for military purposes by the Militia. However, their complaints that the loss of so many animals and forage would cause them severe financial damage, were acceded to, and their later transgression, the first major breaking of Martial Law in the district, was somewhat balanced by a slight loosening of measures.¹¹³ Certainly the loss of horses by small and struggling businesses could in some cases be deemed as disastrous, and some Jews went to great lengths to keep their animals out of the military paddocks.¹¹⁴ Overall, though, the more prominent Jews were positive about the British operations. Jews also found work with the British, and B.L. Gillis spent most of the war not in school, but helping to transport military horses for the officers.¹¹⁵ Levenson Lippman was reported to have "done exceptionally well" during the military occupation of Prince Albert,¹¹⁶ and Alex Miller's father and uncle started a harness-making business drawing on military clientele, and "did very well."¹¹⁷

Not all Jews were openly on the British side. Jews continued to interact with all sections of the local population, and Reggie Kahn's father continued to farm throughout the war. He was English-speaking and described himself as a British subject, but remained on good terms with the farmers. Although some fighting occurred around his land, neither he nor the majority of the population took part, their guns all having been confiscated.¹¹⁸ Most people saw the "invasion" of Boer commandos as a threat to life and livelihood, and the hard-handed approach of both forces to the general population, tended to iron out differences as civilians tried to get on with their lives. As revealed in the Oudtshoorn treason cases, most of the Afrikaner civilians felt as threatened by the Boers as did the Jews, especially as things became more desperate for the Freestaters. Running battles, Boer laagers on their farms, and the confiscation of private property by both sides, made both Jews and non-Jewish civilians victims, and helped to consolidate relationships across ethnic lines.¹¹⁹ The everyday running of many families' lives were little affected by

¹¹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 February 1901, p.2, Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 March 1901, p.2 ; When one of their employees hid a horse from the military, Aschman and Lipschitz were brought before a court, and although they professed their loyalty to the Crown and ascribed the incident to a misunderstanding, they were fined £ 30.

¹¹⁴ 1/OHN 1/2/1/15, Criminal Record Book Oudtshoorn Jan 1901 – Jan 1903, case 187 of 1901, Moses Joseph feather buyer accused of trying to take horses out of district and neglecting to bring them in for inspection.

¹¹⁴ Interview with B.L. Gillis, Oral History Project, Kaplan Centre, p.30

¹¹⁶ INSP 1/1/122, 1901, p.66

¹¹⁷ Interview with Alex Miller, Oral History Project, cover page and p.1

¹¹⁸ Interview with Reggie Kahn, Oral History Project, Kaplan Centre, p.3

¹¹⁹ 1/OHN 1/1/2/3/1, High Treason Cases Oudtshoorn District, c. 1903 ; only three treason cases were brought before the court for the Oudtshoorn district ; In the treason case of Johannes Klue after the war, for

fighting,¹²⁰ but business and social life was limited by Martial Law.¹²¹ And anything that affected the lucrative sales of the ostrich industry, was a threat to both farmers and feather buyers, which saw them unite in wishing that the hostilities would end. Fortunately, the economic damage to the district was only of a very short-term nature. With a few individual exceptions, the Oudtshoorn district did better than most other rural districts and remained "the richest agricultural district in South Africa."¹²²

For the Jewish community the war meant some demographic changes, as some Jewish refugees from the Boer Republics came to Oudtshoorn. Some stayed to benefit from the ostrich feather economy, and the Jewish population increased rapidly, disturbing the community power relations. Community leaders found themselves challenged by ideas from the more cosmopolitan urban centres, especially regarding the degree of religious conservatism that could be enforced by peer pressure. The new arrivals were sometimes accused of being "worldly and irreligious."¹²³ But overall, the end of the war brought stability. As Britain became the only "power" in Southern Africa, most Jews preferred to identify with British greatness. The Afrikaners were now, after all, only another subject people under the benevolent umbrella of British government. Many immigrants wanted membership of British society, culture and success, and were accommodated better in the English-speaking society, than in the increasingly ethnically exclusive Afrikaner circles. By war's end, English had a vastly greater prestige than Afrikaans and Disraeli Simanowitz speculated that some Jews' expansive aspirations, their wish to be in contact with the world beyond provincial Oudtshoorn, led the Eastern Europeans to prefer English above Afrikaans.¹²⁴

3.6 *Haute Bourgeoise* Jews and Social Integration

One factor for selecting English, at the cost of Yiddish especially, was to escape social stigma. English was the language of those Cape Anglo-German Jews with a living standard far above that which most Eastern Europeans had ever known. The ability to speak fluent English became a

example, Woolf Michelsohn, small shopkeeper, was a very sympathetic witness for the defence of his neighbour, who had been dragooned into service by Boers.

¹²⁰ Interview with Robert Wolff, Oral History Project, Kaplan Centre, p.2

¹²¹ For example 1/OHN 1/2/1/15 Criminal Record Book, Oudtshoorn Magistrature, 1901, case 61 : Elijah Cohen fined £ 5 for being off his premises after 10 pm ; case 210 Jacob Nochamson, feather buyer fined £ 5 for being away from his residence between 11 pm and 5 am ; also 1/OHN 1/2/1/15, Criminal Record Book, Oudtshoorn Magistrature, 1902, case 19, Samuel Lax fined for selling liquor to Max Fizenbon, Max Bloemberg, Meyer Israelsohn

¹²² INSP 1/1/122, 1901, p.23

¹²³ Feldman, L., *Oudtshoorn – Jerusalem of Africa*, 1989, p.91

¹²⁴ Oral History Project, D.S. Simanowitz, p.55

status symbol,¹²⁵ and "accent-free" language use, the dropping of the "griener accent," was of some importance, since it could determine a Jew's "acceptance in certain society."¹²⁶ East European immigrants' aspiration to join the *bourgeois* class ranks was met with ambivalence. The upper middle-class Jews were determined to absorb the troubling "alien" element and demanded acculturation from the East Europeans, so as not to dilute their own status before the Gentiles.¹²⁷ The "better class of Jews," as B.L. Gillis called them – the major shopkeepers – were the spearhead of this effort. Members of the Queen Street Synagogue, a group of influential families, by 1902 circulated mostly among themselves or Gentiles of the same level of income. These people, going to dances, playing sports together and on "visiting terms," dominated the Jewish community while simultaneously emulating the wealthier Gentiles. Others had to conform to their standards to be "allowed" into their exclusive circle.¹²⁸ Reggie Kahn commented on this more established group :

"... I don't think we were snobs ... we had the old people who came to Oudtshoorn in the early days, they were all friends, so the children were friends, we lived in the same street ..."¹²⁹

As the Oudtshoorn middle class grew, it became more viable for some more successful Jews to lead an extra-ethnic social life. For adults there were frequent opportunities to mix with non-Jews. For example, at the society wedding of George King, a prominent local Gentile businessman, the Jewish upper crust in Oudtshoorn were all invited.¹³⁰ And at one fashionable Queen Street Synagogue wedding

"... the sacred edifice was crowded with [the] cream [of] Jewish society in Oudtshoorn, as well as a host of Christian friends ..." ¹³¹

¹²⁵ Oral History Project, B.L. Gillis, p.3

¹²⁶ Oral History Project, D.S. Simanowitz, p.28

¹²⁷ Shain, M., *Jewry and Cape Society*, p.6

¹²⁸ Oral History Project, B.L. Gillis, p.15

¹²⁹ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, p.20

¹³⁰ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 26 April 1900, p.2 ; list includes R. Sladowsky ; M. Marks ; W. Solomon ; B. Cohen ; Danzig ; A. Wolff ; B. Lewin ; S.M. Cohen ; L. Field ; B. Stusser ; J. Cohen ; S. Cohen ; Dr Lewin ; Moss Morris ; Lax ; J. Braude ; Sanders ; A. Stusser ; H. Wolff

¹³¹ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 10 October 1901, "Jewish Wedding"

Throughout the Boom period, the same Jewish surnames appeared repeatedly on the society pages of the local newspaper, indicating a core group of influential, "anglicised" Jewish families who circulated freely among the English and moderate, town Afrikaners. By 1905 some families had been surrounding themselves with Gentiles for twenty years, and therefore some Jewish adult immigrants, but especially Jewish children, were learning English quickly. Others had virtually no contact with Gentile upper middle-class circles, but in general the intensity of exposure between Jew and non-Jews, and the freedom with which established Jews could circulate among non-Jews, increased steadily. Some Jewish children were purposefully being socialised with English children in particular, in activities like fancy dress balls, often reported in the "boom" days.¹³² Some Jews mixed regularly in middle class activities, especially music,¹³³ and Orchestral Society functions regularly included Miss Morris (singing solo), and Miss Marks (pianoforte).¹³⁴ Mrs Hoek's music pupils included several Jewish girls,¹³⁵ and Jews also participated in sports. In 1899, the Boys' High School soccer team included Jews,¹³⁶ and Jews also played association football or soccer for the town.¹³⁷ Town rugby teams for 1899 included a Stusser,¹³⁸ a Lazarus, and two Cohens.¹³⁹ The Queen's Birthday celebrations in 1900 was organised partly by M. Aschman, and Jewish boys won several races.¹⁴⁰

3.7 Education

Increased education of the Jewish youth along with their non-Jewish counterparts had a lot to do with this participation in "English" games and cultural events. *Bourgeois* Jews had their children schooled in large numbers and to a relatively sophisticated extent : 1900's candidates for the School Elementary Examinations included several Jewish candidates,¹⁴¹ and Jewish girls

¹³² Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 September 1898, "Children's Fancy Dress Ball", p.3: reports on the 1898 fancy dress ball of the winter dancing class, cited 59 names. Of these 33 were English, and 17 Jewish, compared to only 9 Afrikaans surnames. The Jewish surnames were all of the district's Jewish business elite : Kaplin [sic], Sanders, Nurick, Morris, Stusser, Olinsky, Manashevski and Gillis.

¹³³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 July 1899 p.3 : E. Cohen as a clown, and A. Cohen as a School Girl ; In July 1899, a play included Jewish child actors.

¹³⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 July 1899, p.3

¹³⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 August 1899, p.2

¹³⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 31 August 1899, p.4 : a Lipschitz, Cohen and Sanders

¹³⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 July 1900, p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 August 1900, p.2 : R. Aschman, A. Cohen and S. Sanders.

¹³⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 September 1899, p.2

¹³⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 April 1900, p.2

¹⁴⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 May 1900, p.2

¹⁴¹ The Girls' High School had fourteen candidates, which included seven Jewish girls from the Harris, Kaplan, Lazarus, Nurick, Levy, Rosenberg and Morris families. The Boys' High School sent eleven candidates, three of whom (Morris Gillis, Harry Morris and Elias Morris) were probably Jewish.

featured extensively in music examinations.¹⁴² Education gave rise to cultural events by Jews which approximated English middle-class activities, such as music evenings.¹⁴³ Education also influenced language choice. Not only did Jewish parents choose in which of the two languages (English or Dutch) their children would be educated, but children exposed to a particular language throughout their school careers would by adulthood probably prefer that language. The choices that most Jewish parents made for their children proves that among many Jews, English was seen as more "progressive" than Afrikaans. It often meant that whereas first generation immigrants were more comfortable with Afrikaans, many second generation Jews were raised into use of the English language. Most Jewish primary school-age children circulated for the most part among Afrikaans-speaking children and stood a better chance of exposure to Afrikaans than English, and they frequently became proficient in both, but when in 1900 H. Manaschewitz of the Boys' High School attained the highest aggregate in the district, he did significantly better in English than Dutch.¹⁴⁴ English proficiency took some special effort, but with some success : the Oudtshoorn Girls' School in 1901 singled out several Jewish girls for prizes in English, though not in Dutch¹⁴⁵ – these girls showed higher skills in English than either the Afrikaner children or the English girls themselves. There was in addition a concern to have even the poorer people educated in English.¹⁴⁶

Significantly, when the Hebrew School was opened in 1904, the medium for the secular subjects was English.¹⁴⁷ The history of this school, primarily an effort of the upper middle class Jews, also shows clearly how this class tried to mould itself upon the upper class Anglo-Jews of Cape Town. Oudtshoorn's Hebrew School's immediate model was the Tikvath Hebrew Congregation of Cape Town's Hopemill School, for which teachers were brought from England, and where Hebrew was taught.¹⁴⁸ The Oudtshoorn Hebrew School was a primary school, with Hebrew as an additional subject, and was meant to cater only for Jewish children.¹⁴⁹ Its first headmaster was a London Jew, I. Abrahams.¹⁵⁰ English was insisted upon as medium, even

¹⁴² *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 31 May 1900, p.2 : The Girls' High School sent nine candidates, including Augusta Lewin, Annie Nurick and Rose Morris. Private musical exams featured Jane Manchevsky and Annie Sanders ; also *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 25 June 1900, p.4 ; At the June 1900 Matriculation, eight candidates presented themselves. Of these four were Jewish.

¹⁴³ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 5 July 1900, p.2 ; *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 29 October 1900, p.2

¹⁴⁴ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 23 August 1900, "Boys' High School," p.2.

¹⁴⁵ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 23 December 1901, "Oudtshoorn Girls' School", p.2

¹⁴⁶ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 20 December 1900, "School Concert", p.2. This was the Poor School concert, at which school board members applauded the children's use of English and encouraged English use among the indigent classes.

¹⁴⁷ Aschman, G., in Saron and Hotz, *The Jews in South Africa*. p.128.

¹⁴⁸ Katz, M.E., *Jewish Education at the Cape*, M.Ed. Thesis, 1973, pp.63-67

¹⁴⁹ Oral History Project, Robert Wolff, p.35

¹⁵⁰ Katz, M.E., 1973, p.79

though many of the children could probably speak Afrikaans, and the school was associated with the neighbouring Queen Street Synagogue. Pupil numbers were substantial for the size of the Oudtshoorn community : in 1912 the pupil total was 100.¹⁵¹ By the time Rev. C.V. Nel's figures (Fig. 3B)¹⁵² were compiled, the Hebrew school catered for a substantial minority of the Jewish children.

3.8 English as "Official" Community Language

There was an apparent insistence by Jewish organisations on the use of English as their language of intercourse. The Queen Street Synagogue ("the English Shul") kept its records in English.¹⁵³ Its minister Reverend Woolfson had been imported from Britain in 1888. He was trained in the English mode of worship, and spoke English, although, like most of his flock, he was an East European.¹⁵⁴ Naturally, this favoured the running of the synagogue's administration in English, and when Jewish institutions tried to reach the Jewish public, they also invariably used this language.¹⁵⁵ Jewish weddings were almost always reported only in English,¹⁵⁶ as were other reports addressed at the whole Jewish community, although the Oudtshoorn Courant was bilingual. These included notices for Hebrew teachers, barmitzvahs and addresses by the Jewish Board of Deputies.¹⁵⁷ Reports on the Hebrew School after 1904, were only in English,¹⁵⁸ and also

¹⁵¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 December 1913, "Hebrew Public School -- Annual Prize Distribution", p.4

¹⁵² **Figure 3B : Ethnic distribution of Children in Oudtshoorn Schools in 1915 according to Rev. C.V. Nel**

School	Hebrew	English	Dutch
1. Girls' High School	87	88	136
2. Boys' High School	78	92	109
3. Hebrew AIII	86	0	0
4. West Bank Primary	2	3	70
5. North End Primary	5	9	84
6. Adderley Street Primary	30	3	77
7. George Road Primary	0	0	59

¹⁵³ Oudtshoorn Hebrew Congregation Administrative Records, UCT Archives

¹⁵⁴ Feldman, L., Jerusalem of Africa, p.90 ; OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. Mr Barron mentions Woolfson as one example of the anglicised East European Jew.

¹⁵⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 August 1899, p.2 : A Courant advertisement for Jewish New Year cards in English only ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 October 1900, p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 November 1900, p.2 : a report on Jewish Sociables (featuring English, German and Spanish songs and violin and piano recitals) ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 December 1900, p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 October 1903, "For the Jewish Festivals," p.4 .

¹⁵⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 October 1901, p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 November 1903, p.5 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 25 November 1904, p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 October 1905, p.2.

¹⁵⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 October 1902, "Persecution of the Roumanian Jews" ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 August 1903, p.1 Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 August 1904, p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 September 1904, "Jewish Board of Deputies," p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 September 1905, p.4

¹⁵⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 December 1904, "Oudtshoorn Hebrew Public School," p.2

the notices for the Grand Order of Israel¹⁵⁹ and the Herzl Ladies and Oscar Marmorek Zionist Associations.¹⁶⁰ A visit by Rabbi Dr. J.M. Hertz in 1900, to establish a branch of the SA Zionist Federation,¹⁶¹ featured speeches in English in the Queen Street Synagogue, and in "German" [Yiddish] in the St John Street Synagogue, and an accompanying speech by a local Jew featured both English and Yiddish, but no Dutch.¹⁶²

The shift to English, with some Yiddish, might be explained by the increasing cosmopolitanism of the Jewish population during the Boom – some did not come from Eastern Europe. But there was a strong effort by the new Jewish immigrant “establishment” to have itself seen as English-speaking, and this was part of the Eastern European Jewish *haute bourgeoisie's* effort to redefine itself. Some Jewish shops signs were English, without a Dutch translation,¹⁶³ strange in a district where most of the customers would have been Afrikaans-speaking. Advertisements or notices for businesses in the newspapers, if not in both English and High Dutch, were in English alone. Yiddish was almost non-existent in business, except in communication between Jews.¹⁶⁴ Interestingly, a few Gentiles learned to speak fluent Yiddish,¹⁶⁵ perhaps due to the proximity which Yiddish had as semi-Germanic language to Afrikaans.¹⁶⁶

The acculturation went further than the mere use of the English language : Dorothy Simanowitz's father was advised on the gangplank upon his arrival in Cape Town, to change his surname to Harris, and he was not alone in doing so.¹⁶⁷ More superficially, a telling photo shows

¹⁵⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 November 1910, p.6.

¹⁶⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 November 1910, p.6

¹⁶¹ See Gitlin, Marcia, The Vision Amazing – The Story of South African Zionism, Johannesburg, The Menorah Book Club, 1950. Gitlin places the origins of Zionism in Oudtshoorn in the time before 1897, when some form of Zionism Society already existed in the town (p.28). The movement virtually disappeared under the pressures of Martial Law during the South African War, but was resuscitated in 1904 and remained a mainstay of Jewish cultural life in the town after that (p.55).

¹⁶² Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 November 1900, p.2

¹⁶³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 November 1900 ; Feldman, L., Jerusalem of Africa, p.98 : Louis Noieck used only English

¹⁶⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 January 1898, p.1 : Braun Annenberg in both English and Dutch ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 January 1898, p.4 : I. Levy of the Congo Hotel and the Ruitersbosch Accommodation House, only in English ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 January 1898, p.2 : S. Lazarus and Co, only English ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 January 1898 p.1 and 10 February 1898 p.4 Wulf Sanders and Sons, in advertising the name change of their business in 1898, used separate advertisements in English and Dutch .

¹⁶⁵ OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999. One Afrikaner, John de Jager, worked for years for a Jewish shopkeeper, and learned to speak fluent Yiddish. He became a wealthy farmer and town councillor, and Afrikaners knew him as Johnny "Jood" de Jager.

¹⁶⁶ OJI, Van der Veen, John, 1999.

¹⁶⁷ OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999. He was told on the gangplank by another arrivee to change his surname to Harris, because they thought no Gentile would be able to pronounce "Shimanowitz" [sic]. He later changed it back. OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. The Wilcks' surname was originally Horwitz (?) but they changed it in Eastern Europe, taking it from Gentile neighbours, in order to get out of the ghettos. OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. His mother's father changed his name from Patz [?]to Barron to get out of Lithuania.

the first committee of the Oudtshoorn Hebrew (Queen Street) Congregation in 1888. Except for the outfit of the minister, the men's clothes were already indistinguishable from that of the late Victorian English gentleman they were emulating. Another photo depicts the first School Committee of the Hebrew School in 1903. None of the men had beards and the fashions are most up-to-date, leaving no identification of them as East European Jews, except for the caption.¹⁶⁸ A third photo, of Louis Noieck, taken around 1900 in front of his shop, also depicts three Jewish men indistinguishable from Gentiles in their way of dressing.¹⁶⁹ There was an adoption of Gentile, especially British men's fashions even by first generation Eastern European Jewish immigrants, and especially by the *haute bourgeoisie*. The 1888 photo included some of the most commercially successful and most respected Jews in Oudtshoorn at the time.¹⁷⁰ They were people who spent much of their time among Gentiles. Louis Noieck was also a modestly prosperous merchant with significant non-Jewish contact. And the photo of the Hebrew school committee, shows men secular and liberal in mind-set and inclining towards Zionism,¹⁷¹ judging by their educational project. Complete adoption of English-style clothing could be associated with increasing wealth and social confidence. But even the poorer Jews quickly switched to "the fashions being worn in the town."¹⁷²

3.9 Jews in Civil Society

Many immigrant Jews, inevitably the economically successful ones, made an increasing impact in the town. The Jewish civil assimilation after 1899 reflected increasing confidence outside the ethnic unit, and M.J. Aschman was after 1899 a member of the town School Committee, representing the Poor School, and continued to sit on the Town Council.¹⁷³ He also served as Master of the Masonic Lodge,¹⁷⁴ and several other Jews became prominent in the local Freemasons.¹⁷⁵ Michael Luntz sat on the Town Council,¹⁷⁶ and Marcus Hotz was on the Town Council for fourteen years and the Hospital Board for seventeen. Although he was not a very

For many years, the Barrons had to endure questions from others about whether they "came from the north of England" whereas their surname was indeed Hebraic, meaning "son of the strong."

¹⁶⁸ Feldman, L., *Jerusalem of Africa*, p.106

¹⁶⁹ Feldman, L., *Jerusalem of Africa*, p.98

¹⁷⁰ Feldman, L., *Jerusalem of Africa*, p.106 ; M. Luntz, M. Hotz, M. Lipschitz, Moss Morris, Mark Morris, A.P. Velenski, L. Feldt, Revd. Myer Woolfson, A. Stusser and A. Lewin.

¹⁷¹ See Shimoni, Gideon, *Jews and Zionism*, 1980, chapter 2. Gitlin, Marcia, *The Vision Amazing*, Johannesburg, The Menorah Book Club, 1950, pp. 28, 55.

¹⁷² OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999. Also OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. OJI, De Jager, John, 1999.

¹⁷³ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 21 August 1899, p.4 ; *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 14 August 1899, p.4

¹⁷⁴ 9 August 1915, *Oudtshoorn Courant*, p.2

¹⁷⁵ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 3 August 1899, p.4; *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 26 October 1899, p.4 ; *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 25 October 1900, p.2

¹⁷⁶ Abrahams, I., *The Birth of a Community*, 1955, p.75

educated man, he was also director of the Oudtshoorn Building Society,¹⁷⁷ while his economic and social success also helped to heighten his status within the Jewish community so that he eventually became President of the Queen Street Synagogue.¹⁷⁸ Success in the non-Jewish world became determinants of how strong a voice one had in the Jewish subsociety. Committees became increasingly manned by successful businessmen. This had a strong influence on how the Jewish community was perceived, and how it perceived itself, and the socially mobile differentiated themselves from the Jews who never made any inroads into Gentile society. But more and more Jews reached *bourgeois* respectability, as reported by the London Jewish Chronicle of 1901 :

"... [Some Jews in Oudtshoorn] have become rich and respected men in a community of Jews and Christians. Some of the largest businesses are owned by Jews. They form part of committees and boards on almost every occasion when anything is brought forward for the good of the community ... in music they have a colonial reputation ..."¹⁷⁹

The Jewish community could now be assured that it would have spokespeople in key positions in the general Oudtshoorn society, but most of the time, although people were certainly aware that Aschman and Hotz were Jews, these people did not seek to represent the Jewish community exclusively.

The second generation began reaching adulthood around the turn of the century, and were often better educated and more patriotic or civic minded than their parents. They therefore tended to devote themselves more to the community life outside the Jewish group,¹⁸⁰ and it did not take them long to make an impact. In 1903, Arthur Jacobson was appointed justice for the peace. He was twenty-one, a lawyer, and ten years later he was Mayor.¹⁸¹ Another second generation Jew was Dr. Israel Stusser,¹⁸² who with two other Jewish doctors, L.H. Jacobson and L.H. Lewin,

¹⁷⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 August 1899, p.2

¹⁷⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 May 1928, Obituary, p.4

¹⁷⁹ Aschman, G., in Saron and Hotz, The Jews in South Africa, p.135

¹⁸⁰ Abrahams, I., The Birth of a Community, p.75

¹⁸¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 25 July 1914, "Our Mayor's Departure", p.2

¹⁸² He was the son of the major shopkeeper, Abraham Stusser. Israel refused to take over the family shop, and obtained the English F.R.C.S. surgery diploma. He practised in Oudtshoorn and became district surgeon and honorary medical superintendent. His biography appears in Oudtshoorn Observer, 16 August 1943, p.2 (Obituary).

assured virtual Jewish domination of Oudtshoorn medical practice for a generation.¹⁸³ The Jewish community furnished the entire interior of the hospital building at its inception in 1899, and for decades the hospital had Jews both on the board and as regular contributors.¹⁸⁴ The second generation *haute bourgeoisie* Jews especially contributed to the cultural and social life of the town,¹⁸⁵ as part of their pursuit of middle-class values and positions, and most did not seek status through religious education, but through business and professional success.

By 1913, it was no longer exceptional to find Jews circulating in civil life outside their own ethnic boundaries. This increasing social involvement reflected an economic diversification away from feathers, and the growth of a successful middle class section within the Jewish community. The "Buffaloes" honoured one Kavonic for his services.¹⁸⁶ There were many Jewish Freemasons,¹⁸⁷ and the local Building Society had two Jewish directors, although its clientele was multi-ethnic.¹⁸⁸ The racing club had a Jew as Vice-President and Treasurer¹⁸⁹ and Jews also joined the largely anglophone Football club.¹⁹⁰ Although the town Rugby club was dominated by Afrikaners, prominent English-speakers were also accommodated, and the ubiquitous Sam Cohen's secretarial services were used.¹⁹¹ Afrikaners formed most of the members of the Oudtshoorn Rifle Association, yet they competed for a silver cup donated by N. Lipschitz.¹⁹² Jews formed a significant portion of the Olympic Tennis Club's members,¹⁹³ and some were avid golfers.¹⁹⁴ They enthusiastically supported the Oudtshoorn Musical Society,¹⁹⁵ also the Oudtshoorn Theatre Company,¹⁹⁶ and Jewish ladies served on the Ladies' Benevolent Society committee.¹⁹⁷ Yet the Oudtshoorn Farmers' Association included almost no Jews.¹⁹⁸ The growing

¹⁸³ Aschman, G., in Saron and Hotz, The Jews in South Africa, p.135

¹⁸⁴ Aschman, G., in Saron and Hotz, The Jews in South Africa, p.134

¹⁸⁵ Aschman, G., in Saron and Hotz, The Jews in South Africa, p.135

¹⁸⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 December 1913, "R.A.O.R.", p.2

¹⁸⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 October 1914, "Masonic", p.5

¹⁸⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 August 1914, "Oudtshoorn Building Society", p.2

¹⁸⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 February 1914, "Oudtshoorn Racing Club", p.7

¹⁹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 February 1914, p.4

¹⁹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 March 1914, "Sporting Notes – ORFC – Annual Meeting", p.5

¹⁹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 March 1914, "Shooting", p.6 ; the cup was named "The Lipschitz Jeweller Cup"

¹⁹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 March 1914, p.7

¹⁹⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 June 1914, "Golf", p.4 ; also Oudtshoorn Courant, 18 February 1915, "The Oudtshoorn Golf Club – The Opening Ceremony", p.5 ; So instrumental was Sam Cohen in raising the funds for the local golf clubhouse, that it was proposed in jest, at the opening, that the building be named the '*Koh-I-Noor*'

¹⁹⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 March 1914, "Oudtshoorn Musical Society – General Meeting", p.4 ; the society had a Jewish vice-president and a third of its committee was Jewish

¹⁹⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 April 1914, "Oudtshoorn Theatre Co.", p. 2

¹⁹⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 May 1914, p.6

¹⁹⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 April 1914, "Oudtshoorn Farmers' and Fruit Growers' Association," p.2 and Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 May 1914, "Oudtshoorn Farmers' and Fruit Growers' Association", p.2 ; the

Jewish *petite bourgeoisie* had its greatest triumph when it produced Arthur Jacobson, who became the first Jewish mayor of Oudtshoorn in 1913.¹⁹⁹

These prominent Jews were received with mixed feelings by some non-Jews, with whom they now worked together intimately. Jewish professionals like Julius Lax,²⁰⁰ Morris Gillis²⁰¹ and Arthur Jacobson, had grown up playing in the streets of Oudtshoorn and returned to practice law. In 1914, Jacobson decided to depart for Cambridge, and his farewell banquet entertained the cream of the town society. The chief toast was delivered by C.J. Langenhoven, a fellow lawyer. This revealed an ambivalence towards the Jews, even the most successful and integrated ones, even though it was delivered with humour and appeared acceptable to those present. Indeed, Langenhoven was known as being well-disposed towards the local Jews. On one level, Jacobson was lauded by Langenhoven for his "rare and exceptional brains and business ability" and described the departure of his legal adversary as "a personal loss." On the other hand, Jacobson's "Jewishness" was repeatedly emphasised, and seemed to have been regarded as an integral but ambiguous part of his personality. Jacobson was divided into three "persons." Langenhoven declared:

"... Some people might say they could spare a lawyer,
and it might be said that they could spare a Jew or two.
The Mayor looks after the town, the lawyer looks after
the country and the Jew looks after himself ..."²⁰²

It appears that even in this ethnically integrated social circle, a "Jew" was referred to with jocular disdain. It appeared that the Jew was regarded as a type of "necessary evil," stereotypically self-centred and untrustworthy. This stereotype was so widespread, that in the inclusive environment of the urban upper middle class, where it was possible for a Jew to become not only a Mayor but a close friend and partner, it could be circulated in a light-humoured, even self-deprecatory manner. Private feelings were not recorded, but the Jews present did not openly take exception. Other Gentiles probably expressed the same views in a more negative tone on other occasions. Even at the height of their civil integration and success, Jews had to contend with a stereotype which emphasised their acumen as part of a double-edged sword of "typical Jewish

exception among the Jews were the large landowners Lipschitz and Tooch, who like the few big English farmers, had a big interest in farming in general

¹⁹⁹ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 9 December 1913, "Town Council", p.7

²⁰⁰ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 16 December 1913, p.3

²⁰¹ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 21 April 1914, p.5

²⁰² *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 25 July 1914, "Farewell Banquet", p.4

behaviour.” Non-Jews both admired and resented their talents. Although they recognised that these skilful people could benefit the district as citizens, they feared that the Jews would exploit them. Therefore, even though formally accepted by 1914, local Jews still had to work against preconceptions about them as a outsider group, somewhat "different" from other Oudtshoornites.

3.10 Conclusions

The transition of Oudtshoorn Jews from immigrants to citizens of Oudtshoorn was very advanced by the end of the ostrich feather period in 1914. The wealth of the feather boom undoubtedly accelerated the process of integration, by giving certain Jewish individuals the social status to reach the upper echelons of Oudtshoorn society. In general, economic interaction preceded and benefited the acculturation of Jews. It made acquisition of local languages such as English or Afrikaans essential, and considerably easier, by ensuring regular contact between Jews and non-Jews. It allowed Jews to send their children to school with non-Jews, and to expose them to the non-Jewish world. The feather period was, above all, a period in which Jews formed allegiances. Most Jews adopted non-Jewish middle class interests and loyalties. Most Jews learned the benefits their skin colour gave them in the South African context, and adopted the attitudes of other Whites towards non-Whites in their community. Most Jews acquired the use of both Afrikaans and English, and individual Jews circulated among both groups, but the community inclined towards identification with Britain and English. During the crisis of the South African War, Jewish civilians suffered equally from both sides in the conflict, but those Jews who did take a public stand, eagerly supported the British war effort. Jews were eager to prove themselves to be citizens of Oudtshoorn by defending it against the Boers. On other occasions they made a concerted effort to assure non-Jews that they held the interests of Oudtshoorn and its people in high regard. This was recognised by most non-Jews, paving the way for Jewish involvement in elected bodies of a municipal, social or business nature. By 1914, Oudtshoorn had a Jewish mayor and Jews were closely integrated into the general community. Jews increasingly resembled their non-Jewish neighbours, without losing their group identity. They did, however, still have to contend with pervasive negative stereotypes, and attitudes from non-Jews which to some extent set them apart from other people in Oudtshoorn.

4. Integration and Assimilation : Early Challenges to the Jewish Community

By 1914 Jews could consider themselves residents of Oudtshoorn, and no longer a transitory immigrant community. Many Jews had made Oudtshoorn their permanent home, had extensive interests in the area, and had acculturated to a significant extent. In theory, they could claim the full rights of citizens by virtue of their contribution to the community and the colour of their skins. In practice, however, the extent of their civil rights was as yet undefined. The period after 1914 included several instances in which the status of Jews as citizens in Oudtshoorn was qualified or challenged. The crises that helped bring these challenges about included the fall of the feather economy, the First World War, and questions surrounding religious and legal equality in civil society. Each time, the immigrant group had to defend and define its position in civil society and assert its rights to citizenship of Oudtshoorn and South Africa. Simultaneously, the community had to struggle against assimilation, in order to ensure the continued existence of the Jewish community as a recognisably separate religious and cultural entity.

4.1 The Slump

In 1911, Oudtshoorn was still the richest district in the Cape Province.¹ Repeatedly however, farmers and feather dealers were warned of the dire consequences that would ensue should demand for feathers flag. Some diversification did occur, but even those not handling feathers were dependent upon the buying power generated by ostrich products. Most successful enterprises tried to cushion themselves through reinvestment. But the poor, including many recent Jewish immigrants, were highly vulnerable. The Oudtshoorn Jewish community had by 1913 a core of five hundred people, no longer exclusively dependent upon feathers, yet benefiting indirectly from it. Several lawyers could, for example, make a living because of the plethora of cases generated by the labyrinthine feather industry, and district buying power benefited general dealerships. For the core group, a fall in feather prices would prove damaging, but not insurmountable. What the slump eventually achieved, was to strip away the periphery of the Jewish community and leave behind a stable group, disproportionately middle class, and well adapted to the wider society.

¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 December 1913, "Our Richest Districts", p.6

In December 1913, warnings about the instability of the feather market received scant attention.² Local experts advocated diversification and co-operative ventures.³ By the end of January 1914, the banks had closed their credit lines.⁴ In Paris, animal activists killed the feather fashion by highlighting the extermination of wild animals. Added to this was the development of motor vehicles, which made large hats impractical.⁵ The final factor was the outbreak of war, which brought austerity measures and made shipping unavailable for luxury exports. The Courant refuted grim pictures of a complete economic collapse,⁶ and emphasised that Oudtshoorn would defy the "temporary setback".⁷ Jewish society weddings continued ostentatiously,⁸ yet unemployment rose dramatically.⁹ In the short term, the feather dealers were most severely affected, since they owed the banks money on feather ventures.¹⁰ But in the long run, many farmers also faced severe problems. They soon found that the prices of any crop besides feathers was insufficient to make their small farms profitable or to repay debts.¹¹ Standards of living began to drop. On the positive side there was a return to branches of agriculture with higher labour demands.¹²

By the end of February 1914, Oudtshoorn was in a financial crisis. The Jewish community, which was heavily represented in the "middleman" sector, suffered doubly, as banks exerted pressure from above, through the merchants, onto the consumer. Many businesses found their debtors refusing to pay and a flood of writs and summonses were issued. Appeals to advocates to be less aggressive, and to traders to be merciful, were framed against the background of civic loyalty :

"... Probably this is your birth-place and you have grown up here and have the interests and the welfare of the town at heart ..."¹³

² Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 December 1913, "A Warning to Ostrich Farmers", p.12

³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 January 1914, "Oudtshoorn's Egg Basket"

⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 January 1914, p. 3 ; 3 February 1914, p.2

⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 February 1914, p.3

⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 March 1914, "The Slump in Ostrich Feathers," p.2

⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 May 1914, "Imaginary Ruin", p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 June 1915, p.5

⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 June 1914, p.2

⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 August 1914, p.2

¹⁰ Oral History Project, B.L. Gillis, p.13

¹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 April 1914, p.4

¹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 August 1914, p.2

¹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 June 1914, "Hard Times – by *One of the Poor*", p.4

A division between "rich" and "poor" was emphasised, in which it was argued that the poor were being forced to become "dishonest by the pound of flesh pressure from their creditors"¹⁴ (a reference to Shakespeare's Shylock). The upper middle class were thought to be well insulated against the worst ravages of the crisis.¹⁵ Oudtshoorn soon saw a panic as farms and ostriches were auctioned off.¹⁶ Officially, there were 220 licenced feather dealers, most of them Jewish,¹⁷ but with them their dependents lost their income, and their considerable buying power, as well as that of the farmers and service providers, evaporated.¹⁸ Firms either retrenched staff or reduced pay,¹⁹ which broadened the gulf between many Jewish shopowners and their Gentile employees, who accused them of disloyalty.²⁰ The perception grew that the Jews were only looking after themselves, and because so many Jews were shopkeepers, few of the harassed debtors did not have at least one Jewish creditor. The situation was depicted by many as a moral issue, and creditors and their lawyers were resented for exercising moral judgement.²¹ Relations between individual Jews also soured.²²

Friction was publicly voiced, and there was a sudden hardening of farmers against dealers, reflected in a Courant editorial which accused "outsiders" and disloyal Oudtshoornites of magnifying the effects of the "Slump" for personal gain. "Unscrupulous petty buyers" were identified as the culprits, and farmers were encouraged to "give [them] ... a good washing in the sluit" [sloot = ditch] when approached.²³ Feather-buying enterprises were even accused of having started the feather "scare" in order to gain financial benefit.²⁴ There were calls for the immediate unification of "well-to-do ostrich farmers" to "counteract the threatening danger."²⁵ Jews were not mentioned as an ethnic group in the Courant, but use of the term "feather buyers" implied Jews to many Oudtshoornites, as did the word "speculator" or "dealer."

¹⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 June 1914, "Hard Times – by *One of the Poor*", p.4

¹⁵ Oral History Project, B.L. Gillis, p.14

¹⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 February 1914, p.4

¹⁷ Oral History Project, B.L. Gillis, pp. 13-14 ; Gillis estimated that the vast majority of Jews were somehow dependent upon or related to feathers at the time of the Slump.

¹⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 March 1914, "Oudtshoorn Licences", p.2

¹⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 December 1913, p.6 and 22 August 1914, p.2 ; It was estimated in August 1914 that 2 000 people, out of 36 000 in the district, were on the brink of starvation.

²⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 25 August 1914, "The Chamber of Commerce and Retrenchment", p.5

²¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 February 1914, "Financial Crisis in Oudtshoorn" p.2

²² Oral History Project, B.L. Gillis, p.12 ; Gillis's father died just before the Slump, and his widowed mother's affairs were dealt with by Jacobson, a local Jewish lawyer. Gillis suspected Jacobson of selling his mother short. Gillis also remembered his mother going to Morris Levin (Lewin) to borrow money, and she found herself waiting at the end of the line (p.14).

²³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 March 1914, "The Slump in Ostrich Feathers," p.2

²⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 March 1914, "The Proposed Feather Boycott" p.2

²⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 March 1914, "Ostrich Industry in Danger – Oudtshoorn Wake up !", p.7

The ostrich farmers became intent upon wholly cutting out the middlemen.²⁶ Some wanted cooperation between farmers and dealers,²⁷ but others argued that the "farmers [should] see the power they have in their own hands."²⁸ They distrusted dealers in London – significantly, one "Rose of Oudtshoorn", presumed to be family of a local Jewish feather baron, was described as "an unknown quantity."²⁹ When a public meeting was held concerning the slump, the Farmers' Association opposed involving the dealers. A number of farmers walked out in protest.

A "survival of the fittest" attitude now predominated,³⁰ adding to a general distaste with the impoverished Jews, who were now publicly attacked with the stereotypes that had been kept tactfully private in earlier years. The *Courant* published a letter openly accusing the treacherous "Jew" of swindling the Afrikaners. Craft and trickery were explicitly identified as Jewish characteristics,³¹ and Jewish failure was gleefully mocked in the poem "*The Lament of the Smous*."³² In this atmosphere, the non-Jewish public were outraged when certain Jewish traders kept their retail shops open on the Christian Good Friday. This was interpreted by many Christians as an insult to their religion and persons.³³ There was also dissatisfaction with the town council, and Jewish mayor. One report commented :

"... I am surprised to see *in a Christian country* [that] the Town Council allows such a thing ..."³⁴

This statement reflected a lasting limit upon Jewish integration into Oudtshoorn society. Whatever economic and civil advances they had made in Oudtshoorn, Jews were by implication still outsiders in the predominantly Christian community. They had to abide by Christian religious rules, with only tolerance being given in return. Another letter writer wrote that

"... respect for the feelings of others and the *dominant section*

²⁶ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 17 March 1914, p.2

²⁷ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 14 April 1914, "Oudtshoorn Farmers' and Fruit Growers' Association", p.2

²⁸ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 14 April 1914, "The Ostrich Feather Industry", p.4

²⁹ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 12 May 1914, p.2

³⁰ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 17 March 1914, "The Ostrich Feather Trade," p.4

³¹ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 17 March 1914, "Uncle Gert on the Feather Business" / "Oom Gert op Veere Besigheid" [Cape Dutch / Afrikaans] by AAP [Monkey], p.6

³² *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 4 April 1914, p.7

³³ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 11 April 1914, p.2

³⁴ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 11 April 1914, p.8 ; letter signed by "A Christian"

of the community, should keep the minority from wantonly transgressing ..."

and demanded that public opinion be mobilized. The opening of shops in the evenings and on holidays was further described in terms of inhumane exploitation of [Christian] shop assistants by shopkeepers, and a "lack of patriotic spirit" which had to be met by boycotting.³⁵ Jews were not explicitly identified, but Jewish religious (and business) freedom and civil equality was challenged by the majority opinion. Clearly, Jews were still vulnerable to being isolated by the majority as an outsider group with conflicting interests to that of the majority, under conditions of extreme stress. As such, their equality towards other citizens could still be undermined.

4.2 The "Great War" and Patriotism

Other developments led to further challenges of the Jews' position as equal citizens. For a while, the outbreak of the First World War eclipsed the tensions of the slump, although the feather crisis exacerbated local conflict. Prices of commodities rocketed when the war began, further damaging the relations between retailers and consumers.³⁶ And on the high tide of jingoism, ethnic tensions arose which raised serious questions about Jews' place as citizens of their adopted country and empire. The 1914 Municipal elections were fought heavily on patriotic lines³⁷ :

"... This is a British country and we want representatives with British ideals and fairminded ways. Oudtshoorn is at present enjoying these ideals with her number of nationalities who are inhabitants therein – in a place of this kind I think it is advisable for the municipal voters to be very careful in [exercising] their votes ..."³⁸

The rhetoric was designed to exclude those many local Afrikaners who were suspected of being pro-German, and resulted in a victory of three Englishmen and one moderate Afrikaner. Both Jewish candidates failed, as did four Afrikaners, and when a victory speech was made in Dutch, it

³⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 April 1914, "Good Friday and Saturday Night Trading" by Service-Cum-Reward, p.4

³⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 August 1914, p.3A

³⁷ See Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience, pp.70-78 for a national perspective.

³⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 September 1914, letter by "Citizen", p.2

was jeered by the crowd.³⁹ With tensions rising, Jews were eager to declare their loyalty, as they had during the South African War, and most of them enthusiastically sided with the British.⁴⁰ A loyalist town meeting prominently featured Jews, with M.S. Lipschitz on the stage and Joe Cohen volunteering for armed service :

"... He was a Jew and there were no more loyal people than the Jews as they had such liberty in the British Empire. He was willing to go anywhere and asked for 100 Jews to go volunteer to fight for the Empire ..."

By contrast, when C.J Langenhoven opposed certain military measures of the Union Government, he was jeered at.⁴¹

The Jewish community looked towards the Eastern Front where thousands of Jews joined the Tsar's armies, and watched with concern as Jewish villages were "pillaged, burned or lain [sic] waste by the *barbarian invaders*" [the Germans].⁴² Thus, the Russo-Jewish Relief Fund was well supported.⁴³ Furthermore, a sixth of Oudtshoornites on active service or in the armed forces in 1914 were Jewish.⁴⁴ The local Jewish doctor headed the Ambulance section of the Citizens' Training Association⁴⁵ and Jewish volunteers repeatedly affirmed their loyalty to Britain :

"... I think we Jewish fellows should have been the first to have answered the call, because we have been (and still are being) driven from nearly every other country. We have no home anywhere but here. Under the British flag we are protected in the same way as any Britisher, we enjoy the same liberty and freedom

³⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 September 1914, "Municipal Elections", p.3

⁴⁰ See Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, pp.78-81 for a discussion on Jewish patriotism during the First World War and accusations about shirking of duty levelled against them.

⁴¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 September 1914, "At Last – Oudtshoorn Voices its Loyalty", p.2 ; Langenhoven argued that South African troops should only be used in a defensive capacity, i.e. in South Africa, and not be sent overseas.

⁴² Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 October 1914, "Distress Among Russian Jews", p.2

⁴³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 November 1914, "Miss R. Woolfsohn's Concert", p.6

⁴⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 November 1914, "Oudtshoorn's Roll of Honour", p.2

⁴⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 November 1914, "Oudtshoorn Citizens Training Association", p.4

and we are all treated alike ..."⁴⁶

Accompanying such thoughts was also an expressed desire to "teach the enemy a lesson,"⁴⁷ and Jewish bellicosity was carefully cultivated. The South African Jewish Chronicle addressed young Jews by pointing out the improvement in quality of life that Jews experienced "wherever the Union Jack flies" and encouraged a show of "gratitude for the inestimable benefits which we in this sub-continent enjoy" [sic]. It added :

"... this great war has afforded us an opportunity to show that the Jew is a man amongst men ... to prove once and for all that the ancient prowess possessed by our ancestors has not entirely faded away, and of demonstrating conclusively, so that the fact may never be controverted, that we are able and willing to take our place in the fighting line ..."⁴⁸

Also, Dr. I.B. Lewin, who was raised in Oudtshoorn, expressed on a visit to the Hebrew school :

"... one thing that the children should learn was patriotism. Had it not been for the flag of liberty, freedom and justice under which they lived, where would they be today ..."⁴⁹

And in 1918 Joe Cohen wrote from the Middle East that the "ambition of his life" had been realised now that he could fight in a Jewish unit against the "enemies of the grand old Flag ... the good old Union Jack."⁵⁰ This patriotism was echoed in a poem by S. Mallinick, the ageing immigrant,

"... Rule Brittainia.
God will it : here our rest shall be,
Our years of wandering o'er ;

⁴⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 November 1914, "A Personal Appeal for Young Jews" by Paul S. Kruger, Jewish volunteer, p.3

⁴⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 November 1914, "A Personal Appeal for Young Jews" by Paul S. Kruger, Jewish volunteer, p.3

⁴⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 December 1915

⁴⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 December 1915, p.3

⁵⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 April 1918, p.3

Atrocities we will no more see, --
 Exclusive laws for Jews no more ..."⁵¹

To show the superiority of British values over "German" values, Oudtshoorn Jews even posited a natural affinity between Jews and Englishmen.⁵²

The gratitude the immigrants felt towards the British came to fruition as they supported the British war effort and opposed any local detractors. Langenhoven argued that the Union should only enter the war in a defensive capacity. Others openly opposed Britain, and five members of the Divisional Council publicly refused to congratulate Louis Botha. The reaction was swift,⁵³ and "South African" heavily criticised the "disloyal and rebellious utterances."⁵⁴ "Disgusted" blamed the newly formed National Party.⁵⁵ And in 1919, when a local Afrikaner wrote to Die Burger insulting returning soldiers, he was simply told in the Courant that Oudtshoorn people knew where he lived and that he would get trouble from the "lads" if he did not show respect.⁵⁶

The immediate forum for the dispute between what came to be called the "Dutch" and "English" streams, was the 1915 school board elections, in which Afrikaners loudly complained when six English candidates were elected, but seven Afrikaner candidates were defeated. "Loyalists" attributed the Oudtshoorn divisions to "the two-stream policy." Afrikaner nationalism, radicalism and "race-hatred" in Oudtshoorn were seen as a challenge to the survival of "the moderates in both the white races" and if unchecked, would bring "misery, wretchedness and ruin." The Courant, openly pro-British, pointed out that these elections had in fact been between two "tickets", the one existing of Afrikaners, the other existing of a hodge-podge of "moderates." He concluded :

"... The English and Jewish sections, with the assistance of the moderate portion of the Dutch-speaking [Afrikaner] section were not aggressors, they fought in the defence ..."⁵⁷

⁵¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 September 1918, p.2

⁵² Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 December 1918, "Hebrew School", p.3

⁵³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 August 1915, "An Insult to General Botha", p.2

⁵⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 August 1915, letter "'Loyal' Oudtshoorn" by "A South African", p.2

⁵⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 August 1915, letter by "Disgusted", p.9

⁵⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 May 1919, "A Despicable Diatribe – And a Warning", p.3

⁵⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 September 1915, Editorial "'Vote British!'", p.2 ; (similar events were taking place in Graaff-Reinet)

These two broad alliances would form the basis for the later South African Party – National Party battles for the Oudtshoorn constituency. In rough terms, the latter party had a rural, Afrikaner, ethnically exclusivist basis. The other camp was largely urban, poly-ethnic and pro-British. Only by combining could the Jews and English-speakers gain the numbers to oppose the Afrikaner-*bloc*. For several years after 1915, Municipal Elections were run along party lines,⁵⁸ and in 1916, two South African Party (or hereafter SAP) Jewish candidates easily beat the Afrikaner candidates.⁵⁹ Indeed, Jews would associate with Anglophones as Afrikaner nationalism grew apace in Oudtshoorn. In 1915, D.F. Malan's visit to Oudtshoorn was roundly criticised by the Courant :

"... If, as Malan says, nobody desired to support race hatred, how is it he lay down his sacred calling to indulge in a propaganda which practically places the South African born man of English blood outside the pale of '*Ware Afrikaners*,' which places him in the country of his birth in an inferior position ? ..."⁶⁰

Some Jews held similar fears that an ethnically exclusive party would make them into second class citizens. Although Jews were not mentioned in Malan's speeches, nor by Botha during a visit in the same week, Botha's one-stream policy probably appealed more to local Jews. Yet at election time, the fears of local Jews were played upon by both candidates. Whereas the SAP candidate accused the Nationalists of "[whipping] up people against one another," Langenhoven, the National Party candidate, attacked the Government :

"... A Government that makes use of the military power to proclaim Martial Law and crush lawful political opposition is a danger to every section of the country, Afrikander, Englishman, Jew and Coloured. We [the National Party] stand for the freedom of political difference and political opposition which is guaranteed to us by the flag ..."⁶¹

⁵⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 September 1915, Editorial, "Municipal Election", p.2 ; The Schoemanshoek farmers had especially supported the losing candidate.

⁵⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 September 1916, "The Municipal Elections", p.2 ; the two Jewish candidates, Sanders and Hotz, were at the top of a log of five candidates, and the Nationalist candidate, Anderson, right at the bottom. [SAP or "Sappe" was also a label extended to followers of the UP in later years.]

⁶⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 September 1915, Editorial, "Municipal Election", p.2

⁶¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 September 1915, "Nomination Day", p.10

Certainly the war-time situation was tense enough for "foreigners" to be very closely watched. William Rephan, described as an "Austrian", was charged with "having used abusive language towards Samuel Katz, by casting aspersions on his pedigree", yet he was defended by another local Jew, the "German", Attorney Stusser.⁶² The Stusser family "never felt comfortable" in Oudtshoorn because of the anti-German feeling during that time.⁶³ Any sign of pro-German attitudes was pounced upon :⁶⁴

"... *Those who are not for us are against us*, and ... many Germans have become naturalized for purely business and political reasons, not having changed their opinions, and are strongly in sympathy with Germany. They are a danger to the country ..."⁶⁵

The perception was that former German subjects in South Africa were "trading and growing fat at the expense of the British people" and calls were made that the shops of "non-Britishers" should be boycotted and that every loyal Englishman should "show his patriotism by endeavouring to clear the enemy out of our midst."⁶⁶ This accusation implicated every immigrant Jew born outside the British Empire.

Soon local Afrikaner loyalists, eager to prove their own fidelity, also stepped forward to accuse local Jews. The debate was quickly invaded by the stereotypes and even personal vendettas which arose from years of intricate economic relations :

"... [I] extend my criticism to the young Jews of the country district. Not one of them, so far as I know, has come forward. And yet they lead a free and protected life and have every opportunity of making Shekels out of the people of their country by means of trade and

⁶² Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 November 1914, "An Austrian in Court", p.3

⁶³ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. The family surname was originally Stasser, but was changed to Stusser. Originally Germans, they anglicised to some extent but in 1914 at least, still retained some German loyalties.

⁶⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 May 1914, "Speak Out!" by *Cockney*, p.2

⁶⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 March 1915, p.2

⁶⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 18 October 1915, letter by "Pro Patria", p.2

speculation, through the clemency of our Government ..."⁶⁷

Jewish neighbours of the main accuser, L. van Wyk of De Rust in the Oudtshoorn district, joined the debate, to "give ventilation to [their] disgust at the base insinuations."⁶⁸ The local Hebrew teacher exclaimed :

"... the various commandoes ... contain Jews, principally country storekeepers, who have practically ruined themselves by promptly obeying their country's call ..."⁶⁹

"*Jew of the right sort*" wrote :

"... if the true meaning of patriotism were to be tested, the Jews will outflank L. van Wyk and his compatriots not only in number, but in quality, the tradition born and bred into the Jew ... we have not reached rock bottom yet, and our resources [are available], although seriously curtailed owing to the existing war ; we have not yet found occasion to offer our services (under the cloak of loyalty) for the emolument derived therefrom [sic] ..."⁷⁰

Such sparring between people who daily passed one another on the street was motivated by unease over citizenship. The immigrant Jews and the rural Afrikaners who supported Britain both felt that their loyalty was held in doubt, and wanted to assert it publicly. Van Wyk, who had sent sons to fight the Afrikaner rebels, replied to the local Jews :

"... We generally find that people rebellious at heart utter insinuations against others who are loyal to King and Country. No, we are not ashamed to own that we are loyalists and we might even brag as such ..."

⁶⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 November 1914, letter by L. van Wyk, p.3

⁶⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 November 1914, letter by "Jew of the Right Sort", p.3

⁶⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 November 1914, letter "Jews in the Field" by D. Mierowsky, p.2 ; he mentioned that a large percentage of the Transvaal Scottish were in fact Jews, as with the Wit. Rifles and I.L.H. [sic].

⁷⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 November 1914, p.3

And he added :

"... It seems to me that your [the Courant's] correspondents can much better handle a yard of calico and a gold 'wats' than the trigger of a gun. '*Jew of the Right Sort*' speaks of emolument. Quite so ! Is he waiting for the quotas to come, and barter or does he shirk his duty to better his case ? I wonder whether he can quote Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori ? No, he can't, because he has no country ..."⁷¹

Local Jews were highly offended, and C. Sacks replied that he "would advise Mr. Van Wyk to direct his energies to pumpkin and mealie growing."⁷² A. Solomon resented Van Wyk's aspersions about Jews' lack of moral courage, and accused him of "superficial knowledge of the Jews as a nation" :

"... Your correspondent [van Wyk] [should] cast his eyes over a wider area than the shop opposite his door and not make such a bold show of his ignorance in the future ..."⁷³

At this point the Editor terminated the public debate. But Van Wyk's attack had proved that local Jews were willing and able to assert their community's right and ability to be full citizens of the British Empire and Oudtshoorn. Van Wyk had utilized basic stereotypes no doubt current in Oudtshoorn, but had run up against a community vocal and literate and keen to defend itself. Empirically, Van Wyk's attack was without foundation. Jews proportionately supplied more troops in 1914 than any other local ethnic group – by August 1917, Oudtshoorn Jewry claimed 47 men on active duty. Two were killed in action.⁷⁴ Some former Oudtshoorn Jews were even

⁷¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 December 1914, letter by L. van Wyk, p.2

⁷² Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 December 1914, letter by C. Sacks, Oudtshoorn, p.5

⁷³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 December 1914, letter by A.J. Solomon, Oudtshoorn, p.5

⁷⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 August 1917, "Jewish Roll of Honour" compiled by Rev. Mr Woolfson ; based on former and then current Jewish inhabitants of the district ; the figures included five captains, a sergeant major and a full lieutenant ; ten men were fighting in France

decorated for bravery,⁷⁵ and Jewish businesses as late as June 1918 gave their employees the day off to attend army recruitment drives.⁷⁶

The Russian connection, that is, Russia's position as ally of Britain, was a source of problems, due to Jewish memories of persecution in Eastern Europe. Yet, many Jews expressed pride at the Russian Jews' support of the Tsar's war effort – as Morris Alexander, Jewish parliamentarian, noted on a visit to Oudtshoorn :

"... one of the things that the war had proved was that the courage and patriotism of Jewish citizens all over the world were equal to any other section of the community ..."⁷⁷

The pro-British media also emphasised the significance of the Russo-British alliance against "Prussian militarism". They argued that Russian Jewry's position would be improved by an Allied victory. The Palestine situation, the media also argued, would be decided in the Jews' favour should Britain be given control of the area. Yet some local Jews felt that Germany had always been better disposed towards Jews than Russia, and felt that any force that could overthrow the Tsar would be an improvement.⁷⁸ Support for the British war effort, in itself regarded as noble, was therefore affected by a feeling that it might merely prolong Russian Jewry's suffering.⁷⁹ Every effort was therefore made by Oudtshoorn's Jewish leaders and guest speakers to assuage these fears.

Local Jews furthermore repudiated Vladimir Lenin the moment rumours started among the non-Jewish population that the new Russian leader was both a Jew and pro-German.⁸⁰ To their defence, the Courant published articles from other newspapers, proving that perceptions that Jews were automatically pro-German were erroneous, and that "Jews have every reason to hate Germany, since it is the cradle of anti-semitism" and treated Jews worse than the Russians.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 September 1918, "A Gallant Jew", p.2 ; Corporal Kessel, brother of a local Oudtshoorn woman and a feather buyer in Oudtshoorn between 1901 and 1902, received the Australian Distinguished Conduct Medal ; he was wounded four times in action

⁷⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 June 1918, "Recruitment Rally – Thursday Next", p.2

⁷⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 October 1915, "Russo-Jewish Relief Fund", p.9

⁷⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 October 1915, "Russo-Jewish Relief Fund", p.9

⁷⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 October 1915, "Emancipation of the Jews", p.5

⁸⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 December 1917, "Lenin – Not a Jew or Pro-German", p.3

⁸¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 April 1918, "Anti-Semitic Germany," p.6 (from the Daily Mail)

Progress in returning Palestine to the Jews was received with great excitement by local Jews, and the Zionist movement enthusiastically supported the British effort when it became clear that Britain would support Jews' claims to the area.⁸² In this way, Jews continued to successfully overcome doubts about their loyalty to their adopted land, whether seen as Oudtshoorn or the British Empire. Jews emerged from the First World War having asserted their loyalty towards Britain. They had placed their British interests before that of Russia or Germany, primarily because they resided in British territory, and to a lesser degree because of the British support of Zionist ideals. But by supporting Britain and its agents amid the ethnic tensions surrounding the war, the Jewish community of Oudtshoorn had also begun to align itself politically against a growing current of Afrikaner nationalism in the district and country.

4.3 The Challenges of Decline and Assimilation

After the feather slump in 1914, the Jewish community came under severe pressure to maintain its institutions amid population decline and growing assimilation. In moving from a distinct immigrant community to an integrated group of citizens, Jews had to decide how to harmonise the two major ideals of the community. The first was the growing integration into Oudtshoorn society, acculturation and the acquisition and defence of civil rights equal to that of any other White citizen. The second was the ideal of a recognisably separate Jewish cultural and religious entity which, while not hampering acculturation or integration, would prevent the disappearance of the Oudtshoorn Jews as a group with unique traditions and ideals.

As testimony to the integration of the Jewish community into the community of Oudtshoorn, Jews were not abandoned during the crisis of the ostrich feather slump. In the years following the feather slump, the Jewish community claimed and received support from non-Jews who regarded it as their duty to help their fellow Oudtshoorn citizens. Jewish institutions could count on the Courant, which published their notices and advocated their case to the Gentile community.⁸³ The Courant lauded Jewish charities for making sure "that the Oudtshoorn public hears nothing of the distress prevailing among the local Jews," which it described as especially hard hit. Jewish charity organisations helped to lower ethnic tensions by also helping non-Jews.⁸⁴ The relief of the "unemployed and chronic poor" was seen as the civic obligation of the whole town,⁸⁵ and Jewish

⁸² For example, Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 November 1917, "Zionist Meeting", p.2

⁸³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 August 1916, p.4

⁸⁴ Oral History Project, Robert Wolff, p.46

⁸⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 September 1917, "Surprise", p.2

professionals occasionally provided free services to needy persons. For the Jews, support from Gentiles was vital, since the subscriptions which the Jewish community could generate were declining.⁸⁶ Many Jews left Oudtshoorn,⁸⁷ and Jewish neighbourhoods disappeared.⁸⁸

Changes in the nature of the Jewish community itself, occurred around this time. The first generation was gradually replaced by the second generation. One effect of this was to shift the character of the community from an immigrant one struggling to integrate, to being a collection of citizens struggling to maintain a separate, shared cultural identity amid the demands of integration and acculturation. In 1921, it was claimed, a quarter of the town's population could still understand Yiddish.⁸⁹ However, many old Jews lost the desire to speak Yiddish to their children, as their contemporaries departed,⁹⁰ or showed a reluctance to talk about or retain contact with Eastern Europe.⁹¹ The elderly provided a link to what the local Jews felt made them distinct in a greater community which threatened to assimilate them. For example, readers and expounders of the Talmud were hard to come by. As such, the "great loss" expressed at the death of J.J. Kussel, who had fulfilled this role for twenty years, was more than a mere obituary cliché or personal sorrow,⁹² as the burden fell on younger people with possibly less inclination to study the Talmud.⁹³ The death of Rabbi Boruch Shlom created another gap.⁹⁴ The loss of patriarchs like

⁸⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 October 1916, "Jewish Ladies Benevolent Society", p.2

⁸⁷ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 March 1917, "Important Public Sale", p.1 ; Ruben Kuper sold his land and was leaving the district. OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. His father left temporarily for Durban to work for distributors, the family store being unable to support him too. OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Herman estimates the population to have been three hundred families or a thousand people when he was a small child, down from a high of 1 500 people or five hundred families.

⁸⁸ Oral History Project, Arthur Lewin, p.17 ; Although concentrations of Jews scattered through the town persisted.

⁸⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 November 1921, "Sarah Sylvia at the Gaiety Theatre", p.3 ; assuming that this figure was based on the White population (5560 people by the 1921 census, Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 June 1921, p.4) and not on the whole population, the Jewish community would have been a maximum of 1300 people at that time, but this figure is probably too high

⁹⁰ Eg. Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, pp.14-15 ; Reggie's father stopped speaking Yiddish altogether when his wife died and he had "no one to talk to", and Reggie herself never picked up the language as a consequence (OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999). By contrast, Louis Herman picked up Yiddish from his grandparents, the Kaplans, who spoke hardly any other language, but he was the only child out of ten who managed to do this.

⁹¹ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. His own father kept up correspondence with his sister until she eventually died. OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. Mr Gillis remarked on the hesitancy of the first generation to talk about their immigration experiences. OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. He remarked, by contrast, on the incredible amount of detail, such as geographical names, which had been passed down to him through his grandfather and father. A lot of this information is, however, anecdotal.

⁹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 June 1915, Obituary "The Late Mr. J.J. Kussel", p.5 ; Kussel, for example, had helped established the Talmudic society and had been instrumental in maintaining the Talmud Torah.

⁹³ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Herman remembers how every Friday afternoon, twenty or thirty men would congregate at five o'clock at a table in the St Johns Street *shul* for study. Kuper, Sanders, Rabbi Shlom, Kaplan etcetera attended, with a little bit of witblits [a distilled liquor similar to vodka] to help things along in between.

⁹⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 May 1927, "Death of Great Talmudist – The Late Rabbi Boruch Shlom", p.2

Joseph Lipschitz chipped away at the core of the community for which he was described as a moral centre.⁹⁵

Many of the first generation immigrants now felt that the qualities that made their community unique in a predominantly Christian society, was disappearing. During the pioneer period, the Jewish community was described as "ninety percent orthodox", closing their shops on Saturdays and going to *shul*.⁹⁶ Joan, a Gentile, was fascinated by the booths built at *Succoth*,⁹⁷ the elaborate Friday night dinners even amidst poverty, and the Saturday Sabbath observance of the children.⁹⁸ Dorothy Simanowitz's father used to say his prayers out loud while walking to work.⁹⁹ But Sabbath practice gradually weakened, and Jewish businesses eventually functioned on the Jewish Sabbath.¹⁰⁰ The immediate post-Slump community was still observant for the most part, and held together by a "peer pressure." Those who were not observant

"... were disregarded by the community, they did not belong so to speak, and the rest of the community did not worry about them – they were ostracised ..."¹⁰¹

But the numbers of the less observant section slowly increased. There was a shift of emphasis, from maintaining a specifically Eastern European tradition in South Africa to accommodating Jewish life to a non-Jewish environment. In Oudtshoorn, Jews' loyalties were shared with the Union, or even institutions like the local municipality, into which purely Jewish interests rarely intruded. Some second generation Jews could still have mostly Jewish friends in adulthood, and

⁹⁵ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 15 February 1917, "The Late Mr Joseph Lipschitz", p.3 ; the Lipschitzes had sponsored the Hebrew School. It was common form for qualities like charity to be included in almost every Jewish obituary, as was, if possible, scholarliness in men ; therefore the evidence of these activities, or stress placed upon them in the actual obituary, must be used as cautious measurement of the involvement of the individual

⁹⁶ Oral History Project, Alex Miller, pp. 15, 28 ; OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999.

⁹⁷ Rosten, Leo, *The Joys of Yiddish*, 1979, p.392. *Succoth* : the Festival of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths. A thanksgiving holiday.

⁹⁸ OJI, Joan, 1999. Joan played especially with the Sladowsky children. She tells of how they were not allowed to draw on Sabbath, and that she was invited to play with the Jewish children on Saturdays, specifically so that she could draw the circles for the marbles. "They wanted to play marbles, but they had to find somebody who could draw ... the *kring*." Note : "Joan" was interviewed in Oudtshoorn in 1999, but preferred to have only her first name used as label for her tape, to ensure some confidentiality.

⁹⁹ OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999.

¹⁰⁰ Oral History Project, Alex Miller, pp. 15, 28 ; OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999. Dorothy's mother was forced to open her shop on Saturdays in the early 1920s, in order to economically survive. She warned Dorothy's father, a rabbi, and he decided to resign from the *shul* "before they kicked him out."

¹⁰¹ Oral History Project, D.S. Simanowitz, p.31 ; Simanowitz only arrived in Oudtshoorn in 1912, and remained until 1943.

certain cliques rarely invited the "goyim" [sic] to come along,¹⁰² but isolation from the non-Jewish world was impossible. Young Jews sought status in the greater community, and no longer regarded the Jewish community as their primary arena. As such, Jews became increasingly dependent upon non-Jews to conduct their daily business.

To the advantage of the Jewish community, emotional bonds had also developed between Jews and non-Jews. In the decades after the Jews' arrival in Oudtshoorn, ties and relationships across ethnic lines had multiplied. Although Jews continued to be recognisably distinct from other Oudtshoornites, they were no longer regarded as immigrants or outsiders. Indicative of strengthening bonds across ethnic lines, deaths within "our Jewish community" were also often mourned in public by Gentiles. When M.J. Aschman died, the local Masons, of whom he had been a Past Master, conducted part of the funeral service, also attended by the Mayor, Councillors and Town Clerk – who adjourned a special council meeting at the hour of the funeral as a token of respect.¹⁰³ When Abraham Stusser died, this "highly respected citizen of Oudtshoorn" was mourned also by the rural community, among whom he had been "exceedingly popular" and called "Vader Abraham."¹⁰⁴ Jacob Tov was missed by his "many friends among the Gentile sections."¹⁰⁵ Another Jew missed by the general community was Sam Sanders, who in 1921 decided to move to Europe. A farewell banquet was held by the town, led by the Afrikaner Mayor, Jannie de Jager. Sanders was lauded for his civic involvement,¹⁰⁶ and the institutions mourned his loss to them "as a citizen."¹⁰⁷ Julius Lax, a lawyer, received similar praise. The Oudtshoorn Courant declared that "Oudtshoorn [could] ill afford to lose public men of his calibre ..."¹⁰⁸

Sanders and Lax illustrate the bridging function prominent Jews performed between their religious community and the general community by serving extensively in, and being held in high regard by both groups. They could then utilize their profile to promote Jewish interests when it became necessary. But increasing integration came at a price. The top people in the Jewish

¹⁰² Oral History Project, Alex Miller, p.30. Rosten, Leo, The Joys of Yiddish, 1979, p.143. *Goyim* : Gentiles.

¹⁰³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 August 1915, "In Memoriam of M.J. Aschman", p.2

¹⁰⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 February 1918, "The Late Mr Abraham Stusser", p.3

¹⁰⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 August 1922, Obituary, p.4

¹⁰⁶ This included positions as former Mayor, Town Councillor, Secretary and Treasurer of the Governor General's Fund, Child Welfare Society, and member of the Chamber of Commerce, Ratepayers' Association, Jewish Society, Queen Street Synagogue Committee and Hebrew School Committee.

¹⁰⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 May 1921, "Farewell Banquet to Mr and Mrs Sam Sanders," p.4

¹⁰⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 February 1926, "A Loss to Oudtshoorn", p.2

community now spent less time exclusively devoted to Jewish institutions and the maintenance of the Jewish culture. The declining Jewish community could not compete for the most talented individuals against the greater community, which provided greater benefits and possibilities for personal advancement to the second generation. Some people even left Oudtshoorn altogether. And furthermore, with the death of the old generation, the familiarity which the rural population had built up with men like "Vader Abraham" was replaced with the distant and more forbidding image of the Jews as town shopkeepers and creditors. The new generation of Jewish community leaders were in some cases the inheritors of some money, pieces of land, and were often anglicized. In this way, some of the familiarity gained between rural non-Jews and Jews during the feather period, was lost.

Jews now had to weigh up the benefits of increasing integration into the greater community, with the benefits of maintaining separate, purely Jewish institutions. The strain placed on the community structures by population decline, coupled with the attractions of acculturation and assimilation, posed a serious threat to the Jewish community as a recognisably separate entity, at the same time that it promised a greater assimilation of Jews as citizens into the Oudtshoorn society. One test case for the willingness of Jews to maintain a separate ethnic life, and the extent to which they could (or had to) count on the support of non-Jews to do so, came with the saving of the Hebrew school.

Jewish parents showed increasing doubts about sending their children to the Hebrew school, since its school fees was double that of other schools. The Jewish community formed an Education Aid Society to pay the school fees for any needy Jewish child,¹⁰⁹ and the Jewish leaders spared no effort in trying to arrest the decline,¹¹⁰ but soon the necessity of getting new students was "urgent."¹¹¹ At this point, the Jews could have surrendered the school, but when the local School Committees proposed closing the Hebrew School down, they were met with an uproar not only from the local Jews, but also the Courant, who called it "a very grave injustice ... to the Jewish public in Oudtshoorn."¹¹² The Education Department pointed out the expense of the school, and local High Schools refused to provide Hebrew classes. But the Jewish community rallied, and parents expressed their dismay, having made

¹⁰⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 April 1915, "Oudtshoorn Education Aid Society", p.3

¹¹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 December 1915, p.3 ; between 1914 and 1915, the pupil numbers declined from 105 to 90.

¹¹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 December 1917, "Hebrew School – Prize Giving – Annual Report", p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 August 1918, "The Late Mr Abraham Klein", p.2

¹¹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 August 1918, Editorial "The Hebrew School", p.2

"... every possible sacrifice in order solely that their children might have the advantage of learning Hebrew ..."¹¹³

The Jews decided to fight, and gained three out of the four top places in the next general School Board election.¹¹⁴ They could also count on a voice in the School Aid Society, where Jews contributed a third of the "undenominational" committee.¹¹⁵ The Hebrew School petitioned the Department, but the shortfall in funding was becoming an increasing liability,¹¹⁶ and in desperation, the Jews enlisted the support of Langenhoven, the local National Party M.P.C., and approached Sir Frederick de Waal, the Administrator, on the station as he travelled through Oudtshoorn. The Administrator was swayed by Langenhoven's eloquence to keep the school open, but only if the local Jews themselves paid any deficiency.¹¹⁷ By this intervention, Oudtshoorn managed to save the Hebrew school for another thirty years. The incident showed the concern which non-Jews had for the Jews' case, as both Langenhoven and J. Edmeades, a prominent Gentile farmer-businessman and secretary of the Hebrew School Committee, volunteered their aid.

Apart from proving the Jews' determination to retain some recognisably separate ethnic institutions, this help from non-Jews indicated an acceptance of and concern for Jewish citizens of Oudtshoorn. Apparently, the Hebrew School, and the Jewish citizens' right to a separate cultural life, was considered precious enough to be saved by a united effort. Indeed, the school's reputation was so high, that some Gentiles even asked to have their children admitted to it.¹¹⁸ And as the Jews' need to raise funds increased, so did the interaction with Gentiles who were positively disposed towards them. In 1920 the Hebrew School departed further from tradition, and chose Johan Smit, an Afrikaner, as the new Principal.¹¹⁹ Some success ensued in supporting poor students and drawing new ones – pupil figures bounced back to 115 by mid-1922.¹²⁰ In 1928, the Gentile Mayor, P.A.H. Melville, remarked that the local Jews deserved to have their "language rights" recognised by the Government in education, and blamed the Administration for not doing

¹¹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 August 1918, "The Case of the Hebrew School", p.3

¹¹⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 August 1918, "School Board Election", p.3

¹¹⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 September 1918, p.2

¹¹⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 May 1919, "Hebrew School", p.2

¹¹⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 June 1919, "Hebrew School", p.2 and "Hebrew School Deputation", p.3

¹¹⁸ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, p.16

¹¹⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 August 1920, p.2

¹²⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 June 1922, "Local School Statistics", p.2 ; this was 7.5 % of the students in Oudtshoorn's top eight schools

its proper duty in providing assistance.¹²¹ Other mayors similarly praised the Jewish citizens for tenaciously fighting for their children, and in general the town admired the Jews' efforts.¹²²

Together with the Jewish religion and Hebrew education, the matter which kept the Jewish community distinct from the rest of Oudtshoorn was its interest in Zionism, which by this time was well established in South Africa.¹²³ For all its success, however, its proponents had to struggle against the trend of assimilation into the greater community. Zionists perceived apathy among the youth towards Hebrew training and a continuing decline in scholarly interest. This, they claimed, led to a growing generation gap.¹²⁴ Also, Zionism for some time remained the pursuit of the "wealthier crowd."¹²⁵ Many of the meetings interested only a fraction of the Jewish community.¹²⁶ The movement therefore launched a local cultural offensive. Offering regular lectures on subjects of Jewish interest, as well as cultural evenings and debates, it drew contributions from old and young.¹²⁷ Eventually, Zionism undoubtedly formed the greatest point of identification for the majority of Jews *as Jews*, outside the religious services. Visiting Zionist speakers repeatedly noted the enthusiasm displayed by Oudtshoorn's community.¹²⁸ The Zionists enthusiastically associated with the Maccabeans, people who "stemmed the tide of assimilation"¹²⁹ and recognised the need to maintain Zionist ideals even amidst falling numbers.

Zionism was, however, not only a means of maintaining ethnic solidarity. It also played a role in defining Jewish citizenship in Oudtshoorn and the Union by facilitating the expression of loyalty towards the British Government. As such, it tried to influence and modify the trend towards integration with non-Jewish institutions, rather than prevent it completely. Zionists exhorted the Jewish children to "fear God, honour the King and be loyal to the country",¹³⁰ especially around the time of the Balfour declaration, when mass meetings typically gathered to praise the British effort, and ended off with both the *Hatikvah* and God Save the King.¹³¹ It

¹²¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 June 1928, "Hebrew School Bazaar", p.4

¹²² Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 June 1929, "Hebrew School Bazaar", p.2

¹²³ See Gitlin, Marcia, The Vision Amazing – The Story of South African Zionism, Johannesburg, The Menorah Book Club, 1950, for a thorough history of South African Zionism. Oudtshoorn is mentioned several times. Also Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience. On pp.34-5 he elucidates the role which Zionism played in maintaining group identity among Jews, and the purposes which the Zionist societies served.

¹²⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 December 1917, "Hebrew School – Prize-Giving", p.2

¹²⁵ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹²⁶ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 June 1922, "Relief in Russia", p.2

¹²⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 May 1915, p.2

¹²⁸ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 August 1917, p.3

¹²⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 December 1917, "Chanukah Celebration", p.2

¹³⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 December 1917, "Hebrew School – Prize-Giving", p.2

¹³¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 November 1919, "Meeting of Jewish Citizens", p.2. Rosten, Leo, The Joys of Yiddish, 1979, p.156. *Hatikvah* : the Zionist song which eventually became National Anthem of Israel.

brought in speakers such as Morris Alexander,¹³² to bolster morale during the First World War and prided itself on contributing to general funds.¹³³ The Balfour declaration strengthened the movement's stance towards Britain specifically,¹³⁴ vital as the second generation grew into adulthood and took over community leadership. A major meeting in 1920 extended its thanks to Britain, the League of Nations and Botha and Smuts,¹³⁵ and the close association of these persons and bodies with the Jewish cause, gave a distinct political colouring to the local Jewish community towards the SAP. They certainly associated Britain intimately with Jewish interests,¹³⁶ and several Zionist meetings were utilized to express lasting loyalty to the British monarch.¹³⁷ On the other hand, when relations began to deteriorate between certain Jews in Palestine and the British, doubts began to arise whether either France or Britain "would sacrifice on behalf of the Jewish nation."¹³⁸ Zionism therefore provided a context within which the Jews could decide their exact relationship as citizens and Jews, to the country and Empire in which they were resident. For many among them, Zionism became *the* stage on which they could assert a new Jewish identity based on maintaining Jewish life amid the pressures and attractions of the South African society.

The leadership firmly intended to enrol every local Jew into the movement,¹³⁹ and it increasingly became the coordinating movement of Jewish activities in Oudtshoorn. It allowed for mass meetings such as on the celebration of Theodor Herzl's death,¹⁴⁰ contributions to relief efforts,¹⁴¹ debates on Zionist issues,¹⁴² and debates on political issues pertaining to the Jews, such as immigration.¹⁴³ Zionist activities also helped to create an awareness of Jewish culture within the Christian community. Many Gentiles, particularly farmers, donated to Zionist funds as a token of sympathy for the Jewish cause.¹⁴⁴ Many Christians publicly congratulated Jews on their New

¹³² Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 October 1915, "Russo-Jewish Relief Fund", p.9

¹³³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 September 1916, p.3

¹³⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 May 1920, "Jewish Mass Meeting", p.2 ; on this occasion, led by the Jewish mayor (Sanders), a large crowd was present, and on the platform were seated the most prominent local Jews of both the first and second generation

¹³⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 May 1920, p.2

¹³⁶ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 April 1921, "Palestine and the Jews", p.2

¹³⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 October 1923, "Converzasione", p.2 ; on this occasion the ailing King George V was personally wished recovery by those present at the Herzl Ladies' Zionist Society meeting, and promised the loyalty of his subjects

¹³⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 September 1922, "Address by Mr Olzwanger", p.2

¹³⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 June 1920, "Palestinian Fund – Address by Mr Shacknovis", p.3

¹⁴⁰ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 August 1921, "Herzl's Jahrzeit", p.3

¹⁴¹ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 September 1921, "Russian Relief from Oudtshoorn", p.2

¹⁴² Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 September 1921, Editorial "Zionism" and 14 September 1921, Editorial, "Zionism, an Answer to Morgenthau", p.2

¹⁴³ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 November 1924, "Originality and Imitation" by Dr L.H. Lewin, p.2

¹⁴⁴ Oral History Project, Alex Miller, p.17

Year, and the Courant regularly sent the town's regards to "our fellow Jewish townsmen" on their holidays.¹⁴⁵ The regular reporting on Jewish issues no doubt had to do with the perceived buying power of local Jews, which made it profitable for the Courant to attract their readership, and for businesses to keep on good terms with Jewish clients. But it also made Jewish culture and Zionism of greater interest to the non-Jewish community. This respect was visible, for example, at the opening of the new Hebrew University in Jerusalem, when local Jews celebrated with services and a public meeting, to which they invited the Anglophone Mayor and other prominent Gentile citizens. Congratulations were received, among others, from Hertzog and Smuts, the Mayor made a speech on behalf of the "citizens of Oudtshoorn" and the Dutch Reformed Minister and Magistrate made their contributions.¹⁴⁶ Jews were highly regarded in some circles as contributing citizens of Oudtshoorn, and were fully included in town affairs. For example, when the Prince of Wales visited Oudtshoorn a few days later, Jewish Oudtshoornites participated as masters of ceremony and even as dancing partners to His Royal Highness.¹⁴⁷

Although the Jewish community's position as a clearly defined immigrant group was eroded by time and increasing integration into the greater community, Jews managed to maintain a separate identity within the Oudtshoorn society. This identity was based on religious practice, the maintenance of certain Jewish institutions and Zionism. It allowed Jews to acculturate and integrate, without ceasing to be Jews. It furthermore remained in harmony with the expectations of the other citizens of Oudtshoorn, who to some extent could tolerate and even celebrate cultural diversity as long as the Jews showed loyalty towards the shared interests of the greater community. Jews could be different, without being outsiders. However, the degree to which Jews enjoyed equality, and could exercise their Jewish culture and religion, was still being debated in 1919.

4.4 "This is a Christian Country"

From the many instances of cooperation and tolerance, it would appear that the Jews' rights as citizens in Oudtshoorn were secure by 1919, and that Jews could count on non-Jews to respect their culture and institutions. In March 1919, however, a scandal broke which reflected prevailing

¹⁴⁵ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 September 1921, Jewish New Year Greetings included several entries by Gentiles, both Afrikaner and Anglophone ; 3 October 1921 (Dutch), p.5

¹⁴⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 3 April 1925, "Memorable Day in Jewish History", p.2. See Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience, pp.45-8 for a discussion of Smuts's views on Zionism and how he represented a large group of Gentiles in this regard.

¹⁴⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 May 1925, "Brilliant Scene at the Prince's Ball", p.2

discrimination against Jews, and which diminished their position of equality as citizens of Oudtshoorn. It began when the Mayor, S. Adley, refused the granting of the Municipal Hall to Jews for a Sunday evening as

"... This was a Christian country and they should endeavour their best to keep the Sabbath and it should not be possible to have these gatherings on Sunday ..."¹⁴⁸

The Jewish Benevolent Society who had requested the hall, and the Jewish town councillors, protested. Adley's refusal became a test case for religious and civil equality in Oudtshoorn. While not caustically meant, Adley argued by implication that the religious sensitivities of the Christian majority automatically overrode that of the Jewish minority. In opposition, Councillor Marcus Hotz immediately argued that "the country was for Jews or Christians or anybody who wished to come to it." Certain Christian members of the Town Council agreed and eventually, the hall was granted by seven votes to four, with the minority all being English speaking.¹⁴⁹ But the uproar continued, and the Mayor's statement was shocking to many in the town :

"... we did not expect him to lay down such an erroneous rule as that the Jewish folks have less rights than the rest of the community ..."

Adley was accused of having "a disruptive effect on social life" and deemed "inconsiderate and foolish."¹⁵⁰ A powder keg of ethnic tensions was opened. One National Party Councillor's vote against the granting of the hall was connected with party politics, as revenge for Jewish association with the English in recent elections.¹⁵¹ "A *JEW*" [sic] wrote :

"... Nothing so petty and hopelessly mediocre have we heard in Oudtshoorn for a long time as the Mayor's tragic plea for a Christian Sunday in a Christian country and his anxiety not to disturb the religious meditation of those people who, like himself, doubtless, spend their

¹⁴⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 March 1919, "A Christian Country – Application for the Municipal Hall for Sunday", p.2

¹⁴⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 March 1919, p.2

¹⁵⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 March 1919, "A Christian Country" by "Cosmopolitan", p.4

¹⁵¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 March 1919, letter by "A Jewish Ratepayer," p.3

Sabbaths wondering why any religion, but Christianity is allowed to exist. The snug complacency of these people would be annoying if it were not ridiculous ..."¹⁵²

Significantly, most local Jews, and many Gentiles, saw Adley's remark as ridiculous, rather than overtly threatening. But some older Jews speculated that the Mayor's statement would initiate "a new phase of persecution, inasmuch as it implies a wish to compel the Jews to keep the 'Lord's Day'" and lead to an obstruction of the Jewish observance of the Sabbath. To the alarmist, it marked the growth of intolerance, "in a country which boasts of its tolerance, and of giving equal rights and privileges to all classes and all sects." Yet, to a vociferous group of citizens, it was simply nonsense that the Jews, who had significantly advanced Oudtshoorn's economy, paid a lot of municipal rates and contributed strongly to civic life, "could not expect the same rights as non-Jewish folk." One remarked that

"... this sort of thing was all right a century or two ago, but today it is out of date and its no good trying to force such ideas upon an enlightened and up-to-date community like Oudtshoorn ..."¹⁵³

Nor was it deemed suitable for a mayor of "a fairly important town" to "[insult] a large proportion of the inhabitants." Such ignorance could not be tolerated.¹⁵⁴ Not only was the Mayor chastised for effectively betraying the charitable foundations of his own religion, but local Jews now argued that their tolerance of Christian charitable efforts had not always met with equal respect.¹⁵⁵ It was pointed out that local Jews not only bent their own Sabbath rules to interact with non-Jews, but that local Christians had repeatedly been insensitive to local Jews' religious practices by scheduling meetings on the Sabbath.¹⁵⁶ Jews were all the more indignant because the body spurned by Adley was the Jewish Victims' War Relief Fund.

Adley, in a cautiously framed reply to this criticism, insisted on the *legal* superiority of the Christian religion in South Africa. According to him, Christians had founded the state and

¹⁵² Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 March 1919, "A Christian Country" by "A Jew", p.4

¹⁵³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 March 1919, letter by "Cosmopolitan", p.4

¹⁵⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 March 1919, letter by "A Jew", p.4

¹⁵⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 March 1919, letter by S. Mallinick, p.4

¹⁵⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 March 1919, letter by "A Conscientious Jewess," p.4

controlled it. They were the majority in the Legislature, and had drawn up definite laws regarding activities permissible on a Sunday. Later, non-Christian arrivals were tolerated, but had not altered the "distinctive character of the country's religion" and could not demand of Christians to accommodate them. Jews had no religious rights except those benevolently granted to them by Christians. What they were *allowed* was to keep their own Sabbath if they so chose, by closing their businesses.¹⁵⁷ Other letter writers agreed : although some Christians were outraged by the statement, the law of the land demanded that the *Christian* Sunday be observed.¹⁵⁸

The Mayor's eventual, qualified apology did not go very far, although in the aftermath of the crisis, non-Jews appeared more considerate towards Jews' religious needs.¹⁵⁹ But the division in religious practices in the Jewish community itself was also revealed. While some Jews "resolutely refused to do any trading or business transactions, personally or by proxy, on that day" [the Jewish Sabbath],¹⁶⁰ others "did not strictly observe their Sabbath."¹⁶¹ Christians therefore asked what right Jews had to infringe Christian sensibilities, if they could not even agree among themselves about the sanctity of their own Day ? But this detail mattered less to the Jews than the essential principle of religious freedom. It was exactly the civil and religious equality presumed by the British legal system, which had attracted them to British society.¹⁶² Sabbath observance was not a privilege or tolerance extended to an immigrant group ; it had to be an inalienable right voluntarily exercised by free citizens.

Importantly, the Jewish reaction against Adley's statement showed that the community was able and willing to defend its civil rights, and to argue for complete equality with Christians. It illuminates a literate group of people who could not be ignored by the Christian or civic community, and who were strong enough to eventually force the Mayor into an apology. The Jews were furthermore backed by a strong contingent of Christians, who despite their religious loyalties would not tolerate any inequality between Jew and Christian. Significantly, they reacted to Adley with dismay and then mockery. In fact, Adley did not seek re-election when his term

¹⁵⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 March 1919, letter "A Christian Country" by Mayor S.H. Adley, p.3

¹⁵⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 March 1919, letter "What most of us forget" by "W.J.G.", p.3

¹⁵⁹ For example, Oudtshoorn Courant, 31 March 1919, "The Cadets' Departure", p.3 ; local school cadets left for a camp in two groups, the Christian majority departing on the Friday, the Jewish boys only on the Saturday evening after dark, that is, after the conclusion of the Sabbath

¹⁶⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 March 1919, letter by S.H. Adley, p.3

¹⁶¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 March 1919, letter by "W.J.G.", p.3

¹⁶² For example the statements of loyalty by Jewish soldiers in the First World War, e.g. Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 November 1914, p.3

expired,¹⁶³ and the succeeding Mayor was a Jew, Sam Sanders.¹⁶⁴ And although a large number of Christians in Oudtshoorn disapproved of Jews transgressing the Christian Sabbath, the Christians lacked the power or will to physically enforce their views.

The brief but intense test case showed how far Jewish immigrants had advanced along the path to full citizenship. They were by 1919 full members of Oudtshoorn civil society demanding, and for the most part receiving full equality with Christians. And by aggressively defending their rights, they discouraged local Christians from challenging those rights in future. However, it also highlighted that if Jews were not vigilant, the deep-seated ambivalence which existed towards them among many Christians, could spill over. Jews could not think of themselves as free citizens if they could only lead their communal life because of the *tolerance* of Christians. They needed true religious equality, meaning full equality before the law, and vigilance and effort was vital in order to retain and expand existing rights.

4.5 The Defence of Civil Rights

Another chance to defend their rights came very soon. In July 1919, a visiting Medical Inspector to the High Schools, Louis Leipoldt, affronted the sensibilities of local Jews by singling out Jewish pupils and asking them "how they [as Jews] planned to make money," to their great humiliation. Reactions began to flow in, and "Gentile" wrote to the Courant :

"... Not being of Jewish birth, I can speak impartially and and without bias on the matter, and it seems to me that it is very bad form for a highly-placed Government official to try and bring derision upon Jewish children just because they are Jewish : it almost looks as if the Inspector was jealous of the known superiority of the average Jewish brain over that of other races – the first seven boys in the class referred to being Jewish !..."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 August 1919, "No Municipal Election", p.4

¹⁶⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 September 1919, p.2

¹⁶⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 July 1919, letter by "Gentile", p.2

Thus philosemitism¹⁶⁶ existed effortlessly alongside "bull-baiting" (as the writer called the inspectors' actions), but on the whole, the Jewish outrage received ample support, and led to the censure of the inspector and apologies from the headmaster. The incident highlighted again the willingness of local Jews to insist upon unprejudiced treatment, and the sensitivity of many local Gentiles to their plight. In addition, it colourfully illustrated the change of generations in the Jewish community, and the disdain with which young Jews treated antisemitism. When the Inspector asked one boy whether he was going to become a feather buyer to make some money, the boy coolly replied that he intended becoming an engineer, not as a "money-making business, but as a profession."¹⁶⁷

The local Jews again combined at a later date against some "objectionable text" in a book prescribed in the local High Schools. The poems had been written by Leipoldt, the same medical inspector. Doctor I.B. Lewin of Oudtshoorn described the poems as "not only offensive but certainly antisemitic" with regard to attitudes towards "smouse" :

"... [Leipoldt] said that most of the Jewish pioneers had been 'smouse' and he [Lewin] could find nothing despicable in that, if the Jew by means of being a smous saw a chance of giving his children the best education he could. The Jew was held up in the poem to be a thief. But if he, [like] a banker takes 10 per cent profit, there is nothing despicable in that. [Oudtshoornites] were well aware how the Jews [who] came to this country and struggled to make a living so that their children could receive the best education, although in the eyes of some a despicable race, have to a great extent made South Africa what it is today ..."¹⁶⁸

After a short discussion the School Board, half of whom were Jews, carried a motion for the poems to be withdrawn from the curriculum.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, pp. 37-8. A potentially excessive love of the Jews based on certain characteristics supposedly held by them as a group.

¹⁶⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 July 1919, letter by "Gentile", p.2

¹⁶⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 June 1924, "Municipal School Board," p.2

¹⁶⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 June 1924, "Municipal School Board," p.2

Lewin's father had been a feather buyer, a "smous" and a small shopkeeper, who had raised two doctors, a dentist, a merchant and an operatic singer.¹⁷⁰ Lewin represented a generation of Jews who had grown up in Oudtshoorn, who saw no reason to tolerate antisemitism, and who had means to adequately defend themselves. They were conscious of their civil rights, their equality with other White citizens and confident of their place in the general society. To them Oudtshoorn (and South Africa) not only *had* to accept the Jews as citizens on an equal basis, but owed the Jewish community a debt of gratitude for its contribution. As M.S. Lipschitz asked :

"... Is there any reason why the Jew's nationality should be ignored when he is trying to do good to mankind and specially mentioned when he has done wrong ?..."¹⁷¹

Normally, Oudtshoorn's Jews were scattered across the political spectrum, but when they felt directly attacked, they could unite and utilize civil channels to a formidable extent. Although Oudtshoorn's Jews numbered no more than 190 parliamentary votes,¹⁷² they were a disproportionately vocal, educated and wealthy minority which could adequately defend itself. Issues of immigration was one possible catalyst.¹⁷³ Especially for the ethnically exclusive National Party leaders, who had practically built their Oudtshoorn branch upon the slump and its repercussions, "outsiders" were an important question. For years they blamed the suffering of poor rural Afrikaners on middlemen, speculators and absentee landowners, and also aliens – by which, often, they meant Jews. Both the SAP and the National Party found support from groups opposing Jewish immigration. One case was "Anti-Alien", who implicated Jews in Bolshevism,¹⁷⁴ and who was answered in print by local Jews, who protested the assumption.¹⁷⁵ During this debacle, the Courant editor seemed to draw a curious, and unsuccessful distinction between local Jews, whom he approved of, and unwanted immigrants. For many local Jews, this distinction was nonsense, given their great concern for their remaining relatives overseas.¹⁷⁶ But some others had little sympathy with Jews outside South Africa, preferring to associate with what they believed to be the interests of their adopted country :

¹⁷⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 March 1930, "Behr Lewin", p.2

¹⁷¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 February 1926, p.5

¹⁷² Only an estimated 5.5 % of voters in the 1924 local Parliamentary Elections

¹⁷³ See Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience, pp. 75 – 95 for a national perspective.

¹⁷⁴ See Shain, M., The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, pp.83-91 for a discussion on the perceptions of Jews and Bolshevism in this period in South African history.

¹⁷⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 July 1920, p.4 ; 23 July 1920, p.2 ; 28 July 1920, p.2

¹⁷⁶ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, p.31

"... it was felt then that a foreign element could not be absorbed to the extent that it was pouring into the country ... it was going to be unhealthy even for Jews, and many Jews felt that perhaps it was a very wise thing on the part of the government because they couldn't absorb it all. It was like a foreign body into the original body – you can only absorb a certain number ..."¹⁷⁷

Oudtshoorn was by 1921 filled with debates on the issue, which exposed latent anti-Jewish feelings while simultaneously affirming the Jewish citizens already in the district. The Courant's English speaking editor concluded that there was "room for the right class of immigrants only," by which he meant "practical agriculturalists of the higher order, people of ample means." At this point he still had his Jewish audience, but then he referred to the "undesirable people who had flocked here after the restrictions placed upon them in their own country had become unbearable" and who were now "[filling] our towns with an overflowing population."¹⁷⁸ The local Jews took it very personally, and pointed out that all [Whites] were immigrants, some having arrived earlier than others, but that

"... one thing was accepted as law by all of us, namely to forget the old European race and class prejudices, and to treat each other as equals. Now you suddenly turn upon some people and call them undesirables ..."¹⁷⁹

The Jews identified the statements with efforts to introduce antisemitic legislation into South Africa. In defiance, as before, they pointed out that Oudtshoorn itself would still have been a "dorp" had it not been for the input of the "undesirables." Several Jews insisted that their ethnic group (and future immigrants) played an integral part in the district economy with their shops and distribution enterprises, that they sustained a large population by providing employment and goods, and that Oudtshoorn was well off, compared to other districts, because the "undesirables" had kept the economy going.¹⁸⁰ Important non-Jewish voices concurred :

¹⁷⁷ Oral History Project, Disraeli Simanowitz, p.54 ; This referred specifically to the 1930 Quota Act.

¹⁷⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 December 1921, Editorial "No Room for Undesirables", p.2

¹⁷⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 December 1921, letter "No Room for Undesirables" by L.H. Lewin, p.3

¹⁸⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 December 1921, letter "No Room for Undesirables" by L.H. Lewin, p.3

"... The Jewish people had become mingled in the community and as far as he [Magistrate P. Kuys] as a citizen of Oudtshoorn was concerned, it was nonsense to talk of two communities ... The Jews had shown how amenable they were to the country's laws, how useful as citizens ..."¹⁸¹

Now, as citizens, Jews expected the protection from the people and civil organisations which they had helped sustain. More than that, some local Jews argued that

"... without [the immigrant] our chances of prolonged existence in this corner of the black continent are becoming doubtful ..."¹⁸²

Many, if not all of Oudtshoorn's Jews were by this stage actively identifying themselves with the interests of the White population. In their minds there was no question that they deserved the respect and privilege "due" to any White person in South Africa. Many White Oudtshoornites accepted them unconditionally as citizens of the town, which by definition was seen as a White entity, and many Jews and some non-Jews felt that far from being a threat, Jews were part of the demographic salvation of those with White skins.

4.6 Diffusion of the "Jewish Group"

One indication of a movement by Jews away from being an immigrant group towards being a collection of citizens practicing a shared religion, was the variation in Jews' reaction towards different issues. With time, Jews began to insist that this variation and difference within the Jewish community should be asserted by Jews and recognised by non-Jews. Only then could people who happened to be Jews be accorded the full rights of citizenship.

The impulse to group Jews together always existed among some people. For example, in 1924, a Jewish Oudtshoornite wrote to the Courant to encourage the Jewish electorate to vote against the

¹⁸¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 3 April 1925, "Memorable Day in Jewish History", p.2

¹⁸² Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 November 1924, "Originality and Imitation," by Dr. L.H. Lewin, p.2

National Party. He or she based this position on the alliance of the National Party with the Labour party or "Bolshevists", who were persecuting the Jews in Russia ; the mistreatment of Eli Buirski, parliamentary candidate for Swellendam, who was heckled by National Party supporters for not being a Christian ; and thirdly, the gratitude which the Jews owed Smuts "under whose regime we enjoy the utmost freedom." They were, the person argued, "morally bound to vote for the SAP."¹⁸³

The Jewish voters were estimated at only 190 individuals,¹⁸⁴ but since the National Party subsequently retained its seat by only 673 seats,¹⁸⁵ it was a considerable and easily identifiable voting "block". However, other local Jews like Doctor I.B. Lewin immediately accused the writer of damaging the Jewish community, since by identifying Jews as a "block", they could conceivably be blamed for electoral defeats. Lewin insisted :

"... No organisation, not even an understanding, exists among the Jewish people in this town, for the purpose of having their influence felt through a combined vote. Every Jew votes according to his convictions, and in my view there is an equal difference in opinions among them, as among the rest of the inhabitants in the town ..."¹⁸⁶

This affirmed the Jews' freedom to participate as citizens in the government, independent of their religious or ethnic community, and on an equal basis with any other ethnic group possessing the right to vote. Jews only combined when their ethnic interests were directly involved or if they were threatened as a group. They had to resist the impulse of some people to categorise them together simply because they were all Jews.

Oudtshoorn's Jews had a strong and vibrant platform from which to defend their communal interests, in the form of prominent individuals who happened to be from their ranks, and who could represent them if it became necessary. Some Jews were continually mingling with non-Jews whom they could call on as allies. In 1919 Jews were prominent in the leadership of the

¹⁸³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 June 1924, Letter "To Jewish Electors – (By a Jew)", p.2

¹⁸⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 June 1924, Letter "To Jewish Electors – (By a Jew)", p.2

¹⁸⁵ A victory of 2024 votes to 1351.

¹⁸⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 June 1924, p.3

local Literary and Debating Society,¹⁸⁷ the Golf Club,¹⁸⁸ and Racing Club.¹⁸⁹ The Women's Hospital Board of Aid leadership was Jewish,¹⁹⁰ as were the Chairman and Secretary of the Ratepayers' Association.¹⁹¹ Jews contributed to the Football and Rugby clubs.¹⁹² Jewish prominence in some local civil institutions could be attributed to an economic and educational advantage. For example, parliamentary voting lists for a long time consisted only of those men who were literate and met certain property classifications – in 1919 this amounted to only 3,032 people in the district.¹⁹³ Many Jews had fixed property, and they also pursued education.¹⁹⁴ The Municipal voting system was also based on a graded property qualification, with the number of votes (single, double or triple) being given to an individual based on the amount of property owned by him in the Oudtshoorn town area.¹⁹⁵ The more urbanized and propertied Jewish population was therefore at an advantage disproportionate to their numbers in the larger population, and per capita, they produced more candidates equipped for leadership, or with the financial means, status and time to involve themselves in leadership positions.¹⁹⁶ This accounts for the regular number of Jews elected to the town council. Prominent Jews like M.S. Lipschitz and Marcus Hotz remained on the Council for some time,¹⁹⁷ though there was no Jewish voting "block" that ensured the success of specifically Jewish candidates. There are no recorded instances of Jews campaigning only to the Jewish community, and local Jews did not have separate interests which they thought needed to be protected by a specifically elected Jewish town

¹⁸⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 March 1919, "Oudtshoorn Literary and Debating Society", p.4 ; they provided a Vice-President and Assistant Secretary

¹⁸⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 March 1919, "Golf – Oudtshoorn Golf Club", p.2

¹⁸⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 March 1919, "Oudtshoorn Racing Club", p.2

¹⁹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 March 1919, "Women's Hospital Board of Aid", p.2

¹⁹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 March 1919, "Ratepayers' Meeting", p.2

¹⁹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 April 1919, p.4

¹⁹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 March 1919, "The Provisional Voters' List", p.2

¹⁹⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 March 1914, p.6 ; in 1913, for example, the Oudtshoorn Municipal School Board recorded that 104 out of the 1033 pupils on its books were in the Hebrew School alone, that is, excluding the Jewish children in the high schools ; in 1915, Rev. C.V.Nel's figures for all White children in local schools (Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 September 1915, p.2) showed that Jewish children constituted 288, or 28 per cent, of all school-going White children in the town, far above their proportion to the whole population

¹⁹⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 September 1922, "The Municipal Election", p.2

¹⁹⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 January 1920, "Municipal Election" ; The Jewish community also appeared more liberal towards the role of its women, or Jewish women were more confident, since Fanny Luntz became the first female candidate ever to stand for election in Oudtshoorn. Although she lost at her first attempt, she received the support of over 150 voters, more than a third of the votes that were cast. It had even generally been thought that she would win easily.

¹⁹⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 September 1914, p.2

councillor. These people only acted "as Jews" in specific instances, such as during the "Christian Country" incident.¹⁹⁸

These Jewish candidates were in the first place prominent citizens of the town. Sam Sanders was elected Mayor after four years on the Council, onto which he had been invited to support certain policies.¹⁹⁹ His election was backed by a highly respectable twenty-five years in business in Oudtshoorn,²⁰⁰ and with only one other Jew on the Council at the time, he certainly required the support of the majority of Afrikaners and English speakers.²⁰¹ Certainly Jews almost always had to count upon cross-ethnic popularity to get elected. The propertied vote did not always count in their favour,²⁰² but often Jewish candidates seemed more palatable to the town's leading citizens than the more extreme Afrikaners.²⁰³ Prominent Jews associated openly with the English-speakers, and when Smuts visited the town in 1920, the Jewish Mayor greeted him on behalf of the "two great European races" of Oudtshoorn.²⁰⁴ When Jewish bodies met, Jewish town councillors sometimes attended the meetings in their official capacity.²⁰⁵ Equally, when the Jewish community received prominent visitors, such as Dr Chief Rabbi Hertz, non-Jewish Mayors and Town Councillors would join the Jews in paying their respects.²⁰⁶ Non-Jewish officials sometimes featured prominently at "Jewish" occasions, and Jews did service on occasions when the town was to be represented.

¹⁹⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 March 1919, p.2 ; in this instance Councillors Hotz and Sanders spoke out against the Mayor, and voted in favour of the Jewish "right" to have the building made available to them

¹⁹⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 September 1919, p.2. When he retired he was praised as a citizen, businessman and Jew.

²⁰⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 May 1921, "Farwell Banquet to Mr and Mrs Sam Sanders", p.4 ; He was already highly respected in the town, a major force behind the Governor General's (War) Fund and Child Welfare Society and also the Queen Street Synagogue, Jewish Burial Society and Hebrew School Committee.

²⁰¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 September 1919, p.4

²⁰² Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 January 1920, "Municipal Election" ; in the Municipal by-election at that time, Fanny Luntz came second to Adley, who had received the support of fewer voters, but more double (propertied) votes

²⁰³ For example Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 January 1920, p.2 ; Anderson, the openly Nationalist candidate and an Afrikaans-speaking Scotsman, refused to support a motion by which the town would present Jan Smuts with an illuminated address ; he was widely criticised for his obstinance or "political bias" ; the Jewish candidates supported the motion

²⁰⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 February 1920, p.2 ; that is, the Afrikaners and English, in the terminology of the "stream" policies.

²⁰⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 May 1920, p.4 ; when the Zionist bodies in Oudtshoorn had a mass meeting, the Jewish Mayor, Sam Sanders, attended the meeting in his capacity as Mayor

²⁰⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 January 1921, p.4 ; the Mayor, de Jager, and the Magistrate and other local officials met Dr Hertz, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, at the station and then joined local Jews in entertaining the Chief Rabbi at garden parties

Whites, at least, could ascribe to a common civic identity, and combined on common issues such as child welfare.²⁰⁷ Their children went to school and parties together,²⁰⁸ they contributed to funds collected in the names of one another's religions²⁰⁹ and mourned one another in death.²¹⁰ Jews sang "God Save the Queen" at the conclusion of their wedding ceremonies.²¹¹ There were regular articles in the Courant about Jewish festivals, religious practices and community activities.²¹² Also, Zionist activities were thoroughly reported by the Courant.²¹³ Local Christians knew a lot about what local Jews did and what their aspirations were, and communication broke down the barriers of ignorance and made the Jewish community a more visible and transparent entity. This process reduced possible ethnic tensions, as the humanity and "normality" of the Jewish community were emphasised. Only their religion set them officially apart. If minor antisemitism existed, so, to the same extent, did philosemitism. And if any organised, or apparently officially sponsored discrimination reared its head, the Jewish community was able to meet the challenge, discouraging future outbursts against them.

4.7 Conclusions

The period after 1914 to about 1929 was both one of consolidation of the Jewish community's rights as citizens, and the beginning of a struggle to maintain a distinct Jewish life amid the pressures of integration and assimilation. During this time the second, or post-immigration generation reached adulthood and began to play a role in civil and civic society in Oudtshoorn. They could count on the economic success of many in the first generation during the ostrich feather boom, but they still had to deal with challenges to their civil equality in Oudtshoorn. Only by surmounting these challenges could they assert themselves as full citizens of Oudtshoorn, and not an immigrant group separate from the rest of the community. But equally, only by expending great energy could they maintain their culture as a distinct entity within the society into which they were integrating. In this period, the Jews of Oudtshoorn were quickly outgrowing the label of immigrants, but had not yet acquired full citizenship, that is, full equality in every respect with

²⁰⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 May 1921, Child Welfare Society, p.2

²⁰⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 18 July 1921, p.4

²⁰⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 December 1921, "Mayor's Christmas Cheer Fund", p.1 ; had a disproportionate contribution by Jews

²¹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 May 1922, "The Late Mr. G.C. Olivier", p.2 ; many Jewish wreaths

²¹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 February 1923, p.3 ; wedding of Bertha Hotz to Sidney Jacobs

²¹² For example, Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 September 1923, p.4 ; The significance of Yom Kippur, for example, was repeatedly explained with the intention of making the Christian majority more familiar with the inner workings of the Jewish ethnic community.

²¹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 August 1922, "Jewish Mass Meeting – The Palestine Mandate", p.2

non-Jews or Christians. But the trend was definitely towards growing integration and growing equality, to the extent that Jews began to discern a threat of attrition of their separate cultural community through assimilation. While eager to cease being seen as immigrants, Jews were beginning to see the need to harmonize the wish to remain distinctly Jewish, with the desire to become integrated citizens, without relinquishing or diminishing either identity. In order to do this, the Jewish community made an effort to identify certain common issues between Jews, which had to be defended in order to maintain the community. These included religion, Hebrew education and Zionism, and freedom from discrimination because they were Jews. Outside these issues, the Jewish community insisted that there should be an diffusion of its members' individual interests, and that the right of Jews to have separate and even conflicting agenda within the civil community, be recognised by both Jews and non-Jews.

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5. Challenge and Response : Inclusion and Exclusion of Jews c.1920 – c.1945

5.1 Jewish Economic Diversification and Upward Mobility

By 1919 most feather dealers looked at options outside feathers,¹ and the most obvious choice was retailing. By 1924, some still traded in feathers, but Jewish businesses were dominated by shopkeeping and factories. The professions remained relatively stable.² Economic mobility not only meant a higher standard of living for the second and third generation, but also their dispersion. The leap between the first and second generation was especially visible among the long-established Jews, originally *smouse* and small shopkeepers. Jacob Nochamson's one son became a farmer, and two became shopkeepers. One daughter entered into teaching.³ Abraham Stusser educated one son as a medical doctor, and a second took over the family shop. A third son was studying at university when Abraham died.⁴ Samson Hotz, feather trader, left behind a dentist and a teacher.⁵ A.I. Locketz left behind two tobacco manufacturing sons. Other Jews also educated their children to become accountants, dentists,⁶ attorneys and doctors.⁷ Behr Lewin counted among his six children a chemist, a dentist, a medical doctor, a merchant and an opera singer,⁸ and Morris Joseph's children included a doctor, a dentist, and a chemist.⁹ Although some children could inherit their parents' businesses,¹⁰ most Jewish children migrated to larger centres, and the slump merely accelerated the erosion of the Jewish presence.

Nonetheless a substantial *petite bourgeoisie* remained, and some Jewish families contributed strongly to the rebuilding of the Oudtshoorn economy. Leah Wilck's descendants expanded the

¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 October 1919, "The Feather Slump and Buyers", p.2

² Revealed in a study of obituaries in the Oudtshoorn Courant and Oudtshoorn Observer between 1913 and 1948

³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 June 1919, p.5

⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 February 1918, p.3

⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 July 1928, p.5

⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 31 May 1932, p.3

⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 June 1932, p.2; Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 May 1923, p.2 : Rosie Lax boarding house keeper, saw both her sons practice as attorneys. One son became Mayor of Prieska ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 July 1923, p.2 Moss Morris senior's two sons both became solicitors ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 October 1939, p.3 : Mrs. D. Harris's two sons became medical doctors.

⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 March 1930, p.2

⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 19 August 1937, p.5

Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 August 1937, p.3

¹⁰ Like Victor Aschman (tailor), Joe Stusser (general dealer), Jack Morris (hotel keeper), M.I. Goldberg (furniture manufacturer) and Sidney Subersky (furniture manufacturer)

family shop into several general dealerships and a drapery.¹¹ The Olinskys grew from a speculating business into several local butcheries.¹² Mark Morris, proprietor of the Criterion Hotel, passed the business on to his son Jack. His sons Sol and Coleman entered general dealing.¹³ The Miller sons eventually had two general dealerships, a drapery and a boot merchant enterprise.¹⁴ The Kaplan family had several branches, involved in retail, the professions, farming and tobacco manufacture.¹⁵

Jews played a great part in the development of the district economy during the 1920s. By 1930, the town boasted "a dozen tobacco factories, two shoe factories, two furniture factories, two lucerne meal milling factories" and "a large number of all kinds of workshops,"¹⁶ several owned by Jews. These businesses employed thousands of people and generated large amounts of money. But the town's greatest pride was its "two hundred shops", the moderate-sized, family businesses frequently owned by Jews, which formed the core of town life.¹⁷ To young Afrikaners growing up in Oudtshoorn, it appeared that the main commercial thoroughfare was a virtual Jewish preserve. Few non-Jews had the capital, skills or confidence to enter commerce.¹⁸ Although Jews' influence was less in the district, they were prominent in the everyday lives of Oudtshoornites, who invariably made use of their services.¹⁹

The shopkeepers henceforth formed the core of the Jewish community,²⁰ and although competition was hard and they would occasionally "fight like hell over business," the proximity of many Jewish businesses also aided community solidarity.²¹ Nonetheless the Jewish economic

¹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 May 1930, p.2 ; see OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999.

¹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 November 1930, p.2

Observer, 28 February 1935, p.5

Donaldson's South African Directory 1932

¹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 September 1936, p.4 ; 22 December 1936 ; 13 October 1936, p.2

¹⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 February 1947, p.3

Oral History Project, Kaplan Centre. Interview with Alex Miller

Donaldson's South African Directory 1932, p.1475

¹⁵ Survey of Donaldson and Braby Commercial Directory, Donaldson's South African Directory 1932, and Oudtshoorn Courant, 1920 - 1940

¹⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 August 1930, "What has taken the place of the ostrich feather ?" by L.H. Lewin

¹⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 August 1930, "What has taken the place of the ostrich feather ?" by L.H. Lewin

¹⁸ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999.

¹⁹ OJI, "Joan", 1999.

²⁰ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, adverts 20 October 1919, pp.1, 6. OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. An excellent example is the Wilck family, who opened several prominent retail enterprises after their investments in the ostrich feather industry collapsed.

²¹ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Herman recalls that although Jewish shops were adjacent to one another and natural competitors, Jewish shopkeepers would occasionally band together to help struggling Jewish businessmen pay debts, without promissory notes. He himself struggled, though, to open a little shop

contribution was slowly declining. Donaldson and Braby, who compiled commercial directories for South African towns, listed nearly three hundred prominent Oudtshoorn businesspeople in 1912, of whom over a third were Jewish. Most of these were engaged in feather buying. As late as 1932, Jews maintained a 20 % representation in Donaldson and Braby's list, far beyond their demographic contribution to the district or even the town population.²² But they lacked the demographic momentum to maintain those positions against the attrition of age, out-migration or the occasional economic failure.

Jews were by now seen as an integral part of Oudtshoorn. On the other hand, their apparent success also sometimes produced resentment. Statements made by non-Jews suggest that they often held Jews in awe, a belief that Jews were not only inherently more intelligent than other "races", but better at business,²³ and therefore potentially threatening and not to be trusted. The local Jews' pursuit of higher education filled many local Gentiles with admiration, but also led others to believe that Jews "had almost taken possession of South Africa's universities."²⁴ Their upward mobility seemed to assert further the "inherent" difference between the Jews and other people.

5.2 Ethnic Politics and the Local Economy

Such attitudes accompanied two mutually supportive currents : first, the desire of producers to cut out middlemen from distribution, and secondly, the increasing emphasis on local Afrikaner economic self-determination. Jews could be excluded because many occupied positions in the distribution channels which producers thought superfluous. Growing Afrikaner political power in Oudtshoorn meant that many Afrikaners wanted to fill the distribution channels of their "Afrikaner dorp" with their "own people."²⁵ Some distrust had been created in the ostrich feather era and exacerbated during the slump. Many Afrikaners now felt that undue emphasis had been placed on speculation, "which is the essence of the freemarket system" and which put many

because of the competition, and had to rely on poor and Coloured clients. The individual business sense of some Jews also left much to be desired. OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. OJI, John De Jager, 1999.

²² Various estimates placed the community at between five and seven hundred people.

²³ for example *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 30 July 1919, p.2

²⁴ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 3 April 1925, p.2

²⁵ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. ["... Wat die besigheid betref, hier ons groot winkels, was net Jode. Hier was nie 'n Afrikaner of 'n Engelsman of iets nie. Dit was net hulle. Toe het ons op 'n stadium gevoel ... hier in die 1920s ... Oudtshoorn is 'n Afrikaner dorp, ons wil darem probeer om 'n bietjie besigheid vir Afrikaners in te bring hierso."] He was long a prominent figure in the cooperative movement.

Afrikaners at a disadvantage.²⁶ They resented Jewish middlemen, who specialised in key industries and dominated the distribution of farm produce, and monopolized certain products.²⁷ Jewish businesses, to cut out unnecessary competition, apparently agreed on prices among one another – leaving no room for farmers to negotiate.²⁸ The cooperative movement appeared to be the answer.²⁹ Around 1916, tobacco farmers, including some Jews, had begun to move towards cooperation,³⁰ and by 1919 prominent farmers had stressed that the producers should take control of the channels of distribution themselves.³¹ There was much to be gained. Gradually, after the slump, land use in Oudtshoorn had been adapted to lines not dependent upon ostriches, and by the 1920s incomes again rose.³² Some small farmers were doing well,³³ and tobacco turned out to be the new cash crop.³⁴ The recovery of the farming population was significant for the local National Party, which drew its constituency and leadership from this sector of society. It was therefore both logical and beneficial for the party leadership to tie into the growing desire of farmers to be independent of middlemen, and combine it with the party's growing Afrikaner ethnic focus. From the start, economic and political objectives were closely related.

Most Oudtshoornites felt that a change in the channels of distribution would benefit them. The Courant urged local consumers, hard pressed by local prices, to eliminate "useless middlemen."³⁵ The newspaper argued that the elimination of the speculator would have a "wonderfully stabilizing effect" on feathers, and farmers especially were encouraged to rid themselves of the "itinerant middleman."³⁶ Newspaper reporters declared :

"... in the end the intervention of the speculative middleman is unhealthy and tends to render the carrying on of legitimate trade difficult. Time and again the feather industry has had to suffer unduly because of the operations of the speculator, and there is no doubt whatever that a certain amount of its troubles

²⁶ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999.

²⁷ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

²⁸ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999. This was still so in the 1930s and 1940s.

²⁹ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999.

³⁰ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999.

³¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 February 1919, "Ostrich Feather Interests", p.2

³² Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 September 1917, "Surprise", p.2

³³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 September 1918, "Our Products", p.2

³⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 October 1919, "That Egg Basket," p.2

³⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 January 1920, "High Prices", p.2

³⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 April 1920, "Happier Feeling in the Market", p.2

today are to be laid at the door of that ubiquitous class ..."³⁷

These "country buyers" were almost by definition Jewish, and antisemitic notions permeated the growing demand for change in the local economy.

Subtle at first, antisemitism found a ready audience with the economically vulnerable stratum of small landowners who formed a large section of the Afrikaner population. The Afrikaner leadership also, was seeking a way of solving the crisis, and Jews inevitably featured in their explanation. In 1920 a government Unemployment Commission visited Oudtshoorn to examine the problems experienced by these people. Langenhoven, the local National Party leader, blamed the situation on overinvestment in land and subdivision of farms in the ostrich feather days. As bonds and mortgages piled up, family land fell into "capitalistic hands," that is, was bought by companies and absentee landlords. The only remedy, Langenhoven said, was through "discriminative and progressive legislation." By this he meant,

"... repression of the incipient absentee landlord and land speculator by prohibitive and discriminative taxation, and the removal of one of the causes responsible for the present state of things, namely, immigration from overseas. This last named Mr Langenhoven regarded as absolutely suicidal ..."³⁸

In the 1920 elections, Langenhoven again blamed the "Uitlander" in Oudtshoorn for the "backwardness" of the "poor down trodden Afrikaner." He compared the Uitlander with *voelint* [voëlent = mistletoe], implying the parasitic nature of non-Afrikaners in Oudtshoorn.³⁹ The SAP by contrast appealed directly to the Coloured and Jewish vote,⁴⁰ but it was Langenhoven who won, partly due to the solutions he had proposed.⁴¹

Langenhoven, like many Afrikaners, appeared to be very ambivalent about the Jewish presence in Oudtshoorn. Although the local National Party's policy was to some extent anti-Jewish,

³⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 May 1920, "P.E.'s Feather Market", p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 May 1920, "The Fall of Feathers," p.2

³⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 1 December 1920, "The Unemployment Commission", p.2

³⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 3 March 1920, "Election", p.2

⁴⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 March 1920, "The Elections", p.2

⁴¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 March 1920, "The Local Election", p.2

Langenhoven was regarded as a friend of the local Jews.⁴² Leon Wilck's father recalled amicably "having tea with Langenhoven,"⁴³ and Bennie Gillis, who saw Langenhoven "every day" described him as "a delightful man when he was sober" and joked with him regularly. Although Gillis was SAP, he recognised Langenhoven as something of a local hero. He found an ambivalence between Langenhoven's party's ideas and the private life of the man.⁴⁴ No doubt, Langenhoven and other Oudtshoornites were strongly influenced by the anti-Jewish feeling in South Africa at the time.⁴⁵ When the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Dr Hertz, visited Oudtshoorn, he referred to rumours branding him as "an agent of Imperialism."⁴⁶ D.F. Malan, a prominent National Party politician, also referred to conspiracies and the Jewish chimeria, Hoggenheimer, in speeches given in Oudtshoorn.⁴⁷ Neither Malan nor Langenhoven made explicit attacks on local Jews, but many local people associated such rhetoric with what they perceived to be the economic exploitation of local Afrikaners by the Jews and English. A low level of antisemitism permeated the struggle for the distribution channels.

Furthermore, most Jews were by now considered political enemies by the growing National Party constituency. Most local Jews had further taken every opportunity to associate with the SAP and Smuts, whom many Afrikaner National Party members despised.⁴⁸ Jews publicly thanked Botha and Smuts "for the great and historic services they had rendered the Jewish nation,"⁴⁹ and Jewish publications openly asked Jews to vote for Smuts.⁵⁰ Local Jews were similarly advised by the Courant to support Smuts, lest the National Party take away their civil

⁴² Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 June 1919, "Hebrew School" p.2 ; for example, Langenhoven led the delegation of the Oudtshoorn Hebrew school that successfully appealed to the Administrator, arriving on Oudtshoorn station, when the Government wanted to close the struggling school down ; in addition, Langenhoven was a personal friend of Max Rose, a prominent local Jew, and commented positively on Jews in his works of literature

⁴³ OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999.

⁴⁴ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, pp.33-34 ; a definitive biography on Langenhoven was written by Kannemeyer, J.C., Langenhoven – 'n Lewe, Cape Town, Tafelberg Publishers, 1995

⁴⁵ See Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, pp.114-141 for a discussion of antisemitism in South Africa in the period 1924-30.

⁴⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 January 1921, "The Chief Rabbi's Visit", p.4

⁴⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 January 1921, "Dr Malan's Meeting", p.4 ; See Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1994, pp. 62-3, 90-4, for a detailed discussion on this stereotype of the capitalist Jew. See Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience, pp.91-104 for a background on Malan's position.

⁴⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 January 1920, "Council's Welcome to General Smuts", p.2 ; when in preparation for a visit by Smuts, the Town Council wanted to prepare an illuminated address, Anderson, an outspoken Nationalist councillor, voted against the motion, to the shock and rage of his fellows

⁴⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 May 1920, "Jewish Mass Meeting", p.2

⁵⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 1 March 1920, "To Jewish Voters", p.2 : taken from the Zionist Record, p.2

liberties.⁵¹ By the early 1920s it was assumed that Jews voted SAP, that they opposed the National Party, and that they were in alliance with Britain and its supposed agents. It was therefore considered imperative for the National Party to challenge the Jews' key position in the distribution channel, if they wanted to steer Oudtshoorn in a direction beneficial to their constituency. The cooperatives were not in the first place antisemitic,⁵² but unfortunately, in the process of becoming a political issue, the struggle for change in the local economy came to be seen as between supposed Afrikaner and Jewish business strategy.⁵³

Now the Jews, after fifty years in Oudtshoorn, were again pictured as outsiders, whose interests were different to that of other citizens. The term "middleman" became interchangeable with "Jew" and when an expert described Oudtshoorn as on "a veritable crusade against the middleman,"⁵⁴ Jewish immigrants were directly implied. Supporters of the Jews also used "middleman" as a polite term for Jews :

"... One can imagine what our town and district would have looked like if we had not had our middlemen [*Jews*] here. Suppose the present immigration laws had existed fifty years ago and our middlemen [*Jews*] had been prevented from coming here ..."⁵⁵

Middlemen were credited by some with saving vital industries,⁵⁶ but the current was against them, and the cooperatives were soon endorsed even by the anti-National Party Courant.⁵⁷ When the local ostrich farmers met in 1921 they pertinently excluded all non-farmers, and especially feather buyers.⁵⁸ Farmers were urged to establish cooperatives with people in whom they had faith, since the "ordinary dealer was not a friend of cooperations."⁵⁹ Soon the statements had an ethnic bias, and at the Ostrich Feather Congress one farmer remarked openly :

⁵¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 March 1920, "The Elections", p.2

⁵² Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 December 1920, "The Co-operative Movement", p.2

⁵³ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. [Paraphrase] That is, between speculation (indirect marketing) and cooperation (direct marketing).

⁵⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 February 1923, "From the Middleman's Point of View" by Dr Simon, p.2

⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁷ For example Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 May 1921, p.2

⁵⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 May 1921, "Farmers and Feathers," p.2

⁵⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 November 1921, p.2

"... The farmer had his opposition in Israel ; they had done a lot of good, but they also caused a lot of hardship ..."

Another added :

"... it would not help to send our feathers overseas if we did not have a representative over there, since ... our friend Israel was also over there ..."⁶⁰

Many at the congress were dismayed at the anti-Jewish sentiments, but Jews were increasingly seen as hostile to Afrikaner self-determination.⁶¹ Local economic need was combined with a general perception of hostility from London, where an "incubus" of "very powerful interests" were seen to try and "command [the feather industry and] control it to their own purposes."⁶² Surreptitiously, Hoggenheimer, an Anglo-Jewish hybrid in rural Afrikaner minds, was given a subtle but real presence for certain Oudtshoornites.⁶³ Jews became increasingly aware of the National Party's use of some antisemitism as part of its strategy.

When Langenhoven retired, the new local National Party leader, Stephen le Roux, continued using classic Hoggenheimer references, connecting the SAP government and Jewish parliamentarians to mine magnates and the "capitalist Press." But like Langenhoven, Le Roux walked a tight-rope between National Party anti-Jewish rhetoric and usual local tolerance of the Jews, and he was regarded as a moderate by the local Press.⁶⁴ His attitudes towards Jews were strikingly ambivalent, and he appeared to have used antisemitism more for political mileage than personal conviction. Le Roux seemed, publicly, to see no relation between the individual Jews who lived and worked peacefully with him in Oudtshoorn, and the rhetoric of the National Party. He appears to have been eager to assuage the fears local Jews had of direct discrimination, and at his most conciliatory, he offered South Africa as a home to "everyone who really wished to make it his home" and added that "whoever adopted the country could claim it as his." When asked about immigration, he assured people that "there would not be distinguished between Christian

⁶⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 November 1921, p.5 [Dutch Version] ; the first statement was made by a Ferreira, the second by a Coetzee, both Afrikaners.

⁶¹ The committee appointed by the congress had 31 members, of whom two were English, one Jewish, and the rest all Afrikaners.

⁶² Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 November 1921, p.2

⁶³ See Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, 1994, pp. 62-3, 90-4.

⁶⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 February 1923, Editorial "Oh ! Mr Werth !"

and Jew" in his mind.⁶⁵ But on the other hand he constantly involved Jews by dividing Oudtshoorn into economic categories, in which the Jews were assumed to be in the opposite (privileged) camp to the majority of (downtrodden) Afrikaners. Le Roux claimed that in Oudtshoorn "the economical division was the proper party division" and that "Oudtshoorn would not vote along the old party lines but on economic lines." He sided with the farmers against all others, argued that the farmers or "volk" were oppressed by the SAP Government, and identified the SAP as "a capitalist party,"⁶⁶ – "Big Finance ... bent on ruining the farmer."⁶⁷ This fitted snugly into the tense situation developing between the farmers' cooperatives and the Jewish middlemen over distribution.

Le Roux and the other prominent Nationalists drew upon the propaganda and rhetoric produced on a national level,⁶⁸ frequently by people who had very little contact with Jews. On a local level, years of co-existence and especially economic necessity, forced some understanding with local Jews. Local National Party members freely worked with Jews in a private capacity. The ostrich industry could hardly be saved without the help of a prominent local Jew, Max Rose, who was widely known as the industry's greatest advocate. Even those who had slated local Jews praised Rose for his invaluable contributions.⁶⁹ Also, most farmers were still dependent upon Jewish middlemen to sell their produce,⁷⁰ and since farmers' income was seasonal and unpredictable, shops especially would supply farmers with food and clothing in the interim between harvests.⁷¹ Therefore, although Jews were blamed for economic woes, such accusations did not carry far in practice.

Similarly, during local economic crises, and between elections, Oudtshoorn saw a truce between the SAP and National Party, which in turn lessened the pressure on the Jews.⁷² During

⁶⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 May 1923, "Nationalist Party Meeting", p.6

⁶⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 February 1923, p.4 and p.5

⁶⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 February 1923, "The Nationalist Platform", p.2

⁶⁸ Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, pp. 114-141, discusses the national scene extensively.

⁶⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 August 1922, "Popularising the Ostrich Feather," p.2 ; one C. Coetzee Sr., who at a previous meeting (November 1921) had attacked local Jews, now praised Rose, others affirmed this statement

⁷⁰ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. Even after the cooperatives were founded, the Jewish middlemen continued to play an important role and bought large amounts of produce from farmers. Prices were generally good.

⁷¹ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

⁷² E.g. Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 August 1922, p.2 : the committee elected by the feather farmers and buyers included two Jews, two Anglophones and seven Afrikaners, but these were divided between SAP and NAT supporters, and included the SAP member of Parliament (Raubenheimer) and his NAT successor (S.P. le Roux), with Langenhoven, the NAT Senator, in an advisory position

election time factional interests again prevailed, with the National Party typically claiming that South Africa was a fatherland only for the Nationalist.⁷³ But there was an easy movement between factional and party political interests, in which Jews were routinely seen as outsiders, and economic necessity. Most Oudtshoornites realized that Jews were still a necessary part of the economy, and that it was against the district's interests to give free rein to antisemitic tendencies. Local farmers were advised to "treat dealers not as enemies but as friends,"⁷⁴ and a fund-raising appeal by the Jews at the time could approach "sympathetic ostrich farmers."⁷⁵ Economic differences divided Jews and Afrikaners, but for most of the 1920s, the infusion of antisemitism into local National Party thought was still negligible.

Indeed, many Jews found very little to choose between the policies of the SAP and National Party regarding Jews. Relations in the Hertzog days of the National Party was apparently so good that some outsiders suspected that the Oudtshoorn Nationalists' electoral victories was due to "misguided" electoral support from the Jewish community.⁷⁶ The 1923 parliamentary election was typical. Local National Party officials courted the Jews by circulating a pamphlet in which they attacked the SAP Government's discrimination against Jewish immigrants.⁷⁷ The SAP countered by claiming that impoverished "middlemen" and "small shopkeepers" were not wanted, because of the numbers of poor already in the country.⁷⁸ Equally, the Courant advised local Afrikaners to vote for the SAP candidate, on the grounds that he was "no lackey of the parasites that suck the country dry."⁷⁹ In search of the large rural vote, neither party hesitated to imply that local "Capitalists" would find no home with them, and Jews, as a community identified by some with exploitation, conspiracy and economic disaster, were not entirely welcome in either camp. Local factors counted against the Jews by creating an atmosphere of ethnic and class tension.⁸⁰ The so-called "Poor White problem" was exacerbated as many former small landowners or tenants flooded into Oudtshoorn's slums,⁸¹ and many rural families fought a rear-guard action against bonds and mortgages for decades, only to be strangled slowly by interest, upon which the

⁷³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 25 September 1922, p.2

⁷⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 15 November 1922, p.2

⁷⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 February 1923, "Attention Farmers !", p.5 [Dutch]

⁷⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 May 1924, "Nationalists and the Jews", p.2

⁷⁷ In the case of Weinrich and five other Jewish immigrants against the Minister of the Interior, in which these Jews had been refused entry on economic grounds.

⁷⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 March 1923, "Poor Propaganda", p.2

⁷⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 March 1923, Editorial "Decision", p.2

⁸⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 May 1923, "Is Oudtshoorn Hard Up ?", p.2

⁸¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 July 1923, "Poor White Problem", p.2

land reverted to creditors, or were swallowed up by large landowners.⁸² The process was all the more aggravating because it was drawn out for individual families over many years,⁸³ and the "net result [was] a hopeless paralyzing outlook."⁸⁴ Impoverished Afrikaners found their social status challenged by Coloureds,⁸⁵ and existed amid squalor on uneconomical plots.⁸⁶ They looked for a scapegoat, which was provided in the form of the Jews. Not only the did party politicians continue to use Hoggenheimer references, but the Oudtshoorn press accused businesses of using the credit system to exploit "men of small means."⁸⁷ This led to frustration which did ethnic relations some harm.

The National Party won the parliamentary seat in 1923, and Le Roux, in his conciliatory victory speech, again offered his "services to every one irrespective of party or race."⁸⁸ One of his first actions was to combine with Max Rose to save the ostrich industry, defending both the farmer and the "small buyer" against "capitalists."⁸⁹ Langenhoven remarked shortly afterwards that the National party would bring the "sects and races in Oudtshoorn" together "by mutual regard and mutual rights" in a spirit of "racial cooperation."⁹⁰ The SAP was doubtful, and made much political capital commenting upon the basic dislike of grass-roots National Party supporters for "b[loody] dirty Jews."⁹¹ Certainly, this dislike featured in the economic programs to uplift the Afrikaner. It did not take a fertile imagination for the National Party voter to apply Hoggenheimer propaganda to the local situation, but at the same time the antisemitic rhetoric was disputed by the long and generally beneficent relationship between Jews and non-Jews in Oudtshoorn. For most of the 1920s, Oudtshoorn's National Party leaders probably remained wary of the potential public outcry by some local Gentiles against blatant antisemitism.

Outside influence, and the struggle for control over the local economy along ethnic lines, did however impact on Jews' lives. National Party leaders now aimed at "improving the lot of the poor people" by compelling factories to abide by the producer's terms.⁹² They began calling for

⁸² Oudtshoorn Courant, 1 August 1923, "The Ostrich Feather Industry" by S.G.H. Pitcher, p.3

⁸³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 3 March 1924, letter "Poverty Among Our Farmers" by W.J. Northcott

⁸⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 November 1923, "Wake Up Oudtshoorn !" by Citizen, p.5

⁸⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 June 1925, Magistrate's Report "Crime in Oudtshoorn", p.2

⁸⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 November 1925, "Hard-hit Oudtshoorn", p.3

⁸⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 October 1923, "The Credit System", p.2

⁸⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 March 1923, "Thanks to Electors", p.5

⁸⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 April 1923, "Public Meeting – Taxing of Agricultural Products", p.4\

⁹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 September 1923, "The Nationalist Congress", p.3

⁹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 May 1924, "Nationalists and the Jews", p.2

⁹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 3 August 1923, "Co-operation – Tobacco Farmers and Manufacturers", p.2

the "obliteration" of the "uncooperative spirit(s)"⁹³ by procuring a "100 per cent membership and 100 per cent loyalty from the members" of the cooperatives.⁹⁴ While improving profits and saving marginal farmers, the cooperative movement also remained open to political manoeuvring and outside influence. During the National Party Congress in Oudtshoorn in 1923, D.F. Malan reintroduced the tensions which local National usually played down by attacking the "big mining magnates" which "dominated and scavenged" the country, the Chambers of Commerce as colluding with the SAP, and also "financial bosses" exploiting the "volk", while "at any time willing to shake the South African dust off their feet." He demanded of the National and Labour parties to "squarely resist capitalist and monopolist domination"⁹⁵ but left it to the local people to determine exactly who their enemies were. The most likely target was the local Jewish business community : in 1927, 40 % of the local Chamber of Commerce were Jews.⁹⁶ The cooperative movement acquired religious overtones – it was their "Christian duty to help the poor man" – but more importantly, became ethnically exclusive by aiming to "cooperate for the advancement of volk and country." Power was centralised and opposition from growers and manufacturers could be "done away [with]." The cooperative founded for tobacco growers immediately demanded from local factories to deal with them on their terms. Its executive was not only purely Afrikaner, but was led by Le Roux.⁹⁷ Despite a stated intention to cooperate with secondary industries, too much power became concentrated in the managing boards of these large cooperatives to prevent interaction with local branches of political parties, which sometimes placed political objectives before business objectives.⁹⁸

Jews like Max Rose remained prominently involved,⁹⁹ but the economy became highly politicised along ethnic lines.¹⁰⁰ Many Jews resented the cooperatives for taking business away from them,¹⁰¹ and some former Oudtshoorn Jews who could not compete held grudges for

⁹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 3 August 1923, Editorial, "Cooperation", p.2

⁹⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 15 August 1923, "Local Cooperation", p.2

⁹⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 September 1923, "The Nationalist Congress", p.3

⁹⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 1 April 1926, "Chamber of Commerce – Annual Meeting", p.2 ; 7 out of 17 members present were Jews.

⁹⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 October 1923, "The Big Meeting – Tobacco Farmers Meet", p.6

⁹⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 March 1926, "Ostrich Feathers to the Fore", p.2 ; Feather farmers formed a cooperative in 1926, again prominently led by Le Roux. Its 650 members produced 80% of all feathers in the Cape Province.

⁹⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 January 1924, "Members Address Meeting – The Ostrich Feather Subsidy", p.4

¹⁰⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 February 1924, Editorial "Agriculture and Politics," p.2

¹⁰¹ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Also OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. Mr de Jager played a major role in the cooperative in later years.

decades.¹⁰² Tobacco factory owners, led by a Jew, Sol Green, were especially troubled, and complained that cooperatives would destroy their industry. These factories, completely dependent on local tobacco,¹⁰³ found their supply in the hands of a potentially hostile group, and "the future of the manufacturer [was filled] with very considerable anxiety."¹⁰⁴ New legislation by General Hertzog's "Pact" government for a 100 per cent wage increase in the tobacco industry¹⁰⁵ suspiciously applied only to the Oudtshoorn district,¹⁰⁶ and exacerbated overcompetition in which some of the tobacco factories collapsed.¹⁰⁷ Local furniture factories, two of the biggest ones owned by Jews, were in the same position.¹⁰⁸ As such, Jews were placed under pressure by the National Party supporters' efforts in the local economy.

By the late 1920s, National Party political activists and Dutch Reformed Church Ministers led the majority of the farming population.¹⁰⁹ The farmers appointed a Vigilance Committee to protect their rights against creditors and bondholders, but its attitude was conciliatory, and generally not antisemitic.¹¹⁰ However, Jews could be pictured as hostile to the farming population in many ways. On one occasion Christians were outraged when many Jews refused to close their shops during a Christian prayer service for rain. Jews were accused of worshipping money while the "community [knelt] down before the Almighty God."¹¹¹ By contrast, on the Jewish New Year celebration, only four shops were open in the whole of Oudtshoorn.¹¹² Following the mass outrage, the "mercantile community" was praised for obligingly supporting the cause by closing their businesses on the 1926 Day of Humiliation and Prayer.¹¹³ Some people still saw Jews as outsiders whose interests conflicted with the interests of the majority of Oudtshoorn's citizens, and tensions were manifested in times of crisis or friction as violence. A series of fires broke out in buildings owned by or associated with Jews during a calamitous drought,¹¹⁴ and again during

¹⁰² OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. When he went to New York in later years, his deputation ran into an ex-Oudtshoorn Jewess, a Lewin. Upon finding out who they were, she chased them away, blaming the cooperative for having chased her and her friends out of Oudtshoorn by taking their business.

¹⁰³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 August 1926, p.2

¹⁰⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 August 1926, Editorial "The Tobacco Industry", p.2

¹⁰⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 December 1926, "A Bombshell for Tobacco Factories", p.3

¹⁰⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 November 1927, "Oudtshoorn Tobacco Manufacturers Again Singled Out", p.4

¹⁰⁷ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. His family owned the De Jager factory.

¹⁰⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 October 1926, "Position in Furniture Factories", p.2

¹⁰⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 July 1928, "Discussion of Economic Position – Great Gathering of Farmers", p.4

¹¹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 July 1928, "The Economic State of the District" [Afrikaans], p.7

¹¹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 August 1927, "Day of Prayer", p.3

¹¹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 September 1927, "Jewish New Year", p.4

¹¹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 October 1926, "Day of Humiliation and Prayer", p.4

¹¹⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 September 1927, p.2 ; First Sanders & Sons, a landmark Jewish firm, was completely gutted by an unexplained fire.

"the excitement of election time."¹¹⁵ In the aftermath of one election in 1929, three mysterious fires broke out, one destroying a Jewish-owned property and damaging three Jewish private homes.¹¹⁶ Around election time worker militancy was also visible amid continuing discussion of the Poor White Problem.¹¹⁷ Nor did things seem about to improve : the Oudtshoorn economy was in dire straits even before the Great Depression officially began.¹¹⁸ And on the eve of the Wall Street Crash, the National Party easily controlled the local Parliamentary constituency.¹¹⁹

5.3 Jewish Ethnic Solidarity and Integration

In 1929 the Oudtshoorn Jewish community was still easily identifiable as a considerable cultural and religious entity separate from the rest of Oudtshoorn. Its numbers had stabilized at about five hundred people, and the relationship between the Jewish institutions were as intimate as ever.¹²⁰ Oudtshoorn Jewry kept regular contact with other Jewish communities. Visiting speakers made regular stops at Oudtshoorn,¹²¹ and included Vladimir Jabotinsky,¹²² Chaim Weizmann,¹²³ and Nahum Sokolow.¹²⁴ Gentiles often joined in receiving these prominent guests. Oudtshoorn also served as a venue for national Jewish Youth camps,¹²⁵ organised by the active Young Israel Society.¹²⁶ Zionism was supported by the religious and educational leaders,¹²⁷ and undoubtedly formed a key component of Jewish life. The movement gained strength as Nazism

¹¹⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 June 1929, "Days of Excitement – A Fire Follows Election", p.3 ; shop belonging to Finkelstein Bros.

¹¹⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 June 1929, p.2 ; a bakery owned by Simon Noll was destroyed, and the homes of Messrs Elias, Bliss and Mrs. Lipschitz were damaged ; no cause for the fire could be found ; in May 1930 Noll's building was again almost burned down, this time Abraham Nel, who had been conducting a bakery in the building, was arrested on suspicion of arson (Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 May 1930, p.2) Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 August 1929, p.4 ; in these cases, one Joseph Armstrong, identified as "Coloured" was arrested

¹¹⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 February 1929, p.3, Samuel Nochimowitz, owner of the Oudtshoorn Footwear and Leather Company was sued ; also Editorial 15 February 1929, p.2

¹¹⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 February 1929, Editorial "The Farmer's Lot", p.2

¹¹⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 June 1929, p.4 ; Oudtshoorn elections were never contested by large numbers of voters due to property qualifications ; the 1929 elections were won by S.P. le Roux and the Nationalists by a majority of 655 votes, that is, 1805 votes to the SAP's 1150

¹²⁰ For example, there was some overlap between the different committees, sharing leadership.

¹²¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 August 1929, p.4 ; the person in question was a journalist, Peretz Cornfeldt.

¹²² Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 May 1930, p.2

¹²³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 May 1932, p.3 ; £ 300 was collected at the occasion

¹²⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 June 1934, "Zionist Leaders in Oudtshoorn", p.2

¹²⁵ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 1 July 1938, "Young Israel Week", p.3

¹²⁶ OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999. Also, later, OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. The movement persisted for several years. It proved the highlight of the Jewish children's year.

¹²⁷ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 July 1930, "Dr Herzl Memorial Service", p.2 ; the memorial service was held in the Queen Street Synagogue, and addressed by Rev Woolfson and Mr Rybko, the local Hebrew principal.

rose in Germany,¹²⁸ and was strong enough to generate protest meetings and involve speakers from other ethnic communities in sympathy to its causes.¹²⁹ The Immigration Quota Bill proposed in 1930 elicited strong response,¹³⁰ and many Jews were angry at the National Party-led "Pact" Government of the day. In the mid-1930s, similar legislation was blamed on "bloody Smuts [who] wanted to keep in with the English."¹³¹ In Oudtshoorn, however, the Jewish community could appeal to their Gentile neighbours,¹³² and they gained further support through their untiring efforts at charity. Jewish bazaars were attended by "great many Christian well-wishers" and some of the money thus generated was diverted to Christians or civic bodies.¹³³ The Depression brought many problems, but the Jewish community found sympathy with others in the district, and it was declared by the Afrikaner Mayor to be "just as hard hit as any other community."¹³⁴

Cracks began to appear which suggested that the community was no longer going to be self-perpetuating. By 1937 it was decided to amalgamate the two Hebrew congregations,¹³⁵ and to make the best use of the few leaders, the United Hebrew Institutions (hereafter UHI) was created to coordinate efforts.¹³⁶ The Jews met the challenge of decline energetically and another body, the Oudtshoorn Jewish Guild was created in 1934.¹³⁷ The *shul* division showed no sign of abating,¹³⁸ and there were class divisions :

"... They were always steeped in some form of culture.
They just wanted a better life for their children than
they had [in Lithuania] ... Not all of them could make it.
Some were able to improve their lives and make money.

¹²⁸ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹²⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 August 1929, "Mass Meeting of Protest", p.3

¹³⁰ See Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience, pp. 97-108 for a national perspective.

¹³¹ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, p.37

¹³² Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 February 1930, p.2

¹³³ Oudtshoorn Observer, 2 July 1936, "Jewish Bazaar", p.5

¹³⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 June 1929, p.2.

¹³⁵ Oudtshoorn Observer, 18 November 1937, "United Hebrew Institutions", p.5

¹³⁶ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 November 1934, "United Hebrew Institutions", p.2 ; OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Herman, Secretary of the institution in its beginning years, remembers how it was agreed at first to hold services on a rotational basis in the two *shuls*, and how gradually the Synagogue division was healed. The leadership of the two synagogues made an arrangement and agreed to run communal affairs together.

¹³⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 March 1935, "Oudtshoorn Jewish Guild – A successful year", p.3. eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 August 1935, "Oudtshoorn Jewish Guild", p.3 ; this trip was for a debate with the Beaufort West Zionist Society.

¹³⁸ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. This persisted for years, even into the 1960s. OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. "The fighting was about the holiness of the bottom [St Johns Street] *shul*. They always maintained that the bottom was holier than the top [Queen Street]."

Others remained at the level they were and some made a decent living ..."¹³⁹

But during the High Festivals, both synagogues were crowded with Jews from all over the Southern Cape, and, the Observer noted, "our Jewish fellow-townsmen" universally closed their business houses.¹⁴⁰

By 1940 there were about a hundred Jewish families left in Oudtshoorn,¹⁴¹ still enough to make possible regular contact between Jews in Oudtshoorn. Jewish families still lived within easy distance of one another and adults spent a lot of social time together¹⁴² -- Jewish card parties were a characteristic of the community.¹⁴³ Monty Markus also described the *shul* as "our club" because of the large numbers of young Jewish men who came there both to mix and to worship. Many Jews had mostly co-religionists as personal friends, particularly the elderly, for whom, even after many years in Oudtshoorn, Gentiles were frequently distant on a personal level¹⁴⁴ :

"... it was difficult. Our background and the Afrikaner background was completely different. Their outlook was different from ours ... and we just did not become house friends ..."¹⁴⁵

This was no doubt enhanced by the lack of interest shown by many Gentiles to mix with Jews as friends.¹⁴⁶ Another reason was the strict *kashrut* which most Jews still followed diligently.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁹ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Statement by Theresa Daitsh, his wife. She remembered the elder Markus eagerly awaiting visiting ballet troupes from Cape Town in his later years.

¹⁴⁰ Oudtshoorn Observer, 15 September 1934, p.4

¹⁴¹ OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. Also Markowitz, A., "The Story of South African Jewry – Oudtshoorn Jewry Today" in SA Jewish Times, 27 February 1948, p.6 ; he was given the total of a stable four hundred people or 100 Jewish families. This is also reflected in attendance figures of community events.

¹⁴² OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁴³ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁴⁴ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Also OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. He described the Jewish community as to some extent "inward looking" and the habit of many Jews to mix with one another as personal friends into the 1930s. To his grandparents "the synagogue was their society." OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. He remembered the community as very-close-knit, playing cards with one another and spending a lot of social time together. Oral History Project, D.S. Simanowitz, p.42

¹⁴⁵ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

¹⁴⁶ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁴⁷ Eg. Monty Markus remembered large numbers of Jewish rural shops well into the 1930s, and his father visited these people for *kosher* food on the way to his Gamka farm.

Many families kept the Sabbath strictly,¹⁴⁸ and although Jews would sometimes invite non-Jewish friends to share the meal with them,¹⁴⁹ Jews' unique cultural practices invariably set them apart from non-Jews to some extent. This was most visible with a few elderly Jews, whose very strong religious commitment isolated them to some extent. Mr Slobedman was described by younger, South African born Jews as typical of his generation:

"... he came from Lithuania ... they did not worry about anything else [except religion], that is where he learned Hebrew and the Bible and whatever ..."¹⁵⁰

Myer Kuper was described as "one of [the community's] most orthodox members and a Talmudic scholar of no mean ability,"¹⁵¹ and Aron Simanowitz was described as "un-official rabbi to the Jewish community."¹⁵² But these men were in the distinct minority. Most of their Jewish neighbours pursued thoroughly secular lives, and religious study eventually lacked the prestige that some of the first generation immigrants had placed on it.

Rather, the Jewish community now placed a heavy emphasis on secular education, which formed a key component of the general trend towards greater integration with the non-Jewish community. Although Jews were often outnumbered in the lower grades of the schools,¹⁵³ they were present in disproportionate numbers in the upper classes (Fig. 5A).¹⁵⁴ Jewish parents

¹⁴⁸ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Markus's father demanded *shul* attendance from his children, and for example forbade them to write, ride bicycles or play cards on the Sabbath. Only two other families in the town, according to Markus, did not follow this strict observance.

¹⁴⁹ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. The example, date uncertain, was of le Roux eating at the home of his close friend Derek Fisch.

¹⁵⁰ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. In the beginning, Monty could not speak Yiddish and Mr Slobedman could not speak English, so they had to translate the Hebrew into Afrikaans, which they both understood, for Monty to study Hebrew.

¹⁵¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 June 1932, Obituary, p.2 ; Kuper, according to his obituary, for the last twenty or so years of his life, spent his retirement rising at 4 o'clock in the morning to go to the St. John Street Synagogue, where he spent most of the day, and often part of the evening, in study and contemplation. This ritual was complemented by contributions to Jewish religious bodies, such as the Jewish Religious Study Circle. Similar behaviour was recorded in the obituaries of B. Lichter and Abraham Moses Kaplan, Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 July 1934, p.3

¹⁵² Oudtshoorn Observer, 3 January 1938, Obituary Mr. A. Simanowitz", p.3.

¹⁵³ Based on the senior examination results for Oudtshoorn secondary and tertiary educational facilities for 1937.

¹⁵⁴ For control purposes, the 1930 results (Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 January 1931, p.2 and 23 January 1931, p.2) Here the trends are even more pronounced, with Jewish senior certificate candidates at a substantial 21.4 % of the total of successful students. (OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999) Louis Herman was an exception. Although most Jews, according to him, finished school, he had to leave early to go and work, due to financial constraints. So much so, that during the Great Depression, according to the headmaster of the

encouraged their children to integrate with non-Jews, even if they themselves spent little social time with Christians. Language acquisition was also now aimed specifically at greater integration. Hebrew knowledge went no further than the prayers, and most Jewish families by 1940 hesitated in teaching their children Yiddish – it served primarily as a code language between the older generation,¹⁵⁵ and featured at communal events.¹⁵⁶ Most families, like the Gillises, mastered both English and Afrikaans.¹⁵⁷ Afrikaans was for business, but like many other families the Wilcks preferred English as home language,¹⁵⁸ since it still denoted middle class culture and status :

"... I think our parents saw something in the Englishman, he was a gentleman ... and that was the type of life they wanted for their children ..."

Monty Markus's father insisted on proper table manners and behaviour and would give his children hidings to drill it into them.¹⁵⁹ It all amounted to a growing difference between the first and second generation Jews, with those of the immigrant generation rarely coming close to the level of acculturation of their children who had grown up in South Africa.

Boys' High School, student numbers rose dramatically because parents who normally took their sons out of school to find work, could not find such employment. As a result, the children made further use of the free education that existed up to age fifteen. (*Oudtshoorn Courant*, 9 December 1932, p.2).

Fig. 5A Jewish Children Successful in Writing Senior Exams in Oudtshoorn, 1930

Institution	Exam	Jewish Children	Non-Jewish Children
Girls' High School	Senior Certificate	3	12
Boys' High School	Senior Certificate	5	13
Calitzdorp	Senior Certificate	1	8
Girls' High School	Junior Certificate	6	31
Boys' High School	Junior Certificate	3	20
Calitzdorp	Junior Certificate	0	22
Total		18	106
		14.5 %	85.5 %

¹⁵⁵ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁵⁶ Eg. *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 26 May 1936, "Sokolow Memorial Service", p.3

¹⁵⁷ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. Gillis' father spoke Yiddish and Afrikaans mostly, the latter because he spent so much time on the farm. His mother, English-born, spoke English and never learned much Afrikaans, or Yiddish for that matter. Harry Gillis retained no Yiddish.

¹⁵⁸ OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. His mother was bilingual, having grown up in Paarl and been educated in English, but his father could only "make himself understood" and retained a "strange Yiddishe accent." Another factor was the family's sojourn in the USA before coming to Oudtshoorn.

¹⁵⁹ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Markus thought his father tried to school himself on a colleague, Andrew Acker, whom he thought the perfect gentleman.

This integration was a natural product of growing up surrounded by Gentiles. It was inevitable that children who went to school together and participated in the same activities would grow familiar across ethnic lines, and the second generation found it much easier, because of their language acquisition, to mix with Gentiles.¹⁶⁰ Some children, like Isidore Barron, first went to the Hebrew School, then to the Boys' or Girls' High School.¹⁶¹ Others, like Monty Markus, did not want to go to the Hebrew School at all – in his case because almost all his friends were Gentile – and he only rejoined the majority of Jewish children in High School, where he and the other four Jewish boys of his year were put in the small English medium class. Although they spoke fluent Afrikaans, English was considered to be the dominant language for the town Jews, and it also made administrative sense to have the religious minority in one class.¹⁶² Harry Gillis spoke Afrikaans, but was put in the English class, which created learning problems for him. It did, however, help him and his fellow Jews to create a bond with the fellow-minority group, the English children,¹⁶³ to whom some of the Jews gravitated for mutual defence.¹⁶⁴ But because Oudtshoorn was a rural area and bilingualism was common, the boundaries between English- and Afrikaans-speaking children faded frequently.¹⁶⁵ Manie Meyer, a Gentile, reflected that most Jews spoke perfect Afrikaans and that they mixed on all terrains.¹⁶⁶ Afrikaans certainly was no problem for Monty Markus :

"... a child that grows up in the country, like Oudtshoorn, does not have to go to school [for language] – without opening a book I used to get a B or a C for Afrikaans ..."¹⁶⁷

And Afrikaners were especially attractive for some who already spoke Afrikaans as home language.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁰ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹⁶¹ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999.

¹⁶² OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁶³ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁶⁴ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

¹⁶⁵ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Herman reflected that there was no language problem because of the strength of bilingualism, but that, even though there were a few English boys, that Jewish boys often had more in common, and certainly more opportunity to mix with Afrikaners. OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999. Although their father was English, and this was their home language, the Newman children had no problem speaking Afrikaans or mixing with Afrikaans children.

¹⁶⁶ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

¹⁶⁷ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁶⁸ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

Most Jews felt that they were not treated differently from other children, except for the arrangements made to accommodate their religion,¹⁶⁹ and felt no different from the other children.¹⁷⁰ On their holidays, Jewish children simply did not go to school.¹⁷¹ Some attitudes persisted, though. Jews were generally seen by Gentiles as well educated¹⁷² and naturally smarter, since they often featured at the top of the class. This was partially due to a greater proficiency in English, which gave them an advantage.¹⁷³

Antisemitism at school was always a minor problem. Monty Markus described the spirit as good, despite occasional catcalls from some boys, but fighting was usually futile given the Afrikaner numerical superiority.¹⁷⁴ Lucky Wagener, a Gentile, remembered that a low-level antisemitism and, in return, derogatory remarks about Afrikaners, were part of the colloquial use.¹⁷⁵ But most Gentiles did not "take much notice" of antisemitic remarks, and serious bullying was limited.¹⁷⁶ Although the one-time German principal was very strictly against antisemitic remarks¹⁷⁷ other teachers could not always be counted upon to refrain from making such statements. Tensions were especially high during the Greys shirt period.¹⁷⁸ At times, there was a tacit understanding that Jewish children would be kept off the prefects board, and often Jews were kept out of the first teams. Yet individual Gentiles sometimes showed a willingness to help the Jewish children against their tormentors – including teachers.¹⁷⁹ The main motive for fights was political, with the Jews usually part of the "Sap" minority. Jews were even taunted by individual

¹⁶⁹ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Jews were simply excused from general prayers and given a special lesson by an outsider, but they were free to choose where to go. OJI, "Joan", 1999. In the Girls' High School, the Catholic and Jewish girls would go out of the room and sit together while the DR Church majority received religious instruction.

¹⁷⁰ OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999. She had about ten Jewish children out of thirty in her class.

¹⁷¹ OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. OJI, Fourie, Piet, 1999.

¹⁷² OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999. According to him, a Manaschewitz was the first of many Jews to matriculate at Calitzdorp.

¹⁷³ OJI, Van Rensburg, Esther, 1999. Her father urged her to outdo the Jewish children at school.

¹⁷⁴ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁷⁵ OJI, Wagener, Lucky, 1999.

¹⁷⁶ OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999.

¹⁷⁷ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Markus, in retrospect, thought that some Afrikaner boys thought it a test of manhood, even of status, to be able to make antisemitic statements.

¹⁷⁸ OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999. The Greyshirts, a South African antisemitic organisation, is discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁹ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. Harry remembers always being called "jou bleddie Jood." One day, when a teacher, Potgieter, was insulting him repeatedly in this manner, a big Afrikaans boy, At Mostert, stood up, demanded that the teacher withdraw the remark, and was told that he was a collaborator with the Jews. At then proceeded to knock the teacher cold. The teacher was reprimanded by the school board. This was during the war years. OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. He entered school just after the war, and characterised antisemitism as insignificant, except for occasional catcalls, which were returned with interest. "It never turned into a fistfight or anything like that."

teachers as "Englanders ... belonging to King and Queen" for whom there was no place in South Africa. Leslie Newman solved this particular problem by writing a highly praised Afrikaans essay to his teacher, winning immediate trust.¹⁸⁰ Even girls occasionally got into fistfights over SAP-NAT squabbles.¹⁸¹ Newman remembers that skill in sport, particularly, was a good defence against antisemitism, and helped to integrate many young Jews.¹⁸² Others solved the problem of antisemitism by building up a tight circle of allies,¹⁸³ and Isidore Barron found that "giving them [antisemites] a good hiding" went a long way. His own sporting skills won him some admirers among the Afrikaners.¹⁸⁴ And given the importance that the local rugby team had for the town, it is significant that the top teams rarely ran onto the field without a Jew in the line-up.¹⁸⁵ Newman was even drafted to play for the town cricket team as a teenage boy.¹⁸⁶ Once Jewish children left school, many remained involved, and some even gained fame in local sporting circles.¹⁸⁷ There were some Jewish youth movements, and a separate Jewish Boy Scout and Girl Guide troop,¹⁸⁸ but most of the children's activities involved Gentile youth. Ties persisted after school, with Jews prominent on the Old Boys' Club¹⁸⁹ and Old Girls' Union.¹⁹⁰ It was also of incalculable value in building careers in the town, and facilitating adult social life.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁰ OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999. The Afrikaans master, Marincowitz, a highly regarded user of Afrikaans, playfully taunted Newman until he wrote a composition of such high quality that "his respect for me changed immediately."

¹⁸¹ OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999. He witnessed an instance in which a Jewish and Afrikaner girl "went for one another" on the girls' side of the playground fence. The cause was ostensibly politics – the Jewish girl was SAP.

¹⁸² OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999.

¹⁸³ OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999. The Newman brothers "stuck together" and anyone who wanted to fight with one because he was Jewish, had to face all three.

¹⁸⁴ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. ["Ek het hulle sommer goed gedōnner."] He describes at length his various run-ins with school bullies. From the Gentile perspective, a contemporary, OJI, De Jager, John, 1999, remembered especially the contribution by Isidore Barron in sport. Barron was a terror on the rugby field during and just after the Second World War.

¹⁸⁵ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 April 1933, p.2 ; here, an Olinsky played for the Oudtshoorn 2nd XV, and B. Katz for Calitzdorp B.

¹⁸⁶ OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999.

¹⁸⁷ A good example is Victor "Pickles" Aschman, whose obituary reads :

"... He was educated at the Boys' High School and was popular both among masters and scholars. He was a keen sportsman and represented the town at [cricket]. He was a prominent member of the Oudtshoorn Cricket Club and was capped for the South Western Districts. He was a powerful hitter and we recall that one year, while playing for Oudtshoorn at Mossel Bay against George in the Vintcent Cup Tournament, he scored 80 runs in 20 minutes ..."; Victor was born in Oudtshoorn in 1898.

¹⁸⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 February 1930, p.2 ; although Jews sat on the general Scout/Guide group committee (Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 May 1934, p.2).

¹⁸⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 3 March 1938, p.3

¹⁹⁰ Oudtshoorn Observer, 5 May 1938, p.5

¹⁹¹ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999.

Interviews with Afrikaners reflect the impact the Jewish participation in especially sport had on non-Jews. John de Jager remembered a relatively relaxed interchange, based strongly on mutual sports interests.¹⁹² Piet Fourie fondly recalled Jewish rugby players,¹⁹³ and Manie Meyer remembered being highly impressed by the good rugby some Jewish boys played. Particularly notable to a schoolboy's mind, was the effort Jewish boys took to circumvent Sabbath laws so that they could play first team rugby on Saturdays.¹⁹⁴ Friday nights were, however, often sacrosanct, and Gentile boys found that they had no access to their Jewish friends during that time. Even though not all the Jews went to *shul*, the quiet religiosity, traditionalism and family unity displayed by Jews on such occasions made an impact on many young Afrikaners. Occasionally, young Afrikaners would even be invited to see the *shul*.¹⁹⁵ Monty Markus remembered his friends wanting to play on Friday nights, but that after his religious beliefs (such as that he was not allowed to cycle on the Sabbath) were explained to them, "they knew, and they accepted it." Markus had other duties : not having gone to Hebrew school, he had extensive daily *cheder* tutelage, which somewhat cut him off from his school friends.¹⁹⁶

Generally, Jewish parents were not averse to their children mixing with Gentiles or bringing them home. Louis Herman remembered taking non-Jewish women to dances, and there was a good feeling, but with the understanding that he would never marry a non-Jew.¹⁹⁷ Although mixing with the opposite sex was allowed, marrying out of the faith was strictly out of the question and often subject to disinheritance.¹⁹⁸ Even young people like Dorothy Simanowitz, describing herself as a rebel, mixed with non-Jews, and dated them, but knew that marriage was out of the question.¹⁹⁹ Most Jews understood the threat of complete assimilation, and the

¹⁹² OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. He remembered especially the contribution by Isidore Barron, and the role he later played in rugby and the town council.

¹⁹³ OJI, Fourie, Piet, 1999. He mentioned a Treitsman and Jack Klass. Calitzdorp, where Fourie came from, used to play rugby against the Oudtshoorn team, which in the early 1940s had "massive" Jewish players.

¹⁹⁴ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999. This was in the 1940s and early 1950s.

¹⁹⁵ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999. Christians were usually not invited to the ordinary synagogue services in those years, though Manie Meyer was taken by his friends to see the *shul* on a weekday, when it was quiet. On special occasions, also, religious barriers were relaxed. Max Rose for one, was known to regularly attend Gentile funerals and weddings.

¹⁹⁶ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Markus had to go to *cheder* every day at Mr Slobedman, a shopkeeper. (*Cheder* : a room or school where Hebrew is taught. Rosten, Leo, *The Joys of Yiddish*, 1972, p.82.)

¹⁹⁷ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹⁹⁸ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Markus remembered that among his brother's regular circle of friends, coming to visit at the house, was the son of the Dutch Reformed Minister.

¹⁹⁹ OJI, Simanowitz, Dorothy, 1999. Even though she was a non-conformist, even atheist, and dated non-Jews, Dorothy never considered marrying out of the Jewish faith an option. She described out-marriage as being regarded as "a terrible thing" and remembered her own rabbi father being approached for his blessing of a marriage between a Jewish man and Afrikaner woman. He refused.

overwhelming majority placed limits on their integration into the general community, so that they could retain a distinct Jewish identity.

5.4 Jews and Afrikaners

However, Jewish integration was sufficient to affect the local Gentile community, and determine its attitudes towards Jews. By the 1930s, Jews had become part of the cultural landscape in which Gentiles were brought up. Jews were considered as being different, but to many, they were no longer aliens or immigrants. Few families did not have stories of contact with Jews right back to the feather days, with the familiar themes of charity, hospitality, mutual benefit and occasional friction. Some Jews became semi-legendary, known by all and apparently familiar with everybody : "Old Boerbaitz" continued to *smous* in the district for years, and became an institution with the Gentiles of his time.²⁰⁰ Another character, Dykie Toooh, was famous for his strange behaviour.²⁰¹ Manie Meyer, a child in the 1930s, was raised with stories of the Jews' hard and gradual road from "carrying the bags" to driving motor cars,²⁰² and smousing and its accompanying contact continued into the 1940s.²⁰³

Many Afrikaners, having known the Jews for decades, drew a direct parallel between the Afrikaners' help to the Jews and the upward mobility of the Jews they had sheltered and dealt with. Few Afrikaners did not shop at a Jewish establishment,²⁰⁴ or deal with Jewish produce traders. Jews supplied credit to the poor, whom nobody else would help, and hundreds of small farmers could therefore survive. A lot was possible if one was familiar with one's shopkeeper or dealer and paid on time. With the Depression, the cooperative ventures could not effectively help

²⁰⁰ OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999. Boerbaitz, after years of smousing, was reputed to know the lineage of every Afrikaner in the district, which could lead to exhausting discussions about genealogy and the past with people "whom he had watched grow up." OJI, Fourie, Piet, 1999. Boerbaitz was one of the last smousing Jews, an example of the poorer ones, yet he possessed two trained and shod oxen, with which he pulled his wagon. He used to camp outside Fourie's school on hot days.

²⁰¹ OJI, Van Rensburg, 1999. This included riding his horse into shops and hotels when on business, wearing an elaborate costume – including a chamber pot around his waist – and instances of drunken wit and brawling which made him, for a time, a very well known figure in the town.

²⁰² OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

²⁰³ OJI, Wagener, Lucky, 1999. Lucky Wagener remembered a "voetgangerjood," Herman, who slept in the children's bedroom and ate with the family, before continuing with his cart. The children anticipated his arrival so that they could sell him feathers they had nicked from their father's birds. Jewish upward mobility still struck Gentiles : within five years, Wagener recalled, Herman had a horse, and slowly grew wealthier. This man bought ostrich products and animal skins. Wagener remembered, as a child in the late 1940s, being paid four to five pounds sterling for such feathers. "We lived like kings at school."

²⁰⁴ OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999.

the farmers, and Jewish middlemen played a huge role buying produce.²⁰⁵ Many farmers, conscious of their own ignorance in marketing, were only too glad for the Jews' role.²⁰⁶ This generated a sense of mutual dependency. People like Max Rose, the "ostrich feather king," were regular visitors to the farms of those with whom they did business, and Rose was famous for his generosity, hard work and interpersonal skills :

"... [Rose] showed great interest in everybody ... with [him] there was no such thing as a farmer. You were a person, a partner, a countryman, and he expressed it that way ..."²⁰⁷

Rose regularly attended the funerals and weddings of Christians,²⁰⁸ and was further famous for his help to the poor.²⁰⁹ He was credited with leading the rebuilding of the economy after 1914, and certainly launched the post-Slump lucerne industry, so that many of the farmers owed their economic survival in some way to him. He came to stand at the apex of a thriving collective enterprise.²¹⁰

Since so much revolved around the relationship with individual Jews, children learned attitudes towards Jews from their parents. Occasionally tinged with antisemitism, and certainly with preconceptions about Jews, the mutual advantage of respecting Jews shone through. Individual families certainly benefited : Piet Fourie's mother had a lively side-industry selling poultry to the Klass family for Jewish religious festivals, and remembered good prices, and the Jewish respect

²⁰⁵ (1) OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999. Jews were reputed to agree on a price beforehand so that they did not undermine one another. McLaren refers to Prince Vincent & Co., the Gentile business, who only gave credit to the wealthier people. McLaren could not remember a single instance in which Calitzdorp Jews took clients to court for debt – the relationship was mutually beneficial. (2) OJI, Wagener, Lucky, 1999. He remembered that Jewish rural shops, even during the Depression and Second World War gave up to a year's credit to the poor and the farmer, on the anticipation of the harvest.

²⁰⁶ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999.

²⁰⁷ Eg. OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999. ["Hy het baie belangstelling getoon in (elkeen) ... By hom was daar nie 'n boer nie, dit was 'n mens, 'n vennoot, dit was 'n landgenoot. En hy het dit so uitgeleef ..."] He tells of Rose visiting their farm in the morning, when he had already been working for hours, to drink some coffee, give them the paper and swap news. Rose slept about four hours a night. Stories include his Christmas presents for people in the district, his visiting of the sick, and his hard work.

²⁰⁸ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

²⁰⁹ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999. The example was of Rose lending a man money without any collateral, and, when warned, saying that it was up to the man's own conscience whether he would pay. Rose would also pay his suppliers for their harvests, without checking whether they had actually supplied the weight they quoted. Trust was the cornerstone of his business.

²¹⁰ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999. He was known to be generous in pay and supplies, and "kept a lot of people alive" ["het 'n klomp mense aan die lewe gehou"]

for driving a hard bargain.²¹¹ Gaaf le Roux's father believed that the Jews were essentially honest, and taught his son :

"... You must never say that a Jew has tricked you. It is your own stupidity. I never suffered a loss with the Jews ... and if the Jew haggles you down to a [lower price] it is your own fault ..."²¹²

Gaaf recalled that he was "treated like a king" when he went to visit his Jewish friends, and that the important thing was to deal only with people whom you knew well.²¹³ Jews were said to respect good businessmen, competitiveness and hard work,²¹⁴ and John de Jager remembered that many farmers were helped through tough times by Jews. Afrikaners recalled the contributions the Jews made so freely to charities.²¹⁵ On another level, few Gentile children in the era 1920 to 1950 failed to pass at some stage under the hands of a Jewish medical professional.²¹⁶

Yet, the Afrikaner preferred not to let the Jew into his inner circle, and was certainly wary of the reputed superior "Jewish" business sense. There was ample opportunity for clashes of personality and interests, and Afrikaners were especially sensitive to one of their number "losing" his farm to a Jew.²¹⁷ This sometimes resulted from the practice of farmers approaching Jewish businessmen for credit or bonds.²¹⁸ It became almost idiomatic that "farmers preferred the Jew over the bank" since they believed they could get better terms and felt more comfortable approaching an individual than an institution. Cases slowly accrued in which farms were handed over, with inevitable tension,²¹⁹ and Jewish acquisition of land always created much concern

²¹¹ OJI, Fourie, Piet, 1999. The poultry had to be alive, so that *shechita* could be followed.

²¹² OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. [Paraphrase] ["... Jy moet nooit sê 'n Jood het jou verneuk nie. Dis jou eie slegtigheid. Ek het nog nooit geld verloor met die Jode nie ... en as hy jou afstry na 'n laer prys, dan is dit jou eie skuld ...] The Le Rouxs were house friends of the Max Barrons, did a lot of business with them, and according to Gaaf, enjoyed some Haig whiskey together.

²¹³ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999.

²¹⁴ Eg. OJI, Fourie, Piet, 1999.

²¹⁵ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999.

²¹⁶ Eg. OJI, Van der Veen, 1999. He estimates that half of the doctors in his time was Jewish. OJI, Fourie, Piet, 1999. He mentioned a specific Jewish doctor who, in later years, he had learned to respect tremendously after the man had saved his young daughter's life.

²¹⁷ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999. Some people, Jews and non-Jews, would make people sit guard at their irrigation sluice during the night, and accused one another openly of stealing water – a pastime, even an obsession, with a long history in the Oudtshoorn district. Meyer tells a story of a Jew catching a farmer at his sluice.

²¹⁸ OJI, Wagener, Lucky, 1999. Oral History Project, Alex Miller, p.35

²¹⁹ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

among the Afrikaner population.²²⁰ Eventually many Afrikaners worked as farm managers for Jews, and were entrusted with everyday management.²²¹ Lucky Wagener's bankrupt family farm was bought by the very Jewish businessman whom they had once harboured as an itinerant trader.²²² The relationship was probably fraught with tension, but the ties between the Herman and Wagener families, illustrate an increasing co-dependency and growth in mutual interests between individual Jews and Afrikaners.²²³

Afrikaners were quite easy for many Jews to get along with.²²⁴ Isidore Barron distinguished between the minority of Afrikaans-speaking Jewish families who frequently had a more rural background, and the majority of English-speaking Jewish families.²²⁵ Louis Herman reflected that for those families who farmed or had ties with the farming community, Afrikaners were much closer than English-speakers,²²⁶ including some English-speaking Jews – hence the term "Boerejode."²²⁷ At the extreme end of the scale, it meant total assimilation. This was more likely among the many rural Jews, and in the village of Calitzdorp, a rural satellite of Oudtshoorn which served the western section of the Oudtshoorn district. At least two Calitzdorp Jewish families had members who "became Afrikaners" and joined the Dutch Reformed Church, after their own communal structures ceased to exist.²²⁸ Flip Katz of Calitzdorp married a Christian woman, and was reputedly ostracised by the Jewish community. He had to be buried by the Dutch Reformed Church.²²⁹ In Oudtshoorn, Sidney Subersky was one Jew who married out of the faith, but his

²²⁰ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. OJI, Van der Veen, John, 1999. He did research on Jewish land purchases in the Depression, and found a disproportionate acquisition of land in Oudtshoorn by Jews. He connected the purchases explicitly to the easy credit policy of rural shops.

²²¹ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999.

²²² OJI, Wagener, Lucky, 1999. The person was possibly Samuel Herman, father to Louis Herman. Mr Herman kept his father on as manager but introduced capital investments and innovations which in fact increased the tenants' living standard – although regret over the loss of the farm continued to plague them. Herman took an active interest in the farming operation, which impressed the tenant, and the elder Wagener told his son that "for that Jew [Herman] I would work through the night." Herman introduced scientific methods of farming and took a very active interest in the farming operation.

²²³ OJI, Wagener, Lucky, 1999. Wagener reflects that, despite "losing" their farm to the Hermans, he grew up being treated well by them, and respected them throughout.

²²⁴ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

²²⁵ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. He mentioned A. Kaplan as a contemporary who spoke more Afrikaans than English.

²²⁶ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Herman's grandparents, first generation immigrants, mixed hardly at all with their Gentile neighbours, but his parents, living on the farm, eventually made many Gentile contacts. He mentioned the Grundlings, Potgieters and Bekkers, clients at his parents' shop who would come by to talk, sometimes for hours by the counter, chewing tobacco.

²²⁷ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

²²⁸ OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999.

²²⁹ OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999. Katz was not disinherited, but became an outcast in the Jewish community. Rumours were that no Jews, at least not the rabbi, would come into his house, because it was

marriage to a De Wet was accepted more completely by his co-religionists, and he retained his ties to the Jewish community.²³⁰ Isidore Brown also married an Afrikaner.²³¹

Outwardly, there came to be less distinction between some Jews and the non-Jews with whom they spent most of their time with, especially in the rural parts of the Oudtshoorn area. Jews in Calitzdorp all spoke Afrikaans to Gentiles, and Yiddish to one another. Here, Yiddish was known as "verneuktaal" (translates as "cheating language") by the Afrikaans-speaking groups, who felt vulnerable the moment the older Jews used the language. Observers admitted, though, that many of the Jews spoke excellent Afrikaans, which brought them closer to their customers or partners.²³² Max Rose spoke near-perfect Afrikaans, and the effort he and other Jews took to fit into South African society, while maintaining a traditional base, was noticed by many Christians.²³³ Gaaf le Roux noted the clear difference between South African-born Jews and Jews of the immigrant generation. Although some Jews spoke a strange mixture of English and Afrikaans and Yiddish,²³⁴ many Jews' accent became so indistinguishable from that of their Afrikaner neighbours, that it was impossible for an outsider to "tell that he was a Jew."²³⁵ John de Jager admitted that "English was really their [the Jews'] language," but that the younger ones spoke Afrikaans effortlessly, and insisted on speaking to Afrikaners in their language. There was a sense among some Afrikaners that the Jews regarded the Afrikaner culture as inferior, given the antiquity of their own, but "they were not against it" and that some Jews helped to maintain Afrikaans.²³⁶ He added :

"... The Jews led a normal life. People did not see them as different. We almost accepted them as being no different from ourselves. They spoke our language, they were interested in the same things we were interested in ... agriculture,

impure. At his funeral, his surviving brother asked a Pretorius to be present in the Church on behalf of the Katz family, none of whom attended. He was referred to as "Oom Flip" – the Afrikaans term for an older man. OJI, Coetzee, Hielie, 1999. Katz's family rejected him completely and they continued to live separately from the Gentiles in the village.

²³⁰ OJI, Mileham, Rodney, 1999.

²³¹ OJI, McGregor, Maria, 1999.

²³² OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999. OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. Despite peculiarities in accent with the first generation, the Jews were perfectly understandable.

²³³ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

²³⁴ OJI, Fourie, Piet, 1999. Particularly the poorer ones. Piet's father in turn learned some Yiddish words.

²³⁵ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999.

²³⁶ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. He cited their respect for Langenhoven as one important gesture. Jews like Oudtshoornite Sarah Goldblatt, C.J. Langenhoven's erstwhile secretary, also played a role in establishing Afrikaans as language, and even regulating its development.

[the Jew] has a great interest in the soil ..."²³⁷

As such, Afrikaners regularly went visiting at Jewish homes, and some young Afrikaner men were "infamous" for their predilection for Jewish girls.²³⁸ One minor problem was the Jewish food laws, but "this was only at certain times" and generally there was community and friendship. The major difference lay in ways of doing business, John de Jager argued. The feeling was that Jews preferred speculation, Afrikaners cooperation.²³⁹ Lucky Wagener also recalled how Jews visiting them ate almost exactly like the Christians, except for the absence of pork and milk.²⁴⁰ The younger Jews he mixed with "spoke Afrikaans almost better than the Afrikaner," but the one thing that struck him as alien, was the Hebrew in the prayer books, which looked to him merely like "commas and dashes."²⁴¹

Many Calitzdorp Afrikaners grew up regarding the Jews of the village as wealthier than most of them. Most Whites in the rural areas were impoverished, and the Jews they came in contact with were shopkeepers or professionals, their houses seeming imposing and well furnished, their children well dressed, more "sophisticated" and even aloof. Even poor Jews were surrounded by rumours of wealth. Hielie Coetzee, living in Calitzdorp, found that some of the older Jews lived separately from the other villagers, but she mixed without any problems with the children, who spoke Afrikaans and went to school with Gentiles. A considerable generational difference existed within Jewish families, the elderly being "strange," speaking Yiddish, accented, broken Afrikaans and English and acting differently "from what we were used to with Afrikaner grandparents."²⁴² The small Jewish community in the western Oudtshoorn district and Calitzdorp, appeared closed, interacting with non-Jews frequently, but initiating contact from their side alone. They ran family businesses, practiced their religion in private, and seemed in contact with a world outside

²³⁷ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. ["... Die Jode het 'n normale lewe gelei ... Mense het hulle nie gesien as anders nie. Ons het hulle amper aanvaar – hulle is net soos ons [Afrikaners]. Hulle praat ons taal. Hulle stel belang in dieselfde rigtings wat jy in belang stel ... landbou, boerdery, hy stel baie belang in die grond ..."]

²³⁸ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. Jokingly refers to boys like John de Jager "wat so na die Jodemeisies gevry het." OJI, de Jager, John, 1999. ["... Ek was baie lief vir die Jode. Vir die Jodemeisies ook. Ek het baie aande gaan dans met hulle (laughing) ..."]. It became a running joke in the de Jager household, that Jewish girls put the Afrikaners to shame. Also mentioned by some of his contemporaries.

²³⁹ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. OJI, Van Rensburg, Elizabeth, 1999. When at the teaching college in Oudtshoorn she would invite Jewish friends home for lunch, and having nothing else, ask them if she could put pork on the sandwiches. They agreed readily.

²⁴⁰ OJI, Wagener, Lucky, 1999.

²⁴¹ OJI, Wagener, Lucky, 1999. ["... kommatjies en strepies ..."]

²⁴² OJI, Coetzee, Hielie, 1999 (b. Mostert). The Kamener family was mentioned specifically. When the young men of the Kamener family went to Cape Town, one of Hielie's family used to sleep over at the grandmother's house to keep her company.

Calitzdorp which most Poor Whites could only imagine. There was, however, an incongruity about the Jewish community. At school and in Church, Afrikaner children learned about Israel and the Jews as Chosen people, but to them, the "local Jews were different, not Israel but [like] Afrikaners" in more ways than one. Most Afrikaners had an extremely limited opportunity to see what the practice of the Jewish religion was all about.²⁴³ And outside the low-key Jewish religious practice, many Afrikaners felt that they had to look hard at times to spot the cultural differences between themselves and their Jewish neighbours.

Inevitably, such integration expressed itself in political terms. With time, some Jews, like the Gillis family, began to feel sympathy for the Afrikaner cause. They were aware of Afrikaner poverty, and had a cultural affinity towards them based on Afrikaans and shared experiences. Harry Gillis witnessed a snobbery by certain Anglophones towards the Afrikaner, which extended to Afrikaans-speaking Jews :

"... We became as ardent Afrikaners as the Afrikaners themselves. But we never lost track of our religious side, our Jewish side ... The English would not accept that the Afrikaner would one day get on his feet. It was a terrible battle ..."²⁴⁴

Some Jews had a fiery loyalty towards Afrikaans, which they considered as much their own as that of the Afrikaners. One day Harry Gillis was approached by his Afrikaans teacher :

²⁴³ OJI, Coetzee, Hielie, 1999. She describes her interaction with the Jewish children – even though they were her playmates, she felt inferior at times. They were wealthier, they had motorcars and travelled regularly to Oudtshoorn and even to Cape Town. The Jewish girls had beautiful dresses and were, as teenagers, sent away to Cape Town for secondary education. Her observations were coloured by being those of a small child going into strangers' homes, but she found a great contrast especially in the Brenner household. Jewish religious practice was a very private affair, but included Friday night dinners, *kosher* food, trips to Oudtshoorn for worship.

²⁴⁴ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. Mr Gillis remembers going to Cape Town as a child, and that some shops would not serve him because he spoke only Afrikaans and they thought that he was an Afrikaner.

"... [He said] I want to teach you something about Afrikaans, and he spoke Afrikaans like I had never heard it, that *he* cried and I cried. He actually said the words of Die Stem, and the mountains of the Swartberg were in the background. It was heart-rending, and I thought, there *is* something in this Afrikaans ..."²⁴⁵

With such sentiments, it was not surprising that some Jews felt an affinity towards Afrikaner politics, even though the National Party became increasingly antisemitic after 1930. Living in a staunchly Nationalist Parliamentary seat was at times difficult for some Jews to accept. Yet, there was an ambivalence in Afrikaner behaviour between the essential harmony and politeness of everyday exchange and the programmatic antisemitism which punctuated it at intervals in newspapers and on the political stage.²⁴⁶ This ambivalence was never completely resolved, and had much to do with the extent to which currents on a national level penetrated into the close-knit community of Oudtshoorn.²⁴⁷ Reggie Kahn noted :

"... Personally, they have always been very good to me and when I meet them they know that I'm Jewish, I've met with such kindness that it is unbelievable. Why, I don't know, because the Christians they accept you individually, but when it comes to a nation they're anti-Jewish ..."²⁴⁸

Jews saw a discrepancy between the Malanites' occasional discrimination and the civic contributions which their leaders made. S.P. le Roux himself was a landowner, and was entirely congenial towards his Jewish constituents most of the time. He seemed to have disregarded the more extreme antisemitic notions, perhaps reserving some private anti-Jewish feelings, but finding no wrong with Jews who supported his programs. One such supporter was Robert

²⁴⁵ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

²⁴⁶ See Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, pp.142-153 for a discussion on programmatic antisemitism and the distinction between private and public antisemitism.

²⁴⁷ See Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience, pp.97-110 for a national background, especially regarding the immigration issue.

²⁴⁸ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, p.37

Rollnick, who managed the local National Party-controlled newspaper, the Kango Bode, and sat on the local National Party executive between 1925 and 1936. Rollnick had many National Party friends and described S.P. le Roux as "a very nice fellow who had never done anything to offend his Jewish constituents." He, at least, found local antisemitism to be negligible after three generations of co-existence.²⁴⁹ Other Jews concurred, believing that the antisemitic content of the National Party agenda was hardly enough "to influence the country in general."²⁵⁰ Therefore, even though the majority of Jews were SAP or United Party (UP) people, a significant proportion of them held onto the National Party up to the 1930s, even though this earned them the distaste of their co-religionists. Louis Herman explained :

"... [The Nationalists] were good to us [Jews]. They never picked on us, they were never antisemitic, and when you wanted to see somebody, you went to the front door, not to the back door like you did with the United Party ..."²⁵¹

Herman's parents felt more comfortable with the National Party than with the United Party because "they made a living from the Nationalists " and, because they could not speak English, never mixed with the English.²⁵² Leslie Newman's father, an English Jew, retained his loyalties towards Britain throughout his life, yet described himself as a "Hertzog man" because he "thought their policies were better." This changed with the ascendancy of Malan.²⁵³ Reggie Kahn's elder brother openly supported the National Party "until Apartheid," and her father, a farmer, was friends with National Party Members of Parliament, even though he was staunchly SAP and would not allow them to have meetings on his farm.²⁵⁴ Apparently, many Jews' party loyalties were not decided purely by the party's attitude towards Jews, given the mixed reception Jews were accustomed to getting from both the SAP and National Party. For Disraeli Simanowitz, antisemitism was an important issue, but he also voted UP, because his father had been a "Smuts

²⁴⁹ From an interview by Markowitz, Arthur, "The Story of South African Jewry – Oudtshoorn Jewry Today" in SA Jewish Times, 27 February 1948, p.6 ; Rollnick only quit the Nationalists in the 1940s, when he found their Antisemitism unsavoury.

²⁵⁰ Oral History Project, Disraeli Simanowitz, p.54

²⁵¹ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. (These perceptions were, of course, recorded fifty years after the fact, and are controverted by some other facts, but the gist remains.)

²⁵² OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

²⁵³ OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999. Newman's father had been born in Britain, and his son described him as having "Communist" leanings, so the explanation probably lay in the Pact Labour-Nat coalition of 1924 to the 1930s.

²⁵⁴ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, p.36

man." He did not recall any Jew being pressured to vote for a particular party by other Jews.²⁵⁵ Nor did Reggie Kahn remember being pressured during her Oudtshoorn days to vote for a particular party simply because she was Jewish. She also followed the example of her father, who had voted SAP because "they were right and he was British." Although attitudes towards Jews played a major part in her being a "staunch United Party" supporter, it was not the only issue at work.²⁵⁶

Most Jews were careful not to play an overt role in Oudtshoorn's national politics, lest it focussed undue attention on them. In general, they preferred to work through the civic channels such as the town council.²⁵⁷ This caution was determined not only by the fact that they were Jewish, and therefore would be open to antisemitism from their opponents, but also because Jews were usually associated with the SAP minority and thought it better to avoid factional conflict. Usually they succeeded in doing so, and when they were involved in disputes, it was more often about party politics than friction between Jews and Gentiles. Some Afrikaners habitually called SAP supporters and Anglophone Jews "hanskakies" or lackeys of the British, but this rarely was cause for grave concern, and motivated more by party politics than pure antisemitism. Generally even SAP members went unmolested between elections.²⁵⁸ Attitudes towards the Jews seemed to change only during election time, but otherwise the negative feelings were kept private and only covertly influenced local affairs.²⁵⁹

Until the mid-1930s, therefore, and certainly while the more moderate General Hertzog was the National Party leader, many Jews could consider supporting the Nationalists. Many decided their political loyalties based on factors beyond antisemitism or a party's attitude towards Jews specifically, that is, for reasons similar to non-Jews in Oudtshoorn. When Hertzog and Smuts proposed the coalition in 1933, some prominent Oudtshoorn Jews were pleased, seeing a chance of reaching out to moderate Afrikaners. Sol Green wrote to the Courant to try and create support for the Coalitionists, the Hertzogites, whose Afrikaner candidate he would vote for "without the least misgiving." It was a crucial test, which Le Roux failed in the eyes of some Jews, when he decided to play the ethnic exclusivist card and support the more radical D.F. Malan. Many thought that Le Roux was acting out of character by supporting Malanism and the "Purified"

²⁵⁵ Oral History Project, Disraeli Simanowitz, pp.52-3

²⁵⁶ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, p.36

²⁵⁷ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, p.31

²⁵⁸ OJI, Newman, Leslie, 1999.

²⁵⁹ Oral History Project, Alex Miller, p.26

National Party. Green accused him of showing himself unable to "rise above the old party rut."²⁶⁰ In any event, the local Coalitionist faction was crushed in the local 1933 Parliamentary elections and Le Roux returned to unchallenged power. Such a show of strength in favour of the Malanite faction was disconcerting to moderates in Oudtshoorn, and many Jews who had supported Hertzog now felt alienated from the reconstituted National Party. On the other hand, since the local United Party now apparently embraced people across ethnic lines, and had the support of Hertzog and Afrikaner moderates, it was now easier for Jews to find allies, and for some Afrikaners to provide such alliances.

Having voted for Malan, however, the direction of the majority of the district's Afrikaner population with regards to other ethnic groups, was made increasingly clear. Doctor Stusser was of the opinion that the goodwill, friendship and religious tolerance that had existed in "the early days" were all but gone :

"... people of various denominations had subscribed for the building of the Queen Street Synagogue. These feelings, however, no longer existed ..."²⁶¹

The Malanite National Party easily won the 1936 local Provincial Council elections,²⁶² using prominent Hoggenheimer-type arguments and arguing for greater ethnic exclusivism or self-determination for Afrikaners.²⁶³ Sure of his electoral support, and in line with D.F. Malan's open discrimination against Jewish immigrants,²⁶⁴ S.P. le Roux also became more aggressively anti-Jewish. He now endorsed Malan's policy on the grounds of Jewish unassimilability, to "prevent the danger of a third race in South Africa," and stated :

"... If the Jews are looking to create a land for themselves within our country, in the future, then he is warning them

²⁶⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 May 1933, Letter "Mr Green's Opinion", p.4 .

²⁶¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 September 1937, "His Fiftieth Year of Ministry – Fine Tributes to Rev. M. Woolfson – Public Reception in Drill Hall", p.3 ; this view is questioned by other evidence, but there certainly were new tensions between Jews and non-Jews.

²⁶² Oudtshoorn Observer, 22 October 1936, p.5 ; the winning margin was 1659 (3673 over 2014 votes)

²⁶³ Oudtshoorn Observer, 22 October 1936, p.5

²⁶⁴ E.g. Oudtshoorn Observer, 7 January 1937, p.4 ; Oudtshoorn Observer 18 January 1937, p.2

now that they are looking for, and will find, only trouble ..."²⁶⁵

5.5 "A Jewish Afrikaner" – The Locketz Letters

A pertinent set of letters appeared in the National Party daily, Die Burger, in 1936.²⁶⁶ It was triggered by a national debate over United Party claims that its policies had stopped undesirable Jewish immigration. The debate touched both on fears of Jewish unassimilability as citizens, and different views concerning the nature of "true" South African identity. As part of the debate, Sam Locketz, an Afrikaans-speaking Oudtshoorn Jew, wrote in Afrikaans to Die Burger. He argued that the Jewish immigrants landing on South African shores were not to blame, but the antisemitic intolerance which had driven them from Germany. This same intolerance, he felt, had washed over South Africa, and he noted that :

"... As an *Afrikaner of Jewish descent*, I must protest against the unreasonable accusations against the Jewish section of the population ..."

Locketz argued that this was ludicrous because of the great sympathy that had been shown by himself and "thousands of other *Afrikaners of Jewish descent*" for the National Party cause. They were almost completely assimilated : they had complete fluency in the Afrikaans language and respect for the nascent Afrikaans literature. They contributed to Afrikaner Christian charities. Some even married Christian Afrikaner women and, besides themselves converting, raised their children as Afrikaners and nationalists. He could list twenty Jewish families in the South Western districts whose home tongue was Afrikaans and

"... Their children feel so strongly Nationalist that they only speak Afrikaans. They cannot speak the Jewish language (Yiddish) and they have no inclination to

²⁶⁵ Oudtshoorn Observer, 5 August 1937, "National Party Gathering – Adv S.P. le Roux speaks", p.4 ; at this meeting at least one Jew, Subersky, attended, and asked the speaker several questions about Jewish immigration

²⁶⁶ All from Locketz, Sam, letter "From a Jewish Point of View" in Die Burger, 17 November 1936, p.9 and "From a Jewish Point of View", Die Burger, 11 December 1936, p.6 ; See Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1991, pp. 46-69 and Moodie, T. Dunbar, The Rise of Afrikanerdom, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975, pp. 96-115 ; also Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience, pp. 111-112 for a background to this debate on Jewish immigration and the Afrikaner volk identity.

speak English ..."

He asked how it was possible that the Afrikaners could be unaware of this. Jews had made huge contributions to South Africa and Oudtshoorn, many Afrikaner families had "Jewish blood in their veins" and it was completely unreasonable to exclude Jews based on some vague notion of blood. He wrote as a "plattelandse seun" [a country boy] :

"... Many Afrikaners have told me personally that when they are in need, it is not their fellow Afrikaners who help them, but the Jewish section of the population ..."

Antisemitism was not only anti-Christian, but misplaced. Poor Whites "thank God that they have a job with the Jews." Antisemitism would only undermine Jewish entrepreneurial spirit and put more Poor Whites out of work. He had a high regard for Afrikaners of "Dutch or French descent," whom he implored to see the "Afrikaner of Jewish descent" as friends. Locketz pointed out that in the platteland, the "children of Afrikaans-speakers" grew up together. They were "filled with the same passion for South Africa" and the Jews knew that the Afrikaners were the backbone of the country. Jews had no reason to undermine the "boeredom" and absolutely associated with the interests of the Afrikaner. This had been proved in the "Anglo-Boer" war, where Jews had fought for the Boers, and he added,

"... I can give the assurance that if South Africa is ever threatened again by war, that there will be thousands of Afrikaners of Jewish descent who will rise in unison and be willing with their fellow Afrikaans-speakers to defend South Africa ..."

Locketz finally indicated that with the glaring exception of the strange antisemitism which the Nationalists sometimes purveyed, many Jews were in complete harmony with the political and economic ideals of the National Party. This antisemitism was

"... an insult to Jews who are Nasionaalgesind [Nationalist] and who want to contribute to the building up of a strong and

self-sufficient South African nation ...²⁶⁷

Die Burger received several replies. The only reply to come from Oudtshoorn itself, was by one J. Louw, who asked how the Afrikaner could "build up racial purity" if it "allowed this torrential immigration [of Jews]" and appealed to people to awake quickly and save themselves from the condemnation of their silence by their descendants.²⁶⁸ The debate touched on issues very central to the Afrikaner identity. Locketz's definition of himself as "an Afrikaner of Jewish descent" went against the grain of a stricter definition, which posed Afrikaners as White Protestant South Africans, Afrikaans-speaking and of Dutch, German or French descent.²⁶⁹ Locketz's claim hinged on his pigmentation, his home use of the Afrikaans language, and his National Party political affiliations. In his mind conversion from Judaism to Christianity was not even necessary for a person to be an Afrikaner. But for Afrikaners with a vague idea of "Jewish blood" and of Jewish unassimilability, this was impossible.²⁷⁰

The Boerejode like Locketz provided the strongest weapon against popular antisemitism in rural Oudtshoorn, by squarely disproving arguments of unassimilability. Even if Jews could by the strictest definition not be Afrikaners, many so closely resembled Afrikaners culturally and politically, that there were few grounds to exclude them. Antisemites were left with two avenues : first, to point to disproportionate Jewish involvement in certain areas of the economy. And secondly, to make a distinction between recent immigrant Jews, and the Jews whom they had shared their country with for generations. A tenuous argument along this second line, was that South Africa could only absorb a certain percentage of Jews, that only a certain percentage could ever become Boerejode, and that this limit had been reached. But there was no empirical proof that, given time, the immigrant Jews would not become as acculturated as the Locketzes of Oudtshoorn. The first argument was of more practical use for Oudtshoorn.

²⁶⁷ All from Locketz, Sam, letter "From a Jewish Point of View" in Die Burger, 17 November 1936, p.9 and "From a Jewish Point of View", Die Burger, 11 December 1936, p.6

²⁶⁸ Louw, J.H., letter "Undesirable Immigration" in Die Burger, 24 November 1936, p.10

²⁶⁹ See Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, 1994, pp.145-146 and Moodie, T. Dunbar, The Rise of Afrikanerdom, 1975, pp. 96-115 for a discussion on the volkish nationalism of the Afrikaners and its dialectic with antisemitic ideas.

²⁷⁰ See Moodie, T. Dunbar, The Rise of Afrikanerdom, 1975, pp. 96-115 for a discussion on the Afrikaner identity, volkish nationalism and civil religion in the 1930s especially.

Locketz's argument showed a willingness by some Jews at least, to immerse themselves in Afrikaner culture and political aims. But the influx of Nazi racial theory,²⁷¹ added to a perception of their own growing strength, made many Afrikaners consider Jewish assimilation, if not impossible, then unnecessary. With Oudtshoorn National Party Afrikanerdom strong in numbers, they were free to apply the strictest definitions of what a "true Afrikaner" was, and that in some cases excluded even the most willing candidates like Locketz.

The term "Boerejood" was coined to denote a kind of Afrikaner-Jewish hybrid, and only religious observance stood between an acculturated Boerejood and the Afrikaner. Indeed, the distinction was sometimes so small, that it begged the question of what held the Jewish community together, except religion, and whether a declining Jewish community could maintain a separate identity. Locketz revealed a greater willingness to prove similarities to Afrikaners, than in maintaining a separate Jewish identity. It is possible that to him, "True Afrikaners" were not an ethnic group, but Whites whose primary political loyalty lay to South Africa. The major barrier to assimilation that lay between some Jews and Afrikaners, was antisemitism in general and Nazism in particular. As Afrikaner society debated Nazism in the 1930s and 1940s, it was indirectly influencing the communal unity of those who happened to be of Jewish descent. People like Locketz were proud to call themselves Afrikaners and associate with Afrikaner interests, if only antisemitism could be rejected by the Afrikaners. Antisemitism, ironically, kept many Jews on the margin from completely assimilating out of the Jewish group.

5.6 Jews in Civil Life

By the 1930s many Jews moved freely among Gentiles, and there existed a general religious tolerance.²⁷² Examples abound of Oudtshoorn Jews who formed extensive relationships with Gentiles, and fitted easily into the general civic and social milieu. One such person was Abraham Abel, the owner of the Central Hotel. Besides his activities on Jewish committees, Abel participated in golf, soccer, hockey and rugby and he belonged to the Freemasons.²⁷³ Bennie

²⁷¹ See Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, pp.142-150 ; Also Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, 1991, pp.16-69

²⁷² It was, for example not uncommon for Jews to donate wreaths at the funerals of Christians eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 August 1932, p.3 ; several Jews donated wreaths to the funeral of Mrs W.H. Galvin, a Roman Catholic

²⁷³ From the Oudtshoorn Courant and Oudtshoorn Observer, between 1930 and 1948, Abraham Abel can be traced to ownership of the Central Hotel ; member of the Golf Club ; Committee member Soccer Club ; Council member United Hebrew Institutions ; member of Freemasons ; member Oudtshoorn Jewish Guild ; Vice-President and Referee and Coach Soccer Club ; member Oudtshoorn Herzl Zionist Society ; Vice-

Gillis was active in civic administration and business.²⁷⁴ Sol Green had a similarly impressive career in local civic associations and Jewish bodies.²⁷⁵ Dr Israel Stusser transferred the respect earned in his profession to a fruitful contribution to sports, cultural and civic organisations.²⁷⁶ These people had grown up in Oudtshoorn. They tended to be professionals or successful businessmen, and the bodies they joined were mostly confined to the town of Oudtshoorn. And they also had the personality, talents and inclination to become involved in civic life. Many Jews did not have the ability or inclination to do so.²⁷⁷

There was a continuing diffusion of the Jewish group in civic life, as individuals developed different interests. No organised "Jewish vote" existed to get other Jews onto the Town Council,²⁷⁸ in fact Jews competed and excluded one another from the Council.²⁷⁹ Yet Jews continued to have at least one co-religionist on the twelve-member body – disproportionate to their numbers in even the White population. One Afrikaner even argued that it was proper for the town to always have at least two Jews on the Council.²⁸⁰ The Jews themselves were proud of their contribution :

"... if there is any place in the Union where Jews showed they were good citizens it was in Oudtshoorn (applause) ..."²⁸¹

Such claims were based on a general "good feeling that had invariably existed in the town between the Jewish and Christian communities," and even though antisemitic tensions were rising

President SWD Association Football Union ; delegate to New Zionist Congress, Johannesburg ; President Soccer Club ; President Hockey Club.

²⁷⁴ Again from Oudtshoorn Courant and Oudtshoorn Observer 1930 to 1948

²⁷⁵ From from Oudtshoorn Courant and Oudtshoorn Observer 1930 to 1948

²⁷⁶ From Oudtshoorn Courant and Oudtshoorn Observer 1930 to 1948

²⁷⁷ OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. His father had three brothers. The father mixed freely with non-Jews and "was more modern in his ways than the other three", playing bowls, becoming the treasurer of the Synagogue etcetera. The others preferred to circulate among themselves or other fellow Jews.

²⁷⁸ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Louis Herman admitted that Jews were proud of Jewish candidates, and voted for them often because they were the people they were familiar with socially, but not specifically because they were Jewish or to advance Jewish interests.

²⁷⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 29 August 1930, p.2 ; the candidates in this case was S. Green and J. Lazarus ; Lazarus failed to gain a seat, while Green did.

²⁸⁰ Oudtshoorn Observer, 22 July 1937, p.5 ; the speaker was J. Smit, probably the headmaster of the Hebrew School.

²⁸¹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 23 September 1937, "50 Years in the Ministry – Rev. M. Woolfson's Golden Jubilee" ; the speaker was Dr. I. Stusser ; he referred to the funds that had been made available in the 1890s by Christians to building the St John Street and Queen Street Synagogues, which had been reciprocated since then by large annual contributions by a wealthy Jew to the Dutch Reformed Church.

by the 1930s, it could not undermine the essential harmony.²⁸² One proof at least was that by 1937, Oudtshoorn had its third Jewish mayor.²⁸³ Another : when the Nazis began persecuting Jews, a local minister reminded that if Oudtshoorn "got rid of every Jew within its borders ... Oudtshoorn would undoubtedly be much poorer."²⁸⁴ Bennie Gillis later prided himself that he had, even in the 1930s, never lost a municipal election, even though Oudtshoorn was "the strongest National [Party] seat in South Africa" and he had been "one Jew among nine others [i.e. Gentiles]" Gillis recalled that he had been "begged" by the other councillors and ratepayers to come onto the Town Council because he was such an effective man. It earned him one mayoralty and two terms as deputy mayor.²⁸⁵ Such success creates the impression that antisemitism was either sporadic or episodic, or confined to certain spheres of social interaction. Antisemitism was either too weak to force Jews from civil society, or the Jews' foes concentrated their strength in certain areas, such as the cooperative movement and the National Party, and did not at the time make a concerted effort to keep Jews from other positions of prominence. Whatever the case, the wider population accepted a certain amount of anti-Jewish feeling, though not enough to reverse the Jews' slow movement towards full and equal citizenship.

Jews continued to disprove the impression that they formed a united, and unassimilable community, the basis on which antisemitic propaganda was built. People of the Jewish faith showed that they could represent groups with which they had no ethnic ties, and some were seen as such respectable and unbiased citizens, that the poor or disenfranchised chose them as their spokespersons.²⁸⁶ Jews on the Town Council attended Christian services on Mayoral Sunday, the premier Council or civic event of the year.²⁸⁷ In his mayoral year, Gillis further wished the

²⁸² Oudtshoorn Observer, 23 September 1937, "50 Years in the Ministry – Rev. M. Woolfson's Golden Jubilee"

²⁸³ They were A. Jacobson (1914), Sol Green (1933) and Bennie Gillis (1937).

²⁸⁴ Oudtshoorn Observer, 8 August 1938, Letter "The Jews" by Rev. D. Moore, p.4

²⁸⁵ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, p.26

²⁸⁶ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 August 1933, p.3 ; When two hundred Coloured families in the rural areas were threatened with starvation from unemployment and drought, a hundred Coloured men from Dysselsdorp formed a deputation. They rallied M.S. Lipschitz, a wealthy Jewish landowner in the area, to their cause, and he accompanied them to the magistrate's office and defended their claim to aid. Oudtshoorn Courant, 25 August 1933, p.3 ; Rev. Woolfson personally canvassed two wagonloads' worth of supplies for beleaguered Dysselsdorp, almost exclusively Coloured. In this he cooperated with efforts by Christian ministers and civil authorities.

²⁸⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 15 September 1936, "Mayoral Sunday", p.3 ; Traditionally, the Mayoral Sunday was held in the Church to which the mayor belonged. In 1936, J.J.S. Naude was Mayor, and B.L. Gillis Deputy Mayor. Gillis and other "City Fathers" attended the church service, meant to as divine grace for the coming year of civic government. Gillis was known for his diligence as Town Councillor, repeatedly obtaining a "possible", i.e. presence at all the council meetings in a given year (Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 October 1936, "Attendance of Councillors", p.2.

Christian community a merry Christmas in the Observer,²⁸⁸ and, as tradition dictated, entertained hundreds of Christian children on the Recreation Grounds.²⁸⁹ Many Christian town councillors promised to keep "identifying with social functions irrespective of race or religion,"²⁹⁰ and the Town Council itself had many cross-cutting alliances. This behaviour defied ethnic or religious boundaries,²⁹¹ and ensured the unanimous election of Sol Green to Deputy Mayor in 1932²⁹² and Mayor in 1933, when he was ensured of the "goodwill of the entire council."²⁹³ It also created surprising partnerships, with J.J.S. Naude, an ardent Malanite Nationalist, in his mayoral year in 1937 having as Deputy Mayor the Jew, Bennie Gillis. Rhetoric of political parties rarely went more than skin deep, and people cooperated peacefully to run the town's affairs. Jews also cooperated with people from varied backgrounds in the Chamber of Commerce, and it was as normal for them to differ strongly with fellow Jews, as it was for them to agree with non-Jews.²⁹⁴

Some divisions occurred over shop hours. Jewish holidays were known to many Christians because it involved the virtual shutting down of the business district.²⁹⁵ By the 1930s, however, the need to serve Gentiles on Saturday, the premier trading day for the rural population, had for a long time already necessitated that most Jews, except for the "very religious," make inroads into Sabbath observance. Jewish shops were by now almost universally open on the Sabbath.²⁹⁶ Jews also sometimes transgressed "Christian" laws by selling goods on Sundays,²⁹⁷ and on Christian

²⁸⁸ Oudtshoorn Observer, 9 December 1937, "The Mayor's Greetings", p.5.

²⁸⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 16 December 1937, "Mayor's Xmas Cheer – Nearly 2000 children entertained", p.5 ; 400 White and 1500 Coloured children were given "Xmas" [sic] hampers with sweets at two separate occasions ; Mayor Gillis Addressed both separately.

²⁹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 September 1932, p.2 ; statement of Mayor A.H. Cowley upon stepping down from office at the end of his tenure.

²⁹¹ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 March 1935, p.2 ; one such lasting relationship was struck between the family of John ("Jannie") de Jager and the Behr Lewins ; when an orphan in his teens, de Jager was taken into the business of Behr Lewin, general dealer, and supported until 1908, when he opened his own business.

²⁹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 February 1932, p.2 ; Green had at this time been on the Council for five years. Normally, the Deputy and Mayoral positions were decided by informal rotation, with individuals supporting Councillors of long standing for the posts, in the understanding that they would be given a chance in a succeeding year. Nonetheless, the understandings often broke down, and contested elections (only councillors could vote) of the top positions were common. Green was elected unanimously on both occasions, and wished "mazeltov" by the Courant on the first occasion.

²⁹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 September 1933, p.2 ; Green had an English-speaking, non-Jewish Deputy, also elected unanimously.

²⁹⁴ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 March 1931, "Tobacco Manufacturers Disagree", p.3 ; in this case, Sol Green, tobacco manufacturer, disagreed so strongly with certain policies of S.P. le Roux, member of Parliament, that he and his brother walked out of the meeting ; another Jew, B.L. Gillis, also a tobacco manufacturer, moved a motion of confidence in Le Roux shortly thereafter ; other members, Jewish and non-Jewish, divided into each of the camps.

²⁹⁵ Eg. Oudtshoorn Observer, 17 September 1936, p.5

²⁹⁶ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

²⁹⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 March 1930, p.2

holidays, there was often a division in the business community, with some shops remaining open.²⁹⁸ Individual Jewish business persons wrote to the Town Council demanding to know why they were prohibited from doing their business on Sundays, when they chose and when their services were required.²⁹⁹ Others more surreptitiously took the risk of trading on Sundays and paying the fines if they were caught,³⁰⁰ but it cannot be said to have been an organised trend. Most Jewish traders were too careful of affronting large numbers of their Christian clientele, and Jews generally kept their peace when confronted with conservative Christian sentiments.³⁰¹ When the Town Council decided to allow trading on Sunday, and a Christian petition was delivered to them, Jewish councillors complied with the majority wish. Sol Green, however, qualified his decision,

"... It is mainly a question of [religious] sentiment ... and it is our bounden duty to close cafes on Sundays. I, however, consider it a retrogressive step and ... Oudtshoorn is growing smaller instead of bigger ..."³⁰²

Yet some Jews outside the council supported the conservative Christian sentiment.³⁰³ On one occasion, Jewish liquor traders³⁰⁴ were accused by conservative Christians of trying to "muzzle the Church,"³⁰⁵ and found many of their co-religionists arrayed against them in public condemnation of liquor sales.³⁰⁶

²⁹⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 April 1930, "Trade during Easter Weekend", p.5 ; also OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Some Jewish shopowners surreptitiously opened shop for customers in emergencies outside trading hours, or on holidays, especially for rural people who had come a long way.

²⁹⁹ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 December 1936, p.2 ; Mrs. Treisman, a restaurant/café owner, wrote to the Council demanding to know why she could not serve food on Sundays. The reply was that café owners were not allowed to serve food, i.e. apply for such a licence. The Sunday issue was not resolved.

³⁰⁰ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 15 October 1935, p.3 ; Samuel and Susan Batzofin, owners of a shop on George Road, were fined £ 1 for selling a tin of condensed milk to a coloured boy ; numerous other instances exist, especially with the rural shops ; other non-Christians (such as Cassim Tyre, an Indian shopkeeper, Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 October 1935, p.3) took similar risks, as did the odd Christian.

³⁰¹ 75 % of all Whites in Oudtshoorn belonged to a branch of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1930 (Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 June 1931 – based on preliminary census)

³⁰² Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 November 1935, p.2 ; J.G. Taute, an Afrikaner Councillor, replied to Green that two Jews had approached him "with tears in [their] eyes" to ask him to close the shops on Sundays and prevent their children from gambling in the cafes on Sundays.

³⁰³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 November 1935, p.2

³⁰⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 December 1930, "Liquor Licencing Court", p.2 ; in 1934 (Oudtshoorn Observer, 6 December 1934, p.5) three liquor licences were held by Jews : B.T Shapiro (Imperial Hotel), Mark Morris (Criterion Hotel), A. Abel (Central Hotel).

³⁰⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 April 1936, "Drink Evil in Oudtshoorn", p.2.

³⁰⁶ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 April 1932, "Liquor (Amendment) Bill Protest Meeting", p.3 ; I.B. Lewin was especially vociferous in his opposition to the extension of the open hours of bars in town ; also

Jewish ratepayers differed on many issues such as rates or municipal voting districts. When they tried to form a consensus, it was about matters of purely Jewish concern, such as High Holidays. Otherwise they used the avenues of civic debate to express their opinions, without regard to shared religion or ethnicity.³⁰⁷ For example, when the Town Council, at the insistence of some ratepayers, began to demand the "cleaning up" of the town centre, Jews found themselves on opposite sides.³⁰⁸ The St John Street area especially, had been inhabited by a large population of Jews, many of whom had bought property there.³⁰⁹ By the 1930s, the Jews had moved into the more well-to-do residential areas, but some had retained ownership of slum plots. The Municipal Voters' Association, composed mostly of White, middle class property owners, complained bitterly that St John Street was now a "*hotnosnes*."³¹⁰ Oudtshoorn slowly moved towards racial segregation, with Town Councillors, including Jews, disapproving of the "unhealthy state by which Native, coloured people and Europeans live cheek by jowl."³¹¹ Although he supported many of the slum eradication measures meant to improve the town, Sol Green took exception to the targeting of the Coloured community and rather blamed the White property owners. These included Louis Klass, who argued that improvement of the properties would result in the bankruptcy of the owners,³¹² as well as the Noieck family, who had extensive rent-producing property in the area.³¹³ Several other families were blamed for the atrocious living conditions,³¹⁴

Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 April 1932, "Protest Against Liquor Amendment Bill", p.3 ; Solomon Weinstein represents the Boys' High School Matric Class condemning the Bill on behalf of his peers and the youth of the town in general) ; B.L. Gillis was also an opponent of the liquor trade (Oudtshoorn Observer, 8 December 1938, p.4) ; Jewish ladies also contributed strongly to the Women's Society, one of the liquor dealers' strongest opponents (Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 February 1933, p.2).

³⁰⁷ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 May 1931, "Our Local Parliament", p.3.

³⁰⁸ The old lower St John Street, Vaaldraai and North End slums, had undergone a slow transformation since the pioneer years, when these neighbourhoods had been inhabited primarily by Whites. OJI, Joan, 1999. In the 1930s, still, Jews were concentrated in certain areas. Wealthier Jews concentrated in Queen Street, virtually a Jewish enclave. Poorer Jews still lived in St John Street, High and Adderley Street, towards the poorer side of town.

³⁰⁹ See Coetzee, Daniel, "Class and Capital : Oudtshoorn Jewry 1874 – 1914", Honours Dissertation, University of Cape Town, Map Section.

³¹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 March 1937, "Oudtshoorn Slums must go", p.4. A derogatory term for a place where impoverished or low-class Coloured people lived.

³¹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 October 1933, p.3 ; 13 October 1933, p.4 ; decisions taken by the Town Council on the segregation of "races" were supported in principle by Sol Green (at that time the Mayor) and B.L. Gillis, the other Jewish town councillor in 1933, even though Green at times disapproved of the treatment of the non-Whites or the derogatory tone assumed towards them by Whites.

³¹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 March 1937, "Oudtshoorn Slums must Go", p.4.

³¹³ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 May 1937, p.2 ; 14 May 1937, p.2 ; Louis Noieck's plans to build further tenements were turned down by Bennie Gillis, Chairman of the Health Committee, leading to some public argument. An "urban decay zone" is that area of light industry and residential property around the Central Business District (CBD), which is characterised by poor living conditions, old and badly kept-up buildings, a low-income population and usually a high crime rate. In this case Vaaldraai and the St John Street slums qualified for this definition.

³¹⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 August 1946, "Deplorable Housing Conditions – Annual Health Report", p.2 ; This even in 1946 meant that 75 % of Coloured housing were slums and 80 % overcrowded. These percentages were arrived at by the Medical Officer of Health, based on the then Slums Act.

and the disagreement was fierce enough for some Jews to demand the removal of town councillors, specifically their two co-religionists, Gillis and Green.³¹⁵ These two felt that "civic pride" overrode any ethnic loyalty, and declared themselves ashamed of those who held "the few shillings of rent they collect" over the good of their town.³¹⁶

5.7 Conclusions

Jews experienced a strong ambivalence towards them within the non-Jewish community of Oudtshoorn. Private antisemitism always existed, although most non-Jews lived peacefully alongside Jews. Public antisemitism limited itself to specific areas of society. The National Party branch of Oudtshoorn easily adopted anti-Jewish rhetoric as part of its program, and absorbed anti-Jewish propaganda from its leadership. This propaganda found a willing audience in the local Afrikaner community, but was applied to local conditions to mobilize Afrikaners for specific purposes. One was to ensure Afrikaner domination of the local parliamentary constituency, during election time. The second was to motivate and encourage the cooperative movement, through which the Afrikaner producers wanted to gain control of the channels of distribution. National Party leaders wanted to consolidate this economic and political power by ensuring ethnic loyalty, and this was achieved partly through antisemitic rhetoric which presented Jews as outsiders, who did not have Afrikaner or Oudtshoorn interests at heart.

This propaganda was only partly successful, largely because the Jews disproved it by their actions. Jews integrated freely and extensively, although most did so without surrendering their Jewish religious identity. Jewish acculturation was highly advanced, and some Jews openly voiced affinity for Afrikaners and support of their cultural and even their political objectives. They asked only that antisemitism be eliminated. Many Jews also closely resembled the non-Jews with whom they grew up and interacted, most prominently by speaking Afrikaans. Jews showed repeatedly that they sought to advance the Oudtshoorn community in general and that the Jewish community had no united interests apart from its religious and cultural institutions. In other words, they were citizens of the town and district, and most non-Jews accepted them as equals in this regard. Most of the time, up to the early 1930s, the antisemitism that accompanied the

³¹⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 April 1937, "Membership of Voters' Association", p.2 ; two slum-owning Jews, Messrs Noieck and Rollnick, were part of a group advocating the "removal" of eleven of the twelve town councillors by the municipal voters. They specifically singled out Sol Green and Bennie Gillis, known for their active pursuit of slum eradication. The disagreement lasted a decade.

³¹⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 May 1937, p.2 ; Statement by Bennie Gillis, Chairman of the Health Committee of the Town Council.

struggle for economic and political power did not affect the interaction between Jews and non-Jews. The ties between the two groups were so strong, that only a political or economic crisis, accompanied by strong propaganda from outside the district, could alter the essential harmony.

University of Cape Town

6. The Assault on Inclusion : Jews and Exclusivist and Radical Movements in the 1930s and 1940s

The nineteen-thirties began peacefully enough for Jews. Occasionally, antisemitism shone through, but Jews as an ethnic group or religion were not the targets of organised attacks. By the mid-thirties, however, under the influence of economic depression and radical trends in Europe, local Gentiles were experimenting with movements or ideologies which, as side-effect, created challenges to Jews.¹

6.1 The Challenge from the Cooperatives

The cooperative movement, balancing volkish nationalism with socialist principles, and based on an increasingly ethnically exclusive Afrikaner constituency, remained the most potent force in Oudtshoorn politics. Afrikaner producers now increasingly dominated the market, and together weathered the worst of the Depression.² This contributed to loyalty towards the Nationalists who ran the cooperatives.³

One feature was the gradual alienation of some Jews. The 1930 tobacco bill which the M.P., Stephen le Roux, proposed, so offended Sol Green, a Jewish tobacco manufacturer, that he walked out of the Chamber of Commerce. On another occasion, he accused the Minister of Labour of endorsing compulsory cooperation "as a matter of expediency, to the representations of some of his friends" (i.e. Le Roux).⁴ Tobacco production was now centralized under the local cooperative, and the Greens, as manufacturers, Jews and SAP supporters, were in a particularly sensitive position. The legal advantages given by Le Roux's tobacco bill to the cooperatives perturbed Sol Green, since it threatened his own family enterprise.⁵ Yet B.L. Gillis, another Jewish tobacco manufacturer, supported the bill. The Gillises, collaborating more closely with the dominant Nationalists, eventually surpassed their major competitors, the Greens. This contributed to lasting friction between the two clans.⁶ At this point, the three major Jewish tobacco

¹ See Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, 1994, pp. 142-153 ; Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1991, pp. 16-69

² Oudtshoorn Courant, 1 September 1930, "Cooperation brings Tobacco Farmers back on their Feet", p.4

³ Oral History Project, Alex Miller, p.27

⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 May 1934, "Compulsory Cooperation in the Tobacco Industry" by Sol Green, p.3

⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 October 1931, "Oudtshoorn Tobacco Farmers Meet – Tobacco Bill Wanted", p.3

⁶ according to B. Gillis in Oral History Project, B. Gillis, pp.24-5, 28 : "... he [Sol Green] hated me like poison, he couldn't help himself, because I had practically taken his business ..."

manufacturers still felt safe,⁷ although it was prudent to obey the Cooperation Act, which the cooperatives enforced enthusiastically with fines. This happened even in cases where Jews delivered tobacco from their own fields to the factories of their family members.⁸ No longer could independent farmers deal directly with the factories, and cooperatives could insist that their members limit planting, or hold supplies.⁹

Jews furthermore found themselves with a weakening "voice" in agriculture¹⁰ and ceased to put themselves up for elections as directors of the cooperatives.¹¹ Cooperative meetings were presided over by Le Roux himself,¹² and in an atmosphere of economic stress and unemployment,¹³ speeches on Hoggenheimer were repeatedly made by D.F. Malan, both in and outside Oudtshoorn.¹⁴ This provided the background for the Cango Tobacco Cooperative's singling out of its enemies. The prime candidate was Green, who had complained of Le Roux's methods, and was now isolated as "somebody who bought his tobacco outside the cooperative." He was directly implicated in Le Roux's bellicose statement :

"... the volk must organise to cooperative action. For the weak support will be provided ... But while one is busy to educate the people of Oudtshoorn, there are people who want to undermine this ... let us not be cowards by breaking down the cooperative and exposing it to the enemy ..."

⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 March 1931, "Tobacco Manufacturers Disagree", p.3 ; in fact, when the Chamber of Commerce voted on the Tobacco Bill, Messrs Gillis, Kroll, Kaplan and Spies supported it, whilst M.J. Becker, J. Schoeman, H. Spies and Du Plessis opposed it

⁸ For example Oudtshoorn Courant, 15 May 1931, "Selling Tobacco on Morning Market," p.2 ; the Cooperation Act stated explicitly that no person could deal in tobacco without the explicit consent of or through the channels of the "Cango Cooperative Society" ; in this case Moses Sanders was fined for selling tobacco on the morning market ; the chief witness was J.J.S. Naude, manager of the Tobacco Co-op and a prominent Nationalist

Also Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 April 1932, "Alleged Contravention of Cooperative Society Laws", p.2 ; Morris Gillis, taken to court by the cooperative for selling to Gillis Bros tobacco manufacturers without the consent of the cooperative ; J.J.S. Naude manager of the Tobacco Co-op and prominent Nationalist, appeared as key witness ; Gillis was a member of the Coop, and was therefore not allowed to sell tobacco to anybody but the Co-op.

⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 May 1932, "Tobacco Growers must Restrict Planting", p.2

¹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 May 1932, "Ostrich Farmers Gather", p.2

¹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 May 1933, p.4 ; election of directors of Cango Co-operative Company Ltd

¹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 9 May 1933, "Monster Meeting of Tobacco Manufacturers", p.2 ; The Cango Cooperative Society could claim 1 800 members and could raise loans for tens of thousands of pounds sterling.

¹³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 15 August 1933, p.3 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 August 1933, p.3 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 25 August 1933, p.

¹⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 August 1933, p.2

The M.P. added that "... democracy means giving a few people the support to raise you into your right ..." ¹⁵ and Oudtshoorn's Nationalists were increasingly influenced by authoritarian ideas. Both S.P. Le Roux ¹⁶ and the manager of the Tobacco Cooperative, J.J.S. Naude, supported Malan, ¹⁷ and its Chairman, Jurgens Schoeman, eventually became the local leader of the Ossewabrandwag. ¹⁸ The tobacco industry was therefore highly politicised, ¹⁹ and economic success depended partly on one's political allegiances. Many Jews felt increasingly uncomfortable in the cooperatives, judging by the lengths gone to by some to circumvent the cooperative, and of the cooperative in pursuing them. ²⁰ Others, however, positioned themselves within the new structure, and the Gillis brothers' firm especially made it extremely attractive for Afrikaners to work through them. ²¹

6.2 The Shirt movements ²²

There was certainly friction within the cooperative movement, but Jews faced a far more extreme threat from Nazism and the Shirt movements during the mid-1930s. By 1934 the groundswell was disconcerting, ²³ and especially the older Jews, with memories of pogroms, were terrified. Local Jewish men never banded together in self-defence, ²⁴ but they received conflicting messages from the Gentile community. In the Oudtshoorn district, the potential for a Greys shirt movement was strong, with an impoverished white urban working class (many in the employ of

¹⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 May 1934, p.4

¹⁶ Oudtshoorn Observer, 8 August 1935, p.5

¹⁷ Eg. Oudtshoorn Observer, 17 October 1935, p.4 ; 7 November 1935, p.3

¹⁸ See Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, 1991, pp. 138-160. The Ossewabrandwag was a radical anti-British organisation which grew out of the cultural revival of the 1938 Great Trek centenary celebrations and the political unrest among Afrikaners surrounding the Second World War.

¹⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 14 May 1936, p.3

²⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 June 1936, p.3 ; "Alleged Buying from Co-op Member", p.3 ; Max Barron, a Jewish tobacco manufacturer, bought tobacco from a cooperative member, William Jacob Stander, although warned by Stander "that there would be trouble" if he did, since Stander was only allowed to sell to the cooperative ; Barron was found not guilty, but the cooperative's aggressive pursuit was typical of its attitude towards those who sought to undermine it.

²¹ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, p.25

²² See Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, 1991, pp. 16-69 ; Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, pp.142-148 ; Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience, pp. 108 - 125

²³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 15 June 1934, p.3

²⁴ Oral History Project, Alex Miller, p.34

Jews), a perception of Jewish land-hoarding and manipulation,²⁵ and continuing Hoggenheimer rhetoric.²⁶ However, in June 1934, the Oudtshoorn Courant ran an editorial on "Shirtism," criticising them for their militarism, intolerance and racism.²⁷ And when the Jewish Guild invited local Gentile speakers to address it, Jews were assured that the "thoughtless" or antisemitic Gentile was both disapproved of by the majority and regarded as "anti- Christian." Local Christians, the speakers said, tolerated the Jews, their religion and their Zionist ideals, and some "trusted that the Jew would return to his [the Jewish] faith and save the world."²⁸ Local Christians wrote to the local newspapers, condemning the Nazi persecution of Jews.²⁹

And in the end, the Greyshirt "invasion" into Oudtshoorn was hardly impressive. The major public manifestation of antisemitism was a series of meetings held on an empty lot, in full view of Jewish homes :

"... They came to Oudtshoorn and they got two brothers, the Morrow brothers, they had a big flag with a grey shirt on it and Hitler on it ; they came and they drove the motor car up and down the town and advertised it ..."³⁰

Men in jackboots and uniforms patrolled the streets for a while, and set up an exhibition of anti-Jewish cartoons in a shop window. A huge Nazi flag was also hung from a second storey window – and was promptly set alight by Sam Agranat.

"... And everybody said, Sam, you are a marked man, they will kill you, [but] they never did anything ..."³¹

²⁵ OJI, Van der Veen, John, 1999. He had as an adult researched this perception and found, according to his study, some justification : that the easy credit policies of Jewish shops led to confiscation of land in their favour when their debtors could not pay.

²⁶ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant , 14 August 1934, p.2 ; S.P. le Roux, member of Parliament, thus justified his decision to stay with Malan, and not join the new United Party.

²⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 June 1934, p.3

²⁸ Oudtshoorn Observer, 1 September 1934, "A Gentile's View on the Jews", p.3 ; the speaker who made these statements was Rev. S.E. Eadie

²⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 13 October 1934, "Persecution of Jews – Rev. L. Fletcher on Nazism" (Contributed), p.6

³⁰ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, p.27

³¹ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

Incidents proliferated in which Jews were insulted in public. People knew exactly who the Greyshirts were,³² and Reggie Kahn for one was shocked to find the sudden change :

"... there was a nice feeling, you know, [then] we started hearing about antisemitic [sic] when the Nazis were in Germany and the blooming Afrikaners said this is a Jewish House. Before that we did not know a thing like that ..."³³

Disraeli Simanowitz associated the practice of antisemitism with "the lower classes, the uneducated classes" but "never experienced it from educated, cultured people."³⁴ Monty Markus agreed, but he did not consider the Afrikaners "worse than anybody else." Antisemitism, by his reckoning, almost certainly began with the Nazi influence.³⁵ Alex Miller believed that a generation gap existed, with the older generation of farmers being tolerant of Jews, while their sons, especially those who had access to Afrikaans universities, or who read the Malanite mouthpiece, *Die Burger*, "burned" against the Jews.³⁶ The Greyshirt debate raged furiously in Afrikaner circles, but Miller remembered that some local Anglophones were "the worst," and that business competition was certainly involved. Gentiles however quickly found themselves simply unable to lead their daily lives without contact with Jews, and the boycotts failed.³⁷ Instead, many people displayed sympathy and concern with the Jewish plight.³⁸

When in 1934 the Greyshirts twice attempted to rent municipal property for meetings, they were turned down by the Town Council. Similarly, the Blackshirts³⁹ could not win a majority of votes

³² OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Markus personally knew two of them, and after the war, these men continued to live among the population and even interact with Jews. He surmises that these men, one of whom was a greengrocer, might have been promised things if they helped get rid of the local Jewry.

³³ Oral History Project, Reggie Kahn, p.13

³⁴ Oral History Project, D.S. Simanowitz, p.53

³⁵ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. This assertion is contradicted by Shain, Milton, *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa*, 1994. Shain proves that antisemitism had a long history in South Africa. However, the scale and public prominence of antisemitism did increase dramatically after the Nazi ascendancy in Germany. Antisemitism certainly became more aggressive and more visible to Jews in Oudtshoorn by the mid-1930s. See also Shimoni, Gideon, *Jews and Zionism : The South African Experience*, pp. 108-124

³⁶ Oral History Project, Alex Miller, p.35 ; OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

³⁷ Oral History Project, Alex Miller, p.34 ; the Kleinschmidt family, owners of a major store, were implicated in the boycotts by some interviewees.

³⁸ Oral History Project, Alex Miller, p.35

³⁹ Furlong, P.J., *Between Crown and Swastika*, 1991, p.34. The Blackshirts, led by Manie Wessels, was a Fascist organisation, smaller but similar to the Greyshirts, and prominent only in the Transvaal.

in the Town Council,⁴⁰ although two councillors, prominent Malanite Nationalists, voted in their favour.⁴¹ It turned into a public debate, focussing on relatively simple claims by the two opposing groups. Some defended the Greyshirts on the grounds of free speech and freedom of association. Their opponents argued that the Jews, as citizens of long standing, had an absolute right to protection from the body corporate, and could not be abandoned by civic organisations which they had helped to build up. Many Gentile citizens supported this notion, some not purely in a reaction against antisemitism, but in the exercise of civic responsibility, and as a defence of simple civil liberties, which they believed the Jews had earned.⁴² An Afrikaner councillor argued that the Town Council was obligated to "safeguard the interests of all sections and preserve racial harmony." Although he "held no brief for the Jews" he considered the Greyshirt movement "aimless and hopeless."⁴³ Mayor Bennie Gillis spoke out of "a personal feeling" :

"... As the son of parents who had come to this country half a century ago, he had been born and bred in this town and had always lived in harmony with his Gentile friends. He thought it unfair that 'vagrants' should be allowed to come here, vilify a peaceful and decent section of the community of which he was a member, and so alienate the good feeling and friendship which he had enjoyed all these years ..."⁴⁴

But Gillis found himself between two fires when as Mayor, he had to deal with the Greyshirt application for the Municipal Hall :

"... they [the Greyshirts] called a meeting in the municipal hall and the Jewish community became very agitated. When I was mayor they [the Jews] came to see me. They said you must not let them the hall. I said to them, look, you people

⁴⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 October 1934, "Drill Hall Refused", p.3 ; the vote was six against, two for the application

⁴¹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 20 October 1934, "Greyshirts Refused Use of the Drill Hall" ; at this instance, the motion against the application was suggested by L.L. Nel and B.L. Gillis, and the application was supported by Gous and J.J.S. Naude (the manager of the Tobacco Cooperative)

⁴² Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 October 1934, "Blackshirt Application Refused – Councillors Expressed their Views", p.2 ; the Councillor was A.H. Cowley

⁴³ *Ibid* the councillor here was L.L. Nel

⁴⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 October 1934, "Blackshirt Application Refused", p.2 ; Councillor B.L. Gillis speaking

are putting me in a very difficult position. They are rate payers and you can't refuse them the hall. They said, yes, but if there is antisemitism ... I said, the ratepayers are not concerned about it – about antisemitism ..."⁴⁵

Morris Alexander, Jewish M.P. in Cape Town, advised Gillis that the best way to get rid of the Greyshirts was to let them have a meeting.⁴⁶ Similarly, the pro-application councillors warned that it was "better to give those people the hall so that they could talk themselves out" and warned that a refusal would "create suspicion and agitation among a section of the public."⁴⁷ Those who supported the Greyshirts' application were quick to distance themselves from the Greyshirts themselves, "not wishing to be misunderstood" or reminding the others that they had "proved to [their] Jewish friends that [they] were not Greyshirts." The Jews replied that they were not "worried about people of [their] standing" but about "people who could not think for themselves and if wrongly influenced were made to suffer."⁴⁸

Eventually, the Town Council refused the Greyshirts the use of the hall, but the non-Jewish councillors would give no guarantee that a future council could not reverse their decision. Their overriding desire was to prevent a race riot.⁴⁹ Their decision was aided by measures passed by the United Party's new Minister of Justice shortly thereafter,⁵⁰ and established that the right of the Jewish community not to be persecuted, outweighed the right to freedom of expression of another section of the population. This fed the local fires of suspicion :

"... what is the real reason why the Black, Grey, or even Orange Shirts cannot apparently be allowed the use of the [Municipal] Drill Hall ? Are we definitely ruled at any time by one section of the community ?..."⁵¹

⁴⁵ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, p.28

⁴⁶ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, p.28

⁴⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 October 1934, "Blackshirt Application Refused", p.2

⁴⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 October 1934, "Blackshirt Application Refused", p.2 ; Councillors Gous and J.J.S Naude

⁴⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 19 October 1934, p.2

⁵⁰ For example Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 November 1934, p.3 ; in this case the Magistrate of Kroonstad blocked a Greyshirt meeting with the express approval and aid of the General Smuts, the Minister of Justice, who was a noted philosemite. Ironically, the very same act (the Riotous Assembly Act) by which the ANC was barred to hold meetings, was used against the Fascist movements.

⁵¹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 20 October 1934, "Use of the Drill Hall" by *Ratepayer*, p.4

letter writers argued, saying that all "racial organisations of any shade" (which presumably included Jewish ones), should be placed under the same rules.⁵² Others bemoaned an alienation between the Town Councillors and the public, by refusing the Greyshirts without "satisfactory reason" and instead becoming a refuge for "the opposing section of the community" (i.e. Jews). One said :

"... Afrikaners still have to learn that Oudtshoorn is one of the few places where there is not something like free speech. I am one of the taxpayers in Oudtshoorn who are still waiting for an answer to know whether we are master in our own homes."⁵³

Sensitivity to Jewish feelings was relatively low among sectors of the community,⁵⁴ with a large portion of the population apparently deeming the Jews amply able to defend their own interests. More aggressive individuals also set fire to a number of Jewish premises.⁵⁵

Replies in favour of the Jews were mixed. "*Friend of the Jew*" could not understand why people were discriminating against Jews alone, when there were "also parasites under [sic] the Boere, English, Scots, [and] Coolies," yet argued that "everybody has the right to exist and do business in this country." Jews controlled commerce and manufacture – but it was the job of the government to "prevent undesirable people from entering the country", not that of the public. Jews were to be treated as legally equal citizens, though not respected on the level of Christians.⁵⁶ Other writers argued that Jews should "stop whining about being persecuted" since their economic mobility and civic status gave proof of the good relations they had with "sane and respectable" people.⁵⁷

⁵² *Oudtshoorn Observer*, 20 October 1934, "Use of the Drill Hall" by *Ratepayer*, p.4

⁵³ *Oudtshoorn Observer*, 8 November 1934, letter (Afr.) "Use of the Drill Hall" by *Tretsam*, p.2

⁵⁴ *Oudtshoorn Observer*, 14 February 1935, p.4 ; the feature film at the local Gaiety theatre for that week was *Jew Suss*, billed as "the story of two men as unscrupulous as they were ambitious. Two men grasping at any means or measures that would bring power ..."

⁵⁵ *Oudtshoorn Observer*, 4 April 1935, p.4 ; and 11 April 1935, p.2 ; evidence of arson is merely circumstantial in these cases. Over a period of two weeks, several fires, some in Jewish properties, broke out. Over a two-day period three fires broke out in businesses and residences owned by Jews, all at the same time (2.30 am) in the morning. One of these properties was Luntz's hall, which was gutted.

⁵⁶ *Oudtshoorn Observer*, 27 October 1934, p.2 [Afr] letter "The Jews" by *Friend of the Jew*, p.2

⁵⁷ *Oudtshoorn Observer*, 8 November 1934, letter "Religious Articles" by '*Silver Lining*', p.4

Jews themselves were dismayed at the antisemitic developments, described as "foreign to South Africa's outlook and culture,"⁵⁸ and were assured that both the Dutch Reformed Church and the United Party Government was against Nazism.⁵⁹ National Party speakers equally assured voters that their party's principles did not allow it to "oppress any section or race ... whether it was an Englishman or Jew" and would give "justice and fair play" to all. One told the "many sympathisers of the Grey Shirt movement in Oudtshoorn" that the "question" was an economic, not a political one "and had nothing to do with a particular race." But by identifying credit and immigration as the key problems in Oudtshoorn,⁶⁰ Jews were still attacked to gain voter support.⁶¹ This tightened Jewish allegiance in Oudtshoorn to the United Party, and also identified individuals associated with the party, with whom they could form alliances.⁶²

Preventing the Shirt movements from gaining ground in Oudtshoorn was the Jews' greatest civic triumph in Oudtshoorn : not only did they rise effectively to counter the antisemitic threat by using civic channels, but they called to their aid a powerful alliance of both Anglophone and Afrikaner Oudtshoornites who deeply disapproved of the attacks on their Jewish fellow citizens.⁶³ When the Gentile Protection League⁶⁴ tried to hire the Drill Hall "for the purpose of holding a public meeting in connection with the Jewish menace in South Africa," the Town Council again turned the application down unanimously,⁶⁵ and stifled each succeeding attempt at holding a meeting on municipal property.⁶⁶ Although the antisemitic feeling persisted throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the Greyshirts, Blackshirts and Gentile Protection League had a brief and inglorious history in Oudtshoorn. Bennie Gillis, who out of curiosity went to one of the meetings, found only thirteen people.⁶⁷ The Greyshirts never had mass appeal simply because it did not tie into the

⁵⁸ Oudtshoorn Observer, 26 September 1935, Article "5696 – Jewish New Year Greetings – 1935", p.7

⁵⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 14 May 1936, p.5

⁶⁰ The tactic was used generally during the Facist era by Nationalist speakers : ambiguous Hoggenheimer-genre rhetoric was used to attack the Jew, without "naming the Jew" specifically. (Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, 1991, pp.36-7). In Oudtshoorn especially the inference was readily understood.

⁶¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 August 1934, "Why Mr le Roux cannot join the New Party", p.2.

⁶² One of the United Party's leading figures, Jan Smuts, used every opportunity to condemn Antisemitism (e.g. Oudtshoorn Observer, 10 December 1936, p.5)

⁶³ Oudtshoorn Observer, 15 September 1934, "Mayoral Election", p.5

⁶⁴ Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, 1991, pp.21-22. This was a splinter group of the Greyshirts led by J.H.H. de Waal junior, formerly a Greyshirt organising secretary who had personal differences with the Greyshirt leader, Weichardt.

⁶⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 February 1935, p.2

⁶⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 October 1935, p.3 ; Green proposed the refusal, and he was seconded by an Anglophone, Mellville. There was one other Jew on the Town Council at the time (B.L. Gillis), but the vote was unanimously carried by all ten members present at the council meeting ; two members were absent at the time

⁶⁷ Oral History Project, Bennie Gillis, p.28

interests of the majority of Afrikaners, which were primarily economic.⁶⁸ John de Jager thought of them as "cowards" of whom little notice was taken,

"... [they were] a small group going to the extreme ... like you find in any community. He could not behave like a man towards the Jew, so he hated him ... perhaps he thought that the Jew had cheated him, but the Jew was just a little smarter than him ..."⁶⁹

Gaaf le Roux remembered them as a bunch of people "who talked against the Jews, but did nothing," and did not attract most Afrikaners, who had been living around Jews for many years.⁷⁰ When the Greyshirts asked his uncle in De Rust, a satellite village of Oudtshoorn, for a place to hold a meeting, he bluntly told them :

"... Go to somebody else. When a Jew goes out through my gate, I have money in my pocket. I am not going against them ..."⁷¹

Antisemitic pressure in De Rust was, however, strong enough to make its Jews leave the village in disgust, so that after that, you could "only buy coffee and sugar there" and it declined.⁷²

Individuals who had associated with the Greyshirts continued to circulate quietly in the general population, and friction remained. But by 1936 Jews were told by their neighbours that the "Greyshirts [were] dead quiet and ... tame" and that the Jews had to "let bygones be bygones," "leave politics at home" and regard one another as "citizens of Oudtshoorn, there only to advance the interests of Oudtshoorn."⁷³ Social antisemitism, and antisemitism as a "political question"

⁶⁸ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. He stressed the poverty and the low social status under which many Afrikaners suffered, which made people look for economic upliftment especially.

⁶⁹ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. ["... 'n klein groepie mense wat na die uiterste toe gegaan het, soos jy maar kry in enige gemeenskap ... hy kon seker nie sy man staan teenoor die Jood nie, toe haat hy hom maar. Miskien het hy gedink die Jood het hom verneuk, maar die Jood was net 'n bietjie slimmer as hy."] [paraphrase]

⁷⁰ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. ["... Hulle het sommer teen die Jode gepraat ... maar niks uitgerig nie."]

⁷¹ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. ["Gaan na iemand anders. As 'n Jood by my hek uitgaan, het ek geld in my sak. Ek gaan nie teen hulle nie."]

⁷² OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. The specific family mentioned was the Barrons.

⁷³ Oudtshoorn Observer, 23 July 1936, "Municipal By-election", p.5 ; On this occasion I. Subersky resigned from the Voters' Association onto whose committee he had been elected, because he "could not serve on

remained politically acceptable, though, and local Nationalist leaders continued to endorse D.F. Malan's open advocacy of laws limiting Jewish entry into the Union.⁷⁴ To many in South Africa, and some in Oudtshoorn, Jews continued to be regarded as unassimilable, as troublemakers, and as a threat to the power balance in South Africa.⁷⁵

6.3 Friction from the Left – Jews and Labour relations in the 1930s

Another challenge, this time from the Left, based itself on economic or class issues, avoiding ethnicity or blatant antisemitism but nonetheless targeting Jewish employers. In the 1920s there had been some labour disputes,⁷⁶ and by the 1930s, the Trades Union, formed to deal with the Employers' Association, began attacking specific employers.⁷⁷ When the Industrial Commission appeared in Oudtshoorn in October 1934, three of the six witnesses called were Jews – M. Goldberg, I. Subersky and S. Nochimowitz.⁷⁸ A few months later, at the height of the Greyshirt movement, these same Jewish-owned factories were the principal targets of mass action over wages, when the woodworkers began to unionise.⁷⁹ A lockout ensued, and the workers called in trade unionists.⁸⁰ In their minds, Oudtshoorn's workers were "worse off than slaves" and the "capitalists had to be dethroned." A.M. Merkel, the trade union leader,

"... made a special appeal to his Jewish friends, who had become prosperous in various spheres and whose position

the committee with a Greyshirt". The person in question was E. Wilms, who declared that he did not belong to a political party, but did not renounce his Greyshirt ties either. Wilms subsequently became vice-chairman of the Voters' Association (Oudtshoorn Observer, 2 October 1936, p.3)

⁷⁴ Oudtshoorn Observer, 18 January 1937, "Dr D.F. Malan's Disapproval of Jewish Immigration", p.2

⁷⁵ Oudtshoorn Observer, 5 August 1937, "National Party Gathering – Adv. S.P. le Roux Speaks" [Afr.], p.4

⁷⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 October 1924, "The Factory Strike", p.3 and "Strike Over – Men Return to Work", p.4 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 August 1926, "The Furniture Factories," p.4 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 August 1926, "Wages in Tobacco Rolle [*sic* = Rolls] Industry", p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 December 1926, "Bombshell for Tobacco Factories", p.3

⁷⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 February 1931, p.3 ; 27 February 1931, p.2 ; 20 April 1931, p.3 ; 27 April 1931, p.2 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 June 1932, p.3 ; in this case the Magistrate reflected that Nochimowitz was unlikely to have been guilty of the treatment alleged by a salesman, Carl Garisch, since he "knew the Jewish people ... and their kindheartedness."

⁷⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 October 1934, p.2, "'Oudtshoorn Apparently a Nice Utopia", p.2 ; Two of these, Goldberg and Subersky, owned the largest furniture factories in Oudtshoorn. The third was leather manufacturer Nochimowitz. Gentile witnesses were J.J.S. Naude, manager of the Tobacco Cooperative, and J.W.A. Pretorius, Secretary of the Poor White Committee, as well as Jno [*sic*] de Jager.

⁷⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 16 July 1935, "Furniture Workers '*off duty*'", p.3

⁸⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 August 1935, p.3 ; the new union, the Oudtshoorn Furniture Workers and Allied Trades Union, were aided by A.M. Merkel, General Secretary of the Co-ordinating Council of Furniture Workers of South Africa, J.M. Watson, Secretary of the Port Elizabeth Workers' Union, and J. Muscat, vice-President of the Cape Furniture Workers Union

in life as compared with the workers' was like heaven on the one hand and hell on the other, to give those employed by them a fair and square deal ..."⁸¹

Workers were described as "mere slaves of the employer class in this town,"⁸² and sympathetic strikes appeared in Jewish factories such as M. Kaplan and Co.⁸³ Tobacco manufacturers, including several Jews, settled early on.⁸⁴ The trade unionists used rhetoric familiar to local people, who they stated, wanted

"... a fair share of the wealth which was accumulated by the capitalists – the people they had helped to become rich ..."

and were tired of constructing roads for "capitalists who drove beautiful motor cars."⁸⁵ They accused employers of enslaving the "toilers of the soil" and "*exploiting South Africans* to enrich themselves." Class, and not ethnicity, was the central issue,⁸⁶ and Merkel carefully associated urban workers with the interests of the rural farmers.⁸⁷ Jews accused the strikers of targeting Jews specifically. The trade unionist therefore imported a Jewish trade unionist, M. Linde, who declared :

"... When I first came to Oudtshoorn I was told that I was treading on thin ice and that it would not do for me to attack anyone here. I was born of Jewish parentage and [am] proud of it. I do not care to what nationality the employers belong. If they are the class of employers who treat their employees as they are treated in Oudtshoorn, I shall have no hesitation in attacking them ..."⁸⁸

⁸¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 August 1935, "Workers Worse off than Slaves", p.2

⁸² Oudtshoorn Observer, 22 August 1935, "Employers Severely Criticised", p.5

⁸³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 August 1935, p.3 ; Kaplan himself tried to disassociate the strike in his tobacco factory with that in the furniture factories, but the differences over wages and layoffs were similar, and the workers had probably had some contact

⁸⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 August 1935, p.2 ; a meeting under J.J.S. Naude, manager of the Congo Tobacco Cooperative, agreed on an additional settlement over wages with Watson, before he could direct union activities against them.

⁸⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 August 1935, "The Capitalist System Must Collapse", p.2

⁸⁶ Oudtshoorn Observer, 22 August 1935, "Employers Severely Criticised", p.5

⁸⁷ Oudtshoorn Observer, 29 August 1935, p.4

⁸⁸ Oudtshoorn Observer, 3 October 1935, p.3 (paraphrase : tense adapted and returned to direct speech); Linde was the Secretary of the Cape Furniture Workers' Union

Through the specific businesses confronted, and the existing antisemitic feeling, it was no great leap of logic for workers to identify their enemy as the Jews. Goldberg and Subersky subsequently accused trade unionists of "personal insults and vituperation." The two employers' central argument was that the capitalists, or Jews, had made a significant contribution to the district, and that the town owed them gratitude.⁸⁹ Goldberg was eventually found guilty of declaring a "lock-out."⁹⁰ He refused to give up, though, and the strikers and their supporters therefore boycotted the furniture shops.⁹¹ Isaac Subersky was assaulted⁹² and intimidation of workers followed.⁹³ Significantly, these events took place simultaneously with the debate over Greyshirt meetings in Oudtshoorn's town hall.⁹⁴

Eventually most of the workers trickled back to work, but trade union organisation continued.⁹⁵ The industrial dispute was officially settled by a United Party Government Wage Board, with significant concessions to the workers.⁹⁶ But the Nationalists absorbed most of the vote of the disgruntled Whites,⁹⁷ and the trade unions failed to gain a permanent victory. In 1939, the Chamber of Commerce was accused of perpetuating "old ideas of treating human beings as pieces of merchandise", while the local establishment was attacked for fighting any sign of people developing "Left(ist) views, or wishing to develop a better standard of living." Local workers "lived in fear of their lives, their jobs and, at the end, of their souls."⁹⁸ Such feelings did the Jews' image little good.

⁸⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 29 August 1935, "The Employers' Case", p.5

⁹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 September 1935, p.6

⁹¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 1 October 1935, p.3

⁹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 October 1935, p.2

⁹³ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 October 1935, p.3 ; one of Subersky's employees, a non-striker, was attacked by three strikers ; also Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 October 1935, p.2 ; Alex Volkwyn, a Coloured worker imported by Subersky, was attacked by Whites while Subersky was taking him home after work.

⁹⁴ Significantly, a Medical Officer of Health's report at the time (Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 and 27 December 1935, p.5) indicated that 166 houses in the slums were unfit for human habitation. It suggests a ready audience among the poor for radical ideas to explain or alleviate their misery.

⁹⁵ Oudtshoorn Observer, 23 April 1936, "Wage Board Coming to Oudtshoorn", p.5

⁹⁶ Oudtshoorn Observer, 26 July 1937, p.3 ; 29 July 1937, p.3 ; 12 August 1937, p.4

⁹⁷ Oudtshoorn Observer, 23 May 1938, p.4 ; in the 1938 parliamentary election, the Nationalists won with 3997 votes, the U.P. managed 2891 votes, but Labour, in its first local attempt, gathered only 21 votes ; Oudtshoorn Observer, 25 February 1937, p.3 ; Trade Union circles in Cape Town accused the Nationalists of trying to lure Afrikaner workers into semi-fascist, ethnically exclusive labour unions ; Oudtshoorn Observer, 2 December 1937, p.3 ; Dr Albert Hertzog addresses enthusiastic Oudtshoorn crowd on the "dangers of trade unionism", the "volk's Third Trek" and the threat of Communism.

⁹⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 25 April 1939, letter "Shop Assistants" by *Justus Pacem*, p.2

6.4 The Second World War

By 1938, Jews were explicitly described by the National Party as a problem. S.P. le Roux said so in a speech in May 1938, referring to Jewish unassimilability and strong anti-Jewish feelings.⁹⁹ This impacted at ground level and when at one of Le Roux's meetings stones were thrown, chaos ensued :

"... accused [Susanna Nortier] grabbed a slate and repeatedly struck him [the plaintiff, J. du Plessis] about half a dozen times. *'I warded off the blows ... except one that struck me on the head and broke the slate. Nortier said : This is the fat Jew that caused all the trouble. She seemed to be absolutely fanatical, and had gone berserk ...'*"¹⁰⁰

Ironically, the person being assaulted was not a Jew, but the feelings were clear. Similar attacks were made by Whites on Coloureds,¹⁰¹ and Oudtshoorn was in the grip of aggressive Afrikaner nationalism. Fifteen thousand people turned up in Oudtshoorn's streets for the Great Trek centenary celebrations.¹⁰² Oudtshoorn remained staunchly Nationalist in 1938 and there was consolidation of Afrikaner interests.¹⁰³ Some businessmen who had been politically active against

⁹⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 3 May 1938, "Nationalist Party Policy Explained," p.1 ; for background, see Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, especially Chapter 2

¹⁰⁰ From report on a court case, Oudtshoorn Courant, 3 May 1938, p.3 ; Susanna Nortier of Oudtshoorn, 60 years of age, assaulted Jacobus du Plessis of Cape Town when he did not agree with everything S.P. le Roux was saying. Apparently the excitement had been sparked when stones had been thrown at the meeting, but du Plessis, an Afrikaner, was merely a bystander. OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Many in Oudtshoorn regarded a proper political meeting to be one at which fistfights occurred.

¹⁰¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 June 1938, "Unprovoked Assault – European Fined £ 2 10s" ; Thomas Minnie, White, attacked Dick Adams, Coloured, without provocation, while bystanders shouted "Slaan die Hotnot" [Hit the Hotnot].

¹⁰² Oudtshoorn Observer, 5 September 1938, p.3 ; Furlong provides a background (Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, pp.111-112) to the festivities on a national basis.

¹⁰³ Oudtshoorn Observer, 23 May 1938, p.4 ; Oudtshoorn Observer, 15 August 1938, p.2 ; eg. Oudtshoorn Observer, 29 September 1938, advert "SWD Handelshuis", p.1 [Afr.] ; Oudtshoorn Observer, 22 September 1938, letter "Women's Agricultural Association" by *Ontevrede* [Dissatisfied], p.5 ; in this case, an Afrikaner woman was dissatisfied with the Afrikaans representation on the Oudtshoorn Women's Agricultural Association ; Oudtshoorn Observer, 21 November 1938, letter "Pioneer Street" by *Bilingual*, p.2

the National Party, even found themselves boycotted and going out of business.¹⁰⁴ But it required an extraordinary situation for Jews to become targets.

The outbreak of the Second World War provided this impetus, stripping away inhibitions and making Jews very vulnerable before the onslaught of an organised and confident aggressor group within the Afrikaner community. Feelings against the British were mounting and soon rumours of Fifth Column activities surfaced, and resentment was vented in aggression.¹⁰⁵ In nearby Mossel Bay, Afrikaner politicians blamed Jews for the Anglo-Boer War and the "unrest" in Europe, and demanded their deportation, leading to free fights.¹⁰⁶ The immediate consequence of the declaration of war was the consolidation of Malan's leadership of disgruntled local Afrikaners which reduced the opposition within the Afrikaner community, as accusations of association with "on-Afrikaanse" politics and ethnic disloyalty were levelled at them. Camps formed almost immediately, and in the municipal elections immediately after the outbreak of war, J.J.S. Naude, prominent Nationalist, lost the election even though he pleaded moderation and friendship with "Afrikaans, English and Jewish sections." Sol Green won.¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile S.P. le Roux voted against Smuts' declaration of war on Germany,¹⁰⁸ and the situation was serious enough for Oudtshoorn to be placed under Emergency Law.¹⁰⁹ Authorities found it very difficult to get local men to wear the "red tab" because of "certain influences in Oudtshoorn and District."¹¹⁰ Large processions of Oudtshoorn Afrikaner women and children, led by the dominee, protested against the war¹¹¹ and the Reunited National Party or Volksparty,¹¹² promptly held anti-war meetings, protesting against being disarmed by the "lackey of the

¹⁰⁴ Eg. Oudtshoorn Observer, 1 June 1938, p.2 ; at the Creditors' Meeting of the Insolvent Estate of P.J. van der Westhuizen, hairdresser, he described how he had lost clients after he had opposed the Nationalist Party in the 1936 Provincial Elections.

¹⁰⁵ See Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, Chapter 5

¹⁰⁶ Oudtshoorn Observer, 8 May 1939, "Dr. van Nierop on the Jews – Free Fight at Public Meeting", p.2

¹⁰⁷ Oudtshoorn Observer, 7 September 1939, "Municipal Election – Cr. J.J.S. Naude Defeated – Mr. Sol Green Returned to Council", p.3 ; both the Mayor (Luscombe) and Deputy Mayor (Cowley) elected subsequently, were Englishmen (Oudtshoorn Observer, 14 September 1939, p.3).

¹⁰⁸ Oudtshoorn Observer, 7 September 1939, "The New Cabinet – How Members Voted", p.3

¹⁰⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 12 October 1939, p.3 ; the Government gave one hundred magistrates extended powers, and Oudtshoorn was included among these. The act included wider powers for Magistrates, the banning of certain meetings and the internment of suspect persons.

¹¹⁰ Oudtshoorn Observer, 30 May 1940, p.3. The red tab was an insignia worn on the military uniform, indicating that the soldier had taken an oath indicating his willingness to do military duty outside South Africa's borders.

¹¹¹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 1 July 1940, "We want Peace", p.3.

¹¹² Oudtshoorn Observer, 1 July 1940, p.3 ; the party Chairman was J.J.S. Naude, manager of the Tobacco Cooperative.

British".¹¹³ Further dissatisfaction was created by the suspension of local elections, leaving the town council with a Jewish-English bias.¹¹⁴ Reports of Ossewabrandwag¹¹⁵ meetings began to circulate, with rumours that the members had taken a vow "not to buy from United Party traders, and avoid and boycott different-minded members in society."¹¹⁶ Isidore Barron remembered crowds celebrating the fall of Paris to the Germans,¹¹⁷ and fights broke out between people in the cinema who stood to attention for the playing of *God Save the King*, and those who refused, and between soldiers and anti-war civilians.¹¹⁸ The situation was exacerbated by the establishment of an Royal Air Force training base in Oudtshoorn.¹¹⁹ Large crowds saw local troops off.¹²⁰ But on weekends fights or riots broke out at several occasions, leading to arrests. In many of the most sensational court cases that followed, local Jewish lawyers were involved.¹²¹ Rotten eggs thrown at business premises and broken shop windows also testified to growing resentment against certain businesses,¹²² and there was a spate of graffiti, especially swastikas, on walls – which "responsible Afrikaners condemned."¹²³ The violence was encouraged by the local branch of the Ossewabrandwag (hereafter OB), nationally well known for its use of mob violence and sabotage.¹²⁴ Prominent local Afrikaners, including the Dutch Reformed minister, helped fund the

¹¹³ Oudtshoorn Observer, 4 July 1940, "Anti-War Decision", p.3.

¹¹⁴ Oudtshoorn Observer, 29 July 1940, "No Municipal Elections this Year", p.4.

¹¹⁵ See Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience, pp.128 – 131 for a background to this movement, which combined Afrikaner iconography and nationalist political aims with Fascist imagery.

¹¹⁶ Oudtshoorn Observer, 22 August 1940, "Ladismith – Ossewa Brandwag", p.3.

¹¹⁷ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999.

¹¹⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 October 1940, "Sequal to Disturbance at Gaiety Theatre", p.1 ; B.L. Gillis was again the main witness for the prosecution of a woman who had shouted that the "verdomde soldate" [damned soldiers] should be beaten to death because of the war. OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

¹¹⁹ Markowitz, A., SA Jewish Times, 27 February 1948, p.6. Also, the founding of a camp for Polish refugees.

¹²⁰ Oudtshoorn Observer, 26 August 1940, p.3

¹²¹ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 April 1941, "Airman found not Guilty", p.1 John Rowley, RAF, and William Nortier, civilian, were charged with fighting one another in the street. Rowley was defended by Mr A. Kaplan, a local Jewish lawyer who was often involved in prominent cases of this kind, on what might be termed the pro-War or soldier side of the general conflict.

¹²² Oudtshoorn Observer, 23 September 1940, "Riotous Scenes in Oudtshoorn", p.3 ; also Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 October 1940, "Throwing Eggs in Street", p.3 ; White youths were accused of throwing eggs at the business of Abraham Abel (Jewish owner of the Central Hotel), but were found not guilty. Abel was again involved in a trial when he was charged with allowing the riotous behaviour of the soldiers that frequented his hotel (Oudtshoorn Courant, 22 October 1940, p.2). Abel was again charged on other occasions (eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 28 January 1941, p.3) and it seems that his hotel had become the haunt for revelling soldiers from the camps.

¹²³ (Paraphrase) Interview with R. Rollnick by Markowitz, A., SA Jewish Times, 27 February 1948, p.6 ; OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. Mr Gillis remembered that there certainly was a division among Afrikaners, as much about the war as about the attitude towards Jews, although very few openly defended the Jews.

¹²⁴ Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, p.144

movement,¹²⁵ and at some meetings more than two thousand people attended and demanded "freedom."¹²⁶ A popular theme in the OB newspaper Die OB, available in Oudtshoorn, was the "fight against ... British-Jewish imperialism"¹²⁷ and frequent references were made to the "Joodse Gevaar" [Jewish Threat].¹²⁸ All this bolstered Afrikaner ethnic unity against Britain, Jews, and whatever businesses and persons were seen as their local "representatives."

Jews were certainly in an exposed position. The local UP was described as "absolutely dead," swamped by "Nazi propaganda." Oudtshoorn quickly earned a "bad name" because of the "disturbances."¹²⁹ Soon the OB dominated the Oudtshoorn district, lorrying in thousands of supporters to hold public meetings on the Municipal grounds.¹³⁰ The only serious opposition to the OB, ironically, started to develop in late 1941 when Nationalist leaders refused to attend OB meetings, and caused a withdrawal of support.¹³¹ But the OB still appealed to radical elements and retained thousands of sympathisers in Oudtshoorn.¹³² The social and psychological needs to which the OB catered did not disappear. Nor did the presence of its leadership in other bodies.

Yet the OB itself did not seem to pose a serious threat to Jews, and its violently antisemitic members were regarded as a splinter group. Most Jews always felt safe in their own homes and many Afrikaners joining the OB continued to interact with Jews.¹³³ Some Jews felt that the OB's real focus was against the English, not against the Jews. But Jews were still vulnerable because many of them were so closely associated with the English. Many Afrikaners who had worked and

¹²⁵ Die OB, 25 February 1942, "The OB Emergency Aid Fund", p.6 ; this specific instance was for the families of Afrikaner internees -- £ 112 was collected in two hours by the local commando.

¹²⁶ Die OB, 11 March 1942, "Freedom Day in Oudtshoorn", p.7 ; the celebrations were held on the farm of Hoofkommandant Jurgens Schoeman.

¹²⁷ Die OB, 24 March 1943, "Against Who Are They Fighting", p.1

¹²⁸ eg. Die OB, 19 May 1943, "Jewish Threat Confirmed by Jews", p.5 ; 20 December 1944, "The Jews' Dilemma", p.2 ; 7 February 1945, "Jewish-Communist Assault on Sunday Laws", p.2

¹²⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 11 November 1940, "Unity Truth Legion", p.2

¹³⁰ Also, Oudtshoorn Courant, 31 October 1941, p.3 ; the Nationalists claimed that the OB had at least 1220 subscribing local members on its books. The non-subscribing adherents probably numbered many thousands more.

¹³¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 31 October 1941, p.1 ; at one Herenigde Party (Nationalist) meeting, over three hundred OB members resigned publically in favour of the HP ; debates were heated – Oudtshoorn Courant, 31 October 1941, p.3. Oudtshoorn Observer, 29 September 1941, "Large Meeting of O.B. Members – Address by Dr D.F. Malan, M.P.", p.2 ; When Malan visited Oudtshoorn in September 1941, he demanded from the two thousand-strong crowd that they renounce the OB and dictatorship and show loyalty only to the Nationalist Party. Oudtshoorn Observer, 3 November 1941, "Resignations from Ossewa-Brandwag", p.2 ; Soon thereafter, the resignations of all loyal Nationalists were demanded on paper.

¹³² Eg. Die OB, 6 September 1944, "Commando's Produce up to Five-Fold Increase with OB Day", p.3 ; Oudtshoorn contributed £ 200, to a general fund, an increase on the previous year, and individuals continued to send money in to various funds of the movement.

¹³³ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

socialised with Jews for years, could not comprehend why the Jews now "sided" with the English.¹³⁴ Yet the OB Hoofgeneraal [General-in-Chief], Jurgens Schoeman, himself illustrated the multi-faceted relations with Jews when the Gillises, his neighbours, went to ask him for some irrigation water. He replied :

"... Attie [Arthur Gillis], I will do it for you, but I do not want anybody to hear about it, because I am the head of the Ossewabrandwag, and we are not allowed to help Jews ..."¹³⁵

Oudtshoorn Jewry enthusiastically supported the effort against Hitler.¹³⁶ A local Jewish farmer donated her farm to the United Party Government out of "grateful appreciation of your [Smuts's] valiant efforts in the cause of freedom and peace in this world."¹³⁷ Jews in Oudtshoorn also volunteered for armed service in a higher proportion than any other local population group.¹³⁸ Robert Wolff even reached the rank of major.¹³⁹ This followed a national trend for the South African Jewish population, who volunteered in large numbers.¹⁴⁰ They held religious services for soldiers,¹⁴¹ and contributed extensively to funds,¹⁴² including General Smuts' Birthday Fund.¹⁴³ Two Jews also served on the United Party committee.¹⁴⁴ Monty Markus remembered :

¹³⁴ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹³⁵ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. He was, as young child, an eye witness to the exchange. His father was Arthur "Attie" Gillis.

¹³⁶ Eg. Oudtshoorn Observer, 25 March 1940, "Successful Dance", p.2 ; the dance of the Union of Jewish women included use of the military band and the singing of "God Save the King". Proceeds were donated to the S.A. Mayors' Fund, which supported the war effort.

¹³⁷ Oudtshoorn Observer, 24 June 1940, p.2 ; the farm, Stolsvlakte, had originally belonged to Meyer Luntz, and his widow wrote personally to Prime Minister Smuts.

¹³⁸ Oudtshoorn Observer, 12 August 1940, "Oudtshoorn Men on Active Service", p.3 ; at this point, the register of 75 names included 9 Jews (12 %), 25 Englishmen (33 %) and 41 Afrikaners (55 %) ; another list, Oudtshoorn Courant 20 December 1940, p.3 gives 49 Jewish surnames (18.7 %) out of 261 names of former or current Oudtshoorn men on active service.

¹³⁹ Oral History Project, Robert Wolff, p.40

¹⁴⁰ Shain, M., "South Africa" in Wyman, D.S. and Rosensweig, C.H. (eds) The World Reacts to the Holocaust, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p.675 ; About 10 per cent of the entire Jewish population of the Union of South Africa served in the Union Defence Force or other Allied military forces.

¹⁴¹ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 January 1941, "Special Service for Jewish Soldiers", p.3.

¹⁴² Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 March 1944, p.1 ; of 31 names on the Medical Aid for Russia Fund, list 5, 25 were Jewish ; also Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 September 1940, p.3 – of the 77 names on one London Air Raid Victims Fund list, September 1940, 36 (46 %) were Jewish. On another, Oudtshoorn Courant 27 September 1940, p.3, 13 (27 %) of the 48 were Jews. Jews like Sol Green also did fund-raising for such lists. In general Jews contributed disproportionately to all funds for the war.

¹⁴³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 27 May 1941, p.1 ; of the 28 names of local contributors, twelve were Jewish, including the most prominent Jewish businessmen like Max Rose, B.L. Gillis. I. Subersky and J. Green and Sons, all later victims of arson or sabotage.

¹⁴⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 March 1943, "United Party Meeting", p.5 ; they were Mrs F. Luntz and Mr Max Barron (both had property destroyed in fires).

"... Everybody was worried, even we as children were worried, for we understood one thing ... that if the Germans won the war they would wipe out the whole Jewish race throughout the world ... it reminded them of Eastern Europe, they could not believe that God would ever let anything like that happen ..." ¹⁴⁵

Prominent Jews were by mid-war also in a fighting spirit, although severely outnumbered. The local UP had representatives for the Afrikaner, English and Jewish "sections."¹⁴⁶ Jews contributed far above their proportion of the population.¹⁴⁷ Yet, wherever possible, they seem to have stayed off committees where they would become too clear a target for antisemites.¹⁴⁸ Jews were by definition regarded as SAP-supporters.¹⁴⁹ Sol Green proposed in the Town Council that Municipal property be made available free of charge to any function which supported the war effort. The Town Council, long since purged of anti-war members, agreed unanimously.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, the Mayor chaired the United Party rallies. The Town Council, dominated by English, pro-War Afrikaner and Jewish members, elected only loyalists for several years,¹⁵¹ and was perceived as hostile by certain circles :

[S. Heunis, ratepayer] : "... This town is managed by a clique and you [the ratepayer's association, chaired by

¹⁴⁵ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁴⁶ Oudtshoorn Observer, 29 September 1941, "United Party Enthusiasm", p.2

¹⁴⁷ Eg. Oudtshoorn Observer, 26 February 1942, "Governor-General's War Fund", p.3 ; Out of 70 monthly contributions to the Governor-General's War Fund, 26 (37 %) came from Jews

¹⁴⁸ Eg. Oudtshoorn Observer, 21 May 1942, "Truth Legion Meeting – New Office Bearers Elected", p.3 and Oudtshoorn Observer, 12 October 1942, "United Party Meeting – Junior V-Front Formed", p.2

¹⁴⁹ OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999. Mr McLaren recalls a playground fight between a Jewish and Afrikaner girl about politics, which came to fists and hair-tearing, to the loud appreciation of the school children.

¹⁵⁰ Oudtshoorn Observer, 7 July 1941, p.3 ; He included any Coloured function.

¹⁵¹ Eg. Oudtshoorn Observer, 4 September 1941, "Mr P.A.H. Melville Chosen as Mayor" – Mr. R. Beacom elected Deputy Mayor", p.2 ; with no new elections, the Councillors were free to circulate the mayoral position among themselves. Oudtshoorn Observer, 5 November 1942, p.3 ; in this extraordinary by-election, where J.J.S. Naude did take part, he was defeated against all expectations, even though only 800 of the 1700 eligible voters turned up to vote. It was considered irregular that somebody with Naude's long and excellent service to the town should have been defeated by a relative unknown, and the cause was probably political. Interestingly, Naude in his speech afterwards, claimed that he had been promised support by all sections, including, he said, the English and Jewish ones. This, to his dismay, had not materialised, and he felt that party politics had unfairly robbed him of a position. He was applauded for his attempt.

J.J.S. Naude] will never break that clique ..."¹⁵²

The Jewish community's association with support for the British ranged from fund-raising to metaphysical musings,¹⁵³ including Biblical interpretation which drew a very direct relationship between Jews and Britain on a political and mystical level.¹⁵⁴

Yet, although there were persistent anti-Jewish feelings, Jewish individuals were not assaulted on any organized basis. The mythical "Jew" was not one's neighbour – private homes were unlikely to be attacked. The "Jew" was associated with specific targets : large businesses, employers, creditors. In November 1940, the first in a series of arson attacks on Jewish businesses began. The first targets were Subersky's Furniture factory, and also J. Green & Sons' Tobacco Factory belonging to Sol Green, who more than most Jews publicly supported the United Party.¹⁵⁵ The cause of the fire could not be determined, but motive and opportunity abounded. Arson made practical sense. Faced with large numbers of troops,¹⁵⁶ and with the Smuts Government willing to quash any mass "uprising", open violence was limited to mêlées in the streets.¹⁵⁷ But those with serious grudges had the opportunity to set fire to businesses, in what was classic urban terrorism,¹⁵⁸ designed to create dread among the population, and gain revenge for perceived wrongs with the minimum risk to the perpetrators, or expenditure of effort or resources. It is unlikely that the OB leadership personally organised the attacks, although the individuals or cells responsible probably had some connection to the OB.

¹⁵² Oudtshoorn Observer, 22 March 1943, p.3 ; at this Ratepayers' Meeting, I.B. Lewin was, however, among the committee eventually elected to face the Town Council. The Committee was headed by J.J.S. Naude.

¹⁵³ Eg. Oudtshoorn Observer, 12 February 1942, "An Interesting Discovery – V Symbolizes *Shekinah*, or Divine Manifestation", p.2

¹⁵⁴ Oudtshoorn Observer, 8 June 1942, "Why Britain will Win – Assyria-Germany vs Israel-Britain" by Gladys M. Smith in The National Message, p.2

¹⁵⁵ Oudtshoorn Observer, 11 November 1940, "Disasterous Fire in Oudtshoorn", p.3 ; and Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 November 1940, "Saturday's Huge Blaze", p.2 ; the Courant said that "the cause of the fire is a mystery"

¹⁵⁶ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. Including Gurkhas, who killed so many local dogs with their kuhkris that they had to be sent away. Spotter aircraft were also used and regular patrols took place.

¹⁵⁷ Eg. Oudtshoorn Observer, 18 August 1941, p.2 ; the riot occurred in September 1940. When Gert Graham, 25, was arrested for obstruction, two hundred White adults and schoolboys responded to his calls to be freed.

¹⁵⁸ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. Mr Gillis describes the classic underground cell structure of the OB, working along telephone lines, in which active members were hierarchised, and knew only the people immediately above and those immediately below them in the hierarchy, to minimize the risk if they were caught.

Adding to the pressures that made radical mass movements popular, Oudtshoorn was declared a drought stricken area in 1941.¹⁵⁹ It also made life more difficult for the overstretched fire brigade, especially since domestic water supply was cut off every night.¹⁶⁰ When Wilck Bros was burned down, the Fire Brigade took three quarters of an hour to arrive.¹⁶¹ Because of the density of Jewish-owned commercial property in the centre of town, it was also a simple matter to set one building alight, and destroy several others in the process.¹⁶² Jews subletting to tenants, such as the Kaplan Buildings, were also vulnerable,¹⁶³ and it was also not unusual for shops that survived one attempt, to be struck a second time,¹⁶⁴ or for rebuilt premises to be hit again.¹⁶⁵ The buildings burned down included those who had opposed the cooperatives and those who competed with the nascent Afrikaner-owned businesses, but English-owned businesses suffered very little. It was the local "Hoggenheimer", the moneyed Jew, who captured the imagination of the extreme Right, and former Greyshirts, and the leadership of the OB was certainly implicated by some Jews in these actions.¹⁶⁶ Massive fires, of "causes unknown" were occurring with frightening regularity by 1943 around Jewish properties. There were "strong suspicions of sabotage," but little could be done,¹⁶⁷ and Jews generally felt helpless.¹⁶⁸ As precaution, night watchmen were hired¹⁶⁹ and rewards were promised for information,¹⁷⁰ but in response more vulnerable targets in the rural areas, again

¹⁵⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 24 March 1941, p.3

¹⁶⁰ Oudtshoorn Observer, 26 February 1942, "Fire in Waldorf Café", p.3

¹⁶¹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 14 July 1941, "A Disastrous Fire", p.3 ; OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. His family attributed it directly to the Ossewabrandwag, but were never sure whether individuals they suspected were responsible.

¹⁶² This happened when Cecil's Bargain Store was set alight. The fire spread almost immediately to Aron's Watch Co. and Wholesale Retailers, and threatened Templar's Hall and its owner, I.J. Kahn's offices, and the Voortrekker Winkel. All these were owned by Jews. One Gentile-owned private home was slightly damaged. (Oudtshoorn Observer, 6 May 1943, "Great Fire in Oudtshoorn – Three Well-known Shops Guttled", p.3) also (Oudtshoorn Courant, 4 May 1943, "Lazarus' Buildings Guttled", p.2).

¹⁶³ Oudtshoorn Observer, 24 June 1943, p.2 ; The Kaplan Buildings, including R. Miller's shop and Markus & Co., were partially burned. (See also Oudtshoorn Courant, 25 June 1943, p.3).

¹⁶⁴ For example J. Judelman's Voortrekker Winkel, damaged in the Templar's Buildings fire, then struck a second time and destroyed in September 1943 (Oudtshoorn Observer, 9 September 1943, p.2).

¹⁶⁵ Oudtshoorn Observer, 9 March 1944, p.2 ; Subersky's furniture shop was struck again, as was Wilck Bros. (Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 January 1942, "Fire in Church Street", p.1 ; in this case, flammable material had been stacked against the partially reconstructed building and set alight, a clear proof of arson on a primitive scale.

¹⁶⁶ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Mr Herman for one confuses the Greyshirts and the OB proper. According to him, the fires were the work of the Greyshirts before and during the War, and probably the fires made many Jews assume that the Greyshirts had merely found a new home.

¹⁶⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 March 1945, p.4

¹⁶⁸ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. They could do little but "go sit and cry" according to Mr Herman. Those responsible were never caught.

¹⁶⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 6 March 1944, "Chamber of Commerce – Annual General Meeting", p.3

¹⁷⁰ Oudtshoorn Observer, 9 March 1944, p.2

Jewish-owned, were hit by the arsonists.¹⁷¹ One victim was Isidore Barron's father, "a very outspoken person" and UP committee member. The family suspected specific people but could prove nothing.¹⁷² On the other hand, the sabotage could be as petty as poisoning livestock owned by Jews.¹⁷³ There were isolated instances of non-Jewish, "pro-war" property being attacked, but the association between antisemitism, nationalism and the hatred of "big" business made the Jews by far the most likely victims,¹⁷⁴ with one exception, the Nochimowitz shoe factory, where many Poor Whites were employed.¹⁷⁵

In the 1943 general elections, S.P. le Roux easily retained the National Party Seat.¹⁷⁶ The National Party leadership also appealed to all of the Nationalist supporters to take part in Municipal elections,¹⁷⁷ and there was an unusually heavy poll, the first one since the outbreak of the war, which resulted in the return of Afrikaners at the cost of two Jewish candidates.¹⁷⁸ Although the war was far from over, some normality returned even to Oudtshoorn, with formerly spurned leaders returning to the civic fold.¹⁷⁹ For the first time in many years, though, there was only one Jewish town councillor.¹⁸⁰ The vote went in favour of B.L. Gillis in 1944, in an election again saturated with party politics and ethnic tensions, or as one candidate put it, between the

¹⁷¹ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 November 1940, "Fire Destroys Wheat Stacks", p.1 – this property belonged to S. Herman, Jewish ; the police made enquiries, without success ; also Oudtshoorn Observer, 27 March 1944, "Fire at Dysselsdorp – Max Barron's Business Gutted", p.2.

¹⁷² OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. Max Barron, according to his son, was not afraid to warn the farmers that they were making a big mistake with their politics, and therefore incurred their hatred. He was in Johannesburg when his premises were burned down. They suspected a mechanic, working for a half-German garage owner in town, who had been paid by one of the neighbouring farmers. According to him, although evidence was conclusive, "the Broederbond" killed the investigation. "Such things ... it was burned onto my soul," Barron said.

¹⁷³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 March 1943, "Five Cows Lost", p.2 ; livestock belonging to Max Rose were let out of their pen in the middle of the night and allowed access to poisoned grapes.

¹⁷⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 March 1943, "Arson Attempt Fails – Warning to Business Men to be on the Alert", p.5 ; the shop targeted here was owned by Kenner & Co., Gentiles. A delayed-action device using cigarettes, hessian and paraffin, was discovered. By now the police were even doing stake-outs, but with little success.

¹⁷⁵ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

¹⁷⁶ Oudtshoorn Observer, 12 August 1943, "How the Votes were Cast", p.2 ; the victory was by 4307 to 3124, a majority of 1183.

¹⁷⁷ Oudtshoorn Observer, 2 September 1943, letter "The Municipal Elections" by W.D. Smith, Oudtshoorn, p.3 ; the call to vote was allegedly made by C.R. Swart, Leader of the Nationalist Party in the Orange Free State

¹⁷⁸ Oudtshoorn Observer, 9 September 1943, p.2

¹⁷⁹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 13 September 1943, p.3 ; in the Mayoral race of 1943, the unlikely combination of P.A.H. Melville, UP leader, as Mayor, and J.J.S. Naude, NP leader, as Deputy Mayor, were elected. J.J.S. Naude's election was unanimous, as a show of courtesy by the rest of the Council.

¹⁸⁰ Oudtshoorn Observer, 11 November 1943, p.3 ; Sol Green was the only Jew on the twelve-man Council, as opposed to two or even three in all recent years.

"National Party or the OB's or the Jews" [sic].¹⁸¹ Ill feeling was exacerbated by the burning down of Gillis' tobacco factory.¹⁸² Harry Gillis recalls :

"... I will never forget the night they phoned to say that our factory was burning down. My father just cried. I remember my mother said, go and look at the factory, and he said, what for, there is nothing left of it ..."¹⁸³

The saboteurs had been so keen to destroy Gillis' business, that they had rendered the only fire engine in town inoperable beforehand.¹⁸⁴ The result was a perception that the saboteurs had great determination and excellent connections. Nobody was ever convicted of the crimes.¹⁸⁵

In 1944, Oudtshoorn's Jewish cemetery was desecrated with swastikas in green paint, to the horror of the Jewish community.¹⁸⁶ Sally Kussel, a third generation Oudtshoornite, was "utterly revolted" and expressed fear at the way South Africa was deteriorating in its attitudes towards Jews. But she drew a distinction between the majority of Christians and the "good old Afrikaner and English pioneers – all good friends of the Jews" and the perpetrators, whom she described as "poor misguided hooligans whose minds have been warped and stuffed with first-class Nazi propaganda." Her argument was again that Jews had worked for decades to help turn Oudtshoorn into a "progressive town." This was respected by most Oudtshoornites. The fires and desecration were aberrations, and Kussel called upon Oudtshoorn's tolerant citizens to combine against "rabid, morbid hatred based on stupid, senseless racialism" [sic]¹⁸⁷ Citizenship was the binding factor, and there had to be harmony and mutual respect between citizens. Local Jews had earned it, and they now demanded that their rights be recognised. The town council, at least, did so. Members of all its constituent ethnic groups, including Nationalist leaders, passed an unopposed motion of sympathy with the Jewish community and horror at the "dastardly act."¹⁸⁸ The Cape

¹⁸¹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 11 September 1944, p.3

¹⁸² Oudtshoorn Observer, 18 September 1944, p.3

¹⁸³ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

¹⁸⁴ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. They would pull the plugs out, spike the hoses, and in several cases make it impossible for the fire brigade to reach the fires at all.

¹⁸⁵ The only major trial was that of Fanie Niemand, White, who unsuccessfully tried to burn down the Freemasons' Masonic Lodge in 1947 with sacking, cigarettes and matches (Oudtshoorn Courant, 12 April 1947, p.1). Niemand was acquitted on arson charges due to lack of evidence. Also, D.S. Simanowitz (Oral History Project, D.S. Simanowitz, p.36), whose shop was burned down, remembered in the 1980s that nobody was ever convicted of the arson.

¹⁸⁶ Oudtshoorn Observer, 28 September 1944, "Jewish Cemetery Desecrated", p.2

¹⁸⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 October 1944, letter "Desecration of Graves" by Sally Kussel, p.2

¹⁸⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 November 1944, p.2 ; also Oudtshoorn Observer, 9 November 1944, "Matters Municipal", p.3 ; Councillor Luscombe moved a motion of deepest sympathy with the Jewish community and horror at the act. It was seconded by the Nationalist leader, J.J.S. Naude, and carried unanimously.

Times was not surprised at the desecration, commenting that it was but "a fresh outbreak of anti-Semitism [sic] ... in a town and district in which for a long time racialism [sic] has been most rampant." Like the fires, it claimed, it was but the work of an organisation

"... giving dynamic expression to the poisonous racialism so consistently propagated by Dr. van Rensburg and other gentlemen of the Opposition ..."¹⁸⁹

But the town council's sentiments were all the more strongly expressed because, after 1943, the scale of Hitler's genocide was known in Oudtshoorn,¹⁹⁰ and the councillors spoke from a community in which blatant antisemitism became increasingly condemned. Just after the war, travelling "Greyshirts" again visited Oudtshoorn. They apparently raised little reaction from non-Jews, some of whom attended the meetings.¹⁹¹ The last arson attack was in December 1947, when Green and Company and Subersky's were again targeted.¹⁹² However, as the nature of the Holocaust became known, and eye-witnesses came to Oudtshoorn to tell about their experiences, the nature and undesirability of antisemitism was increasingly made clear.¹⁹³ By the beginning of 1948, "cordial relations [were] reestablished" with the Jewish community.¹⁹⁴

6.5 Conclusions

The 1930s and 1940s was the crisis period for Jews in Oudtshoorn. Never before, and never thereafter, did the Jewish community face such aggression from non-Jews. The underlying cause was economic competition, which became a tool for politicians such as the National Party, which, especially, tried to extend its control over the Oudtshoorn area by directing the cooperative movement. The cooperatives became increasingly exclusive, with Nationalist Afrikaners dominating them, and with the National Party leadership well entrenched within it. Jews, because of their position as middlemen in the economy, were often in competition with the cooperatives,

¹⁸⁹ From Cape Times, in Oudtshoorn Observer, 5 October 1944, "Sinister Hooliganism", p.3

¹⁹⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 December 1943, "Jewish Day of Mourning Today", p.2 ; although rumours of the Holocaust had reached Oudtshoorn before this, this was the first attempt at quantifying the losses to European Jewry at Hitler's hands. The estimates, totalling 3 million killed in all manners (1 702 500 by "organised murder") were woefully below the true loss, but nonetheless awoke the world, Oudtshoorn included, to the complete horror of Antisemitism.

¹⁹¹ OJJ, Wilck, Leon, 1999. He remembered being very upset as a child when these people, engaged on a tour through South Africa, came to the town. According to him, there was no response from non-Jews.

¹⁹² Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 December 1947, p.1

¹⁹³ eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 31 August 1946, "Spent the War in a Concentration Camp – Woman's Six Years of Horror", pp.1,4 ; the eyewitness was Miss C. Shapiro, niece of Max Rose, the local ostrich feather king. She had spent the war in the death camp of Stutthof in Poland, and gave complete and graphic descriptions of her experiences in a long article in the Courant. Afterwards, she remained in Oudtshoorn to recuperate.

¹⁹⁴ Markowitz, A., SA Jewish Times, 27 February 1948, p.6

who favoured direct distribution. Jews were also increasingly excluded from Afrikaner and Nationalist circles as volkish nationalism and antisemitism combined under the Nationalist banner. Both these trends were strengthened by influences from Germany from 1933 onwards, to the dismay of the Jews. Jews therefore tended to support the South African Party, which further isolated many of them from the majority of voters in Oudtshoorn. The cooperative movement and the political struggle that accompanied it had its roots in the feather period and continued for many decades after the Second World War. But the antisemitic movements such as the Greyshirts were more specific to the period 1933 to 1947. These movements failed to win support from Oudtshoorn's people, partly because of good relations between Jews and non-Jews, and also because the National Party and the cooperative movement already saw to the primary, economic needs of at least the Afrikaners. Likewise, the trade union challenge, which thrived for a brief period during the height of the Greyshirt period, failed because it could not fully compete with mainstream political organisations for mass appeal. Jews successfully countered the Greyshirts and other similar movements through using civic channels and therefore overcame one of the most serious challenges to their citizenship in Oudtshoorn's history.

The outbreak of the Second World War, however, heightened political tensions. Jews' citizenship was not necessarily challenged any longer, but as they opposed Germany and supported Britain, they became the political opponents of a militant anti-war and anti-British movement. The primary weapon against the Jewish community was arson, and the primary targets were Jewish-owned businesses. On the surface, it had been nearly unthinkable that the Jews could be attacked so viciously, deep into their third generation in the town. These war-time attacks proved that some people still saw the Jews as outsiders and enemies. Yet, because of assimilation and acculturation, and the good relationship which the Jewish community had with many non-Jews, only a handful of people attacked the Jews. Jewish persons were not assaulted, only buildings. The businesses themselves were targets partly because their owners were associated with the South African Party. They were also attacked because of earlier economic tensions which had been expressed most completely by the cooperative movement, which wanted to eliminate the competition for the channels of distribution. Throughout the war, Jewish individuals remained relatively safe in Oudtshoorn. But an atmosphere of intolerance remained powerfully below the surface of everyday exchanges. Private dislike and tacit barriers against Jews in certain circles remained. Jews emerged from the Second World War as full citizens of Oudtshoorn, but they still had enemies.

7. Recovering Equilibrium : Jews and Equal Citizenship in Post-War Oudtshoorn

7.1 Post-War Jewish Life

The dominant theme of post-1945 Oudtshoorn was of a brave battle against slow but inexorable communal decline, brought on not by antisemitism or assimilation, but by emigration and demographic attrition. In January 1945 the Hebrew school was closed "due to sudden disappearance of numbers."¹ The school buildings were converted into the new Jewish Club,² which served the ageing community with sporting and recreational facilities.³ The club was a key to maintaining Jewish life in Oudtshoorn for the next two decades by providing a setting for interaction between Jews and fostering a sense of ethnic or communal unity. It also indicated a definite ageing of the community.

This was, however, overshadowed by two events which would fundamentally change Jews' perspective of their world. First, the extent of the Holocaust was revealed.⁴ Monty Markus remembered hearing about it as a young man :

"... It was shocking, it was unbelievable. We saw it as these shorts in the bioscope ... There are certain parts you can never forget ... in one of the concentration camps after the war, seeing American tanks taking these bodies and pushing them into heaps, because they could not do anything else, they were starting to decay. It was terrible to see those heaps of humanity lying there ..."⁵

Some local Jews had even lost family members,⁶ and although a lasting ill-feeling towards the Germans developed among many, it did not make them feel less secure about living in South Africa. A joyous occasion of equal scope was the founding of the State of Israel, which remained

¹ Oudtshoorn Observer, 15 January 1945, p.3

² Oudtshoorn Observer, 20 December 1945, p.3 ; a wedding reception was held there

³ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

⁴ See Shain, M., "South Africa" in Wyman, D.S. and Rosensveig, C.H. (eds) The World Reacts to the Holocaust, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp.675-678

⁵ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. The elder Markus's whole family was killed by the Germans, excepting one, who was maimed fighting with the Russians. They continued for years to send this man nylon and suit materials through Britain, which he could sell in Russia on the black market.

⁶ Eg. OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. His wife lost most of her family members in the Holocaust.

a focus for Jewish identity.⁷ The new state brought about a seminal change in the Jewish community's perception of itself :

"... The Jews knew now what persecution was. They were always called gypsies. They never had a homeland. And now there was a Jewish homeland, if anything happened, every Jew had the right to go there. He would be something, not just nothing."⁸

"... At least here we had a country. We had a name. I was very tempted to go and join up [and fight]..."⁹

"... We were proud. We finally had a country ... Even though we were South Africans we were not really accepted as South Africans. We felt we [were], but the non-Jews – not all of them, obviously – did not accept us ... through the antisemitism. The ruling party, whoever they were, there was always a feeling of '*die Jode, they don't belong*' ..."¹⁰

Israel was a strong binding factor within the Jewish community. Zionism, fund-raising and discussions on the new state, benefited the interaction between Jews. Especially in the declining years of the community, Israel, together with their religion, gave them a definite and separate secular group identity which set them apart from the rest of the Oudtshoorn community.¹¹ But, although Israel remained a focus of Jewish attention, most Oudtshoorn Jews paid closer attention to events in Oudtshoorn and South Africa, which they had now made their home. After the disruption to the integration of Jews into the larger society in the 1930s and the 1940s, many now yearned for greater harmony in relations with non-Jews, and a consolidation of their rights of full citizens of South Africa and Oudtshoorn.

⁷ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

⁸ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

⁹ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999.

¹⁰ OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999

¹¹ See Shimoni, Gideon, The Zionist Ideology, Hanover, Brandeis University Press, 1995, pp. 269-332 for a discussion on the notion of Zionism as a secular Jewish identity. Also Bellah, R.N. and Hammond, P.E., Varieties of Civil Religion, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1980 for the concept of the secular or civil religion.

The economy, and the politics that went with it, remained an important facet of the interaction between Jews and non-Jews. Just after the Second World War the Klein Karoo Landbou Kooperasie [Little Karoo Agricultural Cooperative] was founded. No Jew would enjoy a leadership position in it, although some joined – Afrikaners remained "wary" [versigtig] of supposed Jewish business sense.¹² It joined the consumer shop Ons Winkel, established in 1938 in trying to make local Afrikaners "commercially conscious and participate in trade" and compete with the Jews. Its leadership overlapped extensively with that of the tobacco cooperative and National Party.¹³ Yet, soon the Afrikaners began to surreptitiously trickle back to the Jewish shops – though at first careful not to be seen doing so¹⁴ : "those Afrikaners who had been buying from the Jewish shops for many years, simply did not want to go and buy anywhere else."¹⁵ The Afrikaners as yet lacked the commercial skills to compete with the veteran Jewish shopkeepers,¹⁶ and mismanagement finally led to the bankruptcy of Ons Winkel.¹⁷ Oudtshoorn's Jews remained employers for hundreds of local workers and non-Jews could hardly go about their daily business without buying something from a Jew.¹⁸ Competition from the Afrikaner majority grew very slowly, but very few, if any, Gentiles went into business with Jews,¹⁹ and although Afrikaners and Jews were friends, the Gentiles did not want the Jew in their inner circle or personal business.²⁰ The desire of individual Jews to have means of distribution independent from the cooperatives, remained a point of friction.²¹

Notwithstanding the burgeoning antisemitism from the radical right, Jews were by 1948 undeniably considered "White." They were, however, a distinct minority group, with the English Whites, in a population increasingly dominated by Afrikaners.²² Harry Gillis reflected on changes in attitude after 1938 :

"... They would not allow the Coloureds ... they would not allow the Jews, and they would not allow the English. They

¹² OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

¹³ Oudtshoorn Observer, 15 August 1938, "Co-operative Shop Founded", p.2

¹⁴ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹⁵ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁶ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. According to him the Afrikaner effort was led by the De Jagers. OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999.

¹⁷ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999.

¹⁸ For example Oudtshoorn Observer, 12 December 1940, "At the Shops – What to Buy and Where to Get Things", p.3 ; of the 18 shops featured for Christmas shopping, 10 were owned by Jews ; also Oudtshoorn Observer, 2 October 1941, p.3 ; of the 9 butchers mentioned as agreeing to minimum prices, three were Jews.

¹⁹ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999.

²⁰ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

²¹ OJI, Wagener, Lucky, 1999.

²² OJI, Gillis, Harry and Daphne, 1999.

were all anti-Engelse, anti-Jode ... it started in the war years. Up until [then] there was no problem. The Afrikaner was content to farm, but he knew that a time would come that he had to establish himself [but] he was a minority group, it was controlled by the English and Jews ..."²³

After the Second World War the Afrikaner intensified policies of ethnic exclusion, which involved increasing attempts to get purely Afrikaner boards, the mobilization of Afrikaner ethnic votes in a more aggressive manner, and a "greater arrogance" towards non-Afrikaners among some of their leaders.²⁴ Afrikaners now enthusiastically entered all facets of civil life.

There was some concern among Jews about the Nationalist victory in 1948, especially with prominent antisemites in the National Party, but when nothing happened things calmed down.²⁵ A big symbolic gesture was D.F. Malan's visit to Israel and his recognition of the state.²⁶ Jews accommodated themselves to growing Afrikaner power and Jews continued to work on both sides of controversial issues.²⁷ They also not only participated in sport, but were elected to top positions in local clubs.²⁸ Jews could expect to be elected onto many, if not all, town bodies,²⁹ especially the Chamber of Commerce because of their commercial connections,³⁰ and were still involved on the prestigious Hospital Board.³¹ Financial institutions like the Oudtshoorn Building Society also found professionals who happened to be Jews, useful,³² and as important ratepayers, Jews

²³ OJI, Gillis, Harry and Daphne, 1999.

²⁴ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

²⁵ See Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, 1991, pp.240-264 for a discussion on the far right during post-1948 period of Nationalist rule. Also Shain, M., "South Africa" in Wyman, D.S. and Rosensveig, C.H. (eds) The World Reacts to the Holocaust, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp.676-683. Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience, pp.206-217

²⁶ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. The biggest issue or uncertainty was with simple change from one government to another. In the end very little changed, and nothing in his daily life. OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999.

²⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 April 1939, "Slum Clearance Under Way", p.3 ; the main adversaries were the Town Council with Green and Gillis on one side, and the Noieck family as the property owners.

²⁸ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 29 February 1944, "Annual Meeting of Hockey Club", p.2 ; President of Club, Abraham Abel ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 December 1959, "Tech. College to play here", p.1, C. Nochimowitz and A. Kaplan ; 21 May 1960, "The Crowded Hall ...", p.1, Mrs Lipschitz President of National Council of Women

²⁹ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 April 1959, "New O.W.A. Officers", p.1 ; E. Nicksh on the Committee. 23 May 1959, "Re-Elected as Chamber President", p.1 ; Chamber of Commerce, S.A. Subersky Additional member of committee, I.J. Kahn secretary ; 16 September 1959, "Municipal Committees", p.1 ; S. Green only Jew ; 5 September 1959, p.6 Phyllis Novis Ladies Tennis 1959 Singles Champion ; 22 June 1960, "Mrs Tess Weinstein Becomes Ladies Singles Champion", p.1, also playing was Mrs P. Novitz, Mesdames Zartz, Skolna, Elley and Joubert.

³⁰ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 3 March 1944, "Annual Meeting of Oudtshoorn Chamber of Commerce", p.3

³¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 March 1944, "Hospital Board Matters", p.1 ; Sol Green still sat on the Board

³² Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, "Oudtshoorn Building Society – Year's Activities Reviewed", p.1 ; I.J. Kahn, chartered accountant, was re-elected as one of the directors, unopposed.

invariably were involved in town administration.³³ Individual Jews were prominent in municipal politics, often in opposition to one another,³⁴ and in 1948, a third of the twelve-member Town Council was Jewish – a higher proportion than at any other time in the town's history – and Jewish candidates polled very high in the municipal elections.³⁵

On an individual basis, Jews were highly respected. Dr Stusser, District Surgeon, chairman of many committees and family physician of many families, was mourned by many at his death,³⁶ and Leah Lipschitz received a glowing obituary in the Courant, praising her and her husband's contributions both to the Jewish and the general community and "the development of Oudtshoorn since its earliest days."³⁷ Jewish New Year Greetings continued to include messages from Christians to Jews,³⁸ in the same manner as Christmas greetings included messages from Jews to their clients, friends and neighbours.³⁹ Some even included their close Gentile friends in their religious festivals.⁴⁰

7.2 The Strijdom Funeral Service

Jews benefited from a growing shift in emphasis within the Afrikaner community towards rapprochement with other Whites.⁴¹ Divisions within the White community (and between Jew and non-Jew) were played down and segregation based on skin colour became the prime issue on the political stage.⁴² But incidents in the late 1950s revealed sources of friction. The death of Prime Minister J.G. Strijdom in 1958 posed one test case. It related not only to religious tolerance but also to the place non-Christians and non-Nationalists had in a constituency powerfully devoted to both Christianity and nationalism. When an official town mourning service was held in the Dutch

³³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 1 September 1944, "Ratepayers' Meeting", p.2

³⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 December 1947, "Rollnick 'Playing the Gallery' – Municipal Employees Defended", p.1 ; R. Rollnick, chemist and Jewish communal leader, now became prominent advocating contentious issues in the municipal arena. He was soon elected to the Town Council. Also Oudtshoorn Courant 14 August 1948, "Rates Burden Fall on Small Property Owners" by C.P. Nel, p.5 ; Here opposing statements made by Councillors Green and Aschman on municipal rates are compared. Their ethnicity did not come into question.

³⁵ Markowitz, A., SA Jewish Times, 27 February 1948, p.6

³⁶ Oudtshoorn Observer, "The Late Dr. I. Stusser – An Appreciation" by J.M. Brauer, p.2

³⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 January 1959, "Mrs Leah Lipschitz passes on", p.3 ; See also 26 August 1959, "Jewish Pioneer Passes on – The Late Mr S. Miller", p.1 ; Also 30 September 1959, "The Tragic Death of Mr M. Kushner", p.1.

³⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 30 September 1959, "Jewish New Year Greetings," p.3

³⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 23 December 1959, "Christmas Greetings," p.4

⁴⁰ OJI, Joan, 1999. "Joan" was honoured one time to break the Fast with her life-long friend Sylvia. Joan and the Agranats, and their respective children, were very good friends. Sylvia's orthodox father did not appreciate this, but Joan reinvented the Agranats to share Christmas with them, and the children sang Christmas carols together.

⁴¹ See Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism, especially chapters 7 and 9.

⁴² Furlong, P.J., Between Crown and Swastika, 1991, p.251

Reformed Church, rumours began to circulate that a disagreement had developed over the presence of Jews at the service, specifically Rabbi Klirs and Deputy Mayor Sol Green. The Jews felt slighted and demanded an explanation. Ds. O. Raubenheimer accordingly wrote to the Courant.

The *dominee* emphatically denied that he had any personal enmity against Jews as "people, nation or race." Any differences between him and Jews were based not on personal views, but on his religious principles which, although allowing Jews to attend a service of Christians, "made a combined service impossible." Jews and Christians could congregate, and could have an "interdenominational meeting," but they could not worship together since their religious ideologies were mutually exclusive. Although antisemitism was strongly disapproved of by his Church, anti-Judaism was permissible. To "true" Christians, Judaism was a false religion :

"... the rabbi and myself ... could not worship together to the glory of God, since we do not both accept Christ as Saviour ..."

According to the *dominee*, there had been a meeting between himself and the rabbi before the service, at which Raubenheimer had posed this seminal question surrounding Jesus to the rabbi. The rabbi had naturally replied according to his convictions. They then decided that, since neither man could accept worshipping with the other as an equal, the Christian, as representative of the majority, would hold the service alone. Jews attended the service in a private capacity, but members of the Jewish community regarded the rabbi's absence as a grave insult to them as Jews and as citizens who had wanted to pay respects to a national leader. Some then decided that Raubenheimer had also insulted the Jewish deputy mayor attending the service.⁴³

Raubenheimer's response to the allegations revealed the basic division between many local Christians and the Jews. To some, although Jews could be accepted as equals in society, and even on occasions as superiors, Jews were essentially the practitioners of a false religion. Even though Jews were tolerated, whether for religious reasons (as a Chosen People etcetera) or by legal right (the right to freedom of worship and association), every effort had to be made to convert them to Christianity. This attitude was usually tempered by courtesy or even apathy among most Christians. But the emotions surrounding Strijdom's death exposed the apparently irreconcilable rift between the two communities.

⁴³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 September 1958, "Ds. Raubenheimer stel sy sienswyse", p.1

Raubenheimer received a response from a Christian, pointing to the interdenominational worship held in other centres and mourning the intolerant position. Yet, even though this response was more liberal than Raubenheimer's and pointed to the possible equality of religions before God, seminal points were agreed upon : Christians had a duty to set a good example of tolerance and behaviour, to include Jews in their worship, and thereby *convince* Jews that conversion was in their best spiritual interest. In legal and social terms Jews had to be treated with the utmost courtesy, but in religious terms, Jews were spiritual inferiors who had to be saved.⁴⁴

The practical impact of this basic religious assumption is difficult to gauge. In practice, most Christians made little or no effort to convert Jews. Conversion of Jews in Oudtshoorn was negligible. Yet, though most Gentiles disapproved of violent antisemitism, many felt that they did not have to respect Jewish beliefs, or respect Jews above fellow Christians. The similar attitude of the Jewish rabbi, if Raubenheimer is to be believed, showed that both groups considered their faiths to be mutually exclusive and superior to that of the other. Jews and Christians were equal citizens, but they were not equal before God.

7.3 The Stofberg Scandal

The sensitivity towards antisemitism and, simultaneously, the ongoing strength of anti-Jewish feelings, manifested itself in 1959, when a scandal broke around T. Stofberg, the Deputy Mayor. After a confrontation with a fellow town councillor, stories began to circulate in the town that Stofberg was an antisemite who refused to support motions by Jews. These allegations originated in the previous mayoral election, when it appeared that Sol Green had been refused the position of Mayor for antisemitic reasons. Stofberg and another councillor, Greeff, were implicated as responsible for this alleged "slap in the face."⁴⁵ Stofberg was informed by fellow councillors and I.J. Kahn, a Jewish community leader, that "a certain section of the community [was] opposed to him." He replied by resigning :

"... I would not ordinarily have paid attention to these rumours ... but the Deputy Mayor of a town must be acceptable to all sections of the community and if he cannot represent all sections ... he must resign. I am not anti-Jewish in any way, but I feel that under the circumstance I have no option but to resign ..."

⁴⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 20 September 1958, "Stem nie saam nie" – Letter by "Teleurgesteld", p.6 ; see also Raubenheimer's reply, 27 September 1958, "Ds Raubenheimer se Antwoord", p.4

⁴⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 October 1959, pp. 1, 4

His resignation was rejected and Kahn proposed his return. Some Jews, including Sol Green, recalled Stofberg's support in the past, but a section in the Jewish community patently had strong feelings against Stofberg. In reply, the Town Council declared that antisemitism was taken in so serious a light that any accusation had to be investigated. Some Afrikaners complained that an outrageous sensitivity to the feelings of a minority, instead of "majority rule," was threatening to destroy Stofberg's career. But the Council insisted, and Councillor Simpson declared that it was public knowledge that the local National Party urged its members not to support Jews. This even amounted to threats to public officials known to support Jews, and pressure from certain sectors to see only Afrikaners in positions of power.⁴⁶ Such antisemitism was declared by several councillors to be unsuitable in a public servant, and meriting the political boycott of guilty persons. Another group, represented by W.M. Luscombe, assumed a philosemitic position :

"... as far as the Jewish community is concerned, they are my friends. If it was not for their enterprise Oudtshoorn would not have progressed as far as it did ..."

According to him, Jews were the Chosen People, the progenitors of Moses and Jesus, and "one of the greatest nations in the world." He concluded that

"... every nation that had oppressed them had perished [and] in Oudtshoorn nothing should be done to hurt them ..."⁴⁷

Investigations proved inconclusive. But, three weeks later, Sol Green was elected Mayor of Oudtshoorn. He was proposed by an Afrikaner, but he was by no means universally accepted and his election became dogged by "the question of nationalities." Many thought that Stofberg should have received the position, and old suspicions of Jewish dominance flared up.⁴⁸ The traditional Mayoral Sunday, a service blessing the work of the coming year, was held in the Synagogue and attended by important guests,⁴⁹ but after Green, no Jew would again enjoy the Mayoralty.

When Green retired, however, another Jewish candidate, Isidore Barron, was voted onto the Town Council, where he played an active part. Barron's election, like that of the other candidates, was fought on civic issues, including municipal spending, and he did not represent the Jewish

⁴⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 October 1959, pp. 1, 4

⁴⁷ Oudtshoorn Courant, 24 October 1959, p.1

⁴⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 18 November 1959, p.1

⁴⁹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 18 May 1960, p.1

community.⁵⁰ Many Afrikaners regarded him fondly for his rugby skills and involvement in Oudtshoorn's sport,⁵¹ as well as his business contribution. Despite his leadership of the UP, he served for many years on the municipality and school board, winning several elections.⁵² He was, however, as controversial as Green had ever been, because of his outspoken political opposition to the Nationalists. His experience highlights the challenges which faced even exceptional Jewish individuals in the heyday of Afrikaner nationalism. All Jews had to face Apartheid, and this orientation could be complex and even divisive.

7.4 Apartheid

Immigrant Jews had from the time of their arrival in South Africa, begun to absorb many of the attitudes of other Whites towards the non-White population. Yet for the first decades of the twentieth century, before the advent of "group areas," the poorer Jews lived among others of a similar class. The exact level of interaction is difficult to gauge, but indications are that a growing distance marked relations between the two groups as the century progressed. After the National Party victory in 1948 and the beginning of the Apartheid state, Jews were encouraged to share in the views and privileges of other Whites, and being "White" became an essential part of their identity.⁵³ Jews were involved in White civil life regardless of their ethnicity, opposing or aiding other people who happened to be Jewish. Supra-ethnic issues, ranging from rates to the politics of skin colour, made Jewishness incidental, and since the Jews were rarely targeted as a group by enemies, there was usually no need to keep a unified front. Most of the time Jewishness was a non-issue, not greatly affecting the exercise of other loyalties and duties. Although the Jewish community continued to exist, it only did so "sporadically", at Sabbath services, High Holidays or the occasional Zionist Meeting, or in the Jewish Club. Jews had learned to keep out of politics as a community, limiting their ethnic political consciousness to Palestine, or later Israel.⁵⁴

Gradually other divisions had become more important than religion in how a person was treated and acted in the social sphere. Specifically, Jews could now see themselves as White citizens. There was almost no question now that Jews would be persecuted, yet the Coloured community

⁵⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 17 August 1960, p.1 ; 3 September 1960, p.1 ; 10 September 1960, p.1 ; 17 September 1960, p.1 ; Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 November 1960, p.1 ; when Barron was dismissed from one Council meeting after "a first class row", it was because of his combative stance on water restrictions.

⁵¹ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999.

⁵² OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999.

⁵³ See Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience, pp. 207 – 230 for a perspective on events on a national basis.

⁵⁴ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 6 July 1946, "Protest by Jews", p.1 ; local Jewry closed their shops "as a gesture of protest, solidarity and sympathy with Palestine Jewry", p.1 ; later they also held a protest meeting.

was increasingly refused the use of "White" facilities.⁵⁵ Blacks found Oudtshoorn even more hostile, and the ANC received little sympathy from local authorities.⁵⁶ Jews were eager to strengthen their unchallenged position as Whites, and shared many of the other Whites' negative attitudes towards non-Whites. It was almost inevitably picked up by Jewish children raised in the Oudtshoorn milieu.⁵⁷ Disraeli Simanowitz, who had grown up in a Coloured neighbourhood and played with Coloured children as a child, as an adult believed that Coloureds were inferior, but that Jews disapproved of them not because of skin colour, but because they lacked culture and education. He classified them with lower-class Whites.⁵⁸ Such negative associations concerning skin colour pervaded the Jewish community. When a dark-skinned Syrian Jew, A. Zain, settled in Oudtshoorn, many local Jews allegedly refused to recognise him as a fellow believer. Claiming that he was probably an "Arab" or Indian, despite him being officially recognised as White, many shunned him even though he was observant and a supporter of Zionism. One local Jew even attempted to get him thrown out of the Synagogue.⁵⁹ Under pressure from fellow Whites to conform, new definitions developed about the "proper" definition of the Jewish community.

Jews generally sided with the White population on segregation, although some of them were more sensitive to the Coloured community's needs than other Whites.⁶⁰ B.L. Gillis, when dealing with the suggested banning of Coloured sport from the municipal grounds, bemoaned the "scorn" some Afrikaners used against "people ... unfortunate enough to be coloured." He

"... believed that it was best that the Coloured people should have their own sports fields so as to be separated from the Europeans ..."

but as "ratepayers" and generally "decent and law abiding citizens", Coloured persons could not simply be "classed as hooligans" and their privileges removed.⁶¹ This "separate but equal" philosophy was in practice difficult to ensure, and Gillis himself had lapses.⁶² When Coloureds

⁵⁵ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 March 1946, "Coloureds Allege Attacks by Europeans – Protest Meeting in Municipal Hall", p.3 ; This sometimes amounted to White mobs physically attacking Coloureds.

⁵⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 June 1946, "Natives ask for ration cards at conference – Deputy Mayor's Appeal for Conciliation", p.1

⁵⁷ Oral History Project, Robert Wolff, p.54

⁵⁸ Oral History Project, Disraeli Simanowitz, p.57

⁵⁹ Markowitz, Arthur, "The Story of South African Jewry – Oudtshoorn Jewish Personalities," in S.A. Jewish Times, 5 March 1948, p.4.

⁶⁰ See Shain, M., "South Africa" in Wyman, D.S. and Rosensveig, C.H. (eds) The World Reacts to the Holocaust, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp. 678-686 for the national situation in brief, especially the comparisons between the Nazis' treatment of the Jews and Apartheid.

⁶¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 February 1935, p.3

⁶² Oudtshoorn Courant, 10 November 1939, p.2 ; in this instance, Councillor Gillis was furious when he found White men working in a road gang with Coloured men. He expressed his anger in the Town Council,

asked for use of the Municipal Drill Hall, he demanded that the request be turned down because it would mean the use of "White" bathrooms by the Coloureds. Sol Green described this reaction as "petty."⁶³ Such behaviour revealed the extent to which South African racial ideas had rubbed off on the Jewish community. At best Jews were arguing for the Coloureds' right as citizens to equal but separate facilities.⁶⁴ But still, many Jews were sensitive to methods employed against non-White political entities, and asked for tolerance. As Gillis put it :

"... Once you oppressed these people [the African People's Organisation] it will only give vent to resistance as they will endeavour to rise above the oppression ..."⁶⁵

A prominent argument was that non-Whites were harmless and should be "given a chance."⁶⁶ It is unclear, though, what concept the average Jew had of non-White rights or political consciousness, or of the aspirations behind Black movements. Whatever the case, when Coloured feelings boiled over, being a Jew meant little. Alex Miller, landing in front of a mass protest by the local Coloured community, was struck over the head with an iron bar. It was the first physical violence he had experienced in his life, but it was not, in his mind, because he was a Jew : "he hit me because I was a white man."⁶⁷

For the most part, the Jews' attitude was as paternalistic as that of the other Whites, and joined in the running of Coloured affairs by all-White committees.⁶⁸ With few exceptions, Jews and

saying that it "was a wrong principal to allow Europeans to work amongst Coloured men" and that he was "horrified to learn that Europeans were being paid such low wages, and thought it was a disgrace that Europeans to work amongst coloured men."

⁶³ Oudtshoorn Observer, 6 May 1940, p.3

⁶⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 5 and 8 June, 1945, "Our Local Parliament ... Letting of Municipal Hall", p.2 ; Sol Green was for outright separation, based ostensibly on fears that the Coloured community would damage municipal properties if they were allowed to use them. B.L. Gillis argued against Green personally, saying that the Coloured people had the right "as citizens of this town" to use the amenities until the town could provide them with their own. Green and his supporters lost the motion to bar most Coloured activities (unless underwritten by religious or educational organisations) by 3 to 9 votes.

⁶⁵ Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 September 1946, "Meeting Banned – Council Veto on Application", p.6

⁶⁶ Eg. Oudtshoorn Courant, 11 September 1946, "Meeting Banned – Council Veto on Application", p.6 ; V.H. Aschman put a motion that the African People's Organisation, with its eleven members, be allowed to hold a monthly meeting on municipal land. Sol Green wanted the meetings halted until a more suitable venue could be found. B.L. Gillis thought the group harmless and that they should be given leeway to express themselves. Arguments by Afrikaners ranged from fears of improper fire precautions in the crowded venue (J. Smit), to fear of "communistic feelings in the air" (J. Naude)

⁶⁷ Oral History Project, Alex Miller, p.36 ; the incident was after a protest meeting in one of the local halls. The march was by 150 people, and Miller, walking in the street, was struck over the head. He was saved from further injury at the hands of the irate protesters by shouting that he was on their side, upon which he was left alone.

⁶⁸ Eg. the School Board, on which White ministers and also Dr Stusser sat, and which organised the affairs of the Coloured schools. (Oudtshoorn Observer, 27 December 1934, p.5)

non-Whites eventually interacted only as employer-employees or as businessmen and clients.⁶⁹ To most Jews, any other fraternisation was "unthinkable."⁷⁰ As employers of large numbers of Coloureds, the Jews could instill both antagonism and loyalty,⁷¹ but the segregation between the two populations became more pronounced in the post-1948 years, with the advent of official segregation and the destruction of multi-ethnic neighbourhoods.

7.5 The Relationship between Coloureds and Jews

It is difficult to establish the Jewish-Coloured relationship, since the latter community was largely ignored by local newspapers, and since most Oudtshoorn Whites regarded social fraternisation with Coloured individuals to be inappropriate and best ignored or denied :

"... it is something which is not done in this country, and nobody wants to go out of line, nobody wants to go against the general attitude of the population of this country. You may like some Coloured or African and you may socialise with this party but that action is going to reflect upon you as far as your neighbours are concerned and the rest of the population – it is certain, your position in this society would deteriorate ..."⁷²

With most Coloured people poor by White standards, the segregation was accentuated by class differences, and Jews had generally become more estranged from the Coloured community as their social mobility diverged and Jews became wealthier.

Lenie Coetzee⁷³ lived across from a Katzman shop in the multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Vaaldraai, and remembered a good relationship not only with the Jewish shopkeeper in particular, but with other neighbours. Up to the 1940s, she observed, Jews and Coloureds lived next to one

⁶⁹ Individual exceptions are hinted at, e.g. by OJI, Wilck, Lauren, 1999.

⁷⁰ Oral History Project, D.S. Simanowitz, p.58

⁷¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 December 1930, "Late Rachel Kaplan", p.2 ; When Rachel Kaplan died, six hundred Coloureds, many from the Kaplan tobacco factory, attended the Jewish funeral service spontaneously to pay their respects to the deceased

⁷² Oral History Project, Disraeli Simanowitz, p.58

⁷³ The Oudtshoorn Jewry Interviews (Coetzee, D., 1999) form the basis for this record. These interviews were done with Coloured individuals in their late seventies to eighties who had grown up in Oudtshoorn. Individuals are referred to by their first names, and were approached in a life-history format which tried to cover their whole experience, besides interaction with Jews.

another in areas like St Johns street, but the Jews tended to move out as years went by.⁷⁴ Sarah Adams similarly grew up in a mixed neighbourhood in High Street, where Whites, including Jews, lived in close proximity to other groups. She knew of Jewish people in the area, but remembered certainly, that since Jews were Whites, "you could not simply go and knock on his door" but had to show respect and social distance. The Jews she knew spoke Yiddish to one another and at special occasions, but mostly they used English and Afrikaans mixed together. To the Coloured community, Jews were the quintessential shopkeepers and regarded as relatively wealthy. They dominated the town commercial sector, and many Coloureds were therefore clients or debtors to them.⁷⁵ They were major employers,⁷⁶ and Coloureds also rented houses from Jewish landlords.⁷⁷ Distances became enlarged through the divisions of religion and skin colour, but although marriage was strictly out of the question, some Jewish men, like their Afrikaner counterparts, were known to have fathered children with Coloured women.⁷⁸

Many Jews grew wealthy enough to have several servants at the cheap rates then current.⁷⁹ The normal practice was for Coloured women to go to work when still in their early teens, and often spent years with particular families. Lenie Coetzee went to work for the Agranat family and described the relationship as close but certainly as employer-employee. Language use was mixed, both broken Afrikaans (for her benefit) and English. She did a lot of the physical work of raising the children and keeping the household, and had to learn basic *kosher* rules. Friday nights were particularly important, as were specific ways of cooking, even though the wife was an Afrikaner.⁸⁰ Gladys Le Roux found work with the Millers and also did a lot of the work of raising the children,⁸¹ and Aletta Goliath's bedridden employer depended on her for everyday

⁷⁴ In OJI, Le Roux, Gladys, *et al*, 1999. Lenie particularly recalled Katzman's "Jewish" manner of speaking and his love for children who came to him for sweets.

⁷⁵ OJI, Willemse, Gert, 1999. OJI, Adams, Sarah, 1999. OJI, Michaels, Rachel, 1999. Although the Jews were relatively wealthy and had "large houses" from her perspective, they did not appear ostentatious to her. Keep in mind that she lived in a two-roomed house. Yiddish was referred to as "Jodetaal" or when used, they would say somebody "praat Jood" [talks Jew(ish)]

⁷⁶ OJI, Adams, Sarah, 1999. Sarah Adams's husband worked for the Gillis tobacco factory. Pay was relatively low, but work was scarce.

⁷⁷ OJI, Atkinson, Henry, 1999. He lived in North End in a two-roomed house with relatively low rent. The landlord was Wilkenson [sic]. They were sure that these were Jews. OJI, Mesimela, Elizabeth, 1999. OJI, Michaels, Rachel, 1999. Areas of the town were replete with Jewish-built stone houses in the early 1930s. Particularly the St Johns Street-Adderly Street area. The Jews themselves began to move towards the more affluent areas, although they owned property elsewhere.

⁷⁸ OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999. Informants were hesitant to give particular names. Also hinted at by OJI, Coetzee, Hielie, 1999 and OJI, McLaren, John James, 1999. OJI, Atkinson, Henry, 1999. OJI, Michaels, Rachel, 1999. Henry Atkinson had regular contact with an old Jewish butcher and shopkeeper, who lived with a Coloured woman who worked for him, and had children with her without marrying. People knew that the children had "Jewish blood" in them and the father saw fully to the upkeep and education of his daughters. The name mentioned by both was Finkelstein.

⁷⁹ OJI, Coetzee, Lenie, 1999. Lenie's mother worked for the Chatmans [sic] for low pay and some food.

⁸⁰ OJI, Coetzee, Lenie, 1999. The wife was born a Burger.

⁸¹ OJI, Le Roux, Gladys, 1999. She work for the Millers for twenty years.

care and domestic duties.⁸² Working for Jews became a specialised job because of the food laws. Rachel Michaels remembered being punished often for mistakenly mixing meat and milk utensils. She also recalled utensils being buried after being contaminated, and of the degree of trust that Jews had to have in their domestics to allow them the more sensitive tasks of food preparation, especially around the time of the fasting. Those domestics who learned the intricacies of running a Jewish household, became much sought-after.⁸³ Gladys le Roux also remembered having to learn food laws in order to cook for the Jewish Millers. Separating classes of utensils was considered particularly important, and the family also berated her and put knives or pots in the ground for three days if she mixed them up and used "milk" ones with "meat" dishes. Her growing expertise served her well, as she later had to advise other servants. The Millers later even delegated duties to her at *Pesach*,⁸⁴ so that everything was in order by the time they returned home from work.⁸⁵ Aletta Goliath worked for twenty-four years for the Sacks family. In their household, meat and milk dishes also had to be used separately. Special soap had to be used, or clean water for dishes.⁸⁶ It took a while to learn, but in practical terms many Jews were dependent upon trained domestics to run their homes and organise the celebration of their festivals.⁸⁷

Coloured attitudes towards Jews were mixed. They were sometimes seen as secretive by some domestics who were barred from certain parts of the house. In contrast to their dependency on Coloured housekeepers, Jews would usually not allow non-family members, either Coloured or White, close to their business as assistants, "because they did not trust them." They handled all the money themselves. There was a perception among some Coloureds of some Jews as distrustful, miserly, avaricious or obsessed with money, yet also of Jewish thrift and religiosity – far more active, Rachel Michaels claimed, than Afrikaners.⁸⁸ The practice of many Jews to strictly observe their Sabbath into the 1930s and 1940s impressed many Coloureds.⁸⁹ *Rosh Hashanah*, *Pesach* and *Yom Tov* were well celebrated, *Barmitzva*s⁹⁰ were elaborate affairs, and even Sabbath a special occasion. Working as Christians in a Jewish household did not present

⁸² OJI, Goliath, Aletta, 1999. She was trusted to the extent that the employer would make her draw up a list of what she needed to run the household, and then give her the money to go and buy it herself. This continued for ten years. Eventually, low pay made her change to the Sacks family.

⁸³ OJI, Michaels, Rachel, 1999. She worked for the Wilkensons around the mid-1930s.

⁸⁴ Rosten, Leo, *The Joys of Yiddish*, 1979, p. 292. *Pesach* : the Jewish Passover festival.

⁸⁵ OJI, Le Roux, Gladys, 1999. *Pesach* was particularly difficult, since special utensils and dishes had to be prepared, the tables had to be covered from morning to night etcetera.

⁸⁶ OJI, Goliath, Aletta, 1999.

⁸⁷ OJI, Kruger, Piet ; James, Johanna ; McGregor, Maria ; Goliath, Aletta ; 1999.

⁸⁸ OJI, Michaels, Rachel, 1999. Although Coloured children were raised not to speak about Whites at all, lest it reach the Whites' ears and cause trouble. OJI, Mesimela, Elizabeth ; Le Roux, Gladys ; Willemse, Gert, 1999.

⁸⁹ OJI, Michaels, Rachel, 1999. Shopkeepers "would not touch anything on Saturdays" and would let other people run their shops for them for that time.

⁹⁰ Rosten, Leo, *The Joys of Yiddish*, 1979. *Rosh Hashanah* (p.313) : The Jewish New Year festival. *Yom Tov* (p.458) : a holiday.

problems : many domestics were encouraged to attend their own church services and mutual religious tolerance between employer and employee was necessary. Most domestics had little idea of the details of theology which separated the two religions – one described it as dependent upon the prominence given to Moses, or the day of the Sabbath – and religious observance apparently impressed more than the specifics of worship.⁹¹

Day-to-day interaction between Jews and their Gentile domestics created quite intimate relationships, and some domestics experienced considerable freedom, as long as they did their work, were properly dressed and did not "presume."⁹² Coloured interviewees noticed a growing distance between Jews and Coloureds with the generations : younger Jews were generally more aloof and less sensitive to the non-Whites, in contrast with the older ones (first generation) who had been generally poor. Younger Jews, as they or their parents became successful, had no reason to mix with Coloureds at all, and Rachel Michaels even remembered that Jewish parents insisted on distance between their children and their domestics. Where many Coloureds, despite discrimination, felt an affinity towards Afrikaners, they felt alienated from Jews, who in some cases imposed a strict separation for religious reasons, and would influence their children to increase the distance as the situation allowed.⁹³

The Coloured interviewees claimed that they received good treatment from Jewish shopkeepers, many of whose businesses depended on a large number of Coloured clients. In some Oudtshoorn shops, the custom was that Coloured customers were pushed aside when Whites entered. In many of the Jewish shops, with their narrow margin of profit and single owners, however, the shopkeeper seemingly took pains not to affront Coloured customers, and the local colour hierarchy was not as strictly enforced. This was likely true for the small shops where the Whites did not form the bulk of customers.⁹⁴ Coloureds claimed that Jews tended to treat them better than Afrikaners in the Apartheid years. For example, when Bartholomew Isaacs' father preached against Apartheid on the street corners, Jewish shopkeepers protected him and hid him away from the police.⁹⁵ The root probably lay in the economic relationships. Apparently the Jews the Coloured population came in contact with most often, the small shopkeepers, treated them like customers, in a situation of mutual benefit, and not bluntly unequal as in the employer-employee

⁹¹ OJI, Kruger, Piet ; James, Johanna ; McGregor, Maria ; Goliath, Aletta ; 1999.

⁹² OJI, Le Roux, Gladys, 1999 ; And others.

⁹³ OJI, Michaels, Rachel, 1999. Her frame of reference is limited, she makes these conclusions from personal experience over many years with one or two families. But she insists on an apartheid of skin colour, religion and employer-employee which was strictly enforced.

⁹⁴ OJI, Michaels, Rachel, 1999. This holds only if one equates small, one-man operations with Jewish owners. OJI, Willemse, Gert, 1999. Gert Willemse also remembered times when a shopkeeper would abruptly leave him to deal with a White customer, but claimed a more positive response from Jews.

⁹⁵ OJI, Isaacs, Bartholomew, 1999.

relationship. As long as the customer paid, the relationship with Jews was good.⁹⁶ The Jews needed to cultivate good relations in order to survive economically, but Afrikaners did not have the same dependency.⁹⁷

Jews apparently did not develop entirely the same interest as Afrikaners, to keep Coloureds in political and economic subservience. Jews did not have to depend so strictly on the colour bar to keep their group identity : they possessed a unique culture, whereas the Afrikaner, sharing a language, religion and many cultural elements with the Coloured, felt more threatened. Jews, even though they were a minority, certainly did not equate their situation with that of Coloureds. Their attitudes were little different from the other Whites. Yet many felt similarly excluded from Afrikaner-dominated power structures. Some also felt uncomfortable about the discrimination they witnessed, while retaining social distance. The eventual forced removals of the Coloured population away from the business centre of town to its periphery, likely had an adverse effect on some Jewish shops, who now found their traditional clientele living far away, and themselves unable to relocate due to group areas legislation.⁹⁸ Jews therefore were likely to have very mixed feelings about segregation and Apartheid.

7.6 Jews' Political Awareness⁹⁹

Being White became increasingly important as the town fathers began segregating the population according to skin colour. Victor Aschman was head of the Location and Housing Committee of the Town Council which put the removals into practice by the late 1950s.¹⁰⁰ Couched in the belief that the process of segregation basically meant slum clearance in the centre of town, most Oudtshoorn Jews were either ignorant of or indifferent to the process of removal of Coloured families from areas like St John Street. Sol Green and one other councillor opposed the removals in 1959 in the Town Council, because he believed that insufficient housing had been provided for the dispossessed. However, he "believed that the government did not intend to take

⁹⁶ OJI, Michaels, Rachel, 1999. She mentioned Liedermans and "Lewintjie", the latter who dominated the North End area, which was almost exclusively Coloured, and had an excellent relationship with them. He was mentioned by other informants as well. OJI, Mesimela, Elizabeth ; Le Roux, Gladys ; Willemse, Gert, 1999. He was the second generation Lewin to keep shop in the area, and the diminutive was to distinguish him from his parents, who had also been loved by the community. Gert Willemse remembered that Lewintjie would tap the Coloured children on the hands, that they first show the money, before he did anything. Once they did, he was all smiles.

⁹⁷ OJI, Mesimela, Elizabeth, 1999. The deciding factor was whether you were coming to buy – if you were a customer, you were treated well.

⁹⁸ OJI, Michaels, Rachel, 1999.

⁹⁹ See Shimoni, Gideon, *Jews and Zionism – A South African Experience*, Chapter 9, for the attitude of the Jewish Board of Deputies and prominent Jews towards Apartheid. Shimoni also speculates on Jews' generally more liberal attitudes towards non-Whites within the political spectrum.

¹⁰⁰ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 31 January 1959, "Mr Aschman to Lay Foundation Stone", p.1

away Coloured rights or property" *per se*, but merely wanted to create better living conditions.¹⁰¹ Whatever Green's position was, he was lauded by Coloured inhabitants for his stand on their behalf, and seen by some as a champion for equal civil rights in Oudtshoorn.¹⁰² But apparently, few Jews had lasting concerns when notices were served under the Group Areas Act.¹⁰³ The everyday minutiae of life under Apartheid, received the tacit consent of the majority of the Jewish community, who saw no reason or opportunity to oppose the majority of Whites. Official segregation became the norm,¹⁰⁴ but only served to emphasise long-established economic relationships between Whites and Coloureds, with Jews as employers or superiors :

"... it was the same as with any other community living in Oudtshoorn. We accepted them, they worked for us and we paid them, but there wasn't any social [contact] ..." ¹⁰⁵

And if any Jew was aware that even blood for blood transfusion was divided into Coloured and White segments,¹⁰⁶ it was a non-issue for people fully occupied with living from day to day and finding none of their own rights encroached upon.¹⁰⁷ Everyday life included free access to most other Whites, symbolized by such mundane events as golf club braais [barbecues] and society meetings,¹⁰⁸ and many early Apartheid policies did not cause great concern :

"... People who are interested in politics were probably upset by different things, and I was also upset up to a point, but I did not have sleepless nights over it ..."

Generally there was a certain ignorance about the ground-level effect of Apartheid :

"... We were comfortable. We had food, we had clothes, we had parties, and at the back of your head, you knew that something was wrong, but there was very little you

¹⁰¹ Oudtshoorn Courant, 7 February 1959, "Stadsraad vra dat hele dorp blank bly" p.1 (Afr) ; the other Councillor was Luscombe, but their minority was easily defeated by the rest of the council.

¹⁰² Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 February 1959, "Support for the Two Councillors", p.5

¹⁰³ Oudtshoorn Courant, 2 July 1960, "Group Areas Notices Served to Many in Town", p.1

¹⁰⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 19 May 1960, "Coloured Community not Debarred from Festival Programme on Rec", p.1 ; the Union festivities was, however, strictly segregated along the lines of skin colour – Sol Green, as Mayor, was the Chairman of the Festival Committee who decided on this segregation ; by this time (Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 November 1959, p.1) the Group Areas Act was rumoured to be very close to implementation.

¹⁰⁵ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁰⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 13 July 1960, "Coloured [Blood] Donors Panel Down to a Few", p.1

¹⁰⁷ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹⁰⁸ Oudtshoorn Courant, 25 March 1961, "Golf Club Braaivleis Tonight", p.1 ; several Jews attended

could do about it ... I was never brave enough here to stand up and be counted. You couldn't ... It was a way of life, and you carried on ..."¹⁰⁹

Some Jews noticed that "things left much to be desired" in the manner in which labourers were treated by certain White employers,¹¹⁰ but they did not cross the social rules of conformity :

"... We found that we had to tread a tightrope. You could [otherwise] not mix with the Afrikaner farmer who was living in back times [*sic*] with his staff ... [certain behaviour] was sneered at ... To get on in the country, you had to be somewhat laid-back, you had to conform with their standards. If you did not, you were treated at a distance [by other Whites] ..."¹¹¹

Afrikaners perceived a general political apathy amongst most Oudtshoorn Jews.¹¹² And certainly, most Jews kept out of politics, and did not associate with the prominent Jews on the political left. Monty Markus recalled that "there were no fanatics here in Oudtshoorn" among the Jews, and association of other South African Jews with bodies like NUSAS did not affect Oudtshoorn Jews, even those who went to do compulsory military service.¹¹³ Individuals who went to study sometimes became involved in student protests, but little of it filtered back to their home town.¹¹⁴ Oudtshoorn Jews tended to be more conservative than some in urban centres – "we felt so safe out here that we did not really think too much." Political opposition went about as far as voting for the United Party or other parties on the central left.¹¹⁵ Most Jews did so, feeling excluded from the Afrikaner's National Party and frequently uncomfortable with the methods employed by the Apartheid government. Many also still drew family allegiances to the UP back to the role Smuts had played in the Second World War and in matters benefiting Jews.¹¹⁶ There was no question about the Jews being second-class Whites, but a certain amount of tension was

¹⁰⁹ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

¹¹⁰ Eg. OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999.

¹¹¹ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999.

¹¹² OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

¹¹³ OJI, Freedman, Mark, 1999. Mr Freedman was in the navy. Others were similarly conscripted.

¹¹⁴ OJI, Agranat, Tarna, 1999. Born in 1960, she was an exception to the rule, taking part in student protests in the late 1970s. Although her parents were UP, she kept her involvement in the protests from them, believing that they would disapprove of radicalism. She recalled that the basis for her parents' political views was that "we believed that all people should be treated as people."

¹¹⁵ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

¹¹⁶ Eg. OJI, Agranat, Tarna, 1999.

created by the assumption that "the Jews were the Sappe" and therefore in inveterate opposition to Nationalist ideals.¹¹⁷

But a few Jews did support the National Party, to the dismay of some of their co-religionists,¹¹⁸ who would approach this small Nationalist minority among them :

"... We [UP supporters] used to say, 'how the hell can you do that,' and they used to say, 'because I believe in it' ..."¹¹⁹

These political differences did not fundamentally affect the unity of the Jewish community, although Jews who voted National Party were "really the odd man out".¹²⁰ But the private views of individuals within the Jewish group had to be accepted :

"... People don't like to talk about their politics, but some of them did it for business reasons, others because the Afrikaans chap who came to ask them was their friend, so they gave. But it was no issue either way ... they always wanted the United Party to come in, but it never ever happened ..."¹²¹

Harry Gillis for one, as mentioned earlier, had great respect for the Afrikaners' aspirations, if not for their methods or exclusivism. For a long time, Jews generally felt unwelcome in National Party structures. Yet, when the Nationalists finally attempted to open up their ranks, he was approached by a former school friend who lauded him for always having been "Afrikaans-speaking [and] Afrikaans-inclined." Upon request, Gillis joined the National Party as its agent.¹²² More surreptitiously, large financial contributions by prominent Jews were appreciated by Afrikaners, as was the proviso by these Jews "that they did not want to become involved."¹²³ Jews

¹¹⁷ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999. That is, supporters of the United Party. OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. See Shimoni, Gideon, *Jews and Zionism – The South African Experience*, chapter 9 for a discussion on the national picture.

¹¹⁸ Eg. OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999.

¹¹⁹ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

¹²⁰ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999.

¹²¹ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. A branch of the Tooch family was mentioned. OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

¹²² OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. Gillis had reservations, replying that he was a Jew, and that the Nationalists did not allow them to join. The friend, head of the Divisional Council, assured him that "it would be taken care of" and Gillis became the Nationalist agent charged specifically with working among the Jewish and Coloured communities.

¹²³ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999. OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. OJI, Wagener, Lucky, 1999.

voted as they pleased, and there was no Jewish "ethnic" vote, whatever suspicions other ethnic groups had of the Jewish community.¹²⁴

The Jewish support for the National Party was sustained by manifestations of tolerance from the organisation. Once the National Party got into power, they silenced antisemitic extremists like Van Nierop, and the Jews were quite happy with Malan and certainly pleased when, as mentioned before, he visited Israel.¹²⁵ Although antisemitism never completely disappeared from the National Party,¹²⁶ the focus of political attention in South Africa had shifted far away from Jews as a group. Skin colour, and the divisions of right and left in the political spectrum, made a much greater impact than religious differences, and there was no Jewish Question, as in the 1930s. Also, S.P. le Roux, M.P., "did a fortune of business" with local Jews and he was essentially friendly.¹²⁷ Louis Herman described the Le Rouxs as "very nice people."¹²⁸ There were some problems with the immigration policy of the Apartheid years,¹²⁹ which discriminated against Jews,¹³⁰ but some Jews *as Jews* felt a definite sympathy for Afrikaner nationalism :

"... The Afrikaner – in his mind, this was his land,
his Zion ..."¹³¹

At the 1960 Union Jubilee festivities, P.K. le Roux, Minister of Agriculture, emphasised White nation building while stressing the need to cooperate with the "Coloured group" in their shared fatherland.¹³² Mayor Green, as the most public face of Jewry at this same event, emphasised cooperation as the key to "[sustaining] optimism and confidence in ourselves, our community and our country."¹³³ There was no longer a conception of Jews as immigrants. By degrees Jews were invited to make themselves part of the new Republican dispensation as equal White citizens. Being White, they were at least regarded as auxiliaries to Nationalist ideals :

¹²⁴ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

¹²⁵ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹²⁶ Furlong, P.J., *Between Crown and Swastika*, 1991, p.252

¹²⁷ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. S.P. le Roux did business especially with the Klass family, and Monty Markus tells a story of how he promised to help the Markus family to get one of their Russian family members into South Africa.

¹²⁸ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. The Le Roux family were regular customers at the Hermans' shop, Wholesale Retailers, and Mr Herman was familiar with three generations of them.

¹²⁹ Furlong, P.J., *Between Crown and Swastika*, 1991, p.253. A centrepiece act in this regard was the Citizenship Act of 1948, which tried to limit the influx of any non-Afrikaner Whites into South Africa, by limiting the citizenship rights of those not born in South Africa itself.

¹³⁰ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Besides being antisemitic, some Jews felt that it slowed down the growth of the white population and therefore threatened its survival.

¹³¹ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999.

¹³² *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 30 April 1960, "Nasiebou in SA Uiteengesit", p.1 ; P.K. le Roux was a local man and son and successor of S.P. le Roux, Nationalist M.P. for Oudtshoorn.

¹³³ *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 27 April 1960, "Union Festival Message by the Mayor, Clr. S. Green", p.1

"... The English-speakers have always been good South Africans. The majority are positively inclined towards the republic, just as they accepted the South African flag, anthem and citizenship ..." ¹³⁴

Some Jews, encouraged by this, consequently enthusiastically supported republicanism :

"... We always felt that South Africa must be South African ... We wanted it for us. I mean, we did not have to pay homage to England. We did not send our gold and diamonds to England. It was *our* Country ..." ¹³⁵

Oudtshoorn emphatically supported the Republican option, ¹³⁶ and although some Jews voted against the Republic, there was little to do but become accustomed to the minor change. For many otherwise sympathetic Jews, the biggest problem remained Afrikaner exclusivism. ¹³⁷ It cost the National Party support they might otherwise have enjoyed. ¹³⁸

If anything, there was a remarkable lack of agreement in the Jewish community, and there was no collective "Jewish opinion" about events like Sharpeville. ¹³⁹ Rather, Jews were susceptible to the same propaganda as other Whites. ¹⁴⁰ Shappie Schapiro reflected :

"... [The Jews] did not take part in Nationalist politics. But they always had a fear of a black [government] ... Being associated with pogroms, and having suffered through it in Russia, and having felt the antisemitism, I think they had the '*swart gevaar*' [in mind]. But they never thought of emigrating, of leaving ..." ¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ Oudtshoorn Courant, 26 October 1960, "White must equip himself and show unity to West says Minister – the Great Task that lies ahead", p.1

¹³⁵ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

¹³⁶ Oudtshoorn Courant, 8 October 1960, "Results of Vote", p.3 ; Republicans won by a majority of 5277 votes in Oudtshoorn (7 342 over 2 065).

¹³⁷ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

¹³⁸ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

¹³⁹ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁴⁰ Oudtshoorn Courant, 14 October 1959, "Swart Gevaar Bedreig Distrik, Waarsku Staatsamptenaar – Afdelingsraad sal moet stappe neem om toestand te red", p.1 ; the speaker was L. Jansen

¹⁴¹ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999.

Interestingly, when P.K. le Roux addressed his local White audience, he had no problem including the Jews into an English (i.e. non-Afrikaner White) group, and appealed to them to help sustain the White population.¹⁴²

Afrikaner-Jewish relations were reasonably solid, without any visible ill-feeling about the war-time events.¹⁴³ Harry Gillis explained that this resulted from co-dependency. Because Jews and Gentiles "made a living off one another" they "had to be friendly towards one another" and civility was the mark of everyday interaction, despite the underlying antisemitism that occasionally filtered through. There remained a subtle segregation. Leon Wilck noted that although Jews and non-Jewish Whites were friendly, few were close friends, and Jews generally still found it easier to mix with other Jews.¹⁴⁴ Outside politics, they expressed their solidarity with Whites in different ways : it was said that Sidney Subersky, married to an Afrikaner, "never let a White man sleep in jail," posting bail from across the street, and Jews would donate to Afrikaner charities without hesitation.¹⁴⁵

Jews had to be careful not to antagonise any section of the community, on whose patronage the economic survival of Jewish-owned businesses depended.¹⁴⁶ The Hermans, for one, tried not to become associated with any political beliefs, and like most Jews did not segregate their facilities. Good service and familiarity, not politics, determined customer support.¹⁴⁷ Indeed Shappie Schapiro, newcomer to Oudtshoorn, decided :

"... I spoke Afrikaans ... I had made up my mind that the best way to meet this was never to talk politics and they could catch me on anything else ... rugby [especially]. I was friends with every farmer in the town, and everybody suddenly got to know me ..."¹⁴⁸

Schapiro even produced a Christmas pantomime, which endeared him especially to the Afrikaners, and became close friends with many farmers who came in to the business he shared with Jack Klass.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴² *Oudtshoorn Courant*, 30 April 1960, "Nasiebou in SA Uiteengesit", p.1

¹⁴³ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999.

¹⁴⁴ OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999.

¹⁴⁵ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999.

¹⁴⁶ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999. He mentions a market of 40 000 Coloureds.

¹⁴⁷ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹⁴⁸ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999.

¹⁴⁹ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999. [Paraphrase]

Jews also empathised with Afrikaners and fellow South Africans in moments of tragedy. Like many others, Isidore Barron, prominent in opposition to the National Party, was horrified when H.F. Verwoerd was assassinated :

"... that the president [*sic*] of a country could be murdered in parliament. I thought it was the most disastrous thing you could imagine ..."¹⁵⁰

But that reaction was on a personal level, beyond politics, in which Barron had been the most prominent critic of Apartheid policies. He was, for several years, the Chairman of the United Party in Oudtshoorn, and the voice of "active opposition" against "Broeders" in the Municipal Council.¹⁵¹ He believed firmly that the National Party policy was "fatally flawed" and that a qualified vote system should have joined the Coloured and White populations. He summarised the problem in retrospect :

"... The problem with the Afrikaners in those days was – and these were my father's words – [they said] 'it is our God, our volk, our land, our road, it is our house, it is our everything : it is 'ours' one time too many ...'"¹⁵²

In 1970 Barron was candidate for the United Party in Oudtshoorn, the first Jew ever to stand for parliamentary office in Oudtshoorn. In a sense he was the high point of a development from immigrant to citizen among the Jewish community – he was only a second generation, his father having immigrated at the turn of the century. He had been born and gone to school in Oudtshoorn, and to gain support he drew, by his own admission, on his reputation as a former town rugby player, president of the Rugby Club for many years and figure in diverse aspects of civic life. His campaign rested on his "local boy" appeal, and was run almost entirely in Afrikaans to downplay his Jewish background, still sensitive to many voters. The battle was futile, given the massive National Party support base, but it was the most effective challenge to Nationalist power since

¹⁵⁰ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999.

¹⁵¹ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. He was on the municipal council for almost 40 years, since the late 1950s. He had been brought up as a Smuts supporter, and his father had also been a UP leader. The Barrons' premises in Dysselsdorp were burned down by the OB during the war, and in addition, Barron's wife was a refugee from Germany, who had lost most of her family in the Holocaust.

¹⁵² OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. He explained in the interview a franchise based on a Std 6 education and certain property or income levels. ["... The problem with the Afrikaners in those days was – en dit is die woorde wat ek onthou my vader gesê het – 'dis ons God, dis ons volk, dis ons land, dis ons pad, dis ons huis, dit is ons als, dis ons eenmaal te veel ...'"]

1936.¹⁵³ He led the party not as a Jew, but as a citizen who happened to have differing opinions from the majority of other citizens, even though his opinions might have been partly informed by family experiences as Jews and the practice of Afrikaner ethnic exclusivism which was especially frustrating for local Jews with leadership qualities. He could never escape his Jewishness being used as political ammunition by his opponents, and when Barron continued to privately finance much of the party activities, he was personally attacked as a Jew by P.W. Botha, brought into Oudtshoorn during the 1972 by-election, which the UP lost badly.¹⁵⁴

Jews were generally accepted in post-War Oudtshoorn, but became increasingly vulnerable to antisemitism the closer they came to the power structures. This left most of civil life open to them, indeed limited their lives to only the slightest extent, but even though men like Barron had passed every challenge to civil equality and had integrated seamlessly into the Oudtshoorn milieu, they found their Jewish identity invoked, like a label, when it suited their enemies. They had religious freedom, freedom from persecution, freedom of opinion and freedom of association with most civil bodies and in most social circles. They could mix and even make friends in other ethnic groups, and they could maintain their cultural life to whichever level they wished. They were undoubtedly South Africans and Oudtshoornites, but, as they were reminded occasionally, power in their South Africa, in their Oudtshoorn, was in the hands of others, who considered it fitting and even desirable to exclude them.

7.7 Jewish Oudtshoorn after 1955

Although Jews were by 1955 regarded as full citizens of Oudtshoorn, and felt that Oudtshoorn and South Africa was their home, the community retained ties outside Oudtshoorn which, together with their religion, helped to maintain them as a group.¹⁵⁵ The State of Israel was a focal point for their identity, without replacing Oudtshoorn as the place where they lived their lives, did their business and raised their children. Louis Herman visited the country in 1956 for the first time, when "there was nothing" and was impressed by the vast pace of modernization kept up since – perhaps too fast.¹⁵⁶ But he added :

"... I have always liked Israel, because it happens to be

¹⁵³ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. The opposing candidate got less than 5 000 votes, and Barron 2264, a narrower margin than ever before.

¹⁵⁴ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999. Botha was brought in specifically to attack Barron in the civic centre, and according to Barron made repeated references to Barron's Jewishness.

¹⁵⁵ See Bellah, R.N. and Hammond, P.E., *Varieties of Civil Religion*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1980 for a background on this phenomenon of the secular or civil religion.

¹⁵⁶ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999. Mr Herman's daughter went on *aliyah* in 1963, and he now stays there half the year every year.

the state of the Jews. That is where you feel at home,
that is what belongs to you, nobody can say '*dis nie
joune nie*' ..."¹⁵⁷

Ida Kahn kissed the ground when she first visited Israel, and "knew [she] was safe."¹⁵⁸ The wars in the Middle East worried the Jewish community, especially since many already had families there. So high was the excitement during the war of 1956, that Jewish women in Oudtshoorn gave away diamond rings and furniture to raise funds for the Israeli effort.¹⁵⁹ Surprisingly many Gentiles volunteered their help even though the Jews had not approached them,¹⁶⁰ and the Gillises received "huge donations" from the Afrikaner farming community especially – some even wanted to sign up.¹⁶¹ Shappie Schapiro was "excited and proud" when the Israelis won the 1967 war "in six days." He would run home in the afternoons to listen on the radio,¹⁶² and the Entebbe raid was "like Batman and Superman, it was a *thing*."¹⁶³ Leon Wilck was amused by the excitement of non-Jews, so eager to express their admiration that "they congratulated any Jew" they could find.¹⁶⁴

But although Jews were proud of Israel, most of them remained South Africans in every sense of the word. As Jews, their priority was to maintain their own congregation in their own home town. By the 1970s, the Jews in Oudtshoorn numbered about sixty families, and could be described by newcomers as a close-knit community. Shappie Schapiro, arriving from Cape Town, found them to be "very much like the Afrikaners," speaking both Afrikaans and English but, except for the oldest ones, very little Yiddish.¹⁶⁵ The very necessity of maintaining traditions made the Oudtshoorn group more aware of Jewish life than "the city people."¹⁶⁶ There was a stigma attached to those Jews who did not attend *shul*,¹⁶⁷ and people who did not observe the Jewish traditions could even be "ostracised,"¹⁶⁸ not by the rabbi, but by "the more religious members of the community [who] tried to get people to adhere to what they thought was the correct thing to

¹⁵⁷ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹⁵⁸ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

¹⁵⁹ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999. "We got totally carried away – I was quite sorry afterwards," she jokes.

¹⁶⁰ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Even Afrikaner pensioners came into the Jewish shops and demanded the right to contribute funds.

¹⁶¹ OJI, Gillis, Harry and Daphne, 1999.

¹⁶² OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999.

¹⁶³ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

¹⁶⁴ OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

¹⁶⁵ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999.

¹⁶⁶ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999. Mr Schapiro arrived in Oudtshoorn from Cape Town in 1958, when, he estimated, there was about 250 – 300 Jews in Oudtshoorn.

¹⁶⁷ OJI, Gillis, Daphne, 1999.

¹⁶⁸ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999.

do" and had plenty of communal influence.¹⁶⁹ Hebrew teaching and *cheder* was kept up for the purposes of the *barmitzvah*,¹⁷⁰ but it became increasingly important for Jewish culture to be cultivated in the home.¹⁷¹ Members of the *shul* committee would be elected at a general meeting, and up to the late 1970s, there were a significant number of people in attendance, especially in connection with contentious issues such as the closing of the St Johns Street *shul* and the sale of the buildings in the late 1970s.¹⁷² Rabbis now tended to stay for shorter periods before moving on to larger centres.¹⁷³ About 75 % of the Jewish population still belonged to the Jewish club,¹⁷⁴ but eventually attendance and interest declined.¹⁷⁵ Most people rarely looked to Jewish life outside Oudtshoorn, and many Jews felt little connection with the Jewish Board of Deputies.¹⁷⁶

The Jewish children of the 1960s and 1970s¹⁷⁷ mixed as equals with other White children, and were placed in a Gentile-dominated setting the moment they went to school. Most were brought up in a middle-class environment, their parents usually being independent shopkeepers, professionals or farmers. At school their religion was met with tolerance, and they were allowed Jewish holidays, but otherwise they grew up like non-Jewish children, engaging in school activities and learning to identify with [White] South Africa. As Tarna Agranat put it, "being Jewish was not an issue." They made friends freely with Gentiles, even went out with them, and although it was preferred that they marry within the faith, it was not always regarded with the horror of a previous generation. At school and beyond, antisemitism was not completely absent, but generally insignificant. Although aware of their Jewish identity, family observance of *kosher* laws, weekly *shul* attendance and involvement in Jewish societies varied widely, from virtual non-practice to reasonable adherence. Religious observance was largely a private affair, and nowhere near as strict as in earlier generations, although some form of *kashrut* and the celebration of High Holidays was near universal. Sabbath observance was limited – although Friday nights usually had some family significance. Their parents were more likely to be involved in non-religious society such as the Lions, than to spend a lot of time with fellow Jews. Normally, primary identification was with Oudtshoorn, or with other Whites, and not with an exclusive Jewish community. The Jews were almost perfectly Afrikaans-English bilingual, but most elected English as home language once they reached adulthood.¹⁷⁸ Yiddish use was negligible and limited

¹⁶⁹ OJI, Gillis, Daphne, 1999.

¹⁷⁰ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999.

¹⁷¹ OJI, Daitsh, Theresa, 1999.

¹⁷² OJI, Lewin, Herman, 1999.

¹⁷³ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

¹⁷⁴ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. Not all were interested in, or able to play the games provided.

¹⁷⁵ OJI, Gillis, Harry, 1999. Mr Gillis was on the committee for eighteen years, ending in the early 1980s.

¹⁷⁶ OJI, Herman, Louis, 1999.

¹⁷⁷ OJI, 1999. Based on interviews with Agranat, Tarna ; Lipschitz, Stanley ; Lipschitz, Linda ; Wilck, Lauren.

¹⁷⁸ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

largely to idiomatic use. Hebrew knowledge was usually very limited, sufficient for prayers in *shul*, but few could fluently read or speak either the liturgical or vernacular form of the language.

Some effort was made to provide them with a Jewish education, but in the absence of a formal school, the extent of this education was mostly determined by the parents. Women like Hilda Wilck tried to keep Jewish education for children alive by opening little Jewish day groups for young children, to teach them specific songs and history.¹⁷⁹ Parents came to play an increasingly important role in informing children about their past, the family history, and what it meant to "be Jewish." It was expected of children to attend *cheder*, but this usually did not impact very much beyond the *barmitzvah* or its equivalent, and scholarly interest in Jewish matters after age 13 was virtually non-existent. This generation's knowledge of the immigration experience was at best anecdotal, although stories could survive to a surprising extent in families with an active oral tradition,¹⁸⁰ and was sometimes augmented by reading. They felt no connection to Eastern Europe, and although there was an emotional bond with Israel, the strength of that bond was nowhere near that of the previous generations.¹⁸¹ During the apartheid years most of their families were apparently United Party or Centre-Left, but only a small minority were very active politically. Even under apartheid they never felt like "second class" South Africans, and were reasonably secure. People who grew up in Oudtshoorn in the 1960s and 1970s usually enjoyed some form of college or tertiary education. They usually married people outside Oudtshoorn and only in rare cases returned to Oudtshoorn to make a living. Once their parents became deceased or moved out of Oudtshoorn, identification with the Oudtshoorn Jewish community virtually ceased.¹⁸²

Those Jews who remained in Oudtshoorn were still facing some discrimination. By the 1970s, Jewish farmers "had joined the co-ops and regarded it as much their own as anybody else's."¹⁸³ Yet no Jew could yet expect to get onto the directorates, and were subtly discriminated against. Although the majority of farmers were not antisemitic, key persons were,¹⁸⁴ and kept Jews from

¹⁷⁹ OJI, Gordon, Hilda, 1999.

¹⁸⁰ OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. The Wilck family is an excellent example of good family oral tradition, reaching back into Eastern Europe. Compare Wilck, Leon and Wilck, Lauren. M. Markus and I. Barron also. But the transfer of knowledge was anecdotal and at times sketchy, with the first generation people generally hesitant about talking about Eastern Europe.

¹⁸¹ OJI, Lipschitz, Stanley, 1999. Stanley Lipschitz visited Israel as a young man in 1978. He went there to live for a short while on a *kibbutz*, "to enjoy myself" but came away feeling very little connection with Israel – he described the Israelis as "strange people."

¹⁸² OJI, 1999. Based on interviews with Agranat, Tarna ; Lipschitz, Stanley ; Lipschitz, Linda ; Wilck, Lauren

¹⁸³ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁸⁴ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. This applied to anybody who were not part of a key Afrikaner clique, men who made sure that only their allies sat on the board. The method of assuring this was to get proxies from

positions of power.¹⁸⁵ The Klass, Markus and Fisch families, all prominent farmers, clashed with the cooperatives partly because of their refusal to adhere to central control, economic or political, of the agricultural industry.¹⁸⁶ This troubled relationship harked back all the way to the beginnings of the National Party-cooperative symbiosis in the Slump years. It did not threaten Jewish businesses, which suffered heaviest under emigration or the passing away of their owners, and the advent of supermarkets which ended the old system in which "it was taken for granted, that the Jews were the better businessmen ... and had the shops".¹⁸⁷ They meant the death of most small family-owned Jewish shops through competition.¹⁸⁸ Another factor was the improvements in roads after 1960, which made it easier for people to get to the town and bigger centres, and opened up competition which rural shops, and some one-man town operations, could not deal with.¹⁸⁹ Parallel to the Jews' departure came the "Afrikaner renaissance," the product of Afrikaner education and shift to secondary and tertiary industries, so that they filled the places previously occupied by Jews.¹⁹⁰ Jewish decline had all to do with economic pressures, and was not the result of political programmes or ethnic competition.

Even in its declining years, Jewish civic involvement in general was seen to be exemplary.¹⁹¹ Afrikaners did not hesitate to praise the Jews for past contributions to Oudtshoorn,¹⁹² and though Jews still faced occasional discrimination in the 1970s, with a "Broederbond influence" trying to keep them off certain committees,¹⁹³ this was the exception, and usually tacit in nature. Jewish charities cooperated fully with non-Jewish ones, and donated to non-Jewish causes. There might have been a certain reserve from the older generation of Afrikaners, but generally Jews could integrate into the activities of the town.¹⁹⁴ Jewish functions like the Union of Jewish Women's Israeli breakfasts, at which Jewish cooking was enjoyed, received the support of the whole

members in outlying areas to destroy any unwanted candidates in the polls. When Monty Markus "won" one of the tobacco sections, he claims, the clique simply eliminated the category for flue-cured tobacco for that year, rather than give it to a Jew.

¹⁸⁵ OJI, Barron, Isidore, 1999.

¹⁸⁶ OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999.

¹⁸⁷ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999. OJI, Wilck, Leon, 1999. Although one of the Wilcks, Geoff (?), because of his retail expertise won the Spar supermarket franchise when it reached Oudtshoorn, and became one of the town's most successful businessmen.

¹⁸⁸ OJI, Schapiro, Shappie, 1999. OJI, Freedman, Mark, 1999.

¹⁸⁹ OJI, Van der Veen, John, 1999.

¹⁹⁰ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999. OJI, Van der Veen, John, 1999.

¹⁹¹ OJI, Van der Veen, John, 1999.

¹⁹² OJI, Le Roux, Gaaf, 1999. OJI, De Jager, John, 1999. OJI, Wagener, Lucky, 1999. OJI, Van der Veen, John, 1999.

¹⁹³ OJI, Gillis, Daphne and Harry, 1999. The example was the school board elections, in which Mrs Gillis was kept off the board by a prominent Afrikaner – the discrimination was confirmed when the headmaster of the school personally came to their home to apologise, in secret, for what he considered a travesty, and blatant antisemitism.

¹⁹⁴ OJI, Daitsh, Theresa, 1999.

commercial community. A fall in numbers of Jewish women eventually, however, made it impossible for the Union of Jewish Women to keep up the bigger events.¹⁹⁵

Although individual Jews continued to integrate into civil life as businessmen, farmers, sports people and even politicians, the Jewish communal structures were fading away by the 1990s, when the community lost its last rabbi.¹⁹⁶ The gap was filled by inviting rabbis for holidays or the High Festivals, or by visiting *yeshiva* scholars.¹⁹⁷ A Country Communities rabbi visited at regular intervals, but otherwise arrangements had to be made to have sermons written for regular Friday night services.¹⁹⁸ By the early 1990s the community had to make a conscious decision to cooperate in maintaining the *minyan*, and through consensus it was decided to prioritise communal worship.¹⁹⁹ Oudtshoorn's Jewish community in 1999 had seventeen families and were disproportionately old since young people did not return to settle. There were about sixty people, ranging from ninety to newborn. Most specifically Jewish institutions had almost ceased to exist, although representatives of the Union of Jewish Women continued to be invited to attend town functions.²⁰⁰ Certainly the *minyan* was at a critical stage in 1999, with around fourteen or fifteen men available, and High Festivals were very problematic, given the difficulty of getting a rabbi.²⁰¹ Individual commitment was heavily depended on to keep structures alive.²⁰² The Queen Street *shul* served as the communal centre. *Shochtem*²⁰³ visited at intervals, and *kosher* was the rule in Jewish homes.²⁰⁴

With too few people to justify large committees, handling of administration and the upkeep of Jewish facilities devolved onto the head of the *shul*, his wife and a few other individuals.²⁰⁵ *Cheder* became the duty of a single teacher, Susanna Freedman, with duties covering a large geographic area. Receiving a curriculum from the Jewish Board of Education, and inspected at intervals, these classes continued even though numbers had dropped considerably and often meant individual attention.²⁰⁶ The community was conscious of Israel, and occasional fundraising

¹⁹⁵ OJI, Gordon, Hilda, 1999. OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999. OJI, Gillis, Daphne, 1999. Fêtes were also popular. The number of Jewish women reached a critical point in the early 1990s.

¹⁹⁶ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

¹⁹⁷ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

¹⁹⁸ OJI, Freedman, Mark, 1999.

¹⁹⁹ OJI, Freedman, Susanna, 1999.

²⁰⁰ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

²⁰¹ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

²⁰² OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999. OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

²⁰³ Rosten, Leo, *The Joys of Yiddish*, 1979, p.374. See "*Shochet*": authorized slaughterers of animals, according to *kosher* requirements.

²⁰⁴ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

²⁰⁵ OJI, Freedman, Susanna

²⁰⁶ OJI, Freedman, Susanna, 1999.

continued, but few if any considered *aliyah* an option.²⁰⁷ Although they had emotional ties to Israel, they felt alienated from the Israelis *per se*, especially the Sabra. Those interviewed felt strongly about inculcating a Jewish identity in their children and maintaining some level of Jewish culture alive in their households. Yet few engaged in serious study of the Jewish religion and their religious or ethnic background was of minor consequence in their daily lives. Most of the time they did not feel singled out because they were Jewish, and they did not make a great distinction between Jews and non-Jews in their social circles. In general their Jewish identity was a private, personal affair, separated, though not wholly divorced, from their affiliations or social relationships.²⁰⁸ Religious practice was a quiet and personal affair. From within, Jewish homes closely resembled that of Gentiles, although in some, objects of Jewish religious and cultural significance were on prominent display.²⁰⁹ Occupational spread included several mixed, ostrich and tobacco farmers, some major employers, and shopkeepers and retailers.²¹⁰

Mark Freedman described contact with the Board of Deputies as regular, and saw this body as "an insurance policy" should anything go wrong, but there was very little serious antisemitic activity or threats to the community.²¹¹ Interaction with other community leaders in Oudtshoorn was irregular, but contact was sound and the relationship good. Although the "new dispensation's" attitude was uncertain, there was in 1999 no sign that the positive relationship would change.²¹² Their insecurity related to their being White, not their being Jewish. They regarded themselves as South Africans, beyond any doubt :

"... I feel I fit in and I am happy and I haven't got any problems and nobody bothers me. So unless a mad antisemitism wave comes across ... But I feel totally integrated."²¹³

Many Gentiles were impressed with the sacrifices the few remaining Jews made to keep their community alive.²¹⁴ Occasional efforts had been made by outsiders from the larger centres, to convert local Jews, but the community was warned well in advance of these groups who, although

²⁰⁷ OJI, Freedman, Mark, 1999.

²⁰⁸ OJI, Agranat, Tarna ; Wilck, Lauren ; Lipschitz, Stanley ; Lipschitz, Linda.

²⁰⁹ OJI ; gauged from visits to various Jewish homes in Oudtshoorn.

²¹⁰ OJI, Freedman, Mark, 1999.

²¹¹ OJI, Freedman, Mark, 1999. Barring minor vandalism of the cemetery, of which, Mr Freedman admitted, most of the community had not even been aware. The problem was vandalism, not antisemitism, and the municipality had made repairs.

²¹² OJI, Freedman, Mark, 1999. Changes in municipal government in the 1990s had meant the entry of the non-White population into decision making, something previously unknown.

²¹³ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

²¹⁴ Eg. OJI, Fourie, Piet, 1999.

targeting certain members they considered vulnerable, had been unsuccessful.²¹⁵ Occasional incidents and the odd antisemitic activity was confined mainly to very small groups, mostly young pranksters. In public at least, very little antisemitism was visible,²¹⁶ limited to the occasional insensitive comments²¹⁷ which had become entrenched in local culture, but were of low intensity.²¹⁸ Residual tension between Jew and Afrikaner had been largely eliminated, not only by population decline of the Jews, but by the redrawing of political and ethnic battle-lines in the post 1994 period. Monty Markus even invited some of his Gentile friends to *shul* with him, and social visits with other Whites were regularly exchanged.²¹⁹ Ida Lipschitz explained :

"... This is the most wonderful place in the world. They are totally open. There is no segregation ... There is no problem mixing ..."²²⁰

Jews were members of the cooperative in 1999, but did not expect, nor did they want to be on the board of directors, even though they had been approached by Afrikaners who specifically "wanted a Jewish guy on the board."²²¹ Jews' low numbers made their proportional contribution to the economy small,²²² yet a general high regard for the Jewish civic, charity and business contribution in Oudtshoorn persisted.²²³ Oudtshoorn Gentiles, likewise remembered the help that Jews had given to the development and celebration of the Afrikaans culture in Oudtshoorn.²²⁴ Gentile interviewees were quick to point out the improvements that Jewish farmers had made to the land.²²⁵ Lasting gratitude was visible among some older Afrikaners for the Jews' introduction

²¹⁵ OJI, Freedman, Mark, 1999.

²¹⁶ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999.

²¹⁷ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999. Ida remembered a "Freudian slip" from one of her friends, who told her "not to be like a Jew" and then apologised profusely when she remembered that Ida was Jewish and was offended.

²¹⁸ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999. She remembers going to Benn & van der Vlies, a prominent local shop. When the change was short one day, the saleswoman told Ida "you must not Jew me." Ida immediately closed her account.

²¹⁹ OJI, Markus, Monty, 1999. Paul Heyns, one of his best friends, is the example supplied.

²²⁰ OJI, Kahn, Ida, 1999.

²²¹ OJI, Lipschitz, Stanley, 1999. The Lipschitzes ran the prominent show-farms Safari and Welgeluk. OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999. Meyer refers to a meeting of the cooperative at which it transpired that Monty Markus had been invited onto the board, but had refused for reasons undisclosed.

²²² OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999.

²²³ Eg. OJI, Mileham, Rodney, 1999.

²²⁴ OJI, Potgieter, Dr M., 1999. As a highly educated Afrikaner and cultural activist, Dr Potgieter felt justified in lauding the Jewish attitude towards Afrikaans, and their help with its organisations, festivals and maintenance.

²²⁵ OJI, De Jager, 1999. No Gentile can complain, according to Mr de Jager, that a farm that a Jew took over, deteriorated. He gave the Lipschitz family of Safari as an example of the high quality farmers that the Jewish community produced.

of ostrich feathers as a commercial product,²²⁶ and older Oudtshoornites still gave Jews the credit for introducing the necessary commercial know-how to Oudtshoorn's Afrikaners.²²⁷

Young Gentiles in 1999 grew up in an environment in which contact with Jews was infrequent, where there was nothing like the highly visible and influential Jewish community of old, which lent Oudtshoorn a different atmosphere to other South African rural towns. Memory of the Jewish community of old was sketchy, but likewise, little antisemitism remained. Between the young in the White community, having grown up together and resembling one another so closely in language and lifestyle, there was little tension. As Stanley Lipschitz put it, "he sometimes calls me Joodjie, and I call him Boertjie, and that is just about it."²²⁸ Oudtshoorn, if it thought of its Jews at all, regarded it as a remnant, the declining years of a once large population. The more prominent Jews were referred to most often as descendants of old families, running established family businesses or farming enterprises, and are inseparable from institutions like Liedermans or Wholesale Retailers. But knowledge of the Jewish history in the town was limited, and often faintly coloured by old fears of Jewish control of farming land, or their keen business sense. Perhaps inadvertently, purchases by families such as the Lipschitzes, Klasse and Markuses, were still referred to by Gentiles in conversation as "Jews taking over" the land or "land falling into Jewish hands."²²⁹ But most Gentiles in Oudtshoorn did not come into contact with people who happen to be Jewish, simply because of the small size of the community, and those who did, often were ignorant that the person is Jewish, until he or she is specifically identified as such.²³⁰

In 1999, pride in the heritage and dedication in maintaining the last institutions remained strong. But the Jewish community was fighting a probably futile battle against ageing and out-migration.²³¹ Emigration, rather than out-marriage, was the problem – in fact, some prominent Jews had formerly Gentile wives who were not only very observant of Jewish Law but key contributors to communal life.²³² Jews left because of the weak economic condition in Oudtshoorn and the need for stronger Jewish structures, especially for the elderly. Although participation in Jewish culture was entirely voluntary, most active adults in the community felt obligated to help retain the communal structures as long as possible. It was, however, regarded as

²²⁶ Eg. OJI, Van der Veen, John, 1999.

²²⁷ OJI, De Jager, John, 1999.

²²⁸ OJI, conversation with Stanley Lipschitz, 1999.

²²⁹ OJI, Meyer, Manie, 1999. Jack Klass was mentioned as one such creditor / landowner. Conversations in Oudtshoorn in 1999 also revealed tension over the recent Lipschitz purchase of a neighbouring farm from an Afrikaner. Meyer posited that these feelings against Jewish land purchase would be affected radically by the Coloured and Black desire for farm land in future.

²³⁰ Eg. OJI, conversation with Mark Freedman, 1999.

²³¹ OJI, Freedman, Susanna, 1999.

²³² OJI, Freedman, Susanna, 1999. OJI, Freedman, Mark, 1999. The process of conversion is most evocatively and poignantly described by Susanna Freedman, formerly a Christian, in her interview.

inevitable that the *minyán* would disappear within a few years. Although parents endeavour to give their children some Jewish identity, and *kashrut* is maintained, the Jewish community of Oudtshoorn will eventually disappear, not through assimilation, but through sheer lack of numbers.

7.8 Conclusions

Jews had achieved full citizenship rights in South Africa by 1948. The ethnic exclusivism of the ruling National Party, and occasional religious friction, provided some problems. But Jews' citizenship was no longer questioned. They were a minority, but they were no longer regarded as an immigrant group. Indeed, under the system of apartheid, Jews enjoyed almost all the privileges of other Whites. The exception was that they were denied positions of power, but still, some Jews managed to have careers of distinction in the civil and civic arena. Jews absorbed most of the attitudes of Whites towards non-Whites. However, many felt excluded by the ruling Nationalists, who concentrated power in their own hands. Most Jews disapproved of the extent of apartheid, but equally, most did little to oppose it, and maintained segregation from non-Whites. Most Jews voiced their objection to the policies of the Government through voting for the centre-left United Party, and individual Jews were prominent in the role of opposition in Oudtshoorn, but by the 1960s the decline in Jewish numbers and the consolidation of Afrikaner power meant that few were in positions of prominence.

The Jewish community maintained a strong cultural and religious life, and were accorded the full right and opportunity to do so by non-Jews. Zionism and interest in the State of Israel remained strong, but was a private matter, and did not affect most Jews' notion of themselves as foremost citizens of Oudtshoorn and South Africa. They identified very strongly with their local non-Jewish community, although most families made an effort to devote at least a small portion of their time to distinctly Jewish activities, societies and institutions. The major threat to their communal life was the decline in their numbers, not pressure from other groups. The decline in the number of younger Jews contributed to acculturation and assimilation. Although most Jews always had a sense of a Jewish identity, they spent most of their time in Oudtshoorn surrounded by non-Jewish peers. Their non-Jewish neighbours and friends accepted them completely, and with rare exceptions, never questioned their position in Oudtshoorn. Most Jews in post-War Oudtshoorn rarely had any reason to doubt that they were accepted as part of the civil life of Oudtshoorn, and that they were no longer regarded as outsiders.

8. Conclusions

This thesis has focussed on the civil assimilation of Jews in the district of Oudtshoorn between 1874 and 1999, and the acculturation that accompanied and facilitated this assimilation. Throughout this period Jews retained a strong ethnic identity, based on religious observance and a sense of a shared heritage, even against the challenges of population decline. The Jews were never threatened by total assimilation into the Gentile community : they always retained a distinct identity. The greatest threat to its continued existence was, indeed, the upward mobility of its own members, who gravitated to better economic opportunities outside the Oudtshoorn district and therefore sent the community into numerical decline. Jews made a successful transition from being regarded as an immigrant community, to being regarded as an ethno-religious minority group of South African citizens within Oudtshoorn.

The process was spearheaded in the late nineteenth century by a very small number of Anglo-German or already anglicised Jews who came to Oudtshoorn first. They soon slotted into the civil life to cater for both their economic and social interests. When East Europeans began arriving shortly afterwards, many followed the example of the anglicised Jews and acculturated extensively. Henceforth, the Lithuanian Jewish community became divided between a more westernized, and more traditional section. Anglicisation became the prime qualification for acceptance into the town's middle class society. The East European Jews invariably began to acculturate, beginning with basic use of local language. The nature of their industries, feather buying, smousing and small retail enterprises, benefited the formation of personal ties with individual Gentiles. Shared economic interests developed quickly, as did a certain co-dependency. As a group, the Jews made a point of supporting charities and causes outside their ethnic unit and tried to advance their community's relations with the general society. As they gained economic interests in Oudtshoorn, so their interest grew in local politics, and by the 1890s, Jews were voting in elections. Increasing economic security, the creation of sedentary businesses in town, and regular interaction with non-Jews also advanced the formation of other affiliations and the joining of institutions. This allowed for an increase in confidence.

In the mid-1890s, Jews successfully countered anti-alien and xenophobic attacks on their community, claiming interests in Oudtshoorn and shared identity with its other inhabitants. Lingering fears of Jewish economic domination coloured future ethnic relations, but by the turn of the century Jews were enjoying the fruits of civic integration and Jewish individuals were present in important civic structures and business circles. The South African War provided an

ideal opportunity to display loyalty towards Britain and the pro-British section of the district population, and the post-war ostrich feather boom accelerated Jewish integration into the general community. They enjoyed freedom of worship, *de jure* equality under the British legal system, and were identified as Whites, with all the benefits which that brought about in Oudtshoorn. While supporting a vibrant ethnic life, the Jewish community increasingly sought success and status outside its own ethnic borders, and strongly pursued a process of anglicisation. The development of entrenched interests in Oudtshoorn in the first generation was accentuated by the sharp shift in focus of the second generation, which readily identified with Oudtshoorn as their home, and not Eastern Europe or an exclusive Jewish group. This generation was socialised from the start into a Gentile environment and acquired the languages and skills necessary to circulate effortlessly among non-Jews.

By the time of the slump in ostrich feathers, Jews were prominent in business and civic institutions, had interests in Oudtshoorn's economic well-being and the harmonious co-existence of its population, and had developed extensive secondary relations with Gentiles. The Jewish community came under severe economic pressure, not only because of the fall of the feather industry, but also through pressures on middleman occupations. This process was seized upon by a growing ethnically exclusive agenda by Afrikaner leaders, who based their influence in the community upon Afrikaner economic needs. It was accompanied, but not primarily motivated, by tension with Jews, but individual Jews dealt with the challenge as their economic situation determined, and the Jewish community *per se* was not persecuted.

Jews again identified with the British Empire in the First World War and supported the war effort, partly to display patriotism, partly to defend the Jewish group against accusations of disloyalty. Their loyalty was explicitly connected to their positive experience of the British legal system and the equality they felt it bestowed on them. Unease over Russia was subordinated to the need to prove that they were now citizens of the Empire, and had Oudtshoorn's interests at heart above their memories of a "past life" in Eastern Europe. A series of crises and challenges in Oudtshoorn itself consolidated their position as citizens. They contributed strongly to the economic recovery of the district after the Slump. They used civic channels and alliances with non-Jews to counter problems of demographic decline, and to see off threats to their religious equality, discrimination and antisemitism, and anti-alien behaviour proscribing Jewish immigration in the 1920s. Hereby they not only argued for their own rights as citizens of Oudtshoorn (as rate-payers, economic contributors), but also sought to establish minority rights in a White, Christian-dominated society. Increasingly they could depend upon Gentile support for those rights.

The Jewish community's ethnic life was never under threat, but by the 1930s, Jews were impacted upon by economic pressures increasingly manipulated by the ethnic and political interests of the Afrikaner and especially the Nationalist Party. It was not primarily antisemitic, but antisemitism certainly began to play a role. It sought to gain ethnic control over channels of distribution, maximising the benefit to the economically hard pressed Afrikaner community. Jews' predominance in the middleman positions (as shopkeepers, produce buyers and distributors) coupled with general Jewish political support for the South African Party, in opposition to the Nationalists, and their strong ethnic identity, made them natural opponents of the Nationalist program, the most important expression of which was the cooperative movement. The Nationalist effort was accompanied by Hoggenheimer-type propaganda, and the depiction of Jews as outsiders following their own ethnic program and not working in the interest of the rest of the population. It was sustained by troubled economic relationships between people who happened to be Jews and those who were not, especially credit arrangements. Jews were increasingly seen as capitalists, an economic power block.

Several developments disputed this assessment, so enthusiastically used by Nationalist leaders and believed by many of their followers. The Jewish community by the 1930s showed distinct signs of diffusion along civic lines. Although religious life was very healthy, and never under threat from outsiders, individual Jews had so successfully penetrated the civic life of the district that they had multiple affiliations and interests. People who happened to be Jews were differing with one another in civic politics, especially municipal government, on issues like Sabbath or Sunday observance, "moral" issues like liquor sales, and on property ownership, especially slums. This did not mean that the Jewish ethnic group was in any danger of falling apart, but it did entail Jews forming alliances with non-Jews, aligning themselves on grounds of economic or political interest and not religion and ethnicity. It meant that people who happened to be Jews could be highly successful in civic life ; it also meant that the issues on which they identified themselves as Jews, were becoming more circumscribed, and tied increasingly only to freedom of religion and freedom from persecution.

Frequent exposure to Gentiles led to increasing acculturation. Success in the non-Jewish world meant that shared interests had to be cultivated with Gentiles. The second and third generations, socialising from an early age with Gentiles, did this most successfully. Although the vast majority never relinquished their distinct religious identity, they increased their success in the Gentile-dominated world by striving for increasing similarity to Gentiles. Schoolboys countered antisemitism by speaking Afrikaans, making Gentile friends and playing rugby. Gentiles, raised

around Jews, noticed increasing similarities with and affinity towards younger Jews. Although Jews were still regarded as "different" and mild antisemitism or even philosemitism never disappeared, Whites especially no longer saw Jews as immigrants or strangers. A duality therefore developed in Afrikaner-Jewish relations, between "the Jew" as a neighbour, and "the Jew" as a political and economic competitor. Antisemitic propaganda, from Nationalist platforms especially, was watered down to facilitate everyday exchanges and mutual dependency.

Some Jews increasingly identified with Afrikaner cultural, economic and political aspirations. The Jewish community was divided prominently into two broad orientations : the one, Afrikaans-speaking, towards the Nationalist Party and Afrikaner ethnic interests ; the second, much larger group, was English-speaking or bilingual, and oriented towards the South African Party and interests which many Afrikaners found hostile to their nationalistic aspirations. In part this was the result of differing shades of acculturation, in part it reflected economic interests. Some Jews opposed the growing power of Nationalist party politics in the economy and found themselves at the sharp end of the cooperative movement, facing debilitating legislation and hostile producers ; some Jews worked with the Afrikaner interests, collaborated with the Nationalists' interests and benefited from it. Antisemitism was never the prime motivator of the cooperative movement, but it was never far away. Jews were discriminated against because of their economic position, political orientation and ethnic minority status : the most important consideration was not that they were Jews, but that they were not Afrikaners.

Some proof for this lies in the failure of the Greyshirt movement in Oudtshoorn. Pure antisemitism collapsed because of the long history of economic co-dependency, acculturation and the many secondary relationships Jews had formed with non-Jews in Oudtshoorn. Jews mounted a powerful and successful defence against persecution through civic channels, aided by Gentiles. As such, Jewish claims for civil equality involved them in a debate between competing claims for freedom of association and of speech on the part of the non-Jews and the radical organisations, and the Jewish claim to the right to freedom from persecution. Their rights as citizens of Oudtshoorn, who had contributed to the economic well-being of the district and town, whose interests were integral to that of their fellow-Oudtshoornites, and who had repeatedly proved their friendship and worth to non-Jews, won through. Jews could now claim that they were no longer merely tolerated by Oudtshoorn's people ; they had won the right to be defended by their neighbours.

The greatest threat to Jews remained economic issues used to motivate ethnically exclusive political programmes among the Afrikaners. Industrial action against Jewish businesses, partly

motivated by the antisemitism of the mid-1930s, failed because it could not tap into the potential power provided by Afrikaner nationalism. The Ossewabrandwag of the Second World War made a more aggressive challenge, and drew on both Afrikaner political grievances and economic friction in Oudtshoorn. It was not primarily antisemitic in motivation, but it was so strongly informed by the Hoggenheimer image, which saw Jews as an Anglo-Jewish economic alliance against the Afrikaner, that it motivated arson attacks on Jewish businesses. Interestingly, Jewish individuals were not directly harmed. Most of those Jews attacked during the war were probably economically vulnerable (middlemen, creditors) or politically suspect (SAP supporters). Their attackers were likely a small minority working on principles of exclusive Afrikaner ethnic power followed by the Nationalists and cooperative movement since 1914. Most non-Jews felt no specific anger towards the Jews and disapproved of the attacks.

The post-war era saw the consolidation of the Afrikaner ethnic powerbase. Jews found certain civic channels, such as the cooperative directorships and certain committees, closed to them, again, not in the first place because they were Jews, but because they were not Afrikaners. Low-intensity antisemitism pervaded society, but its impact was small beyond the avenues of power, where an Afrikaner oligarchy demanded ethnic loyalty to specific programmes. Jews were free to lead their religious lives and faced no overt persecution, and the basic incompatibility of the Jewish and Christian religions did not feature prominently in everyday life.

Jews benefited from apartheid even though many were politically opposed to it. Most, outside election day, were content being White, and subjected to the pressures to conform and to survive economically, which saw most of them take little or no part in politics. Their relationship to non-Whites was almost exclusively as employers or shopkeepers to employees or customers – there was very little social interaction across the colour bar, and Jews were regarded as, and treated as Whites by non-Whites. They never regarded themselves as second-class citizens. Jewish life was buoyed by the foundation of the State of Israel, but did not fundamentally alter most Jews' attitudes as citizens towards South Africa or Oudtshoorn. By the 1970s young Jews, though often retaining some form of religious observance and sense of Jewish identity, fitted seamlessly into the South African context. Their economic mobility, indeed, took them beyond the borders of Oudtshoorn and contributed to the community's numerical decline. Those Jews who remained resembled White Oudtshoornites in almost every aspect, had access to all but the uppermost positions in civic life – dominated mostly by Afrikaners – and had no doubts about their citizenship in South Africa, or their right to call themselves Oudtshoornites.

The greatest challenge to Jewish life in Oudtshoorn turned out not to be assimilation, which was successfully withstood through ethnic institutions and religious observance even amid acute population decline. Nor were they diminished by persecution, which they countered successfully by acculturation and utilizing civic channels. The deciding factor was the Jews' own economic aspirations, which saw them move beyond the boundaries of Oudtshoorn. The Jewish community was never swallowed by Oudtshoorn. They simply outgrew it.

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