

SHYLOCK AND PROSPERO:

ANTI-SEMITISM, ZIONISM AND SOUTH AFRICAN IDEOLOGY

by

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When war broke out in the Middle East in October, 1973 for the fourth time in a quarter of a century, it signaled the nadir of Israel's deteriorating popularity in black Africa and the Third World. The struggle of the Jewish state, composed of the outcasts of European intolerance, against the forces of a hostile desert and more hostile neighbors, had earlier inspired support and admiration from a wide range of new African nations confronted with similar problems of state building and economic obstacles. But whatever residual sympathies may have existed for the hardy pioneers of Israel dissipated in the growing consciousness of Third World solidarity and Israel's dependence upon those powers which appeared opposed to Third World security and prosperity. The process of withdrawal of African diplomatic support for Israel, which began well before the 1973 war,¹ was climaxed by a round of diplomatic breaks which left only five African nations with ties to Israel by the end of 1973.²

Among those nations who continue to support Israel, the strangest by far is the Republic of South Africa. Indeed, South Africa's support for Israel has grown beyond mere diplomatic relations towards a new, and to many Africans, an unholy alliance. During the Yom Kippur War, the South African Minister of Defense, Mr. P. W. Botha, said that "South Africa would give moral support to Israel in the Middle East war, and that he did not doubt that ways and means of showing the Republic's sympathy *in a practical way* short of war would be found." He went on to explain that "(T)here existed a deep feeling of sympathy in South Africa with Israel in its struggle against forces supported by 'militaristic Communism'.³ Such means were found when exchange controls were relaxed to allow South African Jews and others to send \$30 million worth of support to Israel in the wake of the conflict.⁴

What makes the South Africa-Israel alliance and the sympathy underlying it so strange and paradoxical is the strong tradition of anti-semitism among South Africa's rulers.⁵ The current Nationalist Party leadership and every South African Prime Minister since the establishment of Israel in 1948 was, prior to that watershed date, an outright supporter of Nazi

Germany and of fascist racial policy as regards Jews.⁶ Nonetheless, recent leaders have emerged over the past twenty-five years as among Israel's most reliable friends. It is possible to explain the shift in policy by the Afrikaner leadership in terms of changing strategic and foreign policy considerations; i.e., a marriage of convenience. But, we cannot hope to explain the development of 'a deep feeling of sympathy' in these terms. And there is little doubt that many South African whites, both Afrikans and English speakers, feel a deep and keen sympathy with the Jewish state and the Zionist cause. An examination of some of the ideological bases of South African policy is required if we are to resolve the dilemma of the transformation of South African anti-semitism into active, affective pro-Zionism.

Anti-semitism: Shylock in South Africa

Anti-semitism in South Africa followed closely the development of modern anti-semitism in European society.⁷ Until the closing decades of the nineteenth century, we can observe a phenomenon which can best be described as Christian anti-semitism. This is the result of the stigma attached to Jews not primarily as a race or nation but rather as non-believers. The Jew is not despised as a Jew, but as a misbeliever. The result of this may be difficult to distinguish in terms of the resulting social and political discrimination from the more virulent form of modern anti-semitism which seeks not so much to exclude but to extirpate the Jew from society as incarnate evil. Prior to this century the Jew was hated because of what he did or believed, but since the rise of post-national anti-semitism he has come to be hated for being a Jew. Even those traits acclaimed as virtues in others were condemned as 'Jewish' in the Jew.⁸

In South Africa, this development can be observed in the transition from the early treatment of Jews, first by the Dutch Company and settlers and later by the independent Afrikaner republics. There were no practicing Jews during the first century and a half of white occupation in South Africa. The rules of the Dutch East India Company forbade the employment of any but Protestant Christians by the Company or as settlers. This reflects the attitudes of the classic kind of Christian anti-semitism. The same restrictions which applied to Jews applied in equal force to Catholics, and even Lutheran Protestants had difficulties in acquiring permission to build churches due to their departure from the Company's Dutch Reformed and Calvinist orthodoxy. Thus, South Africa's first Jews were recorded as Jews only after the fact of conversion and baptism. Despite a high regard for the Old Testament Jew of the Book, the flesh

and blood Jews of early South Africa were severely discriminated against and disallowed from participation in society.⁹

But the Jewish problem as such does not begin in South Africa until after British occupation of the Cape; indeed, not really until the arrival of Eastern European, especially Lithuanian Jews in the 1880s and after. Then the problem begins to take on the classic configurations of twentieth century anti-semitism. Jews are reviled as alien and unassimilable as a group and attempts to restrict Jewish immigration to South Africa begin in earnest. The South African Republic under Paul Kruger, continuing the older policy of Christian anti-semitism, added restrictions on Uitlanders in general to the list of disabilities already suffered by Jewish and Catholic misbelievers under the Republic's laws.¹⁰ More interesting is the fact that the Afrikaner Bond in the Cape Colony took up the cry for keeping the Jews out of South Africa, favorably pointing to the South African Republic's example of restrictions. Thus, the first organ of Afrikaner nationalism responded to the darker appeal of anti-semitism.

Fear of loss of property to Jewish business became a key anti-semitic argument. A leader of the Bond put it thus: "If foreigners make an inroad into the country, they would take the farmers' property and would outvote the Afrikaner party at the polls."¹¹ To the Afrikaner community, the loss of the soil to these alien, ruthless and cosmopolitan businessmen would be a tragedy of the highest order: a violation of a sacred vow to the motherland. The Afrikaner appears to fit Jean Paul Sartre's description: "The anti-semite can conceive only of a type of primitive ownership of land based on a veritable magical rapport, in which the thing possessed and its possessor are united by a bond of mystical participation."¹² The mystical bases of Afrikaner *volk* and the rising national consciousness which began during the late nineteenth century¹³ found a ready ally in the anti-semitic 'passion' of Europe in the grips of a similar nationalist revival.

While some Jews did successfully enter agriculture, especially in the Outdshoorn ostrich ranching region of the Cape, and some displayed a remarkably capitalist attitude towards the resources and products of the soil,¹⁴ the bulk of the new Jewish immigrants arrived poor and remained poor. Itinerant trade on a small scale was a much more typical occupation of the rural Jew and the vast majority of 'cosmopolitan' Jews were in fact metropolitan in their orientation. As early as 1904, 88 percent of the Jews living in the Transvaal were in the Rand-Pretoria urban centers.¹⁵ The concentration of Jews in the urban areas, their predominance in commercial and financial operations and especially their notable successes in the

highly capitalist mining industries¹⁶ contributed to the emerging image of the South African Jew as a modern Shylock. We need not rehearse the list of outstanding Jewish magnates which begins with Barney Barnato and Alfred Beit and persists to today in the person of Harry Oppenheimer (despite the conversion of the Oppenheims to Anglican religion). What needs mention is that from early in the Jewish experience in South Africa, Jews engaged in those occupations (ranging from petty traders, middlemen and lenders through to bankers, financiers and 'cosmopolitan capitalists' in the mining industry¹⁷) which struck the Afrikaner nationalist as particularly 'Jewish'. To the landless *biwoner* and the wealthy farmer of the *platteland* as well as to the rapidly urbanizing 'poor white' and the aspiring middle class Afrikaner, the Jewishness of these occupations added to their reputation as part of the pernicious and unwholesome life which the twentieth century was thrusting on the simple, pure and idyllic Afrikaner *volk*.¹⁸

It should come as no surprise then that politicians interested in mobilizing the Afrikaner nation and its electoral power, like the 'demagogic' politicians of the European right, should find in anti-semitism a sharp and useful weapon.¹⁹ That this weapon should be brought to bear by the Nationalists under Hertzog during their first bid for power after the Rand Revolt of 1922 is perfectly natural. If anti-semitism in South Africa is not an aberration of Afrikaner character any more than it was an aberration of German character, its political application by Nationalists in South Africa must be understood as a general symptom of the same crisis which saw the rise of Fascist anti-semitism in the heartland of European culture. The steady rise to power of Afrikaner racist Nationalism from the 1920s to 1948 is both parallel and intimately tied to the rise in vocal and virulent anti-semitism in Western society at large.

The first form this modern anti-semitism took was a renewal of the call for the exclusion of Jews from South Africa by the tightening of immigration legislation. In the wake of the Red Revolt on the Witwatersrand in 1922²⁰ an agitation began for the exclusion of Jews as potential radical aliens, especially Bolsheviks, who would contaminate the laboring men of all races and bring turmoil to South African industrial life. That this should be the cry of the Nationalists and Labour and not of the magnates and the South African Party of General J. C. Smuts, who was so often accused of being a tool of the mining concerns, is only superficially contradictory. The very fact that the attempt to restrict immigration was made by trying to have the Jews included under those laws which effectively prohibited the immigration of Asians indicates the fundamentally racist, rather than simply capitalist purpose of the agitation.

Jews were to be considered along with Indians as an unassimilable alien minority which should be excluded and if possible expelled.²¹

The Pact Government, which included the Nationalists, came to power in 1924 and the agitation declined. But, it wasn't until 1930 that effective anti-semitic legislation could be put into effect. In this regard, South Africa was a step ahead of the German Reich. But it was not possible due to the constitutional limitations imposed by Britain at the time of Union against *explicitly* racist legislation to write the law actually mentioning Jews. Nonetheless, the Immigration Quota Act of 1930 succeeded *de facto* in reducing the number of Jewish immigrants to South Africa.²² Its author, the then Minister of Interior, Daniel F. Malan, years later frankly stated "that that had in fact been its objective."²³

But anti-semitic agitation aimed at restricting Jewish immigration was just beginning. With Hitler's rise to power in 1933 and the beginnings of Nazi persecution of German Jews, the 1930 Act proved insufficient to prevent a wave of Jewish refugees from spilling over onto South Africa's shores. Agitation reached unprecedented heights in 1936 and 1937 when marches of black shirted South African Fascists took place in major cities across South Africa. The Nationalist Party persistently called for an end to Jewish immigration. The governmental response was to pass a law further restricting Jewish entry into the country. The Aliens Act passed by the Smuts-Hertzog Fusion Government in late 1936 did not satisfy the 'purified' Nationalists, who were led by D. F. Malan, the author of the first restrictive immigration act. "The Nationalist Party . . . regarded this Act as 'ineffective' and incessantly demanded the total cessation of further Jewish immigration."²⁴

It was during this period of the late 1930s that the ideologues of Afrikaner Nationalism incorporated anti-semitism more fully into the Party's program. Anti-semitism went well beyond mere attempts to restrict immigration. South African right wing politicians and intellectuals of the Nationalist movement were discovering that South Africa as well as Europe had 'a Jewish problem'. The poor white problem which had led to a militant economic nationalist program of "Buy Afrikaans, Save Afrikaans" was now traced to the evil influence not just of capitalism but of 'British-Jewish capitalism'. The Shylock figure of Christian anti-semitism was transformed in South Africa to the image of a "Hoggenheimer," a Jewish-capitalist glutton grown fat on the efforts of the poor, Christian and Nationalist Afrikaner *volk*. Again we can hear echoes of European anti-semitism especially that of the lower middle classes. The

hatred of the fully integrated members of society was aroused against those who they viewed as alien, anti-social and exploitative. Nor was the Jews' alienation a question of intention, profession or design but of nature and race.²⁵ The anti-semitic agitation can be seen as an attempt to create a crisis in which the Jew could be repaid for his perfidy and the natural ascendancy of the *volk*, the primitive community of native and true Afrikaners, could be re-established.²⁶ Thus, the anti-semitic 'passion' and political program of the Afrikaner Nationalists was intimately related to the specifically nationalist ideas of a nation in crisis. Anti-semitism was another element in the core ideas of reactionary nationalism which inspired the outward rituals and symbols of the more purely Afrikaner national consciousness such as Dingaan's Day, the Voortrekker Monument and the celebrations of national heroism in the two "Boer" Wars.

At the core of the new anti-semitism was the recognition that South Africa had 'a Jewish problem' as well as a 'Native' problem; that Jews, despite their obvious success in accommodating the demands of the modern sector of the South African economy, were viewed as unassimilable by the majority of white society. This kind of Jewish question could not be regulated; it had to be extirpated. Even the educated and traveled, like the publisher and editor-in-chief of the new Afrikaners language newspaper, *Die Transvaaler*, Hendrik Verwoerd,²⁷ seemed inordinately concerned about Jewish immigration and citizenship. Verwoerd, who is best known as the author of South Africa's apartheid policies of 'separate development', felt that the problem of South African Jews deserved the very first editorial statement of *Die Transvaaler* in October, 1937. In "The Jewish Question from the Nationalist Point of View,"²⁸ Verwoerd, already identified with the agitation against Jewish immigration which led to the Aliens Act, complained that South Africa's Jews did not join in that agitation against what he saw as harmful further immigration and chastised them for not supporting and identifying with the Afrikaner majority and their Nationalist political parties. This accusation of disloyalty came after a cataloguing of the anti-semitic gospel of Jewish alien and unassimilable character, un-Christian business methods and general un-Afrikaansness. Thus, the leading architect of Afrikanerdom's racist policies vis-a-vis the African majority sharpened his ideological claws on the relatively easy prey of the Jewish minority. A campaign sympathetic to Blackshirts and hostile to Jews and Communists was carried out in the pages of *Die Transvaaler*. Verwoerd was joined in this press campaign by J. G. Strijdom, another future South African Prime Minister.²⁸

The attitude of the Nationalist party at this time (1937-38) can be judged by the following statement by D. F. Malan, its leader:

*The fact is, that the Jewish people have no national home, and that as soon as their numbers in any land exceed a certain percentage, it creates a race problem there. Anti-semitism is there. . . . In South Africa we reached this limit a considerable time ago already....*²⁹

The racialist thought of Afrikaner nationalism, forged in the wake of the Boer war against the 'British race', was refined by the tortuous arguments over the fate of the Jewish race a decade before the solution of total segregation, known as apartheid, was applied to the various 'non-white' races of South Africa.

The war which broke out in 1939 between Nazi Germany and the British, brought the Union of South Africa led by General Smuts into the anti-Fascist camp. The Nationalists were severely divided as to what their response should be.³⁰ Their legal obligations as members of the British Empire and Commonwealth made overt support for the Nazi cause dangerous and possibly treasonable. Malan led the party into a position favoring strict and legal neutrality. Other party members, like J. B. Vorster, took a stand more in keeping with their real sympathies by organizing subversive activities through Afrikaner fascist organizations like the *Ossawa Brandwag*. But, even the official and more moderate position of the Nationalist party on the question of Jews was quite in keeping with its Nazi sympathies. The 1941 Programme of the Federal Council of the Nationalist party had a section entitled 'Immigration and the Jewish Question' in which Jews were named as 'unassimilable elements'. It called for a complete end to immigration at a time when the Jewish population of Europe, even of Holland, was being systematically uprooted, driven into exile or placed in concentration camps. Indeed, the party program went even further by calling for the repatriation of 'illegal and undesirable elements' which could only mean those handfuls of Jews who had reached South Africa through 'loopholes' in the immigration laws. All this was proposed in the name of protecting 'South Africa's own original white population' from 'unfair competition'.³¹ Not surprisingly the Transvaal Congress of the Party officially banned Jews from membership in 1943 and were followed by the Orange Free State and Natal Congresses. This ban stayed in effect until the 1950s

While the war in Europe had the effect of exacerbating the Jewish question among Nationalist ideologues, the end of the war, the defeat of German and Italian fascism and the revelations of the extermination of millions of European Jews did not in itself

ease the tensions. It took the much less dramatic, but far more practical revelations of Nationalist electoral possibilities in 1948 to bring about the relaxation of tensions. Malan's campaign platform included a few sops to Jewish opinion. He still called for an end to immigration, but now providing for exceptions for 'humanitarian' reasons and the 'cultural needs of the community'. Moreover, he proposed no new discriminatory legislation against Jews.³³ From relaxation to reconciliation, however, would take more than moderate electoral proposals and time. It would begin to come about with the creation of the State of Israel as a national homeland for the Jewish people and the consequent emergence of a new Jewish stereotype. I don't mean to suggest that garden variety anti-semitism vanished in South Africa. On the contrary, while official anti-semitism was restrained, popular anti-semitism directed at Jews in South Africa seems to have remained alive, co-existing quite well with the new image of the Jew as white settler elsewhere.³⁴ The new image was no longer a South African version of Shakespeare's Skylock, the merchant and usurer. Now the Afrikaner conjured Shakespeare's Prospero as well -- a European Prince, cast up on a distant and hostile island amid strange and vulgar 'natives' by the Tempest.

Pro-Zionism: Prospero and the shock of recognition

South African sympathy with Zionism and hence with the new state of Israel did not spring fully armored from the heads of the Broederbond. Like Israel itself, it had a long gestation period. The first South African Zionists were Jews, although many leaders of the Jewish community held back from the movement for quite some time. Other Jews were quick to realize the compatibility of their own Zionism with elements of Afrikaner nationalism and parallels were duly noted. 'The Jewish parallel to Afrikaans nationalism was the spreading of Zionist ideology and the fostering of Hebrew as a living tongue' during the first decade of this century.³⁵ Despite the opposition of the rabbinate and the leading liberal synagogues to the Zionist movement of Jewish nationalism,³⁶ it sank deep roots among the South African Jewish population and struck a responsive chord among the nationalist Afrikaners from an early date as well. This should not be surprising. In many ways modern Zionism recognized the unassimilable and alien nature of South African Jews asserted by anti-semitic Nationalists. 'In the eyes of the anti-Semite, the establishment of a Jewish nation furnishes only another proof that the Jew is out of place in the ... community.'³⁷

In many ways, the anti-semitic propaganda of the nationalist borrowed a page from the Zionists themselves. Malan's argument

about a certain percentage of Jews creating a race problem as they have 'no national home' sounds remarkably like Zionist propaganda of the pre-Israel period.

*Without Zionism, without a center in Palestine, the Jews will, until they cease to exist, constitute an international irritation -- a problem. . . in any country where they, as a scattered minority, refuse to merge themselves . . . with the majority . . .*³⁸

Despite the harmony of Zionist and Afrikaner nationalist ideas regarding the importance to national life of a homeland where the complete and unrestricted exercise of national sovereignty could be enjoyed by a 'chosen people', there was little in the programs of Afrikaner leaders in 1948 which would allow us to anticipate their hearty welcome and sympathetic regard for the Jewish state. Yet, it is indisputable that South African statesmen and Afrikaner Nationalists in particular took a lead in making Israel at home in the society of nations.

In this regard J. C. Smuts, the leader of the South African Party and United Party and a non-Nationalist Afrikaner, played a singular role in the creation of the Jewish State.³⁹ As a member of the Imperial War Cabinet in 1917, he met and befriended Chaim Weizmann, later to become the first President of Israel, and helped to draft the Balfour Declaration which set British controlled Palestine as a national homeland for the Jews. By 1929, Smuts had become a leading international patron of the Zionist idea. As Prime Minister of South Africa in 1947 he supported the partition plan in the United Nations and just two days before the General Election which brought Malan's Nationalists to power in May, 1948, he granted *de facto* recognition to the new State of Israel.

Smuts's support for Israel predicted on his view of British imperial interests, certainly did not help his election chances within South Africa. But neither did it force the Nationalists into an anti-Zionist position. Malan expanded South Africa's support for the Jewish state by extending *de jure* recognition and by becoming the first head of government to make a visit to the fledgling state. The successful 'war of liberation' against the Arab states by Israel in 1948 'made a deep impression' on the Nationalists, "both because of the fortitude shown by the Jews in Palestine and because many Afrikaners saw in the new state the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies."⁴⁰

It would be a mistake to attribute the rise of South African pro-Zionism to contingent and convenient events like military victories over 'common' enemies. Various excuses for the blossoming love affair can be concocted. The 'hostage' status of

South Africa's 115,000 Jews⁴¹ helps explain Israeli receptivity to South African advances. The role of Jewish businessmen in cementing economic ties between the two states⁴² contributes to the spirit of detente. But, there is further evidence that economic and cultural ties have been growing at an increasing rate since the 1967 war brought the romance into the open.⁴³ And it seems unlikely that the small vulnerable Jewish community of South Africa could have so profound an influence on Afrikaner sentiments from their position as an oppressed minority. Even the highly influential role of South African Jews who have 'returned' to Israel to settle⁴⁴ like Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban, itself cannot account for South Africa's change of heart. All in all, it is hard to contend that the Jews of South Africa, whether they remained or 'returned', have played anything but a minor role in the emergence of pro-Zionism in South Africa.

Perhaps the most convincing argument on the superficial and opportunist nature of the reapproachment is the geo-political one. From a military and strategic point of view, Israel is seen by South Africans as a fellow guardian of European 'white' democracy against the forces of 'militaristic communism'. The recent emergence of new alliances out of the 1973 war have added to that conviction. South Africa, already in informal alliance with Portugal in support of the buffer states of Angola and Mocambique, was brought closer to alliance with Israel by the efforts of the United States to re-arm and supply Israel through the Portuguese owned Azores islands. Portugal was quick to demand concessions from the U.S. on her stand on Portuguese colonialism which not only stimulated the emergence of an Arab-African bloc, but drew the Israelis closer to the camp of Southern African reaction.⁴⁵ This recent example of the developing Israeli-South African entente continues a trend based on the common hostility to so-called 'terrorism' and to Third World nationalism by both Israel and South Africa.⁴⁶ But, the recognition of common interest in defense posture and military questions of retaliation against guerrilla sanctuaries falls far short of explaining South Africa's *active* sympathy with Zionism and the Jewish state. For that emotional development, recognition of deeper ties was required. South African perception of a common situation of Israeli Jew and white South African as alien settler minorities in lands they have taken from others provides the basis of that development. Recognition of elements of the character of colonizing conqueror in the Jewish rulers of Palestine best accounts for the empathy of South Africa's own white Prosperos.⁴⁷

A key to understanding the Prospero complex is found in the views of the immigrant settlers of the questions of land, the people of the land and of human nature and ethnicity. While

the Israelis conquered their land from the British, the Arabs and the desert' the Afrikaners wrested theirs from the same British Empire and the African. The common ideology of being 'chosen people' seeking to establish a New Jerusalem underlines the sense of identification which South African whites are able to feel for the Israeli frontier *kibbutznik*, gun in hand guarding his homeland from the Arab Palestinians.

Moreover, Zionists and Nationalists share a common view of those who oppose the establishment of the settler regime. Their claims to the land are said to be spurious, and their ability to use the land is demeaned. Arab and Bantu are seen as interlopers, temporary sojourners with no rights to the land except as allowed under settler law. Certainly they have no right to participation in the political life of the state except as permitted by those whose purpose it is 'to make the desert bloom' or to be 'a bastion of western civilization' on the edges of darkness and chaos.

Behind this common view of the 'barbarian enemy' is a more subtle view of the nature of ethnic relations and indeed of human nature. For the Zionist, to be a minority in another's land is to be persecuted. The history of Jewish oppression by European Gentiles is seen as proof of the inherent evil in human nature -- the immutable tendency of the majority to dominate and tyrannize over the weak and ethnically distinct minority. Despite periods of liberalism, emancipation and assimilation, the eventual return of the repressed hostility towards the alien means the return of persecution. In this view the only solution to the problem of minority status is to become a majority in your own land with your own state -- to be strong enough to be the oppressor and not the oppressed.⁴⁸

This view of human and ethnic relations is perfectly consistent with South African's ideology. Not simply out of a puritan doctrine of original sin, but out of three hundred years of historical experience, white settlers in South Africa have come to understand their relations with the surrounding indigenous Africans in terms of separation and domination of one or the other. It is anathema to the Afrikaner to consider sharing the state with those races and peoples with whom of necessity he shares a common territory. Not even the British could be fully trusted with a share of state power in the minds of Afrikaner nationalist. The inevitable result of sharing power with other races is the domination of the stronger. A black electorate means the suppression of the white man. Ideas of cooperation, equality, even limited multi-racialism within a single state are incomprehensible. The fundamental tenets of gross apartheid, of Bantustan policy is that only the separate existence of ethnic states, where each group is a majority

can prevent the domination of one by another . . . and of the white by the black. South African ideology is 'Zionist' in its view of ethnic and racial relations.⁴⁹

In general, Zionism, despite its socialist proclamations, is understood by whites in South Africa as the nationalist ideology of a white settler community. Israeli settlers like those of South Africa occupy a borderland between Western civilization and barbarism and must exclude 'the barbarians' from within the walls of civil society. Zionism becomes then an exclusive and racist ideology in the eyes of Afrikaner nationalism as well as in the view of other observers of Zionist thought and society.⁴⁸ White South Africa sees in Israel a reflection of its own likeness. It is this likeness to each other and to the image of Prospero on the island which I believe is bringing them together in ideological and political partnership.

Despite the basic sympathies between Afrikaner Nationalism and Zionism the course of their 'friendship' was not always smooth. The first difficulties came in 1956 over the Suez Crisis, which proved to be a hornet's nest rather than a beehive as South Africa's Prime Minister Strijdom referred to it.⁵¹ Not only did Egypt end up losing the valuable resources of the Suez Canal it had just nationalized, but even the three allied invaders, Britain, France and Israel, managed to get stung by the first joint action by the United States and the Soviet Union in the United Nations.⁵² White South Africa chose to remain at arm's length from her western allies and especially her Commonwealth cousin, the United Kingdom. Her sympathies for Israel were neutralized by her tradition of anti-semitism and anti-British feeling and she remained aloof. An abstention on the U.N. General Assembly vote which condemned the Anglo-French invasion left South Africa free to not only feel sympathetic for Israel, but to benefit from the side effects of the closing of the canal such as the increase in Cape Route shipping without spending any political capital in open defense of Israel.

After initial reticence, the long term impact of the Suez Crisis allowed a freer play for South African sympathy for Israel. First, the Suez was a crisis for the United Nations, which at that very time was engaged in attacking South Africa's domestic policy of apartheid. South Africa's vulnerability to the United Nations which would come more and more to reflect the aspirations of the Asian and African nations, meant that any discrediting of the United Nations especially through divisions among the permanent members of the Security Council operated to allow South Africa breathing room.⁵³ When Israel, which on one occasion supported South Africa in the U.N., came

to be castigated by the United Nations' Afro-Asian block, another link in the white settler front against Afro-Asian nationalism was forged.

Second, the Suez crisis marked a breakdown in Commonwealth relations as that body changed from a white dominated to a multi-racial entity. The ineffectiveness of the Commonwealth in protecting Britain from the sting of the Suez crisis was duly noted by White South Africa, who within a few years decided that the Commonwealth was a luxury a white racist regime could ill-afford.⁵⁴ Breaking the Commonwealth connection would give the new Republic of South Africa an even freer hand in ordering its relations with the State of Israel, itself a former area of British control.

Lastly, the closing of the canal and the diversion of merchant and naval vessels to the Cape route meant more than just an increase in port activity and revenues. It opened up a whole new set of strategic considerations which has led South Africa to see itself as a major partner in the western alliances' defense of the Indian Ocean and Asia, as well as a bulwark against Soviet and Chinese Communist influence in Africa. This view, which was given a fillip by the Suez crisis and its aftermath has become the lynch-pin of South Africa's foreign policy.⁵⁵ Once again, the analogy between the pro-western states of Israel and South Africa, respectively guardians of the Northern and Southern gateways to the Orient, was drawn by anti-communist Nationalists. The Communist enemies of the two settler 'democracies' provided further grounds for the growth of sympathy for Zionist Israel in 'Christian' Nationalist South Africa.

The failure of South Africa to come to Israel's support during the troubled days of the Suez Crisis was nothing compared to the injury inflicted by Israel on South Africa in the wake of the Sharpeville crisis four years later.⁵⁶ The resulting censure of South Africa by Britain and the United States was not really surprising, but the Israeli condemnation seemed uncalled for coming as it seemed to South Africa from another settler society with no shortage of massacres of Arab civilians on its record. Indeed, in the debate within South Africa in 1961 which followed the Israeli vote in the U.N. for a strong resolution condemning South Africa, Prime Minister Verwoerd agreed with the Arab victims of Zionism by averring: "Israel, like South Africa, is an apartheid state."⁵⁷ His accusation asserted that Israel had been taken from the Arabs. It in fact contained backhanded approval of Israel's restrictive policies towards non-Jews by suggesting their common condition as settler societies. And while there was some rancor at Israel for its public stand against apartheid at this time

of crisis for South Africa,⁵⁸ there was the simultaneous promise of mending the break with a stronger cement.

At the time of the debate, Verwoerd did not engage in an anti-semitic smear against South African Jews, although Jews were castigated for their failure to support the Nationalists at the polls. In fact, he talked of the need for white solidarity which would include Jews and ultimately might allow some expression of their Zionist ideals.⁵⁹ The disagreement was one between natural friends and potential allies.

Furthermore, like the Suez crisis before it, Sharpeville became a crisis not just for South Africa, but for the Commonwealth and the United Nations. In the wake of the crisis, South Africa withdrew from the Commonwealth and its isolation made Israel a more likely companion in international affairs. The inability of the U.N. to mount effective sanctions against South Africa increased her isolation without damaging her granite response to demands for change in racial policy.

The reapproachment was not to emerge fully until the 1967 Six Day War demonstrated to South Africa the value of Israel to a trans-African military alliance. South Africa, now under the leadership of Vorster, a former Nazi, let the 'victory' of Israel lead to reconciliation and detente. No longer would the former anti-semites carry a burden of guilt for the holocaust. Militant Zionism lifted that burden by proving that Jews were just like everyone else: a people with a homeland to defend, to expand and to vindicate their claims to worldly power.⁶⁰ Here was a nation of conquerors which a 'true' Afrikaner could respect and support.

In the wake of the war, the settler government of South Africa loosened its exchange control regulations to allow some \$25 million to flow to Israel. Over 1000 white South Africans volunteered for non-combatant service in Israel for six months and most symbolically the South African Blood Bank made plasma available to the Israelis. The alliance of the settlers was tied with a bloodknot.⁶¹ In the United Nations, South Africa's support for Zionism was manifested by her abstention on Third World resolutions aimed at Israel during June and July. Significantly, South Africa abstained again in September when a resolution by Sweden, Finland and Austria to send the Middle East issue to the regular session of the General Assembly passed with no negative votes. Only Israel and Portugal joined South Africa in abstaining.⁶² The triangulation of Africa by the three African colonial-settler states had begun over the question of continued United Nations 'interference' in their area of prime concern, the defense of settler colonialism.

On the eve of the Six Day War, South Africa embarked on its new 'outward policy'.⁶³ Israel was important to this new foreign policy in several ways. First, in many ways the policy of finding friends at the rear of one's immediate enemies was pioneered by Israel in Africa through her one time relations with Uganda, Kenya, Chad, Nigeria and other states on the Muslim-Christian divide in Africa. Also, Israel could serve as a model for 'third country' imperialism, a policy of funneling western economic and political influence in Africa through a third, local power;⁶⁴ Israel and Iran in the Middle East; South Vietnam and Thailand in South East Asia; then why not South Africa and Portugal, the West's natural allies in the strategically vital southern third of Africa?

Second, there was a considerable increase in commercial contact between the two states. By 1969, the Israel-South Africa Trade Association could announce that exports from South Africa to Israel had more than doubled since 1967 while the slightly larger volume of Israeli exports to South Africa were also increasing.⁶⁵ This trade was significant, not in volume, but in comparison to trade with other African or Arab states. But increasing trade was not the cause of the new relations between the 'allies'. That rested on a new South Africa's perception of her situation:

*In their re-evaluation of the external environment the white South Africans began to draw a close analogy between their position and that of the Israeli's. . . By the late 1960s, and especially after the Israeli's dramatic victory in the Six Day War of 1967, the comparison was drawn in terms of two small states which had demonstrated their ability to survive by guts and determination. The Israeli experience confirmed the South African view that apparently overwhelming odds can be overcome by a combination of economic and technical strength, a dedicated citizen army, and a concerted national effort.*⁶⁶

Add to this the perception of Israel as a white society among darker 'natives', the racist perception of Israel, a European nation, as another extension of western civilization which the western powers would ultimately support and defend and the image of Prospero was complete.

Only one brief crisis threatened the new 'alliance' of the northern and southern gateways. This came in 1971 when Israel following its own outward policy in Africa offended white South Africa's sensibilities by offering aid and succour to the African liberation movements, South Africa's 'terrorists'.⁶⁷ The reaction of the liberal *Rand Daily Mail* to what they termed an

act of "cheap expediency" to the grant of a paltry \$2500 indicates the unanimity of South African white opinion on questions of 'terrorism'. The crisis would pass quickly when the Organization for African Unity rejected the Israeli offer and subsequently Israel withdrew the offer under settler South African pressure.⁶⁸ The common interests of Arabs and Africans caught in the pincers of racist South African and Zionist colonialism had begun to be understood by the victims as well as the designers of the South African-Israeli entente. By 1973, the injury to white South African sensibilities by the Israeli offer had healed and the Republic's reaction to the Yom Kippur War could be characterized as one of 'deep sympathy' on the part of the white South African nationalists for Israel and Zionist ideology.

Shylock, Prospero and (the Ideology of White South Africa)

What conclusions can we draw from this rehearsal of white South Africa's attitudes and ideas about Jews and Israelis? The facts of settler South African anti-semitism and her ultimate reconciliation with the Jewish nation-state of Israel suggest two ideas which have to do with the nature of South Africa's racist ideology. The first is that in terms of South Africa's racist ideas, both anti-semitism and pro-Zionism are really not very strange bedfellows. The hatred of Jews as a cosmopolitan and rootless minority within South African society is merely another facet of the radical nationalism of the Afrikaner parties, whose ideas about race, culture and nation produced the unique program of totalitarian segregation called apartheid. These same ideas produced the anti-semitic agitations aimed at excluding Jews from the country and from the political life of South Africa. Moreover, the transition to pro-Zionism as official policy and popular sentiment did not abrogate the pariah status of Jews within South Africa although the demonstration of Israeli-Jewish power may have relieved some of the worst forms of anti-semitism. Zionism served to justify anti-semitism against 'cosmopolitan Jews' while simultaneously normalizing and nationalizing the Jewish population. Israel lifted the guilt of the anti-semite from the South African white by allowing him to expiate it in his support for Judaism, armed, entrenched and 'normalized' in Israel. Ideas of white South Africa about the nation, the land and chosen people could now be extended to Jews, like other national groups. Moreover, the Jewish nationalists and Zionists were asserting their nationalism against first, the forces of internationalist imperialism which had once held Afrikanerdom in thrall and second, against the socialist and revolutionary ideology of the Afro-Asian nationalism which threatened white hegemony in southern Africa.

The second idea is that white South Africa's ideology, despite its obnoxious manifestations in anti-semitism and racism

against Africans, Coloureds and Asians, is really harmonious and consistent with western nationalism as it confronts cultural and racial diversity and economic necessity. Just as South Africa's anti-semitism flowed from and paralleled the western European cultural tradition going back to Shylock and before, its reconciliation with Zionism compares with the remarkable support and admiration for Israel felt in Germany and central and western Europe for the survivors of their own virulent anti-semitism. But then what is the need for the myriad explanations of South Africa's uniqueness in terms of the seventeenth century attitudes of the Afrikaner farmer, of the exceptionalness of their frontier history and their situation of ethnic diversity? The experience of European settlers in southern Africa amidst millions of Africans, was obviously conditioned by their environment and the history of contact and conquest. But, South Africa was never far out of touch with the metropole, never an isolate, always dependent upon Europe for strategic goods, for protection and for cultural re-infusions. It was always in touch with the intellectual and political currents sweeping the western world from the liberal nationalism of the Caapse Patriotte in the 1790s through the student protests of the 1960s and the recent fad of streaking. The tradition of Shylock and the image of Prospero as white colonial settler, are found in the Afrikaner ideology and in the mainstreams of western culture. As such they serve to emphasize the western roots and continuing imperial ties of South Africa's racist ideology.

Lastly, if we are correct about the depth and strength of the ideological basis of the South African detente with Israel, we may be on the verge of a new era of international conflict in Africa. The unstinting support which the United States has guaranteed to Israel is providing the basis for an expansion of the imperial sphere of influence. This sphere may revolve about an axis running from Tel Aviv to Pretoria as the two states are drawn together in defense of their interests as settler states. Buttressed by support of colonial Portugal and neo-colonial Iran, this sphere may project the conflicts of the Middle East to a continental theatre. Unless an unlikely and 'lasting' peace is achieved in the Middle East, the perennial tempest in that region may grow into an African holocaust as the white colonial and settler states tighten the circle around the Afro-Arab world from the Nile to the Zambezi.

Footnotes

1. E. Touma, "Deteriorating Israeli Position in Africa," *African Communist*, 54 (1973), pp. 75-81.
2. B. Oudes, "Unfriendly Interest . . .," *Africa Report* (Nov.-Dec. 1973), pp. 4-5.
3. *South African Digest*, October 19, 1973, p. 1.
4. B. Oudes, "In the Wake of the Mid-East War," *Africa Report* (Jan.-Feb. 1974), p. 11.
5. The paradox of a socialist government in Israel accepting support from racist South Africa is as puzzling a subject to many observers, but it lies beyond the scope of this essay.
6. Madison Area Liberation Support Group, *South Africa and Israel* (Madison, 1971), p. 1.
7. J. P. Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York, 1948) presents a penetrating analysis of European anti-semitism with important lessons on the South African anti-semite as well.
8. H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London, 1958), pp. 11-53. This historical account of the development of modern anti-semitism in European culture treats this duality in anti-semitic thought.
9. G. Saron and L. Hotz, (eds.), *The Jews in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1955), pp. 1-44.
10. See *Ibid.*, p. 85.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 88; See pp. 86-104 on Jewish immigration up to 1913.
12. Sartre, *Anti-Semite*, pp. 23-24 and pp.126-127.
13. F. van Jaarsveld, *The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism* (Cape Town, 1961) argues for the beginning of national consciousness in the period 1868-1881.
14. Saron and Hotz, *The Jews*, pp. 120-137. The Jewish 'maize king,' E. Lazarus, "realized from the outset that farming must be treated as a business proposition quite as much as any other economic undertaking." p. 367.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
16. In 1921, 60 percent of the Jewish male population was engaged in commerce, 6 percent in finance and 3 percent in the professions. Compare this to only 16 percent white males as a whole in commerce. Under 6 percent of Jewish males engaged in agriculture. *Ibid.*, p. 368.
17. For Jews in the diamond industry, see *Ibid.*, pp. 105-120; in gold mining, pp. 138-164, pp. 179-189; and in trade unions, p. 365 and p. 377. South African Jews have not escaped the typical and contradictory reputation of being both communists and capitalists.
18. Sartre, *Anti-Semite*, p. 25, and Arendt, *Origins*, pp. 25-28, 56 ff., for European examples of these bases for anti-semitism.
19. J. Parkes, *Anti-Semitism* (Chicago, 1964), pp. 19-24 on the use of Jews as political scapegoats.
20. H. Simons and R. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa* (Baltimore, Md., 1969), pp. 271-299, for a full account of the Rand Revolt and its communist participants.
21. Saron and Hotz, *The Jews*, p. 377.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 378-379.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 380.
25. Sartre, *Anti-Semite*, p. 25.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 30. "Incapable of understanding modern social organization, he (the anti-semite) has a nostalgia for periods of crisis in which the primitive community will suddenly reappear and attain its temperature of fusion."
27. A. Hepple, *Vewoerd* (Baltimore, 1967) for an intellectual biography of South Africa's most anti-semitic and ideological Prime Minister.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-222. *Ibid.*, p. 223 and pp. 220-226.
29. Quoted in Saron and Hotz, *The Jews*, p. 380.
30. Hepple, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-226, and Saron and Hotz, *The Jews*, pp. 384-385.

31. Saron and Hotz, *The Jews*, pp. 382-384.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 385 and p. 387, and Hepple, *op. cit.*, p. 227.
33. Saron and Hotz, *The Jews*, pp. 385-386, and Hepple, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-227.
34. Cf. X. Hollander, *The Happy Hooker* (New York, 1972), p. 43, who reports that Johannesburg is called "Jewburg . . . because of the overwhelmingly high percentage of Jews who live there" by the Afrikaners whose society she describes as "conservative and cliquey."
35. Saron and Hotz, *The Jews*, p. 44 ff. on early Zionism in Cape Colony.
36. Cf., J. Heller, *The Zionist Idea* (New York, 1949) and E. Berger, *Judaism or Jewish Nationalism* (New York, 1952) on the centrality of secular nationalist ideology to Zionism from both pro and con perspectives.
37. Sartre, *Anti-Semite*, p. 65.
38. Elisha Friedman, cited in J. Smertenko, "An Interpretation of the Jewish Problem," *Social Forces* IV, 3 (1925), p. 594.
39. J. C. Smuts, *Jan Christian Smuts* (Cape Town, 1952), pp. 203-204, 302, 468, 509-510. For a critical account of Smuts' support for Zionism, see R. Stevens, "Settler States and Western Response," cited in Madison Area, *South Africa and Israel*, pp. 18-20.
40. Saron and Hotz, *The Jews*, p. 387.
41. A figure of 114,762 is reported in the 1960 census, Republic of South Africa, Bureau of Statistics, *Report on the Religion of the Population*, Volume 3 of Population Census, Table 1, p. 1. This is roughly 3.7% of the white population.
42. Madison Area, *South Africa and Israel*, discusses some of the political and economic connections between the two regimes.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-18, and S. Ben Adam, "Israel: Africa's Friend or Foe," *African Communist*, 43 (1970), pp 40-44.
44. By 1955, over 1200 white South Africans had settled in Israel and were reportedly among the most successful settlers. Saron and Hotz, *The Jews*, p. 389.

45. J. McManus, "Secret US deal with Portugal," *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, Nov. 3, 1973, and C. Lobban, "Special: Mid-East War, Israel and Southern Africa," *Southern Africa*, VI, 10 (Dec. 1973), p. 9; F. Ofner, "Israel Restores Ties with South Africa," *Christian Science Monitor* (March 22, 1974), p. 5.
46. ben Adam, "Friend of Foe," pp. 43-44.
47. Om Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban* (New York, 1964, 2nd edition) discusses the mentality of the colonizer in terms of the character of Shakespeare's Prospero of *The Tempest*. While I do not subscribe to Mannoni's description of the psychology of the colonized, I find the description of settler mentality useful in understanding South African whites and their views of Israelis.
48. A. Bober, *The Other Israel* (New York, 1972), pp. 167-170.
49. C. P. Mulder, "The Rationale of Separate Development," *South African Dialogue*, edited by N. J. Rhodie (Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 49-63.
50. ben Adam, "Friend of Foe." pp. 44-48; Madison Area, *South Africa and Israel*, pp. 18-32; Bober, *The Other Israel*, pp. 87-101; M. Rdinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State* (New York, 1973).
51. Quoted in J. Barber, *South Africa's Foreign Policy* (London, 1973), p. 90.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-91. Also, S. Bailey, *Voting in the Security Council* (Bloomington, Ind., 1969), pp. 39-41.
53. Cf. E. Louw, *The Case for South Africa* (New York, 1963), pp. 19-48, and A. Vandenbosch, *South Africa and the World* (Lexington, Ky., 1970), pp. 232-256. Israel had on one occasion supported South Africa in the U.N., *Israel and The United Nations*, Hebrew University, Jerusalem (New York, 1956) p. 213.
54. Vandenbosch, *South Africa and the World*, pp. 174-188; Barber, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 91-96.
55. Prior to the Suez Crisis, South Africa had insinuated herself into Mid-East defense questions. J. Spence, *The Strategic Significance of Southern Africa* (London, 1970), pp. 12-16. For the Cape Route in South African strategic thinking, see *Ibid.*, pp. 28-32, and Vandenbosch, *South Africa and the World*, pp. 283-287.

56. Barber, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 142-159, for South Africa's reactions in the wake of the Sharpeville condemnations.
57. Hepple, *Vernooer*, p. 228.
58. Israel had at least once previously voted against South Africa's racial policy without arousing a serious debate in South Africa. *Israel and the United Nations*, p. 255.
59. Hepple, *Vernooer*, pp. 227-229.
60. M. Selzer, *Zionism Reconsidered* (London, 1970), xi-xxii on the idea of Zionism as the normalization of Jewish ideals to the world of nations.
61. Madison Area, *South Africa and Israel*. As if to underline the compatibility of pro-Zionism with racist anti-semitism, the plasma was to be replaced by people of Jewish 'blood'.
62. A. Lall, *The U.N. and the Middle East Crisis, 1967* (New York, 1968), pp. 186-187, 217.
63. John Berratt, "South Africa's Outward Policy: from Isolation to Dialogue," in *South African Dialogue*, edited by N. J. Rhodie (Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 543-561, and Larry Bowman, "South Africa's Outward Policy: A Foreign Policy Dilemma for the United States," *Ohio University Papers in International Studies* (Athens, Ohio, 1973).
64. Africa Research Group, "David and Goliath Collaborate in Africa," reprinted from *Leviathan*, September, 1969.
65. South African exports went from \$3 to \$7 million from 1967 to 1969. Israeli exports from \$3.9 to \$9.1 million in the same period. Madison Area, *South Africa and Israel*, pp. 4-6.
66. J. Barber, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 214-215.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 266, for an example of South Africa's view of the comparability of African and Palestinian 'terrorism'.
68. Quoted in Dennis Worrall, "South Africa's Reactions to External Criticism," in Rhodie, *Dialogue*, p. 578. Also p. 566 for reasons for the withdrawal of the offer.

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