



The following article, written by [Fred Rundle](#) between 1999 and 2004, was taken from Boerekryger website.

The photos were taken from the web and serve to illustrate the text.

## **Jews and Communism in South Africa**

Against the international background of heavy Jewish involvement in Communism, did the South African experience show any parallels? Perhaps the best way to gain an insight into this topic is to quote from four books, three of which are by Jewish authors.

### **Book one**

A History of Communism in South Africa by Dr Henry R Pike (published by Christian Mission International of South Africa, Germiston, South Africa (1985, 1988).



A large number of Jews have worked to promote Communism in South Africa, as Pike's book indicates. Many of these Jews were involved in the organization of trade unions, particularly black trade unions. Some of the names mentioned by Pike are A Z Berman "a noted Marxist"

who headed the Industrial Socialist League in Cape Town; the communist writer David Shub, Solly Sachs, secretary of the Garment Workers Union and expelled from and then readmitted to the South African Communist Party, Bennie Weinbren who directed the Non-European Trade Union Federation, Issy Diamond, Abraham Levy, Hymie Levin, Issie Wolfson, Julius Lewin, Louis Joffe, Dr Max Joffe, Molly (Zelikowitz) Wolton, Lazar Bach, Rebecca (Notlowitz) Bunting, Fanny Klenerman, Michael Harmel, Sam Kahn, Katy Kagan, Eli Weinberg, Yetta Barenblatt, Hymie Barsel, Leon and Norman Levy, Lionel Forman, Jacqueline and Rowley Arenstein, Errol and Dorothy Shanley, Monty Berman, Bertram Hirson and Neville Rubin.

Dr Pike (p 212-3) quotes from a South African Government Gazette Extraordinary (vol VI 16 Nov 1962 pp 2-28) which listed "persons who have been office-bearers, officers, members or active supporters of the Communist Party of South Africa". The list included 66 "clearly identifiable as Jews", 61 "white non-Jews" and two uncertain. At the time, the South African population was approximately 3 million whites, while the South African Jewish population was 110 000 (World Almanac 1958 p270). So there was approximately one Jew for every 26 white non-Jews in the country. If there had been an equal distribution of Communist involvement between non-Jewish whites and Jews, the Jewish membership of the Communist Party should have been one-twenty-sixth the white Gentile representation. Instead, we find slightly more Jews as members. In other words, Jews were almost thirty times more likely to become members of the Communist Party than were white Gentiles. If Jews with non-Jewish names were also counted, the ratio would be likely to have been considerably higher.

In theory this could be explained away as simple Jewish concern for the welfare of the underdog, the lowest classes, and in the South African context, evidence of Jewish sympathies across racial barriers, or non-racism. In testing such a hypothesis to see whether this is indeed the case, we can look at another instance. Such concerns have been notoriously, and very conspicuously, almost totally absent in the protracted conflict in the Middle East. There, international Jewish support has been overwhelmingly and steadfastly in favour of the Jewish Israelis, and not of the Palestinians who have lost their country, and in thousands of cases their lives, to the violent settlers from Eastern Europe and America. After all, the entire territory was under Palestinian political control until 1947. The Jewish population of the area in 1917 was a mere 7% of the 700 000 inhabitants. The other 93% were Arabs. In 1947 the United Nations under tremendous US pressure gave the Zionists, who owned only about 6% of the land, 56% of the territory of Palestine. Since then, there has been a steady take-over of the remaining territory by force, violence, warfare, bribery and stealth.

Perhaps you might think Dr Pike is just "anti-Semitic" and his approach is biased. But have a look at the next author:

## **Book two**

Jews and Zionism: the South African Experience (1910-67), by Dr Gideon Shimoni (Oxford University Press, 1980).

This book appears to have been written for a Jewish readership.

Two extended quotes from the book will serve as a summary of the situation some decades ago.

[Dr Shimoni was born in South Africa to parents from Lithuania, but settled in Israel where he lectured at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and where he gained post-graduate degrees in Jewish history. While bitterly contemptuous of South Africa under the apartheid system, Dr Shimoni in effect identifies with the concept of geographically based ethnic groupings that was the basis of the South African system. This kind of irony, not to say hypocrisy, is typical of Jews opposed to “racism” in Europe, the US or South Africa.]



Dr Shimoni writes of “...the extraordinary salience of Jewish individuals in the white opposition to the regime of apartheid. Throughout this period Jewish names kept appearing in every facet of the struggle: amongst reformist liberals; in the radical Communist opposition; in the courts, whether as defendants or as counsel for the defence; in the lists of bannings and amongst those who fled the country to evade arrest. Their prominence was particularly marked in the course of the Treason Trial which occupied an important place in the news media throughout

the second half of the 1950's. This trial began in December 1956, when 156 people were arrested on charges of treason in the form of a conspiracy to overthrow the state by violence and to replace it with a state based on Communism. Twenty-three of those arrested were Whites, more than half of them Jews. They included Yetta Barenblatt, Hymie Barsel, Lionel (Rusty) Bernstein, Leon Levy, Norman Levy, Sydney Shall, Joe Slovo, Ruth (First) Slovo, Sonia Bunting, Lionel Forman, Isaac Horvitch, Ben Turok, Jacqueline Arenstein, Errol Shanley, Dorothy Shanley. To top it all, at one stage in the trial the defense counsel was led by Israel Maisels, while the prosecutor was none other than Oswald Pirow. The juxtaposition was striking: Maisels, the prominent Jewish communal leader, defending those accused of trying to overthrow White supremacy; Pirow, the extreme Afrikaner Nationalist and former Nazi sympathizer, defending White supremacy." (pp. 227-8).

"In this extended five-year period between the emergence of violent opposition and its effective suppression, the prominent involvement of individual Jews was in the public eye more than ever before. This was even more so than in the dramatic circumstances of the "Rivonia arrests". On 11 July 1963 the police raided the home of Arthur Goldreich in Rivonia near Johannesburg, where it captured, by surprise, the leadership cadre of the Umkonto we Sizwe underground. Seventeen people were arrested... Five of those arrested were Whites, all of them Jews. They were: Arthur Goldreich, Lionel Bernstein, Hilliard Festenstein, Dennis Goldberg and Bob Hepple... [There was an] overwhelming impression that Jews were in the forefront of the White radicals who were trying to overthrow the system of White supremacy in South Africa. When the secret African Resistance Movement (ARM) was crushed during 1964, it again became evident that many Jews were involved. One of its founders was identified as Monty Berman... others were Adrian Leftwich and Bertram (Baruch) Hirson. Among those who were associated with ARM were Neville Rubin and Michael Schneider [and ] others implicated were Frederick and Rhoda Prager, Raymond Eisenstein and Hugh Lewin..." (pp. 232-3).



Dr Shimoni records with obvious distaste the wording of an Afrikaans letter in a newspaper

criticizing this fundamentally hypocritical proclivity of Jews: "They (the Jews) themselves are the most exclusive apartheid people, yet they exert themselves here for integration." While Jews themselves have shown no intention to integrate or merge with the African masses, they have been hyper-critical of mainstream whites who are reluctant to follow this route, criticizing churches with segregationist policies, while their synagogues have remained ethnically 100% Jewish.

### Book three

Cutting Through the Mountain: Interviews with South African Activists Edited by Immanuel Suttner (Viking-Penguin, England and USA 1997).

This book also appears to have been written for a Jewish readership. It is a thick expensively bound book of over 600 pages, financially supported by the Liberty Life Foundation created by the Jewish mega-capitalist Donald Gordon. Suttner says "a disproportionate number of individual Jews played a part in transforming South Africa into a more just society. There are two streams: those who fought "within the system" as jurists, members of parliament, via the media, or in civil society, and those who entered "illegal" organizations which were socialist, communist or mass-based in character." (p. 2) He says the book "welcomes (these Jews) back not only as worthy South Africans, socialists, communists or liberals, but as worthy Jews" (p. 3). Some of the "remarkable people" (page vii) who are heroes of the book include:

Taffy Adler who was involved in the 1970s and '80s in the "formation and consolidation of the black trade union movement". His father was a Lithuanian Jew who emigrated to South Africa in 1926 and who "was tremendously loyal to Stalin and Russian communism" right up to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. His uncle, Michael Harmel, became general secretary of the South African Communist Party.

Ray Alexander (Rachel Alexandrowich) arrived in South Africa from Latvia and joined the SA Communist Party five days later. She played a leading role in the organization of trade unions. She was married to Jack Simons, a "devoted communist" and lecturer at the University of Cape Town.

Pauline Podbrey (Podbrez) born in Lithuania came to South Africa at the age of eleven. She joined the Communist Youth League, run by Max Joffe, and the related Labour League of Youth, run by Hilda Bernstein. Of the Communist Party she says "the majority of the members

were Jewish... looking back on it now, it seems as if everybody was Jewish.” (\*p. 52). She married a prominent Indian trade unionist and Communist Party leader, resulting in her mother being ostracized by the South African Jewish community, although it has been and still is normal practice for this community to depict white non-Jews as despicable prejudiced racists.



Joe Slovo born in Lithuania, came to South Africa where he joined the Young Communist League at the age of sixteen. He became a central member of the Communist Party of South Africa and a “hard-line Stalinist”, becoming general secretary in 1986. He concentrated on building up Umkhonto we Sizwe, the “armed wing” of the ANC (African National Congress), becoming its chief of staff and head strategist in the campaign of bombings directed at civilian targets and other acts of terror. He only abandoned his commitment to Stalinism and Soviet-style communism when the Soviet bloc started falling apart in the late 1980s and it became necessary to do so. A key strategist representing the ANC in the negotiations with De Klerk’s government in the hand over of power, he became a minister in Mandela’s Cabinet. When the ANC came to power in 1994. He died of cancer a few years later. His daughter published an autobiographical book describing her father’s affair with a Jewish Communist friend’s wife and his utter refusal to acknowledge the son born of this relationship.







