

## Remembering the Holocaust in a Racial State: Holocaust Memory in South Africa from Apartheid to Democracy (1948–1994)

By Roni Mikel-Arieli. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. Pp. xiv + 349. Cloth \$90.99. ISBN: 978-3110715255.

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This revision of a 2019 Hebrew University of Jerusalem doctoral dissertation is the first large-scale study of Holocaust memory in apartheid South Africa, building on research in South Africa, the Netherlands, Israel, and the United States. The author frames Holocaust memory in terms of South African Jews' larger history, support for Israel, and relationships with other Whites, split between Afrikaners and English-speakers.

Roni Mikel-Arieli outlines early South African Jewish history, rising antisemitism in the 1930s, and World War II's impact, notably Afrikaner nationalist pro-Axis sympathies. South African Jews, mostly aligned with English-speakers, were shocked when Daniel Malan's Afrikaner National Party (NP) won the all-White 1948 election, ushering in apartheid. Despite the regime renouncing antisemitism and growing closer to Israel, while both faced rising criticism over apartheid and Palestinian rights, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) remained cautious. Liberal and Leftist Jews' opposition to apartheid and NP anti-communist obsessions reinforced community leaders' non-political stance, unless the Jewish community was directly affected. This and Jews' privileged position as Whites affected Blacks' views, especially as they associated their struggle with that of the Palestinians.

Mikel-Arieli's impressively sprawling analysis connects these developments to awareness and assessment of the Holocaust. Fiercely Zionist South African Jews gave far more to fund Israel than an early Warsaw Ghetto memorial. A local version of an Anne Frank diary dramatization avoided too-explicit references to Nazi atrocities due to Afrikaner sensibilities. Early South African Holocaust monuments were explicitly Jewish to combat antisemitism but avoided parallels with local racism. Tensions sharpened by the Eichmann trial, which increased global attention to the Holocaust soon after the 1960 Sharpeville police massacre, magnified the apartheid issue. While South African Jewish leaders tried to increase Holocaust awareness, Afrikaners rejected the Holocaust's uniqueness, comparing it to Boer suffering in South African War-era British camps, Allied bombings of Germany, or dropping the atomic bomb.

Mikel-Arieli shows how the Six Day and Yom Kippur Wars, plus UN condemnation of Israel and South Africa, modified pro-NP Afrikaners' views, seeing Israel and local Whites as both struggling for survival, while closer South Africa-Israel ties led to the UN linking Zionism and apartheid racism. The government relaxed a brief ban on state television showing the Holocaust episode of the British series *The World at War*, its shift also evident in schools' adoption of Anne Frank's diary, including in Afrikaans, with performances of a dramatized version at Stellenbosch University and by the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT). Holocaust witness projects and exhibitions for Jewish and wider audiences in the 1980s, however, coincided with belated Israeli sanctions and community leaders finally condemning apartheid.

In the closing sections, the author ranges beyond the White minority. During the 1990–1994 transition from apartheid, the unbanned African National Congress (ANC) and its leader Nelson Mandela viewed the Palestinian struggle like their own, placing the SAJBD and the

SAZF in an awkward position. Pairing the Anne Frank in the World Exhibition (AFWE) with an Apartheid and Resistance one upset some in the Jewish community for highlighting Israel-apartheid regime links. Ironically, some ANC members had read Frank's diary while imprisoned on Robben Island; some ANC leaders participated in AFWE events, pointing to Nazi-apartheid parallels. Jewish community leaders saw the need to rehabilitate Black perceptions but wanted to defend Israel and the Holocaust's uniqueness. They sought to make the AFWE a national event, bringing together education departments and major national venues, aided by the ancillary apartheid exhibition. Patrons included anti-apartheid icons such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The final pages discuss the Holocaust's significance for Tutu and Robben Island prisoner Ahmed Kathrada, both drawing analogies to apartheid while deploring Israel-Pretoria ties. The author closes by noting how South Africa's three new Holocaust Centers break with the uniqueness paradigm, using Holocaust and broader genocide education to promote anti-racism, human rights, and peace.

Inevitably, so wide-ranging a study has limitations. Lack of Afrikaans forces reliance on translated newspaper cuttings. Unqualifiedly asserting that Malan and his party "closely associated themselves with the policies of the Nazis during the war" (39) and claiming "direct" Nazi influence on apartheid (173) is too simplistic. Among four 1910 official racial groups, Mikel-Arieli refers to "Bantu/Africans" (19) – the term into the late 1940s was "Natives." She refers to the Gereformeerde Kerk as the "Reformist [not Reformed] Church" and the "Dutch reformist [not reformed] churches," calling minister Dirk Postma a "priest" (88). The many "poor Whites" do not fit with the early twentieth-century White minority being "characterized" by "economic mobility" (21).

Not only the Communist Party was open to all social and racial groups (22); the Liberal and Progressive parties began with no class or race restrictions. PACT, one of four provincial arts councils, did not replace the National Theatre Organization (133), nor was it "the Afrikaner national theatre" (136). Despite linking the 1937 Aliens Bill to the "United Party" (25), the author refers puzzlingly to the 1939 "South African United Government" as a NP-South African Party "coalition" (29); these parties formed a coalition in 1933, merging in 1934 as the United Party. The Holocaust denial booklet "Did Six Million Really Die?" author puzzlingly appears as both Richard Verrall (pseudonym Richard Harwood) (121) and Robin Beauclair (pseudonym Richard Harwood) (125–126).

Minor errors in the text include: "emigrated to" (20), "principle racial definer" (22), "too scard to fight" (69 note 7), "ensured" the community's leaders (69), Vincent Crapanzano as "Carpanzano" (143, 144) and "Carpenzano" (144), "racial legislations" (144), Viktoria Mxenge as "Mkenge" (145), "Union of Orthodox Congregation in South Africa" (169), Sharpeville as "Sharpsville" (178), Hermann Giliomee's *The Afrikaners* listed as *The Afrikaner* (88 note 84, 89 note 86), and 34-year-old Paul Kruger described as "retired from" rather than "seceded from" the Hervormde Kerk (88).

On balance, however, this is a notably brave attempt to pull together so much material in a fresh way, illuminated by fascinating details, not least the way in which Holocaust memory has had wide resonance even in surprising quarters, inciting furious reaction while reflecting much deeper values, relationships, and conflicts.

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