

when the Soviet Union was viewed favourably by most Jews. The visit of the two famous Soviet Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee leaders, Itzik Fefer and Shloime Mikhoels, to Canada in 1943 gave them enormous traction. They later attained significant electoral success including the election of Fred Rose to the national parliament, J. B. Salsberg to the provincial parliament, and other activists to local government. Most of these candidates ran in heavily Jewish-populated districts, and emphasized their Jewish credentials. But the Cold War brought an end to these successes. It also saw the conviction of Rose and other Jewish communists on charges of spying for the Soviet Union which provoked fear in the Canadian Jewish community. The Communist organisation, the United Jewish People's Order, was quickly expelled from the Canadian Jewish Congress, and would not be re-admitted until 1995.

Sadly, much of the Jewish communist support for Birobidzhan was based on delusions and gullibility. The first Stalinist purges of 1936-38 decimated the political and cultural leadership of the Jewish Autonomous Region. And later Stalin destroyed the entire Soviet Jewish intelligentsia between 1948 and 1953 including Fefer and Mikhoels. Other victims tragically included two former American ICOR activists who had immigrated to the USSR in the early 1930s. These facts were revealed beyond any reasonable doubt by Khrushchev's 1956 revelations. Many Jewish communists realized that they had actually supported a regime which was murderously anti-Semitic rather than philo-Semitic. The nexus between Jews and Communism had come to an end.

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Shmuel Moreh and Zvi Yehuda (eds), *Al-Farhud: The 1941 Pogrom in Iraq*. Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism. Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2010.

To date, international concern with Middle East refugees has focused primarily on the approximately 700,000 Palestinian Arabs who left Israel during the 1947-48 war. Far less attention has been

paid to the nearly one million Jews—known as *Mizrahim*—who left Arab countries in the decade or so following that war. Most moved to the newly created Jewish State of Israel where today they constitute the majority of the Jewish population, and often lean towards the hawkish side of the political spectrum.

The mass exodus of the previously large and prosperous Jewish community of Iraq seems to have been a particularly sad example of Arab intolerance. A newly edited book by the Israeli academics Shmuel Moreh and Zvi Yehuda (*Al-Farhud: The 1941 Pogrom in Iraq*) sheds new light on the causes of the Farhud which seems to have been a key factor in provoking the later exodus. This volume contains both new papers on the pogrom and reproductions of earlier published articles.

The Iraqi Jews were a well-integrated community who could date their heritage back to the destruction of the first temple in 586 BCE. However, the security and confidence of Iraqi Jews was shattered by the pro-German military coup of April 1941 headed by Rashid Ali al-Kaylani. The coup leaders were quickly defeated and exiled by a British army occupation, but their departure was followed by a large-scale *farhud* or pogrom against the Jews of Baghdad.

Shmuel Moreh describes *farhud* as an Arabized Kurdish word which means unrestrained massacre, burning, looting and rape by hooligans. More than 170 Jews were murdered, several hundred injured, and numerous Jewish properties, businesses and religious institutions damaged and looted. The Farhud was perpetrated by Iraqi officers, police, and gangs of young people including women (which was unusual for Arab society) influenced by religious and nationalist fanaticism, and the popular perception of a Jewish alignment with Britain. These groups rejected the presence of national or religious minorities in the Arab world, and regarded the Jews as a fifth column sympathetic to the Western powers.

Moreh and other contributors note that the anti-Jewish rioters were influenced by a number of factors. One was ongoing incitement by a group of approximately four hundred Palestinian émigrés residing in Iraq. These Palestinians were mainly doctors, teachers and politicians who had fled to Iraq after the failed 1936-39 uprising against the British. They were led by the extremist Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el-Husseini,

who would later collaborate with Hitler's Final Solution. One of these Palestinians, the poet Burhan al-Din al-Abbushi, wrote incendiary verses accusing the Jews of killing and violating Arab women and children in Palestine. These verses were read publicly in mosques and schools, at demonstrations and on the radio, and appear to have provoked much anti-Jewish hatred.

Another factor was the anti-Jewish propaganda distributed by the German Nazi envoy Fritz Grobba in Baghdad, although Zvi Yehuda argues in this volume that the impact of the German propaganda may have been exaggerated. Also important was the anti-Jewish campaign by local Iraqi nationalists including a number of leading officials in the Ministry of Education, and the anti-Jewish speeches by local clerics at specific mosques in Baghdad on the day of the Farhud.

In addition, there was the cynical political decision by the British Army to delay the timing of their intervention to restore order lest they be labelled as friends of the Jews. The late Elie Kedourie in his republished paper quotes a letter by the British Ambassador to Iraq, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, cautioning the Foreign Office from displaying any open sympathy for the Jews. According to the book's foreword by Robert Wistrich, the British had acted with similar malevolence in failing to act to prevent anti-Jewish riots in Libya in November 1945 and Aden in December 1947.

A fascinating chapter by Nissim Kazzaz notes that the Communist Party of Iraq, which had a number of Jews in its leadership, surprisingly welcomed the pro-Nazi military regime headed by Rashid Ali on the grounds that it supported liberating Iraq from British imperialism. However, the Party strongly criticized anti-Jewish manifestations associated with the regime, although acknowledging that some Jews were alleged traitors to the military regime. This criticism intensified following the Farhud, and the Party later repudiated its endorsement of Rashid Ali.

Esther Meir-Glitzenstein notes in her chapter that the Farhud produced a new interest by the Zionist movement in Iraqi Jewry. Until that time the European-dominated Zionist establishment had been influenced by western colonialist ideas which regarded Arab Jews as alien and unproductive, and hence not suitable for immigration to

Palestine. However, reports on the Farhud by Iraqi Jews who visited Palestine provoked concern and shock among leading Zionist officials including Moshe Shertok (Sharrett), head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department. Shortly after the Farhud, Shertok met with the prominent Iraqi leader Nuri al-Said, who rejected suggestions of widespread anti-Jewish feeling in Iraq, and argued that the traditionally good relations between Muslims and Jews throughout the Middle East had solely been damaged by Zionist actions in Palestine. In contrast, the Zionist movement viewed the Farhud as confirming their belief that Jews could only live securely in Palestine. As a result, the Jewish Agency began to allocate a proportion of immigration certificates to the Jews of Iraq.

The most significant finding from the many Jewish memoirs cited in this text was their terrible sense of betrayal. As noted by Moreh, a number of Jews had served as doctors and officers in Rashid Ali's army during the battles against the British, and Jewish merchants had donated generously to the armed forces. They expected a more positive outcome from their service than this horrific massacre. Even worse, many of those killed and injured in the Farhud were attacked by local Muslims whom they personally knew. Government hospitals often refused to treat the injured Jews, and some were later told by Jewish nurses that the injured were deliberately poisoned by doctors in the hospitals on the orders of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. Others placed jewellery and money in trust with their neighbours, who then refused to return the property.

But conversely, many recalled with gratitude the bravery of their Muslim neighbours who respected the tradition of Arab hospitality to save their lives. For example, the book includes a specific letter written by the President of the Jewish community of Basrah thanking Shaikh Ahmad Bashasyan—the former Lord Mayor of Basrah—and his family for protecting Jews during the Farhud.

According to Moreh, the Farhud constituted a "decisive and tragic turning point" for the Jews of Iraq, and destroyed what he calls the "Jewish delusion that they could live in Iraq as citizens of equal rights with the Muslims" (page 208). The Jews were particularly shocked by the silence of the Iraqi Arab intelligentsia, many of whom defended the Rashid Ali regime, and condemned the execution of some of its key leaders. No literary works by Arab writers even mentioned the Farhud. Conversely, a number of popular songs were compiled before and during the Farhud

expressing hatred for the Jews, and celebrating the theft of valuable property from the supposedly wealthy Jewish merchants. Moreh argues that the Farhud convinced most Iraqi Jews that Zionism was the solution, and led directly to the mass immigration of 1950-51 to Israel.

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Anne Sarzin and Lisa Miranda Sarzin. *Hand in Hand: Jewish and Indigenous People Working Together.* Sydney: Write 4 U (NSW). Paperback. \$30.00

Every now and then a book emerges with the potential to inspire in readers a commitment to action for social change. Through powerful narratives, *Hand in Hand* tells of the forging of relationships across what at first glance may appear as a vast social divide—Jewish and Indigenous people.

The significance of the relationships is portrayed in the book through both vignettes of social action and photographic imagery. The authors, Anne Sarzin and Lisa Miranda Sarzin, highlight some largely unknown projects arising from Jewish and Indigenous people working together for justice. In so doing they contribute to a counter discourse that challenges commentators who lament the lack of engagement across groups which have shared experiences of persecution and suffering.

Just as there is not one Indigenous or one Jewish voice, there are different ideas in the book about how to make a contribution in both approach and substance. Although educational projects are a sizeable focus of the book, examples abound of other forms of engagement that demonstrate different ways to walk hand in hand, including the domains of the arts, health and philanthropy. The words of wise prophets and contemporary Jewish leaders will be a major source of inspiration to some; for others it may be the actions of ordinary people that spur others to action. The diversity of approaches demonstrates a common theme of working in partnership for the achievement of a shared humanity.

The book is largely restricted to New South Wales while acknowledging that there is a broader account to be conveyed. Furthermore, although the book's focus is on contemporary relationships, we are taken a step back in time and away from New South Wales through the revealing of the moving story of William Cooper, which is pivotal in the annals of Jewish and Aboriginal history and commemorated in Israel. Cooper led a delegation to the German Consulate in Melbourne in 1938 to protest against the persecution of Jews in Germany. I was fortunate to be at the commemoration event at the Jewish Holocaust Museum in Melbourne in 2002 and to hear the stirring words of Justice Marcus Einfeld and the ovation that followed. Marcus Einfeld is among the prominent Jewish leaders honoured in this book, through his exposure in 1988 of the shameful conditions confronting the Aboriginal community of Toomelah.

Other accounts are less well-known and Jewish involvement in Indigenous rights campaigns has not always achieved headlines. The text provides an opportunity to also bring the quiet achievers into the public sphere, with the stories of partnerships before reconciliation became mainstream. Among the earliest forms of engagement by Jewish participants were the courageous Freedom Ride of 1965 and membership of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, a body which spearheaded the 1967 Referendum that removed discriminatory provisions from the constitution. Through actions past and present, those who feature in the narratives present as role models for Jewish community members to build on the achievements to date and to recognise the work still to be done.

The book is not overtly political, though, as its title suggests, it is about relationships and how the formulation of partnerships can bring about powerful change in people's lives. From my human rights perspective, it is somewhat of an omission to not engage more critically in the political realm when the politics of oppression has dominated the lives of both Jewish and Indigenous people. There is also the question of moral responsibility in questions of political activism, with the need for Jewish voices to acknowledge their overcoming of oppression and how this creates an imperative to work in partnership with those who have had less fortunate lives.