

Insights into South African Genealogical and Historical Holdings: The Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem

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1. Introduction:

The Central Zionist Archives is the archives of the Zionist movement. Its records cover the years 1880-1970 and document the growth of the Zionist movement worldwide, the development of the Jewish Home in Palestine and various aspects of the history of the Jewish people in the last 120 years.

In particular, the Archives aims to collect, preserve and encourage the use of the archives of the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund and Keren Hayesod, as well as the archives of the World Jewish Congress and various other bodies. The CZA also holds the private papers of individuals active in the Zionist movement and in the development of Palestine and Israel.

In addition, the CZA houses over half a million photographs, 50,000 maps and plans, over 18,000 posters and announcements, a large collection of ephemera, 13,000 newspapers and periodicals, a library and a microfilm collection. Along with the Hebrew University, the CZA also runs the Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive, which houses over 3,000 film and video titles.

Visit the website <http://www.zionistarchives.org.il>

There is a vast amount of material relating to South Africa in the Central Zionist Archives, that deals with the history of Zionism and of the Jewish community in South Africa, the Holocaust and the genealogy of South African Jews. As an ex-South African, paging through the documents, I felt as if I was living the past history of the country of my birth.

Genealogical research is made up of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources may be found in the archives, such as oral history collections, or photograph archives or any other source that holds original documentation, while the secondary sources may be found in books or in any other material that enhances the primary source material. The primary source serves as the basis for research. The primary source material at the CZA is not only of a historical nature, but of a genealogical nature too. Thus it not only enhances genealogical research, but also serves to augment the historical aspects of this research, emphasizing the way in which history and genealogical research are inextricably linked. The historical documents provide us with the framework for genealogical research as the historical material not only unfolds the history, but also tells a story.

A large number of the documents consist of lists of names. These names have not be indexed or entered into a database. In order to index the names, each file within each record group would have to be examined individually and if a list found, it would be entered into a database. This is an almost impossible task.

2. Holdings:

The aim of this article is introduce the genealogist and family researcher to material relating to South Africa in the CZA. The volume of the material in the archives is so extensive that I have taken just a few examples to give the reader an idea of the different aspects that can be researched at the archive. For the purposes of this article, I have divided the record groups into two sections:

- A. South African Historical Issues
- B. Genealogical research

A. South African Historical Issues:

There is much material relating to the history of South African Zionist activity in the community, such as the organizing of various Zionist activities and fund-raising events, the activities of the Jewish National Fund and Keren Hayesod, and correspondence relating to immigration matters, Youth Aliyah and Machal.

Here are examples of some of the archives that the CZA holds that are relevant to the history of South African Jewry:

F24 - First and foremost, it should be noted that the CZA received the archives of the South African Zionist Federation in the 1970s. There are nearly 160 boxes of material reflecting the wide range of activity of the South African Zionist Federation from its founding until the 1970s.

S5 - Worth noting too, is the material of the Organization Department of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem that organized the various Zionist activities that took place, including the Zionist Congresses and the delegations that represented each country.

S6 - The CZA also holds the papers of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency which contains files of correspondence on immigration (aliyah) from South Africa.

S32 - There files on South Africa in the Youth and Hehalutz Department of the Jewish Agency which oversaw the activities of the various Zionist youth movements over the years.

L62 – Noteworthy are the papers of the Overseas Volunteer Settlement Office containing correspondence concerning the Machal volunteers (Mitnadvei Chutz Laaretz) from South Africa.

A354 – The papers of Chief Rabbi Joseph Herman Hertz contain a wealth of information on the Jewish community in South Africa.

Following are a number of examples of documents I found on South African Jewry:

From file number S6/4591: This document casts information on the contribution of South African Jewry to the welfare of the new State.

AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

EUROPEAN EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL

119, RUE SAINT-DOMINIQUE
PARIS (7^e)

TELEPHONE
INVALIDES } 87-83
 } 87-65
 } 79-37
CABLES & TELEGRAMS
JOINTFUND-PARIS

-2-

April 22nd, 1949.

Jewish Agency for Palestine
Jerusalem, Israel

The 130 cases consist of the following:

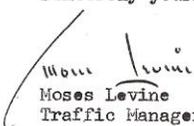
- a. 89 cases containing 14,856 used garments and 1,334 items used household linen.
- b. 28 cases containing 4,991 prs. used footwear
- c. 13 cases containing 702 "Friendship Boxes"

The gross weight of the shipment is 23,537 lbs.

The unit valuation is 5/- for the used garments and household linen; 2/6 for the used footwear; 15/ for the Friendship boxes.

We will send you detailed packing list under separate cover. The South African Jewish Appeal, 78 End Street, Johannesburg, South Africa would appreciate it if you would notify them of the condition of the goods upon arrival and full details of the eventual distribution.

Sincerely yours,


Moses Levine
Traffic Manager

ML/eo
cc: AJDC Jerusalem
AJDC Tel Aviv
Mr. Butkowski
Mr. Goldstein

From file number KKL5/193/7: This example sheds light on the Establishment of the Jewish National Fund in South Africa and its increased activities.

South African Zionist Federation הפדרציה הציונית בדרום אפריקה



JEWISH NATIONAL FUND

(KEREN KAYEMETH LEISRAEL, LIMITED)

Telephone: 34-1941
34-2027, 34-1827
Tel. Add: "ZIONFED"
P. O. Box 18

224-57

224-57

2561 8711 1-2

25 MAR 1953

Dr. S. Lowy,
Keren Kayemeth Leisrael Ltd.,
P.O. Box 283,
JERUSALEM.

224-57

Dear Dr. Lowy,

קן קימת לישראל

224-57

2561 8711 1-2

25 MAR 1953

COMMISSIONER HOUSE,
50, COMMISSIONER STREET,
JOHANNESBURG

11th March, 1953

קק"ל	17005	מספר
18 MAR 1953		
נהלל ביום		
ועתה קיום		
מ"ב	מ"ג	מ"ד
מ"ה	מ"ו	מ"ז
מ"ח	מ"ט	נ"א
נ"ב	נ"ג	נ"ד
נ"ה	נ"ו	נ"ז
נ"ח	נ"ט	ס"א
ס"ב	ס"ג	ס"ד
ס"ה	ס"ו	ס"ז
ס"ח	ס"ט	ס"י

RE: NAHLAOT

At this stage I would like to give you details of those Nahlaot, which communities here have already commenced and for which major inaugural functions have already taken place or for which they are planned in the near future. In every case we have either received or have been promised the participation of the Minister for Israel and the Consul-General, and if we are successful in obtaining the services of Larry Adler, as seems likely, the first year of our independent function activities should prove very successful:-

- Nahlat Johannesburg ✓
- " Germiston ✓
- " Vereeniging
- " Pietersburg
- " Witbank (a)
- " Witbank (b)
- " Bloemfontein
- " Eastern Transvaal
- " Western Transvaal
- " Rhodesia.

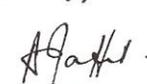
You will see from the above, that we have barely begun our activities as yet, and there is a tremendous amount of work for Mr. Rose to do in securing the completion of those Nahlaot already inaugurated, and persuade the rest of the country to follow suit.

During these last weeks I have been travelling extensively

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with the purpose of making a last visit to as many communities as possible to boost their activities on our behalf. For this reason I have been away from some of our Committee meetings, and the weekly mail, as is again the case this week, has gone off to you signed by our Secretary. However, my journeyings will terminate this week, and I will then write to you with a summary of activities and with the up to date position as at the commencement of handing over to Mr. Rose.

Yours sincerely,


 for LEWIS HARRIS
 ORGANISER - J.N.F.

Below is an example of a questionnaire which appeared in the Jewish Times in South Africa in 1943. These questionnaires were filled out in South Africa and sent to the Search Bureau in Israel by those seeking remnants of their family whom may have survived the and who they left behind when emigrating to South Africa.

From files number 54/720: This questionnaire is of genealogical value as it contains the names of the individuals, address, and their relationship.

SUPPLIED BY THE CENTRAL INFORMATION BUREAU
ON JEWS IN U.S.S.R. OF THE JEWISH AGENCY
FOR PALESTINE.

12 THE S.A. JEWISH TIMES, FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 1943

Information Bureau on Jews in Soviet Russia

QUESTIONNAIRE

**regarding Whereabouts of Any Jew now in
the U.S.S.R.**

SOME time back, the "S.A. Jewish Times" published several lists of names of Jews from Lithuania, Latvia and other places who had managed to escape to safety in Soviet Russia. Anyone desiring to obtain information about a relative or friend whose name has not appeared must fill in the following questionnaire and post it to the "S.A. Jewish Times," P.O. Box 2878, Johannesburg. Every effort will then be made to trace them.

FILL IN THIS FORM.
(Please write clearly in ink in Latin characters, except where otherwise stated)

A.—THE PERSON WHOM YOU ARE SEEKING.

Full Name in Hebrew Characters שולין סלחטו

Full Name in Latin Characters SOLIN Schachtso

Full name in Russian Characters if possible Зарин Салма
(As far as possible give names in all cases as they appear in official documents).

Age 36 Single or Married SINGLE

Profession Photographer Nationality Jew

Relatives who were together with person sought (give names, ages and relationship to person sought) MILAM DOWITZ

Former address of person sought Tavny

Last place of refuge (full address if possible) Tavny, Lithuania

Place and name of institution where he last worked in place of refuge Tavny, end Rosemas

When and from where did the last information from person sought come? Buchara

Relatives or friends of person sought who were with him last, or were in touch with him. Give their present address if possible _____

B.—PUBLIC ACTIVITY.

If person sought has at all been arrested, state where and why, and with what sort of persons? _____

Has anyone applied anywhere for the person sought, and with what results? _____

Further details _____

C.—THE PERSON ASKING FOR INFORMATION.

Full Name LOUIS SOLIN

Full Address Cremant, Cape Victoria Pt, Woodstock

Place of Work _____

Relationship to person Brother

What are you asking us to find out? present address

Place Cape Town

Date 30/3/1943

REMARKS TO BE FILLED IN BY BUREAU

Index _____ File _____

Results _____

2. Genealogical Research:

The CZA holds a number of card catalogues and series of personal files relating mostly to immigrants to Palestine/Israel, amongst them immigrants from South Africa. These are of great value to genealogists.

The card catalogues have been scanned and the main details typed into various databases. The actual card catalogues are not open to the public. Within a few months the typed databases will be open to the public in the reading room of the Archives. Thereafter, the intention is to put the databases up on Internet, but that will no doubt take some time. These files relate immigration to Israel world over and not from South Africa in particular.

These databases are used by the staff of the Family Research Bureau of the Central Zionist Archives to answer queries. Requests can be made to the search bureau by mail, email or fax. See the website: <http://www.zionistarchives.org.il> (Family Research).

The only database open to the public is the passenger lists of immigrants who arrived in Israel between 1919- 1974. The lists are in Hebrew. In order to make maximum use of the database, the researcher should have the date and year of immigration, if not the search is almost impossible. The search can only be carried out at the Archives.

I would like to point out again that there are numerous lists of names in various record groups in the archives. These lists have not been entered into a database and the researcher will find them in the files while researching in the various record groups. Therefore if for example the researcher knows that a member of his/her family was active in Machal, researching the files on Machal will not only shed light on the history of this period, but may also mention the individual or family being researched.

Genealogical databases:

Category	Holding Number	Holding Name	Language	Number of Cards
Immigration	SP6	Card index and files of Candidates for Immigration And immigrants of the Jewish Agency Immigration Department, 1919-1969	Hebrew	400,000
Immigration	SC6	Statistical Card Index of the Jewish Agency Immigration Department, 1919-1948	Hebrew	200,000
Immigration	LC21	Card index of the Palestine Office in Riga for immigrants from Latvia, 1920-1939	Hebrew	2,000

Immigration	Immigration registers, 1948-1970	Hebrew	
Search Bureau	Index of appeals to the Jewish Agency's Search Bureau for Missing Relatives	Hebrew	700,000
Youth Aliya	Hebrew card index of Youth <i>Aliyah</i> children, 1935-1995	Hebrew	305,000
Youth Aliya	Card index of Youth <i>Aliyah</i> children, 1933-1990	English	127,000
Youth Aliya	Card index of Children in Youth <i>Aliyah</i> institutions	English	107,000
Youth Aliya	Card index of Youth <i>Aliyah</i> "Teheran Children", 1942-1943	English	900
Youth Aliya	Card index of German Youth <i>Aliyah</i> children, 1933-1936	German	3,000
Recruiting Demobilization	Card index of enlistees of the Recruiting and Demobilization Offices of the Jewish Agency, 1942-1945	Hebrew	25,200

The material in the CZA is of enormous importance to the researcher. This is the first of a number of articles which will describe the holdings of the Central Zionist Archive and the value of these holding to researchers. Further articles will focus on the holdings in more detail. It is through this material that the researcher can become familiar with the rich Zionist history of South Africa and the part that individuals played in creating this history.

Article written in 2010

