



Bid to Settle Jewish Refugees from Nazi-Germany in Botswana, 1938-1939

Author(s): Christian John Makgala

Source: *Botswana Notes and Records*, Vol. 38 (2006), pp. 20-32

Published by: [Botswana Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41235984>

Accessed: 05/06/2013 06:49

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Botswana Society is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to Botswana Notes and Records.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Bid to Settle Jewish Refugees from Nazi-Germany in Botswana, 1938-1939

By Christian John Makgala¹

Abstract

This article demonstrates that while Adolf Hitler's Nazis were busy persecuting Jews in Germany there was an attempt made by the colonial authorities in Botswana, South Africa and Britain to settle some Jewish refugees in some European areas of Botswana. The idea was to settle a small number of Jewish families with capital and agricultural skills in order to improve the beleaguered economy of the territory. This attempt was done amidst growing anti-semitism and Nazi influence in the right-wing Afrikaner community in South Africa. Anti-semitism in Britain and South Africa was said to be informing government policy towards Jewish refugees. It is believed that this scenario hampered attempts by the British government and the Anglo-Jewish community to assist refugees fleeing Nazi Germany. The outbreak of World War Two in 1939 seems to have abruptly ended the bid to settle the refugees in Botswana.

Introduction

In an attempt to help Jews fleeing persecution in Nazi Germany in the late 1930s the colonial government in Botswana (Bechuanaland Protectorate) agreed to the settlement of Jewish refugees in some European areas in order to improve agricultural production. The economic decline in colonial Botswana, owing to an embargo by South Africa on cattle from Botswana in the South African market, influenced the authorities in Botswana to welcome the idea of settling Jewish refugees. Plans to settle these refugees began in early 1938 and continued until August 1939 when the whole thing came to an abrupt end without reasons advanced. Perhaps the reason was the outbreak of World War II in early September 1939 when Britain went to war with Nazi Germany. The outbreak of war and later the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel seem to have led to the abandonment of the plan to resettle Jews in Botswana or it could have been due to the fact that the South African cattle embargo was lifted in 1941. However, Botswana was not the only territory considered for Jewish settlement; other areas in the British empire which were also targeted included Uganda.

The paper starts with a brief overview of the relations between Botswana and South Africa from 1910 to 1941. The relations provide the context within which the issue of settling the Jewish refugees is discussed. The plight of the Jews in Nazi Germany and the response of the British government and the British Jewish community is examined briefly. Anti-semitism in South Africa and the South African government's policy on Jewish immigrants are also explained. This background information is followed by an account of the attempt to settle Jewish refugees in Botswana from 1938 to 1939.

Relations between Botswana and South Africa, 1910-1941

The Constitution of 1909 which led to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 had a provision for the eventual incorporation of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland into South

1. Christian John Makgala, History Department, University of Botswana

Africa. These three territories, collectively known as the High Commission Territories, were governed from South Africa by the British High Commissioner. The capital of colonial Botswana, Mafikeng, was also in South Africa. Given the brutal exploitation of the blacks by whites in South Africa the Batswana, led by their Dikgosi (rulers), tirelessly fought against the planned amalgamation of their land with South Africa (Bitsang, 1982; Halpern, 1965; Hyam, R, 1972; Khama and Buchanan, 1946; Khama, 1935; Khama, 1955; Perham and Curtis, 1935; Robertson, 1978; Tlou and Campbell, 1997). However, a small European minority in Botswana campaigned for the incorporation. The European area of Tati District was to be incorporated into Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) because of its historical ties with that territory (Tapela, 1976; Mgadla, 1987). The Europeans' spirited campaign only waned in the 1950s as Britain became uneasy with apartheid, introduced by the National Party in South Africa after attaining state power in 1948. In order to force the Africans to accede to incorporation the South African government imposed an embargo, lasting from 1924 to 1941, on cattle below a certain weight from Botswana bound for the South Africa market, which was the main market for Botswana's beef (Ettinger, 1972:21-9). Beef was the main product of Botswana and most of the European settlers were engaged in commercial cattle ranching.

Unfortunately, the worldwide Depression of 1929 to early 1930s, periodic cattle diseases and drought had dealt a devastating blow to the already terrible economic conditions in the territory. As a result, the European settlers stepped up their agitation for incorporation into South Africa. In some quarters it was felt that Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, possessing capital and agricultural skills, could be resettled in the Tati District or the Tuli Block in Botswana in order to improve agricultural production and boost the economy of the two areas. The Tati District and the Tuli Block became European areas after the local Africans were brutally moved out, while the few who remained were declared 'squatters' and tenants and provided exploitative labour to the new landlords (Tlou and Campbell, 1997:257-60 and Ramsay, 1987:65-7).

Although race relations in Botswana were not as harsh as in the neighbouring South Africa and Rhodesia, racial discrimination existed in the country. This was found in the educational and medical facilities, residential areas, public transport and the government service (Makgala, 2004:11-24). In towns such as Lobatse and Francistown there were townships which were reserved for Africans just like in South Africa and Rhodesia. These townships were characterized by overcrowding, diseases, poor sanitation and rampant crime (Mgadla, 1987:134). The Tati District was owned by the highly exploitative Tati Company while the Tuli Block was under the management of the equally merciless British South Africa Company. Both Tati and Tuli Block were European enclaves. Some Europeans, who owned land in the Tuli Block, were residents or citizens of South Africa. Therefore, relations between Africans and whites in the Tati District and Tuli Block had a strong South African and Rhodesian influence. The discussion for Jewish settlement in Botswana did not involve the local African Chiefs because the targeted areas were not under their control.

The Plight of Jews in Nazi Germany and Britain, 1933-1939

Anti-semitism and the plight of the Jews in Nazi Germany, and the government policy towards the Jews during this period, is an over-researched topic. Therefore, here we provide a very brief account of the situation which forced them into exile as refugees. The policy of the British government towards the German Jews or refugees in relation to the position of British Jewish organisations is looked into.

The leader of the Nazi Party, Adolf Hitler, believed in the superiority of the Aryan race and strongly felt that the Jews were an inferior race. He blamed them for all the ills that befell Germany following the First World War. The Jews were blamed for Germany's defeat in the war as well as the crippling reparations which Germany was made to pay to the Allied victors. Jews suffered physical and psychological torture at the hands of the Nazis, particularly after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933.

Many Jews were expelled from the civil service, their property was looted or confiscated by the Nazis. Some Jews were robbed and murdered with impunity. They were denied German citizenship. Their businesses were boycotted and there was a brutal action of removing them from the German economy. Jewish intellectuals and professionals were given a hard time and their books were publicly burnt in May 1933. This treatment proved unbearable to many Jews such that in 1937 about 120,000 Jews left the country (Carr, 1991:323). In November 1938, following a Jewish boy's murder of a German embassy official, there was widespread destruction and looting of Jewish businesses and property as well as the burning down of synagogues by the Nazi agents. Needless to say, many Jews were ruthlessly killed in the process. The beginning of these incidents came to be known as *Kristallnacht* - the Crystal Night because of the broken glass from smashed windows covering the streets. The persecution of the Jews in Germany led to the British colonial authorities and Jewish associations in Britain and South Africa seeking to settle a limited number of Jewish refugees who possessed agricultural skills and capital in Botswana.

Anglo-Jewish communities tried to help their fellow Jews fleeing Nazi Germany but there were local factors to be taken into account, such as the already existing local anti-semitism. As a result, the fear of an anti-semitic backlash severely limited the extent to which the British Jews could assist the refugees, argues Richard Bolchover (1993:49-70). This, he says, greatly influenced the formulation of the Anglo-Jewish policy towards the refugees. According to Bolchover, the result was that the Jewish community tried hard to prevent an influx of refugees into Britain and allowed just a small number of immigrants to seek refuge. *'Many considered Hitler's strategy to be to deprive Europe's Jews of all their possessions, and, having turned them into paupers, to force them upon countries where they would become a burden on the local resources and thus cause anti-Jewish feelings. Consequently the [British Jewish] community's leadership tried to exercise considerable selectivity regarding Jewish immigrants to Great Britain – they had to be young, self-supporting, able-bodied, skilled and assimilated'* (Bolchover, 1993:49). Bolchover also writes that:

The Anglo-Jewish community went to great lengths to disperse the refugees around the country and advised them to keep a low profile, so as to avoid the impression of a substantial and menacing Jewish body within England. The Board of Deputies appointed a Public Relations Officer whose main job was to monitor and, if necessary, correct the public behaviour of refugees in London. She approached people in the street who spoke German too loudly, she remonstrated with café owners who displayed German language newspapers and she arranged for vigilante committees to be formed by the Jewish communities in the provincial centres to keep watch on their refugees... A handbook entitled 'Helpful Information and Guidance for Every Refugee', issued in English and German, and published jointly by the Board of Deputies and the German Jewish Aid Committee in June 1939, adjured each refugee to regard himself as 'in honour bound' to start immediately to learn English and its correct pronunciation, and to refrain from speaking German or reading German newspapers in public, or indeed from speaking in a loud voice altogether. (Bolchover, 1993:50).

It is also believed that the British government was under attack from anti-semitic quarters and sentiments which informed British immigration laws (Bolchover, 1993:52). According to Bolchover, another problem faced by the Anglo-Jewish in assisting refugees from Nazi Germany was that of Zionism. *'The Zionists saw the establishment of a Jewish national entity in Palestine as the only answer to Jewry's problems'* (Bolchover, 1993:54). In 1933 the Jewish community in Britain had made a pledge to the government that Jewish refugees who found their way into Britain would not be a charge on the British taxpayer. As a result of this commitment the unexpected influx of refugees from Nazi Germany tied *'the hands of Home Office in issuing visas, and thus to exclude those refugees for whom private guarantees of maintenance could not be found'* (Sherman, 1973:266). The outbreak of World War Two presented the Jewish refugee organisations with an overwhelming problem as they were unable to fulfil the 1933 pledge made to the British government (Bolchover, 1993:70). *'That undertaking had been given on the basis of an estimate that the number of Jewish refugees coming to Britain might be as many as 3,000 to 4,000.'* By 1939 some 55,000 had arrived (about 50,000 from the expanded Reich, some 5,000 from elsewhere), *'at a cost to the Jewish community of more than £3,000,000,'* says Bolchover (1993:70). With the number of the refugees on the increase and becoming a serious financial challenge the refugee organisations realised the need to block the influx.

Bolchover's argument that fear of anti-semitism compelled the British Jewish community to be reluctant in assisting the refugees from Nazi Germany has come under heavy attack from Rubinstein. He argues that indeed there was anti-semitism in inter-war Britain but Bolchover exaggerates its degree and gravity. *'Anti-semitism never became a major political issue as it often did on the continent of Europe; Jews were not molested, much less persecuted,'* he writes (Rubenstein, 1996:94). He also says that a large number of Jewish refugees had always integrated peacefully and successfully. Rubinstein also writes that celebrated Jewish personalities such as Albert Einstein and others were hugely popular among the British people. *'The burden of much recent historical analysis of the [British Jewish] community is that its response to the greatest and most immediate crisis in the history of the Jewry was woefully inadequate, rendering far too little assistance to refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia prior to the war'* (Rubinstein, 1996:280). Furthermore,

While the ultimate goal of genocide might (or might not) have been in Hitler's mind from 1933 (or long before), Nazi policy toward the Jews was not genocidal until June 1941, and it is imperative that the various phases in Nazi policy toward the Jews not be conflated by historians. While Hitler's policies toward the Jews became ever more extreme, until 1938 many reasonable people assumed that the Nazi regime would ease up on its treatment of the Jews as it became institutionalized. Each of the stages in the Nazi's persecution of the Jews was reached sequentially, and represented a distinct move towards a far more extreme position – in 1933 banning the Jews from the civil service and beginning a flood of anti-semitic propaganda, with the establishment of the first concentration camp, chiefly for the regime's political opponents; in 1935 the Nuremberg Laws placing Germany's Jews beyond the pale of citizenship; in 1938, following 'Kristallnacht' – but not only then- the goal became the emigration of virtually all the Jews from the Reich. Virtually no informed observer at the time foresaw the next step, while, as noted, no one imagined that genocide would eventually follow. (Rubinstein, 1996:281).

Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Question in South Africa, 1930-1938

The period immediately following the First World War led to immigration of Jews from eastern European countries to other parts of the world including South Africa. A number of these countries put in place legal mechanisms through which the Jewish immigration was significantly reduced. In South Africa the Immigration Quota Bill was introduced by the Minister for Interior, Dr D.F. Malan, in 1930 with a view to curtailing the number of Jewish immigrants coming into South Africa from eastern Europe. Since the early 1930s was a period of economic hardship owing to the worldwide depression, blamed on the Jews by the Nazis, the leadership of the Jewish community in South Africa, the Jewish Board of Deputies, accepted the Immigration Quota Bill (Bradlow, 1999:117). However, according to Edna Bradlow, the popular view in the Jewish community denounced the Bill as grounded on 'unjust and illiberal principles' (Bradlow, 1999:117). Among other excuses anti-semitism in South Africa was caused by the perception that Jews were inassimilable. Furthermore, since most of these were poverty stricken immigrants from poor east European societies, it was believed that they were going to contaminate the 'European civilisation' in South Africa (Bradlow, 1999:117).

The coming into power of the Nazis in Germany and the Nazi's anti-semitic propaganda found fertile ground in the form of South Africa's rightwing Afrikaner population. In 1914 an Afrikaner, General J.B.M. Hertzog, founded the National Party with the aim of helping the supposedly marginalized Afrikaners attain the same level or even surpass the English speaking South Africans in terms of wealth accumulation. The ultra-right-wing National Party had a lot in common with the Nazi Party in Germany.

Hitler's attainment of power in Germany inspired the formation of a number of uniformed ultra-right-wing 'shirt' movements in South Africa. These readily and enthusiastically embraced the anti-semitic plank of the Nazis and also used Nazi symbols such as swastikas, salutes, parades and uniforms (Furlong, 1991:20). The Nazis in Germany fuelled its anti-semitic influence on the South Africa white, particularly German speakers, through a barrage of anti-semitic propaganda from Germany (Furlong, 1991:21).

The Quota Act restrictions excluded German-born Jews because their numbers were not big. Moreover, some of them were Western-educated with necessary skills needed for economic development in South Africa. *'In February-March 1936 however, five Union ambassadors serving in Western Europe drew a memorandum, whose basic premise was that the current 'Volkerwanderung' (of which the German refugees constituted one component) obliged the South Africa authorities immediately to revise immigration policy in the direction of greater control'* (Bradlow, 1999:123). The government began considering restriction on the entry of German-born Jewish refugees as a result of the ground the National Party propagandists were gaining through their anti-semitic platform. In 1936 there was a rapid and significant increase in the Jewish immigrants to South Africa and this resulted in heightened anti-semitism by the National Party. So serious was this situation that the National Party in the Transvaal took the drastic step of banning Jews from party membership. The party also advocated restriction of Jewish immigrants into the country.

Ironically, during the first three years of the Nazi regime fewer than half of the German immigrants to South Africa were Jewish - 1,044 out of 2,664 arrivals. Despite the big increase in German immigration, there were fewer Jewish immigrants overall than in the pre-Quota Act days. The anti-Jewish hysteria that struck South Africa in 1936 was stimulated, in part, by the sudden boost in immigration: 3,344 immigrants came, compared to 1,078 in 1935. Yet the proportion of Jews to the total white population of the Union had increased only a fraction, from

4.28% in 1926 to just under 4.75% in 1936, or 95,000 out of more than two million people. (Furlong, 1991:55-6).

The government's uneasiness with the popularity of the National Party's anti-semitic position was worsened by the fact that 1938 was an election year. This resulted in the enactment of the Aliens Act of 1937 and the scrapping of the Quota Bill of 1930. The new piece of legislation did not discriminate in terms of the place of origin of Jewish immigrants (Bradlow, 1999:122).

It should be pointed out here that in South Africa English speaking South Africans naturally supported Britain in her war effort whereas many Afrikaners sympathised with Nazi-Germany. Hence, in handling the issue of Jewish refugees the colonial authorities in Botswana were very cautious not to offend Afrikaner sensitivities in South Africa. This could also explain the reason why it was felt that Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany could be settled in Botswana instead.

Attempt to Settle Jewish Refugees in Tati District and Tuli Block, 1938-1939

In February 1938 a certain Captain Martin, writing from Sherwood in the Tuli Block, suggested to Resident Commissioner Charles Arden-Clarke the possibility of settling Jewish refugees in the Tuli Block. This was after Martin had talked to a Mr Kirschener, a representative of a Jewish organisation called Zionist Association in Johannesburg. The Zionist Association was said to be in a position to purchase the whole of Tuli Block for purposes of settling the Jewish refugees from Germany (Arden-Clarke to William Clark, 4 Jan. 1938, S.336/10/2, BNA). It was said that this would not be a commercial undertaking. Arden-Clarke suggested that the South African government be consulted although he expected a negative response owing to its 'present attitude to the entry of aliens and their settlement in the Union' (Arden-Clarke to William Clark, 4 Jan. 1938, S.336/10/2, BNA). However, Arden-Clarke did not '*think of any insuperable objection to a settlement of industrious Jews in the Block, provided that adequate guarantees were forthcoming that we should not be landed with a community of "poor whites" and that the land would be properly developed*' (Arden-Clarke to William Clark, 4 Jan. 1938, S.336/10/2, BNA). Martin, who wished this matter to be treated as unofficial, also indicated that if the authorities in Botswana had no qualms with the proposition then he himself would open official negotiations with the South African government.

When High Commissioner Sir William Clark was contacted, he informed Arden-Clarke that similar proposals had been made in the case of Swaziland, but were not approved due to tremendous difficulties experienced in finding a market for the exportable produce of Swaziland (William Clark to Arden-Clarke, 21 Feb. 1938, S.336/10/2, BNA). Sir William Clark also felt that the Tuli Block appeared more unsuitable for Jewish settlement than Swaziland because the Tuli Block is suitable mainly for ranching. He also maintained that it would be unwise to encourage Jewish ranching for export due to the South African cattle embargo (William Clark to Arden-Clarke, 21 Feb. 1938, S.336/10/2, BNA). He further stated: '*the above considerations apply to any scheme for closer settlement and have no particular reference to the country of origin of the persons concerned.*' The High Commissioner concurred with Arden-Clarke that the South African government would have to be consulted and was also not sanguine about it answering in affirmation. However, to William Clark the proposal stood no chance of success since it made no economic sense. In other words economics and not humanitarian considerations mattered. In response to William Clark's views Captain Martin

adroitly argued that the Tuli Block was good for both arable agriculture and cattle ranching, and extolled efforts by descendants of Jews in agricultural pursuits in Palestine:

'There is nothing wrong with the soil at all. It is excellent for citrus, tobacco, cotton and kindred crops; all of which have been tried out successfully in a small way experimentally. The only difficulty is water, not soil, and here the Block has a tremendous advantage in being a narrow strip strung out along the Bank of one of the big Rivers of South Africa, ie. The Limpopo.

The energy, enterprise and capital expended in Palestine shows clearly that settlers of the type fathered by the Zionist Association onto the land, which would then flow figuratively with Milk and Honey. (Captain Martin to Arden-Clarke, 18 March 1938, S.336/10/2, BNA).

He also asserted that, if talked to, the South African government could be convinced to allow Jewish settlement in the Tuli Block. It appears Captain Martin approached the Jewish Board of Deputies in South Africa to plead with the South African authorities. This is borne out by the fact that on 29 November 1939 High Commissioner Clark 'granted an interview to a deputation from the Jewish Board of Deputies at the request of Hofmeyer, the ex-Minister, who introduced them' (Clark to Arden-Clarke, 30 Nov. 1938, S.363/1, BNA). After informing them of the difficulty of the situation, the representatives 'enquired what prospects there were of placing some suitable settlers, however few, permanently in the Territories [Botswana and Swaziland] on the understanding that the Board would carefully select these and guarantee that they would not become a charge on the Administration' (Clark to Arden-Clarke, 30 Nov. 1938, S.363/1, BNA). This reminds us of the assurances the Jewish community made to the British government in 1933 as mentioned above.

Although High Commissioner Clark 'informed them that this was a question which would ultimately have to be decided by the respective Immigrants Selection Boards in the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland', he stated that in Bechuanaland 'the only area where there might be possibilities of permanent settlement for a few *bona fide* agriculturalists was in the Tuli Block' (Clark to Arden-Clarke, 30 Nov. 1938, S.363/1, BNA). He also made them aware of the impact of South Africa's cattle embargo on the livelihood of the Tuli Block farmers. The High Commissioner also told the deputation 'that it was possible that the Immigration Selection Board might be prepared to admit permanently a few families of the right type if they could be assured that no financial liability would fall on the Protectorate'. The deputation pledged 'that they would have no difficulty in obtaining funds from the Samuel-Rothschild Committee in England to which they had sent large subscriptions'. Clark 'was favourably impressed with the members of the Board who formed the deputation' as he found them 'business-like and reasonable about the evident difficulties of the matter' (Clark to Arden-Clarke, 30 Nov. 1938, S.363/1, BNA).

For his part Resident Commissioner Arden-Clarke sounded optimistic and excited by the idea of Jewish capital and labour in developing agriculture in the Tuli Block. He also suggested that the Tati Company should be approached with view to settle Jewish refugees in the Tati District. 'I do not think that they would have any objection either to Jewish capital or labour,' he wrote (Arden-Clarke to Clark, 6 Dec. 1938, S363/1, BNA). 'I noticed in the press that in Northern Rhodesia [Zambia] intending Jewish settlers were first to be trained in agriculture and certainly any settlers who intend to make a living from agriculture in this country must have training and experience,' added Arden-Clarke confidently.

When the General Manager of Tati Company was contacted he mentioned that although they had large areas of land open for settlement their policy of encouraging settlement

in them met 'with varying degrees of success' (General Manager to Government Secretary, 12 Dec. 1938, S.363/1, BNA). Curiously, the General Manager gave a position which makes one wonder whether his Company or himself was anti-semitic: *'The question of settling Jewish farmers in the Territory is, however, a matter for much thought and consideration, and I am not prepared to say at present whether a scheme of this kind is likely to meet with the approval of my company.'* This uncertainty forced him to propose to contact the Company's Board of Directors in London for a decision.

Interestingly one Edmund Davis, writing in London for and on behalf of the Bechuanaland Exploration Company to the Imperial government provided an elaborate and advanced plan on how Jewish settlement in the Tati District would be carried out:

Very serious consideration has been given by us of the Jewish families on the continent due to the persecution of the German Government, and it has occurred to us that we might be able to settle a certain number of families with agricultural knowledge on part of our land in the Tati district, and, in particular, in the areas adjoining the Shashi River. The total acreage we have in this particular district amounts to 259,909 acres, known as the Old Tati District, which area is sub-divided into farms of from 2/6000 acres each, which, in turn, could be sub-divided where necessary. ...

Our idea of settlement would be to allocate a certain area per family, to erect on each such area the necessary dwelling and outhouses, construct dipping tanks and provide fruit trees and to advance to the settlers the necessary farming implements and a certain number of cattle, the latter to remain the Company's property, though on any increase of cattle the tenant to receive 25% of the net yearly increase as consideration for taking proper care, paying proper attention, and being entirely responsible....

So far as the crops are concerned, for the first five years the Company to receive no portion of the same, but as consideration for the rights granted, the Company to be entitled thereafter to receive one-fifth of the gross yield of all crops on the land.

The only obligation we would impose on the tenant would be that during the first two years of his lease he would have to undertake to properly prepare and plough at least 100 acres.

The Company would be willing to advance passage money for each married couple, with no more than two children, such passage money to be repaid, free of interest, at the rate of £1 per month, after the second year, or as circumstances may allow.

We would point out that this company has carried out a similar scheme in Southern Rhodesia extending over a period of many years...

We assume the selection of the Agriculturalists would be made by a Sub-Committee of the League of Nations, or some other central and suitable body who would accept responsibility for the selection of the class of the applicants desired. (Edmund Davis to Malcolm MacDonald, MP (London), 16 Nov. 1938, S.363/1, BNA).

Obviously the Bechuanaland Exploration Company was motivated by profiteering and was trying to advertise itself. It was reported that this Company was prepared to foot the bill (Sir Eric Machtig to William Clark, 30 Nov. 1938, S. 363/1, BNA). The Company's seemingly generous proposal found purchase in some quarters in the British government. Some even suggested that arrangements could be made to place the Company into direct link with one of the Jewish refugees organisations in London, with a view to selecting suitable settlers and making necessary arrangements. However, the number of Jewish families proposed by the Company aroused what amounted to strong disapproval by High Commissioner Clark:

As regards the question of numbers you will see that... [Davies] talks about one to two hundred families which would not only mean a considerable increase in the white population of the Territory, but would cause a preponderance of Jews in the Tati District. I feel doubtful whether we should be wise to accept so many, particularly as I saw somewhere that Southern Rhodesia were preparing to admit only twenty families (Clark to Arden-Clarke, 14 Dec. 1938, S.363/1, BNA).

Davis' land distribution and farming plans were dismissed, by implication, as outrageous and romanticism of the man at the Metropole by Forsyth Thompson (Government Secretary) in Botswana. He cited inadequate rainfall as the reason and, like his boss, expressed disquiet bordering on xenophobia and suggested Jewish settlement in the Tuli Block instead:

'As regards the number of families which might be settled in the whole of the Tati District, I question the wisdom suddenly of introducing a large foreign population into a comparatively small British community. The white population of the Tati District when the census was taken in 1936 was 330 of whom over 300 were engaged in ranching or trading, and I personally feel that we should not allow at the outset more than 20 families (equivalent to say eighty people) to settle in the whole District...

With regard to the Tuli Block there are farms owned by certain individuals or companies such as Mosenthals of Port Elizabeth (the Limpopo Ranching Company), the African ranches, etc, who would probably be prepared to lease or otherwise dispose of their land, and by the British South Africa Company who still own large tracts of undeveloped land. It would be necessary to approach the latter and find out whether they are prepared to encourage the settlement of Jewish refugees' (Forsyth Thompson to Priestman, 28 Dec. 1938, S. 363/1, BNA).

This position seems to have compelled Edmund Davies to 'back-pedal' on his proposed settlement in the Tati District and a proposal was made for settlement of 100 families in the Tuli Block instead (Arden-Clarke to High Commissioner, 9 Jan. 1939, S.363/1, BNA). The reason given was that in the Tuli Block there was '*approximately one million acres of land capable of supporting not less than one hundred and fifty families of four persons each engaged on ranching and/or dairying provided outlet for their products were available*'. In the light of existing market limitations Arden-Clarke considered it practicable to introduce twenty-five selected families at present. He also pointed out that the BSACo and the majority of present landowners were anxious to sell their holdings, which made him '*not anticipate any serious objection to establishment of settlement of Jewish refugees up to absorptive capacity of areas available*'.

Meanwhile, the Tati Company's Board of Directors in London approved '*of encouraging the settlement in Tati of suitably trained and qualified Jewish farmers from Germany*' (General Manager to Government Secretary, 1 Feb. 1939, S.363/1, BNA). '*In pursuance of this policy,*' wrote Tati Company's General Manager, '*I have pleasure therefore in offering the Tantabane area of approximately 35,000 acres, situated West of Tsamae Siding... We are of the opinion that 10 families could be accommodated in this particular area of the country.*' Nevertheless, the Government Secretary felt that '*Politically as far as the Protectorate is concerned... there is much less objection to establishing a Jewish colony in the Tuli Block than in the Tati District*' (Government Secretary to Resident Commissioner, 4 Jan. 1939, S.363/1, BNA). This reason led to the High Commissioner suggesting that both the South African and Southern Rhodesian governments be consulted about the suggested closer settlement of Jews in the Tati District (Clark to Machtig, 2 March 1939, S.363/1, BNA). He also

expressed uncertainty as to whether the response of the South African government would be in affirmation, the reason being that Prime Minister General *'Hertzog might, of course, again raise the question of transfer'* (General Hertzog was an ardent racist who tried by hook and by crook to force Botswana into amalgamation with South Africa). The cattle embargo was an idea of his administration. However, after consulting both General Hertzog and Southern Rhodesia the two governments agreed that only ten Jewish families be settled in the Tati (District High Commissioner to Arden-Clarke, 29 May 1939, S.363/1, BNA).

It was then decided to inform the Tati Company that all consulted stake holders had agreed to the settlement of ten Jewish families in the District. The only condition being that such families be *'suitably qualified to earn their living as farmers and possessed of adequate capital'* (Arden-Clarke to High Commissioner, 22 June 1939, S.363/1, BNA). It was suggested that Tati Company approach the Johannesburg Jewish Board of Deputies concerning available land and the requirements for settlement of these ten Jewish families. The Company was directed to *'let Government have full particulars of any proposed settlers in order that Government may satisfy itself as to their suitability'* (this communication was sent to the General Manager of the Tati Company by the Government Secretary, 21 July 1939). The Secretary of the Board of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies was informed about Tati Company's anxiety to promote the interests of suitable settlers selected by it (Government Secretary to Secretary of South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 2 August 1939, S.363/1, BNA).

The matter ended at this point (August 1939), and archival sources do not detail further development. Perhaps this abrupt end was brought about by the outbreak of World War II in early September 1939. It is claimed that during the war Britain and her allies were indifferent *'toward refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe'*, which *'constitutes a well-known part of the ingrained anti-Semitic Strain'* (Adam, Van Zyl Slabbert and K. Moodley, 1998:43). Although in the 1930s and 1940s anti-semitic thinking in South Africa *'provided such a useful means of political mobilisation for the Afrikaner right-wing'* (Shain, 1994:ix), later the post-World War II apartheid regime began accepting Jews as a political and economic expediency, and also collaborated with Israel (Adam *et al*, 1998:29). This was part of South Africa's propaganda against international communism meant to attain support and investment from the United States of America and its Western allies.

The modern Jewish state of Israel was established in 1948 in the desert area of Palestine. Israel has since registered tremendous success in agriculture despite being an arid country. The Israeli engineering firm Tahal was established in the early days of the state with the aim of addressing one of Israel's most acute problems - lack of water - and has since then played a key role in the legendary blooming of the country's desert (<http://www.tahal.co.il/pages/frameset.html?main=/pages/contact.html>). Interestingly, in 1998 (59 years after the outbreak of World War Two), the government of post-independence Botswana engaged Israel's Tahal to advise on ways in which the country's rather disappointing arable agricultural and dairy production could be made competitive at the global level. This has led to the much talked about National Masterplan for Promotion of Arable Agriculture and Dairy Development (NAMPAADD) (http://www.gov.bw/government/ministry_of_agriculture.html#nampaadd and Makgala, 2006).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to detail an aspect of the history of Botswana which has not been written on before. The relations between Botswana and South Africa during this period has been

explained in terms of Jewish refugees and anti-semitism in some section of the Afrikaner community in South Africa. The bid to settle Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany in Botswana is also interesting because it brings into the historiography of Botswana a rare link between the country and the Jews as well as Nazi Germany.

Since the areas in which Jewish refugees were to be settled were European owned and outside the tribal or African reserves, the Africans were not consulted in the discussion or communication on the subject of Jewish settlement. The need to improve agricultural production in Botswana was a serious concern given the country's penury, and the Jewish refugees with capital and necessary skills were meant to improve the production of food in the territory. Today in the post-independence era, the country is over-dependent on diamond mining and the risks of such a syndrome have led to the need for diversification of the economy. Agriculture has been identified as a sector which could be boosted with a view of diversifying the economy in the face of threats brought about by globalisation. Hence, in 1998 - some 60 years after the failed bid to bring in Jewish agricultural producers - the government of Botswana engaged an Israeli firm to conduct an extensive study on how the country's poor arable agricultural sector could be made a serious income-generating enterprise. Almost a case of history repeating itself.

References

Archival Sources

- Captain Martin to Arden-Clarke, 18 March 1938, S.336/10/2, Botswana National Archive (BNA).
- Charles Arden-Clarke (Resident Commissioner) to William Clark (High Commissioner), 4 January 1938, S.336/10/2, BNA.
- Charles Arden-Clarke to William Clark, 6 December 1938, S363/1, BNA.
- Charles Arden-Clarke to High Commissioner, 9 January 1939, S.363/1, BNA.
- Charles Arden-Clarke to High Commissioner, 22 June 1939, S.363/1, BNA.
- Edmund Davis to Malcolm MacDonald, MP (London), 16 November 1938, S.363/1, BNA.
- Forsyth Thompson to Priestman, 28 December 1938, S. 363/1, BNA
- General Manager (Tati Company) to Government Secretary, 12 December 1938, S.363/1, BNA.
- General Manager (Tati Company) to Government Secretary, 1 February 1939, S.363/1, BNA.
- Government Secretary to Resident Commissioner, 4 January 1939, S.363/1, BNA.
- Government Secretary to Secretary of South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 2 August 1939, S.363/1, BNA.
- High Commissioner to Arden-Clarke, 29 May 1939, S.363/1, BNA.
- Sir Eric Machtig (London) to William Clark, 30 November 1938, S. 363/1, BNA.
- William Clark to Arden-Clarke, 21 February 1938, S.336/10/2, BNA.
- William Clark to Arden-Clarke, 30 November 1938, S.363/1, BNA.
- William Clark to Arden-Clarke, 14 December 1938, S.363/1, BNA.
- William Clark to Eric Machtig, 2 March 1939, S.363/1, BNA.

Published Sources

- Adam, H, Van Zyl Slabbert F. and Moodley, K. (1998) *Comrades in Business: Post-Liberation Politics in South Africa*, Utrecht: International Books.
- Bitsang, M. (1982) 'Chiefs, the Transfer, and Administrative Colonial Control: Bechuanaland Protectorate 1930-40'. B.A. research essay, University of Botswana.

- Bolchover, R., (1993) *British Jewry and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Bradlow, E. and J.H. Hofmeyer (1970) 'Liberalism and Jewish Immigration', *South African Historical Journal*, 40, pp 114-129.
- Carr, W. (1991) *A History of Germany, 1815-1990* London: Edward Arnold.
- Ettinger, S.J. (1972) 'South Africa's Weight Restrictions on Cattle Exports from Bechuanaland, 1924-41', *Botswana Notes and Records*, 4, pp 21-29.
- Furlong, P.J. (1991) *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- Graml, H. (1992) *Antisemitism in the Third Reich*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Halpern, J. (1965) *South Africa's Hostages: Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Hyam, R. (1972) *The Failure of South African Expansion, 1908-1948*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Jackson, A. (1999) *Botswana 1939-1945: An African Country at War*. New York: Clarendon Press.
- Khama, T. and Buchanan, D. (1946) *The Case for Bechuanaland*. Johannesburg.
- Khama, T. (1955) *The Proposed Inclusion of Bechuanaland into the Union of South Africa*. London.
- Khama, T. (1935) *A Statement to the British Parliament and People*. London: Society for Anti-Slavery and Aborigines.
- Makgala, C.J. (2004) 'A Survey of Race Relations in Botswana, 1800-1966', *Botswana Notes and Records*, Vol 36, pp 11-26.
- Makgala, C.J. (2005) 'Botswana's NAMPAAADD in Historical Perspective, 1939-2005'. *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, 19 (2).
- Mgadla, T. (1987) 'North-East and South-East', in Fred Morton and Jeff Ramsey, (eds.), *The Birth of Botswana: A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966* (Gaborone: Longman. pp 134-146.
- Perham, M, and Curtis, L, *The Protectorates of South Africa: The Question of their Transfer to the Union* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935).
- Ramsay, J. (1987) 'Resistance from Subordinate Groups: Babirwa of Malema, Bakgatla Mmanaana and Bakalanga Nswazwi', in Fred Morton and Jeff Ramsey (eds.), *The Birth of Botswana: A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966*. Gaborone: Longman. pp 65-7.
- Robertson, H. (1978) 'From Protectorate to Republic: The Political History of Botswana, 1926-1966'. PhD thesis. Nova Scotia: Dalhousie University.
- Rubenstein, W.D. (1996) *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain* London: Macmillan.
- Shain, M. (1994) *The Roots of Anti-Semitism in SA*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Sherman, A.J. (1973) *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-39*. London: Book Barn Ltd.
- Shimoni, G. (1980) *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience*. Cape Town, Oxford University Press.
- Tapela, H.M. (1976) 'The Tati District of Botswana, 1866-1969' (PhD thesis, University of Sussex.
- Tlou, T. and Campbell, A. (1997) *History of Botswana*. Gaborone: Macmillan.

Internet Sources

<http://www.tahal.co.il/pages/frameset.html?main=/pages/contact.html>.

http://www.gov.bw/government/ministry_of_agriculture.html#nampaadd.