

the elite Anglo-Saxon colonialist rulers and the African masses.

With no capital and little knowledge of English, the Jewish traders who ventured to remote areas of the African bush and who migrated to the Copperbelt played an important part in creating new markets and supplying the demands for Western items, such as farm machinery and manufactured clothing.

Their entrepreneurial effort was instrumental in merging the African and European economies, and it helped the Jews become a vital and respected community in this part of Africa.

In politics the Jews played an eminently active part for their small numbers. Jewish mayors held office at one time or another in almost all the Northern Rhodesian towns. Sir Roy Welensky, son of a Polish-Jewish father and an Afrikaans mother who was said to have converted to Judaism, was a dominant political figure in the country for 25 years. One of 13 children, Welensky labored as a railwayman in his teens, later becoming a heavyweight boxing champion.

Welensky rose from railway union organizer to become prime minister of the short-lived Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and strove to achieve a working partnership between whites and blacks. Never one to deny his Jewish

"Anti-Semitism, per se, does not exist among Africans," says Prins. "Feelings against whites, perhaps, but Jews were never singled out."

origins, the tough-minded and tough-fisted Welensky was known to have flattened more than one bigot for anti-Semitic remarks.

Aaron Milner, whose father was a Jewish immigrant and whose mother was a native African, started out as a bookkeeper in a general store in Chingola, and ended up holding several important Cabinet posts, including Minister of Home Affairs.

An "official" view of the Jews and their role in Zambian life was expressed a few years ago by the country's leader, President Kenneth Kaunda.

Responding to a request by then Israeli Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren to allow Torah scrolls to be exported to Israel from closed synagogues in the Copperbelt, Kaunda said he was surprised and sorry that the Jewish community had dwindled.

"The Jews in Zambia had contributed to the welfare and well-being of the country," he wrote to Goren.

Though among the Third World leaders who has gone on record against some of Israel's policies, Kaunda added, "Sometimes our positions versus the Jews and Israel is not properly understood. We regard them as sons of God and as such we were always only too happy to cooperate with them."



Handwrought copper panels adorn the ark in Lusaka's now rarely used synagogue.

Jews and Israel contribute to richness of Zambian life

WHEN GOLDA MEIR visited Zambia in 1964 as Israel's foreign minister, she went to see Victoria Falls, one of Africa's most spectacular sites and the prime tourist attraction of that spacious land.

After staring at the mighty Zambezi River precipitously plunging at a million gallons of water per second into the gorge below, while a majestic rainbow illuminated the clouds of spray, Golda's comment was, "Such a lot of water wasted!"

Meir had come to Zambia to participate in the independence celebrations of the newly proclaimed republic. Formerly the British Protectorate of Northern Rhodesia, and later one of the three members of the now-dissolved Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Zambia was inaugurated into nationhood with much fanfare and patriotic fervor on United Nations Day, Oct. 24, 1964.

After Meir's visit, hundreds of Israeli experts arrived in Zambia to provide technical assistance in such fields as agriculture, poultry raising, construction and police training.

But Jews had been living in what is now Zambia long before the Israel came.

At the turn of the century, the legendary Susman brothers, Harry and Elie, youthful immigrants from a little shtetl in Lithuania, were the first Jews to enter Northern Rhodesia. Scarcely out of their teens, the Susmans trekked northward out of South Africa, their ox wagon laden with salt, beads and other goods for bartering.

Crossing the wide Zambezi upriver from Victoria Falls, the two Yiddish-speaking brothers made friends with tribal chiefs and gradually built up a thriving business, trading goods for cattle. Moving the cattle southward, however, was always a hazardous journey. The Susmans' dugout boats and flat rivercraft were often beset by wallowing hippopotami, and the cattle herds were frequently stalked and stampeded by hungry lions. No less perilous in those days were tsetse flies, malaria and the dreaded black water fever.

Eventually, the enterprising Susmans established extensive cattle ranches, farms, factories, sawmills and a chain of hotels. Their one abortive venture was in mining. Judging claims they had staked in the Copperbelt to be of little value, they sold them to a prospector for a small sum. Today one of Zambia's most productive copper mines operates on the same site.

The earliest Jewish community in Northern Rhodesia was established in the town of Livingstone, a few miles north of Victoria Falls. In 1905, when the newly laid rail line, extending up from South Africa, reached Livingstone, an active Jewish congregation was already there. When the chupah was raised at the town's first Jewish wedding in 1910, Livingstone's Jews numbered 38 out of a total population of 260.

In the late 1920s, Northern Rhodesia's basic economy was radically transformed by the discovery of huge deposits of copper near the border with the Belgian Congo — now Zaire.

A cluster of little towns in this district burgeoned overnight as the gleam of the Copperbelt lured droves



Golda Meir, then Israeli foreign minister, visits members of the Ndola Jewish community in Zambia's Copperbelt region during 1964 independence celebrations.

of immigrants from Southern Rhodesia, South Africa and overseas.

Jews contributed much to the growth of the towns and the expansion of the copper industry. They supplied badly needed transport, opened shops and hotels and provided many essential services. Jewish small businessmen came down from the neighboring Katanga province of the Congo, where they had settled years before. Scores of Jewish workers and their families settled in the mining towns of Kitwe, Ndola, Chingola, Mufulira and Luanshya, taking jobs as miners, plumbers, elec-

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tricians and truck drivers. Jewish traders traveled from the Copperbelt far out into the bush country where whites were seldom seen.

Most merchants in the towns lived behind their stores. The womenfolk cooked over outdoor fires. Toilets were some distance away and en route to and from nature's call, one had to be constantly on the alert for venomous snakes.

The Copperbelt's bustling commercial activity and mild climate soon made the region the vibrant center of Northern Rhodesian Jewish life.

Former Copperbelt residents today

recall with nostalgia how closely knit the Jewish communities were in those days. With most towns within an easy hour's ride of each other, Copperbelt Jews formed an extended family. They collectively celebrated *simchas* and fetes, cared for one another during grim outbreaks of black water fever and formed lifetime friendships.

World War II brought a new stream of immigrants — German Jews seeking a haven from Hitler. Denied entry by South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, the wandering, refugees were ultimately accepted by Northern Rhodesia.

Their acceptance by the Jewish community — mostly of Litvak origin — was not that immediate, however. Fearing competition from a more educated and sophisticated group whose work ethic and culture were unfamiliar to them, the earlier settlers were slow to extend a welcoming hand.

Elana Turtledove, who grew up in Luanshya, remembers how impressed she was as a child seeing these better-dressed, more mannerly Jews who spoke a language resembling Yiddish, but sounding more cultivated.

At around the same time, the capital of Northern Rhodesia was moved from disease-ridden Livingstone to the more salubrious climate of Lusaka, near the center of the landlocked country. Surrounded by savannah uplands, 4,000 feet above sea level, Lusaka grew slowly, as did its small Jewish population. But by 1942, a gleaming white synagogue was consecrated in the center of town.

Forty years later, Lusaka is known as "Africa's fastest growing city" and has a population of more than 700,000, more than quadrupled since independence.

Its clean, broad streets lined with jacaranda and bougainvillea trees; the promising future symbolized by the main Cairo Road's skyscrapers; the exotic landscapes of the Munda Wanga Botanical Gardens; and the religious diversity witnessed by an Anglican cathedral, a Catholic church, a Hindu temple, a mosque, and a synagogue all add to the charm of this pleasant capital of a young nation of six million people.

— Jack Goldfarb