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JEWISH ANZACS FROM RUSSIA: CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

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ABSTRACT

There were nearly 150 Jewish Anzacs among the 1000 First World War Anzacs born on the territory of the Russian Empire, whose stories are recorded in my book *Russian Anzacs in Australian History* (2005). Like the other Russian Anzacs, these men are subsumed into the Anglo-Saxon majority in most traditional First World War histories of Australia; they also disappear among the mass of all other Jewish-identifying Anzacs in Australia. Among them were, of course, some well-recognised heroes, but many were Jews whose military service did not go well, who had a chequered history in the army, or even just men whose service was not especially noteworthy. This paper will explore a number of individual and social narratives in the histories of these otherwise almost invisible and forgotten Jewish lives, working towards the construction of a prosopographical portrait of this ethno-confessional group.

KEYWORDS

Russian Jewish Anzacs, Immigration (pre-1914, from Russia), First World War, Antisemitism

Until recently the Anzacs, an iconic marker of Australian history, were ethnically associated with Australia's Anglo-Celtic heritage, and politically with the heritage of the British Empire. C.E.W. Bean, in the opening pages of his *Official History of Australia in*

the War of 1914-1918, asserts of Australia in those years: 'The percentage of Australians who came of any other stock [that is, other than English, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh] was negligible; the population of this vast unfilled land was as purely British as that of the two islands in the North Sea which had been the home of its fathers'.[1]

Australian Jewry in the 1st AIF was the first non-Anglo-Saxon ethno-confessional and trans-territorial group which demonstrated that people of 'other stock', as Bean put it, were not negligible, either in numbers or in their contribution to the war efforts. The expression 'Jewish Anzacs' was coined by Jewish chaplain D.I. Freedman, already in 1917.[2] It was provision for Jewish religious needs at the battlefront, which made them visible and identifiable as a specific confessional and cultural group. Drawing from data accumulated by Freedman, the Jewish community celebrated its contribution to the Australian war effort in the *Australian Jewry Book of Honour*, compiled by Harold Boas and published in 1923. Recently, the story of the Jewish Anzacs was celebrated by Mark Dapin in *Jewish Anzacs: Jews in the Australian Military* (2017), which extensively uses personal and archival records, letters, and memoirs.[3]

My research in this field came about through a different approach to the subject. Since 2000 I have been working on locating Anzacs who had been born in the Russian Empire and whose records were hidden in archives and private papers. It was in the course of this work that I began sifting the stories of the different community groups resident in nineteenth-century Russia, among who were Russian-born Jewish Anzacs. This research was presented in my 2005 book *Russian Anzacs in Australian History*,[4] which was followed by papers about Anzacs from Latvia and Belarus, and a recent book about Anzacs from Ukraine.[5] The stories of Jewish Anzacs from these territories form an essential part of each of these works. Some of my research about Jewish Anzacs was published in Russian for the benefit of Russian-language readers.[6] I also maintain a database of Jewish Anzacs

born in the Russian Empire with detailed information about each serviceman, including biographical data and links to digitised archival documents, newspaper articles and other publications, portraits and blogs.[7] This has allowed me to find the families of these Anzacs, with their own stories and archives, and to commemorate those who had no family to cherish them.

In identifying Anzacs as 'Jewish' I did not strictly follow the rule that 'a Jew is taken as any person who has a Jewish mother'[8] or actively practices Judaism. My Russian experience and study of the family history of my Jewish husband, Vladimir Kabo,[9] taught me that identity in historical research must be comprehended as a fluid entity and an individual's change of religion or indifference to it in the twentieth century does not nullify their original identity. The process of identity formation should furthermore be seen as inclusive, with multiple identities, such as Jewish, Russian/Polish, and British/Australian, overlapping rather than excluding each other.

Untangling the multi-ethnic complexity behind the iconic image of the Anzacs was only one aspect of bringing the 'Anzac legend' into the present. As the Australian nation grows, each new generation of Australians invests into this legend its own understanding of the past, creating a powerful balance as the nation learns to reconcile the spirit of the legend and the new facts of history. In recent years, for instance, attention has been focused on the stories of people whose heroism was not limited to the battlefields alone – these men had to prove their bravery in civilian life as well. This is the story of thousands of servicemen, maimed physically and mentally, who tried to find themselves in post-war Australia. Among them were veterans whose lives did not fit into the standard framework of stereotypical heroes, along with those who failed in their fight with post-war life and committed suicide.[10]

With such an approach in mind, my aim was to explore the lives of all Russian-born Jewish men who enlisted in the AIF during the First World War, including those who did not reach the

battlefront for various reasons. My database includes the names of at least 148 such enlistees. This adds a number of new names to Boas' lists and provides some new dimensions to the experience of Jewish participation in the AIF. These previously un-noted names were often of Jews who were too ill to serve, whose military service was not especially 'heroic', or who had a chequered history in the army, being discharged or deserting before reaching the front. A study of the cohort of Russian Jewish Anzacs in their entirety not only allows historians to combat antisemitic stereotypes such as those that labelled Jews as shirkers of military duty, but also to see Jewish individuals and their emerging communities in all their complexity. They may not have all been awarded military medals or honours, but the war was part of their history too, and they were in turn a part of Australian war history.

A notable example of such left-of-field Jewish servicemen was the flamboyant Louis Brodsky, who, as a boy, had fled the misery of life in the Pale of Settlement to become a sailor. After years of working on ships he settled in Australia with a young family, but at the first sounds of war he rushed to join up. His son remembered that 'He ... was repeatedly rejected because of his poor teeth and campaigned against the Army authorities so vigorously that he won newspaper publicity, and he finally won approval from the authorities to create and establish a corps of men rejected only for poor teeth.'[11] But this was only the beginning of his odyssey. After being finally accepted into the army, he embarked for Egypt. Upon arriving, he realised that the army was not the place for him after all, and sought a discharge. This was refused, so he purchased the identity papers of a Russian refugee named David Lipschitz, assumed this new identity and took French leave. As David Lipschitz he worked as a steward on various merchant ships for the rest of the war, eventually returning to Australia in 1918. There he surrendered himself to the military authorities, but was not prosecuted. That was not the end of his adventures. During the 1930s he visited the Soviet Union, on the same false passport of course, and even managed to get into trouble with

Scotland Yard along the way. When the Second World War broke out, he was one of the first to offer his services to Australia yet again.[12]

Illus. 1. Louis Brodsky, in the centre, with his twin sons on the right. Image courtesy of Vivien Brodsky

Louis Brodsky's army tales were an essential part of his family's folklore, but none of his family had any idea about the real truth behind his war adventures. It is hardly surprising that his twin sons, Alexander and Isadore, inherited his nonconformist spirit. They both served during the Second World War and were court-martialled several times for all sorts of typically Australian pranks, in spite of their otherwise perfect service.[13] Although Louis Brodsky was stripped of his war medals and as such was quite justly not included in Boas' book, he shouldn't be excluded from Anzac history.

This approach allows us to probe the notion of the Anzac spirit from different angles, for instance the validity of 'mateship' in application to those who were considered 'different'. This returns us to the role of ethno-cultural and religious identity. Was

it important for these Anzacs to preserve it? Or, on the contrary, did they aim to put it aside? When speaking about Jewish people in Australia a century ago, it would be limiting to see them only as a community united by religion, irrespective of their original national background. Due to the cultural specifics which each national group brought with them, we can definitely distinguish from each other groups such as Australian Jewry, which had been settled for several generations in their new land; British Jewish immigrants; South African; German; and Polish Jews.[14] So-called 'Russian Jews' in Australia were in their turn highly diverse groups sharing the same national origin and religion but differing from each other in many other aspects. In respect to pre-revolutionary immigrants it is possible to distinguish at least four distinct groups.

The first group are Jewish emigrants who came to Australia as a result of a two-stage migration via UK, America, and to a lesser degree, Western European countries and South Africa. They were mainly families from Poland and some Baltic territories. Their children, future Anzacs, who, for instance, grew up in the UK and later immigrated to Australia, were readily accepted by both Australian Jewish communities and the Anglo-Saxon population at large. Their language of communication was usually English. To this group we can add Jewish seamen, well assimilated within Western culture by the time of their arrival in Australia.

The second group were also two-stage migrants, whose first station was Palestine. Here we find the strongest influence of the ideas of Zionism; while settled there they also gained agricultural skills, and learnt to defend their livelihood and their settlements. I also include in this group those who stayed in Egypt. They were notable for their knowledge of a variety of languages to which they were exposed in the process of their two-stage migration, but often lacked a good knowledge of English. Their first port of call was usually Western Australia; some of them later moved to eastern Australian states. In large part due to their revitalised Zionist-Middle Eastern heritage, in which many took great

pride, it took them some time to be accepted into mainstream Australian life.

The third group were direct immigrants to Australia, mostly from Ukraine and Belarus, who arrived as a result of chain migration. They mostly settled in Western Australia, Victoria, and Broken Hill in NSW. They spoke Yiddish; a number knew some Russian but almost none knew any English at all. Still, the support of their chain migration networks, the earlier members of which were well equipped for Australian life, and a great determination to master the language and to succeed in their new lives helped them to settle successfully in Australia.

The fourth group were Jewish immigrants who came to Australia via Siberia, the Russian Far East, and Harbin city, situated in Manchuria, China. They mostly settled in Brisbane and Sydney. Although they preserved their Jewish religion, they were Russified to a significant degree; some of them were imbued with ideas of radicalism, and, arriving in Australia just a few years before the war, they had little opportunity to master English before 1914, and faced many difficulties finding their way into Australian society.

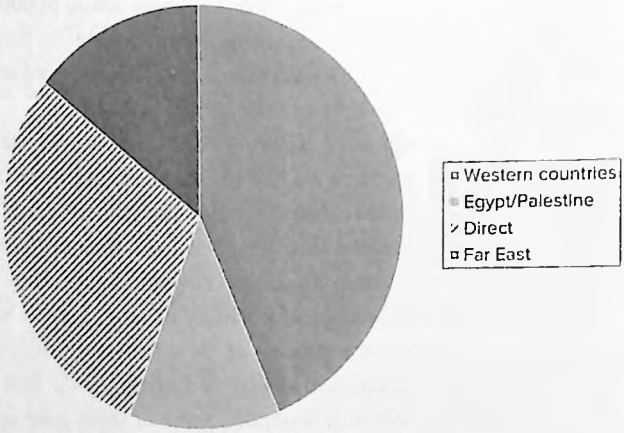

Chart 1. Distribution of Jewish Anzacs according to the routes of their immigration

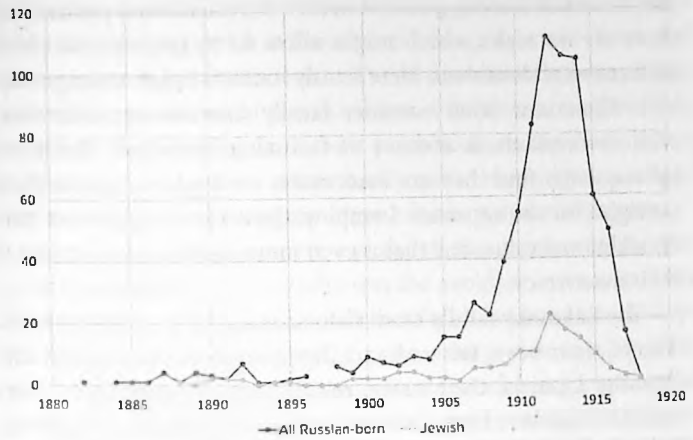

Chart 2. Arrivals in Australia

The dynamics of arrivals of future Jewish Anzacs from the Russian Empire in comparison with the arrivals of all Russian born Anzacs indicates that although there was a significant rise in the number of arrivals on the eve of the First World War, a factor characteristic for all ethnic groups, for Jews it was not as steep as for other immigrants (see Chart 2). This can be explained by the fact that the pattern of Jewish migration differed from that of these other groups: for Jews it was a chain migration that had been taking place over a long period of time. This tendency, along with the central role of family in Jewish migration dynamics, tend to suggest that on the eve of the First World War the Jewish community as a whole was more embedded into Australian life than the communities of other ethnic groups from Russia.

The reasons for this emigration were diverse. Russian historians of emigration often tend to pigeonhole immigrants into the two categories of *economic* and *political* emigration. It is obvious on the example of Jewish emigration that in every case the decision to move to another country was a multifocal process. Of course, emigrants aspired to a better life and economic prosperity, and as such they can be considered economic immigrants.

But factors of a socio-political nature were also ever-present and there are no scales which might allow us to understand which of them were dominant. Here family memoirs play an important role. Historians often consider family memoirs or interviews with descendants as sources of factual information. But if we subsequently find they are inaccurate, we tend to dismiss them outright; for the approach I employ, these kinds of sources have an additional value, one that is even more essential, in the case of their inaccuracy.

The Lakovsky family from Odessa is a good example for this. Two of their boys, Edward and David, enlisted in the AIF, and Dorothy Lazarus, their niece, relates the circumstances of her family's departure from Odessa. Her grandfather Tom Lakovsky, she says, earlier moved from Ekaterinoslav 'to Odessa, because there was more education and music for the children. Grandfather at 21 built a hotel in Odessa, he had about 250 employees ... My grandfather spoke Russian and Yiddish. Because my mother was 14 when they came out, she had wonderful memories of Russia, as they were very wealthy people and had a very good life in Russia.' With growing social unrest the situation changed. When her grandfather witnessed the brutal repression of rebel soldiers and sailors in Odessa, 'he said to the family, "If they are doing that to themselves, what will they do to the Jews? Let's get out of here". So my grandfather paid fares for the whole lot of the relatives and brought them to Australia, to Perth.' Another granddaughter of Tom, Leah Jas, told me that her grandparents came to Australia because the Bolsheviks were 'killing off people'.[15] The fear of the past left behind in Russia obviously resonates in these memories, but in fact the Lakovsky family, according to shipping records, came to Fremantle in 1902-03, well ahead of the brutal crushing of the revolutionary rebellion in Odessa in 1905, and certainly well before 1917, when the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia. These family tales, however, are not simply inaccurate, but contain the hidden memory of other terrors. The word *pogroms* was not mentioned by the original storytellers, probably because

it was too horrible to pass it on to young grandchildren. Instead, the fear of being Jewish in Russia is mixed up here with the fear of being taken for 'Russian Bolsheviks' in Australia: these memories were likely passed on to grandchildren at the time of the Red Scare in Australia. So, in spite of their jumbled facts, these memories prove that immigration of this family was in essence political, and we would probably recognise them now as political refugees.

Another common memory about the causes of Russian Jewish emigration to Australia was the avoidance of compulsory Russian Army service. Many families fled Russia to avoid it when children were young; in other cases young men, reaching the age of 20, would leave for Australia to avoid being conscripted at age 21. Although by 1906 the long-term compulsory service in the Russian Army was shortened to three years, it remained ingrained in family memory as a horrible trial; Jews experienced humiliation and systemic bullying in the Russian Army and lacked institutions which would care for their religious and cultural needs.[16] Due to this avoidance of army service Jews in Russia were often perceived as shirkers. The mass enlistment in the AIF of these very youth, who had just fled Russia to avoid conscription, refutes these antisemitic stereotypes.

One of them was Moisey Kotton, a young Jewish man from Kremenchug in Ukraine, who fled to Australia in 1912, at 20 years of age, on the eve of his age of conscription. Two years later his brother Samuel followed him at exactly the same age. When applying for naturalisation in Australia, Moisey wrote to the Australian authorities: 'Since I arrived in Australia I lived under the name of Max Kotton. The reason I done so was the fear of being sent back to Russia: I have not done any crime except leaving the country, which is a crime itself according to the Russian law.'[17] In Australia he settled in Naughton's Gap, NSW, working as a carter. With the outbreak of the war he made several attempts to join the AIF. When he was finally accepted the local newspaper reported: 'Mr. M. Kotton, who succeeded in passing the medical test, is a naturalised Russian, and is only 5 ft. high. The minimum

height is 5 ft 2 in, and Mr. Kotton was pleased when he was admitted as a bugler. He is very anxious to get to the front.' In September 1918 he was killed in the battle south of Peronne. The local farmers of Naughton's Gap, whose love and respect he had won, mourned him.[18]

The case of Max Kotton, accepted by an outback community, helps us to fight another stereotype, about the occupations of Jews in Australia. In 1914, the Russian consul in Australia, Alexander Abaza, reported to the Department of Foreign Affairs that, 'Except for the Jews who live in cities and are engaged here, as elsewhere, mainly with various trading matters and light crafts (tailors, shoemakers), almost the entire Russian population in Australia lives exclusively by manual labour.'[19]

The antisemitism in this official voice from Russia is plain to see. In reality, the distribution of occupations among the Russian Jewish Anzacs was quite different: along with those engaged in trades in the service sector, like tailors, cooks, hairdressers, traders, commercial travellers, drapers, storekeepers, and merchants, the other half of the sample had quite different occupations. The professional and white-collar sector was significant, and included

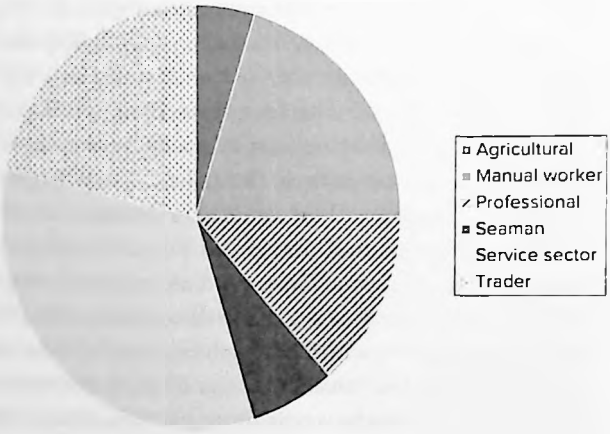

Chart 3. Occupations of Jewish Anzacs

engineers, medical practitioners, musicians, a surveyor, and university students; some were engaged in farming. Contrary to the Russian consul's claims, quite a large sector of the Jewish community were engaged in manual labour, working as labourers, blacksmiths, carpenters, a miner, and so on. Furthermore, as a response to Australian conditions, we find among the Jewish Anzacs archetypically Australian outback occupations, including bushmen, swagmen, a rabbit trapper, and a fossicker.[20] Finally, one very interesting aspect is the significant percentage of seamen – nine men in our small cohort of 148. (See Chart 3) It was possible to identify those who were seafarers from the descriptions the enlistment clerks recorded of their distinctive tattoos, some of which were quite striking, such as David Minor's 'Chinaman's head pierced by sword'.[21]

The well-known Captain Eliezer (Lazar) Margolin was among those who lived as bushmen. When he arrived in Western Australia in 1902, he had left behind a comfortable upbringing in Russia and an education from an elite high school in Belgorod, not far from Moscow, followed by ten years in the newly founded Jewish settlement of Rehovot in Palestine. He had no knowledge of English when he arrived in Australia and started off as a navvy and teamster, before trying his luck goldmining in Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, and then as a greengrocer at Lawlers. Over this time, he began to master English and developed various business interests. Despite this, however, his bush experience left a noticeably lasting imprint on his personality. The Jewish journalist Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who came to know Margolin well during the war, remarked of him: 'He thought like a man who had spent his life far from big cities, in Palestine in the time of the first pioneers and at the back of beyond in the Australian bush: slow, lofty, terse, and deep, with a keenly instinctive understanding of life.'[22]

Another outback story was that of Father Paul Ephraim Zundolovich. He was a Roman Catholic priest, but his background was Jewish. He came to Australia in 1892 and travelled on horseback through remote outback areas in Wilcannia, NSW,

preaching among first settlers and Aborigines, winning the love and respect of this motley outback community. During the war he accompanied Australian troops to England as a chaplain.[23] On the evidence of the lives of these remarkable men it is impossible to argue that the Jewish immigrant experience in early twentieth century Australia was limited to 'various trading matters and light crafts'.

The question of how these Jewish Anzacs identified themselves and negotiated the complexities of accommodating their Russian and Jewish heritages at the same time as coming face to face with a young Australian nation was another intriguing aspect uncovered in my study of their lives. As a rule, younger community members willingly embraced the new world of Australia. Frank Lesnie, who grew up in England and had adopted the name Frank Bernard when he joined the army after two years of farming in Australia, decided to give his allegiance to the young nation. He was asked why he hadn't instead enlisted from England, where he had lived since early childhood, and replied: 'Australia, the home of workers, will suit me in the capacity of a worker or a soldier. I have a love of freedom which would have been denied me, had I joined a home regiment'.[24] Surviving Gallipoli, he wrote in one of his letters from the Western Front to his relative on a topic that must have been preoccupying him:

LESNIE, F. Hersehon. Pte., 11th Battalion.

Illus. 2. Frank Lesnie, Australian Jewry Book of Honour, Perth, 1923

> Now to the original subject under discussion ... Your statement that I would not have my present nature had I been other than a Jew ... You say only a Jew could die as did the Rabbi at Keshineff. I've seen men die – game, by gad. The instance of the rabbi is nothing compared to them.[25]

This was the last of his letters to survive; he was killed in March 1917 during an attack on German trenches. Young Samuel Ettingove was a nephew of Sidney and Elcon Myer, the founders of the Myer Emporium, and joined his rich uncles in Australia at the age of 15. Before enlisting in the army, Ettingove wrote to the Australian authorities explaining his deep-seated wish to enlist as a British subject. 'It is my earnest desire', he wrote, 'to enlist as a British Australian soldier, and not as a Russian. I consider myself as of Jewish race (not Russian) and as belonging to the British people, to whom my sympathies and convictions entirely belong, and in whose civilisation I have been educated.' At the time he was writing this, Russians were being accepted for enlistment in the Australian army without being naturalised. Previously they were required to become British subjects, but from 1915 the

Illus. 3. Edward Platt, impresario. AWM21, 3914/18

Defence department had halted naturalisation for all Russians under the age of fifty in an attempt to encourage them to join up. Nevertheless, Ettingove wanted to take the oath as an Australian as a matter of principle. In his case an exception was made and his naturalisation was expedited so that he could enlist with his university comrades.[26]

Haim Platkin was another Anzac who made a conscious choice about his identity, but with a markedly different outcome. He was from the same area of Belarus as his contemporaries, the two Myer brothers, Sidney and Elcon. He left the area around the same time as they did, but went to England, where he lived for the next twenty years, taking on an English identity and even adopting an English-sounding name, Edward Platt. Under this name he arrived in Australia in 1914 as the impresario for some Russo-Jewish musicians. When the war started he soon became involved in war charity work, producing patriotic badges, and even tried to organise a Russian unit within the AIF. Then, he went and enlisted in the AIF; but, in a gesture of solidarity with his motherland, he enlisted under his original, distinctively Russian-Jewish name of Haim Samoilovich Platkin.[27]

Further reassessment of the Anzac legend – founded on the principles of mateship, egalitarianism, and endurance – in the context of Anzacs of different ethno-cultural backgrounds allows us to understand it as a more complex and multivocal narrative. The iconic painting by Ellis Silas, 'Roll call', captures a glimpse of an army unit after bloody fighting for Queen's Post in Gallipoli on 9 May 1915, soon after the landing. Name after name is called; the reply – a deep silence. The prototype for the commander conducting this roll call was the Gallipoli comrade of

Illus. 4. Eliezer (Lazar) Margolin in Egypt, 1915, AWM, P05772.003

Illus. 5. Ellis Silas, 'Roll call', in Ellis Silas, Crusading at Anzac A.D. 1915, London, 1916

Silas, Eliezer (Lazar) Margolin, the commander of the 16th West Australian battalion. Silas's journal chronicled the bond that grew between Margolin and his soldiers after the landing. When it became obvious that the mission his men had been charged with was impossible to accomplish, Margolin exclaimed of them: 'My poor lads … I don't want to lose my boys for nothing'.[28]

Who did Margolin feel himself to be in those difficult days – a Russian who grew up on Russian humanistic literature under the tutelage of teachers at the Belgorod Grammar School, or a Jew who became a warrior and found his roots in the ancient land of Rehovot? I think that at that time, first of all, he was an Australian, just like these boys from West Australian farms and mines loyal to the military oath and ready to lay down their lives for their friends. And in spite of the fact that he had been an immigrant, a man with a funny accent, Silas observed how warmly his men responded to him. 'Dear old Margy', they called him, 'a fine fellow and brave beyond compare.' This is indeed the Anzac legend in the making – being reinforced by the palpable 'difference' of Margolin, who is nevertheless readily accepted into it.

But at the very moment Margolin was being absorbed into the legend, there was another side to it, too, as shown in a quite different story unfolding in these first few weeks after the Gallipoli landing. Alfred Markowicz was a worldly, well-educated man, who had shown courage and initiative saving the lives of his comrades during the chaos of the first days after the landing. In his case, however, his foreignness was not seen benevolently: he was arrested without evidence on suspicion of pro-German sympathies, deported to Australia, and discharged. A pencilled annotation in his service records, reading 'No Crime. Doubtful name', blighted his life forever; attempts to gain justice and clear his name failed and he committed suicide in 1935. When enlisting in the army he gave his denomination as Roman Catholic, but was buried by the Sydney Chevra Kadisha.[29]

Instances of Anzac mateship can be discovered as entries of misconduct in the service records of our Anzacs. One such man was young William Zavodtchikoff, a Siberian Jew, who was serving in a Queensland depot as a sentry. He had been there several months when he allowed an Australian-born prisoner to escape from the guardroom, whereupon Zavodtchikoff himself was detained. At this, Zavodtchikoff said to the sergeant of the guard: 'You put that man in for nothing. Put me in too.'[30] In Russia, no private in the army, let alone a Jewish private, would have ever dared use such insubordinate language, but Zavodtchikoff was clearly already intoxicated with the newly discovered mateship he had found in the Australian army. Norman Myer, another of Sidney Myer's nephews, also took on this spirit wholesale. According to his service records, Myer was a soldier with exemplary conduct, although he later seemed to enjoy portraying himself as a dinkum digger. His friends remember his tales: 'For leave there were Paris and London. Myer never got the dates exactly. He was prone to stay away until his pay book was exhausted. Then there was the inevitable fine when he got back.'[31]

Once again, this seemingly seamless absorption is counterbalanced by another narrative, a tragic one. In 1948 a story was

published in Australian newspapers about someone called 'Anzac Harry, who was wounded at Gallipoli while serving with an A.I.F. artillery unit, [and] is in an Arab internment camp at Baalbek (Syria)'. The story related how, after being demobilised at the end of the Great War, this former soldier had gone to Beirut, where he opened 'Anzac Harry's Bar' on the seafront. During the Second World War '[h]is bar was the first port of call for thirsty men of the 7th Division which fought in Syria and captured Beirut. If a digger were broke, he could always get a drink on the house at Anzac Harry's'.[32] Harry never revealed his true name but his photo in Australian Light Horse uniform on the wall of his bar was the best proof of his authenticity.

Alas, archival files revealed that 'Anzac Harry' turned out to be the same Haim Samoilovich Platkin who had enlisted with his Russian name, but his experience as a soldier in the AIF had not been a happy one. He enlisted in 1917, enrolling in the Duntroon officer school, where he suffered discrimination as a Russian. After embarking for overseas service, the discriminatory attitudes of his fellow soldiers only got worse. In May 1918 he complained to his commanding officer that the men 'invariably called me Russian anarchist, Russian spy and [I] am generally considered a suspected person'. He was a cultivated man, who used words as his weapon, and had no real fighting skills – none of this helped allay the mistrust of his fellows. His battery commander's blunt assessment was: 'He is absolutely useless as a gunner being both incapable and unreliable'.[33] His last hope was to be accepted into the Jewish battalion, and he asked for a transfer … So, there he was. A man destined to remain an eternal outsider, inventing his exploits in Gallipoli, where he had never fought. And yet, is this just a story about a stateless Russian Jew assuming a false identity? A story about being ostracised by Australians? No. Rather it is the story of a man who, from the First World War to the Second, tried to overcome what he had been denied, and managed to achieve what he aspired to, even if it was only in his imagination. And for the privilege of being called 'Anzac Harry' he was happy to offer

free drinks to Australian soldiers …

In 2016 Kevin Rudd, visiting my exhibition 'Russian Anzacs: Threads of a Buried History' in Tsarskoe Selo, near St Petersburg, choose to speak at the poster of Margolin, because he was a hero, and had a high rank. My belief is that for us Australians and Jewish Australians, and our children and grandchildren, the story of Haim Platkin, a failed, ostracised soldier, must be equally important. They are both part of our history, with all its bright and sad aspects.

Endnotes

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2. See, for instance, 'Perth's Rabbi on active service', *Sunday Times*, Perth, 7 January 1917, p. 5; 'The Anzac Maccabees. Interview for the 'Jewish Chronicle with Capt. The Rev. D.I. Freedman', *Jewish Herald*, 12 January 1917, p. 7.
3. Sydney, New South Publishing, 2017.
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5. Elena Govor, 'Latvian Anzacs', in Aldis L. Putniņš (ed.), *Early Latvian Settlers in Australia*, Melbourne, Sterling Star, 2010, pp. 16-52; Elena Govor, 'Belorusskie anzaki', *Bialoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 40 (2013), c. 53-108; Elena Govor, *Falling Stars: The story of Anzacs from Ukraine*, Canberra, Alcheringa Press, 2017.
6. Elena Govor, 'Evreiskie Anzaki [Jewish Anzacs]', *Vozrozhdenie*, Sydney, no. 30 (2005), pp. 23-29; no. 31 (2006), pp. 37-42; no. 32, pp. 37-43; no. 33, pp. 48-55; no. 34, pp. 54-61; Elena Govor, 'Belgorod – Australia – Gallipoli: Istoria Lazaria Margolina' [Belgorod – Australia – Gallipoli: The story of Lazar Margolin], in *Kurskaia guberniia i kuriane v pervoi mirovoi voine. Kurskii voenno-istoricheskii sbornik*. Vyp. 14. Kursk, 2014, pp. 43-49.
7. Website 'Jewish Anzacs' (section of Russian Anzacs), http://russiananzacs.net/ethnicorigin/Jewish/
8. Mark Dapin, *Jewish Anzacs*, p. 144.
9. Vladimir Kabo, *The Road to Australia: Memoirs*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 1998.
10. See for instance Monash University project One Hundred Stories

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