

# SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

**Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society**

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Managing Editor*

Sandra Berman, *Primary Sources Section Editor*

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2010

Volume 13



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Articles appearing in *Southern Jewish History* are abstracted and/or indexed in *Historical Abstracts*, *America: History and Life*, *Index to Jewish Periodicals*, *Journal of American History*, and *Journal of Southern History*.

*Southern Jewish History* acknowledges with deep appreciation grants from

The Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, New York

The Gale Foundation, Beaumont, Texas

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ISSN 1521-4206

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# Rabbi Benjamin Schultz and the American Jewish League Against Communism: From McCarthy to Mississippi

by

Allen Krause\*

On two or three occasions during research on the role southern rabbis played in the civil rights movement in the South, this author came across the name of Benjamin Schultz, the maverick who served as rabbi of Temple Beth Israel of Clarksdale, Mississippi, from 1962 until his death in 1978. What distinguished Schultz from all his southern colleagues was a political conservatism marked by a passionate antipathy to Communism joined by a conviction that there was a clear and present danger of a Communist takeover of the United States. This obsession carried over into the arena of civil rights in that Schultz, like the majority of southerners, early on believed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to be a Communist-influenced (if not controlled) organization intent on creating unrest among the African American population.<sup>1</sup>

## *Jewish Conservatives: An Oxymoron?*

Schultz's Mississippi colleagues knew of his political orientation when he arrived in the state as a result of the tremendous publicity he received battling the Red Menace prior to moving south. Consequently, he was all but anathema to the rabbis of the Magnolia State from the moment he crossed their state border. He was also disliked by most non-southern Jews throughout the country who were familiar with his name and crusade. Within a

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few decades after 1881, when the first of the approximately three million eastern European Jews of the “new immigration” began arriving in this country, in many respects the words “American Jews” had become synonymous with the words “political liberalism.”<sup>2</sup> As Hasia Diner points out, Jews were conspicuous among the supporters of left-wing causes in the United States throughout the twentieth century. Many had, in fact, supported Socialist and Communist organizations. By mid-century, although large numbers of American Jews had transitioned to suburbia, they retained their liberal *weltanschauung*, voting for Democratic candidates and sending donations to the American Civil Liberties Union and other left-wing causes. This held particularly true of Jews who affiliated with the Reform and Conservative movements, as is reflected in the stands taken by their rabbinic and lay leadership.<sup>3</sup> In the 1950s both groups issued pronouncements in support of labor, the protection of civil liberties, and the need to do away with racism, especially in the American South.<sup>4</sup>

However, a small cadre of Jews had grown disaffected with the liberal ethos. One indication of this came in November 1955 when William F. Buckley, Jr., published the premier volume of the *National Review*. Jewish names comprised five of the thirty-one of those on the masthead. According to George H. Nash, “Each was a personal friend of Buckley’s, and each contributed substantially to the insurgent journal in the years ahead.”<sup>5</sup>

One aspect of political conservatism is the suspicion of government and the assertion that society is best served when government interferes as little as possible, except for when it is protecting its citizens from crime and immorality. Unfettered capitalism is the gold standard, bringing prosperity to all who are industrious. Though these values were central to political conservatism up to the end of World War II, the cold war added a new concern which, according to Murray N. Rothbard, proved to be a “betrayal of the American Right,” namely a diversion from domestic to foreign affairs and the dependence on the federal government as our tool in destroying the international Communist conspiracy.

“The guts of the New Conservatism,” Rothbard wrote, “was the mobilization of Big Government for the worldwide crusade against Communism.” From Rothbard’s perspective, it was Buckley and his journal that were at the very heart of the “betrayal.”

[Interest] in individual liberty was minimal or negative. . . . Interest in free-market economics was minimal and largely rhetorical. . . . we should now ask whether or not a major objective of *National Review* from its inception was to transform the right wing from an isolationist to global warmongering anti-Communist movement; and, particularly, whether or not the entire effort was in essence a CIA operation. We now know that Bill Buckley, for the two years prior to establishing *National Review*, was admittedly a CIA agent in Mexico City, and that the sinister E. Howard Hunt was his control. His sister Priscilla, who became managing editor of *National Review*, was also in the CIA. . . . Frank Meyer, to whom he was close at the time, was convinced that the magazine was a CIA operation.<sup>6</sup>

Whether or not one chooses to accept Rothbard’s analysis, unquestionably the desire to destroy the Communist world conspiracy motivated many of the twentieth century “godfathers” of Jewish political conservatism. Eugene Lyons, a graduate of the Young People’s Socialist League, who in his youth had joined with enthusiasm in singing “The People’s Flag is Deepest Red” and later was the editor of the apologetic *Soviet Russia Pictorial*, lost his utopian illusions when he served as a United Press correspondent in Moscow from 1928 to 1934. His autobiographical *Assignment in Utopia*, published in 1937, became one of the most powerful anti-Communist works of the century. Willi Schlamm’s odyssey took him from being editor-in-chief of the Austrian Communist Party’s periodical in the twenties to editing an anti-Stalinist newspaper in the late thirties. The transformation of other Jewish conservatives was similar, caused by a deep disillusionment with Stalin particularly as a result of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, the revelations about the slave labor camps in Siberia, the Slansky trial, execution of prominent Jewish Communists in Czechoslovakia, and the purge of Jewish doctors in Russia following Stalin’s death, all of which happened prior to the creation of *National Review*. Also, *Assignment in Utopia* proved a powerful

weapon when read by those beginning to doubt the Marxist utopian vision.

Eugene Lyons's autobiography was only his first step in the fight against the perverted utopian dream. His next book, *The Red Decade: The Stalinist Penetration of America* (1941), turned the spotlight on Communist influence in the United States and thereby brought the battle to a much closer arena. He and others prepared the soil for the hysteria of the late forties and early fifties, and for a certain senator from Wisconsin.<sup>7</sup>

*Rabbi Benjamin Schultz.*  
(*Clarksdale Press Register*, October 8–9, 1977.)



*Early Years*

Benjamin Schultz, arguably for Jews, the most disliked American rabbi of the mid-twentieth century, was born on March 12, 1906, the son of Joseph and Rose Minskey Schultz, both recent immigrants from the pogroms in Poland. The eldest of six children, four boys and two girls, Schultz grew up in Rochester, New York. His father was a tailor and manufacturer of women's coats who had limited success even before he was stricken with cancer in 1933 when his eldest child was twenty-seven years old. An invalid until his death in 1949, Joseph relinquished his role as breadwinner and decision-maker to his first-born, while the younger siblings went about shaping their lives and careers.

Possibly because of his additional burdens, Schultz's years at the University of Rochester were undistinguished. Having flunked math twice, his degree was not granted until after he had made up the deficiencies; thus he failed to graduate with his class. Math, however, was not essential to the path Schultz was to pursue. His mother's father, grandfather, and one of her uncles were all rabbis. Ben's youngest brother told *New York Post* reporter Fern Marja, "It was a tradition in our family that the first-born son would be a rabbi and when Ben decided to become one, my mother was understandably very proud. Ben was her whole life -- and still is."<sup>8</sup> As Schultz later told it, since his mother said to him when he was a toddler, "You grow up and be a great rabbi," his career path was decided when he was a tender four years old.<sup>9</sup>

Thus in 1926, upon completion of his B.A., he enrolled in Rabbi Stephen S. Wise's seminary in New York, the Jewish Institute of Religion. According to some of his fellow seminarians interviewed over a quarter of a century later, the young Schultz was "consistently egotistical, insistently oracular. Even at twenty he exulted in the sound of his own voice and could not resist any opportunity to indulge in oratory." The faculty as a whole regarded him as "mentally nimble, if a little lackadaisical." In their eyes he seemed "destined to a life of mediocrity."<sup>10</sup>

Nonetheless, as was the custom, while Schultz was still a student Wise recommended him to a small group in Englewood, New Jersey, about to launch a Conservative synagogue, which he

apparently served in a competent fashion. The following year Schultz served as a student-rabbi at Temple Emanuel in Kingston, New York. Ordained in 1931, the young rabbi went to congregation Ahavath Sholom in Brooklyn to function as its interim spiritual leader and director of education. Five years out of the seminary, with two significant congregational experiences under his belt, Schultz accepted the call to another Temple Emanu-El, this one in Yonkers, New York.<sup>11</sup>

On the surface things seemed to be going well for Schultz; the vast majority of the congregation considered their rabbi to be very good, though "rather aloof." One congregant told Marja, "A group of us started going to Friday night services and began to like them, because Schultz gave short, concise, topical, and interesting sermons. We all had a great deal of respect for him then." Such was not the case, however, with the synagogue's leadership. By 1942, according to past-president Charles Schnall, "the members of the Board of Trustees were generally dissatisfied with Rabbi Schultz. . . . We wanted him to show more interest in the individuals of the congregation. . . . [We] felt that he didn't take sufficient interest in his parish duties, *such as visiting the sick and concentrating on the Sunday School.*" When their rabbi showed no inclination to change his ways the board scheduled a special congregational meeting for the purpose of ousting him, but Schultz undercut the leaders by phoning and visiting many of his supporters in order to "rally the troops." Schnall was of course disappointed: "They had never worked closely with him. . . . [They] were impressed with the little they had seen of him. We were out-voted and Schultz remained."<sup>12</sup> Five years later he was still with this Reform congregation with no obvious sign of problems. That is, until his three articles came out in the *New York World Telegram* on October 14, 15, and 16, 1947.<sup>13</sup>

#### *The Articles of Separation*

Caught unawares, the members of Schultz's board of trustees opened their newspapers and found a series dramatically titled "Commies Invade the Churches," with the explanation: "Communists have a foothold in our churches. Many key Protestant and

Jewish leaders are their dupes or willing pawns. Catholic-born labor leaders and glamorized celebrities use their 'faith' to lure Catholics into helping Communism."<sup>14</sup> The October 14 column focuses on the Protestant churches, claiming that "17 Methodist bishops and 4000 ministers and lay people" are in a Communist-front organization. It proceeds to name Dr. Harry F. Ward, the distinguished professor emeritus from Union Theological Seminary, and other well-known Protestant clerics as being "pro-Russia."

On October 15 the author informed the reader that "Red Crocodile Tears Ensnare Some Rabbis." In this article Schultz asserted that Professor Abraham Cronbach, one of the most esteemed faculty members of the Hebrew Union College, supported Communist-front groups. Then Schultz turned his weapons on his own teacher, one of the great rabbis of the twentieth century. He stated that Stephen S. Wise was soft on Communism and "in a sermon called for giving Russia the atom bomb know-how." Wise, Schultz concluded, says that he "sincerely believes that liberals and Communists can work together against Fascism, as certain Protestant bishops and ministers also believe. Thus believing, they lend their names to sinister groups."

Having dealt with the Protestants and Jews, the October 16 column is titled, "Reds Use Prominent Catholics as Bait to Lure Masses." As in his first two articles, Schultz attacked key Catholic leaders with similar accusations. Schultz ends the series with the ominous warning: "A minority took over Russia and Germany. A minority could paralyze America—and are working now toward that eventuality. . . . Let's root the Russia-first network out of all faiths."

This was not a new passion for the Yonkers rabbi. Since his parents were refugees from eastern Europe it seems reasonable to infer that he grew up in a family concerned with the treatment of Jews behind the Iron Curtain. Indeed, his youngest brother told the *New York Post*: "There was no one thing that led to Ben's anti-communism. It was a general atmosphere of our home, a gradual build-up. There was a hatred of Czarist persecution—my parents had been born in Russia. Perhaps as an indication of what our

politics were . . . the Jewish Daily Forward was always in the house, along with The Nation and the New Leader. I can remember that we were always a liberal, anti-Communist family."<sup>15</sup>

"A Weekly Digest of the Yiddish Press," a regular column he wrote in the forties for the *Jewish Post*, reflects this interest. In a reminiscence penned in 1971, Morrie Ryskind recalls "an article Rabbi Schultz wrote while still at Yonkers about the Bolsheviki's calculated antisemitism which stated, 'The 150,000 Jews who escaped into Russia from Nazi-occupied Poland were sent to heavy labor camps in Siberia. One-third died within six years.'"<sup>16</sup>

On another occasion Schultz quotes an article from the *Jerusalem Journal* written by S. Isaacs:

Zionists, stop flirting with Russia! . . . Thousands of Arabs are joining the Communists. Russians are playing up to them; and saying 'that Zionism is supported by the Jewish capitalists.' And a Forward reader conjures up the picture of Stalin, from a conquered Iran, breaking through to Palestine. 'There would be nothing left of Eretz Israel. Stalin has ruined and plundered every land he ever entered.' Also, true Zionists would be shot or sent to Siberia.<sup>17</sup>

The chastisement of American Jews was not limited to those who were Zionists. More and more Schultz' columns attacked Jewish agencies and Jewish leaders for what he viewed as "the inroads made by communism in their ranks." In two of these articles the Yonkers rabbi quotes the Yiddish-language *Jewish Daily Forward* when it calls Rabbi Stephen S. Wise the "Chief Rabbi of our Communists," and when it criticizes Wise for being on the same lecture platform with Soviet journalist Ilya Ehrenburg.<sup>18</sup> After Schultz cited a number of such attacks, Rabbi Wise responded to him on April 8, 1947, saying "I want you to know of my disgust for your column "Uptown and Downtown." . . . I find it my duty to say to you that I am throughly [*sic*] ashamed . . . that you are an alumnus of the Jewish Institute of Religion." Schultz replied: "I'm sorry you are displeased but I shall continue my discussion of attempted communist domination of the American Jewish Congress . . . of which you are unhappily the president at the moment."<sup>19</sup>

*Abraham Cronbach (left) and Stephen S. Wise,  
two prominent and esteemed targets of Rabbi Benjamin Schultz.  
(Courtesy of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives,)*

Schultz had thus dealt with the topic in his weekly *Jewish Post* columns,<sup>20</sup> but these had a very limited readership; never had he so blatantly made the accusations that he did in the October articles, and never had he placed his ideas on so large a stage. Even though his Emanu-El congregants had changed the rabbi's contract from a one-year to a two-year extension on the occasion of his tenth anniversary, they were as shocked by the *World-Telegram* articles as were the congregation's leaders, who had been trying to get rid of Schultz for half a decade.<sup>21</sup>

Almost immediately, a congregational meeting was called to "discuss the rabbi's case." The anger was so intense that he surely would have been dismissed had not interventions changed the final outcome. In the first and most important intervention Hearst-syndicated columnist George Ephraim Sokolsky, himself a Jew, came to the meeting and threatened to devote a column to the matter in which he would charge the Emanu-El leadership with being soft on Communism. In the second intervention, S. Andhil (Sol) Fineberg, community relations consultant for the national office of the American Jewish Committee, suggested that it would

be wiser, especially in the light of continued negative publicity, if the congregation simply allow Schultz to remain until his contract ended a few months later. The board grudgingly accepted Fineberg's advice, but to show their displeasure, they (and most other congregants) stayed away from Friday night services. "He came and preached," Fineberg wrote, but "nobody came, the temple was practically empty."<sup>22</sup>

Emanu-El congregants were not the only ones upset with Schultz's public attacks. As reported in the *New York Times*:

The New York Board of Rabbis in a resolution adopted yesterday, condemned Rabbi Benjamin Schultz . . . for three articles he wrote for the *New York World-Telegram*. . . . The resolution declared that Rabbi Schultz . . . "has used the smear technique of the scandalmonger, a technique entirely inappropriate for a rabbi." . . . The board suggested that Rabbi Schultz should make a public apology "to those whom he has wronged."<sup>23</sup>

Thus began a three-decades-long period in which all but a few of his rabbinic colleagues treated Schultz as a pariah.

### *The Birth of a Crusader*

Schultz, however, was not without friends. Some of these—Jewish, influential, and of like mind—decided to create an organization whose principal goal would be "ferreting out all Communist activity in Jewish life wherever it may be," and to make it clear that the word "Jew" was not perceived to be synonymous with the word "Communist."<sup>24</sup> Among the founders of this organization, named the American Jewish League Against Communism (AJLAC), were George Ephraim Sokolsky, Eugene Lyons, Alfred Kohlberg, Lawrence Fertig, Benjamin Gitlow, Maurice Tishman, Harry Pasternak, and Schultz. In addition to being a syndicated columnist, Sokolsky worked as a radio commentator. Journalist and author Lyons, having rejected his early left-wing associations, became at various times an editor of the *Reader's Digest*, *American Mercury*, and the *National Review*. He hosted the organizing meeting in his Manhattan home. Kohlberg, a wealthy textile merchant, headed the so-called "China Lobby," a group that supported Chiang Kai-shek, president of the Taiwan-based,

Republic of China.<sup>25</sup> Fertig also wrote a syndicated column. Gitlow was an ex-Communist turned right-wing author and politician. Tishman was a diamond merchant. Pasternak, a real estate man, owned a seat on the New York Stock Exchange.

A few months later Roy Cohn, another man of influence, joined the league's board of directors. Admitted to the bar at age twenty-one, Cohn went on to become a Manhattan-based federal prosecutor, who was known for his zealous prosecution of accused American Communists, including Alger Hiss and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. In the early fifties he gained notoriety as chief counsel for the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations headed by Joseph R. McCarthy. Schultz gladly accepted the offer to become the executive director of this fledgling organization.<sup>26</sup> "My pulpit," he announced after he took the position, "is 220 W. 42d Street in New York and my congregation is America."<sup>27</sup>

The new executive director moved enthusiastically into his ideal job as reflected in the fact that his name began to appear frequently in newspapers around the country. Readers learned that in May he flew to Los Angeles "to organize anti-Communist forces among Southern California Jews," and there he announced that Russia had jailed "2,000,000 Jews behind her 'iron curtain' because of their religion." Schultz returned from the West Coast in time to testify before the Control of Subversive Activities Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee of the United States Senate. The focus was on what was popularly called the Mundt-Nixon Bill, a comprehensive attack on Communists and suspected Communists in the United States. Within its seventeen sections it declared that the Communist world conspiracy was "a clear and present danger to the security of the United States." The bill therefore would levy a fine up to ten thousand dollars and imprisonment for up to ten years as penalty "for any person to [*sic*] participate in any movement to establish a foreign-controlled totalitarian dictatorship in the United States." If confirmed by the Senate, as it had been by a six-to-one majority in the House, it would result in the loss of citizenship and passport for anyone convicted of this crime and would make it illegal for him/her to be employed by the federal

government. It would require that every Communist organization and every "Communist-front" organization register with the attorney general and submit a complete membership list including names and addresses.<sup>28</sup>

In a written memorandum to the committee, Attorney General Tom C. Clark, who opposed the bill, argued that even if the question of its constitutionality "were removed," elements in the bill would force the Communist Party "underground where surveillance of its activities will become increasingly difficult."<sup>29</sup>

Schultz was given an opportunity to testify before the committee on May 31, 1948, the final day of the hearings. In his testimony he utilized a syllogistic tactic he would repeat often in the coming years: "according to my observation" the average American is for the Mundt bill, and, "since the average Jew is an average American," it stands to reason that most Jews are also in support of it. Asked whether he saw anything constitutionally problematic about the bill, Schultz replied that he saw "no intrusion upon the civil rights or civil liberties of Americans" in it.<sup>30</sup>

In his column published in mid-July Sokolsky noted the establishment of a branch of the AJLAC in Hollywood. About four weeks later, the *New York Times* and newspapers from coast-to-coast carried the news that the Catholic War Veterans had awarded the Red-fighting rabbi their Americanism Medal. In November Sokolsky again plugged Schultz and the AJLAC in his column, writing that the creation of the organization is "something that needed doing long ago."<sup>31</sup>

As 1949 began Schultz appeared before the Brooklyn Board of Education and, to a chorus of boos and hisses, insisted that the board no longer allow the Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order, a subsidiary of the International Workers Order, to use public school classrooms after school hours. A week later the board unanimously "shattered a long-established precedent" and did exactly what Schultz had demanded. He followed this up in March with a campaign aimed at keeping Dmitri Shostakovich and other Russian delegates from attending a "cultural and scientific conference for world peace" to be held in New York at the end of the month.<sup>32</sup>



Although the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) primarily focused on the Alger Hiss trial in the early months of 1949, it also continued to interrogate friendly and not-so-friendly individuals in its campaign to root out Communists. One of the key targets of the committee was the artistically acclaimed black singer, Paul Robeson, who had spent time in Moscow and was reported to have said that if a war should break out between the USSR and the United States, America's Negroes would not take up arms. This embarrassed the more conservative black leadership, which finally approached HUAC Chairman Ed Wood (D-GA), asking to testify before the committee. To provide moral support, Ben Schultz again made his way to the Hill, where he told the committee that the Communists were engaged in a "deliberate conspiracy to inflame religious and racial minorities here against the United States." The next day articles throughout the country carried headlines like this one from the *Dothan [AL] Eagle*: "Rabbi Accuses Paul Robeson of Red Conspiracy." While certain congressmen in Washington worked hard to revive a version of the defunct Mundt-Nixon Bill, Schultz continued his vigorous support: The accusation that these bills are "fascist" or "anti-freedom of speech" is as specious as it is largely insincere. . . . There are no restrictions on speech. There is only an insistence that the public has the right labels. . . . Many of . . . [our youth] are coming under pro-Soviet influences. He then again attacked various academics in high places and finished: "The gap in our Maginot Line is the upper intellectual segment of our population."<sup>33</sup>

Getting bolder as every month passed, in September Schultz sent a telegram to Thomas Dewey in which he demanded on behalf of the AJLAC that the governor "take strong measures to 'wipe out the Communist conspiracy' in New York State." By the end of the year Schultz had become the darling of an ever-expanding number of conservative syndicated columnists, and his name could frequently be found in their columns. One of these, Peter Edson, said that the rabbi has "become one of the country's outstanding authorities on the Red Menace," in the same category as Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen for the Catholics.<sup>34</sup>

*Senator Joseph R. McCarthy (left) with his chief counsel,  
Roy Cohn, c. 1953.*

*(Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Image ID-8004.)*

During August 1950, Schultz's name became even more a household word when, just before the new television season began, he and the league demanded that the "Aldrich Family" television show drop one of its three stars, Jean Muir, who played Henry Aldrich's mother. The accusation was that her name appeared in 1949 on the letterhead of an alleged Communist-front group called the Congress of American Women. The information, as usual, came from J. B. Matthews via a small booklet called *Red Channels* that focused on "communists and fellow-travelers" in the entertainment industry. In response to Schultz's pressure, General Foods Corporation, the show's sponsor, quickly had Muir dropped from the cast. The matter became a cause célèbre, widely reported in the press, with Schultz's name in almost every article. *Time* magazine reflected the feelings of many when it wrote:

All it took was a handful of telegrams and 20 telephone calls to kick Actress Jean Muir off the air as a "controversial personality". . . . Last week, crowing over their victory against Actress Muir, a little group organized themselves as a special committee to keep the air waves pure. The committee members were old hands at the game. Among them: Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, head of the newly formed Joint Committee Against Communism.<sup>35</sup>

On the day after Muir was let go Schultz assured the press that this was but the first step in a process meant to "cleanse the radio field of pro-Communist actors, writers, producers and commentators." At least partly as a result of Muir's treatment by Schultz and the show's sponsor, her life spiraled into a period of depression and alcoholism that lasted through the decade. For Schultz and his supporters, this was not a big price to pay to save America from the Red Menace.<sup>36</sup>

Continuing celebrity caused Schultz's name to appear in unlikely places; for example, in Ed Sullivan's syndicated column, "Little Old New York." Just prior to writing that Joe DiMaggio looks thinner and Ralph Kiner is dating a tennis star, Sullivan wrote: "Hard-hitting anti-Commie leader Rabbi Benjamin Schultz [is] demanding [New York] Mayor [Vincent] Impellitteri probe 'extensive pro-Red influence in the New York Public Library.' He charges one librarian sponsors Commie fronts and just wrote a

foreword to a new Commie-line book."<sup>37</sup> Dr. Joshua Bloch, director of the Jewish Division of the library, was the person being charged.

Having attacked Muir and having made demands on Dewey and Impellitteri, Schultz now turned his attention to two American icons, Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and Secretary of Defense General George Marshall. Many reacted with astonishment when the papers published in late January 1951 contained the accusation that Nimitz had a "bad record on tolerance of pro Communists" and that Marshall had been used as a "fall guy" in a "military plot." "When Nimitz was Chief of Staff," Schultz told delegates to the Women's Patriotic Conference on National Defense, "Army orientation courses largely followed the Communist party line."<sup>38</sup>

Jewish groups rushed to reject what they saw as outrageous accusations. A statement signed by representatives of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish Labor Committee, the National [Jewish] Community Relations Advisory Council, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and the Jewish War Veterans was crystal clear:

The undersigned Jewish organizations, representing through their affiliates the overwhelming majority of the organized Jewish community of the United States, regard as infamous the attack by Rabbi Benjamin Schultz . . . on the patriotism and moral character of two great Americans, Secretary of Defense Marshall and Admiral Nimitz. . . . Such irresponsible attacks impair the fight against Communism by creating confusion and distrust at home and by undermining overseas the high confidence earned by Nimitz and Marshall. . . . These tactics are particularly reprehensible at a time when the preservation of American democracy requires the highest regard for civil rights and liberties as fully as it needs opposition to Communism. Rabbi Schultz in no way represents any section of the American Jewish community and the major Jewish organizations repudiate and condemn his repeated resort to vilification and slander of reputable Americans on the pretext of combating Communism.<sup>39</sup>

Noting the response from the Jewish community, Westbrook Pegler devoted an entire column to Schultz, titled in some newspapers "Let Me Introduce Rabbi Benjamin Schultz." Pegler began, "I think you would like to become acquainted with Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, of New York, the director of the American Jewish League Against Communism, who has suffered much for his opposition to the creeping treason which became systemic in our government under Franklin D. Roosevelt." Pegler concludes, "Rabbi Schultz works under handicaps. Even some of his own people who exalt the name of Roosevelt, suspect him of 'Fascism.' Yet he cries out against 'misleaders of my people.' . . . He is on the right side." Alfred Kohlberg also came to Schultz's defense, circulating a high-quality six-page pamphlet claiming that the attack on him was "ludicrous" and that it was but one of "a series of incidents of distorted and untruthful statements" about him. This controversy also marked a significant turning point for the AJLAC. According to Marja, after this "the ranks of his National Board dwindled" and "the rabbi had to turn more and more to the American Legion and the Minute Women of America" for comfort.<sup>40</sup>

The next major Schultz controversy came in mid-November, when as a guest of a meeting of the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs, Schultz suggested censorship of school textbooks, claiming that many of these books were written in such a manner that "the United States is presented to our children in language and ideas which weaken their love of country, and that Soviet Russia is often extolled." In support, the New York County American Legion in convention presented Schultz with its annual Americanism Award before two thousand delegates in attendance.<sup>41</sup>

### *The McCarthy Era: From Censor to Censure to Closure*

Three and a half years after the formation of the AJLAC, and two and a half years after his famous Wheeling, West Virginia, speech, Joseph Raymond McCarthy had become the most important figure on the American anti-Communist scene. As yet, however, Schultz seems to have had little connection to the

Republican senator from Wisconsin. That connection was publicly established on October 13 when Schultz said of McCarthy, "If it were not for him, we would now be talking about Amerasia . . . and aid to China." However, it was still too early for Schultz to hitch his wagon to this middle-American star. When asked about his connection with the senator, he replied that although he approved of McCarthy bringing the Communist threat to the notice of the American people and was "strongly in favor of the Wisconsin senator . . . I am not in politics."

He may not have been in politics in 1952, but he was unquestionably moving in that direction.<sup>42</sup> Even before Schultz became part of McCarthy's entourage, he played a key role in shaping the senator's anti-Communist inner circle. According to McCarthy biographer Fred J. Cook, Schultz came across a six-page pamphlet, *Definition of Communism*, written by G. David Schine, which had been placed in every room of the Schine family's hotels, including the Ambassador in Los Angeles and the Ritz-Carlton in Atlantic City. Cook indicates that journalist Richard Rovere described the pamphlet as follows:

It puts the Russian Revolution, the founding of the Communist Party, and the start of the First Five Year Plan in years when these things did not happen. It gives Lenin the wrong first name. It confuses Stalin with Trotsky. It confuses Marx with Lenin.

Cook wrote that Schultz was "so dazzled by its depth of understanding" that he introduced Schine to Sokolsky, who introduced him to Roy Cohn, who in turn introduced him to McCarthy. On July 30, 1953, the AJLAC hosted a luncheon in New York's Hotel Astor at which Schultz presented a plaque to the twenty-five-year-old Schine, who was now "chief consultant" to McCarthy's Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. The plaque cited Schine for his "outstanding patriotism and loyalty to American and Jewish anti-communist principles."<sup>43</sup>

By now Schultz's name frequently could be seen connected to McCarthy's. Thus Lee Mortimer wrote in one of the August editions of "New York Confidential," his syndicated column, "Rabbi Benjamin Schultz . . . tips me off that Joe McCarthy will let go a new H-bomb on September 14. . . . Bigger than anything he's yet

exposed, which is plenty big." McCarthy's "H-bomb" appears to be his declaration that Communists had infiltrated the United Nations, which had become "'a perfect set-up' for information trading among American Reds and U.N. delegates from Communist countries." He also identified Joel Remes, an American employee of the Polish delegation, as "a high official of the Communist Party."<sup>44</sup>

In November 1953 the Army drafted Schine. Thus began a saga that would lead to McCarthy's downfall, but not until an amazing spectacle played out before the American people. When Cohn learned of Schine's draft status, he initiated a campaign to get special privileges for his friend. He apparently tried to get Schine a commission and an assignment to McCarthy's committee to fulfill his military commitment. When that did not work he made calls to numerous individuals, from Schine's company commander up to Secretary of the Army Robert Stevens, demanding that Schine be given light duties, extra leave time, and that he not be sent overseas to Korea. At one point he even threatened to "wreck the Army" if his demands were not met. When the Army rejected Cohn's efforts, McCarthy countered that its response was nothing more than retaliation because of his subcommittee's investigations into Communists in the Army.<sup>45</sup>

Stevens did not take this abuse passively. At the Army's request, hearings began on March 16, 1954, under the auspices of a newly-appointed subcommittee chaired by Senator Karl Mundt (R-SD) created to investigate the opposing accusations made by McCarthy and the Army. These televised hearings did not conclude until June 17, 1954, and are generally believed to have marked the beginning of the end for McCarthy and McCarthyism.

During the beginning of the Schine brouhaha, Schultz created new ways to get his name into the tabloids. On November 2 he spoke to the Charleston, West Virginia, branch of the Minute Women of the U.S.A., where he made public a letter from Eleanor Roosevelt in which she defended alleged Communist Alger Hiss.<sup>46</sup> For those looking for excitement Schultz did not disappoint. Not only did he attack Mrs. Roosevelt, he also tore into one of America's most respected rabbis, Abba Hillel Silver, lumping him with

“editorial writers on publications like the *Saturday Review of Literature*.” “Their opinions,” said Schultz, “widely reported in so-called cultural circles from coast to coast, serve to make our citizens feel constricted in opposing the evil of international Communism. This plays into Communist hands.”<sup>47</sup>

Little more than a week later in a speech to veterans in Bedford Hills, New York, Schultz aimed his sights even higher. Reporting on this talk, the *New York Times* announced, “Decries Honor to Truman: Rabbi Schultz Says Jewish Unit Should Have Canceled Award.” The American Jewish Congress was wrong, Schultz told his audience, to present an award to former President Harry S. Truman knowing he had become “the center of a dispute involving protection of a Soviet spy.”<sup>48</sup>

By June 1954, as the Army-McCarthy hearings moved toward closure, Cohn’s image had badly deteriorated. Since McCarthy, too, was not doing well, it was deemed necessary for Cohn to relieve some of the pressure by resigning his position as chief counsel for McCarthy’s subcommittee. Schultz was so upset by this development that he planned a series of testimonial dinners for Cohn to take place in various locations on the East Coast. *Time* magazine described the first of these dinners, held on July 29 in Manhattan, as “One Enchanted Evening.”

Dancers swung and swayed with Sammy Kaye on the Astor [hotel] roof and short-sleeved crowds jostled up and down Times Square . . . last week as 2,000 men and women filed . . . into the Astor’s grand ballroom to pay homage to Roy Cohn. . . . New York had probably not seen such a display of sentiment since Lou Gehrig said farewell at Yankee Stadium. Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, toastmaster and prime organizer of the \$7-a-plate dinner, gave Cohn the first plaque.

The plaque was awarded to Cohn “in recognition of his battle for his God and country, which has inspired America.” After presenting the plaque Schultz assured the gathering that “The plain people [of America] know that the loss of Cohn is like the loss of a dozen battleships.” The presentations and speeches continued past midnight and included talks by Sokolsky, Fulton Lewis, Jr., and Teddy Roosevelt’s son, Archibald. But “the loudest ovation of



*Schultz was the prime organizer and toastmaster of the "Enchanted Evening" honoring Roy Cohn. "New York had probably not seen such a display of sentiment since Lou Gehrig said farewell at Yankee Stadium."  
(Time, August 9, 1954.)*

all came when Rabbi Schultz introduced 'My Hero,' Joe McCarthy himself."<sup>49</sup>

Although remaining Schultz's "hero," McCarthy had lost most of his support in Congress and much of his popularity with "the little people" who had watched his performance on television. One of the most dramatic moments during the hearings came on June 9, when the Army's lead counsel, Joseph Welch, responded to a McCarthy attack with the words "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?" Two days later Senator Ralph E. Flanders (R-VT) introduced a Senate resolution to censure the junior senator from Wisconsin. Even though McCarthy cavalierly dismissed the idea of censure, his colleagues did not. In response to Flanders' request an ad hoc committee was appointed to consider the merit of the resolution, and this committee brought back a recommendation to act in the affirmative. It was decided that the debate on censure would begin in the Senate November 8, 1954, a few days after the fall elections.

As could be expected, these developments appalled Schultz. In response he again made front-page news by calling for Americans to make their way to Washington on November 11, to participate in a huge rally on McCarthy's behalf. A *Fresno* [CA] *Bee* article said it all with the title "Rabbi Plans Big March to Plead for McCarthy." In the last week of October, the International News Service distributed a picture of a smiling Rabbi Benjamin Schultz holding a stack of papers in his hands, with the accompanying caption saying that he was being "swamped by telegrams from some 15,000 persons anxious to join his proposed rally in Washington on behalf of Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy." The day of the rally those fifteen thousand shrunk to approximately three thousand hard-core McCarthyites, who were treated to the touching moment when Schultz presented the senator with a plaque praising him for "fearless persistence in battling the enemies of our country."<sup>50</sup>

Inside the chambers of Congress, however, Schultz's words of praise fell on deaf ears. The debate on censure continued, concluding finally on December 2, with a condemnation of McCarthy

that carried by a three-to-one margin. Although his supporters might not wish to see it, the glory days of McCarthyistic intimidation were gone. During the Eighty-fourth Congress the disgraced senator was “conspicuously ignored” whenever he got up to speak; even the press chose the same tactic. The word “McCarthyism” became a pejorative adjective, symbolic of demagoguery. In both physical and emotional decline, beset by alcoholism, the once-mighty senator died less than three years later at the age of forty-eight.<sup>51</sup>

*The American Jewish League Against Communism*

The new mood following the Army-McCarthy hearings and the censure debate proved inhospitable to the AJLAC and its executive director. Reflecting this change, Peter Edson, who had praised Schultz as “one of the country’s outstanding authorities on the Red menace,” turned much less enthusiastic. In a mid-November column titled “Professional Anti-Red Promoted McCarthy Rally,” he quotes Schultz: “The leaders of the McCarthy censure movement are dominated by elements that favor the admission of Red China to the United Nations. They are out to ‘get’ every anti-Communist in the United States.” Edson then moved in for the kill: “The Rabbi emphasizes the ‘they’ . . . But when questioned about who ‘they’ are, he refuses to name names.” Edson concluded by sarcastically telling his readers that Schultz defined a “pro-Communist” as “any anti-anti-Communist.”<sup>52</sup>

Like McCarthy, after December 2 Schultz and the AJLAC all but disappeared from the pages of America’s newspapers. In late April 1955, the faithful gathered at New York’s Henry Hudson Hotel for one last hurrah, a testimonial dinner for the man who had organized many such dinners not so long before. Reportedly seven hundred attended including, one can surmise, Cohn, Schine, Sokolsky, Kohlberg, and Lyons. At the appropriate moment the main speaker, Senator McCarthy, took the microphone and began:

Ladies and Gentlemen: Our meeting tonight is long overdue. The gallant warrior we are honoring has been covering himself with glory for so many years, it’s a wonder we have never

stopped, until now, to say thanks. That's the trouble, Ben, with being a solid, unwavering bastion of strength . . . people tend to take you for granted. . . . How, for example, would the anti-Communist fight have fared over the past decade without Rabbi Schultz? And how should we bear the loss if ever he were to leave his post? . . . What is it that can make a man indispensable . . . ? Is it the possession of keen insights . . . ? Or is it practical shrewdness in the day-to-day battles? Is it an ability to joust with the dialecticians at the intellectual level? Or is it stubbornness and grit at the street level? Is it unflinching courage? Is it single-mindedness of purpose—an unswerving determination to defeat the enemy absolutely?

Each of these qualities is a scarce commodity. . . . But when you find them all in one individual, you have found a rare man indeed. . . . The good Lord put in all the ingredients when he made Ben Schultz.

After praising him as one of the founders of the AJLAC, the speaker continued:

Ben Schultz, ably seconded by . . . other leaders who share his religious beliefs, has managed to expose the malicious myth that persons of the Jewish faith and Communists have something in common. . . . The very existence of this hard-hitting anti-Communist group gives the lie to a vitally important item of Communist propaganda. . . . I frankly doubt that there is a single organization in this country that the Communists are more anxious to destroy . . . Ben Schultz and his indomitable crew of heroes will not be beaten down by anybody. . . . It's a personal honor to me, Ben, to be able to join in paying tribute to you. . . . You have served your country well. Thank you, Good luck and God-speed.

When the applause subsided, the speaker returned to his seat. The next day papers throughout the land carried headlines similar to that in the *New York Times*: "Rabbi Schultz Honored: McCarthy Praises Him for His Fight against Communism."<sup>53</sup> It almost sounded like Schultz was being put out to pasture, but it was not so. He was to hang around five more years, trying in each of them to justify his position and the existence of the AJLAC, a difficult task at best. It wasn't easy.

An omen of what was to come appeared in Edson's November 1954 column, when he wrote regarding Schultz, "he has no synagogue and he says his present pay is lower than what most rabbis get." Around the same time Sokolsky wrote a column that one paper titled "Anti-Marxism on a Pittance" in which he explained, "The Jewish League Against Communism has to pass the hat to pay its rent, and its one employee, Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, is often never paid at all." Schultz corroborated this in the winter 1957-1958 edition of *Jews Against Communism*, the official newsletter of the AJLAC, where he wrote "Our League is always dying for lack of support; it always survives because it is doing the work of God." Again in 1959 he reported, "Our organization operates on an admittedly meager budget, and we are in danger this year of not raising even that. . . . [Help] is necessary."<sup>54</sup>

*S. Andhil Fineberg*

Rabbi Sol Fineberg, a Marine Corps veteran and National Chaplain for the Jewish War Veterans, met Schultz when both served synagogues in the Yonkers area. Three years after Schultz accepted the Yonkers position, Fineberg made a career change and became the national community relations director of the American Jewish Committee, a position he held until 1964. An avowed "cold war liberal," anti-Communist to the core, he typified many of the AJC professionals. In this regard he was on the same page as Schultz, seeing "New Deal liberals" (like those in the leadership of the American Jewish Congress) as naïve and ineffectual in combating the Communist menace. Yet he was a fan neither of the AJLAC nor McCarthyism, believing their goals admirable but their methods seriously flawed.<sup>55</sup>

Despite their different approaches, Schultz always perceived Fineberg to be an ally and friend. In an unpublished 1974 interview, Fineberg recalled:

Schultz constantly . . . had to prove that there was a need to have such an organization. Then one day . . . Eugene Lyons, who was then one of the senior editors of *Readers Digest*, rode back on the train with me from New Bedford. . . . We two had been the speakers that evening. . . . Lyons was a board member of the

American Jewish League Against Communism and a very active one. He told me that they were running out of funds. Their backers were losing interest, and they just didn't know what to do with Rabbi Schultz. . . . [They] did not feel that the organization was worth continuing and now they had this rabbi and didn't know what to do with him. A few days later I received a phone call from Schultz. He said nothing about the difficulties of the League or anything of that sort, but he told me how desperately he wanted to get back "to preach the word of God." . . . He didn't know where to turn to find a pulpit that might accept him. . . . He called me back several weeks later. He had found a small pulpit in the South.<sup>56</sup>

Elsewhere Fineberg wrote that Schultz had asked him to be a reference for any potential position, and that he had consented to do so. In the years following Schultz repeatedly told reporters and others that the reason he left New York and came to Brunswick, Georgia, was so that he could "preach the word of God."<sup>57</sup>

*S. Anhil Fineberg.  
(Courtesy of the American  
Jewish Committee.)*

*HAIR, the Musical*

Before moving with Schultz to the South, it is difficult to ignore one last New York memory. In October 1967, long after Schultz's fifteen minutes of fame had ended, *HAIR*, a rock musical written by Gerome Ragni and James Rado, opened in the off-Broadway Public Theater of Joseph Papp. A year later it made the big leap to Broadway, and found a home there. Written in the mid-1960s, it was totally counter-culture, criticizing and satirizing racism, war (especially the one waging in Vietnam), sexual repression, and institutionalized religion. One of the absurdities it pointed out was that the military draft is "white people sending black people to make war on the yellow people to defend the land they stole from the red people."

In the original Broadway script in a scene toward the end of act 1, Berger, the Tribe's leader, hands out hallucinogenic pills to the kids in the Tribe. As he does so he recites "One pill for . . ." and lists a famous person's name. The Tribe member who receives that pill gives some sort of response, e.g., when Berger says "One pill for James Brown," the Tribe member sings a few bars of "I Feel Good." Pills are given in the name of Richard M. Nixon, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Pope—and Rabbi Benjamin Schultz. The one who accepted the latter pill sang a few bars of "Hava Nagila."

Why Schultz? James Rado (né Radomski) believes the idea originated with Ragni. Possibly Ragni had such an antipathy to McCarthyism that the rabbi from Yonkers remained fresh in his mind years after Schultz had disappeared from the scene. Within a short time Schultz also disappeared from the script, replaced by a more contemporary adversary. But, for a brief moment in time, the man who from his youth had wanted to be a rabbi had his name on Broadway.<sup>58</sup>

*"Swanee! How I Love You" – The Brunswick Interlude*

When Schultz arrived to Brunswick in late summer, 1960, the community included a total of 170 Jews, approximately fifty Jewish families. Such small Jewish communities experienced great difficulty attracting rabbis. Dr. Alvin Labens, a past president of

the larger Clarksdale, Mississippi, synagogue, told the author “I had an older friend in the congregation . . . who always said, ‘The only thing we get is a rabbi on his way up or a rabbi on his way down.’ In my old age I’m trying to figure out when did we get one on his way up.” The members of Brunswick’s Temple Beth Tefilloh were thus as pleased to have their new rabbi as he was pleased to be there.<sup>59</sup>

Apparently Schultz spent his first year in Brunswick becoming active in the local Rotary and other civic organizations, meeting other clergy, and tending to the needs of his congregants. In addition, he made speeches to local groups, so many that, by the time he left after two years, he claimed to have made nearly two hundred such presentations.<sup>60</sup>

*Temple Beth Tefilloh, Brunswick, Georgia.*  
(Courtesy of Julian H. Preisler, *AmericanSynagogueArchitecture.com*.  
Photograph by Hans J. Preisler, 2007.)



Schultz continued a long-standing tradition of annual summer trips to Europe, done, he often said, so that he could interview ordinary people and people of status in order to gain a sense of political and cultural trends. On June 25, 1961, in a handwritten note to Sol Fineberg, Schultz wrote that he and Lottie were leaving "at dawn tomorrow for a trip to London, Bonn, Amsterdam, Paris, Venice, Rome, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem." He closed the note, "Lottie and I spent the happiest year of our life" during their first year in Brunswick.<sup>61</sup>

The August 18, 1961, edition of *The Brunswick News* included an article, "Rabbi Sees No Shooting War Over Berlin Crisis," that announced Schultz "recently returned from a six-week European tour" and that he discussed his trip at the previous day's Rotary Club meeting. Although the article quoted a part of Schultz's speech, the August 24 edition of *The Rotrygram* gives more insight into the talk; "Rabbi Ben Schultz turned a travelogue into a commentary on the image of America abroad." He told the Rotarians that, in Europe, members of the Communist party were "tolerated and even accepted socially." Then he moved into the theme that he repeated consistently in the months and years ahead: "The South . . . is looked upon with disfavor and is without a defender" in Europe. Another of his favorite themes followed: "There is dry rot at the intellectual core of America which has equated pro-Americanism with evil." The article concluded, "He [Schultz] would have us . . . develop and promote a pro-American attitude. To these concluding words of wisdom, one can only add a hearty 'amen'—as did the Brunswick Rotary Club with a standing ovation." Elsewhere in the same newsletter is the comment: "Ben Schultz's address last week should evoke in all of us the desire to promote actively a sense of national pride. This country has been criticized unjustly too long."<sup>62</sup>

Thus Schultz continued his crusade, only now in a much smaller theater. As could be expected the publicity for his talks almost always carried the same credentials, listing the awards he had received for his patriotism (by the American Legion, the Catholic War Veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars). In addition, the publicity invariably cited his favorable mention in J.

Edgar Hoover's *Masters of Deceit*, which placed him in the same company as Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and financier and presidential advisor Bernard M. Baruch, and mentioned that, in 1955, "he opened the U.S. Senate in prayer." Sometimes the public relations people went a little too far, as in the article in the *Southeast Georgian* that maintained Schultz has "been associated with Bernard Baruch, the Senior Editors of *Readers Digest*, General A. A. Weidrenauer [*sic*], and Senator Barry Goldwater" and that he is "the author of many books on Communism." Rarely did newspapers add that he was the past executive director of the AJLAC, and they never associated him with McCarthy, Cohn, or Schine, facts that Schultz seems to have kept to himself.<sup>63</sup>

On June 28, 1962, after two years in Brunswick, Schultz wrote to his friend Fineberg in New York:

Dear Sol:

As a friend of mine, at great sacrifice to yourself, you have often been of aid. Now, comes one of the "rewards." I have achieved a "promotion"—election as the rabbi of Temple Beth Israel, Clarksdale, Miss., a congregation three times as large as this one, with a magnificent plant, fine school, active workers, ultra-modern parsonage, etc. . . . I start in August.

The July 2 edition of the *Brunswick News* informed the community that Rabbi Schultz had "accepted a call to Temple Beth Israel of Clarksdale" and noted that he had been "in demand here as a speaker on Communism, on Europe where he traveled extensively, and on interfaith relations" and shared Schultz's words of gratitude for the "life-long friends" he and Lottie had made in the community. Interestingly, a few weeks later an article in the *Yonkers [NY] Herald Tribune*, accompanied by Schultz's picture, was headlined: "Anti-Red Leader: Rabbi Schultz Named to Mississippi Temple." The article mentions that he and Lottie were honored at a farewell reception there at which "the rabbi received a gold watch," and that they had "moved into their new Clarksdale home before coming east to begin their Europe trip." Schultz was off to get more data, for there were many more speeches that had yet to be delivered.<sup>64</sup>

*Temple Beth Israel, Clarksdale, Mississippi.*  
*Courtesy of Julian H. Preisler, AmericanSynagogueArchitecture.com.*  
*Photograph by D. Gorton.)*

### *Clarksdale*

Clarksdale is part of the Mississippi Delta, an area that historian James C. Cobb calls “the most southern place on earth.” The Delta begins in Memphis and, following the Mississippi River, snakes down about two hundred miles to Greenwood. It is narrow, no wider than sixty miles, but rich, flat land. This is where the great cotton plantations were to be found, and, according to journalist and author Curtis Wilkie, around the time Schultz arrived in town it was “the country’s last feudal system.”<sup>65</sup>

On the face of it, Clarksdale might seem to have been an island of tranquility during the tumultuous sixties, with hardly a sit-in or demonstration to be seen within its boundaries, even though it was home to Dr. Aaron Henry, an African American pharmacist who served for three decades as state president of the NAACP. The tranquility, however, was a sign of the all but total impotence of the black community rather than their satisfaction. An important part of their problem was police chief Ben Collins, known as “the toughest lawman in the Delta.”<sup>66</sup> On the one occasion when Aaron did organize a local protest, Collins “simply

rejected black demands and packed the jails with demonstrators."<sup>67</sup>

But the main support of the feudal system came from far outside of the Delta; from the Oval Office and congressional chambers in the nation's capital. In the 1930s money began to pour into the pockets of Delta planters as a reward for their reducing their cotton acreage. A clear outcome was a corresponding reduction in the planters' need for labor. Add to this the federal support of agricultural mechanization, and the result was an African American population living in abject poverty, totally dependent on the will of the planters for whatever small income they could manage to bring in. To make matters even worse, the selfsame planters distributed the surplus food commodities sent by Washington to sustain those in need. With the support of men like Delta natives James O. Eastland in the Senate and Jamie Whitten, chair of the powerful House Appropriations Sub-Committee on Agriculture, in a typical year in the 1960s federal farm payments allocated to about one-third of one percent of the population were six times greater than the money expended in food relief for the sixty percent of the people living below the poverty level.<sup>68</sup>

When Schultz arrived in 1962, the Clarksdale synagogue claimed about 120 families, making it the third largest in the state behind Greenwood and Jackson. Although large by Mississippi standards, the congregation was small in comparison with the vast majority in the United States. Past president Dr. Alvin Labens explained, "We were not a cultural center; we were not an educational center. We were dependent on a cotton crop and when mechanized cotton pickers came out the farmers didn't need labor like they used to and then eventually Wal-Mart came out and that just killed the mom and pop operations." Typical of almost every small town in the South, the Jewish residents were overwhelmingly in the merchant class, often with stores on Main Street. A minority were professionals, usually physicians or attorneys. These middle- and upper-middle class members of Temple Beth Israel were delighted with the arrival of their new rabbi to the Delta.<sup>69</sup>

*Rabbi Schultz with the 1963 confirmation class,  
Temple Beth Israel, Clarksdale.  
(Courtesy of Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life.)*

The *Clarksdale Press Register* provided a gracious, small-town welcome with an article titled "New Rabbi Appointed at Temple Beth Israel." It began, "A national leader in the anti-Communist movement has been named rabbi of Beth Israel Temple here. Rabbi and Mrs. Schultz, who were moving into their home today [Friday], will depart Monday for Europe where the rabbi expects to gather further information in his anti-Communist activities." A similar article appeared in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* written by Anne Fleming (who would write many more sympathetic articles about Schultz in the following years). The article begins:

A one-man crusade against communism recently moved to Clarksdale and assumed his duties as the new rabbi of Beth Israel Congregation. Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, who was born in New

York, has a voice as soft as any Southerner's and a deceptively mild manner for a man who has fought communism throughout the length and breadth of the United States and abroad. Though a lifelong New Yorker, the rabbi asked for a Southern congregation. "I believe this section to be among the most pro-American in the nation," he explained. "As yet it is relatively free of infiltrating communists and their unwitting tools, those misguided 'liberals.'" . . . The rabbi believes he can be happy in Clarksdale "because I can go about my purely religious duties without too much distraction arguing with 'liberals' and pro-communists."<sup>70</sup>

Schultz hit the ground running. As soon as he came back from Europe he told a reporter that he detected "a 'subconscious feeling' among these Europeans that the U.S. is not firm enough and that the Communists eventually will win." He also reported there was "a totally twisted idea of the South" in Europe. "There was no defender of the South in all of Europe. . . . Even Eichmann has his defense council [*sic*], but the South has no defender over there." Schultz said he would like to see southerners "organize a public relations campaign in Europe [since] . . . films and newspaper articles particularly have contributed to the erroneous ideas of the South." Three days after his return from his trip abroad Schultz made these points in a speech to the local Exchange Club.<sup>71</sup>

Thus began a series of talks to various groups including the American Legion, Rotary Club, Altrusa Club, Daughters of the American Revolution, Exchange Club, and many churches. Most of these speaking engagements took place in Clarksdale proper, but many occurred elsewhere in the Delta, in other sections of Mississippi, and even in other southern states. None of these talks, however, proved as controversial as the one he delivered before the Clarksdale Business and Professional Women's Club on October 24, 1962.

*"America Needs More Mississippi"*

The other rabbis serving Mississippi congregations felt less than enthusiastic about Schultz's presence in the state, but, with prodding from Perry Nussbaum in Jackson, they had reached out to him in a collegial spirit. That ended on October 25, 1962, when

the newspapers and airwaves throughout the state reported in great detail Schultz's remarks the day before to a Clarksdale women's group. Months later that speech remained in people's minds and on their lips. Almost four months later, the *Clarksdale Clarion-Ledger* reported in its Sunday edition:

"BIG JOHNNY REB," the five-station radio network covering much of Georgia, has featured a special editorial quoting a widely publicized statement by an esteemed religious leader in Mississippi upholding its stand for constitutional government and American principles. We think the "Big Johnny Reb" editorial is well worth passing along, as follows:

Out of the unfortunate and unconstitutional imposition of Federal force upon the Sovereign State of Mississippi came the clarion-clear voice of a Jewish Rabbi, speaking with the wisdom of Moses. Rabbi Benjamin Schultz of Clarksdale, Mississippi, says: "What America needs is more of Mississippi, not less." The Rabbi listed these five reasons:

1. If Mississippi had its way, Castro would not be in Cuba today. Washington would not have installed him there.
2. If Mississippi had prevailed, the Berlin Wall would have been torn down as soon as it went up.
3. If Mississippi had prevailed, there would be no Communists on American faculties and corruption of our youth would stop.
4. If Mississippi, with its States Rights philosophy, had its way, Big Government, provocative dictatorship and eventual national bankruptcy would be thrown out the window.
5. If Mississippi had its way, traditional patriotism would again sweep the land to strengthen out [*sic*] people inwardly and insure victory in the international crisis. After all, if Communism conquers, we all lose—Jews and Gentiles, black and white. Religion loses most of all.

Rabbi Schultz emphasizes the point that our nation needs more people who will stand up for constitutional government [i.e. "states' rights"], for patriotic principle, for American interests in the face of the Communist challenge.<sup>72</sup>

In the speech, Schultz had actually ended his comments calling on “the dedicated clergy of Mississippi and the South . . . to demand that our Northern preachers fight the Cold War . . . against Communism, even if it means less time to attack the South.” One of the most enthusiastic responses to Schultz’s message came from the White Citizens’ Council, which reprinted a précis of it in its October 1962 newsletter, *The Citizen*.<sup>73</sup>

Schultz’s remarks were consistent with statements he had made well before he arrived to Mississippi. As executive director of the AJLAC, he had delivered a letter to the White House asking President Truman to appoint a commission “to investigate Communist-inspired ‘racial tension’” in this country. The Communist Party intended, he wrote, “to inflame the discontent and grievances of each minority group” with the result being “hatred toward constituted authority.” Again, in testimony before the HUAC, Schultz argued that our country’s Communists “are trying to stir up racial and religious hatreds in an effort ‘to throw this land into confusion, paving the way for Stalinist revolution and conquest.’” Minorities (i.e., African Americans) should not be concerned, however, because, although anti-minority injustices do exist in the United States, “the one sure thing about America today is that, through the democratic process, injustices are being gradually removed.”<sup>74</sup>

What had been happening in Mississippi in the months between 1961 and the day of the speech? In what hopeful way were injustices “being gradually removed?” Here is a sampling of occurrences in Mississippi during that period:

- On March 27, 1961, nine black students from Tougaloo College attempted to use the public library in Jackson and were arrested and thrown into jail. The next day students from Jackson State University marched peacefully to the jail in protest and club-wielding police set upon them using tear gas and dogs. That night more than one thousand African Americans attended a rally in support of the Tougaloo Nine.
- On May 24, 1961, twenty-six freedom riders, having survived vicious attacks in Alabama, arrived in Jackson,



where they were jailed. Mississippi governor Ross Barnett justified the treatment thusly: "The Negro is different because God made him different to punish him." By the end of the summer more than three hundred freedom riders had been incarcerated in the state, most being sent to the penitentiary in Parchman.

- On September 25, 1961, in Liberty, E. H. Hurst shot and killed Herbert Lee, 52, who had assisted African Americans to go to the polls to vote. Hurst, a member of the Mississippi legislature, was never charged with the crime.
- In late October 1961, Paul Potter and Tom Hayden of Students for a Democratic Society were dragged from their car and beaten in the street when they came to McComb to show support for the Voter Registration Movement. Shotgun blasts from a Klan nightrider almost killed Dion Diamond and John Hardy. Throughout the state less than seven percent of Mississippi blacks were registered to vote – in many black-majority counties not a single black citizen was registered – and, of those few on the voter rolls only a handful dared to actually cast a ballot.
- On April 9, 1962, Cpl. Roman Ducksworth, Jr., a military police officer stationed in Maryland, was ordered off a bus by a police officer in Taylorsville and shot dead. The police officer apparently mistook Ducksworth for a freedom rider testing bus desegregation laws.
- On August 31, 1962, the son-in-law of the local state representative and a cousin of the sheriff brutally beat Bob Moses, leader of the state's Voter Registration Project. An all-white jury acquitted the assailants.
- On September 3, 1962, riots broke out in Oxford when James Meredith arrived on the campus of the University of Mississippi. Two people were killed and 160 of the marshals, who had been pulled from the ranks of various federal agencies to try to keep order, were injured. President John F. Kennedy sent in the National

Guard and the Army. In the following days, twenty-three thousand soldiers arrived in Oxford.

- And, of course, there was the continuing specter of the August 28, 1955, killing of fourteen-year-old Chicagoan Emmett Till in the Delta hamlet of Money, when he said something like “bye, baby” to the wife of the proprietor in a small country store.

Nonetheless, according to Rabbi Schultz, America needed more Mississippi.

*Responses to a Verbal Earthquake*

On November 20, 1962, E. Stanley Basist, president of the board of trustees of Schultz’s synagogue, sent a letter to the presidents of all the other Mississippi Reform congregations, in which he wrote:

It has come to my attention that several Mississippi Rabbis have made uncomplimentary remarks about our Rabbi, Benjamin Schultz. These remarks were made shortly after a speech of his was publicized in several Mississippi and Tennessee newspapers, and, more important, further remarks were made about him to the president of our Temple Youth Group and the Youth Group advisors at the Conclave held last weekend in Memphis.

Rabbi Benjamin Schultz has my complete endorsement and the overwhelming backing and support of the Clarksdale Jewish Community. . . . [The other rabbis] further stated that should Clarksdale be appointed the host city for the Temple Youth Conclavette this coming spring that they would not attend as long as Rabbi Schultz held the Pulpit position here in Clarksdale. . . . As a layman it is not within my capabilities to try to cope with jealousies and misunderstandings between Rabbis. . . . I hope . . . if certain Rabbis are guilty of such unbecoming conduct, they will now consider the incident closed and will not persist in making further damaging remarks. I am, therefore, asking you to check into this matter for me with your own spiritual leader and to determine if there is any basis to the reports as received by me, and advise.<sup>75</sup>

On the day Basist mailed his letter, Sol Fineberg sent Schultz a letter labeled "PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL." Fineberg stated that he was "writing as a friend . . . [who has] defended you during the many years in which all other rabbis were hostile, [but] I am on the verge of questioning my own judgment. I fear you have let a flurry of popularity lead you to believe that you can throw caution and discretion to the wind." Fineberg continued:

You were welcomed back into the active rabbinate as a rabbi. You did a magnificent job in Brunswick, as a rabbi. . . . I have urged rabbis to discard any reservations they have about your becoming a genuine colleague. They agreed readily. As for Perry Nussbaum you were wrong.<sup>76</sup> He did not object to your coming to Mississippi and even put in a favorable word. But he is alarmed. They all are. . . . What will happen if a member of an audience or a reporter asks you "What do you think . . . about James Meredith? About White Citizens' Councils? Etc." Assuming that you give the . . . nativist, anti-Negro answers needed to satisfy certain elements! What then? The same questions will then be put publicly to other rabbis in your area. Are they to be pilloried if their views . . . are expressed? Or for remaining silent . . . you do need—all rabbis need—rabbinical cooperation and good will. . . . No one wants more than I do, to see you succeed. My assurance was given the [rabbinic] placement committee [of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR)] that your work in the pulpit would not antagonize your colleagues. . . . I hope you will not become the temporary idol of the same sort of people who idolized you in the past and let you down later.<sup>77</sup>

One week later Schultz sent a three-page response to Fineberg, affirming that they were friends, having been so since 1926. In the letter he admitted that he has perhaps "gone to an extreme in making it plain on the outside that my present congregation likes me," but he has not in any speech or pronouncement "mentioned segregation or integration." His controversial speech was given only to provide "a 'lift' to the sorrowing citizens of Mississippi." He expressed resentment against the rabbis of the state, several of whom "opposed my coming before I came." Nonetheless the end of the letter is conciliatory: "I should like to reach an

agreement. . . . Sol, there must be ways and means of getting something in motion."<sup>78</sup>

In a letter sent the same day to Nussbaum, Fineberg wrote that he spoke with Sidney Regner, executive director of the CCAR, "this morning," and that Regner said Schultz had sent him a letter "a week ago complaining to him that his rabbinical colleagues in the South have been unkind." Fineberg closed:

this will have to be played out slowly and carefully, giving Schulz [*sic*] as little opportunity as possible to denounce those who disagree with him as soft on Communism, lacking patriotism, etc. He may come to his senses and I hope he will, but I am not as confident as I wish I could be.

Fineberg wrote Nussbaum two days later, enclosing a copy of Schultz's letter to him. Fineberg asked Nussbaum to write the following: "Dear Rabbi Schultz: I know there has been some misunderstanding in which you and others are involved. Why not arrange to talk it over?" Heeding Fineberg's advice on December 4 Nussbaum wrote to all of the Reform rabbis in Mississippi—Robert Blinder (Vicksburg), Moses Landau (Cleveland), Arthur B. Lebowitz (Natchez), Charles Mantinband (Hattiesburg), Allan Schwartzman (Greenville) and to Schultz—inviting them and their wives to a "rabbinic gab-fest" at his home on December 20, "*Lifnay darchay sholom*, and to forestall a potential *Chillul Hashem* in our State."<sup>79</sup>

Fineberg had good reason to turn to Nussbaum for leadership in this matter. From the moment Nussbaum arrived in Jackson in 1952 he was passionately committed to the concept of unity among the Jews of Mississippi. Possibly because he grew up in the established Jewish community of Toronto, he was painfully aware of the scant number of Jews not only in Jackson but also in the state as a whole. He labored for years trying unsuccessfully to create and maintain a Mississippi Assembly of Jewish Congregations. In like manner, he worked to enhance communication and contact among his rabbinic colleagues. There is a certain irony to this, in that Nussbaum was in many ways the least likely candidate to succeed in either of these tasks; he was anything but diplomatic and was generally considered to be a very difficult

person to like, given his irascible personality. Mantinband, who was just the opposite, might have been a better choice, but he was just weeks away from announcing that he had decided to leave Hattiesburg to settle in Longview, Texas.

Shortly after sending the invitation to the other rabbis Nussbaum received a copy of a letter from Fineberg to a Philip Kantor. Apparently Fineberg had met with Kantor while breakfasting with a friend in Memphis. The letter reads in part:

This is to tell you that since we met I have had personal conversations with Rabbi Mantinband . . . and with Rabbis Regner and [Dan] Davis in New York [members of the rabbinical placement committee], three telephone calls to Rabbi Nussbaum in Jackson and have seen and carried on intensive correspondence with Rabbi Schultz. I am hopeful that Rabbi Schultz will overcome the ill effects of the startling newspaper report of his speech, and that he will make good in every way in your congregation.<sup>80</sup>

Fineberg noted that "the president of your congregation" had written an "ill-advised letter to presidents of other congregations. . . . This threat to the security of the other rabbis is most objectionable." He informed Kantor that Nussbaum was taking steps to establish goodwill among "all the rabbis of Mississippi towards Rabbi Schultz and I believe he can succeed, provided someone tells Mr. Basist that he is on the wrong track." He assured Kantor that Schultz was capable of being "a splendid person, humble, kind, considerate and a genuine rabbi." He continued:

Please tell no one, except Lester Rosen, that I have corresponded with you. Please tell no one how you received the copy of the attached [Basist] letter. . . . I very much want Rabbi Schultz to remain in Clarksdale. . . . I shall appreciate your keeping me informed and be sure that I shall treat whatever you communicate to me in complete confidence. Please let me know all the important developments.<sup>81</sup>

So, who are Kantor and Rosen? Fineberg provided the answers in a letter to Nussbaum written on the same day, which began: "Dear Perry: No one is to know that I have a correspondent on the Board of the Clarksdale congregation, one of the few who is critical of Rabbi Schultz." He continued:

Perry, I am completely convinced that we are on the right track. I am, in brief, sharing with you a peculiar relationship which I have maintained with Rabbi Schultz throughout the years, preventing his becoming a very hurtful figure on the national scene. . . . If you manage to get all the rabbis of Mississippi to let bygones be bygones in regard to Schultz and give him a luke-warm (if not warm) treatment, that would be excellent. . . . that would be infinitely better than the kind of explosion that would be necessary to get Ben Schultz out of Mississippi. . . . At this point I bow out and shall initiate nothing further whatever. . . . I would recommend that others . . . regard you as the person to whom the problem *in its entirety* be referred. [emphasis in original]

On December 7 Nussbaum wrote Rabbi James Wax of Temple Israel in Memphis regarding the December 20 meeting with Schultz: "It may be that the latter is sincerely motivated to keep the peace with his Mississippi colleagues and put some kind of checkrein on his extreme rightist pronunciamentos." He asked Wax to give him a "rundown of your contacts with Schultz." Nussbaum chose to contact Wax for a number of reasons. First of all, Memphis was the closest large Jewish community. As such, it hosted almost all the major Reform conventions and regional meetings that included Mississippi congregations. Also when Mississippians, especially those in the Delta, longed for more sophisticated entertainment or shopping, Memphis was a popular destination. As rabbi of the most prestigious synagogue in this prestigious city, Wax was well regarded for his stands and, among colleagues, well respected. In addition, Nussbaum felt a collegial connection with "Jimmy" Wax, with whom he corresponded on many occasions. Finally, Wax shared Nussbaum's concern about Schultz's arrival on the southern scene, as he told the author in 1966:

There's one rabbi that I think is a reprehensible character and I don't mind being quoted, that's Ben Schultz of Clarksdale, who made the statement—you'll find it quoted in Silver's book, *The Closed Society*—that President Kennedy should have sent the troops to Cuba rather than to Mississippi—it was during the time of Meredith's admission to Ole Miss.<sup>82</sup>

On January 2, 1963, Nussbaum again wrote Wax:

Ben Schultz and his wife spent several hours in Jackson at our home, as did Charles Mantinband and his wife and Bob Blinder. We impressed on Schultz that we are not in sympathy with his McCarthy-like speeches, but could understand how his anxiety to establish himself in his new community led to some *injudicious statements*. He was full of *charoto* about his Ole Miss publicity but insisted that he will not back down on his anti-communist position, etc. etc. We also gave him to understand that his public image from here on in will have a decisive influence on individual rabbis' decisions to support him in his youth work.<sup>83</sup> Only time, of course, will tell about the degree of his repentance.

Schultz's *charoto*, or sense of guilt, apparently was short-lived. On February 1, 1963, both the *Delta Democrat-Times* of Greenville and the *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* carried articles in which Schultz argued that the United States needed "more nationalism" and that the South particularly needed better public relations, repeating once again his analogy that Eichmann had a defense but the South has neither defense nor defender.<sup>84</sup> The same day that the articles were published, Nussbaum responded with a letter:

This morning I have carefully read the enclosed UPI report on your Greenville Rotary speech, as I have listened to a summary of it on one of our Jackson radio news programs. . . . [Until] your coming to Clarksdale, we kept our differences within the rabbinical family as much as possible, because these have become abnormal times both for Jews and Judaism in our State. . . . Our principle of expedience in general on integration was criticized . . . by many people outside of the State. . . . throughout all these months of James Meredith the Mississippi Rightists and Racists, and their publicity media, have not injected what have become classic antisemitic phenomena . . . in spite of the fact that some of us are clearly identifiable as anti-Rightists and anti-Racists. . . . The paramount consideration in these times, in this State, is the image of the Rabbi. . . . In Mississippi, we simply cannot afford the luxury of 7 Rabbis not presenting a united front. . . . I strongly disagree with your publicized positions as expressed last Fall, and in the UPI account of your Greenville speech. . . . [Whether] you intend it or not, you are portraying yourself as a

*Perry Nussbaum confidentially forwarded to Sol Fineberg a copy of his  
letter to Benjamin Schultz.  
(Courtesy of Allen Krause.)*



defender of the South at a time when Mississippi . . . has defied every fundamental American legal, moral and Jewish principle. You have been telling extremists what they want to hear. . . . It was a shot in the arms to the extremists and racists last Fall to have a clergyman extol Mississippi contra the established authority of the government and the people of the United States, and you made the pages of the Citizens' Council publication, as I suspect you have been favorably quoted in the professional anti-semitic media. I have felt uncomfortable when I have had to explain you to the Christian clergymen and laity with whom I work. . . . In my judgment, you are misrepresenting Judaism . . . according to my interpretation of Judaism, the stereotype of Mississippi is not so different from that of Adolph Eichmann, and we deserve what Europeans think of us. . . . I deplore the support the racists and extremists will elicit from this latest publicity, particularly when a handful of younger Mississippi Methodist preachers at last have openly dared to challenge the stranglehold of Methodist racists and extremists. . . . This is the time for Mississippi Rabbis to be extremely careful, therefore, not to cut the ground from under the handful of Christians who are beginning to rebel against the fascistic atmosphere in the State. You have become a fellow-traveler with those elements in the State to which I am absolutely opposed, even though you have the best of intentions, because you refuse to see that your brand of political Conservatism is meat and drink for the fascists who are in control of Mississippi. . . . If you continue to make public speeches . . . if in such speeches you further the line of the unholy alliance in our State which panders to every latent human prejudice—in the name of decentralized government, states' rights, white supremacy, etc.—you are furthering the vicious tactics of the communist conspiracy of which you are an outstanding opponent. This, to me, is your blind spot. We will see each other next weekend in Memphis.<sup>85</sup> It remains to be seen if I can get the Mississippi Rabbis there together with you after this newspaper account of your latest speech.

This extraordinary letter gives clear evidence of Nussbaum's commitment to civil rights and his sense of despair regarding the climate in Mississippi, reminiscent of the correspondence he carried on with the state's rabbis in the summer of 1961 when he was secretly visiting Jewish Freedom Riders incarcerated in Parchman Penitentiary. In 1961 Nussbaum was rebuffed or rebuked by all of

his colleagues save for Blinder in Vicksburg and Mantinband in Hattiesburg. Nonetheless, the intensely negative reaction of all of the men to Schultz's speech strongly suggests that they also had serious problems with southern racism; their silence and inactivity regarding civil rights was more a response to fear for their congregants' welfare and for their own. Although they did not feel free to speak out, they obviously were incensed when one of their own did so in support of the status quo.

Schultz's reply of February 6 to Nussbaum had a conciliatory tone, at least to a degree. "Thank you for taking the trouble to write about my speech in Greenville" he wrote. "Much of . . . your reasoning I cannot follow. . . . [There] is a rabbis' breakfast on Sunday and we shall all see one another there. I hope to keep your friendship. You have mine, and I hope you welcome it." Nussbaum was by now running out of patience with Schultz. His frustration is evident in a letter he wrote on October 28, 1963, to Sol Kaplan, director of the Southwest Council of the UAHC (with a copy to Sidney Regner, executive vice-president of the CCAR):

As you know, my own position is that he is another rabbi in this State and that he is called to serve a congregation which is happy with him. From the beginning of my ministry in Mississippi, I have been dominated by one desire: to achieve *achdus* among the rabbis as well as mutual cooperation among the Congregations, in these trying times for Judaism and rabbis in Mississippi.

Since the very unfortunate business of Schultz's statements during the first weeks following his arrival in Mississippi a year ago, [Allan] Schwartzman has conducted his own personal vendetta. He has been unable to draw a line between his responsibilities to community and his personal feelings about Schultz, witness the collapse of several hours of discussion yesterday, only because Schwartzman would not allow his signature to appear with Schultz's.<sup>86</sup>

Schwartzman is leaving Mississippi. How soon, I do not know.<sup>87</sup> I do know that this attitude of his toward Schultz has been one of the [problematic] factors without question, because of the family connections in his Congregation and in Schultz's. . . . He says that he has been in correspondence with Dan Davis,<sup>88</sup> with

Balfour Brickner<sup>89</sup> and . . . that organized Reform Judaism is putting Schultz under an unofficial *cherem*. . . Schultz emphatically told me . . . [what] adds up to “to hell with the rabbis in Mississippi—he is the offended person. . . This means that this rightist rabbi, who, in my opinion, has been kept under some wraps for several months, will now identify himself completely for what he was. . . I do not want a deterioration into a *hillul haschem*, which just will not do the Jews of Mississippi any good.

The meeting at which Schwartzman refused to allow his signature to be next to Schultz’s took place in late October 1963. There was one agenda item: the invitation extended by the UAHC to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to be the keynote speaker at the coming Biennial Convention. This was seen by the Mississippi rabbis as an act that would alienate their congregants from their national organization and create serious problems for their members, who were trying desperately to keep a low profile as Jews. In the October 28 letter to Kaplan, Nussbaum explained that the Mississippi rabbis had after three and a half hours “finally agreed on the text of a telegram to be sent to [UAHC president Rabbi] Maurice Eisendrath,” only to have Schwartzman refuse to sign, which prompted Schultz to refuse to sign it as well. Furthermore, Schultz “says that now he has *carte blanche* to say and do anything he likes without reference to his colleagues.” Thus the petulant behavior of two of the colleagues meant that the letter would not be sent at all. Frustrated, Nussbaum ended his letter to Kaplan with the request that he convey to Eisendrath that he no longer saw any point in continuing as “a one man vocal defender of the Union.” In the light of a “completely unnecessary provocation,” said Nussbaum, “I am convinced that the Union has no regard at all for the security of the Jewish communities in this state.” Nussbaum had clearly run out of patience with more than just the rabbi from Clarksdale.

### *Was Schultz a Bigot?*

Was Schultz a bigot? Did he look on the African American as a lesser human being, unworthy of equality? Or was he just so caught up in anti-Communist hysteria that he saw the issue of

black civil rights through the corrupting prism of the grand Soviet plan to divide and conquer? His testimony before the HUAC shows that he clearly bought into the southern and general racist perspective that the NAACP was a Communist organization and that the civil rights activism of the sixties was Communist inspired, if not Communist controlled.<sup>90</sup> But, possibly it was more than that. A defender, Samuel Abrahams, wrote with appreciation in the *Jewish Post and Opinion* upon Schultz's death that he "made the world aware of the oppression of Communism in Russia as early as 1946." But then, he continued, "I did not always agree with Rabbi Schultz, especially later when he assumed a pulpit in Clarksville [sic], Miss., and expressed vile anti-Black positions about fellow Americans of different pigmentation and color, but . . ." <sup>91</sup> Schultz surely would have disagreed, as he had done in a 1971 letter to Dr. Jacob R. Marcus, director of the American Jewish Archives, and there is good reason to believe his passionate denial.<sup>92</sup> In the letter Schultz specifically referred to an article that appeared "a few years ago" in the *American Jewish Archives* journal that included "a damaging reference to me implying that I was somehow linked with the segregationists." The damaging reference was based on a quote from James Silver's *Mississippi: The Closed Society* and my brief commentary:

One other rabbi should be considered here. He is unique among his colleagues in that his utterances have been used by pro-segregationists in support of their position. "With a few clergymen in modest rebellion against the status quo," wrote James Silver in *Mississippi the Closed Society*, "the Citizens Council eagerly grasped to its bosom a strange new reinforcement in the person of Rabbi B. . . . S . . . ." who soon after his arrival in Mississippi "laid down the principles which could save America."

This rabbi finds little support for his view among his Southern colleagues. Though some men do not speak on civil rights or, on occasion in the privacy of the Jewish community, speak against certain aspects of the civil rights movement, no other man seems ever to have been even peripherally associated with the segregationist position in the eyes of his community, congregants, or colleagues.<sup>93</sup>

Schultz explained to Marcus that his “America Needs More Mississippi” speech referred to Mississippi’s anti-Communism and that “there were no racial overtones to my pro-American appeal. My opposition to Federal usurpation, too, is part of a philosophy and is not ‘anti-Negro.’ Your author was wrong, but neither he nor Silver tried to get my explanation.” And, as proof of his lack of racial animosity, Schultz included an April 8, 1968, clipping from the local Clarksdale newspaper.<sup>94</sup>

On April 7, 1968, an interracial memorial service for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was held at the city auditorium in Clarksdale with somewhere in the vicinity of fifteen hundred people in attendance.<sup>95</sup> Surprisingly, the April 8 *Clarksdale Press-Register* account indicated that Schultz delivered the eulogy. Curtis Wilkie, a young reporter for the newspaper, became deeply involved in the planning of that service. Wilkie later wrote a personal reminiscence of Mississippi in the sixties and subsequently became chairperson of the journalism department at the University of Mississippi.<sup>96</sup> In the newspaper article Wilkie explained that Schultz “noted that Dr. King ‘climbed almost to the top level of American society. He was an example of what America can do, and why we must value America and hold it together.’” Schultz praised King as a disciple of Gandhi: “He did not fight persons, he fought evil.” In a letter to the author, Wilkie commented concerning the service and Schultz’s role in it:

I was involved in the planning of the service, and we were determined to make it as ecumenical and integrated as possible. Even some conservatives in the white community were in shock over the assassination, and we felt if they wanted to make good faith expressions of concern and sorrow, they were welcome to do so. Rabbi Schultz surely fell in this category, and having a Jewish figure presiding over a predominantly Christian audience at the service seemed to be a public declaration that much of Clarksdale was united, regardless of color or religion . . . I recall him presiding with dignity . . . in all my dealings with him over my years as a young reporter there, it was obvious that he was very conservative vis a vis [*sic*] political ideology and extremely anti-communist (to the latter, almost obsessive). I never heard

him make any kind of racist remark or embrace segregation, *per se*.

Two years prior to this memorial service, state NAACP president Dr. Aaron Henry wrote the author, "Unfortunately I live in the hometown of Rabbi Benjamin Schultz. No doubt you have heard of him. . . . He has good warm relations with the White Citizens Councils and the John Birch Society. He poses as a 'professional communist hunter'. . . ."97 Nonetheless, Wilkie writes that even though "Aaron Henry did not trust him . . . Aaron was the key figure behind the memorial service for Dr. King, so he must have relented in his views or forgiven him in the spirit of the moment, for he would have had to approve of Rabbi Schultz for his role that Sunday in Clarksdale."

Even assuming, as the evidence suggests, that Schultz was not a racial bigot, he did not place the black cause high on his list of priorities. How else could he have said that the Communists "spend much of their time bewailing the disabilities of the Negroes . . . and inflating . . . [their] grievances beyond measure," and "The one sure thing about America today is that, through the democratic process, injustices are being gradually removed." More to the point, regardless of his anti-Communist motivation how could he have made "the speech" arguing that America needs more Mississippi, ending with a demand that "Northern preachers fight the Cold War . . . against Communism, even if it means less time to attack the South," considering what had been happening to blacks all around him?<sup>98</sup>

#### *Was Schultz a Good Rabbi?*

Repeatedly in his correspondence with Sol Fineberg and Perry Nussbaum, Schultz remarked on how much his congregants loved him, and these comments cannot be easily dismissed. Many years earlier, before he wrote the three articles that catapulted him into the role of a professional Red-hunter, he had served eleven years with his Yonkers congregation. Prior to that, he had been assigned to a start-up congregation. Today, three-quarters of a century later, the short history on the web site of Temple Emanuel of Englewood, New Jersey, states that "under [the] part-time

direction of Rabbi Benjamin Schultz . . . the Temple began to come to life and thrive." Add to this the fact that he remained in Clarksdale for the rest of his career until his death, and that recent interviews with some of his Clarksdale congregants produced uniformly positive comments about their rabbi. Fineberg, in a backhanded way, corroborated this when he wrote Nussbaum that Philip Kantor was "one of the few [in Congregation Beth Israel] who is critical of Rabbi Schultz." One must take into account his problems with the Board of Trustees in Yonkers, but their dislike of Schultz was not shared by the larger congregation until the publication of the *World-Telegram* articles.

There can be no doubt that Schultz was highly respected in the non-Jewish community. Not only was he a sought-after speaker, he also was elected a district governor of Rotary—a singular honor for a congregational rabbi. The newspaper article that announced this states, "It would be difficult to choose . . . a better representative at the gatherings of District Governors when they meet at Rotary International Conventions." On the occasion of his tenth anniversary in the community, an article in a church bulletin recognized "the high tribute accorded to Rabbi Benjamin Schultz and Mrs. Schultz by Congregation Beth Israel, and many friends throughout the South, on the tenth anniversary of their outstanding and dedicated service to the area. . . . May they go 'from strength to strength,' always finding fulfillment in joyful services to their fellowman."<sup>99</sup>

There is really little mystery why Schultz was so appreciated not only by the broader Clarksdale community, but also by the Jews of Clarksdale. Men like Nussbaum and Mantinband in Mississippi, or Burton Padoll in Charleston, South Carolina, may have occupied the moral high ground on the civil rights issue, but they were a constant source of unease to their congregants, who feared retaliation from the Citizen's Council or the Klan because of the words and deeds of their rabbis. Although Jews in Deep South communities were more likely to harbor guilt feelings regarding the status quo than were their Christian neighbors, in the vast majority of cases they kept this guilt to themselves, expressing it at

most only in the security of their own religious community. Some of the other Mississippi rabbis shared their feelings and beliefs on this matter within the confines of their synagogue, but honored their people's wishes and remained silent elsewhere. Even so, they almost certainly were more liberal on this issue than the Methodist and Baptist clergy that made up the vast majority of their non-Jewish colleagues. However, Schultz still remained *sui generis*, the only rabbi whose pronouncements were used by the Citizen's Council and by the southern media in support of their position on segregation.

Rabbi Harry Danziger, who retired after a distinguished twenty-two year career at Temple Israel of Memphis, confirmed much of this when he wrote: "He was beloved in Clarksdale and the area for the reason that he was not beloved by his regional colleagues. He was a staunch conservative and broad-brush anti-Communist, as I understand it. I never saw it but I came later." In Schultz's eulogy, Danziger expanded on this: "[It] was not his national posture in the turbulence of the 1950s that was the hallmark of Benjamin Schultz, but the day-by-day and week-by-week service to and teaching of his congregation as their rabbi and their friend."<sup>100</sup>

One jarring note, however, came from Rabbi Solomon Kaplan, the director of the Southwest Region of the UAHC during the 1960s. In 1966 he said during a telephone conversation I had with him that, although "Schultz had quieted down somewhat, he is still much of a 'loner' in the southern rabbinate." My notes of that conversation continue: "And, surprisingly, he is not as strong with his own congregation as an outsider might believe. He is well enough respected as a rabbi; this is not the issue. What bothers some of his people [most likely his leaders, as in Yonkers] is their rabbi's overly conspicuous conservatism." Kaplan related that he had been approached by at least four members of the Clarksdale congregation, including the synagogue president who wrote the November 20, 1962, letter to other congregational presidents in Mississippi, asking "what can we do to shut our rabbi up" on political and civil rights issues? "Though not one of his congregants would disagree with their rabbi in public," Kaplan



said, “at least a few, and more likely than not, many, evidence disenchantment in private.”<sup>101</sup>

It appears that Schultz indeed did tone down his rhetoric and reduce his political speechmaking as the years passed, but this was not enough to win over the friendship of his Mississippi colleagues. When he died of a stroke on April 23, 1978, the only rabbi attending his funeral was the officiant, Harry Danziger, who had developed a relationship with the Clarksdale congregation during his years as the rabbi of Temple Israel in Memphis. Today, for those few outside of Clarksdale and Memphis who recognize his name, Benjamin Schultz is not remembered so much as a personable pastor or good speaker as he is for his lifelong crusade which eventually made him the darling of the forces of bigotry in the troubled South of the 1960s.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> On June 1, 1958, a Montgomery, AL, judge prohibited the NAACP from operating in the state because it was “not properly registered.” A suspected Communist-front organization, the judge ordered it to submit its complete membership list to the Alabama attorney general (which would have put its members in great financial and even physical jeopardy given the climate of the time). In addition the judge assessed a fine of \$100,000, an amount guaranteed to bankrupt the organization. Other southern states followed this procedure, basically putting the NAACP out of business throughout most of the South until the United States Supreme Court ruled against Alabama and in favor of the NAACP eight years later. See, for example, “Banning NAACP In Alabama Voided,” *Winona (MN) Daily News*, June 1, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> Murray Friedman introduces a symposium on American Jewish political conservatism with these words: “It is a truism that American Jews are prototypical liberals. Jewish voting patterns and a considerable body of historical as well as popular literature supports this wider understanding. There is little reason to challenge this view. Even though the 90 percent Democratic majorities of the 1940s among Jewish voters have declined somewhat—reaching that figure only in the 1964 election when Lyndon Johnson defeated Barry Goldwater—Jewish support for Democratic presidential candidates has remained consistently high.” “Opening the Discussion of American Jewish Political Conservatism,” *American Jewish History* 87:2 (June, 1999): 101.

<sup>3</sup> The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) and Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) for the Reform; the Rabbinical Assembly (RA) and United Synagogue of America (USA) for the Conservative.

<sup>4</sup> Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley, CA, 2004), 277–281.

<sup>5</sup> The names were Frank Chodorov, Eugene Lyons, Frank S. Meyer, Morrie Ryskind, and William S. Schlamm. George H. Nash, "Forgotten Godfathers: Premature Jewish Conservatives and the Rise of *National Review*," *American Jewish History* 87:2 (June 1999): 123.

<sup>6</sup> Murray N. Rothbard, *The Betrayal of the American Right* (Auburn, AL, 2007), 159, 161.

<sup>7</sup> See Nash, "Forgotten Godfathers," 126–138.

<sup>8</sup> Fern Marja, "The Strange Case of Rabbi Benjamin Schultz," *New York Post*, December 5, 1954. This was the first of five lengthy articles on Schultz that appeared from December 5 through December 10, 1954.

<sup>9</sup> Schultz told the interviewer that from the time his mother said this, he never considered anything else. *Clarksdale Press Register*, October 8–9, 1977.

<sup>10</sup> Marja, "The Strange Case," December 6, 1954.

<sup>11</sup> History of Temple Emanu-El, <http://www.templemanuel.com/Public/ABOUTUS/History/index.cfm> (accessed December 25, 2008.)

<sup>12</sup> Marja, "The Strange Case," December 6, 1954.

<sup>13</sup> *New York World Telegram*, October 14, 1947; October 15, 1947; October 16, 1947.

<sup>14</sup> When the *World-Telegram* agreed to Schultz's proposal to write these articles they hired veteran anti-Communist reporter Frederick Woltman to help him. In May of that year Woltman had won a Pulitzer Prize for his exposure of U.S. Communists. According to Marja, "Woltman has since made no secret of his estimate of his former collaborator. The newspaperman has voiced regret that what he believes was a legitimate and worthwhile series should have catapulted Schultz into a position as a self-appointed spokesman for Jewish anti-Communists. Like many of those who were associated with Schultz during this period, Woltman has evaluated Schultz as a weak argumentative innocent who has developed no real grasp of communism . . . and who has helped set back the cause of anti-communism." See <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,854746,00.html> (accessed May 9, 2010); and Marja, "The Strange Case," December 7, 1954.

<sup>15</sup> Marja, "The Strange Case," December 7, 1954.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Anne Fleming "Yankee Rabbi Finds the South Is 'Home'," *Clarksdale Press Register*, June 7, 1972.

<sup>17</sup> *Jewish Post*, December 7, 1945, "Benjamin Schultz," biographical nearprint file (hereafter cited as Schultz nearprint), Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (hereafter cited as AJA).

<sup>18</sup> Marja, "The Strange Case," December 7, 1954.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> He also wrote a column entitled "Uptown and Downtown."

<sup>21</sup> Schultz had agonized over the fact that the paper wanted to identify him as the rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in Yonkers. He was rightly worried that this would create problems

for him with his members. Thus he turned to his colleague, Rabbi Fineberg, for advice. Fineberg counseled him that identifying his congregation would not be prudent, yet Schultz made it clear that they would not print the articles without such identification. In the end Schultz and the paper agreed to a compromise offered by Fineberg that he simply be identified as "a rabbi of a Westchester congregation." "Southern Jews and National Jewish Organizations," Fineberg Collection 149, 5, 1, AJA.

<sup>22</sup> "To Discuss the Rabbi's Case: Yonkers Congregation Will Meet Sunday on Ouster Charge," *New York Times*, October 22, 1947; "Southern Jews and National Jewish Organizations," Fineberg Collection.

<sup>23</sup> "Communist Stories Bring Rabbi Censure," *New York Times*, October 23, 1947.

<sup>24</sup> Actually the AJLAC was an idea Sokolsky had over a decade earlier; possibly Schultz's articles and the Jewish world's response was the catalyst that moved Sokolsky to action.

<sup>25</sup> It was Kohlberg who financed the AJLAC to the tune of \$800 per month for the first few months.

<sup>26</sup> Connecting Jews with Communism was a favorite canard of many antisemitic groups and individuals. "Jewish Unit Vows Communist Purge," *New York Times*, March 15, 1948. Lyons wrote a very sympathetic biography of J. Edgar Hoover that was published in 1948. The *Reader's Digest*, founded in 1922, was from the beginning conservative and anti-Communist. The *American Mercury* moved to the right under the aegis of Clendenin J. Ryan, who purchased the magazine in 1950. One of its writers was the young William F. Buckley, Jr., who went on to found the *National Review* in 1955.

<sup>27</sup> Marja, "The Strange Case," December 5, 1954.

<sup>28</sup> *Long Beach (CA) Independent*, May 2, 1948. Members of the subcommittee included chairman Alexander Wiley (R-WI), William Langer (R-ND), Pat McCarran (D-NV), Homer Ferguson (R-MI), Harley M. Kilgore (D-WV), Chapman Revercomb (R-WV), James O. Eastland (D-MS), E. H. Moore (R-OK), Warren G. Magnuson (D-WA), Forrest C. Donnell (R-MO), J. William Fulbright (D-AK), John Sherman Cooper (R-KY), and J. Howard McGrath (D-RI). The committee thus consisted of seven Republicans and six Democrats, with three of the latter being from the South. *Hearings of the Control of Subversive Activities Subcommittee*, United States Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, (Washington, DC: 1948), 422-425, <http://www.archive.org/stream/controlofsubvers1948unit> (accessed December 29, 2008) (hereafter referred to as CSAS Report). A hard copy of the report is in the *Americana* section of the Boston Public Library. Karl E. Mundt (R-SD) and Richard M. Nixon (R-CA) served in the House of Representatives from 1939 to 1948 and 1947 to 1950, respectively.

<sup>29</sup> CSAS Report, ii.

<sup>30</sup> CSAS Report, 361-366. Although the bill found support in the subcommittee, the Senate did not act upon it. Two years later an expanded version of it passed the House with an even larger margin but again got bogged down in the Senate. This led Pat McCarran to

introduce a third version, which did pass, and which was enacted into law when a veto by President Harry S. Truman was overridden.

<sup>31</sup> *Long Beach Independent*, May 2, 1948; *New York Times*, August 14, 1948; *San Antonio Light*, November 3, 1948.

<sup>32</sup> *New York Times*, January 14, 1949; January 21, 1949. The attempt to bar Shostakovich failed. The U.S. State Department opted to grant visas to him and twenty-two other Soviet citizens. *New York Times*, March 16, 1949; March 17, 1949.

<sup>33</sup> *Mansfield (OH) News Journal*, July 7, 1949; *Dothan (AL) Eagle* July 13, 1949; Arthur Herman, *Joseph McCarthy* (New York, 2000), 163.

<sup>34</sup> *Middletown (NY) Times Herald*, September 21, 1949; *Cedar Rapids (IA) Gazette*, December 5, 1949.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Brown (J. B.) Matthews, a left-winger during the thirties, had associated with many Communist and Communist-front organizations. By the end of the decade when he saw the light, Matthews had amassed voluminous files on the American left—letterheads, mastheads from political journals, flyers, and press releases—“all displaying names of tens of thousands of left-wing individuals and many hundreds of organizations, indexed, cross-indexed, and recorded on file cards.” Matthews claimed that he had more than 500,000 names on file cards and a list of more than 2,500 organizations. Matthews’s list of subversive organizations included the ACLU, the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, the Americans for Democratic Action, and the NAACP. Matthews’s list of subversives included Justice Learned Hand, University of Chicago Chancellor Robert M. Hutchins, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter James Reston, and Henry Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines. Robert M. Lichtman, “J. B. Matthews and the ‘Counter-subversives,’” *American Communist History* 5:1 (June, 2006): 1–36. The *Aldrich Family*, popular for years on radio, was set to appear for its first season on television. *Red Channels* was issued by the right-wing journal *Counterattack* on June 22, 1950. The pamphlet-style book names 151 actors, writers, musicians, broadcast journalists, and others in the context of purported Communist manipulation of the entertainment industry including Leonard Bernstein, Abe Burrows, Morris Carnovsky, Lee J. Cobb, Aaron Copland, Norman Corwin, Alfred Drake, Howard Duff, Jose Ferrer, John Garfield, Jack Gilford, Ruth Gordon, Morton Gould, Uta Hagen, Dashiell Hammett, Lillian Hellman, Judy Holliday, Lena Horne, Langston Hughes, Burl Ives, Sam Jaffe, Garson Kanin, Gypsy Rose Lee, Burgess Meredith, Arthur Miller, Zero Mostel, Dorothy Parker, Edward G. Robinson, Harold Rome, Norman Rosten, Robert St. John, Pete Seeger, Artie Shaw, William L. Shirer, Howard K. Smith, Louis Untermeyer, Sam Wanamaker, and Orson Welles. Even a cursory look at the complete list and the names added later shows a disproportionate number are Jews, likely to be a higher percentage than the percentage of Jews in the entertainment industry. The Joint Committee Against Communism was formed at the end of January at the call of American Legion national commander George Craig. Sixty national organizations met and a seventeen-member committee was appointed with Schulz at its head. See *Portland (ME) Press Herald*, January 30, 1950; *Charleston (WV) Gazette*, August 29, 1950; Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*

(New York, 1999); *Walla Walla (WA) Union-Telegram*, August 29, 1950; *Time*, September 11, 1950, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,813149,00html> (accessed December 5, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> *Kingston (NY) Daily Freeman*, August 30, 1950, 9; *New York Times*, September 7, 1950. Famous Jewish comedian Eddie Cantor, about to debut on his own television show on NBC, called Muir's dismissal "one of the most tragic things that ever happened in show business." *New York Times*, September 6, 1950.

<sup>37</sup> *Uniontown (PA) Morning Herald*, December 22, 1950.

<sup>38</sup> "Jewish Rabbi Raps Nimitz," *Centralia-Chehalis (WA) Daily Chronicle*, January 27, 1951.

<sup>39</sup> "Jewish Groups Assail Rabbi for Attacks on Marshall and Nimitz," (Washington, DC) *Sunday Star*, February 11, 1951.

<sup>40</sup> *Logansport (IN) Press*, February 25, 1951. Of the three major Jewish defense organizations, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL), and the American Jewish Congress (AJCongress), only the latter, reflecting the long-time leadership of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, placed as much weight on civil liberties as it did on anti-Communism. As a result, the AJC and ADL were willing to accept limitations on civil liberties such as many found in the Mundt-Nixon bill while the AJCongress was not. See Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*; Marianne R. Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong: The American Jewish Committee, 1945–2006* (Waltham, MA, 2006); the testimony of AJCongress representative Aaron Lewittes in opposition to the Mundt-Nixon Bill CSAS Report, 337–361; Marja, "The Strange Case," December 10, 1954.

<sup>41</sup> *New York Times*, February 20, 1952.

<sup>42</sup> Wheeling is where McCarthy waved a sheet of paper and declared that here was a list of known Communists in the State Department. "McCarthy Gets Rabbi's Support," *Eau Claire (WI) Daily Telegram*, October 13, 1952.

<sup>43</sup> Fred J. Cook, *The Nightmare Decade* (New York, 1971), 408–09; *Oakland (CA) Tribune*, July 30, 1953.

<sup>44</sup> *Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune*, September 14, 1953. Remes (aka Julius Reiss) was a documentation clerk. "Remes" in Hebrew means "secret." See the *Executive Sessions of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations*, v. 3, Eighty-Third Congress, First Session, 1953, 1807–32, <http://www.gpo.gov/congress/senate/mccarthy/83871.html> (accessed January 28, 2009).

<sup>45</sup> *Time*, March 22, 1954.

<sup>46</sup> *Charleston (WV) Daily Mail*, October 11, 1953; "Roosevelt-Hiss Relations Subject of Rabbi's Talk," *Charleston Daily Mail*, November 1, 1953.

<sup>47</sup> "Rabbi Denounces 'Neutral' Leaders," *Charleston Gazette*, November 3, 1953.

<sup>48</sup> *New York Times*, November 11, 1953.

<sup>49</sup> *Time*, August 9, 1954, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,936247,00.html> (accessed January 27, 2009); *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*, July 29, 1954.

<sup>50</sup> *Fresno Bee*, October 5, 1954. See also *Santa Fe New Mexican*, October 5, 1954; *Charleston Daily Mail*, October 5, 1954; *Nashua (NH) Telegraph*, October 5, 1954; *Athens (OH) Messenger*,

October 5, 1954; *Valparaiso* (IN) *Vidette-Messenger*, October 30, 1954; *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, November 12, 1954.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate*, (Amherst, MA, 1987) 318. "McCarthyism" is described as "1. The practice of publicizing accusations of political disloyalty or subversion with insufficient regard to evidence. 2. The use of unfair investigatory or accusatory methods in order to suppress opposition." *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition (New York, 2001), <http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/McCarthyism> (accessed February 7, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> *Lima* (OH) *News*, November 19, 1954.

<sup>53</sup> *New York Times*, April 21, 1955. See also "Denies Ties of Jews and Reds," *Waukesha* (WI) *Daily Freeman*, April 21, 1955; and the military paper *Stars and Stripes*, April 23, 1955. The McCarthy testimonial speech can be found in the Richard J. O'Melia Collection, Speeches IV, folder 5, Hesburgh Library, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN.

<sup>54</sup> *Lima News*, November 19, 1954; *Charleston Daily Mail*, November 17, 1954; *Jews Against Communism*, 10:2, 1; 12:1, 8, AJLAC, 1949-1972 and n.d., AJA.

<sup>55</sup> Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 149. Fineberg was not alone in his opposition to Schultz. Although the AJLAC initially attracted Jewish New Dealers, once it became associated with McCarthyism, these people dropped out, leaving behind only a "corps of right-wing extremists." Even Don Isaac Levine, surely a hard-line anti-Communist, dropped out, saying that "Schultz's alliance with the McCarthy [Westbrook] Pegler axis has set back the cause of anti-communism so far that Schultz has nullified the purposes to which he dedicated himself to at the start." Congressman Abraham J. Multer (D-NY) also resigned, complaining that "Schultz was just using the League to further his own interests," while Vivienne T. Wechter, then chair of the Women's Division of the Liberal Party in the Bronx left the AJLAC and described Schultz as a "handmaiden" of Kohlberg "who got his satisfaction out of seeing his name in print and feeling like a big shot." Marja, "The Strange Case," December 9, 1954.

<sup>56</sup> S. Andhil Fineberg interview, conducted by Isaiah Terman, April 19, 1974, Fineberg Collection 149, 5, 2.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, "New Rabbi in Clarksdale Fighter Against Communism," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, September 12, 1962; *Clarksdale Press Register*, October 8-9, 1962, Perry E. Nussbaum Papers, 1947-1972, manuscript collection, AJA (hereafter cited as the Nussbaum Collection) no. 430, 3, 8.

<sup>58</sup> I am grateful to Elizabeth Wagner, an agent of Ogilvy and Mather, for communicating with James Rado on my behalf. Her e-mail to me on October 19, 2009, confirmed that Benjamin Schultz is mentioned in the first script of *HAIR*, but that Rado has no recollection of how or why. She continues "He believes that his writing partner, Gerome Ragni, may have been the one who included him in the script, but unfortunately Gerome passed away many years ago." See also Scott Miller, "HAIR—An analysis by Scott Miller," <http://www>

.orlok.com/hair/holding/articles/HairArticles/scottmiller.html (accessed January 29, 2009). Miller describes Schultz as a "high-profile Jewish political figure."

<sup>59</sup> *American Jewish Year Book* (AJYB), 62 (New York, 1962), 72; Alvin Labens, telephone interview conducted by Allen Krause, July 2007.

<sup>60</sup> *Clarksdale Press-Register*, July 13, 1962, Schultz nearprint.

<sup>61</sup> In 1944 Schultz married Charlotte ("Lottie") Elkind, the executive secretary of his Yonkers congregation.

<sup>62</sup> *Brunswick* (GA) *News*, August 18, 1961; *The Rotrygram*, 16:6, August 24, 1961, Fineberg Collection 149, Series A; correspondence, 1939-1974, box 4, folder 7, AJLAC, 1949-1972 and n.d. AJA.

<sup>63</sup> Reference is apparently to Lt. General Albert Coady Wedemeyer who served primarily in the Far East during World War II, where he became a strong advocate for Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist China. After retirement he became closely connected to the China Lobby. "Camden P.T.A. To Hear Noted Anti-Communist Speaker Tonight," *Southeast Georgian*, November 2, 1961, Nussbaum Collection, 430, 4, 7. Schultz apparently did not write any books, although he did translate from the Yiddish a booklet written by Gregor Aronson, a Russian Jewish refugee.

<sup>64</sup> Fineberg Collection 149, 4, 7; *Brunswick News*, July 2, 1962; *Yonkers* (NY) *Herald Statesman*, July 21, 1962; Schultz nearprint.

<sup>65</sup> Curtis Wilkie, *Dixie: A Personal Odyssey Through Events That Shaped the Modern South* (New York, 2001), 113-115.

<sup>66</sup> James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York, 1994), 236.

<sup>67</sup> John Dittmer, "The Politics of the Mississippi Movement, 1954-1964," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, ed. Charles W. Eagles (Jackson, MS, 1986), 79.

<sup>68</sup> Steven F. Lawson, *In Pursuit of Power: Southern Blacks and Electoral Politics, 1965-1982* (New York, 1985), 21 as quoted in Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth*, 259.

<sup>69</sup> AJYB, 62, 5; 64, 72; Labens interview. Labens estimated that 95 percent of the Jews in Clarksdale around 1960 were merchants, and that Jews owned almost all the dry goods stores in town. Although business declined as a result of the reduction in the local work force, Main Street remained viable until Wal-Mart arrived in the mid-seventies.

<sup>70</sup> *Clarksdale Press Register* June 1, 1962; *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, June 1, 1963, Schultz nearprint. It was not unusual for the Memphis newspaper to cover events in Clarksdale, which is almost seen as a suburb of Memphis though it is seventy-one miles southwest of the metropolis.

<sup>71</sup> *Clarksdale Press-Register*, July 13; *Clarksdale Press-Register*, August 23, 1962, Schultz nearprint.

<sup>72</sup> *Clarksdale Clarion-Ledger*, February 10, 1963, Schultz nearprint.

<sup>73</sup> Nussbaum Collection, 430, 3, 8.

<sup>74</sup> *New York Times*, July 26, 1948; *Charleston Daily Mail*, July 13, 1949; *New York Times*, July 14, 1949.

<sup>75</sup> The high school youth groups connected to the Mississippi Reform synagogues all belonged to the SOFTY region of the National Federation of Temple Youth, an arm of the UAHC. In the 1960s SOFTY covered Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and West Tennessee (i.e. Memphis). They customarily gathered annually for a regional conclave and on other occasions for statewide “conclavettes” at member synagogues. See the Nussbaum Collection, 430, 3, 8, for all correspondence on this issue.

<sup>76</sup> Perry Nussbaum served as rabbi of Beth Israel Congregation in Jackson, MS.

<sup>77</sup> James Meredith integrated the University of Mississippi approximately seven weeks prior to Schultz’s controversial talk.

<sup>78</sup> Rabbi Charles Mantinband was the spiritual leader of B’nai Israel Congregation in Hattiesburg, MS. In the 1950s and 1960s. He and Nussbaum were the only rabbis in Mississippi who were activists on behalf of civil rights for African Americans. Nussbaum Collection, 430, 3, 8.

<sup>79</sup> The only non-Reform rabbi in Mississippi at the time was Samuel Lieb, who held the pulpit in a small Orthodox synagogue in Greenwood.

<sup>80</sup> Reference to a Rabbinical Placement Committee should not be given too much weight. It was not until 1964, when Rabbi Malcolm Stern was hired to be the first director of the joint CCAR/UAHC Rabbinical Placement Commission that either the CCAR or the UAHC had much influence on the placement of rabbis. Prior to that time rabbis either contacted the synagogues directly or were contacted by lay people inviting them to apply for an open position. For all practical purposes, each congregation enjoyed near total autonomy allowing each to hire whomever they wished.

<sup>81</sup> Nussbaum Collection, 430, 3, 8.

<sup>82</sup> James Wax interview, conducted by Allen Krause, June 22, 1966.

<sup>83</sup> Preventing their teens from attending youth events in Clarksdale was apparently the closest the other rabbis could get to ostracizing his congregation.

<sup>84</sup> *Greenville (MS) Delta Democrat-Times*, February 1, 1963, 2; *Jackson (MS) Clairion-Ledger*, February 1, 1963, Nussbaum Collection.

<sup>85</sup> At the UAHC Convention.

<sup>86</sup> I am not sure why Schwartzman reacted in this way other than to suggest that Schultz was a very emotional issue for him. In an April 16, 1963 letter to Irv Schulman, executive director of the New Orleans office of ADL, Schwartzman thanks Schulman for sending him a copy of the Citizen’s Council précis of Schultz’s speech and continues: “Birds of a feather certainly flock together. The article contained therein was the most terrible one ever made by a rabbi in the United States, as far as I know, and this is the statement for which I can never forgive the author.” Schultz nearprint.

<sup>87</sup> Schwartzman served in Greenville from 1960 to 1964 and served the Vicksburg and Lexington, MS, synagogues from 1966 to 1989. He had a brief interlude in between as rabbi of Temple Beth El in Flint, Michigan.

<sup>88</sup> Head of the UAHC’s New Congregation Division and a member of the CCAR Placement Committee.



<sup>89</sup> Brickner headed the UAHC's Commission on Religious Affairs and codirected its Commission on Social Action.

<sup>90</sup> Diane McWhorter discusses this in *Carry Me Home, Birmingham, Alabama: The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York, 2001). See also Jack Salzman and Cornel West, eds., *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States* (New York and Oxford, 1997), 287; George Lewis, *The White South and the Red Menace: Segregationists, Anticommunism, and Massive Resistance, 1945-1965* (Gainesville, FL, 2004), 51-88.

<sup>91</sup> *Jewish Post and Opinion*, June 2, 1978, 7.

<sup>92</sup> Benjamin Schultz to Dr. Jacob Marcus, March 25, 1971; Marcus to Schultz, March 28, 1971, Schultz nearprint.

<sup>93</sup> P. Allen Krause, "Rabbis and Negro Rights in the South, 1954-1967." *American Jewish Archives*: 21:1 (April, 1969), 25-26.

<sup>94</sup> Schultz to Marcus, March 25, 1971. This letter and Marcus's brief response, in which he thanked Schultz for the "letter explaining your point of view and the clipping," and concluded saying that these documents would now be filed in the AJA "so that your side of the story is on record" are found in Schultz nearprint.

<sup>95</sup> I am grateful to Margie Kerstine for calling this article to my attention.

<sup>96</sup> Wilkie, *Dixie: A Personal Odyssey*.

<sup>97</sup> Wilkie to Allen Krause, July 22, 1966.

<sup>98</sup> *Delta Democrat-Times*, February 1, 1963, 2; *New York Times*, July 14, 1949.

<sup>99</sup> History of Temple Emanu-El; "Yankee Rabbi Finds The South is 'Home,'" *Clarksdale Press Register*, June 7, 1972. Telephone interviews conducted by Allen Krause: Dr. Alvin Labens, who praised Schultz as representing the congregation well in the non-Jewish community, being a good speaker and pastor, and being personable (July 2007); Irwin Kaufman, who succinctly summarized, "As far as I'm concerned, I think he did a good job." (July 2007). Aaron Kline added, "There was no problem—he got along very well," (October 28, 2008). *Clarksdale Press Register*, May 19, 1976; *The Torch*, (Summer 1972), Schultz nearprint.

<sup>100</sup> *CCAR Yearbook* (New York, 1979), 142.

<sup>101</sup> P. Allen Krause, "The Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights," Part Two (rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, June, 1967), 304-305.