

**Jacob Israel de Haan in Mandate Palestine:  
was the victim of the first Zionist political assassination a “Jewish Lawrence of Arabia”?**

LUDY GIEBELS

**Introduction**

On 30 June 1924 Jacob Israel de Haan was assassinated in Jerusalem, the first of the three notorious political murders of Jews in Zionist history.<sup>1</sup> The second one was the (still not completely resolved) murder in 1933 of Chaim Arlosoroff, the head of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, and the third, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. In all three assassinations what can be termed “the Arab factor” played a role. De Haan has subsequently been remembered as a kind of Jewish Lawrence of Arabia, a champion of the rights of the Palestinian Arabs, and he is therefore considered (by many Zionists) to be a traitor to his own people and specifically to the Zionist cause.<sup>2</sup> But is such a legacy justified? This article will argue that De Haan primarily was an extraordinary advocate for Jerusalem’s ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazi community. In that capacity he embodied probably an even greater threat to the Palestinian Zionist organization than for his standing among the Arabs. His presence challenged the fiction that Zionism was the sole representative of Jewry in the National Home. We shall see, as well, that there are distinct British dimensions to his tumultuous career in Palestine that proved to be of great consequence. Although in Israeli historiography he still is largely dismissed as an ineffectual maverick, he is revered by ultra-Orthodox Jewry worldwide. For the grand old man of Israeli Orthodox politics, Agudat Israel’s Menahem Porush (1916–2010), De Haan was a main inspiration.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Nahman Ben Yehuda, *Political Assassinations by Jews: A Rhetorical Device for Justice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> See Michael Berkowitz, “Rejecting Zion, Embracing the Orient: The Life and Death of Jacob Israel De Haan”, in *Orientalism and the Jews*, ed. Ivan Kalmar and Derek Penslar (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 109–24; an earlier version appeared as “Double Trouble: A Call to Investigate the Life and After-Lives of De Vriendt and De Haan”, in *Arnold Zweig: Sein Werk im Kontext der deutschsprachigen Exilliteratur: Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik A*, 49 (1999): 111–24.

<sup>3</sup> Tom Segev The making of history/Man of the worlds in *Ha’aretz*, 7 March 2010.

## The road to Jerusalem

Jacob Israel de Haan, born in 1881, grew up in the family of a Dutch small-town *chazan*. He became a teacher and already as a boy had literary ambitions. In 1904 he published the novel *Pijpelijntjes* (“Notes from Neighbourhood The Pijp”) which created a scandal in the Netherlands. It was the first Dutch novel to depict, without any apology, a homosexual relationship between two adolescent men. It also had the character of an underground story, because the setting was a working-class area and petty crime and paid – homosexual – sex were treated in an offhand manner. De Haan lost his position as a teacher and also as the editor of the children’s page of the country’s leading Socialist newspaper, *Het Volk*. He turned to law and graduated in 1916 with a thesis about the semantics of the notion of culpability. In 1907, he married a much older non-Jewish woman, a doctor whom he had met when he was examined by her for his teaching job.

But in 1915 De Haan had experienced a severe mental crisis, which was probably triggered by the death of his strictly observant mother. He then began to publish his poetry, referring to himself as the Poet of the Jewish Song. The poet pledged support for Zionism and joined the Mizrachi, the religious branch within the Zionist Organization, but was far from a nominal member. De Haan never did anything half-hearted. His homosexuality had brought him to *Pijpelijntjes*, and his compassion for political prisoners in the Tsarist empire to visiting the Russian dungeons in 1912.<sup>4</sup> Early in 1919 his religious Zionism led him to that fateful journey to Jerusalem. In a letter to Chaim Weizmann he called himself, with typical bravado, one of the best poets of his generation and declared himself “anxious to work at the rebuilding of Land, People and Language.”<sup>5</sup> Weizmann was not impressed but an old acquaintance, Israel Zangwill, the grand old man from the Herzl era, warmly supported De Haan’s application for a Palestine visa.

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<sup>4</sup> He had published *In Russische gevangenissen* (In Russian prisons) (Amsterdam: Maatschappij voor Goede en Goedkoope Lectuur, 1913). His activities on behalf of these political prisoners were part of an international movement at that time.

<sup>5</sup> De Haan to Chaim Weizmann, Dec. 12 1919, Central Zionist Archives Jerusalem? (cza), Z4/106/14.

It was not easy to get into Palestine at that time. The country was still feeling the ravages of the Great War and had not enough food for the impoverished population. The Zionist Organization preferred agricultural pioneers. But De Haan had a great advantage: he was appointed the correspondent in Palestine for the leading Dutch daily, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, with a salary of 6,000 florins a year. Therefore he was financially independent and besides, as Zangwill summed up to Weizmann, as a journalist he would be a great asset “to your social forces in Palestine.”<sup>6</sup> It was assumed that De Haan would support the Zionist cause through his reports.

After a journey of three months, about which he gave vivid impressions to his readers in the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, De Haan arrived in March 1919 in one of those famous streaming, spring rains in Jerusalem. As he told his readers: “No, it is not a regal entrance of the Poet of the Jewish Song in Jerusalem. The railway station is unremarkable. It rains. The wind blows and it is cold.”<sup>7</sup>

### One of the respectable set

In bourgeois Holland, De Haan was considered odd. He was completely averse to conventional behaviour if it did not suit him. And even in the multicoloured community of mandate Jerusalem, which did not lack eccentrics, De Haan was immediately a conspicuous figure. Several memoirists give evidence of his striking personality. The Governor of Jerusalem, Ronald Storrs (whom De Haan admired), described him as “facially an intellectual version of Vincent van Gogh, whose dreadful glare of an unknown terror sometimes blazed in his eyes also.”<sup>8</sup> But probably many memories were coloured by De Haan’s last years, when he became mentally disturbed by the demonstrations of

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<sup>6</sup> Israel Zangwill to Weizmann, 23 Dec. 1918, copy in Institute for Research on Dutch Jewry, Jerusalem Box ii, marked “Aliyah”.

<sup>7</sup> “Jerusalem”, *Algemeen Handelsblad* (AH) 5 April 1919. The capital letters are his.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald Storrs, *Orientalisms* (London: I. Nicholson & Watson, 1937), 492. Storrs testifies that De Haan, at the time in which he himself was a target of Zionist ire, left at his house a bibliophile copy of Baudelaire’s poems with the message: “When all my people are cursing you, I send you this for a token that I believe in you, and what you are trying to do.” Other memoirs about De Haan include Muhammad Asad, *The Road to Mecca* (London: M. Reinhardt, 1954), 106–7; Norman and Helen Bentwich, *Mandate Memories, 1918–1948* (London: Hogarth Press, 1965), 73–4; Frederick Kisch, *Palestine Diary* (London: Gollancz, 1938); Horace Samuel, *Unholy Memories of the Holy Land* (London: Hogarth Press, 1930), 122–4; Wolfgang Weisl, *Der Kampf um das Heilige Land: Palästina von heute* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1925), 198–206.

contempt from Jerusalem's Zionists, including being spat on and receiving persistent death threats from 1922 onwards.<sup>9</sup>

For all his eccentricity, though, De Haan was an astute and highly intelligent man. Therefore it was logical that he associated with those he ironically called the “respectable people of Jerusalem”. His feuilletons in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* were popular, because he described life in the Holy City like a medieval chronicle, in an unabashed personal way and with a malicious wittiness.<sup>10</sup> Although, of course, his audience was comparatively small, the Dutch Jewish community ranked higher in the Zionist Organization than its modest number of adherents would seem to justify.

Thus, although the Zionists in Palestine may have looked on De Haan with some trepidation from his first step into the country, he was certainly, at least in the first three years, part of the establishment. In 1920 he became, together with the Zionist celebrity and later right-wing leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky, a lecturer in penal and Ottoman law at the Government Law School, which was founded by the Mandate government to train higher civil servants for Palestine. And in May 1920 he was one of the five defenders of members of the self-defence organization, the Haganah, who were tried after the Arab riots in Jaffa.<sup>11</sup> Because of a leg injury, and perhaps also due to his penchant for drama or exhibitionism (as his less charitable contemporaries would have it), De Haan was brought into the courtroom on a stretcher. He was also one of the few Jews who had dared to visit the Western Wall in Jerusalem at the height of the Nebi Moussa riots a month before.<sup>12</sup>

All this changed at the beginning of 1922, when the British press tycoon Lord Northcliffe visited Palestine. In order to put that period into context, one must first look into the principle ideological preoccupations of De Haan, which were for him the most urgent issues for Jews in Mandate Palestine: the Arab question and the status of Jewish religious institutions in Palestine.

### **De Haan and the Arab question in Palestine**

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<sup>9</sup> The first sentence of one of his most beautiful feuilletons, titled “25” is: “How silly the twenty-fifth is, when one has not been murdered on the twenty-fourth.” *AH* 13 June 1923.

<sup>10</sup> For the *AH* he wrote 494 feuilletons (c. 1,200 pages) in four and a half years. The complete text can be found in the Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren (Digital Library of Dutch Literature) <http://www.dbnl.org/auteurs/auteur.php?id=haan008> (accessed Oct. 2014).

<sup>11</sup> See the detailed report of the session, “Voor den Krijgsraad” (Before the court-martial), *AH* 25 May 1920, dated 9 May.

<sup>12</sup> “De stad in opstand” (The city in revolt), *AH* 26 April 1920, dated 8 April.

With a natural feeling for justice, perhaps the most consistent trait in his erratic life, De Haan saw from the beginning the problems that the rights of the Arab indigenous population would pose for the Zionist aspiration to establish a Jewish National Home. Even on his way to Palestine he had written several times about the role of Arab national consciousness in the new postwar world. He was particularly troubled by the Zionist boycott of Arab labour and the pressure brought to bear on Jews who still employed Arabs. His views were by no means exceptional. Several prominent Zionists warned against the optimistic view that Palestine was a kind of tabula rasa where Jews could immigrate without consequence. But in spite of these views on the Arabs De Haan was – this must be emphasized – an ardent Jewish nationalist and remained so until his untimely death. It is therefore not out of character that soon after his arrival in Palestine he had collided with the British authorities because of anti-Arab utterances.<sup>13</sup> In an interview with one of the important Palestinian leaders, Aref Paha al-Dayani, he spoke condescendingly about Arab nationalism and repeated the Zionist refrain that the Arabs inhabited such a large area that the Palestinian Arabs could easily move elsewhere.<sup>14</sup>

In his feuilletons De Haan often wrote about Arabs, especially after he befriended Adil Aweidah and his brother Abdul Salaam. At the end of 1921 he moved into the summerhouse of Abdul Salaam and became part of the extended Arab and Greek households which lived around the courtyard. Some of his most charming feuilletons were devoted to that small world, while others were dedicated to Jewish institutions in old Jerusalem such as orphanages and the Shaare Zedek hospital. And yet, especially surprising in the light of his later reputation, when one reads his feuilletons, one seldom finds a good word for the morals of the Arabs: they are purely self-interested and money plays a highly important role, even in their friendships. Of course, this was not an unusual stereotyping of Arabs. T. E. Lawrence himself was not devoid of prejudices against Arabs. Yet it seems strange that De Haan had so little to say about the Arabs' more endearing traits. A strong example is a somewhat malicious depiction of his bosom friend Adil, who visited him in the Shaare Zedek hospital where De Haan was lying "tired and close to death." He wrote:

Of course Adil Effendi comes many times. But it is hard on him lately, Ramadan has begun.

He swears on the beard of the prophet that he will fast the whole month. It is nearly June and

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<sup>13</sup> This occurred in April 1919; see cza, collection L3.

<sup>14</sup> "Arabische en Joodsche politiek" (Arab and Jewish politics), *AH* 14 Aug. 1919, dated 2 July.

all the respectable people of Jerusalem wear their summer clothes. Adil Effendi muses: “If I (De Haan) should die, could he have the new shirts I had bought at Morums?” I bequeath him the shirts. “Perhaps, my friend,” Adil muses: “Allah will send you recovery, and I shall not get the pretty shirts. Give me one now for safety’s sake.” Nothing is so dear to my friend Adil Effendi as beautiful clothes.<sup>15</sup>

One can find similar descriptions about the many street urchins. This kind of thing **however** seems not to have greatly disturbed De Haan; rather, he appears to be amused.

It is significant that an intellectual like De Haan did not find friends among the Arab academics. Jerusalem did not lack Palestinian Arabs who had studied in Beirut, Constantinople, or even at Oxford or Cambridge. Apart from the Aweidahs, he consorted with policemen and generally with Arab young men who took him along on horse rides on moonlit nights, probably the most happy moments in his Palestinian life. And this connected him with the Amir Abdallah, to whom he was introduced by his landlord Abdul Aweidah. The latter was an agent for Abdallah. He took care of his horses and accommodation when he or his entourage visited Jerusalem. De Haan met the Amir for the first time in February 1922 but only in June 1923 does he mention wearing Arab clothes (“an Amir dressed up person”). One photograph in which he was dressed like that has become prominent and contributed markedly to his fame and notoriety as the “Jewish Lawrence of Arabia”. This (and also the rumours of his homosexual relations with young Arab boys) has obscured his crucial role as an ultra-Orthodox politician. Greater attention will be paid to his visit to Amman to see King Hussein, which is interwoven with the spectacle and last act of De Haan’s life.

It is necessary here to explore De Haan’s role in Orthodox Jerusalem. We should bear in mind that his habitat was Jewish Orthodoxy and he never plunged as deeply in Arab society as did Lawrence and famous kindred spirits like Harry St John Philby in Transjordan and Muhammed Asad (born Leopold Weiss) in Arabia.

### **An Orthodox home in the Holy Land**

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<sup>15</sup> “Poorten der Gerechtigheid” (Gates of Justice), *AH* 24 June 1920, dated 4 June. The name of the hospital founded by Moshe Wallach in 1902, Shaare Zedek, means “Gates of Justice”.

De Haan came to Jerusalem as a staunch Mizrachist, the main Orthodox group within the Zionist Organization. Among Jewish Orthodoxy in Mandate Palestine there existed a wide spectrum of opinions with regard to Zionism. The Zionist Organization aspired to the establishment of a Jewish public community and possibly a state, and the Mizrachi lived in an uneasy relation with the rest of the organization. Their strict religious observance was not palatable for the liberal and socialist majority that became stronger in the aftermath of the First World War and the apparent success of the Balfour Declaration. In the creation of the National Home, Mizrachi did not appear to fill a significant role. There was a certain irony in this, because the appeal of religious Jewry as the People of the Book was an important factor in the success of Zionism in the Gentile world, especially among the English for whom the myth of the Redemption after the return of the Jews to the Holy Land was still vivid. Even a cynical politician like Balfour shared this feeling.

On the other side of the spectrum was Palestine's contingent of ultra-Orthodox Jewry, in great part (but not exclusively) the East European Hasidim. For them, Zionism was a false Messianism, no less than a work of Satan. The establishment of Jews in the Holy Land for purposes other than prayer and religious devotion was reserved for the Redemption when the Messiah would come to earth.<sup>16</sup> In between stood Agudat Israel, which was established in 1912 in Frankfurt as a counterweight to the non-expressly religious Zionist Organization. Most of the Orthodox believed that state and religion in the Holy Land had to be unified. At the basis of the Agudah stood a well-considered ideology: the Torah presented to Moses at Mount Sinai was not only a Divine revelation but also the blueprint of a constitution for Jewish collective existence.<sup>17</sup> While things were different in the Diaspora, where Orthodox Jews were bound by an oath that obliged them to obey the local laws, in the Holy Land only the laws of the Torah could reign. After the Balfour Declaration, Agudah also attempted to establish Orthodox colonies in Palestine. Therefore the organization came to be considered a Zionist collaborator by zealous anti-Zionists. The boundaries between the different Orthodox groups were not, however, always clear-cut.

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<sup>16</sup> On Jewish Orthodoxy and Zionism see Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira, eds., *Zionism and Religion* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998); Ben Halpern and Jehuda Reinharz, *Zionism and the Creation of a New Society* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 185–91; Arie Morgenstern, *Hastening Redemption: Messianism and the Resettlement of the Land of Israel*, trans. Joel Linsider (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, trans. Michael Swirsky and Jonathan Chipman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Alan Mittleman, *The Politics of Torah: The Jewish Political Tradition and the Founding of Agudat Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

The Zionist establishment in general strongly condemned and vilified the Orthodox. Weizmann was appalled by the Jewish quarter in the Old City, where most of them lived on the alms of the Chalukkah, the charitable institution that collected contributions from all over the world. David Ben Gurion wrote: “This sector is dead and buried, a population of obscurantists and schnorrers.”<sup>18</sup> Even Gershom Scholem, no stranger to religious spiritualism, for decades joked with his mother in their correspondence about the refusal of the Orthodox Dr Wallach (incidentally, De Haan’s closest friend) to shake her hand.<sup>19</sup>

De Haan moved from the Mizrachi to Agudism and soon became one of their most important leaders. He had found a spiritual home in the anti-Zionist Orthodoxy in Jerusalem. Part of this change was precipitated by his bitter disappointment with the Palestine Mizrachi and also because he felt slighted, even ridiculed, by the mainstream Zionists. But perhaps more significant is the fact that he became enamoured of what he regarded as the natural piety of the Orthodox of Jerusalem. He did not see them as paupers and unkempt, bearded rabbis with unseemly large families. To him they did not represent an ugly vestige of the East European shtetl that many Zionists sought to flee. De Haan, on the contrary, asserted that the Zionist colonies – which were far from self-sufficient – could be considered the new Chalukkah. In his circle, we see that Jerusalem ultra-Orthodoxy could be remarkably varied and more sophisticated than one might expect.

Moshe Wallach became his best friend, as already mentioned. Wallach was a German doctor who had settled in 1892 in Jerusalem, where he founded a clinic in the Old City. His modern methods elicited strong hostility. In posters he was denounced as a murderer for advocating vaccination against diphtheria. To coax patients to his struggling practice, he issued a lottery among them. He won the confidence of increasing numbers and in 1902 opened a new hospital at the end of Jaffa Road, Shaare Zedek. In early Mandate times, this was the most modern and important health institution of Palestine, used by Jews and Arabs alike. It had, distinctively, special wings for quarantine. Wallach, who became himself an institution for the whole of Jerusalem, headed the hospital with Teutonic vigour until 1947. He was strictly Orthodox and like many others refused to

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<sup>18</sup> David Ben Gurion quoted in Cecil Bloom, “The Institution of *halukkah*: A Historical Review”, *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 36 (1999–2001): 23; Benjamin Ish-Shalom, *Rav Avraham Itzhak HaCohen Kook: Between Rationalism and Mysticism*, trans. Ora Wiskind-Elper (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 14.

<sup>19</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Mutter und Sohn im Briefwechsel 1917–1946* (letters of Betty Scholem and Gershom Scholem), ed. Itta Shedletzky with Thomas Sparr (Munich: C. H. Beck with the Leo Baeck Institute, 1989), 146, 191, 327, 498.



speak Hebrew, claiming that the holy tongue should only be used for religious purposes. And of course he refused to shake hands with women.<sup>20</sup>

Another friend was Abraham Zvi Goldsmit, who was born in Jerusalem and raised in Amsterdam. Goldsmit had worked with his wife Sara for the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, a German philanthropic institution that established schools in the Near East. He was also among the first physical education teachers in Palestine and later founded the national sport institution Maccabi.<sup>21</sup> In 1919, he ran an orphanage for boys and it was in this orphanage that De Haan, who in his homosexuality had strong affections for young boys, experienced his happiest moments. He celebrated most of the Jewish holidays at the orphanage where he enjoyed the noise and bustle of adolescent boys, perhaps considering himself most at home there.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, he was a frequent guest of the strictly Orthodox Miss Annie Landau, an Englishwoman who ran the Evalina de Rothschild School in Jerusalem. This institution for girls mainly trained stenographers and Miss Landau's pupils fared well in yearly contests where all the typists of the British Empire were assembled. With her bi-weekly get-togethers and yearly Purim Ball, she was considered the greatest hostess in Jerusalem at that time. She included all Jerusalemites as her guests "without distinction in race or creed", as De Haan aptly put it many times in his feuilletons. Until the end of his life he visited her, sometimes with his friend Adil. Landau too frustrated the Zionists by refusing to speak Hebrew (notably, at a trial) and, even worse, she refused to stand up when the *Hatikvah* ("The Hope", a poem later adopted as the national anthem) was played.<sup>23</sup> Landau mentioned that De Haan was tremendously appreciative when treated kindly and felt best when he could act as a benefactor.<sup>24</sup> After his murder, rumours spread that De Haan had done nothing without her knowledge.

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<sup>20</sup> See Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete* (London: Abacus, 2001), 53.

<sup>21</sup> On Goldsmit see David Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Founders and Builders of Israel* (Hebrew) 19 delen, [n.p.] 1947–70) III, 1286, online at [www.tidhar.tourolib.org](http://www.tidhar.tourolib.org) (accessed Oct. 2014).

<sup>22</sup> See the first of his feuilletons about the boys' orphanage, "Purimfeest te Jeruzalem" (Purim in Jerusalem), *AH*, 7 May 1919.

<sup>23</sup> On Landau see Storrs, *Orientations*, 491.

<sup>24</sup> Annie Landau to Ronald Storrs, 16 Nov. 1924, Storrs Papers, Pembroke College, Cambridge.

His strongest spiritual influence, however, was Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, who lived in poverty on the Deutsche Platz in the Old City as the revered leader of the Hungarian Ashkenazim.<sup>25</sup> Sonnenfeld, born in Verbo, Hungary, in 1849, was a prodigy who became *Moré*<sup>26</sup> when he was twenty years old and went to live in Jerusalem with his master, Avraham Schag, in 1873. The formidable Hungarian Orthodox community sent much money to the pious Jews in Palestine. Sonnenfeld was instrumental in the building of the modern Batei Ugarin, one of the first Jewish settlements outside the walls, but he himself stayed in the Deutsche Platz, seeing himself as an heir to German and Dutch Jewry. His theological outlook was ultra-Orthodox. He was strictly against the teaching of any secular subject in Jewish schools, causing him to clash repeatedly with emancipating institutions like those of the *Hilfsverein* and of course the Zionists, for whom he was the rabbinical obscurantist par excellence.

However, he was not the dour character as painted by his opponents. On the internet, one can find many of his homilies about the daily portions of the Torah that were read in the synagogue. As De Haan confirmed in many remarks about the rabbi, he was a compassionate and humorous pastor endowed with great psychological insight. When once his pupils disparaged the young socialist *Chalutsim* ('pioneers') for violent behaviour, he pointed out that they had come from regions infested with violence and should be forgiven. It is highly significant that he was befriended and esteemed by his ideological arch-enemy, the Zionist Chief Rabbi Avraham Kook.

In retrospect, it is intriguing that De Haan did not align himself with Kook. After all, in 1919 De Haan was still an ardent Zionist. Kook, while remaining staunchly Orthodox, attempted to connect traditional Judaism to modern youth and Zionism.<sup>27</sup> In addition, like De Haan, Kook was a tormented soul and a literary man, admired by writers such as Agnon and Brenner. Both Kook and De Haan were vilified to the extreme in the streets of Jerusalem by their opponents: radical left-wingers spat on De Haan (as noted earlier) and radical Agudah youngsters threw buckets of water in Kook's face. De Haan in the beginning certainly admired Kook and fell under his charismatic spell. But he grew irritated by Kook's long-winded speeches and ultimately considered him as another pompous Zionist official. There is no doubt that De Haan would have been less ostracized had he

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<sup>25</sup> Walter Pietsch, "Über die Wurzeln der Ultra-Orthodoxie im ungarischen Judentum: Gestalt und Wirken von Rabbi Chaim Josef Sonnenfeld \*1849 Verbó (Ungarn) gest. 1932", *Jerusalem' Aschkenas: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 7 (1998): 2.

<sup>26</sup> In this context, the highest title in rabbinical education.

<sup>27</sup> See Yehudah Mirsky, *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014).

affiliated with Kook. But, although he would have benefited from a tolerant and understanding pastor who was accepted by the once cherished Zionists, he probably needed the straight-laced variant Sonnenfeld more.

It is certain that Sonnenfeld had expressed understanding and some sort of consolation for De Haan's homosexuality, which became his enduring demon. Although it is generally assumed that he had relations with Arab men, homoeroticism among the Orthodox, in various forms, was less frowned on than is generally believed.<sup>28</sup>

In 1919, Sonnenfeld was recognized as the leader of Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox, the Edah Haredit, against the ongoing Zionist encroachment. At the time, this party was still affiliated with the Agudah. It is difficult to estimate their numerical strength. The census of 1922 did not discern between levels of religiosity among Jews. Certainly, in De Haan's lifetime there would have been a strong anti-Zionist, religious majority in Jerusalem. Yet the question remains as to what extent this majority identified with the Sonnenfeld group. They claimed to represent first 1,200 families or 35,000 persons, which seems a reasonable estimate.<sup>29</sup> Of course, we should keep in mind that, in addition, there were other anti-Zionist Orthodox groups who were not affiliated to Sonnenfeld, such as the Sephardim.

De Haan in the meantime had become the Jerusalem representative of the Pekidim and Amarkalim of the Holy Land, an organization based in The Hague that distributed alms for the Dutch and German members of the Chalukkah and was considered as rich as its Hungarian counterpart.<sup>30</sup> He also became an executive board member of the Jerusalem branch of Agudat Israel under the chairmanship of Wallach. In this capacity De Haan functioned as a legal expert in matters such as land purchase. And most famously, he became the leading diplomat of the group.

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<sup>28</sup> See Berkowitz, "Rejecting Zion", 120.

<sup>29</sup> Memorandum from the Ashkenazic Council [the Sonnenfeld group], Jerusalem, to the British Foreign Minister, 12 Dec. 1922, Kew, National Archives (NA) CO733/41; Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 71, 73, estimates that, after correction of the official numbers in the census of 1922, in Jerusalem nearly 38% of the population was Jewish. For the district of Jerusalem, which comprised a larger area, McCarthy gives 34,431 religious Jews. The estimate of the Foreign Office in 1926 was 3,000 to 10,000 persons; Agudat Israel to League of Nations, 1 Nov. 1926, NA FO/371/12267.

<sup>30</sup> See Bloom, "Institution of *halukkah*".

## The diplomat

The first endeavour of De Haan on behalf of the Sonnenfeld group, or Ashkenazic Council, as they signed their dispatches, was to the King-Crane Commission that visited Palestine in June 1919. This had originally been set up as a so-called Inter-allied Commission to investigate the possibility of establishing a National Home for the Jews in Palestine, as announced in the Balfour Declaration. Of course, the Declaration was subordinate to the more extensive regulations of the peace negotiations after the First World War. In the end, the French and British dropped out and only the Americans manned the commission, which was named after Henry King and Charles Crane<sup>31</sup>. De Haan functioned on this occasion only as the interpreter for an Agudist delegation of ten men, which acted independently of the Zionist delegation. Agudah's demands were that it also should be granted immigration certificates for Palestine and consulted in the decisions concerning Palestine at the Peace Conference.<sup>32</sup> Whatever the results of these talks, the report of this commission, which was severely critical of Zionism, was consigned to a drawer and never published.

Perhaps because the report met a quiet death, the Agudah's action did not attract much attention. But a few years later alarm broke out among the Zionists when Lord Northcliffe visited Palestine and received several delegations which were opposed to the Zionist presence in Palestine. Preparing a National Home for the Jews had turned out to be no easy matter. The Peace Conference had divided the region between Britain and France in more or less independent states with Palestine as a mandate under Britain, including the proviso of the Balfour Declaration. A number of bloody riots between Arabs and Jews from 1919 to 1921 dispelled any illusion about the possibility that a Jewish National Home could be implemented peacefully. Although in 1922 the country was fairly quiet, it was apparent that it was in a fragile state.

Northcliffe was the mightiest press baron in the United Kingdom, a man who owned the most important newspapers in the country, ranging from the respectable *Times* to the popular *Daily Mail*. He was a pioneer of the so-called yellow press, the notorious halfpenny papers. The establishment looked down on this kind of sensationalism, but one should bear in mind that the readers of these newspapers were upwardly mobile, with more free time and education than the previous generation.

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<sup>31</sup> Henry King was a theologian, Charles Crane prominent in the Democratic Party.

<sup>32</sup> "De Commissie ontvangt" (The Commission receives) *AH* 7 Aug. 1919, dated 27 June.

It is also often forgotten that the press of the nineteenth century had been by no means been independent: it was subsidized mostly by political parties and acted as their mouthpiece.<sup>33</sup>

When visiting Palestine in February 1922, Northcliffe was returning from a world tour, most recently in India. There he had met the vast power of Islam, which made him sensitive to the Arab grievances against the National Home. It did not help that he was transported from his ship in armoured cars for safety reasons. And when he was brought to their colonies by proud Zionists, he was not charmed by the easygoing behaviour of the colonists, who wished to demonstrate their egalitarian ethos by showing that they were not impressed by the great man. Nor was there any love lost between the socialist-minded Zionists and Northcliffe. On the contrary, these visits confirmed his longstanding fear (shared by many other conservatives) that Palestine was importing young and active Bolsheviks.

This provided a fertile field for the Sonnenfeld group, who were among the many delegations that paid their respects to the lord. De Haan, the only English-speaking member, was their spokesman. De Haan informed Northcliffe about the compulsion by which the Zionist Organization tried to subordinate his community, the true successors of the people of the Torah and Old Testament. Probably, it was a new experience for Northcliffe to encounter Orthodox Jews who were against Zionism. As pointed out before, Zionism had appealed to some extent to Gentiles, not necessarily devout Christians, stemming from the idea of the return of the People of the Book to their rightful country. And now it turned out that these very people felt oppressed by the Zionists.

The Zionists were dismayed by the failure of the Chalutsim to impress the esteemed visitor, as well as by the hearing he gave to the Agudists. Northcliffe's views, predictably, were widely publicized in his press. His reports were not immune from antisemitism.<sup>34</sup> It was not possible, though, simply to discredit Northcliffe for hostility to Jews. He was accompanied by Philip Graves, who in a series of articles in the (Northcliffe-owned) *Times* exposed the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as an antisemitic fabrication.<sup>35</sup>

The brunt of the ire about the disappointing visit of the great man poured down in Jerusalem on the heads of the cursed Agudists and especially De Haan. In fact, what happened next justified the

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<sup>33</sup> Peter Catterall, Colin Seymour-Ure, and Adrian Smith, eds., *Northcliffe's Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press 1896–1996* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

<sup>34</sup> As cited in the *Egyptian Gazette* (!) 17 Feb. 1922.

<sup>35</sup> For dismay about the behaviour of the *Chalutsim* and the Agudah delegation, see CZA S25/670 and Z4/1445; see also notes by Frederick Kisch, 28 March 1922, CZA S4/1445 III.

many complaints about the social pressure of the Zionist establishment on the non-believers in their cause: young pioneers tried to molest rabbi Sonnenfeld and from now on De Haan regularly received death threats.

Palestine Zionists were frantically establishing institutions in order to facilitate the Zionist Organization and the Mandate government's control of the population. Democratic bodies were inaugurated to create a representative Palestinian Jewry that also could function as a mouthpiece to the authorities. That process had started in 1918 and by no means was complete in 1921. Most supposedly representative bodies remained provisional.<sup>36</sup> But even these small governing councils needed money for their work and therefore, in 1921, the Zionist Organization received consent from the government to raise a modest tax, a first important step towards the Jewish community attaining an official public status. As its enactment would have been in the hands of the Zionists, who were the best organized section, it was deemed a significant move towards the Zionist National Home. To raise a tax one needs a list of taxpayers and, therefore, the national camp proposed drawing up a list of Palestinian Jews. For those who did not want to pay taxes to the Zionists, there was the possibility of removing their names from the list. This, however, was the equivalent of declaring oneself a non-Jew. To the Orthodox who considered themselves the very guardians of Judaism, this was not a mere semantic matter. The outcry against the list led to another solution, a tax on matzo, which of course would hit particularly the many poor among the Orthodox. The Agudists took legal action, with De Haan as their legal representative.<sup>37</sup> After seventeen court sessions, they lost their case in 1923.

The most fundamental action, however, was the resistance against the establishment of an official rabbinate, one of the lasting central Jewish institutions in Palestine sanctioned by the High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel.<sup>38</sup> This provided for a Chief Rabbinate, to which the dissenting Jewish councils would be subordinated. Not surprisingly, the Rabbinate was a Zionist or at least Zionist-friendly creation that aspired to the integration of the Eastern European Ashkenazi community of Sonnenfeld, which maintained a strong tradition of separatism. The Jerusalem Agudah worked hard for recognition of their council on an equal footing with the Zionists. In this they were supported by brother organizations in Europe. Again it was De Haan who sent appeals on behalf of

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<sup>36</sup> Moshe Burstein, *Self-Government of the Jews in Palestine since 1900* (1934; repr. Westport, CT: Hyperion, 1976).

<sup>37</sup> "Voor het Paaschfeest" (Before Passover) *AH* 19 April 1923, dated 30 March.

<sup>38</sup> Bernard Wasserstein, *Herbert Samuel: A Political Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

the Jerusalem Agudah.<sup>39</sup> He appealed not only to the Colonial Office (in 1920 responsibility for Palestine was transferred from the Foreign to the Colonial Office) but also to the League of Nations, which was supposed to supervise the actions of the Mandate power. Especially after the murder of De Haan, Agudah was repeatedly accused of agitating against the National Home and therefore of treason to the Jewish people. Yet, these petitions did not speak out against a National Home and mandate. On the contrary, they waxed enthusiastic and grateful about it.<sup>40</sup> What the critics did or would not want to see is that the Agudists were also Jewish nationalists, albeit strictly Orthodox and therefore of a different type from the Zionists of the World Zionist Organization. In addition, De Haan, with all his bitter criticisms against Zionism, showed himself in his feuilletons as a nationalist, remarkably proud of the Jewish achievements in Palestine.

The visit of Northcliffe brought all these matters to a boiling point. In addition to the death threats his Jewish class at the Law School called a strike to demand his dismissal. While above all he prided himself as a poet, De Haan considered teaching his second great calling. He was by all accounts a gifted instructor, but the government bowed to agitation and De Haan was dismissed.<sup>41</sup> It was clearly a *Berufsverbot* preventing him from practising his profession for political reasons, because his capabilities as a teacher were undisputed and his Arab class of course did not join the strike. The cancellation of his lectureship was a tool to stop his anti-Zionist activities and he bitingly remarked: “The Hebrew university promises to become a model of objectivity and freedom of speech.”<sup>42</sup>

At the end of the strike, De Haan’s writings for the *Daily Express*, owned by the second press baron in Britain, Lord Beaverbrook, came under scrutiny. Beaverbrook travelled in the summer of 1923 to Palestine, accompanied by his right-hand man, James Douglas. De Haan, by then probably the most hated man in the community, visited them in the dead of the night because – as he told them – his life was in danger if it became known that he had visited another press baron. Beaverbrook was anti-Zionist, which could again be confused with antisemitism. His anti-Zionism originated in his friendship with a number of assimilated British Jews who rejected Zionism, because they considered

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<sup>39</sup> See petitions in July and November 1920 by the Dutch chief rabbis and from Zurich and Vienna, NA FO/371/4120 and 5185; E14274; E14493.

<sup>40</sup> Geneva, League of Nations Archives, 1/19498/2413, petitions and correspondence of the Agudah in 1922.

<sup>41</sup> See Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, De Haan Archive, no. 2, correspondence of De Haan with Bentwich Israel State Archives LS 700/3/23; CZA A255/678; De Haan’s plea after his dismissal to the Secretary of the Colonies, 4 Nov. 1923, NA CO 733/60 55095; comment by Herbert Samuel, CZA 733/52 62340.

<sup>42</sup> De Haan to Jacobus Kann, Dutch consul in Jerusalem, 20 June 1924, De Haan Archive, no. 6.

it an infringement on their citizenship. One of the leaders of this movement was his friend Edwin Montague, the Viceroy of India.<sup>43</sup>

Accusations that Beaverbrook simply was an antisemite can be challenged by the fact that he was an early opponent of Hitler and helped Jewish refugees. An unrelated but interesting aside is that he was tolerant towards homosexuals, an unusual attitude at that time. In any event, he hired De Haan as a correspondent for the *Daily Express*. The contributions were to be brief and in London they were equipped with the kind of sensational headlines favoured by the *Express*. Titles like “Wild reds of Zion” attracted the attention of the London Zionist bureau but, because the short articles were anonymous, it took a while before the name of the author was disclosed. Zionist circles were greatly dismayed when the correspondent’s identity was discovered. It was one thing for De Haan to have found an interested public among the readers of a dignified Dutch newspaper, but another, far worse, to have obtained an estimated 800,000 readers in the English-speaking world. Zionist influence is discernible in the fact that the editors of a Beaverbrook newspaper promised to send a stiff letter to their Jerusalem correspondent.<sup>44</sup> They did not want to implicate themselves in the intricate Palestinian politics and warned their correspondent that he should be, above all, terse and attempt to remain apolitical.

A few months later, the last act of De Haan’s Palestinian tragedy was introduced in Transjordan in the Shunet-Nimrîn camp where he met Hussein, who was not only King of the Hijaz but also for a short while Caliph of the Islamite believers.

### **A triangle in Amman: King Hussein, Frederick Kisch and De Haan**

In the course of 1923, De Haan met his match among the Zionists in the person of Frederick Hermann Kisch (1888–1943), who was appointed as political head of the Organization in Jerusalem. Kisch was a highly decorated and respected military man. In contrast to his intransigent East European predecessor, Menachem Ussishkin, Kisch was well-equipped to engage the Palestinian Arabs and the British. While De Haan increasingly became a “one-man wrecking crew” against

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<sup>43</sup> Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie, *Lord Beaverbrook: A Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1992); Robert Allen and John Frost, *Voice of Britain: The Inside Story of the Daily Express* (Cambridge: Stephens, 1983).

<sup>44</sup> Israel Cohen, London, to Frederick Kisch, Jerusalem, 29 Nov. 1923, CZA Z4/113.



Zionism in Palestine,<sup>45</sup> Kisch assumed the role of his nemesis and succeeded at last in defusing the harm. One of Kisch's means was to enlighten De Haan's many visitors with some "home truths" about their contact, probably his homosexuality and – a disclosure De Haan feared even more – the fact that he was still married to a non-Jewish woman.<sup>46</sup> Kisch's success as regards De Haan is most manifest in the latter's dealings with King Hussein.

At the beginning of 1924, Hussein visited his son, Amir Abdallah of Transjordan. He was in the middle of lengthy negotiations with Britain about an Anglo-Hijaz treaty that would protect him against his expansive neighbours, of whom the most dangerous was Ibn Sa'ud. One of the key conditions of the British was the recognition of the "special position" of England in Palestine, including acceptance of the Balfour Declaration. The Hashemite family's reunion in Transjordan (of the oldest son of Hussein, Ali, was also a part) culminated in a proclamation of Hussein as Caliph.<sup>47</sup>

De Haan had been a more or less regular visitor of Amir Abdallah's since 1922, and he was invited to meet the king, first in Amman and later in Shunet-Nimrîm, an oasis where the royal household moved in order to flee the inclement winter in Amman. He came there initially as a journalist but seized the opportunity to lobby for his beloved Agudah. Under his aegis, a delegation with the old rabbi Sonnenfeld, who for the first time left the Holy Land (if one regards Transjordan as outside it), had an audience with Hussein. De Haan described the event as an emotional meeting between two octogenarians who were drawn to each other by the wisdom of their advanced age.<sup>48</sup> The delegation presented a memorandum that emphasized the existence of the Agudat Israel with its alleged number of a million members. On this occasion it was reported that the king expressed comforting words to Rabbi Sonnenfeld and his companions: to his grief he had heard that not all people of Palestine paid heed to the Chief Rabbi (Sonnenfeld was elected Chief Rabbi by the Orthodox community of Jerusalem). As a consolation, he noted that the prophet Moses had wrestled with the same problem. More wise words were exchanged and coffee with sweets was served.

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<sup>45</sup> Berkowitz, "Double Trouble", 115.

<sup>46</sup> Kisch, *Palestine Diary*, is the part-publication of his complete diary (hereafter, *Diary Ms.*), now in the CZA.

<sup>47</sup> Yehoshua Porath, "The Palestinians and the Negotiations for the British-Hijazi Treaty, 1920–1925," *Asian and African Studies* 8 (1972): 20–48; for the special role of De Haan see Ludy Giebels, "De ontmoetingen van Frederick Kisch en Jacob Israël de Haan met Hoessein, koning van de Hedjaz, in januari 1924: een driehoeksverhouding in Amman" (The meetings of Fredrick Kisch and Jacob Israel de Haan with Hussein, King of the Hijaz, in January 1924: a triangle in Amman), *Studia Rosenthaliana* 13 (1979): 194–219.

<sup>48</sup> "Het bezoek bij den koning" (The visit to the king) *AH* 29 March 1924, dated 3 March.

In the meantime Kisch had assembled his own delegation. That was not easy because the Palestine Zionists did not see much use in diplomatic contacts with the Hashemites, who were not on good terms with the Palestinian Arabs. The Zionist delegation was also received in a friendly manner, which is not surprising in view of the quandary the king was in: to sign the Anglo-Hijaz treaty or to lessen Palestinian Arab distrust about a possible acceptance of the Balfour Declaration. The Zionist Sephardic Chief Rabbi, Jacob Meir (1856–1939), who had joined the party, received the usual decoration of the Grand Order of Istiklal (Independence), which the king later bestowed with admirable impartiality also on Sonnenfeld.<sup>49</sup>

Thus far Agudists and Zionists had been treated on roughly equal terms by the Hashemites and that, apparently, was the reason for De Haan's dissatisfaction. After Hussein was proclaimed Caliph, De Haan visited him again, now as a journalist, and allegedly received from him the declaration that he strongly condemned the "godless" Zionists and considered it his duty to mobilize the Islamic world against "present unreligious Zionism".<sup>50</sup> These harsh words caused much consternation in the Zionist camp, but Kisch managed to obtain a retraction, which De Haan in turn had to publish in his own newspaper.<sup>51</sup> It is not clear if the Caliph had spoken the actual words De Haan put in his mouth. But, in view of Hussein's innate tendency for double-dealing, this is a reasonable assumption.

However, Hussein's days as king and caliph were numbered. A few months later he had to abdicate and spent the rest of his life in melancholic exile on Cyprus, accompanied by his youngest son and his cherished horses. Kisch remained a capable political leader of the Yishuv, and De Haan, within three months of his latest manoeuvre, met his end. His audience with Hussein can be seen as an addendum to his already longstanding death warrant. From then on, he was suspected of willingness to deal with the devil himself, that is, allying himself and his community with the Arabs to oust the Zionists from Palestine. The idea was, and to many remains,<sup>52</sup> that De Haan was hatching a plot with Arab Palestinian nationalists against Zionism. This, however, is far-fetched. He approached Hussein mainly in his role as caliph and not as a political figure. The Caliph's condemnation of Zionism came from a religious point of view, which was of course also the real

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<sup>49</sup> Kisch, *Palestine Diary*, 94; the visit took place on 12 Jan. 1924.

<sup>50</sup> "Het nieuwe Caliphaat" (The new Caliphate) *AH* 2 April 1924, dated 12 March.

<sup>51</sup> "Een démenti" (A retraction) *AH* 15 May 1924, dated 1 May.

<sup>52</sup> Mirsky, *Rav Kook*, 209.

quarrel of the Agudah with the secular Zionist movement. De Haan, as a savvy diplomat, must have known that the Hashemites at that time were extremely unpopular with Arab Palestinians and would hardly have been useful allies if he was intent on courting the Palestinian Arabs. At the time of his death, De Haan's sole aim was the recognition of Sonnenfeld's group as independent Chief Rabbinate, preferably equal with the Zionist.

### **The assassination and its aftermath**

On the evening of 30 June 1924, De Haan was shot when he left the synagogue of the Shaare Zedek hospital where he had recited *kaddish* for his recently deceased father. The murder resonated worldwide, including in the international Arab press. In Zionist circles, the prevailing view was that he had sown the seeds of his own downfall. There were only a few dissenting voices. The socialist Moshe Beilinson pointed out in the Jerusalem *Kontress* that this murder signified a moral breakdown of the Yishuv.<sup>53</sup> Hugo Bergmann, the chief librarian of the nascent Hebrew University, was impressed by De Haan's *Kwatrijnen* (Quatrains), a booklet with four-line poems published a month before his death. De Haan himself delivered his last publication to the library, the quintessential Zionist institution. The poems revealed De Haan's struggle with his belief in God and, even more, with his homosexuality, particularly his attraction to young boys. After reading them, Bergmann confessed that despite his revulsion for the man, he was profoundly moved by the evident inward struggle from which the poet suffered.<sup>54</sup> Norman Bentwich, who had dismissed De Haan as a lecturer, wrote a moving letter to Dr Wallach in which he strongly condemned the murder.<sup>55</sup> The arch-enemy of the deceased, Kisch, in contrast, was relieved by the elimination of the poet and was highly irritated because the British government sent a condolence telegram to De Haan's family.<sup>56</sup>

For the Zionists, the publication of the *Kwatrijnen* was a godsend. Even amid the hostility and sadistic utterances in the Zionist press, now it was easy to divert the murder to the realm of a crime of passion. It was alleged that an Arab father had taken revenge for sexual abuse of his son.

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<sup>53</sup> *Kontress* (Hebrew) 16 Tammuz 1924.

<sup>54</sup> Hugo Bergmann, "De Haan als Dichter", *Der Jude: Eine Monatsschrift* 8, no. 10 (1924): 598–600.

<sup>55</sup> CZA, Wallach papers, A399 doos 17, Bentwich to Wallach, 30 June 1924.

<sup>56</sup> Kisch, Diary, Ms., 7 July 1824, CZA S25/565.

But the rumours that this was a political murder could not be suppressed. It shows the solidarity of the Palestinian Jews that nobody claimed the reward of £200 for information that would lead to the perpetrators. After all there were some early indications that the murderer came from Ukraine.<sup>57</sup> Only in the 1960s did the Israeli journalist Chaviv Kanaan disclose officially that the assassination had been a Zionist political affair.<sup>58</sup> Some twenty years later, the culprits were identified as Avraham Giora and Avraham Tehomi, who actually pulled the trigger. Both were members of the Haganah, the organization which De Haan himself had defended in 1920. It seems that they acted on orders from the higher echelon, including the man who became the first president of Israel, Yitzhak Ben Zvi. At that time he was a leading figure of the Va'ad Leumi, the Jewish National Council in Palestine. Rumour has it that David Ben Gurion, as well, was implicated.<sup>59</sup> It was a well-orchestrated action with, apparently, several accomplices. David Tidhar, the founder of Hebrew thriller-writing and an early Yishuv biographical dictionary, at that time still a young policeman, took care that at the neighbouring police station no Arab policemen were on duty. In the best thriller tradition, he had a personal interest in the death of De Haan. Tidhar had borrowed money from him in order to publish his first book. The day before the murder they argued about Tidhar's inability to pay back the loan. De Haan threatened to bring his IOU to the market as a bill of exchange. That would have ruined the reputation of Tidhar, because at that time no decent Zionist could be mixed up with the pariah of the Yishuv.<sup>60</sup>

Other mysteries remain in the affair. There is no trace of a police investigation, although according to the *Daily Express* this was transferred to the Palestine military's Colonel Broadhurst and Scotland Yard. It is possible that in the later chaos of the transfer of the Mandate these papers have been lost, but it appears that at least one statement of the police about the murder was officially destroyed.<sup>61</sup> Another intriguing document is an original bank ledger showing £10,000 in the account

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<sup>57</sup> E.g. in the newspaper of the Agudists, *Kol Israel* 1 July 1924.

<sup>58</sup> *Ha'aretz* 21 Feb. and 24 Feb. 1960; Alexander Zvielli, "Echos of the Past", *Jerusalem Post*, 10 May 1985.

<sup>59</sup> Shlomo Nakdimon and Shaul Mayzlish, *De Haan: Haretsach hapoliti harisyon beEretz Yisrael* (De Haan: the First political murder in Palestine) (Tel Aviv: Modan, 1985). I wish to thank Chawa Dinner in Jerusalem who helped with Hebrew sources.

<sup>60</sup> For the IOU see The Hague, Nationaal Archief De Haag, Consulate Jaffa/Tel Aviv, no. 2. Tidhar's book was *Hotevim we-hata im he-Eretz Yisrael* (1924), English trans. by Julian L. Meltzer as *Crimes and Criminals in Palestine* (privately published, with 16 pp. of advertisements). The Mandate government tried to ban the publication, probably the reason why Tidhar could not pay De Haan. In 1930 Tidhar's book figured on an auction list of a Dutch antiquarian bookshop, together with other books from the estate of De Haan.

<sup>61</sup> *Daily Express* 3 July 1924; NA, entry in the register of the Colonial Office 793 4-7 1924.

of Chaim Kalvarisky in De Haan's estate.<sup>62</sup> Kalvarisky, a long-time employee of the Rothschild colonies, was at that time the head of a Zionist bureau for Arab affairs in Jerusalem. Through his good relations he was supposed to create better understanding between Arabs and Zionists. This involved among other things bribes, and at his time he was accused of embezzling the funds.<sup>63</sup> It is highly probable that De Haan was up to another scandal but it is a mystery how he could have acquired this document.

### **The significance of De Haan**

Almost singlehandedly, De Haan put Jewish Orthodoxy in Palestine on the map as a political force. He demonstrated that the right wing of Orthodox Jewry in the heart of the Zionist enterprise was fundamentally opposed to the idea of a secular Jewish National Home. Mizrachi obviously accommodated itself to Zionism, seeing the National Home as a temporal solution for the Jewish people. Therefore, it did not contravene Messianism and the demands of the Torah.<sup>64</sup> But part of the Palestinian Orthodoxy, conveniently called "ultra-Orthodoxy" by the Zionists (although by the British officials still dubbed "Orthodox"), held to their conviction that a Jewish National Home in Palestine should be subordinated to the Torah. Due mainly to De Haan, the British realized that there was a significant body of Jews in Palestine who were not in accordance with the Zionists. Mandate Palestine was emerging, then, as not simply a place where Jews confronted Arabs but also one in which different groups of Jews were in sharp opposition. In fact, the Colonial Office admitted that the original proposals of Herbert Samuel were frustrated in order to placate the likes of De Haan.<sup>65</sup>

In the end the Agudists did not quite get what they wanted. They were not recognized as an equal body alongside the Zionists. The Mandate government did not wish to deal with more than one Jewish representative. But the Agudists acquired complete autonomy with their own *shehita* and rabbinate. The tax on the matzo was silently abolished, as well as their categorization as non-Jews in

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<sup>62</sup> Archive De Haan no. 77, dated 24 April 1924.

<sup>63</sup> Hillel Cohen, *Army of Shadows: Palestinian Collaboration with Zionism 1917–1948* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2008), his extensive work about Zionist and Arab collaboration, does not mention these accusations.

<sup>64</sup> Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, 34.

<sup>65</sup> Sir John Shuckburgh, head of the Middle East Department, to Secretary of State, 2 July 1924, NA CO733/70.

the census.<sup>66</sup> Under the shock of the Jewish fate in the Holocaust, the Agudah and the Zionists came to a rapprochement at the founding of the State of Israel. The result is a hybrid order in which Torah and secularism are strangely interwoven.

After De Haan's demise, the most feared lawyer in Palestine, Horace Samuel (no relative of Herbert), succeeded the dead poet as the legal adviser of the Agudists and penned eloquent memoranda to the Colonial Office. Horace Samuel was also not an ordinary man. He translated Nietzsche into English and had served in the Jewish Legion during the First World War. Eventually, he found Zionist Palestine too parochial and returned to England. His memoirs about his sojourn in the Holy Land still make entertaining reading.<sup>67</sup>

The pain De Haan inflicted on Zionism was long-lasting. When the ambassador of the Netherlands to the State of Israel presented his credentials to President Weizmann in 1949, he was informed that Dutch Jews as a whole had made an excellent contribution to the Jewish community with one exception: De Haan.<sup>68</sup> In Jerusalem's most established Orthodox quarter, Mea Shearim, however, his name is still a household word and every year on the anniversary of his death from there a pilgrimage sets forth to his grave on Mount Olive, that overlooks his beloved Jerusalem. In anti-Zionist Orthodox circles all over the world, he is considered the martyr for their cause. At the same time in the Netherlands, he is a figure-head representing the emancipation of homosexuality. In fact, the monument for homosexuals in Amsterdam bears a line of his poetry: "naar vriendschap zulk een mateloos verlangen": for friendship such a boundless longing. And so this enigmatic man, whose life was torn apart by an urge to be loved by all and an uncompromising sense of justice, remains a divided soul long after his death.

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<sup>66</sup> For the Regulations on the Jewish Communities 1928 see: *Laws of Palestine 1926-1931 Including the Orders in Council, ordinances, regulations, rules of court, public notices, proclamations, etc.* Compiled by Moses Doukham 4 vols. (Rotenberg, 1932).

<sup>67</sup> See his memorandum to the Colonial Office, 15 July 1924, NA CO 733/71; Horace Samuel, *Unholy Memories*.

<sup>68</sup> Johan Nederbragt, *Jeruzalem, indien ik u vergete...* (The Hague: Voorhoeve, 1953), 350. I wish to thank mr André Roosen for this information.