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Reflections on Chanukah

As Jews commemorate the epic victory of the Maccabees over Antiochus - actually the victory of Judaism over Hellenism - it is worth considering the constant struggle which is still being waged - and which could easily still be lost - against the inroads among Jews of non-Jewish thought. In our joyful emphasis upon the victory of the Maccabees we are too prone to forget that notwithstanding the limited victory won by the Hasmoneans, Hellenism captured the minds and the imaginations of hundreds of thousands of Jews - in Egypt, in Greece and indeed in all parts of the world. These Jews lost their identity among the non-Jews whom they imitated and they became easy and willing converts to Christianity.

The tendency among minorities is to follow the customs and ideals of the majority among whom these minorities live. Undoubtedly a considerable share of the importance which has been attached to the festival of Chanukah in recent years has been the result of the proximity of Christmas and the need to offer a Jewish counterpart to the growing influence which this Christian festival exerts upon Jewish children. But there is no need for Jews to develop out of Chanukah a sort of synthesis between the Jewish

holiday and Christmas. Chanukah, celebrated as a Jewish Feast of Rededication, is so rich in tradition, so colourful in its external manifestations, so perfectly developed to appeal to children that we should devote ourselves to emphasizing the joys of Chanukah and just leave to the Christians the Christmas celebration, so full of meaning to them.

As Jews take pride in the achievements of the Maccabees and the great victories of the spirit which they won, we would do well to remember that we, too, are engaged in a crucial battle for survival. Our present enemy, and we recognize full well the current climate of anti-Semitism, is not an external one. Ours is an enemy within which bids us to yield up our Jewish heritage to the Moloch of acquiescence thereby diluting our Jewishness with the pabulum of conformity. Only if we resist the temptation to avoid the obligations which living as Jews impose on us and instead follow in the footsteps of those dedicated Jewish leaders of the past who created the matrix by which Jewish life has been shaped, will we measure up to the example set by the Maccabees in their heroic struggle which we commemorate in the Chanukah festival.

חנוכה שמח!

Chanukah sameach!

Happy Chanukah!

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THE WORLD IN REVIEW

NEWS OF THE RECENT PAST IS REVIEWED

By NOAH FREEDMAN

Religious Leaders Should Know Better

One would think that a rabbi and an archbishop would know better than to compare COVID restrictions and inaction on climate change to the 1930s in Germany. Apparently not.

Rabbi Tamarah Benima, a 71-year-old Reform rabbi at Amsterdam's modern progressive Beit Ha'Chidush synagogue, acknowledged that politicians, scientists and doctors dictating COVID-19 public health

measures may "have the best intentions." "But as a Jew", she quickly added, "what happened in Nazi Germany is a warning to me. Those in power all had the best intentions. Also, when they declared Jews a danger to 'public health'. Also when they declared a war against the 'virus' of those times. So don't play with fire by setting aside people in our society as a 'danger to public health'."

Jewish groups throughout the country were quick to condemn the controversial rabbi's

comments. The Central Jewish Board of the Netherlands, the country's largest Jewish umbrella group, said her comparison is "contrary to our values and shows a complete lack of realism." The Netherlands Association for Progressive Judaism "strongly rejects the irresponsible and offensive comparisons," the group said in a statement.

Then there are the comments by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. Welby told a BBC audience that failure to tackle climate change could be "possibly"

more disastrous than the warnings about the Nazis in the 1930s. The current leaders will be "cursed" if they don't act.

When asked about his use of the word "cursed" Welby responded "It was consciously a strong word. It will be: people will speak of them in far stronger terms than we speak today of the politicians of the 30s, this will kill people all around the world for generations...It will allow genocide on an infinitely larger scale.

At least Welby had
(Please turn to page 12)

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KATIE COURIC WASN'T THE FIRST

JOURNALISTS AND HISTORIANS HID COMMENTS ABOUT JEWS BY FDR AND TRUMAN

By **RAFAEL MEDOFF**

Controversy has erupted over the admission by journalist Katie Couric that she doctored her 2016 interview with Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, in order to “protect” Ginsburg from criticism of her opposition to athletes kneeling during the national anthem.

Couric joins a growing list of authors who have

*Dr. Medoff is founding director of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies and author of more than 20 books about Jewish history and the Holocaust. His most recent book is *The Jews Should Keep Quiet: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and the Holocaust* (<https://tinyurl.com/y2qo5o4j>). The following article appeared first in the Jewish Journal of Los Angeles.*

altered the unflattering words of individuals whom they admire, in order to shield them from embarrassment. Presidents Harry

S. Truman and Franklin D. Roosevelt have been among the prime beneficiaries of such unilateral revising of history.

One instance involving Roosevelt concerns remarks he made in a private meeting on January 22, 1938, with Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, the foremost American Jewish leader of that era. The only source for what they discussed is a memorandum that Wise dictated shortly afterwards, for his private records.

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AWARDING SCHOLARSHIPS AND FIGHTING HATE

By MIKE COHEN

Schulich Leader Scholarships—the largest and most prestigious Canadian academic award for undergraduate students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)—is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. Funded by the Schulich Foundation and administered through UJA Federation this scholarship is valued at up to \$100,000 per award and given to a

diverse group of entrepreneurial-minded students annually.

Seymour Schulich, the visionary philanthropist behind this initiative, believes that giving direct support to students is one of the most effective vehicles in educational philanthropy. By covering all the students' financial needs to pursue an undergraduate degree, these generous

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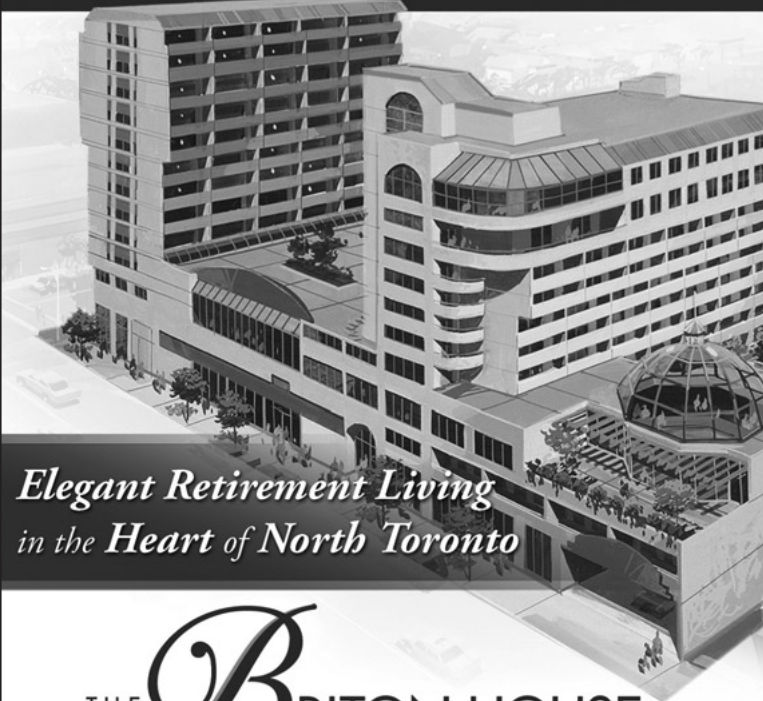
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EYE ON TORONTO

(Continued from preceding page)

scholarships eliminate the time and stress of having to afford tuition and living costs. This enables students to devote all their time and attention to their studies and entrepreneurial pursuits. Beyond the financial value of the award, the recipients join an active network of elite STEM leaders, benefitting from access to top employers, exclusive mentorship, and networking opportunities made available throughout the year.

"It's gratifying that this important and meaningful investment in the future of Canada is off to a strong start," said Mr. Schulich. "Schulich Leaders

will be the engine that drives prosperity for our country. We look forward to supporting exceptional students pursuing their STEM education for many years to come."

To learn more about Schulich Leader Scholarships at 10 years, visit: schulichleaders10.com.

STEPPING UP AGAINST HATE: UJA Federation of Greater Toronto President and CEO Adam Minsky recently issued a statement to update the community about the organization's fight against hate—and how this will shape its work to combat antisemitism moving forward. During the

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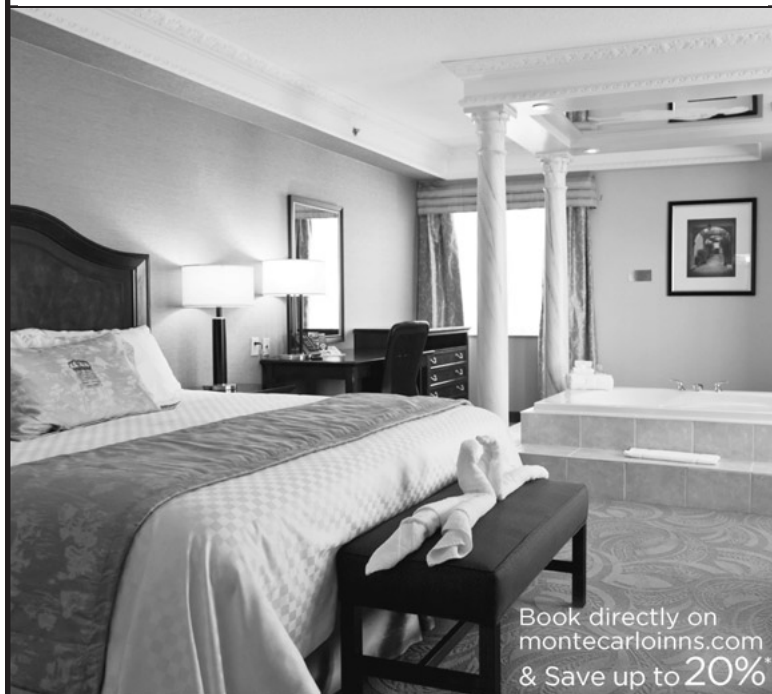
latest wave of Hamas terrorism targeting Israel, our community witnessed a surge of antisemitism unlike any we had ever seen," he stated. "This included physical violence, verbal assaults, hatred on social media, boycotts of Jewish organizations, and the expression of toxic views toward Israel among mainstream voices in politics and society, to name just a few alarming developments."

Minsky announced that Steven Farber has joined UJA's team as Senior Vice-President, Countering Antisemitism and Hate—a new position created to lead UJA's efforts to empower the community to rise to this challenge. Having begun his career in investment banking, Farber has comfortably moved between the corporate and not-for profit worlds his

entire career. This includes serving in a senior political role here in Canada, working in Israel for several years in diplomacy and commerce, and serving in Israel as a key advisor to Tony Blair in the Office of the Quartet Representative. He will work closely with key partners in this area, including UJA's advocacy agent the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), Hillel Ontario, UJA Community Security, and UJA's Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre (soon to become Toronto's Holocaust Museum). "With an all-in community effort, I am confident we will together achieve a similarly powerful response to rising antisemitism," Minsky continued. "This is just the beginning."

(Please turn to page 12)

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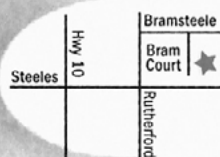
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In 1978, Time magazine estimated that around 80 percent of professional American comics were Jewish, and Jewish humour remains a foundation stone of modern popular culture. This book is not intended as a definitive tome but is instead a delightful and irreverent celebration of great photography and some of the ultimate one-liners of the 20th century, ripe in satire, anecdote, self-deprecation and irony.

The book shines a light on those who have dominated the comedy scene and brought joy to so many throughout their lives. Featuring a heartfelt and informative introduction by stand-up comedian Bobby Slayton, and a wonderful selection of one-liners and images edited by Tony Nourmand, this book offers a beautiful insight into the life and humour of the world's foremost Jewish comedians throughout the ages.

Featuring comedians including Larry David, Fran Lebowitz, Mel Brooks, Bette Midler, Garry Shandling, Buddy Hackett, Sid Caesar, Jackie Mason, Gilda Radner, Groucho Marx, Lenny Bruce, Rita Rudner, Rodney Dangerfield, Joan Rivers, Jerry Lewis, and George Burns, the book's wonderful portraits are accompanied by some of the finest and funniest observations.

The book is published in conjunction with the exhibition of Jewish Comedians at La Térmica Cultural Centre in Málaga, Spain, in November 2021. It is the first in a series of exhibitions and books celebrating Jewish culture in the arts. The series is produced and curated in collaboration with Reel Art Press.

The book is available at bookstores and at <https://www.reelartpress.com/catalog/edition/219/a-small-book-of-jewish-comedians>

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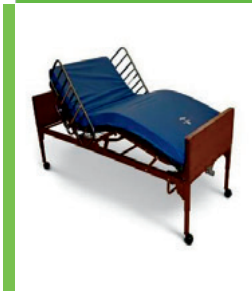
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(Continued from page 9)

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Mike Cohen can be reached at info@mikecohen.ca

WORLD IN REVIEW

(Continued from page 5)

the common sense to climate change to the rise of “unequivocally apologize” Hitler. “It’s never right”, for comparing “inaction on Welby added, to make com-

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parisons with the atrocities brought by the Nazis, and I'm truly sorry the offence caused to Jews by these words".

Greek Court Rules Against Kosher Slaughter

Last year the European Union's highest court upheld the bans im-

posed in parts of Belgium against slaughtering animals for meat without first stunning them. The European Jewish Association warned about the "downstream consequences that the European court of Justice ruling carried with it" and now those fears have proven justified.

The highest court in Greece has ruled against allowing ritual slaughter. The court said that the country must find ways to meet the demands of animal rights advocates and the needs of Jews (and Muslims) to follow their customs and traditions.

"The government should regulate the issue of slaughtering animals in the context of worship in such a way as to ensure both the protection of animals from any inconvenience during slaughter and the religious freedom of Muslims and Jews living in Greece", the court said.

Rabbi Menachem Margolin, chairman of the EJA, said that "what we are witnessing is first-rate hypocrisy. When it comes to antisemitism, governments and institutions rightly stand behind us. But when our beliefs and customs are attacked right and left by laws, they are nowhere to be seen."

(Please turn to page 20)

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KATIE COURIC WAS NOT THE FIRST

(Continued from page 6)

According to historians Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman, in their 2013 book, *FDR and the Jews*, the topic of the conversation was Palestine. Roosevelt believed the country was incapable of absorbing many more Jewish immigrants, so he urged Wise to look for "some large areas [elsewhere in the world] as a second choice for the Jews." Wise disagreed and "parried" with FDR about Palestine, Breitman and Lichtman wrote, citing Wise's memorandum.

But Breitman and Lichtman omitted another part of the conversation, in which the president blamed Poland's Jews for the rising antisemitism in that country. According to the full text of the Wise memo, FDR claimed that "the Jewish grain dealer and the Jewish shoe dealer and the Jewish shopkeeper" had been undercutting Polish Christian merchants, and it

was this alleged Jewish financial subterfuge that was provoking Christian shopkeepers to demand that "the Jew should go."

According to the memo, Wise protested, "But, Chief, this is pure Fascist talk"—a surprisingly blunt remark, considering that Wise was a passionate supporter of President Roosevelt and his administration. But Wise's plea had no impact on the president. He wrote that Roosevelt's remarks were "very painful" and "like a blow in the face." Readers of the Breitman-Lichtman book, like readers of Katie Couric's interview with Justice Ginsburg, had no way of knowing what had been omitted.

President Roosevelt's image has also benefitted from another troubling omission, this one courtesy of the State Department. At the Yalta Conference, in February 1945, Roosevelt mentioned to Josef Stalin

(Please turn to page 18)

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KATIE COURIC WAS NOT THE FIRST

(Continued from page 16)

that he would soon be seeing Saudi Arabia's king, Ibn Saud. Stalin asked if FDR intended to make any concessions to Saud. According to the transcript, "The President replied that there was only one concession he thought he might offer and that was to give him the six million Jews in the United States."

But when the State Department published the transcript in 1955, Roosevelt's unpleasant remark about Jews was omitted. More than fifty years later, a researcher discovered that then-Assistant Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith had crossed out the comment about Jews prior to publication, and had written in the margin: "Delete this--it is not pertinent history."

Censors have also lent a helping hand to FDR's successor. In a 1945 memo, President Harry S. Truman wrote: "The Jews claim God Almighty picked 'em out for special privilege. Well I'm sure he had better judgement. Fact is I never thought God picked any favorites. It is my studied opinion that any race,

creed or color can be God's favorites if they act the part--and very few of 'em do that."

The most unflattering words in that passage ended up on the cutting-room floor. Journalist William Hillman was hired to assist Truman in preparing his memoirs and other papers for publication. The first volume, *Mr. President*, appeared in 1953. It included the 1945 memorandum, but the wording was changed to read: "I never thought God picked any favorites. It is my studied opinion that any race, creed or color can be God's favorites if they act the part--and very few of 'em do that." The reference to Jews was omitted, presumably to protect the former president's reputation. Hillman never revealed whether it was his idea, or Truman's, to rewrite the historical record.

Katie Couric, to her credit, has belatedly admitted what she did. Unfortunately, others who have done likewise have not been forthcoming about their own historical malpractice.

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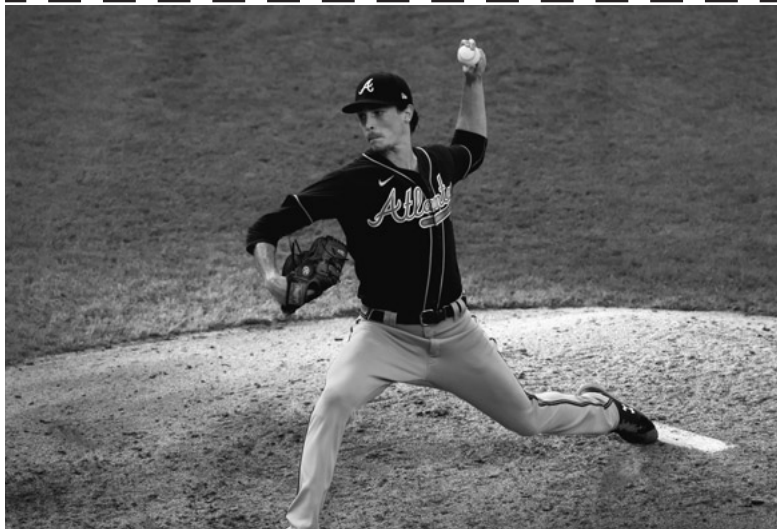
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WORLD IN REVIEW

(Continued from page 13)

NY City Councilman Shouts "Jewish motherf—ers"

Omari Shakur, a councilman-at-large in Newburgh, NY, was visiting a constructions site to voice his concerns over safety protocols. The landlord asked Shakur to leave at which point Shakur "lost it". "You and these Jewish motherf—ers think you can come in here and take over our community. F—all y'all!" he responded.

Shakur was censured at a council meeting and Shakur voted with the motion, in effect censuring himself. He apologized several times at the meeting. "When those words came out of my mouth, I regretted them", he said. "As a child and an activist in the '60s and '70s, the Jewish community has been allied with the Black community for the longest".

While several city council members told Shakur his frustration was legitimate, they were not about to excuse him for his anti-Semitic rant. "This is strictly about antisemitic remarks," said Councilwoman Karen Mjeia. "This is a community that does not tolerate that."

Shakur is no stranger to controversy. Also known as Raymond Bryant Jr., the council member was arrested a couple of years ago for failing to produce ID and exit his vehicle after he was stopped for running a red light.

Target and Barnes and Noble Remove Books

Following letters of protest by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre Target Corporation and Barnes and Noble have removed the book "Not Guilty At Nuremberg" by Holocaust denier Carlos Porter from their shelves. Online bookseller Walmart has also stopped selling the book.

"We assume these

large online booksellers do not mass-market books promoting terrorism or pedophilia," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, SWC associate dean and global social action director. "At a time of surging antisemitic hate crimes here in the US, it is beyond the pale that a book would be marketed by someone who insults the memory of six million Jewish victims of the Nazi genocide."

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In addition to "Not Guilty at Nuremberg, other books removed include the novel "The Auschwitz Myth – Legend or Reality?", by Wilhelm Stäglich, a former officer in the German army during World War II and a neo-Nazi party member, and Germar Rudolf's "A Censorship is Taking Place!", written to protest German authorities' ban on his anti-semitism and Holocaust denial, and "What is Truth?", by the French Communist Paul

Rassinier, one of the earliest Holocaust deniers.

Both Target and Barnes and Noble responded to the complaint by making it clear that they would not tolerate "offending titles" on their shelves or their website.

US Election Notes

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy won re-election in a
(Please turn to following page)

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WORLD IN REVIEW

(Continued from preceding page)

closely fought battle with Republican Jack Ciattarelli.

What's interesting is that while Murphy could count on the state's Jewish progressive voters who routinely vote Democrat he made a concerted effort to tap into the politically con-

servative Orthodox Jews. He even secured the endorsement of the Lakewood Vaad, the council of Orthodox religious leaders.

Jacob Frey won reelection as mayor of Minneapolis. Frey's opposition to replacing the city's police department with a Department of Public Safety resonated with voters. Frey is a Reform Jew and attends two Reform synagogues in Minneapolis, Temple Israel and Shir Tikvah, together with his wife, who converted.

In Virginia Republican Glenn Youngkin defeated former governor Terry McAuliffe. He did so in part by making a concerted effort to attract left leaning Jews. His strategy seems to have paid off. Exit polls showed the new governor winning 37% of the Jewish vote, which translated into a drop of 10% among Jews who supported Joe Biden. With 170,000 Jews eligible to vote and the election so close the number of Jews switching appears to have been significant.



LISA RICHTER WAS one of six winners for outstanding works in Jewish writing. The awards are supported by the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York University. Richter won the award in poetry for her *Nautilus and Bone* (Frontenac House). *Nautilus and Bone* chronicles the life and work of the radical, passionate Russian-Jewish American poet Anna Margolin on her path toward self-determination. The collection of persona poems brings to life one of the most celebrated Yiddish poets of her generation. "The Canadian Jewish Literary Awards build pride, not only in the individuals being honoured, but in the creative achievements that reflect Jewish themes and ideas," said Edward Trapunski, Jury Chair.

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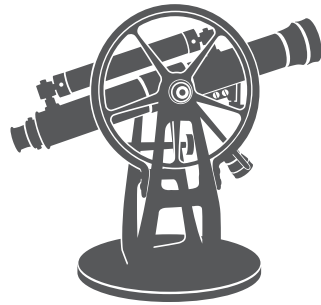
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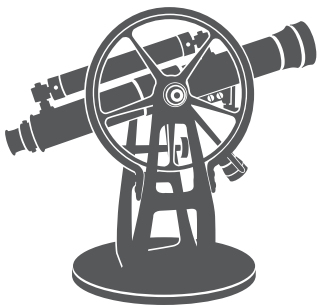
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