Relief

Large quantities of food, medical supplies and clothing were continually sent to Europe, Cyprus and other places. Tens of thousands of garments were thus dispatched. Sydney alone, for instance, sent goods worth over £30,000 abroad this year. In Melbourne, the relief funds combined with the Welfare Society.

SUMMARY

A brief picture of developments in the five Jewish communities of Western Europe during the past year, particularly those which had been under Nazi occupation, suggests certain general trends. On the whole, these communities (France, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Norway) continued to repair the damages and dislocations wrought by the war and occupation. Their populations were relatively stabilized. The pre-war political status of the Jews was re-established. Jewish civic rights were restored, and individual and institutional life returned to normal to a considerable extent.

When one takes into account the economic disturbances and inflationary tendencies in most of the countries under review, the recovery of the Jews was especially noteworthy. In general, it exceeded the pace towards readjustment of general populations. The rapid reintegration of the Jews can be explained by the fact that there were practically no changes in the structure of Western European economies,

1 This section was compiled in the European office of the American Jewish Committee on the basis of reports submitted by the Committee's European correspondents: Mrs. Regina Orfinger-Karlin, for Belgium; Andre Tabet, for Italy; Emil Raas, for Switzerland; A. de Haas, for Holland; and Gunnar Josephson, for Sweden. The article on France and the Summary were prepared by Marvin Goldfine of the A. J. C. European office; those on Switzerland and Belgium were translated and edited in the New York office by Claire Marck and Geraldine Rosenfield respectfully.
and most Jews were able to return to their former middle-class occupations. Many required and obtained credit assistance from loan funds which were set up, and thus were given the necessary impetus towards independence. Furthermore, the capacity of the Jews for quick adjustment to changing conditions may have been another factor in their economic reintegration. Their losses were heaviest; their urge to recoup them was particularly strong.

Consequently, the relief and assistance which American organizations put at the disposal of these communities were almost exclusively devoted to the refugees or the recent arrivals in these countries. The problems of the latter varied with the absorptive capacities of the various economies. In Belgium, where the proportion of Jewish non-citizens was large, their situation was particularly acute because of the restrictions placed on the issuance of work permits. On the other hand, all the Jewish immigrants to Sweden were readily absorbed and gainfully employed.

The trend towards economic recuperation was further evidenced by the development of local fund-raising campaigns. Holland’s Jewish community had already been conducting its own appeals for a year and a half, and the French Jews were making plans for a united-appeal project for the winter of 1948-49.

As the Joint Distribution Committee was forced to reduce its local assistance in favor of the urgent overall problems of the relief and resettlement of DPs, there was a growing awareness among the community leaders of the need to utilize in a fuller fashion the resources of their own countries. The emergence of Israel captured the imagination of the Jewish communities, and the war in Palestine evoked a generous outpouring of funds. Italian Jewry was highest in the pro rata contributions for Israel, with Belgium ranking second. The unusual collection of 200 million francs in France in a six-month period, despite a lack of official records or data relating to Jews, so encouraged the leaders of the campaign that they were planning greatly to enlarge the quota for the forthcoming year. Indirectly, the urgent
requirements of the state of Israel stimulated these recently disrupted communities to build organizationally, and helped restore the structure of their community pattern.

On the whole, it could be stated that the emergence of the Jewish state had been viewed sympathetically in most quarters in Western Europe. While none of the governments had officially recognized the new state at the time of writing, the general climate of opinion was favorable.

Anti-Jewish sentiment, however, persisted in all areas and strata of society. Indeed, it would have been utopian to expect the poisonous effects of several years of Nazi occupation to be removed once the war was ended. What is quite significant is that hardly any overt or organized anti-Semitism has taken root in Western Europe. To be sure, Einar Aberg in Sweden continued to send his propaganda leaflets to various countries, but he was largely ineffective even within his own country.

This still left unsolved the more subtle problem of latent anti-Semitism and the general need to establish better community relations between Jew and non-Jew. An attempt to treat this urgent question on a broad scale was being initiated through the Councils of Christians and Jews in France, Belgium and Switzerland. Together with the American and British organizations and other national groups, they joined in this common purpose through the formation in July, 1948, of the International Council of Christians and Jews in Fribourg, Switzerland. It was hoped that these groups could develop into effective agencies in their respective countries.

One of the most serious communal problems which Jews of Western Europe faced was the need to re-establish schools for Jewish education and to infuse new life into the religious and cultural institutions which survived the war. Difficulties were inevitable because of the shortage of teachers and rabbis, the lack of texts and teaching materials and the diversion of funds to other urgent matters. More serious was the loss of interest and desire for such education except in the most orthodox circles.
SWEDEN

JEWISH LIFE AND JEWISH CONDITIONS in Sweden were subject to no great changes during 1947-48. All Jews who were Swedish subjects were still legally required to belong to the Jewish congregations. Legally it was necessary to have some religious affiliation. Only by transferring to a Christian community could a Jew secede from the congregation. A governmental committee had, however, been at work for a few years drafting a dissenter law, removing this enforced affiliation to a religious community, a law which would alter considerably the structure of the Swedish-Jewish congregation. When affiliation to the congregations would become purely voluntary, a number of indifferent members would in all probability cease to belong to them.

Population

Approximately 7,000 Swedish Jews were members of the three large congregations of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmo, Stockholm alone comprising over 4,000. There were in addition about 10,000 Jews in Sweden who came as refugees after 1939, of whom some 3,000 arrived from Germany during the first years of the war. They were completely absorbed into the Swedish community, and could become Swedish subjects after nine years' residence. Just before the cessation of hostilities, a large number of Jews were rescued from the German concentration camps and brought to Sweden. They mainly comprised younger women from Poland, Hungary, Rumania and Carpatho-Ukraine, as well as France and Holland. All the immigrants from France and Holland and many from the other countries either were repatriated or emigrated overseas and to Palestine. But there were still some 6,000 refugees remaining in the country.
Immigration

During 1947-48 immigration was open to Jews fulfilling certain requirements. Those eligible were transmigrants, persons with relatives in Sweden and skilled workers. The Jewish congregation in Stockholm, with the aid of other Jewish organizations and the co-operation of the government, worked energetically to help co-religionists immigrate.

Under a transit quota system, European Jews who had emigration possibilities to other countries to which they could not receive visas, were permitted to enter Sweden in limited numbers, and there reside and work until they received visas to the countries of their destination. In many cases their stay was very long, particularly in view of the restrictive immigration regulations in the United States and other countries. The transit quota of 400 persons was almost filled at the time of writing. Some 280 persons arrived during 1947-48, of whom only about 25 could continue their travels.

Immigration based on relationship to refugee residents was very limited, since it was restricted to husbands, wives, aged parents and children under sixteen.

Sweden's need of labor encouraged the community to make every effort to import Jewish skilled workers, particularly from DP camps in Germany, and from Poland. Thousands of applications were submitted. Permits, however, were granted only for certain specified industrial occupations and for persons with many years of experience in those occupations. Nearly a thousand persons (including family groups) were thus enabled to immigrate to Sweden during the autumn of 1947 and the spring of 1948. However, the possibilities of a continued immigration of this nature were limited.

Emigration

Apart from transmigrants, a large number of refugees in Sweden, particularly those who were rescued from concentration camps in 1945, sought to leave for other lands. The
abnormal sex distribution among those rescued in 1945—roughly 1,000 men to 6,000 women—was the principal reason for this desire to emigrate.

In conjunction with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the Joint Distribution Committee, the community organized a comprehensive emigration section which assisted the potential emigrants. Travel expenses not met by the emigrant or relatives were shared equally by the Swedish state, and HIAS and JDC. Unfortunately, however, state aid was to be discontinued in the autumn of 1948. Through the emigration section 1,339 persons were helped to leave during 1947, of whom 459 went to the United States, 182 to France (for transshipment to Palestine), 61 to Palestine, 50 to Australia, 46 to England and the remainder to other, non-European countries.

During the first half year of 1948 the number of emigrants was 630, of whom 213 went to the United States, 118 to Palestine and the remainder to other countries.

Relief Activities

It was natural, in view of the large proportion of needy refugees in Sweden, that a very large responsibility rested with the Swedish-Jewish congregations. Admittedly, the Swedish government displayed much good will, and included the refugees to an increasing extent in the general social welfare. Fortunately, working conditions in the country were so favorable that nearly all able-bodied refugees had work, although the intellectuals had some difficulty in obtaining employment. However, many of those who were rescued by Sweden in 1945 were found to be seriously ill, a large number with tuberculosis. Through the government's initiative they were taken care of in sanatoriums and convalescent homes. The large majority regained their health, but many were still only partly employable, and there remained some 300 invalids who needed permanent care. Others were untrained and needed financial aid. Therefore, a comprehensive social and cultural rehabilitation program by Jewish agencies
was necessary. The community employed a large number of social consultants to help these refugees relocate throughout the country, to obtain dwellings for them, to deal with the authorities and employers on their behalf and in general to advise them in regard to their varied problems. It sent rabbis and cantors to visit the various refugee centers. It furnished medical and dental care assistance, help in establishing residence, and with regard to the celebration of Jewish festivals (particularly Passover) and observance of the dietary laws where desired. It also financed clubs for cultural activities and training courses and established a legal advisory bureau for the refugees.

This extensive refugee relief work was partly financed by the Swedish-Jewish congregations. These imposed an annual tax among their members of not less than about 4 per cent of their respective incomes, of which sum nearly half went to help refugees. In addition there were successful private collections. Apart from its direct help, the Swedish government also contributed towards the congregations' social work for refugees. A large part of the costs were borne by JDC, without whose generous contributions these activities could never have had the scope they did.

An OSE Committee was created and collected funds for the purchase of medicine and for supporting OSE's activities on behalf of children. The Youth Aliyah Committee, which contained non-Jewish members as well, succeeded in collecting funds and received very valuable assistance from the Swedish Save the Children movement.

Above all, however, Palestine's defensive struggle was the object of very great interest. The Swedish Committee for the Jewish Agency collected over $300,000 for Haganah, a very large sum in view of Swedish-Jewish circumstances. Contributions came from all Jewish circles.

World ORT Union

By means of an appropriation of 230,000 crowns (approximately $64,000), the Swedish government made a significant
contribution to ORT's activities in Germany. Of this sum, approximately $40,000 was to be used for the purchase of tools and machines, and approximately $24,000 for the training of some thirty ORT instructors in Swedish vocational schools. After their schooling was finished, these instructors were to return to Germany as teachers in ORT's vocational schools there. Furthermore, Swedish Europe Help donated about $14,000 for the purchase of machines, and the city of Stockholm contributed a number of valuable machines. A special ORT committee was formed within Stockholm's Jewish congregation to deal with these donations. In addition, a Swedish parliamentary ORT committee representing the different political parties was recently created to support ORT's activities.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism played a very small part in Sweden. The Jewish population was not subjected to any particular difficulties, even though the comparatively large new immigration of Jews encountered a certain distrust in some circles. The coarse and vulgar anti-Semitic propaganda of Einar Aberg which was broadcast from Sweden to foreign countries attracted some attention, but was not considered of any great importance. The Swedish Parliament recently passed a law which made it a criminal offense to make defamatory statements against groups on account of their race or religion.

Personalia

In spite of his advanced age, Marcus Ehrenpreis still served as Chief Rabbi in Stockholm with Rabbi Kronheim at his side. Rabbi Lob functioned in Gothenburg, and Rabbi Grunwald in Malmo. The Stockholm congregation was privileged to have Hugo Bergmann, Professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, as adviser, lecturer and lay preacher in the synagogue for a whole year.
The Belgium government at the time of writing represented a Catholic-Socialist coalition under the presidency of Paul-Henri Spaak. The Catholic party was the majority party of the government, holding 48 per cent of the elected offices. The Socialists were second in power with 30 per cent, followed by the Communist party with 12 per cent and the Liberal party with 10 per cent.

The crucial problem facing the country was an impending economic crisis. The stability of the present government depended on its ability to avert such a crisis, through the Benelux arrangement or otherwise.

Population

Through deportations, emigration to Palestine, repatriation to other countries, voluntary exile and the normal death rate, the total Jewish population of Belgium dropped from 64,000 in 1941 to an estimated 45,000 in 1948.

Because of its geographical situation Belgium has traditionally been the stopping-over place of Jews moving from the eastern to the western part of the continent. Thus, a large majority of the Belgian Jewish population has always been foreign, of a transient or semi-permanent nature. Roughly, of the 45,000 Jews residing in Belgium at the time of writing, two-thirds were foreign Jews who had been in the country ten years or more, and the remaining third was made up of equal parts of native Belgian Jews, transients who had a specific destination in mind and others whose ultimate destination was still to be decided. The total number of Jews living in Belgium was .6 per cent of the total population; the number of foreign Jews was 9 per cent of the total foreign population of Belgium. This was the fact which gave the Belgian Jewish community its special character and special economic problems.
The declining birth rate in the native Jewish population and among those Jews living in the country for more than ten years corresponded to that of the general population, which averaged one and one-half children in each family. This decline was due primarily to the fact that during the Nazi occupation the greatest number of deaths among the deportees occurred in the thirty- to fifty-year-old age group. The greater number of survivors among the native Jews was in the age groups below sixteen and above fifty.

The vast majority of the Jews lived in the two major cities of the country: 27,000 in Brussels and 14,000 in Antwerp. The remaining 4,000 were settled in smaller communities throughout the country.

Communal Divisions

As was to be expected, the Jewish community manifested a definite interest in the Zionist problem and in the future of Israel. In Brussels about half of the 27,000 Jews were organized in the following Zionist groups: 15 per cent in the left Poale-Zion; 10 per cent in the right Poale-Zion; 10 per cent in the Solidarité, a remnant of the Belgian resistance, which was leftist and pro-Israel; 10 per cent in the General Zionists; and 5 per cent in the Mizrachi. That half of the community which was not organized in Zionist activity remained outside of all organized political or social life, since there was no active participation in the general affairs of the country.

In Antwerp the great majority of Jews was divided almost equally in membership between the Agudath Israel and the Mizrachi. The strong orthodox element which dominated Antwerp Jewry accounted somewhat for its flourishing community life, expressed through organized political and cultural activities. An additional reason was that the Antwerp diamond industry counted among its leaders wealthy Jews with a traditional sense of responsibility for philanthropy and social work.
Economic Situation

Because of the transient nature of a sizable group in the Jewish community (some 5,000 were passing through the country en route to another destination and an additional 5,000 had as yet no idea of their final destination), the economic situation was relatively bad. During the month of June, 1948, for example, the Joint Distribution Committee gave financial aid to 3,000 persons in Brussels, where unemployment was the most serious. The amount of aid given was insufficient to permit a decent standard of living.

A Belgian law passed in November, 1939, and enforced in January, 1946, required all foreigners to obtain work permits or professional cards, the former entitling the holder to work for a salary and the latter permitting him to earn his living independently. Because of the general unemployment in light industry and business, the Ministry of Labor refused to issue work permits to transients, that is, persons who had not obtained the status of permanent residents. Professional cards were even more difficult to obtain, since the Ministry of Economic Affairs issued these only when it could be proved that the enterprise to be engaged in was necessary to Belgian economy. This ruling affected most harshly the vast majority of foreign Jews who arrived in Belgium during the past ten years and who wished to earn their living as small shopkeepers or businessmen.

An existing law which authorized the Ministry of Justice to take expulsion measures against any foreigner who endangered the social or economic order of the country served as a continual threat to those who could get no work permits or professional cards. While the law had not been applied to foreign Jews except in a very few cases, its existence created great tension in an already unstable situation, and efforts were being made by the Jewish community to have the law abrogated.
Cultural Life

Antwerp remained the center of Jewish traditional life in Belgium. Its population had increased by some 2,000 since 1947, and while Antwerp had fewer Jews than Brussels, it claimed a highly organized and active Jewish community. In addition to four official synagogues subsidized by the state, Antwerp had many small houses of worship. Of the official synagogues two were of the Communauté Réunie (comparable to United Synagogue in this country), one was of the Maksiké Hadass (Agudist) and one was Spanish-Portuguese. The Antwerp community had one rabbi, two assistant rabbis and four religious functionaries.

In Brussels, where the great majority of Jews did not attend synagogue, there were only two official synagogues, one for the general community and one for the orthodox. Smaller groups, such as the Sephardim and the German refugees, had set up two or three unofficial places of worship. Brussels had two rabbis and two religious functionaries.

Official synagogues existed in Arlon, Liège and Ostend. The congregations of Charleroi and Ghent rented places when the occasion demanded.

Education

There were approximately 7,000 Jewish children of school age (from six to seventeen) in Belgium. About 40 per cent were receiving some type of Jewish education. Twelve hundred attended Jewish day schools in Antwerp and Brussels; 1,000 took courses in afternoon religious schools; 500 lived in homes where Jewish education formed part of the curriculum; and 180 studied in yeshivot.

There were two Jewish day schools in Antwerp, one having eight classes, the other twelve. The program of secular studies was the same as that in other state schools; in fact, the secular program was subsidized by the municipality. Religious instruction was financed by voluntary donations,
grants from the Jewish community and tuition fees paid by the parents. The curriculum of religious studies included prayers, Bible and commentaries, Hebrew and Jewish history. The languages of instruction were Flemish, French and Yiddish.

The Hebrew day school in Brussels had five classes, attended by 130 pupils from the ages of four to fourteen. In addition to the official secular program, the course of studies included Jewish history, Bible and Hebrew. The language of instruction was French.

While Brussels had only one all-day school, it had eight afternoon schools: three with Hebrew as the principal language of instruction, four with Yiddish as the language of instruction and one with a Hebrew and Yiddish program. Afternoon schools existed in Charleroi, Liége and Seraing S/Meuse.

Each afternoon school was independent, receiving its funds and educational program from the religious, nationalist or political group which sponsored it. Classes met for a maximum of ten hours a week and a minimum of five hours. The standard of instruction varied greatly from school to school, but all suffered from a lack of sufficiently qualified teachers and textbooks.

The two yeshivot in Antwerp were subsidized partly by the JDC and partly by local contributions. One yeshivah was transplanted from Hungary in 1946 and intended to move on to Israel as soon as possible; the other hoped to remain in Belgium as an institution of higher Jewish learning.

There were ten children's homes, in each of which some type of Jewish instruction was given. Four were administered in the strict orthodox tradition. The educational standard in these homes was adversely affected, as were the afternoon schools, by a shortage of qualified teachers and appropriate textbooks.

Twenty-six vocational schools had been established in Belgium by the American ORT, with courses in mechanics, carpentry, electricity, radio, tailoring, dressmaking, agri-
culture and bookbinding. There were also courses for adults in weaving, knitting, dressmaking, shirtmaking and corsetry. At the end of the last school term, ORT awarded 151 diplomas, but since most of the graduates could not get work permits, they were unable to use their newly acquired skills to earn a living.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism as an official government-sponsored ideology did not exist in Belgium. Neither did it exist in any organized form or as part of any political program. For the Belgians, anti-Semitism was still an integral part of the Nazi doctrine which they despised, and so they were not likely to be receptive to any anti-Semitic movement at this time. It is true that several newspapers of the extreme right were strongly opposed to Israel and attempted to link Zionism with communism, but this was regarded as part of a general reactionary program rather than as a specific manifestation against the Jews of Belgium.

What did concern the Jews of Belgium was the social hostility manifested toward foreigners. This form of xenophobia on the part of the Belgians had been heightened by the influx of foreign Jews on Belgian soil, since the recent immigrants had to compete with returning Belgian war veterans for jobs and business opportunities.

Furthermore, it cannot be denied that the German occupation left its mark on the Belgian population. Before the war there was no acknowledged distinction between Jews and non-Jews; after the war, there could be no denying that such distinction existed. A source of friction was the Jewish children who were given shelter in Christian homes during the Nazi regime and whose foster parents did not wish to give them up. In most cases genuine attachments had been formed between the Christian parents and their adopted Jewish children and the problem of bringing these children back to the Jewish fold was one of great complexity.

Widening the gulf between Jews and non-Jews even further
was the attitude of the many Jews in Belgium who regarded their status as transitory and did not attempt in any way to adapt themselves to the social, economic or political life of the country.

THE NETHERLANDS

During the past year the remnant of Dutch Jewry which survived war and postwar vicissitudes, began to take on the semblance of a stable Jewish community. At the outbreak of the war there were some 140,000 Jews in Holland, including 20,000 German refugees who were granted asylum by the Dutch government. Today, according to a rough count, there are an estimated 28,000 Jews in Holland, including 4,000 of foreign birth. About half the total number live in Amsterdam, the remainder in thirty other communities throughout the land, particularly in larger cities.

The Dutch government, governed by a coalition of the Catholic People’s party and the Labor party, adhered to its age-old tradition of tolerance. Thus, those Jews who survived the Nazi holocaust were able to re-establish themselves economically and socially without much difficulty. In certain quarters there were still vestiges of anti-Semitic feeling, but this was not considered by Jews of any significance. One of the most vexing of postwar problems, that of the Jewish war orphans living in Christian homes, was still not resolved to the satisfaction of the Jewish community at the time of writing. The Dutch governmental agency in charge of war orphans was reluctant to remove Jewish children from Christian homes where they appeared to be happy and well-adjusted. Discussions of this problem between the Jewish orphans agency, Leezrat Hajeled and the Dutch agency, OPK (Commissie van Oorlogspleegkindern) continued.

Cultural Revival

Amsterdam, the largest as well as the most prosperous of the Dutch Jewish communities, had reclaimed some of the
ruins of its cultural life. Parts of the old Jewish quarter in that city were almost completely demolished; the Ashkenazic synagogue, for example, had its interior so badly damaged that the congregation had not yet been able to restore it and worship there. On the other hand, the seventeenth century Sephardic synagogue was hardly damaged and was serving the community once again. The famous library attached to that synagogue, Etz Hayyim, had been reopened with a display of treasured manuscripts, archives and ancient volumes which had been carried off by the Nazis to Germany but were recovered at Frankfort after the liberation. Another Jewish library which had been preserved intact was the Rosenthal Collection of the University of Amsterdam Library. The Rabbinical Seminary in Amsterdam had been re-established; and interest in Jewish history was being stimulated by the monthly publication of a review of Dutch Jewish history.

Amsterdam was the chief seat of higher education, but plans were under way to open a Yeshiva in Leiden, the well-known university town. Some thirty pupils from Hungary were to be brought to that city within the next few months by special permission of the Dutch government.

An acute problem in Jewish education existed in the smaller towns and villages of Holland where there were no rabbis or teachers to conduct schools. In Amsterdam both elementary and secondary schools had been re-opened. A new youth organization had been created by the Jewish community to interest young people in Jewish tradition and ideals.

One result of the war was an awakened interest in Jewish affairs outside of Holland, particularly in regard to Zionism and Israel. Zionist organizations were active in the cities, many of them having their own publications and several sponsoring summer camps for young people.

Community Activities

An indication of the increasing stability of the Dutch Jewish community was the fact that in the course of 1947–48 it had gradually become self-supporting. On September 1, 1948,
the Jewish Coordination Commission financed by the JDC and responsible for the greater part of the welfare work in Holland ceased to exist. The functions of this Commission were taken over by Cefina (Central Financial Action), whose goal was one million guilders a year, with which it planned to maintain several children’s institutions, a hospital and a Youth Aliyah movement. One group of 500 children living in a children’s village near Appeldorn, maintained by the JDC, left for Palestine on October 7, 1948.

The Ashkenazic community of Amsterdam was able to move back into its regular quarters and was undergoing an internal reorganization to centralize all work in the social and philanthropic fields.

At the time of writing there were three Chief Rabbis in the Netherlands, as compared with one for each province before the war. In July, 1947, Rabbi D. Y. Schochet was brought from Basle, Switzerland to serve as Chief Rabbi of The Hague. This was the first instance in seventy-five years, with one exception, of a Dutch Jewish community importing a rabbi from another country. Also, a Hungarian, Rabbi Katz, was granted permission to enter Holland through the intervention of Queen Wilhelmina, and was serving in the Amsterdam House of Study.

**Immigration and Emigration**

From July 1, 1947, through June 30, 1948, Holland admitted 3,488 displaced persons. From September, 1947, through the end of May, 1948, 600 of these displaced Jews were granted permission to settle in Holland. Most of the immigrants came from German camps and were skilled workers. They were distributed in the four large cities, Amsterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam, and in a few smaller ones.

During 1947, according to a Hebrew Immigration Aid Society report, approximately 650 Jews emigrated from Holland. In October, 1947, as mentioned previously, 500 children
left the Appeldorn children's village for Palestine. Many other young people were waiting for an opportunity to emigrate to Israel.

*Settling War Debts*

The restitution of property taken over by the Nazis continued at a slow pace. Special courts for restitution had been set up to cope with this situation. Life insurance companies which in 1942 canceled most of their policies and handed over to the Germans millions of guilders belonging to Jews, had lost most of their suits and were beginning to repay on the canceled policies. Securities sold by the Germans were, however, still in the buyers' possession. There was little chance that those securities payable to bearer and bought on a normal stock exchange would be returned to the original owners.

A problem more crucial to the morale of the Jewish community was that of former community leaders who had collaborated with the Germans and facilitated deportation proceedings against Dutch Jews. The two chairmen of the Nazi-created Jewish National Council, Abraham Asscher and Dirk Cohen, were arrested in November, 1947, by the Public Prosecutor of Holland for collaborationist activities. Much public interest centered about the trial of these two men and many prominent persons urged their acquittal. In December, 1947, they were released in their own custody pending a trial before the Extraordinary Court of Justice at The Hague. But in January, 1948, a Jewish "court of honor," made up of representatives of the Jewish community and the Dutch Zionist Council, tried Asscher and Cohen and found them guilty of the following acts: obeying the orders of the Germans to organize a Jewish Council; publishing a Jewish weekly which was of more use to the Germans than the Jews; facilitating the carrying out of certain German rulings, including the internment and deportation of Jews; advising Jews to pay the special levy imposed on them; and aiding in the selection of Jews for deportation, particularly in May, 1943. Both
defendants rejected the legality of the “court of honor” and refused to attend its sessions. They did not, however, resume their roles as leaders of the Jewish community.

Another case receiving wide public attention was that of Frederik Weinreb, who was convicted of betraying fugitive Jews to the Gestapo and of extorting huge sums of money from Jews whom he aided in fleeing the country. The conviction took place in November, 1947, at which time friends of Weinreb, several members of the Dutch parliament and Jewish groups in the United States rallied to his aid. These persons charged that Weinreb was being railroaded to prevent his exposing the collaborationist activities of high Dutch officials. The International League for the Rights of Man, which had an observer at Weinreb’s trial, demanded his release from prison in February, 1948, when he had served two thirds of the three-and-a-half-year sentence, and under Dutch custom was eligible for release. This and subsequent appeals for the release of Weinreb were denied, it being charged by Dutch authorities that new evidence had been brought in to prove Weinreb guilty of treachery against fellow Jews. A later decision was handed down by the Appellate Court of Holland on October 26, 1948, sentencing Weinreb to six years’ imprisonment.

FRANCE

Instability continued to mark the political life of France during 1947–48. Many times the government appeared to flounder, only to be saved by last-minute compromises by the political parties. The rising tide of dissatisfaction was made evident in the October, 1947, municipal elections when General Charles De Gaulle’s newly organized rally showed striking gains, particularly at the expense of the MRP (Mouvement republicain populaire), which stood right of center. Even when Robert Schumann succeeded Paul Ramadier as Premier in November, 1947, and the MRP continued in a strategic position, the balance of government forces against
the two powerful extremes of the right and left remained precarious. There was much talk, especially by Socialists, of galvanizing into action a strong Third Force, but it was generally sensed that only economic recovery could create such a liberal democratic movement.

Nevertheless, few would deny that the country was making headway in its reconstruction program. According to the New York Herald Tribune's index based on 1938, French industrial production mounted from 102 in May, 1947, to 114 in May, 1948. More goods of all kinds appeared on the market as the year progressed, and the quality of the bread improved. But these improvements hardly impressed the common man who still suffered from a faulty distribution of goods and services and a rising cost of living. Prices rose over 70 per cent during the year and the devaluation of the franc and removal of some controls seemed to be very ineffective in stemming the tide.

Reconstruction

Three years after liberation, the economic and communal life of French Jewry was returning to normal. Except for the large transient group, employment was general and many Jews had already recouped some of their losses. The restitution of their shops no longer constituted a problem for the vast majority, although Jewish tenants did not fare so well. The Conseil Representatifs des Juifs de France was still coping with various phases of the Jewish property question through its legal committee, and maintaining a close working relationship with the Restitution Service of the Ministry of Finance. It also provided legal assistance to needy Jews and immigrants, and presented their claims before the proper authorities.

The stream of immigrants and transients entering France averaged over 2,000 individuals monthly, and the larger part continued to tax the resources of American relief agencies and of the COSAJOR (Comité Juive d'Action Sociale et de Reconstruction), the local welfare body. Employment place-
ment efforts were co-ordinated during the past year by a central committee which began to function in September and secured work as apprentices in small shops for over 1,200 men and women. In view of the immigrants' language difficulty and the necessity of regulating the status of each with the Ministry of Labor, this figure represented a significant effort. Jewish employers responded well; 46 per cent of the immigrants were absorbed in the clothing industry, 33 per cent in the leather and 6 per cent in the metallurgical industry.

Other institutions also contributed to the rehabilitation. Hefud found placements for 560 workers through its four vocational training establishments around the Paris area. ORT expanded its work in France; with the help of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union it was able to open a training school in Montreuil. In addition, schools were opened in Casablanca, North Africa; Strasbourg and Marseille. At the end of December, 1947, the total registration for all the ORT schools in France numbered 2,925 students, an increase of 30 per cent over last year's registration.

The Joint Distribution Committee aided the reconstruction of the Jewish community by sustaining four credit or loan institutions, which extended business loans to a total of 1,230 individuals.

Welfare and JDC Activities

Relief to individuals and institutions continued to constitute a serious problem for the community and a major responsibility for the Joint Distribution Committee. Care and lodging for 4,000 transients was a tremendous burden, requiring large administrative and functional staffs. Canteens, old age homes, children's homes and social case work were handled through local bodies such as COSAJOR, the Eclaireurs Israelites, and various other federations and unions. Co-ordination of the medical program, largely carried out by OSE, was initiated through the creation of a working
group of medical advisers. Supplies such as food, clothing and welfare items were brought into France at an average cost of eight to ten million francs per month.

In all, while JDC began during the year to curtail expenditures and retrench in France, there was no appreciable assumption of financial responsibility by the local community. To remedy this situation, joint discussions were initiated between JDC officials and the community leaders to plan for a united Jewish campaign and to stress larger contributions from local sources.

Zionism and Palestine

One reason for the comparative lack of communal support for welfare and relief was the tremendous attention given to the situation in Palestine. From November 29 when France joined with those nations which voted for partition in the United Nations Assembly, French Jewry devoted its major energies to the support of its fellow Jews in Palestine. The government gave numerous indications of its sympathy, and prominence was accorded by the press to the heroic stand of the Yishuv. Collections for Haganah amounted to the unprecedented sum of well over 200,000,000 francs for the six-month period following November 29. Equally impressive was the reaction of the Jewish community to the declaration of independence of May 15, when over 35,000 Jews, one third of Paris' Jewish population, crowded the Villodrome d'Hiver to acclaim the event. It was significant that the first announcement of Moshe Shertok as the Foreign Minister of the new state dealt with the ministerial appointments of Eliahu Epstein to Washington and Maurice Fisher in France.

Though the European commitments of France, as well as the unstable situation in the Moslem world where it had special interests, accounted for the hesitation of the government to recognize the Jewish state, there was still no doubt about its friendly attitude. A few days after the declaration, the members of the National Assembly sent a message of greetings to Israel. The hearty reception given to Chaim
Weizmann on his arrival in Paris following his acceptance of the Presidency of the Provisional Government of Israel was ample evidence of the prevailing spirit.

No issue could have demonstrated more the democratic sentiment latent in the French tradition than that of the Exodus affair in June, 1947.

When the British Navy escorted three refugee-loaded ships back from the shores of Palestine to Southern France whence they set out, the problem of forcing them to disembark was a matter for the highest government officials to consider. France had good reasons not to wish to upset the British applecart at that time. Division of opinion was inevitable, but popular sentiment, assisted by a favorable press, prevailed, and the invitation of the government to receive the refugees carried the additional clause that no force or compulsion would be exercised against them to get off the ships if they did not want to.

Anti-Semitism

Nevertheless, it was the impression of many observers that anti-Jewish sentiment had been planted on French soil during the past several years and that the country was more race-conscious than it had ever been. Whatever the reasons—whether the result of the influx of refugees, the tendency during the occupation of non-Jews to disassociate themselves from Jews in order to avoid reprisals, a sense of guilt towards Jews who suffered most, or resentment against Jewish claims for the return of their lost possessions—the manifest indications of the presence of anti-Semitism warranted serious attention. Communists and reactionaries alike were guilty of promoting anti-Jewish feeling. The communist press published a number of articles and cartoons lampooning Jewish members of the cabinet such as René Mayer, Minister of Finance, and Jules Moch, Minister of the Interior, in a fashion which left no doubt that it hoped to make political capital out of the anti-Semitic feeling in France. At the same time, the residue of reactionaries, spiritual heirs of Action
Francaise, continued to abuse their freedom of expression. While their influence remained negligible, they succeeded in gaining ground in certain circles. Though the Committee to Liberate Petain was disbanded by the government, the same forces were successful in winning the light sentence of ten years' imprisonment for Xavier Vallat, Administrator for Jewish Affairs for the Vichy government. At the public trial, Vallat proudly reasserted his anti-Semitic views, and won wide plaudits from his many friends as a gallant fighter for his country's honor. The fact that these people were accepted by the De Gaullist party caused concern to some who found no political or doctrinal objection to the General. Others were less worried, and pointed to several leading Jewish officials, such as René Mayer and Henri Torrez, men close to the General's inner circle. De Gaulle himself certainly never gave the slightest endorsement to the views expressed by fascist elements.

**Defense**

While little discrimination marred the economic and social pattern of the country, the existing tension was considered serious enough to spur a small group of Christians and Jews to organize into the Amitié Judeo-Chrétienne and affiliate with the International Council of Christians and Jews. Though chiefly interested in the problem of anti-Semitism from the standpoint of religious education, it represented a serious effort to come to grips with the whole question of prejudice.

In May, 1948, Jules Isaac, an active member of the Amitié, published his *Jesus et Israel*, a book which attempted to present in proper perspective the historical realities of the life and death of Jesus. It was widely acclaimed as a courageous revelation of the bias which the Christian tradition had developed towards the Jew, and an urgent plea for its elimination.

A wide audience developed for the radio broadcast, *Voix d'Israel*, heard each week under the sponsorship of the Con-
his story Central, whose musical director, Leon Algazi, prepared the program, usually consisting of musical selections and features of interest to the general public.

Other attempts to deal with the problem of Christian-Jewish relations were few and sporadic. The League Against Racism, which recently dropped the word “anti-Semitism” from its title, held a few mass meetings which concentrated upon attacking leniency with collaborators brought to trial, and British policy in Palestine. It also put out the irregular newspaper, *Le droit de vivre*.

During the course of the past year, the American Jewish Committee established a European headquarters office in Paris, one of the purposes of which was to assist local organizations in their community relations. It was in close touch with the leaders of the Jewish community of France, who planned to set up a special defense committee in the fall of 1948. Meanwhile, the Jewish community was issuing a monthly bulletin of information on anti-Semitism and on interfaith relations.

Also, the Centre de Documentation Juive in Paris maintained a large documentary file on the whole area of Nazi operations against the Jews, part of which was used by prosecutors at the Nuremberg trials. This institution sponsored a conference in Paris in December, 1947, of similar historical bodies in Europe in order to exchange views on the best means of co-ordinating efforts at documentation, historical research and the defense of the rights of the survivors of Nazi persecution.

On the international level, the Alliance Israelite Universelle manifested its traditional interest in the protection of the rights of Jews everywhere. It was one of the three organizations which made up the Consultative Council of Jewish Organizations which had consultative status with the Social and Economic Council of the United Nations. The Alliance maintained a network of 116 schools in North Africa and the Near and Middle East, where formal instruction was given to over 50,000 Jewish pupils.
Education

No real developments in the field of Jewish education in France can be reported, partly because of the strong ideological differences between the institutions, and partly because of the neglect in this area of Jewish work in favor of the pressing matters pertaining to Palestine. Among the interesting educational projects which were initiated within the last few years were the Ecole Gilbert Bloch in Orsay, which stressed leadership training; the Centre Educatif, which prepared youth leaders for children's orphanages; and the Centre d'Education Juive, which aimed to spread knowledge of the Hebrew language through special courses in Paris and the provinces.

In addition to these and other schools for French children, there were over forty children's homes, with an average population of fifty immigrant children, which could provide the opportunity for Jewish instruction. However, the annual report of the Council of Jewish Education and Culture drew attention in October, 1947, to the seriousness of the educational crisis, asserting that "half of these children are raised by movements which differ even regarding the most elementary notions about Judaism, while the other half are in institutions which care for their material and moral well being, but which, out of an overzealous concern for freedom, hesitate to touch on the Jewish problem."

The effort to trace children placed in non-Jewish homes or institutions during the occupation was spurred on recently by the creation of a Commission de Dépistage, consisting of representatives of OSE, OPEJ, UJRE, Colonie Scolaire, the two Rothschild homes and several other individuals. Operating with funds from JDC, the committee hoped to solve this vexing question during the course of 1948-49.

Youth Organizations

An active program, consisting of special courses and study circles, the publication of a journal, Kadimah, and the operation of a summer camp in Marseille, was carried on by the
Union of Jewish Students in various university towns throughout the country. Of the 97,000 students in France, the Jews represented a proportion well above their population ratio. There was a continual influx from the continent and abroad, many of whom unfortunately relied on assistance from a community already overtaxed.

The Eclaireurs Israelites de France, numbering 6,000 Jewish Boy Scouts (2,000 in France proper and 4,000 in North Africa) had a special department, known as Service Social des Jeunes, which handled case work for young transients between the ages of fourteen and twenty-three. Vocational training, supported by JDC, was also part of their program. Altogether, 200 young people per month were helped through their various welfare services.

Zionist youth activity was loosely centralized in the Federation of Zionist Youth of France, comprising all the movements, the most active of which were Hashomer Hatzair and Hapoel Hamizrachi. The latter organized last summer a successful camp project for its junior members, the B’ne Akiba. In addition, it directed the activities of one of the three hachsharot (agricultural training colonies) in France, Bahad, which accommodated about 650 persons. The largest of the three, Hechalutz, had an average population of close to 3,000 men, women and children.

**Religious Structure**

The management of the religious life of the community was the function of the Union des Associations Cultuelles Israelite, or as it is more often called, the Consistoire Central. It was a purely voluntary body with no official status vis-à-vis the state, and its scope of activity was confined by law to religious matters only. The Consistoire Central administered the synagogues and temples, performed and recorded all religious ceremonies, operated the rabbinical school, and in general was unofficially recognized as the representative body of the Jewish community. The chief rabbi of France was the spiritual leader, though the Consistoire Central had
a lay president and executive body, and was composed of delegates of all the local religious associations.

Not all the synagogues in France, however, were affiliated with the Union. Of the forty Rabbis in the country, fifteen were non-Consistorial, though most of them were located in Paris. They were mainly newcomers themselves, and were associated with immigrants' synagogues. Neither were the synagogues in Alsace-Lorraine part of the Union, having retained their official status, and, like the other denominations, being recognized and supported by the state.

Of interest is the fact that during the past year and a half, the Order of the French Legion of Honor was conferred on Chief Rabbi of France Isaie Schwartz, Chief Rabbi of Paris Julien Weill, and Judge Leon Meiss, President of the Consistoire—a significant token of the regard in which the Jewish community was held officially.

Community Trends

To describe the organizational structure of the Jewish community would involve a lengthy catalogue of societies and organizations representing all ideological and fraternal groupings. The effort made by the Conseil Representatif des Juifs de France, organized in Lyon in 1943 to bring order into the complex community pattern, met with limited success, since its very creation and existence would have been impossible had it attempted to encroach on the autonomy of existing bodies. Its effectiveness was further curbed by its all-inclusive membership, which prevented the homogeneity which is a necessary condition to any action. Its undoubted contribution was to bring together for the purposes of discussion the two previously separated sections of French Jewry, the immigrant elements and those more assimilated to French culture.

In general, the tendency in 1947–48 was towards unification. Events in Palestine not only captured the imagination of the assimilated, but made possible a certain area of common ground between the extreme leftists and the Zionists. The
Zionist organizations were somewhat overshadowed by the general enthusiasm for the Jewish national cause. Furthermore, the planning that was going into the creation of a United Campaign already suggested a further force for community cohesion. These factors augured well for French Jewry.

SWITZERLAND

The stable political situation in Switzerland continued to stand as a bulwark against any drastic change in the life of Swiss Jewry during 1947-48.

Communal Life

There were 25,000 Jews in Switzerland at the time of writing, 19,000 of whom were Swiss nationals. Most of the Jews resided in the cities, with Zurich leading, with more than 6,000 Jews representing 1.8 per cent of Zurich’s total population. Consequently, Zurich was a center of Jewish cultural and communal activities, followed to some extent by Basle and Geneva. The Schweizer Israelitische Gemeindebund ("Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities") comprised twenty-seven Jewish communities with a total of 3,622 families.

At the suggestion of the United Jewish Educational and Cultural Organization (Europe) the Juedisches Lehrerseminar ("Teacher’s Seminary") in Basle conducted training classes for group leaders, which were well attended, particularly by foreign students.

The Union of Jewish Students of Switzerland, which was founded in 1946, numbered at the time of writing more than 500 active members and played an active role in Jewish life. The promising program of this Swiss section of the Union Mondiale des Etudiants Juifs ("World Union of Jewish Students") had among its objectives: co-operation in the rebuilding of Palestine (there were many Palestinian students in the Union), struggle against anti-Semitism in all its forms, and the development of cordial relations with organizations of non-
Jewish students. In addition, the Union provided material and moral aid to needy students. The education of Swiss-Jewish youth was being increasingly assumed by youth organizations, most popular of which were the Zionist Hechalutz, Hashomer Hatzair and the Jewish Scouts.

The publication of the important periodical *Revue Juive*, edited by Josué Jehouda, was temporarily discontinued.

**Refugee Help**

The majority of the 4,500 Jewish refugees still in Switzerland were being taken care of by the *Verband Schweizerischer Juedischer Fluechtlingshilfen*. More than half of them received part or full assistance from this organization. (It is interesting to note that only 5,000 native Swiss Jews were able to work.) The organization spent 4,000,000 Swiss francs in 1947 for the maintenance of emigres and refugees, about one million less than in the preceding year. More than a thousand Swiss refugees and emigres left Switzerland in 1947 and the *Verband* spent more than 1,000,000 Swiss francs for their emigration. Of this number, 924 went overseas, the largest number to the United States (614), France was next with 76 immigrants or repatriates, and was followed by Hungary (64), Australia (61) and Palestine (54).

On February 1, 1947, the Joint Distribution Committee took over the official emigration department of the *Verband*. HIAS and JDC agreed to share the emigration load and administrative expenses equally.

Permanent asylum in Switzerland based on a special *Bundesratsbeschluss* ("parliamentary dispensation") was granted 214 applicants.

The *Verband* assumed the responsibility for the maintenance of 400 Jewish children when the Swiss *Hilfswerk fuer Emigrantenkinder* was dissolved at the end of 1947.

The SIC *Hilfe und Aufbau* Committee which gave emergency material and spiritual assistance to children and sick people in districts lying immediately beyond the Swiss frontier was forced to discontinue its work because of lack of funds.
Zionist Activities

The Schweizerische Zionistenverband with 1,200 members representing all the different Zionist groups and political shades was the center of Zionist organizations and activities.

The creation of the new state of Israel was the subject of enthusiastic celebration. A new bimonthly, Das Neue Israel, began publication in June, 1948, with the aim of illustrating and promoting the cultural, economic and political life of the new state.

Hechalutz conducted an efficient training program for collective agricultural life in Palestine which culminated in work on a training farm in Bex (Waadt).

Over 200 delegates from Jewish communities of more than forty countries attended the Second Plenary Assembly of the World Jewish Congress which convened in Montreux from June 27 to July 6, 1948. The Congress’ future course was discussed in the light of the two crucial issues of the day: the East-West political controversy and the relationship of the Diaspora to Israel. Re-elected to the leadership of the World Jewish Congress were Stephen S. Wise, Nahum Goldmann and A. Leon Kubowitzki.

The Gemeindeverband, which participated in the World Jewish Congress, co-operated closely with the American Jewish Committee, with JDC, OSE and ORT. The association with these great American-Jewish organizations added substantially to the welfare and self-assurance of the Jews of Switzerland.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism, dormant in Switzerland after the collapse of Nazism, was gradually reawakening. There were anti-Semitic allusions in books and in the smaller newspapers, but public response was negligible. The official attitude manifested itself clearly in the rather severe punishments meted out to Swiss National-Socialists who were aggressive anti-Semites. One of the most infamous of these traitors, Georges Oltramare,
was tried by the Swiss Supreme Court and condemned on November 14, 1947, to three years in the penitentiary and the loss of his citizenship rights for five years. During this trial the representative of the Swiss Attorney General sharply attacked Oltramare’s anti-Semitic activities as a danger to Swiss independence and sovereignty.

Efficient educational work in the field of intergroup relations was performed by the Jewish-Christian Association to Fight Anti-Semitism in Switzerland, which had some 500 members, two-thirds of whom were non-Jewish. The Association cooperated closely with friends in other countries, particularly with the International Conference of Christians and Jews. The Association held two international meetings in Switzerland, one in Seelisberg in the summer of 1947, the other in Fribourg in the summer of 1948.

Until recently there was a special decree prosecuting anti-Semitic activities. This decree was part of the wartime ordinance for the protection of democracy and was lifted with the abolition of the entire ordinance. At the time of writing, the SIG (Schweizer Israelitische Gemeindebund) had failed in its attempt to incorporate the ordinance in the penal code.

ITALY

The April, 1948, elections confirmed the government of the Center with Alcide de Gasperi as Premier, and gave the Christian Democratic party a relative majority in the Senate and an absolute majority in Parliament. Representatives of almost all the other parties, with the important exception of the large Communist party, were included in the government.

The defeat of the socialist-communist bloc was marked by incidents of violence, repeated strikes and attacks in the press, but the government of the center, now strengthened, demonstrated its ability to control the situation.
Legislation

During the period between May, 1947, and May, 1948, little legislation was enacted by the government with regard to the Jews. The restitution laws all date prior to this period. The question became one of implementation. Although most of the cases were settled out of court, the various tribunals differed in the application of the law.

An important legislative measure concerned the rebuilding by the state of synagogues destroyed during the war. This measure placed synagogues and Christian churches in practically the same category insofar as state aid for reconstruction was concerned. In accordance with this law, the temples of Bologna, Milan, Leghorn and Florence were to be rebuilt.

Immigration of Refugees

A friendly tolerance characterized Italian postwar policy with respect to the immigration of refugees. The illegal influx of refugees continued, but the Italian government did little to stop it, knowing that only a very small minority of refugees intended to remain in Italy, since most of them wished to sail to Palestine.

According to special agreements with the International Refugee Organization, that body was responsible for the refugees in the assembly camps. Recently (April, 1948) there was an order to transfer these camps from Northern Italy, where they were numerous, to Central and Southern Italy.

Population

The number of Italian Jews registered with the communities was around 32,000. The slight increase as compared with last year's figure of 30,000 was due to the excess of births over deaths, as well as to some extent to the return of Jews who left the country during the period of racial discrimination.

The largest communities were those of Rome (11,700), Milan (5,800), Turin (2,400), Venice (1,800), Florence
(1,700), Vercelli (1,300) and Leghorn (1,200). All the others numbered less than 1,000.

There were twenty-four communities in all, plus thirteen separate sections. They were situated mostly in the North. In the South, there were only two communities: that of Bari—recently constituted—with 600 Italian nationals and numerous displaced persons, and that of Naples.

Internal Organization

The period 1944–46 was characterized by the serious problem of the reorganization of Italian Jewry; 1947–48 may be designated a return to normal.

All the representative bodies of the communities and the Jewish institutions were reconstituted. Directing the communities was the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, whose president was Raphale Cantoni. The Union of Communities was governed by a Council and an Executive, with headquarters in Rome.

This period was also characterized by an adjustment to normal economic conditions. The Joint Distribution Committee contributions to the communities were diminishing gradually in accordance with a planned program which provided for the complete cessation of assistance by October, 1948, with the exception of contributions to the Union of Communities and the Rabbinic College and aid to the children in the orphanages of Ostia, Rome and Turin.

The economic progress was tied up with a marked increase in the compulsory contributions by recorded members of the communities. But this resulted in financial hardship for the other Jewish institutions (asylums, schools, hospitals, shelters, etc.) which were suffering from decreases in voluntary contributions. These institutions were already in great difficulty because of the shrinkage in their capital which was almost completely invested in government bonds and real estate, the incomes from which had become totally inadequate because of the inflation. This was perhaps one of the most serious aspects of the situation.
Intergroup Activities

On November 8, 1947, Dr. Everett Clinchy, president of the International Council of Christians and Jews, organized a meeting in Rome which was attended by many Jews, Catholics and Protestants, both lay and clerical. The purpose was to stimulate interest in the formation of an Italian Council. However, little resulted from this initial effort, because those who attended the meeting were basically unprepared. This necessitated the postponement of further meetings that had been planned.

Experiences in other Italian cities were a little more satisfactory, although no permanent local committees were formed.

The Union against Religious Intolerance and Racism remained a local body in Turin, where it had been created two years before.

Anti-Semitism

An anti-Semitic manifestation took place in April, 1948, when a few members of the neo-fascist MSI (Social Italian Movement) marched in a provocative manner before the synagogue in the Jewish district of Rome and in the streets of that area. An unverified report had it that cries of "Death to the Jews" were heard, and acts of outrage were directed against the monument commemorating the Nazi martyrs. The Jewish population promptly took action and dispersed the marchers. The leftist papers devoted much space to this incident, using it for their political purposes, as this occurred on the eve of the elections. For the same reason, the papers of the Center tried to minimize or ignore the event. The Union of Jewish Communities protested energetically to the Ministry of the Interior, which expressed its regret and disapproval. The MSI denied having provoked the incident and declared that it was not an anti-Semitic party.
Apart from this episode the situation remained stable, characterized by the absence of any propaganda or discrimination. Instances of religious bias which had formerly marked the propaganda of some preachers decreased, thanks to the prompt intervention of the Union.

Zionist Activities

On the occasion of the birth of the Jewish state, there were important manifestations of rejoicing in all Italian cities containing Jewish communities. There were special religious celebrations in the synagogues; the event was discussed with enthusiasm in all Jewish circles.

The fund-raising campaign for Haganah met with great success, and at the time of writing 160 million lire had been collected. The campaign of the Jewish National Fund also produced satisfactory results. However, there was no immigration of any consequence of Italian Jews to Palestine.

ORT in Italy

One of the most interesting aspects of Jewish life in Italy was the extraordinary development of ORT. It was administered by a Council of eighteen members, some of whom were non-Jews.

There were eighty trade schools with 1,850 pupils (of whom 1,710 were DPs, 140 native Italians), 140 teachers and 50 members of the administration. There were 460 graduates.

The Italian press frequently mentioned this institution with great sympathy and admiration. Many journalists visited the ORT camps and schools and expressed interest in the admirable and useful work accomplished by Jewry on behalf of the survivors of the Nazi camps, who had been given the opportunity of rebuilding their lives through work.

The Italian political world showed real interest in the activity of ORT; special mention should be made of the offi-
cial participation of Renzo Levi and Abraham Blass, chief of ORT, Italy, in the International Conference of Labor which took place in Rome from January 26 to February 9, 1948.

Other Organizations

The assistance lent by the Joint Distribution Committee which was extremely significant during the period immediately following the liberation and thereafter, was decreasing little by little, while that of the local organizations was increasing. By the month of October, 1948, JDC was to cease all its contributions to the communities and institutions, although it was to carry on in other fields on a reduced scale.

OSE was the largest contributor to an infants’ home in Rome for children under three, to several children’s play-grounds situated in the principal communities and to summer camps.

In five of the seven southeastern European countries discussed in this section, the year 1947-48 marked the achievement of complete and effective Communist political control, and of a far-reaching transformation of the economic life of these countries on the model furnished by the Soviet economy. While the tempo of achievement of these uniform “revolutions” varied according to local conditions and moods, the objectives and processes of transforming these countries into “people’s democracies” were identical.

1 Prepared in the offices of the American Jewish Committee.