

# IMPRESSIONS OF FRENCH JEWRY TODAY

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**N**O SERIOUS statistical study of French Jewry has yet been made. The chief difficulty has been that during the past hundred years French censuses have asked no questions about religious affiliation, in keeping with the separation between Church and State. In general, the extremely complex structure of French Jewry makes it almost impossible for anyone to write a satisfactory survey. The complexity—both demographic and social—springs from the multiplicity of the origins of French Jewry and its present-day distribution in the country, from the great variety of ideological trends, and from the high proportion of Jews who no longer have any connexion with organized Jewish activities. It must be stressed that for these reasons the facts set out in this paper are working hypotheses and rough approximations, subject to check by future inquiries. (Virtually the only serious recent sociological studies of French Jewish communities have been undertaken by Community Service, which is sponsored by the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the American Jewish Committee, and the Anglo-Jewish Association, and these only on small and medium-sized Jewish communities.)

## *Population*

The most plausible estimate of the present-day Jewish population of France is 300,000–350,000, or less than 1 per cent of the 45 millions in the country. It can be assumed that 150,000–180,000 Jews live in the Paris area, but about one-third of them are scattered in small suburban settlements, which means that a good number form very small and practically isolated communities. Some 30,000 Jews are to be found in the three *départements de l'Est* (Moselle, Bas-Rhin, and Haut-Rhin), which have a special status and where local Jewish traditions have been relatively well preserved. In the rest of France there are 50,000–60,000 Jews living in towns where there are Jewish communities or at least some elements of Jewish community life. We may mention Lyons and its suburbs (13,000), Marseilles (8,000), Toulouse, Bordeaux, Nice (5,000), and Lille (2,000). Finally, there are some 30,000 Jews living in virtual isolation in towns and villages throughout the country.

## FRENCH JEWRY TODAY

At the end of the eighteenth century, when Jews became citizens, there were about 3,500 Jews in Paris. In general they came from the three regions of France where the Jews had formed permanent settlements: Alsace-Lorraine, Comtat Venaissin (a Papal State incorporated in France during the Revolution), and Bordeaux-Bayonne (in this case Portuguese Jews). These three regions form the ancient seat of French Jewry.

The communities of Comtat Venaissin practically disappeared in the course of the nineteenth century. Many Jews were converted, and most of the others, e.g. the Crémieux, Lunel, and Milhaud families, moved elsewhere. In the Bordeaux-Bayonne area the communities underwent the same experience in a milder form, but here there have persisted local traditions to which newcomers to the region have been able to assimilate. Alsace-Lorraine Jewry has survived in a most lively fashion even though many of its members swarmed into France (and even into Belgium and Switzerland), especially after the attachment of these provinces to Germany in 1871.

German Jews came into France in the middle of the nineteenth century, but the major waves of immigration began with the arrival of Jews from Eastern Europe. Six thousand arrived in Paris between 1881 and 1900 and 15,000 between 1901 and 1914. Moreover, during the same period there arrived some 10,000 Sephardim who had for the most part learned French in Alliance Israélite Universelle schools. It has been estimated that about 70,000 Jews from Eastern Europe immigrated to France between the two wars, and that some 10,000 Sephardim came from the Balkans and Asia Minor. Many Jewish refugees from Germany passed through France, but few stayed there; today they are thought to number barely 5,000.

The Second World War, of course, changed the demographic composition of French Jewry. About 120,000 people were deported. As a result of deportations and post-liberation population movements, the geographical distribution was completely altered; but, on the whole, the relative proportions of the different origin groups remained largely the same, with one major change in recent years: the immigration of Jews from North Africa, some 40,000 of whom have settled in France. They are all French-speaking. Some of them are highly educated and rich, others are working class. Movements from Eastern Europe as well as emigration from France (both to Israel and elsewhere) are now on a very small scale.

### *Occupations*

The absence of census data makes it very risky to speak about the occupational distribution of Jews in France and of the part they play in economic and cultural life. The information given here is even more subject to caution than the data on population in the last section.

Jews are to be found in all branches of economic life. However, at the present time they seem to play a greater part in certain tertiary activities (liberal professions and commerce) and to be most numerous in some secondary activities (notably in certain industries and especially in such trades as ready-made clothes and leather goods).

The attention paid to certain outstanding names in economic life must not be allowed to obscure the fact that the great majority of the Jews belong either to the lower middle class or the higher stratum of the working class. It is certainly true that the economic role of the Rothschilds and the Péreires in the nineteenth century was very considerable, especially in the development of railways and some of the major industries. Other 'Jewish' banks have since then been founded and still exist, but neither do they form a coherent banking network nor do they exercise a dominant influence in the world of French banking. In the nineteenth century the greater part of French Jewry, especially in Alsace-Lorraine, lived close to the countryside, where they traded in animals and generally acted as small business men and craftsmen.

Some of the large stores (e.g. Galeries Lafayette) are run by Jews, and have Jewish capital. Jews keep a good number of shops and are strongly represented among travelling salesmen in the provinces. The Jewish share of the total volume of French retail trade is, however, quite small, although in some branches and in some towns this share may appear relatively large. There are comparatively few Jews in the food trade; there are more of them in clothing, fancy leather goods, watches and jewellery, electrical goods, furniture, and furs.

In some fields of economic activity Jews have been the agents of innovation. One need mention only the names of André Citroën for the motor industry and Bleustein-Blanchet for advertising and publicity (Publicis, Regie-France, etc.). In other fields (ready-made clothes and footwear, for example) development has been greatly helped by the existence of a predominantly Jewish skilled labour force.

Jews of French origin and those of foreign extraction who have become assimilated to French culture, have tended to abandon small trade and the crafts for the liberal professions, at least when they have had the chance to do so. Generally, Jewish parents of humble origin urge their children on to higher studies in a manner which is not paralleled among non-Jews of comparable status. It is quite likely that in the French universities as a whole Jews form 5 to 6 per cent of the student body. Jews form a significant proportion of doctors and lawyers, although in France taken as a whole this proportion must be definitely below 10 per cent for doctors and even lower for lawyers. A considerable number of Jews have turned to engineering (there is quite a large proportion in atomic research, for example), the teaching profession, and such careers as public relations, the press, broadcasting, and the cinema. Antisemitic propaganda has greatly exaggerated the number and power of the Jews

in these occupations simply by stressing the outstandingly successful (Lazareff of *France-Soir*, Lazurick of *Aurore*, a few film directors and radio producers). Finally, we should note that a few Jews have reached very high positions in the civil service.

Only a very small number of Jews are professional politicians. However, there have been a few successes among them which have given a false idea of the scale of Jewish participation in this field: there have, for example, been three prime ministers, Blum, René Mayer, and Pierre Mendès-France.

### *Cultural Life*

It is almost impossible to evaluate Jewish participation in French cultural life. In order to make a thorough study of this question it would be necessary to distinguish between two kinds of Jewish writers and artists: first, those who have been consciously Jewish or who have at least expressed something Jewish in their work, and second, those for whom the accident of Jewish birth has not marked their work.

In the nineteenth century there was an outstanding French school of scholars of Hebrew and Semitics (Munk, Cahen, Darmstetter, Neubauer, etc.). At the end of the last and at the beginning of the twentieth century *La Revue des Etudes Juives*, for example, bore witness to the flourishing state of these activities. In contrast, literary works which could be said to be French-Jewish were either non-existent or at least second-rate.

The generation which had grown up under the influence of the reaction to the Dreyfus Affair tried, however, to create a Jewish literature in the French language. The inter-war period was the epoch of Fleg, Spire, Henry Hertz, and Albert Cohen. It was this period which gave birth also to a series devoted to Jewish literary works, generally translated from English or Hebrew, and which produced Jewish literary reviews some of which have survived.

It is also worth noting that in this period, after Péguy and Léon Bloy pointed out the role of Jews in Christian civilization, the Jewish character made his appearance in the work of non-Jewish novelists in contrast to the nineteenth century when the 'literary Jew' was merely a stereotype. We see this in certain works by Proust (himself a half-Jew), Duhamel, Roger Martin du Gard, etc.

Since the end of the Second World War and especially in recent years the publication of Jewish works has greatly increased. It is still too early to judge the value and the significance of this literary work. On the other hand, we must note the very lively rebirth of Jewish studies illustrated by the names of Georges Vajda and Andre Néher. Behind these two masters one feels there is growing up a whole generation of historians, sociologists, Hebraists, and thinkers, auguring well for the future of Jewish knowledge in France.

Series of Jewish books and gramophone records have multiplied. The

subjects most commonly dealt with are the State of Israel, Biblical studies, religious thought, the Nazi period, and Jewish history. This proliferation meets both the curiosity of the non-Jewish public and the needs of a rising new Jewish generation.

At the end of the last century, when the generation of Jewish Hebraists died away, Jewish scholars began to play a part in certain general fields of study and thought but, in the majority of cases, their work showed no particular Jewish influence: in sociology (Lévy-Bruhl, Durkheim, and more recently Gurvitch and Raymond Aron); in philosophy (Bergson and later Brunschwig, Jean Wahl, and Jankelevitch); in history (Glotz, Halphon, Henry Berr, and above all Marc Bloch); in cultural anthropology (Lévi-Strauss); in mathematics (Mandelbrojt, Laurent Schwartz); in physics; and in medicine (Weill-Halle, Debré, Baruk, etc.). It needs no stressing that these and the names that follow are merely illustrative, and by no means a complete listing.

Jews have not played a prominent role in French literature. The first Jew to be admitted to the Académie Française was the dramatist Porto-Riche at the beginning of this century; since then, apart from Bergson, only André Maurois has been elected. One must note, however, the great influence of Marcel Proust on contemporary literature. As for painting, hardly a week goes by in which the work of a dozen Jewish artists is not on view. Several great Jewish names appear in the Ecole de Paris: Modigliani, Pascin, Chagall, Soutine, and Kisling. Among the younger painters beginning to make an international reputation for themselves are Atlan, Arikha, Maryan, and Spitzer. A good many of these artists identify themselves as Jews and belong to the Association de Peintres et Sculpteurs Juifs de France. Some of these, such as Chagall, draw their inspiration from Jewish subjects (Benn, Mané Katz, Kolnik, etc.). In music, in the more classical genre we may recall for the last century the names of Meyerbeer and Offenbach and for this century that of Darius Milhaud who has drawn for his inspiration in part on Provençal Jewish life. One of the exponents and practitioners of 12-tone technique in music is René Leibowitz who lives in France. A number of French-Jewish composers and performers have devoted themselves to Jewish traditional and synagogal music (e.g. Algazi). Let us note finally that some Jews have made a name for themselves in the teaching of music (e.g. Gedalge), and in its performance and in musical criticism. Many Israelis have come to study at the Paris Conservatoire.

In the French theatre the Jews are not particularly outstanding today. There are many Jewish actors but none of them today enjoys the renown of a Rachel or a Sarah Bernhardt. Among producers, however, let us mention Jean Mercure and some organizers of new companies, such as Marcel Lupovici. Special mention should be made of Marcel Marceau, who has done much for the art of mime throughout the world. There are few first-rank names among cinema actors (Simone Signoret) or

## FRENCH JEWRY TODAY

producers (Cayatte, Alexandre Astruc). On the other hand, Jews have considerable influence in film production and distribution. A few Jewish radio and television producers have been responsible for new ideas and have achieved unusual success.

The number of Jewish singers and music hall performers has increased in recent years (Marie Dubas, Gainsbourg, Georges Ulmer, some of les Compagnons de la Chanson, Agnès Capri who has started the fashion of poetic songs 'à la Prevert', etc.).

### *Relations with Non-Jews*

On the whole, as will have been seen from the last section, Jews have been closely integrated into French life. Again on the whole, one can say that at the present there is no discrimination in French behaviour or law. Nevertheless, the Occupation and German propaganda left their trace in the minds of the French people, supporting certain 'habitual' French xenophobic tendencies. Antisemitism still remains a useful argument for the extreme right, which is as violent as it is weak; nor is it unknown, in much milder form, in certain milieux on the left. The French temperament is inclined to a rather parochial distrust of all that seems 'different', and antisemitism, as a 'customary' tendency to keep Jews at arm's length, persists.

Lately, as a reaction to the wartime massacres and the rebirth of Israel, there has grown up an enormous interest in everything Jewish. This interest has been recently reinforced by political events in the Mediterranean. More and more French thinkers, especially religious, puzzle over the meaning of Israel's 'survival' and 'martyrdom'. Youth groups (students and trade unionists) are eager to make study tours in Israel, and often ask for information about the building of the young State. The number of Catholics and Protestants learning Hebrew in order to gain a better understanding of the Bible has considerably grown, and this interest is not solely due to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. At Easter 1959 there was even a special congress of two hundred representatives of Catholic groups learning Hebrew. A general interest is also witnessed by the sharp increase in the sale of serious books and records giving information about Israel and Jewish thought.

### *Jewish Life*

It is very difficult to establish exactly the extent and intensity of Jewish life in France. First, despite the greater co-ordination achieved in recent years, there is no organization which can claim to embrace all Jewish activities. Second, we are now in a period when Jewish activities, in almost all fields, are growing very noticeably, and this movement, which augurs well for the future, is only in its early stages.

As we have seen, outside Alsace-Lorraine France has no old tradition of a spiritual, intellectual, social, and communal Jewish life. The ancient

communities of Comtat Venaissin have practically disappeared; in the Bordeaux area the old Portuguese tradition persists, but on the whole communal life here is not now very strong. The late nineteenth century was the period when Jews moved into French life with, from the start, a marked tendency to assimilate. With certain rare exceptions, established Jews have accepted the standards of nineteenth-century Jewry. Expressions such as 'Frenchmen of the Mosaic Religion', 'Israclites inside the Synagogue, French citizens outside it' are becoming obsolete, to some extent, but the mood they signified remains. Jewish communal and family life gave way to individual piety in a period of enlightenment when religion was in retreat. Becoming simply an aesthetic and sentimental emotion (when it was not just a matter of filial piety or of moral education) religion degenerated to a thing without value or power, without being replaced by any other reason for being Jewish. This phenomenon, common enough in Western Europe, was accentuated in France, despite the crisis of the Dreyfus Affair, because of conditions peculiar to the country: the law of separation of Church and State and of a strong tendency to individualism. In countries such as England everyone belongs to something—clubs, political parties, religious congregations. In France the done thing is to belong to nothing; Jewish life clashed with the general framework of French life. In the best case French Jews contented themselves with 'doing their duty' by registering with the Consistory (in order to keep up their morale and have their religion represented at official ceremonies) and with donating a little money to good causes.

The situation remained very different in Alsace-Lorraine where the Jewish communities, often rural, maintained their own traditions which fitted into the ordinary life of the region. Moreover the three *départements de l'Est* continued to enjoy the benefits of a special concordat in the matter of religion.

Before the last war the state of French Jewry was in some measure marked by the immigration of a relatively large Jewish population with a lively consciousness of *Yiddishkeit*. French Jewry was not at once able to integrate these immigrants, who lived on the fringes of local communities and slowly became assimilated to French ways. The organizations peculiar to Eastern European Jews (*Landsmannschaften*, Yiddish groups, etc.) gradually lost their importance, although their influence is still to be seen in social and cultural activities, Zionist and local.

At the Liberation things had changed. The children of immigrants had become French by nationality and education. If to a great extent these young people had suffered the demoralization of the war and were looking for nothing but a 'life without history' in which they might simply pursue riches and amusements, one could no less perceive certain sturdy signs of renaissance: spiritual disquiet, religious study, attempts to understand 'why I am a Jew', a (perhaps vague) feeling for

## FRENCH JEWRY TODAY

the need of values to be protected. This fitted in with a certain post-war trend in French thinking, but its Jewish expression was sharper. The creation of the State of Israel, the War of Independence, and the opening of the Israel Embassy in Paris produced a new mental shock, of which the several Zionist movements could not take advantage because of warped ideology, the habit of seeing everything from a political point of view, lack of proper contact with the country, and also, it must be said, mediocrity and lack of sustained effort. For all that, the experience of the State of Israel, concurrent with a certain spiritual renewal, the changes in behaviour, the rise of a new and more demanding generation, radically modified the picture of Jews and Judaism in France. Vigorous attempts to reorganize the structure of French Jewry in the same period have in some measure provided a framework for this renaissance.

### *The Organization of Judaism*

Since Napoleon created the *Consistoire Central* in 1808 it has represented the Jewish religion. It is made up by local consistorial organizations in France and Algeria. The Paris Consistory has a little fewer than 6,000 members and the provincial consistories together count scarcely more, although this figure in most cases indicates families and not individuals. The Consistory follows a conservative line, tending somewhat to a greater orthodoxy in recent years. In consistorial synagogues men and women are separated but organ music as well as the mixed choir is allowed. Orthodox Jews, then, are to be found outside the consistorial synagogues; and there are many small prayer-houses grouping people of the same countries of origin. Orthodox groups are federated in the *Conseil Traditionaliste du Judaïsme en France* which maintains very good relations with the Consistory and has become more active, notably in the field of education, especially in the last few years. The Liberals, also not belonging to the Consistory, are organized in the *Union Libérale Israélite* which belongs to the World Union for Progressive Judaism. This is a very active but relatively small movement with 600 members.

In reality the Consistory, which is in a sense 'the official body of French Jewry', plays a more considerable role than one might suppose from the number of its members: an administrative role (various certificates, burial, *Shechita*, *Kashrut*); a legal role, in that by French law the Chief Rabbi of France is elected by the Consistory; an educational role, in that the Jewish Seminary (Rabbinical School) is dependent on it; and a prestige role, because it stands for the tradition of French Jewry and continues, as in the last century, to be led by the 'great families'. (In the nineteenth century it could be said that the Rothschilds *were* the Consistory; while they still take a leading part in it, the saying is no longer accurate.)

It should be added that in recent years the Consistory has made



serious efforts in many fields of activity which have greatly enhanced its position in the community: an effort to recruit new members; an effort in education (improvement and extension of the system of courses in religious instruction); and an effort to adapt itself to present-day conditions—the Consistory is no longer the exclusive affair of a few ‘notables’. It has striven to welcome and integrate into French religious life the recent refugees from North Africa and Egypt, while before the war it gave the impression of being wary of newcomers. Having come down from its ivory tower, the Consistory is now collaborating more and more with the whole body of Jewish organizations in France.

The Consistories of the three *départements* of Moselle, Bas-Rhin, and Haut-Rhin are independent. In this region the rabbis and major religious officials are appointed by the State. Religious instruction is given in the schools by all religious denominations. As we have seen, local traditions have survived here more vigorously.

#### *Other forms of Organization*

French Jewry was for a long time shy of Zionism, despite the notable exception of Edmond de Rothschild. Before the war Zionism had not really taken a hold except among people with a strong Jewish awareness—in the East of France and among the unassimilated immigrants from Eastern Europe. The war and the creation of the State of Israel inspired a general support for Israel. This has been further enhanced in recent years by the close political ties between France and Israel. The growth of the Zionist movement in France, however, did not match the scale of sympathy for Israel, although the Zionist Federation of France has tried to group together all parties, including ‘non-political elements’. But the Zionist leadership, press, and propaganda machine have remained subject to political considerations, and the number of ‘non-party’ members has not kept pace with expectations. Leaving aside the youth movements (with which we shall deal later), one should note the importance of the membership of WIZO (12,000), the success of the annual celebration of Israel’s Independence Day, and the growing number of tourists going to Israel from France. We should also mention that the *Magbit* reaches more people (12,000 donors of a total of Fr. Francs 250,000,000) than the bodies collecting for local needs; and to these contributions must of course be added the money brought in by the Keren Kayemeth Leisrael, WIZO, etc. In a few words, one may say that French Jewry is at present unanimously pro-Israel and that it feels very close to it.

Philanthropic works and welfare have always been important Jewish activities. In the nineteenth century they consisted generally of the Rothschild Foundations (hospitals, homes, orphanages, etc.). In Paris the most important charitable body, the *Comité de Bienfaisance Israélite de Paris*, was created as a parallel to the Consistory and has remained

## FRENCH JEWRY TODAY

closely tied to it. On the eve of the Second World War, in face of the influx of refugees first from Eastern Europe and then from Germany, French sections of the International Jewish Social organizations O.S.E. and O.R.T. were set up, as well as bodies founded by independent groups. In 1950, on the initiative of the American 'Joint', there was founded a co-ordinating fund-collecting body for local needs, the *Fonds Social Juif Unifié*, which at the same time has become the central organization for distributing to member-bodies the funds coming from its own collection and that of the 'Joint'. In 1959 the F.S.J.U. consisted of thirty parties and bodies, and collected Fr. Francs 300,000,000 (twenty millions in Strasbourg) from 10,000 donors. The thirty welfare work member-bodies of the F.S.J.U. permanently support 5,000 families (war victims, unemployable refugees, social and medical cases), shelters 1,200 old people in sixteen homes, has resettled 22,000 refugees from North Africa, Egypt, Hungary, and Poland, and looks after 1,000 orphans and abandoned children.

Bringing together the most varied groups and movements, the F.S.J.U. has assumed a most important role in the Jewish communities of France. It has succeeded, notably, in developing cultural services and co-ordinating many activities in the fields of education and youth work. Besides, it has set up a cultural action commission for distributing Claims Conference funds in France and for establishing a programme to extend the system of social and cultural work.

### *Schools and Youth Organizations*

Every synagogue runs courses of religious instruction or a Talmud Torah. In Paris 2,400 children attend the weekly two-hour courses organized by the Consistory, about 200 the courses run by the Liberals, and 300 the courses run by the Orthodox; and a few hundred are catered for by different religious bodies. In addition, other courses have been established by non-religious associations—e.g. the Federation of Jewish Societies, *Landsmannschaften*, Bund, etc.—which look after 1,000 children in Paris. It is difficult to measure the extent of these part-time courses in the provinces. The proportion of children attending part-time courses in the *départements de l'Est* is especially high; elsewhere the non-religious sponsored courses are comparatively less important than in Paris (500 children in the whole of the provinces); while the religious sponsored courses are spreading, thanks to the rebirth of certain provincial communities, to the installation of Rabbis, travelling teachers, and the creation of correspondence courses.

There are four Jewish full-time schools in France: one primary and two secondary schools in Paris and one primary and secondary school in Strasbourg. More than 1,000 pupils follow the usual courses of French studies in these schools while living in a Jewish setting and give five to eight hours of their weekly time-table to Jewish instruction (Hebrew,

Jewish history, Bible, etc.). In all these religious schools the teaching is generally of a high standard. Besides these, there are half a dozen *Yeshivot* in France with four to five hundred children. In some of these the pupils are children from North Africa. Others of these schools are *Yeshivot-Lycées* where the children are prepared for the official French examinations at the same time as they pursue Talmudic studies.

At the higher level there are many different institutions: the Jewish Seminary of France, including the Rabbinical School, the School for Cantors, and the Jewish Teacher-Training School (this last preparing teachers at the same time to be able to fulfil other functions in small communities); the Ecole Normale Israélite Orientale training teachers for the 132 Alliance Israélite Universelle schools with 45,000 students scattered over the Mediterranean area; the Institute of Higher Hebraic Studies, training Liberal Rabbis for the World Union of Progressive Judaism; a Chair of Jewish History and Literature at Strasbourg held by Professor André Neher; and numerous study groups. In addition, at the Gilbert Bloch School at Orsay young students spend a year following their university studies and acquiring a firm foundation for a Jewish life.

In the whole of France youth movements number about 5,000 members, of whom half belong to several Zionist youth movements and half to the Jewish scouts. In addition, there are associations of which the most important is the *Union des Etudiants Juifs de France* which has 800 members in Paris alone and conducts important activities in certain provincial university towns.

Holiday camps take in about 6,000 children every year. These camps are primarily social in purpose; but more and more they are introducing programmes of Jewish activities.

On the whole, the proportion of Jewish children who receive some Jewish instruction before the age of Barmitzvah can be put at 40 per cent and the proportion of young people who receive Jewish instruction after this age at 8 per cent. Of course, in Alsace and Lorraine these figures are much higher. If the statistics appear disheartening they must be at once put into the context of the recent development of French Jewry. For the last five or six years the pupils at Jewish schools and members of youth movements have been growing very appreciably in number. This growth is due to two factors: first, a demographic factor—there has been an increase in births and the immigration of North African families with a strong Jewish consciousness; second, a psychological factor—a slow but sure rebirth of Jewish awareness in France. Parallel to this growth, the quality and standard of teaching is constantly rising.

So that, while the proportion of children receiving Jewish instruction is still small, it is important to realize that it is growing all the time and that it gives the child a Jewish awareness which is deeper and more lasting than the ordinary preparation for Barmitzvah. We can say, therefore, without being exaggeratedly optimistic, that as an ever-grow-

ing number of children who have received a Jewish education of increasing intensity enter into adult life, the Jewish awareness to which we have referred will further take root in France.

All this is the truer because for the last four years the Jewish community of France has been at pains to establish youth and community centres with funds from the Claims Conference and technical aid from the 'Joint'. These centres have been set up in many different parts of the country, sometimes attached to synagogues and sometimes independently of them. All sections of the Jewish population, irrespective of ideology and origin, are able to feel themselves at home in these centres. People can go there either just to meet other Jews or to follow courses in Hebrew, history, the Bible, etc. An organizational framework has been slowly developed in response to the new institution and the fresh and attractive material with which it has been provided.

As we have seen, religious awareness is still foreign enough to the great mass of French Jewry, despite the fact that it is deepening and gaining ground. Lectures always draw a regular public especially in the provinces, where there are few distractions, but they are sporadic and do not reach more than a small proportion of the people. Jewish newspapers and periodicals are very numerous in France. There are three Yiddish dailies—one Zionist, one Communist, one Bundist—which also circulate outside France. There are Zionist weeklies (published by the Zionist Federation, the General Zionists, Mizrachi, etc.). There is an independent Zionist fortnightly with 6,000 subscribers, and another fortnightly put out by the Central Consistory. There is a monthly, *Evidences*, of high intellectual standard, and a well-illustrated monthly magazine, excellently produced, *l'Arche*, which has 10,000 subscribers. Finally, there are community bulletins and the publications of various associations (Alliance Israélite Universelle, World Jewish Congress, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, etc.). Many provincial communities also publish local bulletins. But the abundance of publications should not give us any illusions about the numbers of readers; they remain in all between ten and fifteen thousand, the greater part of them taking several papers. On the other hand, these figures are an advance on the pre-war situation. We have seen the same in the fields of Jewish education. Finally, a determining factor, as we have already seen, is the sympathy for and active interest in Israel which is expressed both in *Magbit* and in the growing number of tourists going to Israel. And while the scale of *aliyah* remains minute, capital investment in Israel is increasing very appreciably.

### Conclusion

Barely a quarter of French Jewry actively expresses its consciousness of being Jewish. This detachment, which is very striking to somebody acquainted with countries where Jewish awareness is high, has very deep

psychological roots. Jews living in France assimilate themselves to French individualism. Moreover, the dispersion of Jewish settlement, the ease of social and political assimilation, the high level of French cultural life and the respect in which this cultural life is held by the mass of the French people, the demoralization brought about by the war, the complex problem of French politics and the attractiveness of Marxism to intellectuals and young people—all these have been separate forces combining to produce the same result: to turn Jews, and particularly young ones, away from a Jewishness which seems to them as outworn as French Judaism was at the end of the nineteenth century, and to put them on the road to eventual total assimilation. The forms taken by this assimilation can be various, but they all converge: political assimilation, as, for example, through Jewish Communist movements; social assimilation to native French Jewry which itself has a marked tendency to melt away into general French life; general assimilation into the French environment. For the sake of the record, let us mention the efforts made by proselytizing missions—Catholic, Protestant, and secular—which have been more spectacular than dangerous, except in the case of certain intellectuals.

However, for the last few years this pessimistic picture has not been altogether accurate. A deeper knowledge of religious thought, a restructuring of the organization of French Jewry, and unanimous sympathy for Israel have together changed the history of French Jewry even if the statistical data have not yet altered basically in response.

The Jewish birth-rate, like the French birth-rate in general, has risen. It is generally understood that we live in a time neither of the total Jewish life of the *Shtetl* and the ghetto nor of an abstract religion detached from the flow of ordinary life. Because of the sentiment for Israel and because the second and third immigrant generations are no longer ashamed of being Jewish, Jewish identification is not now something to be concealed. Parallel to this reassertion of Jewish awareness there has developed, as we have seen, a more vigorous and rational organization of Jewry in France. Finally, the quality of most Jewish activities has appreciably risen, especially in teaching.

It can be said that at the present time French Jewry has largely passed out of its dismal period into a period of reconstruction. There is a long way to go before this reconstruction is solid enough and before community life becomes attractive. The difficulty is that the effort required must be comprehensive and find a general formula to attract to community life the large public in which the establishment of Israel has inspired a Jewish pride. And in order that such a community life may survive it is necessary to plan for a Jewish intellectual élite of the future which will be deeply imbued with traditional Jewish culture and able to express it at a level not below that of the great tradition of French culture.