THE DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT OF ITALIAN JEWRY FROM THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY[1]

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I. THE DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT OF ITALIAN JEWRY

IT IS very difficult to estimate the numbers of Jews in Italy before the seventeenth century. Partial data reveal that their number dropped between the period of the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages. It reached an appreciable size in the fifteenth century, and then again declined as a result of the persecutions at the end of that century and during the sixteenth, mainly because of the expulsion of Jews from all those parts of Italy which came under the dominion of Spain.

On the other hand, from the beginning of the seventeenth century estimates of the total number of Italian Jews can be made as given in Table 1. On the basis of these estimates, and of more detailed material which we cannot produce here, the following conclusions can be arrived at.

The number of Jews in Italy, which had fallen to a record low level at the beginning of the seventeenth century, grew slowly but steadily during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The increase was slower than that of the entire Jewish people and of most populations in Europe, including the Italian. In consequence, the proportion of Jews in Italy per 1,000 population dropped almost continuously from some 2·6 around 1700 to 1·00 in 1931, or to 1·16 in 1938 according to the census of persons of 'Jewish race' taken by the Fascist Government in 1938, as a preparation for implementing anti-Jewish persecutions. This census gave a higher estimate of Jews than current estimates, and a critical appraisal of its results still remains to be made. It may be estimated, however, that over 10,500 of the 'persons of Jewish race' registered in this census were not of the Jewish religion.[2]

In the course of the three and half centuries under survey (1600–1938) the Jewish population of Italy at most doubled itself.

There is reason to believe that these characteristics of the demographic development of Italian Jewry were affected by migration only

TABLE 1. *The Jewish Population of Italy*

Year	*Italy (boundaries before First World War)*			*Italy (boundaries after First World War)*		*Source*
	Jewish population	*General population in thousands*	*Jews per 1,000 general population*	*exclusive Venezia*	*inclusive Tridentina*	
				Jewish population		
c. 1600	21,000* 25,000†	10,804	2·13	?	?	Estimates
c. 1700	26,500	10,071	2·63	?	?	Estimates
c. 1770	29,900	16,033	1·87	30,700	?	Censuses and estimates
c. 1800	31,400	17,860	1·77	33,00	?	,,
c. 1840	33,900	22,355	1·52	37,200	?	,,
c. 1850	34,900	24,162	1·44	38,900	?	,,
1861	34,498	25,017	1·38	39,182	?	Census of Italy
1871	35,783	26,801	1·34	40,597	?	Census of Italy corrected by the writer
1881	37,401	28,460	1·31	42,726	?	'Census of the Israelites' corrected by the writer
1901	36,982	32,475	1·14	43,691	44,445	Census of Italy corrected by the writer
1911	39,908	34,671	1·15	47,705	48,459	,,
1931	39,649	39,538	1·00	46,532	47,825	,,
1938	48,151	41,348‡	1·16	56,436	57,425	Census of persons of Jewish race
				Italy, according to boundaries after Second World War, incl. Trieste, excl. Fiume, Abbazia		
1946						
(A) Jews resident in Italy	27,432	46,284§	0·59	29,066	29,117	(A) Estimates by the Union of Jewish Communities: persons registered with communities¶
(B) Displaced persons and refugees‖	26,000			26,000	26,000	(B) According to *American Jewish Yearbook*, data for 1947
Total	53,400	46,284§	1·15	55,100	55,100	
1959	30,700	49,478	0·62	31,950	32,000	Rough Estimate**

* Estimate by the writer. † Estimate by Simone Luzatto (*c.* 1638).
‡ Resident population, census of 1936. § Census of 1951.
‖ February 1948: 29,300 displaced persons were maintained by PCIRO in Italy.
¶ Records indicated under (A) do not include Jewish families not on community records, female children not registered by their families with the communities, non-Italian Jews in transit or not definitively established in Italy, Jews scattered in places not connected with the Jewish communities, etc. ** *American Jewish Yearbook, 1960.*

to a limited extent. True, numerous and important streams of Jewish migration entered Italy and left it, in the tragic period of the expulsion from Spain and in the course of the persecutions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but it seems that during the subsequent centuries a certain stabilization took place in the position of Italian Jewry. The descendants of those Jews who had not been expelled during the persecutions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries remained in the ghettos which were established in the various Italian states, and their numbers were not increased by large migrations from other countries. It seems that only three immigration streams in the direction of Italy were of some numerical significance in that epoch: to Venice in the seventeenth century, to Leghorn in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and to Trieste in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On the other hand, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a systematic exodus of Jews from Tuscany to other Mediterranean countries. After the Italian unification and the restoration of civil rights to the Jews, accompanied by the assimilation of Italian Jews to their environment, it appears that no noticeable waves of emigration came from Italian Jewry. On the other hand, Italy served as a shelter for various migration streams of Jews who had escaped from persecution (Jews of Corfu to Trieste in 1891; Jews from Eastern Europe who reached various parts of Italy at the end of the nineteenth century and during the twentieth; Turkish Jews after the Turko-Greek War of 1922; German Jews[3] after the Nazi persecutions, etc.). Likewise, the number of Jews who settled in Italy for commercial or other economic reasons also grew.

Hence, the slow rate of growth of Italy's Jewish population until 1938 cannot be explained as the results of emigration. On the contrary, without immigration from other countries the rate of growth would have been still slower.

The principal explanation for the slow rate of growth must, therefore, lie in low natural increase, which will be discussed in Sections 4–7.

After 1938 Nazi-Fascist persecutions brought about a drastic reduction in the number of Jews. According to data collected by the Union of Jewish Communities, 8,360 Jews were deported from Italy, of whom only 611 came back; in the years 1938–42, 5,651 were baptized or otherwise dissociated themselves from membership of the Jewish communities; and some 6,000 emigrated.[4] After the end of the Fascist era, in 1946, Jews permanently resident in Italy were reduced to some 29,000, according to registers of the communities which are to some extent incomplete (see note ¶ to Table 1).

On the other hand, after the war Italy was a temporary shelter to tens of thousands of refugees and displaced persons in Europe. Including these people, Italian Jewry in 1946 reached almost the same size it had been before the persecutions. However, the overwhelming majority of the refugees left the country in the course of a few years. A new

and smaller influx of refugees came mainly in 1956–7, from Egypt (some 5,000), Hungary, and Poland. A considerable part of this new wave left; however, it is estimated that some 2,500 Egyptian refugees—90 per cent of whom were of Italian citizenship—remained in Italy.[5] This may account for the small increase in the number of Jews resident in Italy registered by the Union of Jewish Communities between 1956 and 1959. In the latter year the number of Jews in Italy was roughly assessed at 32,000.[6] The proportion of Jews per 1,000 inhabitants within the old boundaries of Italy is thus found to be about 0·62 as compared to 1·16 in 1938 and 2·63 in 1700.

2. CHANGES IN THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF ITALIAN JEWRY

The geographical distribution of the Jews, until a few years before the emancipation, accurately reflected the results of the expulsions and persecutions which—mainly in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—led to the abandonment of the numerous Jewish communities in Sicily (1492, 1639), the 'Vicereame' of Naples (1510, 1541, 1702), the Duchy of Milan (1550, 1597), Sardinia (1492), the Papal States—apart from Rome and Ancona—(1569, 1593), the Republic of Genoa (1550, 1567, 1737), etc. As a matter of fact, 95 per cent of Italy's Jews were until 1840 concentrated in a small number of areas. A third of them lived in 38 communities in the plain between Mantua, Venice, Emilia, and Romagna. Around these groups, in the West, the East, and the South, there were another five groups of communities: (*a*) the Piedmont group with nineteen communities, which included 16·7 per cent of Italy's Jewish population; (*b*) five communities of Venezia Giulia (including Udine) with 9 per cent of the total Jewish population; (*c*) four communities in the Marche (7 per cent); (*d*) five communities in Tuscany (19·5 per cent); and (*e*) the southernmost community, Rome (9·9 per cent).

The largest Jewish community at that time existed in Leghorn and contained 4,800 people. From 1593 the city attracted a growing number of Jewish migrants because of the grant of special privileges to Jews and on account of the city's commercial development. Second and third places were taken by Rome (3,965) and Trieste (2,815); in eight other communities the number of Jews ranged from 1,000 to 2,500. There were four communities with 500–1,000 Jews each, 30 with 100–500, and 27 with fewer than 100 each. Quite a few of these communities were located in rural centres and small towns, but even then a considerable section of the Jewish population had an urban character (see Tables 2–4).

In the light of the economic characteristics of the Jewish population, its geographical distribution before the emancipation was 'unnatural'. It arose, as mentioned before, from the persecutions of the past, from

TABLE 2. *Distribution of Italian Jews among Various Groups of Communities*

Groups of Jewish communities	*Total No. of Jews*			*Indices (1840 = 100)*				*Per 100 Jews in Italy*		
	1840	*1931*	*1948*	*1861*	*1901*	*1931*	*1948*	*1840*	*1931*	*1948*
(1) Old communities										
(A) In 50 villages and small towns	7,700	1,150	430	83	33	15	6	20·7	2·7	1·5
(B) In 17 provincial towns	16,388	6,033	2,992	99	64	37	18	44·1	14·3	10·5
(C) In regional centres*	7,551	12,006	7,035	130	183	159	93	20·3	28·5	24·7
Total A–C	31,639	19,189	10,457	102	85	61	33	85·1	45·6	36·7
(D) Rome	3,696	11,065	11,000	119	193	299	298	9·9	26·3	38·6
Total (A–D)	35,335	30,254	21,457	104	96	86	61	95·0	71·9	75·3
(2) New communities in Milan, Genoa, Bologna, Naples	658	9,256	6,308	201	828	1,407	959	1·8	22·0	22·2
(3) Scattered in localities outside organized Jewish communities	1,202	2,584	717	84	240	215	60	3·2	6·1	2·5
Total (without Fiume, Abbazia)	37,195	42,094	28,482	105	114	113	60	100·0	100·0	100·0

* Torino, Venezia, Trieste, Firenze.

TABLE 3. *Distribution of Italian Jews* according to Size of Inhabited Places*

Number of inhabitants in 1901	*Per 100 Jews living in each group of places*					*Jews per 1,000,000 inhabitants in each group of places*		
	1840	*1861*	*1881*	*1901*	*1931*	*1881*	*1901*	*1931*
Up to 5,000 inhabitants	1·03	1·07	0·91	0·65	1·51	12	10	3
5,000–10,000	4·35	4·01	2·80	1·17	1·01	215	77	44
10,000–15,000	5·73	4·51	2·99	1·38	0·59	554	189	68
15,000–25,000	5·07	3·80	3·51	2·48	1·74	616	357	213
25,000–50,000	15·85	14·60	11·27	7·99	4·19	2,357	1,278	466
50,000–1000,000	35·24	32·03	30·10	23·41	15·20	13,851	5,461	2,119
100,000 and over	32·72	39·98	48·42	62·92	75·96	6,396	6,924	4,073
Total	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	1,314	1,122	952

* Italy within the boundaries before First World War (without Venezia Giulia and Venezia Tridentina).

TABLE 4. *Distribution of Italian Jews according to Size of Jewish Communities*

No. of Jews in place of residence	*Per Jews living in each group of Jewish communities*			
	1840	*1881*	*1931*	*1948*
Up to 50	0·90	1·56	1·55	1·72
51–100	3·62	2·75	0·89	1·56
101–250	9·18	5·25	3·41	4·14
251–500	12·45	8·42	3·60	5·31
501–1,000	7·52	8·73	9·52	7·12
1,001–2,500	35·07	37·01	20·35	14·77
2,501–5,000	31·27	21·09	18·92	26·23
5,001–10,000	—	15·16	14·99	—
10,000+	—	—	26·76	39·15
Total	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00
Total in communities with over 1,000 Jews	66·34	73·26	81·02	80·15

regimes which restricted its rights, and from the division of Italy into different States. An analysis of the figures on the development of various communities and of the distribution of family names in certain localities, seems to justify the conclusion that this geographical distribution, 'unnatural' though it was, was also fairly stable. It seems that there were not many internal migrations.

With the emancipation and the unification of Italy in the middle of the nineteenth century the situation rapidly changed. The Jews soon took part in the general movements of the population towards areas and centres which were economically more highly developed.

However, the move to urbanization of the Christian population was constantly fed by the great natural increase in the agricultural areas (especially the Southern areas), and did not cause a very profound change in the geographical distribution of the whole population. On the other hand, among the Jews the internal migration led to radical changes. A comparison of the numbers of residents in the various communities in 1840, 1861, 1901, 1931, and 1948 allows us to follow this development closely (see Tables 2–4). The Jewish migratory movement rapidly led to the almost complete abandonment of 50 old communities in small towns and villages; the 17 communities in provincial towns managed in the first period to prevent a great decline, thanks to the fact that, while supplying migrants to the larger towns, they themselves absorbed migrants from nearby villages and small towns. But in the twentieth century their demographic decline was very strong. The ancient communities of towns such as Turin, Venice, Trieste, and Florence made great progress, but even there symptoms of demographic decline were noticed, even before the Nazi-Fascist persecutions. In the

forties, all those processes became very rapid, and in 1948 the population of the old Jewish communities outside Rome was about one-third of its size in 1840. The community of Rome, on the other hand, continued to increase, and at the same time other new communities of considerable size grew up in the centres of trade and industry, first and foremost among them being Milan, and to a certain extent before the persecutions, Genoa, Bologna, and Naples. The number of Jews 'dispersed' over various places outside the organized communities also grew to some extent up to 1931.

3. THE OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE JEWS IN ITALY

The socio-economic evolution of the Italian Jews, and in particular their quick rise in social status, after the emancipation, have been largely discussed elsewhere.[7] Here I shall cite only a few data from the census of 1931, which can help in understanding some of the demographic characteristics of the Italian Jews which are discussed below. Table 5 shows that Italian Jews had the usual characteristics of Jewish occupational distribution in modern West European groups: almost complete absence of agriculturalists among the Jews (only 0·8 per cent as compared to 48·5 per cent among the Italian population), low proportion of labourers and exceedingly high proportion in commerce, public services, liberal professions, etc. The high proportion of Jews belonging to the middle classes, and often to the upper middle classes, is particularly evident in communities such as Turin, Bologna, Padua and Florence, where between one-quarter and one-third of the Jews were in free professions or proprietors, and in the community of Milan where over 9 per cent were industrialists.

Some residue of a Jewish proletariat was found in Leghorn and in Rome. In this community the proportion living by commerce (part of which was petty trade, peddling, etc.) was conspicuous.

4. MARRIAGES

Table 6 shows the rates of marriages among Italian Jews during the period 1775–1955.[8]

These data disclose that *before the emancipation* the Jewish rate of marriage was more or less stable: in the period 1775–1875 it ranged between 7–7·5 per thousand. This rate was not high if compared with that of other populations, but it was not particularly low either. It was higher (7·6 on the average in 1775–1875) in richer communities outside Rome than in Rome itself (6·8).

Although we do not have any more detailed material on this subject, it can be assumed that the frequency of marriages among Jews was affected by mutually opposing factors: religious tradition—which was

TABLE 5. *Distribution of Italian Jews by the Socio-economic Conditions of the Heads of the Families, according to the Census of 1931*

Socio-economic condition	*Total Italian population*	*Jewish population*							
		All Italy	*Selected communities*						
			Rome	*Leghorn*	*Milan*	*Trieste*	*Turin*	*Florence*	*Padua*
Industrialists	39	62	41	40	93	62	79	66	81
Merchants	61	343	456	267	337	322	183	283	174
Clerks	49	252	231	207	315	276	287	229	183
Commissioned officers	2	6	5	7	3	2	8	4	—
Free professions	19	108	56	114	111	79	143	149	206
Proprietors, etc.*	10	49	17	39	43	31	100	110	125
Artisans	45	17	20	28	11	14	17	12	2
Agriculturalists	485	8	4	4	2	3	3	6	29
Labourers	211	56	81	149	26	90	52	35	33
Household help, porters, etc.	26	19	26	39	7	39	11	6	17
Not gainfully occupied†	53	79	62	105	51	82	117	99	149
Total	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000

* Includes religion and art.
† Includes regular army (excl. officers).

still very strong—encouraged normal marriage and family life, whereas it can be assumed—although there is no direct evidence—that the following factors limited the frequency of marriages:

(1) The dispersion of part of Italy's Jews over communities with small numbers of residents. The irregular composition of the populations of these communities by sex and age, which was a likely result of their small numbers of members, was liable to restrict the possibilities of marriage, or at least of marriage between suitable partners with regard to age and other characteristics.

(2) The serious restrictions imposed on the economic and professional life of the Jews (this factor was even more likely to influence the Jews of Rome).

(3) The custom that the family of the bride must provide a dowry.[9]

After the emancipation, the Jewish marriage rate, as registered by the communities, rapidly declined: from 7·5 per thousand in 1851–75 it fell to 5 at the beginning of this century, and to less than 5 in the course of the present century. In communities outside Rome it fell even below 4, and in 1945–53 it was only 2·4.

TABLE 6. *Marriage Rates (per 1,000) according to Registration with Jewish Communities**

Years	*Jewish population in the communities for which data on marriages are available*		*Marriage rates per 1,000 Jews*			*Marriage rates per 1,000 of general Italian population*
	Population of these communities	*Per 100 Italian Jews*	*Rome*	*Other communities*	*Total*	
1776–1800	8,705	—	6·29	7·62	7·01	—
1801–1825	7,507	—	7·04	7·60	7·37	—
1826–1850	13,906	—	7·42	7·50	7·48	—
1851–1875	17,150	42·4	6·64	7·87	7·53	7·9†
1876–1900	15,730	37·1	6·54	6·22	6·35	7·6
1901–1905	36,115	81·8	5·60	4·97	5·10	7·4
1906–1910	30,338	65·8	6·99	5·14	5·65	7·9
1911–1915	30,949	66·4	5·95	3·99	4·56	6·9
1916–1920	33,146	72·4	6·09	3·47	4·22	6·4
1921–1925	35,088	78·0	8·10	4·83	5·78	9·0
1926–1930	39,022	88·4	6·20	3·64	4·51	7·3
1931–1935	30,876	69·4	5·53	4·30	4·74	6·8
1945–1955	17,415	64·3	6·76	2·40	4·15	7·9

* For interpretation of these rates, see note 8.
† 1872–5.

These marriage rates must be considered as very low; in fact, they are almost unparalleled throughout Europe. However, it must be considered that these rates do not reflect all the marriages of people of Jewish origin. Owing to several factors, not all marriages of Jews are celebrated by religious rites and registered in the community: (1) first of all, the number of marriages with Christians constantly increased in Italy and reached very great proportions;[10] (2) a certain number of Jews who married Jewish wives did so without a religious ceremony. The extent of these two phenomena can be seen from detailed statistics which were assembled in 1930–40 by the Central Bureau of Statistics in Italy (see Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10).

These statistics show:

(1) The percentage of marriages with partners of the same religion solemnized by religious rites was very high among the members of the majority (Catholic) religion. It was low among the Jews and still lower among the other minorities.

(2) Some 30 per cent at least of the Jewish brides and grooms married partners of a different religion. The true percentage may have been even higher because the statistics do not show cases where one of the two partners changed his or her religion before the marriage.

(3) As in other countries, the frequency of mixed marriages was greater among Jewish men than among Jewish women (if the unknown frequency of conversions before marriage is disregarded).

TABLE 7. *Percentage of Marriages performed by Religious Rites (1930–5)*

	Catholic	*Jewish*	*Protestant and other Christian*	*Total*
Per 100 husbands of each religion	97·9	54·3	37·3	97·8
Per 100 wives of each religion	97·9	58·5	40·2	97·8

TABLE 8. *Distribution of Jewish Marriages according to Types (1930–40)*

Married	*Per 100 Jewish husbands*	*Per 100 Jewish wives*
A Jewish partner, by Jewish religious rites	51·8	53·9
A Jewish partner, without Jewish religious rites	16·1	16·8
A Christian partner, in civil marriage	26·5	23·9
A Christian partner, in Christian marriage	5·5	5·1
Total	100·0	100·0

TABLE 9. *Percentage of Jewish Marriages*

Year	*Married a Jewish partner*	
	Per 100 Jewish husbands	*Per 100 Jewish wives*
1930–1932	67·9	72·7
1933–1935	66·6	70·1
1936–1937	65·3	66·2
1938	54·0	55·5
1939–1940	98·9	99·6

TABLE 10. *Marriage Rates, per 1,000 Jews*

Year	*Marriages between Jewish partners*	*All marriages*
1930–1932	3·60	5·12
1933–1935	3·82	5·59
1936–1937	4·26	6·47
1938	4·85	8·52
1939–1940	2·84	2·86

TABLE 11. *Percentage of Mixed Marriages by Places (1930–3)*

Place	*Per 100 Jewish husbands*	*Per 100 Jewish wives*
	Married a non-Jewish partner	
Rome	5·7	2·9
18 places in which there was a local Jewish community	39·1	33·7
Other places	72·5	64·1
Total	32·7	27·2

TABLE 12. *Percentage of Marriages in which both Partners were Jewish and which were performed without Jewish Religious Rites, by Places (1930–3)*

Place	*Per 100 Jewish husbands*	*Per 100 Jewish wives*
Rome	5·3	5·4
18 places in which there was a local Jewish community	15·1	16·4
Other places	17·7	23·1
Total	12·9	13·9

(4) In localities without Jewish communities the number of mixed marriages constituted the majority, while in localities which had Jewish communities mixed marriages were a minority although of considerable size; only in the large, and more conservative, community of Rome were mixed marriages still a very small minority.

(5) It appears that in the first period after the emancipation mixed marriages were more frequent among the more cultured and wealthy strata of the population, where contact with non-Jews was more frequent. But later on, mixed marriages also developed among the lower officialdom, workers and others. A special inquiry carried out among the Jews of Rome in 1928 showed that the percentage of mixed families was greater among the bourgeoisie and working strata than among business circles; it was much greater among people born outside Rome than among the natives of Rome; it was also greater among the less conservative elements, who lived outside the ghetto quarter and its vicinity.

(6) Marriages between Jews solemnized only by civil ceremonies were contracted more largely in places without organized Jewish communities; however they occurred also in places with Jewish communities; this proves an obvious trend towards secularism and abandonment of religious tradition.

(7) The official statistics for 1930–7 show that the rate of Jewish *religious* marriages was only 3·0 per thousand Jews; the total marriage rate between Jews was 3·8 and the rate of all marriages involving Jews (including mixed marriages) was 5·6. In view of the fact that Jews who were converted to another religion before entering a mixed marriage do not appear in these statistics, these rates have to be slightly increased. We thus arrive at a marriage rate which does not seem very different from that applying to Catholics belonging to the social strata of which the Jews formed part.

This and the analysis of Jewish and Catholic marriages by age justify the conclusion that there was no systematic difference between the frequencies of marriages among Jews and non-Jews respectively. However, the concentration of the Jews in urban and bourgeois strata and their estrangement from religion, as well as their increasing tendency to intermarry with non-Jews—especially in places where Jews did not constitute a concentrated population—led to the great drop in the rates of Jewish religious marriages. On the basis of a gross estimate, it can be assumed that according to the situation existing in 1930–5, only 70 per cent of the Jews entering matrimony could be expected to bring up their children as Jews.

As shown by Table 9, the beginning of the persecutions in 1938 brought about a marked increase in mixed marriages; fear of threatened laws led to the hurrying up of many such marriages planned earlier. On the other hand, after the implementation of antisemitic legislation forbidding mixed marriages, those marriages almost completely disappeared. The census of persons of 'Jewish race' taken in 1938 showed that 43·5 per cent of existing married couples were mixed. Of the 7,457 mixed couples, 2,445 were childless. Of the 9,247 children, 2,045 were Jewish, 6,935 non-Jewish, and 267 part-Jewish.[11]

Unfortunately, no statistical data are available for the period after the restoration of freedom to the Jews. There is no doubt about the fact that mixed marriages, mainly outside Rome, are again very frequent, but their frequency is not assessed now by the Central Statistical Institute of Italy.[12]

5. BIRTHS

Table 13 shows the development of the birth-rate among the Jews of Italy in the course of some two hundred years: from the middle of the eighteenth century until the middle of the twentieth. With regard to previous periods, we have only figures relating to two communities: Leghorn and Florence (Leghorn: 1669–75, 548 yearly births per 1,000 Jews; 1676–1700, 42·3; 1701–25, 28·1; 1726–50, 27·5; Florence: 1675, 43·8; 1676–85, 45·9; 1741–50, 39·4).

TABLE 13. *Birth-rates (per 1,000) according to registration with Jewish communities**

Years	*Jewish population in the communities for which data on births are available*		*Birth-rates per 1,000 Jews*			*Birth-rates per 1,000 of general Italian population*
	Population of these communities	*Per 100 Italian Jews*	*Rome*	*Other communities*	*Total*	
1751–1775	9,885	—	32·0†	26·35	28·64	—
1775–1800	14,057	—	33·9	27·43	29·27	—
1801–1825	13,518	39·4	36·4	27·79	29·75	—
1826–1850	15,450	42·4	36·8	27·86	29·95	—
1851–1875	21,709	54·6	35·3	27·80	29·44	36·8 (1872–5)
1876–1900	18,450	43·5	29·3	19·36	22·81	36·5
(1879–1881)	(40,876)	(95·7)	(30·0)	(21·93)	(23·12)	(36·9) (1876–80)
1901–1905	37,456	86·8	30·67	14·27	17·56	32·7
1906–1910	30,795	68·3	27·19	15·06	18·35	32·7
1911–1915	30,234	64·7	21·82	13·64	16·09	31·5
1916–1920	30,962	67·8	18·50	10·42	12·93	23·0
1921–1925	33,019	73·4	26·78	13·49	17·60	29·8
1926–1930	33,742	76·4	23·70	10·46	14·69	26·8
1931–1935	38,675	86·9	20·68	7·73	11·43	23·8
1945–1955	22,465	81·1	15·12	7·29	10·37	19·9

* For interpretation of these rates, see note 8.
† 1775.

On the basis of an analysis of these figures, as well as other detailed statistics, which cannot be produced here, we can distinguish different periods in the development of the birth-rate of Italian Jewry:

(1) In the view of Professor L. Livi (see 'Gli Ebrei alla luce della statistica', cited above), the Jews of Italy, in the early period, enjoyed high fertility under the influence of tradition and as a result of their special situation. This is evidenced by the high birth-rates of the Jews of Leghorn in the eighteenth century, of Florence until 1750, and of Trieste at the end of the eighteenth century, etc.

Livi's thesis is very interesting, but, as I have pointed out in my book mentioned above, it is open to criticism or, at least, needs further research before we can accept it. It would be especially desirable to investigate the following questions: (*a*) whether the high birth-rates of the Jewish communities of Leghorn and Trieste were not connected with particular age-structures (it is possible that these communities enjoyed an influx of a high percentage of young people among the migrants who arrived there); (*b*) whether the high fertility of these communities was not influenced by the particular type of migrants which they received (in Trieste—Ashkenazim; in Leghorn—people from Oriental communities).

(2) The era of high birth-rates—as estimated by Livi, and if it existed at all—apparently ended in an early period. In the middle of the eighteenth century, when the statistical material in our possession

becomes more comprehensive, we find that the Jews of Italy, with the exception of Rome, did not have high birth-rates but these rates were more or less stable. In fact, it can be seen that in the period 1750–1875 the birth-rate of Italy's Jews outside Rome remained at a level of 27 births per 1,000 a year. For purposes of comparison, we should mention that the total birth-rate of Italy in 1871–5 was 36·8 per 1,000, and in all Europe it was in the period 1800–70, 38–9 per 1,000 on the average.

In Rome, too, the birth-rate was stable, but ranged around a much higher level (in 1776–1875 it was 35·6 on the average). In view of the fact that the marriage rate in Rome was lower at that time (6·85 on the average in 1776–1875) than in the other communities (7·65), it would appear that even then the Jews outside Rome were restricting the numbers of their children to a much greater extent than the Jews of Rome. A gross calculation of the ratios between the birth-rate and the marriage rate in the hundred years between 1776–1875 shows that the average number of children per marriage among these Jews was only 3·6 per family as compared with 5·2 among Roman Jews. It is possible that this was connected with the fact that the cultural and social position of the Jews outside Rome was generally better than that of the Jews of Rome.

(3) After 1875 the birth-rate of Italy's Jews began to fall rapidly and reached 11·4 in 1931–5 and 10·4 in 1945–53, as compared with 29·4 in 1851–75. This decrease was particularly great in the communities outside Rome (from 27·8 in 1851–75 to 7·3 in 1945–53), but even in the relatively more fertile community of Rome the birth-rate fell from 35·3 in 1851–75 to 15·1 in 1945–53.

This decline resulted from the same circumstances as mainly manifested themselves in restriction of fertility in married life and led to a decline in the birth-rate of all the populations of European origin, especially among more urbanized and cultured strata. However, the extent of the fall of the birth-rate among the Jews in Italy is much greater than among the Italian population and among other European populations. It seems that this phenomenon had two basic causes: (*a*) The birth-rates of Italy's Jews as shown in Table 13 indicate, more or less, the numbers of children born to every thousand Jews who remained in the Jewish faith. Before the emancipation, these children made up nearly 100 per cent of all Jewish children, but with the increase in the number of mixed marriages, the proportion of these children dropped, and reached, as we saw above, only 70 per cent in 1931–5. In view of this it can be assumed that the birth-rate among the Jews of Italy dropped as low as only 17 per 1,000 in 1931–5 (and not 11·4 per 1,000 as stated in the records of the communities, according to Table 13).[13]

(*b*) This estimated level—some 17 births per thousand persons of Jewish origin—is still much lower than the level of 23·8 per 1,000 found among the total Italian population. However, it can be proved (by

detailed calculations which we cannot show here) that the difference between the birth-rates of Jews and Christians would turn out to be much smaller if we compared Jews with Christians of the same social, occupational, and geographical background. In other words, the Jews of Italy restricted their births more or less to the same extent as the Christians of the same social strata. However, the low level of the birth-rate which was so pronounced and abnormal in the communities resulted from the fact that many Jews left their religion and that the more fertile strata of the population—such as farmers and urban workers—formed a very small proportion among the Jews.

As a result of the decrease in the birth-rate, we find that the size of families of Italian Jews is also small and that the age structure of the population shows pronounced signs of 'ageing'.

This process was already considerable in 1901 and has continued throughout the first half of this century. At present the age distribution of Italian Jews tends to become more and more a reversed pyramid. The 'ageing' process is less pronounced in the community of Rome, where birth-rates are higher (see Table 14).

TABLE 14. *Age Distribution of Italian Jews*

Age groups	*1901*		*Age groups*	*1911*	
	Per 100 Jews	*Per 100 Italian population*		*Per 100 Jews*	*Per 100 Italian population*
0–15	26·4	34·1	0–15	22·2	34·0
16–30	22·8	24·2	16–65	69·8	59·6
31–50	28·4	23·0			
51–70	18·0	15·1	66+	8·0	6·5
70+	4·4	3·6			
Total	100·0	100·0		100·0	100·0

Age group	*1922–8 Per 100 Jews**	*1921 Per 100 Italian population*	*1938–54 Per 100 Jews†*	*1951 Per 100 Italian population*	*1928 Per 100 Jews of Rome*	*1954 Per 100 Jews of Rome*
0–14	20·2	30·2	15·6	26·1	25·6	19·7
15–29	24·5	26·5	18·5	25·5	25·5	24·0
30–44	22·2	19·2	23·1	20·3	21·0	21·2
45–59	19·6	13·6	21·4	15·9	16·1	18·6
60+	13·5	10·5	21·4	12·2	11·8	16·5
Total	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0

* This estimate is based on data on distribution by age in various types of communities in 1922–5 and in Rome in 1928.

† This rough estimate is based on data on distribution by age in the Jewish community of Rome (1954), of Milan (1938: date quoted by G. B. Ghidoli, op. cit.), and in various small communities (1953).

6. MORTALITY

With regard to mortality, too, a number of figures (see Table 15) can be cited which relate to the seventeenth century and to the first 75 years of the eighteenth. Together with other figures relating to later periods they induced Livi to assume that the mortality rates of Italian Jewry developed in a particular way of their own. In the initial period of the isolation of the Jews in ghettos in poor hygienic conditions, it must be assumed, according to Livi, that their mortality was high. However, as a result of natural selection, the strongest people survived and bequeathed to their offspring a greater immunity to certain diseases (such as tuberculosis). Therefore the rate of mortality among Italy's Jews dropped even before the period in which the general mortality decrease, characteristic for the nations of Europe, took place.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of this thesis. At any rate, it is a fact that the overall mortality of Italy's Jews (see Table 16) was relatively low and tended to drop still further as long ago as the last quarter of the eighteenth century; it continued to decrease consistently throughout the nineteenth and the beginning of the present century.

A simpler explanation for this decrease than that proposed by Livi can perhaps be found in a series of circumstances which led to the decrease of mortality rates among other populations (such as: the general advancement of the sciences of medicine and hygiene; the improvement in organized public methods for health protection and individual hygiene; social, cultural, and economic advancement). It appears that the fact that Jewish mortality was lower than that of the Italian population as a whole can be explained by the social and geographical composition of the Jewish population of Italy. It can also be explained by the particular Jewish characteristics which produce an earlier decrease in death-rate among the Jews than among the non-Jews in other places as well.

In the course of this century the progressive ageing of the Jewish population of Italy produced the result—which is also characteristic for other Jewish populations in similar situations—that the rate of decrease of the crude rate of mortality slowed down, so that the rate now exceeds that of the general population, despite the low level of age-specific Jewish death-rates[14] (see Table 16). This development is particularly pronounced in communities outside Rome where the ageing process was more considerable.

TABLE 15. *Death-rates per 1,000 Jews in Certain Communities*

Years	*Leghorn*	*Years*	*Florence*	*Years*	*Modena*
1657–1675	43·7	1675	31·5		
1676–1700	46·0	1676–80	53·5		
1701–1725	33·1	1721–25	33·2		
1726–1750	29·9	1729–32	32·8		
1751–1775	29·0	1756–75	32·0	1756–75	25·5

TABLE 16. *Death-rates (per 1,000) according to registration with Jewish Communities**

Years	*Jewish population in the communities for which data on deaths are available*		*Death-rates per 1,000 Jews*			*Per 1,000 of Italian population*
	Population of these communities	*Per 1,000 Italian Jews*	*Rome*	*Other communities*	*Total*	
1776–1800	10,057	—	?	28·23	?	—
1801–1825	13,518	39·8	29·6	24·60	25·74	—
1826–1850	15,450	42·4	26·7	23·58	24·31	—
1851–1875	21,709	54·6	24·3	24·21	24·23	30·5 (1872–75)
1876–1900	23,013	54·3	20·2	20·45	20·38	26·5
(1879–1881)	(40,876)	(95·7)	(21·89)	(20·89)	(21·01)	(29·4)(1876–80)
1901–1905	37,456	86·8	17·55	18·02	17·35	22·0
1906–1910	30,795	68·3	15·40	17·32	16·79	21·2
1911–1915	30,234	64·8	14·32	17·14	16·30	19·7
1916–1920	30,962	67·8	16·69	18·59	18·00	24·4
1921–1925	33,019	73·4	15·82	18·56	17·71	17·4
1926–1930	33,742	76·4	13·57	17·26	16·09	16·0
1931–1935	38,675	86·9	15·20	17·32	16·71	14·1
1945–1953	22,465	81·1	11·59	15·86	14·18	10·9

* For interpretation of these rates, see note 8.

7. NATURAL INCREASE

The analysis of the natural movements of the Jewish population in Italy, as given in the previous paragraphs, explains the relatively slow rate of development of the population between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, as well as the demographic decline of the communities outside Rome in this century.

In the later ghetto period, Jewish mortality in Italy, except for Rome, was relatively low, but so was the birth-rate and the resultant natural increase was very modest. In the period of the emancipation, frequency of marriage and births among the Jews was more or less similar to that of the Christians who belonged to the same social strata and lived in the same places. The Jews even had a certain advantage with regard to mortality. However, the fact that they belonged to those population

groups which have drastically restricted their births, coupled with the spread of mixed marriages, resulted in a situation where the birth-rate of families which remained connected with Judaism dropped very far below the rate of mortality in all the communities with the exception of Rome (see Table 17). Even before the First World War, according to the registers of the communities,[15] the more or less 'normal' natural increase of the Rome community (which also tended to drop) was no longer adequate to make up for the considerable natural deficit of the other communities. Italian Jewry in general, therefore, suffered from a surplus of deaths over births which was balanced only by the surplus resulting from migration movements.

These phenomena paralleled those of other Jewish populations in Western and Central Europe, whose long-term demographic future was doubtful, even before the Nazi persecution began.

As indicated in § (1), persecutions inflicted heavy losses on Italian Jewry. After the return to normal life, the reduced number of Italian Jews was again subject to excess of deaths over births. This fact, and the continuous ageing process, render the survival of most Italian Jewish communities uncertain. On the other hand, the community of Rome seems still to be endowed with some demographic strength.

TABLE 17. *Rate of Natural Increase* (+) *or Decrease* (−) *per 1,000, according to Registration with Jewish Communities.*

Years	*In the Jewish population*			*In the Italian population*
	Rome	*Other communities*	*Total*	
1776–1800	?	−0·80	—	—
1801–1825	+6·8	+3·19	+4·01	—
1826–1850	+10·1	+4·28	+5·64	—
1851–1875	+11·0	+3·59	+5·21	+6·3 (1872–5)
1876–1900	+9·1	−1·09	+2·43	+10·0
(1879–1881)	(+8.11)	(+1·04)	(+2·10)	(+7·5)(1876–80)
1901–1905	+13·12	−3·75	+0·21	+10·7
1906–1910	+11·79	−2·26	+1·56	+11·5
1911–1915	+7·50	−3·50	−0·21	+11·7
1916–1920	+1·81	−8·17	−5·07	−1·4
1921–1925	+10·96	−5·07	−0·11	+12·4
1926–1930	+10.13	−6·80	−1·40	+10·9
1913–1935	+5·48	−9·59	−5·28	+9·8
1945–1953	+3·53	−8·57	−3·81	+9·0

NOTES

[1] This article is largely based on my book *La evoluzione demografica degli ebrei italiani (1600–1937)*, which, after having reached proof stage, was not published because of the situation that arose after the enactment of the anti-Jewish laws in Italy (1938). The first parts of this book appeared in the *Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, Vol. 12, 1938, nos. 7–9, pp. 256–320, and nos. 10–12, pp. 318–62. A summary in Hebrew was given in an article which appeared in a book of studies on Italian Jewry in honour of Sally Mayer (Jerusalem and Milano, Sally Mayer Foundation, 1956). I have been unable to bring my research up to date by a systematic investigation of the effects of the persecution of the Italian Jews. The period after 1937 is therefore studied here only cursorily.

The reader is referred to works quoted above for an analysis of the sources and their evaluation.

A version of this paper was read at the Second World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 1957, in the section 'Demography of the Jews'.

[2] From figures given by R. De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, Torino, 1961, it appears that out of 48,032 persons of Jewish race and Italian citizenship registered at the *end* of 1938, 37,241 were of the Jewish religion and 10,791 of other religions or no religion. Alien Jews numbered 10,380 in the census of August 1938.

[3] From a comparison of the detailed figures for the censuses of 1931 and 1938, despite their different basis (1931: religion; 1938: Jewish race) it appears that a strong increase occurred in this period mainly in Milan and Rome, which can be explained probably by immigration from abroad. A detailed statistical analysis of the 1938 census records is, however, still to be undertaken. Incidentally, the data of the 'Census of persons of Jewish Race' for Milan are very different from the estimate based on community records, as given by G. B. Ghidoli, 'Ricerca, Antropologica e demografica su un gruppo di ebrei milanesi', *Statistica*, April–June 1951, p. 159. Data cited by De Felice, op. cit. p. 9, show that some 5,500 alien Jews had, in 1938, been living in Italy less than ten years.

[4] G. B. Ghidoli, in the article cited above, indicates that according to statistics published by the Central Statistical Institute of Italy on 25 October 1941, 5,966 of 45,410 Jews of Italian citizenship present in Italy on 1 January 1932 had left Italy before 15 October 1941. For the movements of Jews of alien citizenship see De Felice, op. cit., pp. 424 f.

[5] See *American Jewish Yearbook 1960*, p. 229.

[6] See *American Jewish Yearbook, 1960*, p. 228.

[7] See R. Bachi, 'La demografia degli Ebrei Italiani negli ultimi cento anni', *Atti del Congresso Internazionale per gli studi sulla popolazione*, Rome, 1931, Vol. 6., and other publications by the same, quoted in footnote 1; Eliezer Ben David, *Gli ebrei nello vita culturale Italiana, 1848–1928*, Città di Castello, Unione Arti Grafiche, 1931; the article by G. B. Ghidoli, cited above; L. Livi, *Gli ebrei alle luce della statistica* (Vol. I, Florence Libreria della Vòce, 1918; Vol. II, Florence, Vallecchi, 1920). See also De Felice, op. cit., p. 130.

[8] Marriage rates given in Table 6 and birth- and death-rates given in Tables 13 and 16 are based on the registrations with Jewish communities. It seems likely that in the periods in which the Jews were shut up in the ghettos and the religious, administrative, and legal bonds between the individual Jew and the community were very close, registration was practically complete. Registration became less complete during the emancipation period. With regard to marriages, mainly those performed by a religious Jewish ceremony were registered by the community. With regard to births, mainly those male births were registered in which circumcision was performed. With regard to deaths, mainly those deaths were registered which led to burial in a Jewish cemetery. The registration improved in completeness to some extent after the Law of 1932 which made it compulsory for the Jews to belong to Jewish communities.

Birth-rates were calculated on the basis of male births registered with the communities, with an appropriate correction for female births.

[9] For (2) and (3) see L. Serristori, *Statistica dell'Italia*, Florence, Stamperia Granducale, 1842, p. 372.

[10] Apart from data given in Table 10,

we have no historical data on mixed marriages from the whole of Italy. Only for Trieste the following percentages are available for Jewish husbands or wives who married a non-Jewish partner: 1869–70, 1·9; 1871–80, 6·0; 1881–90, 12·9; 1891–1900, 20·8; 1901–10, 23·8; 1911–20, 31·1; 1921–7, 42·0.

[11] See De Felice, op. cit., p. 19.

[12] Detailed data on the marriages of the Jews in Milan, cited by S. Della Pergola ('I matrimoni degli Ebrei a Milano', *Hatikwa*, March–April 1952), show a considerable increase in mixed marriages. Percentage marrying a non-Jewish partner: out of 100 Jewish husbands 1940–45—44·1, 1946–51—46·4, 1952–55—51·9; out of 100 Jewish brides, 1940–45—16·5, 1946–51—31·0, 1952–55—39·0.

[13] No data are available for extending this calculation to the 1945–53 period.

[14] According to G. B. Ghidoli (op. cit.) the expectation of life at age 0 for the Jews of Milan was in 1931–9 67·0 years as compared to 59·5 for the population of Milan.

[15] In judging the data in Table 17, we must bear in mind the fact that under-registration is probably higher for births than for deaths, so that figures for natural increase are to some extent underestimated.

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