



# Western Europe

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## INTRODUCTION

THE STATUS and future of the Western European Jewish communities was rapidly assuming a definite shape and form in the period under review. This region, consisting of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Italy, Sweden, Norway, and Greece, had in 1948-49 a total population of some 125,000,000, of whom about 400,000, or approximately .32 per cent, were Jewish. Large-scale emigration was practically at an end, and the movement that existed was fairly well-defined. The question once hotly argued as to whether or not Jews should remain in Europe had been settled by reality and the Jews themselves. There were Jewish communities, and there would continue to be such communities. It was now possible to measure with some accuracy the Jewish civic, economic, and legal position, as well as to evaluate the internal life of the various Jewish communities in Western Europe.

In Western Europe there were two fundamental problems which faced the communities. The first was the major necessity of creating central communal bodies with a leadership capable of giving their membership a sense of status. The second necessity was for the knowledge of the techniques with which to build those healthy social and religious institutions which unite a community.

### *Influence of Israel*

The year under review started only two weeks after the proclamation of the independent state of Israel in May, 1948, and covered the entire period of Israel's victorious struggle against the seemingly superior forces of invaders intent on destroying it. This struggle captured the imagination of Western-European Jews and helped restore to them the self-respect that had been shaken by the record of Jewish martyrdom under the Nazis. Israel seemed the primary answer to the needs of displaced European Jews for emigration. But at the time of writing an end was expected in the near future to the large-scale emigration of European Jewry to Israel which began with the independence of Israel. News of the economic difficulties in Israel had caused large numbers to adopt a waiting attitude. A continuation of this attitude toward Israel was expected to have important psychological effects particularly on Dutch and Belgian Jewry, who were faced with the need to rebuild their life in their native countries.

The fact of Israel also presented short-range problems of an external and defensive nature. These problems revolved around the issues of the Holy

Places and the Arab refugees, which were acute in countries like France and Belgium where Catholicism was strong and active. Pending an actual solution of these problems, much depended on skillful public relations by Israel to prevent its opponents from winning the battle for world public opinion by default. Another immediate problem was the resentment felt in the Scandinavian countries over the assassination of Count Folke Bernadotte, the United Nations Mediator, by Jewish terrorists in Israel. Swedish Jews felt that in some measure they were being held responsible by Swedish public opinion. They hoped that with the passage of time their former good relations with the rest of the Swedish population would be restored.

## FRANCE

**B**ETWEEN the Summer of 1948 and the Summer of 1949, France made political and economic progress to an unexpected degree. The "Third Force" government of Prime Minister Henri Queuille, having assumed the conduct of affairs in September, 1948, was still in power almost a year later as a coalition of the parties of the Center. The strength both of General Charles de Gaulle, on the right, and of the Communists, on the left, seemed to be waning slowly.

No class of the population was content with its economic lot, but none could deny that conditions had improved. In September, 1948, the black-market exchange rate of francs for dollars had been about 500 to 1; by July, 1949, the black market in dollars had practically suspended operations, and the official rate of about 320 to 1 was approximately the going rate.

The French Communists continued to count on the support of from one-fifth to one-fourth of the French people, and on a rather smaller proportion within the Jewish community. The Communists had several important advantages in their efforts to dominate the life of the Jewish community, and their failure to do so needs to be specially noted. The Communists had played an important part during the three years of resistance to the Nazis during the occupation; the record of the Soviet Union and Soviet satellites in behalf of Israel during 1947 and 1948 in the United Nations could be cited in all appeals for Jewish support; the Communists sedulously labeled all their opponents, of the left and the right, as anti-Semites, inventing or magnifying anti-Semitic incidents to lend plausibility to this label. Yet, despite all these factors in their favor, the Communists had a relatively smaller following among French Jews than among all Frenchmen. In part, this was to be explained by the fact that Jews had proportionately fewer industrial workers than the French population as a whole, and in France the Communist party had a strong proletarian base. Another important reason for this failure lay in the growing tension between Israel and the countries within the Soviet sphere of influence. In addition, those French Jews with a particularly strong interest in Yiddish culture were outraged by the Soviet Union's liquidation of its most prominent Yiddish writers, and the closing down of the last remnants of a Yiddish press in that country.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Soviet Union p. 337.

## *Communal Activities*

Though France contained Western Europe's largest Jewish community, with a population of about 250,000, French Jewry was without a central organization to give direction to its efforts. There was a plethora of Jewish organizations, but none to speak in behalf of all the Jews of France, and none to explain the Jews in France to the non-Jews. The pressures of war and persecution had forced the establishment of such a combined group in 1943, Le Conseil Représentatif des Organisations Juives de France (CRIF), but CRIF had made no real impression upon the community, because the various conflicting ideologies and groups within it neutralized one another, and at the time of writing it was practically defunct. In June, 1949, an agreement was reached by the major non-Communist organizations of French Jewry for an annual fund-raising campaign, called Fonds Social Juif Unifié in support of French Jewish philanthropic and cultural enterprises. It was expected to begin functioning in October, 1949, and would not include fund-raising for Israel during its first year. The American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) had worked hard and long for this agreement, and it came at a time when the JDC had reduced its expenditures in France to a fraction of what they had been immediately after the war. There was hope that the Jewish community had attained sufficient stability and prosperity to support its own communal institutions, despite the barriers of the cultural and ideological divisions within French Jewry. The cultural division consisted of that between native French Jewry and the immigrants. The former had for generations sought the complete assimilation within the homogeneous French cultural pattern which was the price of full acceptance into French society. The trend to assimilation which had been halted by the war seemed to be rising again. It was estimated that more than 25 per cent of the marriages of French Jews outside of Paris were with non-Jews during this period. The immigrants, on the other hand, were Yiddish speaking, the majority from Eastern Europe, with a strong attachment to Yiddish culture. Interest in Israel had served for a time to unite nearly all the elements of the French Jewish population, though Zionism had never been popular among the French Jews before the war.

But this temporary unity was breaking down during the period under review. In August, 1949, the Communists withdrew from the joint fund-raising efforts for Israel, citing as their reason the alliance of the Haganah Committee with the "treacherous warmongers" and "plutocrats" in the United States and other "imperialistic countries." Earlier, in February, 1949, Eliezer Kaplan, Israel's Minister of Finance, declared that the government of Israel recognized "Aid for Israel" as the sole French fund-raising agency for Israel.

This split within the unity front for Israel was a reflection of the three-way ideological split. The Union des Sociétés Juives de France was the organization of the Communist-directed groups. Admittedly the most active element in the Jewish community and organizationally strong, it succeeded in making itself heard out of all proportion to its numerical strength. Every effort initiated by the Union followed the Communist party line.

The Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France, though not a political group,

was the pro-Zionist representative of the Eastern-European immigrant Jews. The Fédération, an anti-Communist amalgamation of some 120 religious, cultural, and welfare organizations, was a "Third Force" in French Jewish life. The majority of the member groups retained full freedom of action, and four-fifths of the Fédération's fund had come from the JDC, not from local French sources.

The native French population played no significant role in either the leftist Union or the Zionist Federation. The Consistoire Central, whose activities had been confined to religious matters since 1906, numbered only 3,000 to 4,000 members. However, its new president, Guy de Rothschild, hoped to revive the influence of the Consistoire. The Alliance Israélite Universelle was limited in its activities to educational work in North Africa, other Moslem countries, and Israel.

### *Economic Life*

On the whole, the Jews in France had made a more or less satisfactory economic adjustment since the liberation of France, and the Eastern-European immigrants had been aided by French liberality in granting work permits. Jewish groups in France had sought no special restitution laws; application of the general restitution laws involved so much red tape and delay that many claimants had given up in discouragement.

The community was still unable to take care of its own relief burden, and it had been borne for the most part by the JDC until June, 1949. There was at the time of writing a hard core of some 5,000 persons on relief, and an equal number of transients receiving some cash relief from the JDC. In addition, there were approximately 3,000 children in orphanages, the largest number of whom would eventually emigrate to Israel. There was a need, in addition, for more old-age homes.

### *Intergroup Relations*

French tolerance was traditional, and there was little overt organized anti-Semitic activity in France, although Hitler's propaganda had left an impression in the minds of many Frenchmen. At the time of writing, there were five or six publications of a collaborationist and anti-Semitic character whose circulation ranged from a few thousand to forty thousand. The French government was active in attempting to suppress this literature, as well as the organizations that sponsored them. At the request of Jewish organizations, the government agreed in February, 1949, to investigate the financial support for these publications. In the same month, Jules Moch, the Jewish Minister of the Interior, brought the newspaper *Unity* to court for publishing an article urging that all Jewish government ministers be deported to Israel. In March, 1949, the Ministry of Education instructed all teachers to read to their classes the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Teachers were asked to stress the clauses directed against racial and religious discrimination.

There were two important sources for strained intergroup relations. The first was the campaign of propaganda and diplomatic influence conducted by

the Vatican and by French Catholicism for the removal of the Holy Places in Palestine, together with their environs, from Israel sovereignty. There were constant allegations by such noted French Catholic scholars and writers as Louis Maisignon of Le Collège de France, and Paul Claudel and François Mauriac that the Israel authorities were mistreating Catholic clergy and laity, that sacred edifices and sites had been wantonly damaged by Israel soldiers with the connivance of their superiors, and that no redress had been made and no satisfactory assurances for the future given. Efforts were made to convince leaders of Catholic opinion in France that the charges were either unfounded or greatly distorted. There was alarm among the Jewish leadership in France over the possibilities of the resurgence of a religious anti-Semitism in which Zionism would figure as the anti-Christ.

Another large factor aggravating organized anti-Semitic sentiment were the demands made by individual French Jews for restitution. In March, 1949, the French police were reported investigating two groups formed for the purpose of combating restitution: the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, Compensation, and Amnesty, and the Union of Civic Victims. The existence of these groups reflected the lack of interest of the French government in the prosecution of Nazi collaborators. In June, 1949, according to official statistics, 120,000 collaborators should have faced trial; in actual fact, only "economic collaborators" and those responsible for the murder of anti-Nazis were tried; of 38,000 sentenced by French courts, 27,000 had already been released. Of the 40,000 collaborators deprived of their civil rights, 39 per cent had been reinstated and were enjoying full rights; very few of the 790 collaborators sentenced to death had been executed. The "economic collaborators" fared best; less than 50 per cent of them faced trial, the government stating that they were needed to assist in France's reconstruction efforts. Most of the collaborators who had become trustees of Jewish property and business houses were still in possession of their loot (*Jewish Chronicle*, London, June 17, 1949).

There was no central well-organized group in France to combat these anti-Semitic manifestations, though an over-all program of vigilance appeared to be a real need.

### *Culture*

Jewish religious, cultural, and educational work in France tended to emphasize the differences within the various groups, rather than minimize them. Thus, of the three Yiddish dailies published in Paris, one expressed the Communist point of view, another the Labor Zionist, and the third the Bundist. There was no non-Yiddish daily for native-born French Jews. The few periodicals appearing in French were mostly of a partisan and propagandistic nature. There was an almost complete lack of current Judaica in French, and no well-organized attempt to publish French Jewish books on a regular basis. However, there were a few encouraging notes. Jewish students at the Sorbonne in Paris were making renewed efforts to put out a scholarly journal. Rabbi Zaoui of the Reform synagogue in Paris was the head of a group which had issued the first number of a quarterly on Judaic subjects. There were some young French Jewish writers who were seeking to make contact with their

Jewish environment. French Jewish intellectuals and community leaders were becoming more and more concerned with the problem of cultural expression and had come to realize the need for some central efforts in that direction.

Yiddish literature, on the other hand, had benefited from the influx of Jewish writers and journalists from Eastern Europe. A half dozen Yiddish books appeared within the space of a few months previous to the writing of this article. However, these works were outside of the French tradition. The same could be said of the Yiddish theater in Paris.

### *Religion and Education*

The religious activity of French Jewry was limited to participation in the synagogue; but none of the synagogues offered any of the larger programs so popular in the United States. The main religious activity was concerned with the education of Jewish children. The potential number of Jewish school children in France was approximately 40,000. Of this number, only 10 per cent were receiving a Jewish education, much of which was insufficient. The Jewish schools suffered an almost total lack of central organization, coordination and curriculum planning.

There were five large yeshivot in France at the time of writing. But the 1,700 pupils hailed from Central Europe and intended to emigrate; they had no connection with and were making no contribution to French Jewish life.

More interesting for its possible eventual effect upon French Jewish life was the school of the OPEJ (Organisation pour la Protection des Enfants Juifs) near Paris, which was training teachers for Jewish schools. Students of the school published a series of manuals in French which described Jewish holidays and rituals and were circulated among all the OPEJ children's homes. The school was planning to issue a children's newspaper in French dealing with Jewish subjects, the first of its kind in the country.

The leader of another such training school, Robert Gamzon, left for Israel with fifty of his pupils, but the school was continuing.

Finally, during this period, a yeshivah came into being at Aix-les-Bains which was seeking to recruit its students from the Jewish population of France, and to train community leaders and organizers. This project was meeting financial difficulties.

## BELGIUM

THE OUTSTANDING political event in Belgium, during the period under review, was the election held in June, 1949. The Catholic party fell short of the majority it had expected, and the stalemate over the issue of the restoration of King Leopold continued.

There was a total of some 42,000 Jews in Belgium, the Jews constituting less than 1 per cent of the total Belgium population, but Jewish aliens in Belgium were close to 10 per cent of all aliens. The economic situation was not good and unemployment figures were high; the result was a difficult economic and moral environment for the Jews of Belgium.

Naturalization had always been circumscribed by rigorous requirements, but after the war it became apparent that civil servants in the naturalization service were using unequivocally anti-Semitic criteria in their recommendations as to the admissibility of applicants to Belgian nationality. A higher court overruled a lower court's approval of the withholding of Belgian citizenship from fifteen-year-old native sons of Jewish immigrants because the civil servants who had examined them considered their home environments too Jewish and therefore incapable of providing the sort of education needed for inculcating real Belgian loyalties.

This explains the large trend toward emigration. Movement out of the country in the direction of Israel was approximately 400 a month from May, 1948 to January, 1949. However, large numbers were being kept from leaving Belgium for Israel at the time of writing by Israel's financial difficulties.

### *Antwerp and Brussels*

The 10,000 to 15,000 Jews in Antwerp made up a small, tight, and stable community. The large majority were Orthodox and were organized in an efficient network of religious, educational, and ideological institutions. They lived in a distinctly Jewish quarter, educated their children in Jewish parochial schools, and earned their living, by and large, in the diamond trade. The community was in need of little aid in order to take care of its welfare needs and was showing an increasing willingness to do so.

However, the 20,000-25,000 Jews in Brussels had little community organization, religious life, physical closeness, or identity of economic interest. As in France, the population was composed of Jews who had come to Brussels from different lands at different periods. Only about one thousand persons were members of the two Brussels congregations.

### *Communal Coordination*

No representative organization existed among Belgian Jewry capable of dealing with community life and defense. The influence and function of the publicly recognized Consistoire Central were strictly limited. Moreover, there was little coordination between the Antwerp and Brussels communities, so that important Jewish problems were frequently being handled separately, and differently, by both communities.

### *Culture and Education*

The rootlessness of Belgian Jewry was illustrated by the fact that there was not a single Jewish periodical in the country, though almost every Belgian community had a press organ of its own before the war. The education of children represented the main Jewish activity.

Of some 7,000 to 7,500 Jewish children of school age, about 1,200 were receiving instruction in three day schools, two of which were located in Antwerp. Another 1,000 were attending supplementary schools; 500 in private homes, and 180 in yeshivot.

The day schools were quite good and were partly financed by the state. The teaching in the supplementary schools was poor, and since there was no local publication of school texts, pupils were forced to use whatever material was at hand.

There were about sixty students preparing to be teachers and educators as well as rabbis in the yeshiva in Antwerp. While the students were principally of Central-European origin, there were several students from Western Europe and Belgium itself.

### *Intergroup Relations*

There was a very definite consciousness among the general Belgian population of the presence of Jews. The period under review witnessed specific anti-Semitic phenomena in the shape of vicious articles based on Catholic reports of desecration of the Holy Places in Israel. Feeling about this subject ran higher in the Belgian press than that of any other country. For example, members of the Belgian Association for Assistance to Palestine Refugees toured European capitals with a ten-foot wooden cross containing a relic of the "true cross" to demonstrate the need of safeguarding the Holy Places in Palestine (*Religious News Service*, May 24, 1949). Yet neither the Brussels nor the Antwerp Jewish community was doing anything to counteract the effect of this propaganda.

## NETHERLANDS

DUTCH JEWRY presented an apparent paradox during the period under review: its 28,000 Jews formed one of the best-organized and economically stable Jewish communities in the world, and lived in a nation where they were secure. Yet the leaders of the community insisted there was no future for Jews in Holland. The leadership of the community had either already emigrated or was planning to do so.

Despite the very drastic ravages of the war—five-sixths of the prewar Jewish population of approximately 140,000 had been killed off, and much wealth lost—Dutch Jewry no longer needed financial help from outside sources. Composed largely of upper middle-class professionals, businessmen, and industrialists, Dutch Jewry had raised sizeable sums for its own social and welfare work and was even supporting 500 children from other lands en route to Israel.

But while Dutch Jews were financially prosperous, they were psychologically unhappy. Dutch Jewish leaders felt that to live both as a Dutchman and a Jew involved an intolerable split in loyalties, and were openly declaring their choice of life as Jews rather than Dutchmen. This feeling seemed to be understood by non-Jews, and did not seem to produce anti-Semitism.

A new development in community affairs was the organization early in 1949 of a group to influence the government to vest the heirless assets of Dutch Jews killed by the Nazis in a successor body that would use them for communal and relief purposes. Preparations were also made to constitute the

successor body itself, to be ready whenever the appropriate legislation was passed. Informed opinion was cautiously optimistic about the prospects for the success of this effort.

### *Religion and Culture*

The Sephardic element of Dutch Jewry had been virtually wiped out by deportation during the war: the large Sephardic synagogue in Amsterdam had difficulties in gathering a quorum. There are only three Ashkenazic rabbis in Holland as contrasted with some twenty-five who had served in a network of religious institutions that extended to every Dutch province before the war. Only one-fourth of the remaining population was registered with synagogues, and there was a strong assimilationist trend.

There were two publications issued by and for the Jewish community, in addition to a special weekly devoted to Jewish topics which was circulated among important non-Jews. The community had a rich heritage of cultural material, except for books and periodicals on current Jewish topics which it could not afford to publish because of the small size of the community.

### *Defense and Restitution*

The relations of Dutch Jewry with the government were excellent and its central organization, the Jewish Coordinating Committee, was an effective quasi-official body.

The burning postwar problem for Dutch Jewry was its struggle for the restoration to the Jewish community of some 4,000 Jewish children who had been hidden in Christian homes during the years of the war and occupation. The community had apparently lost its struggle, for the Dutch parliament reasserted its determination to permit the nomination of non-Jewish foster organizations to serve as the guardians of Jewish war orphans.

## SWITZERLAND

EXCLUSIVE of some 4,500 refugees, the Jewish population of Switzerland consisted of approximately 18,500 persons who resided in twenty-seven communities. A number of the refugees were expected to remain in Switzerland, since the government had granted residence to refugees who could not return to their countries of origin and was making it easier for them to secure work permits.

### *Communal Organization*

The Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities extended aid to educational and cultural activities, and supported a school in Basle which provided the community with teachers, educators, and communal workers. There was also an active Jewish students' union which was helping needy students. To a large extent, the education of Swiss youth was being taken over by such youth

groups as the Jewish Boy Scouts and the Zionist Hechalutz and Hashomer Hatzair organizations. The Zionist organization in Switzerland consisted of some 1,200 members; on the whole, the attitude of the general population to Zionism was favorable.

### *Intergroup Relations*

Swiss Jews possessed the same civic rights as the rest of the population and were subject to no official discrimination. However, anti-Semitic allusions had grown somewhat more frequent since the end of the war. In the Fall of 1948, a Swiss magazine, *Die neue Politik*, was banned by the British from circulation in their zone of Germany for printing propaganda accusing the Jews of being responsible for conditions in postwar Germany, and particularly for the war crime trials. The American authorities had also investigated the Swiss magazine, but at the time of writing had not announced the results of their investigation.

Though this propaganda had evoked no significant public response, the Jewish-Christian Association to Fight Anti-Semitism felt the need to defend the Swiss Jewish community. They were attempting to secure the incorporation in the penal code of a clause making anti-Semitic activities subject to prosecution.

### *Restitution*

Switzerland continued during the period under review to be the scene of a struggle which was being conducted by Jewish organizations for restitution of assets belonging to Jews who had died heirless. Because of the Swiss banking laws which were very favorable to secrecy, thousands of Jews from other countries had deposited assets in Switzerland estimated variously at from \$5,000,000 to \$50,000,000. The Jewish organizations were appealing to the precedent of a number of countries where such assets had been allocated by special legislation to specifically Jewish communal and relief purposes. However, the Swiss government was reluctant to waive the existing law under which such assets should escheat to the government of the country of which the dead Jews were nationals, pleading the difficulty occasioned by the bank-secrecy law in the determination of the heirless Jewish assets. However, the position of the Jewish organizations was fortified early in the Summer of 1949 with the discovery of an unpublicized trade agreement between Poland and Switzerland in which Switzerland had obligated itself to repatriate to Poland such assets as had been held by deceased Polish citizens.

## ITALY

THE GOVERNMENT of Italy continued during the period under review to be in the hands of the Center parties, with the Christian Democrats the major element in the coalition, and economic conditions, though far from satisfactory, continued to improve slowly.

## *Population and Emigration*

For the first time since the end of the war, at the time of writing the large majority of the 38,500 Jews in Italy were native Italians. By the beginning of 1949, only 5,578 displaced Jews remained in Italy, of whom more than a half preferred the United States to Israel as the country to which they wished to emigrate. In the previous twelve months, some 20,000 Jews had left Italy for Israel. By the beginning of the Spring of 1949, the diversified structure of communal and cultural organizations created by the displaced Jews of Italy had all but disappeared, most of their members and beneficiaries having left, including the Union of Jewish Writers and Artists; the Organization of Jewish Refugees; Hechalutz, which operated a series of hachsharah farms to train prospective immigrants to Israel in agriculture and communal living, and the Yiddish newspaper, *Baderech* ("On the Way"), and the monthly, *In Gang* ("On the Way").

## *Communal Organization*

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) reduced its assistance. In 1949 JDC funds for Italy were used to supplement the contributions of Italian Jewry itself for its orphanages and homes for the aged (of which there were 6, with 165 inmates) and for the Collegio Rabbinico. The synagogues had a prior claim on the communal taxes that Jews were obliged to pay by Italian law, and the institutions of social welfare, whose originally generous endowments had been rendered completely inadequate by the inflation, were desperately in need of funds (the average income from the communal properties was \$1.50 per month). During the few preceding years Italian Jews had contributed more, *per capita*, to the Haganah and similar Israeli purposes than the Jews of any other Western-European country. In October, 1948, the Union of Jewish Communities came to an agreement with the JDC, by which they undertook to launch a campaign for the necessary funds, and the JDC undertook to supplement the income. Arie Stern, the Israeli representative in Italy, was a member of the committee of sponsors. The JDC also contributed to the capital funds of the first Jewish credit cooperative in Italy, which had been established in August, 1948, in order to provide loans to professional people, artisans, and tradesmen who were in need of credit.

The fact that the Israeli representative was a sponsor of local philanthropic enterprises and the unprecedented outpouring of Italian Jewish contributions for Israel were most significant, and emphasized the great revolution that had occurred in the thinking of Italian Jews in the course of a single decade. Before 1938, when Mussolini introduced racist legislation, there was little Zionist feeling in the Italian Jewish community. But the racist legislation was followed by the Nazi deportations and murders. The result was that, though relatively few native Italian Jews chose to emigrate to Israel, enthusiasm for Israel was universal. In addition, as Italians the Jews of Italy felt no strangeness in the face of indistinct boundaries between church and state, or between the religious and the governmental: Catholicism had long enjoyed and con-

tinued to enjoy a special legal status in Italian life; but the head of the Catholic Church was also the sovereign of an independent state, Vatican City. It did not seem strange to anyone, therefore, that Arie Stern, Israel's representative in Italy, was invited to be active in almost every phase of the Italian Jewish community's activities, or that David Prato, the Chief Rabbi, was invited to give formal religious sanction to practically every official celebration or ceremony in honor of the Israeli representative in Italy. Rabbi Prato had spent about ten years in Israel, from which he returned to Italy shortly after the war to assume the office of Chief Rabbi vacated by the apostate Zolli.

### *Intergroup Relations*

There was rather less fear of anti-Semitism in Italy than in most other countries because the experiences of the war and the postwar attitude to the Jewish displaced persons had shown that the Italian people had a high resistance to anti-Semitism.

In March, 1949, anti-Jewish leaflets were found on the tombs of the Roman Jews murdered by the Nazis in the Fosse Ardeatine; the leaflets were the work of unrepentant Fascists of the worst sort. This was not considered nearly so serious as the anti-Jewish sermons of a popular Jesuit preacher in Turin, Father Lombardi. Taken in conjunction with the Vatican's propaganda against Israel on the issue of Holy Places, it caused some concern to Jewish leaders. They felt, however, that when a satisfactory compromise had been reached between the Vatican and Hakirya, the seat of Israel's government, the danger that might be inherent in the Lombardi incident would be exorcised.

### *Restitution*

During the Summer of 1949 various negotiations were being conducted in Washington, London, and Rome to have several classes of Italian war booty, in the custody of the United States and Great Britain, set aside for Jewish relief and migration purposes.

### *Culture and Education*

The heart of the program for perpetuating Jewish life in Italy was education, yet only a small percentage of the Jewish children was being reached. Such education, to be effective, had to be taught in all-day schools, for the Catholic Church was very influential in the regular educational program. Some kindergartens, for instance, were taught by nuns. In Rome, Milan, and eight other of the larger communities there were such all-day schools, while in Naples and seven other small cities there were talmud torahs. Of these schools, that in Milan was excellent, but the others were poor. The great problem was attracting teachers.

The meager cultural activity in Italy was conducted by the Union of Jewish Communities, which was issuing a monthly cultural and historical magazine and a monthly youth supplement, as well as helping to subsidize a national weekly, a bi-weekly, and a publishing house in Florence. The publishing

house had turned out an impressive list of books of Jewish interest: school texts, dictionaries in Hebrew-Italian and Italian-Hebrew, and a weekly pamphlet with extracts from Jewish philosophers, writers, and poets. Though there were countless items of priceless Jewish artistic and historical value scattered throughout Italy, little or no use was being made of this material.

## SWEDEN

THE MOST significant event in the history of the 15,000 persons comprising Swedish Jewry during the period under review was the assassination of Count Folke Bernadotte, the United Nations Mediator in Palestine, by Jewish terrorists in Israel, in September, 1948.<sup>1</sup> Bernadotte had been very popular with the Swedish people as a devoted friend of the weak and oppressed everywhere whose work reflected glory on his country. During the war, he had engaged in unofficial diplomatic negotiations, and had used his high office in the Swedish Red Cross in an attempt to save some Jews from the Nazis. Hence, when Bernadotte was murdered by Jews in Israel, and the Israel government subsequently failed to apprehend the murderers, popular sentiment against the Jews reached an intensity which, though not alarming when compared with the norm in some other countries, was greater than at any previous time in modern Swedish history.

### *Intergroup Relations*

The leading newspapers were careful to point out, in the numerous editorials condemning the crime itself and what was considered to be the laxity and indifference of the Israeli government, that Swedish Jews should not to be held responsible; references were made, however, to the ingratitude of the Israeli Jews in murdering a man who had done all he could to save the European Jews from Hitler.

An adverse result for Israel was the failure of either Sweden or Norway to extend recognition—Denmark was the Scandinavian exception in giving *de facto* recognition in February, 1949—and the settled Scandinavian hostility to Israel within the United Nations. Swedish Jews felt that their previously secure status had been impaired, and that it would take years for the bad effects of Bernadotte's assassination to disappear. Many thought they now discerned a hostility which was formerly restricted to the more reactionary and tradition-bound branches of the nobility—a hostility which was evident even in the middle-class circles among which Jews normally moved. They interpreted the official distinction between Israel Jews, who were responsible, and Swedish Jews, who were not, as reassuring proof that overt anti-Semitism was still considered disreputable by respectable people. They interpreted similarly the appointment of Hugo Valentin, the author of the famous book on anti-Semitism, to an honorary professorship of history at the University of Upsala in March, 1949, and that of Ragnar Josephson to head the Royal Dramatic Theater in Stockholm. They hoped that the many reports of trade negotiations

<sup>1</sup> See also Israel and the United Nations, p. 379, and Israel, p. 391.

between Sweden and Israel, under whose terms Sweden would receive profitable contracts to supply lumber, prefabricated dwellings, machinery and the like, were not merely reports, and that extensive trade relations would in fact soon be established.

The one important anti-Semitic voice in Sweden, that of Einer Aberg, had been silenced by government decree. Whether this decree could be used to stop Aberg from sending his anti-Semitic materials to other lands was still in doubt.

### *Community Organization*

The approximately 7,000 native Jews in Sweden were legally required to belong to the Jewish community, and Swedish congregations possessed the power to levy taxes. A law was being drafted to make affiliation to religious communities voluntary, and it was anticipated that if the law was passed the communities would lose the support of a number of members who were Jews by birth only. The bulk of the work done by *Mosaiska Församlingen*, the central Swedish Jewish organization, was on behalf of the refugee population, composed of 6,000 Orthodox girls and 2,000 Jews who came to Sweden from Germany during the first years of the war. The Orthodox girls had difficulty in finding husbands among the small Jewish community of Sweden, and a number of them left Sweden during this period.

The disposition of the heirless assets of non-Swedish Jews was a problem still unresolved at the time of writing.

As in most of the rest of Western Europe, the Jewish community deeply regretted the scarcity of good reading matter—on all aspects of Jewish life, thought, religion, or history—in Swedish, the language most easily read by the majority.

## GREECE

THE JEWISH population of Greece numbered 8,000 at the time of writing. Of this number, 3,700 resided in Athens and 1,620 in Salonika. The Greek Jews had been emigrating at the rate of approximately 90 per month—an emigration of more than 10 per cent of the Jewish community yearly. This movement was intensified in July, 1949, when 132 Jews emigrated from Greece as a result of the decision by the Greek government to permit Jews of military age to leave for Israel if they so desired on condition that they renounced their citizenship.

### *Intergroup Relations*

Greek anti-Semitism was an important factor in this emigration, as were the economic difficulties attending the civil war. Thus, the Greek press unanimously attacked the appointment of Joseph Mallah, a Jew, as Greek envoy to Israel, until a letter from Foreign Minister Constantin Tsaldaris put an end to the agitation.

The Jewish community in Greece was also suffering from official economic discrimination. Evidence of this was a national tax imposed by the government on the various industries in Greece, allocated according to the estimated wealth of the individual industrialists. The result was that the Jews of Athens, though constituting only .5 per cent of the population, were asked to pay 4 per cent of the total amount; those in Salonika, who were .2 per cent of the population, were asked to pay 16 per cent of the total. (This tax rate was eventually withdrawn.)

### *Restitution*

The most important development affecting Greek Jewry during the period under review was the signing by King Paul on March 27, 1949, of a decree transferring Jewish heirless property to a Jewish successor organization established for that purpose. Since the property involved was valued at approximately \$4,000,000, it became apparent that the Greek community would easily be able to take care of its future communal needs. A temporary central body to administer the funds was set up in Athens, and local committees were established in Salonika and the smaller Greek towns, as well as in Crete. The successor organization defined its aims as, first, to take an inventory of the heirless property and, second, to work out a plan for assistance and rehabilitation. Until the master plan was worked out, the Central Council of Jewish Communities was to receive funds with which to do relief and rehabilitation work.

## TURKEY

THE JEWISH population of Turkey declined sharply during the period under review as a result of a large and unexpected emigration to Israel. At the time of writing, there were some 55,000 Jews in Turkey; an estimated 30,000 Jews had left Turkey since August, 1948. Worst hit of all by this exodus was the Turkish province of Ismir, where only 4,500 Jews remained of an original Jewish population of 15,250. The community faced the problem of maintaining eighteen synagogues and yeshivot, and combining its schools. Istanbul and Brousse had been similarly affected, though not as sharply.

### *Government Attitude toward Jews*

The reasons for this large-scale emigration of Jews from Turkey lay in a number of factors. First was the basic governmental treatment of the Jews as a minority group and its consequent refusal to recognize the Jewish communities as juridic personalities, which made it difficult for them to hold property. Teaching in Jewish schools was under strict state control, and Jewish schools were forbidden to make the study of Hebrew compulsory, though it could be elected by the students. The government forbade the formation of any group having a religious basis, and non-Moslems were banned from all public employment.

However, toward the end of the period under review, there seemed to be a

change in the government's attitude. More freedom of action was granted to minority schools in July, 1949 (*JTA*, July 18, 1949), and Jewish citizens were given permission to become officers in the Turkish Army Reserve Corps; in addition, there were growing opportunities for Jews to secure minor positions in the government bureaucracy and school system. Nevertheless, Turkish Jews felt neither safe nor secure in Turkey. Their feeling was aggravated during the Arab-Israel war, which found Turkey neutral but the Turkish population pro-Arab.

### *Government Attitude on Emigration*

Another important factor militating for the emigration of Turkish Jewry to Israel was the government's attitude on emigration. Turkey had officially forbidden Jewish emigration to Israel, but it permitted Jews to secure visas to other countries, and was aware that their ultimate destination was Israel. With the Turkish recognition of Israel on March 28, 1949, this pretext was dropped. There was an emigration representative of Israel in Turkey at the time of writing.