

Zionism

There was substantial Zionist feeling in Algeria, but it was of somewhat different character than that of other areas of North Africa. Zionist aspirations were tempered somewhat by the strong attachment of the Algerian Jews to France. Not only were the Jews of Algeria, for so many generations integrated into French culture, naturally and organically attached to their metropolitan center, but in Algeria itself they had achieved an enviable status and had given to the country a number of eminent civil servants, magistrates, and persons of professional endeavor. For generations there had been a steady process of assimilation of the Algerian community into the French general and Jewish life, and many Algerian Jews regarded Paris as their spiritual center. Some had achieved notable careers in French and Jewish life.

Zionist activities in Algeria were promoted by a number of Zionist groups, among them a WIZO group and Jeunesse Sioniste. There was also a Zionist federation under the chairmanship of Aizer Cherqui.

Social Services

No special emergency needs arose in Algeria during the period under review (July, 1949, to July, 1950). Whatever assistance was necessary was provided by the local agencies, which were organized on the French pattern. Some, like OSE and ORT, were affiliated with their French prototypes.

There was, of course, the problem of the Jews living in the southern Algerian territory who did not have the equal status provided by the *Loi Crémieux*. Their economic position was very precarious, and, according to local reports, tuberculosis and other diseases were widespread in their midst. The responsible French-Jewish organizations were aware of this problem and sought means of alleviating it.

LIBYA

ACCORDING TO THE decision made by the Political Commission of the United Nations General Assembly on November 9, 1949, the former Italian colony of Libya was to become independent not later than January 1, 1952. Its eastern part, Cyrenaica, had already achieved some degree of self-government under Emir Sayid Sir Mohammed Idran el Senussi. A protege of the British, the Emir had been administering the internal affairs of Cyrenaica since September 16, 1949. Tripolitania, the western part of Libya, was still under British rule; the southern territory of Fezzan, under Ahmed en Sif en Nasr, was controlled by the French. In addition to the external difficulties occasioned by this situation, there were internal dissensions and rivalries among the different clans and groups in Libya. Adrien Pelt, United Nations Commissioner for Libya, was in charge of preparing the country for independence.

Jewish Population

The Jewish community of Tripoli, one of the oldest Jewish settlements in the world, was in the process of virtual liquidation. As of April, 1950, only some 15,000 Jews remained in the country, with practically the entire population concentrated in Tripoli. At the time of this writing (July, 1950) only 350 Jews remained in Cyrenaica. These were wealthy people who had decided to remain in the country for the time being. In view of the continuing emigration, only very small numbers of Jews were expected to remain in Libya when the exodus was completed. During the period under review the whole social fabric of the community was subjected to one aim—emigration to Israel. Meanwhile, the recognized Jewish community was still functioning in Tripoli and maintaining good relations with the British military authorities.

Jewish Education

Six schools provided education to over 3,200 children. These schools included Italian schools, talmud torahs, and a special Alyat Hanoar school that was preparing children for emigration. Alliance Israélite Universelle maintained one elementary school and one kindergarten with an enrollment of about 500. To provide for children who resided outside city limits, additional Hebrew classes were organized in synagogues and other public buildings. All school children were fed in JDC-supported canteens.

Social Services

OSE, which was in charge of the medical program, conducted mass medical examinations of the Jewish population in addition to caring for immediate needs, particularly those of children and infants, in a baby center, tuberculosis rest home, etc. Between March 1, 1949, and September 30, 1949, 15,764 persons were examined by physicians and medical aid was given to those in need. This was particularly important for those awaiting emigration to Israel. JDC contributed substantially to meet local needs, in addition to supporting over 4,600 transients from the interior of the country and Cyrenaica.

Emigration from North Africa

The emigration of North African Jews to Israel continued during the period under review (July, 1949, to July, 1950). Available figures show that from May 15, 1948, through April 23, 1950, about 28,600 Jews left Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, and 18,400 left Libya.⁸ Thus, about one-twelfth of the entire Jewish population left to seek new homes in the established Jewish state. The impact of the emigration on the whole North African Jewish community was of course important, but it had to be appraised in the

⁸ Statement by E. M. M. Warburg, JDC release, April 23, 1950.

light of the various local situations. In Libya, where emigration was expected to continue at a substantial rate, the Jewish settlement was expected to be largely extinguished. In Morocco, the source of over 90 per cent of the French North African emigrants, important as emigration was, it did not touch the core of the Jewish population, and to a certain degree natural increases might replenish the community in the event of a reduction in the rate of emigration. Only a few thousand emigrants left Tunisia, and relatively small numbers went to Israel from Algiers, leaving those communities little affected.

EMIGRANT AID

Considerable efforts were made by both JDC and the Jewish Agency to assure a normal flow of those who wanted to go to Israel. Special camps were established in Tripoli, Brindizi, Algiers, Casablanca, and Marseilles, where transients were lodged, fed, and subjected to strict medical examination and treatment. There were, however, a number of factors limiting emigration. The funds supplied by the United Jewish Appeal were said to be insufficient to cope with large numbers of emigrants. Some priority was expected to be established in order to take out first the Jews from countries from which immediate emigration was a matter of absolute necessity.⁹ Health factors also played an important role. It was reported in May, 1950, that only 15 per cent of the two hundred applicants per month from Morocco were able to pass the necessary medical examinations. There was also noticeable a certain reserve on the part of the would-be emigrants themselves. According to some reports, this was due to the feeling of some North African Jews, particularly Moroccans, that they were regarded on their arrival in Israel as in a sense inferior to other immigrant groups.

Attitude of the Moslems

Except for some isolated cases, no serious anti-Jewish incidents occurred in the French North African possessions during 1949-50. On May 9, 1950, according to press reports, five hundred Tunisian Moslems staged a demonstration and attacked the Israeli ship *Akko* in Bizerte harbor in Tunisia (*The New York Times*, May 10, 1950). According to Israeli sources (reported on June 27, 1950, and July 12, 1950) some nervousness was felt in the remote cities of Tunisia, where isolated Jewish communities were said to be in fear of possible outbreaks. Impressions obtained from local reports pointed to an anti-Jewish attitude on the part of large groups of Moslems which was permanent and profoundly entrenched in the religious and social fabric of their lives. Differing in degree and in character in different areas and among different groups of population, this attitude was most pronounced in Morocco. However, in order to appraise the situation objectively, the altogether different status of Jews in Tunisia and Algeria must be taken into consideration.

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⁹ JDC statement, July 7, 1950.