

The situation in North Africa was of serious concern to all political parties in France. Several parties, outstanding among which was that of the French socialists, Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière Socialiste (SFIO), suggested a number of far-reaching reforms in the direction of increasing local self-government, in addition to large-scale development projects in the countries concerned. As a matter of fact, during the years following World War II, the French had introduced considerable changes in the administrative and political organization of their North African countries. They had extended the electorate in Algeria and somewhat increased native participation in local consultative councils of both Tunisia and Morocco. The French had also enlarged the competence and jurisdiction of these limited assemblies.

There was much evidence that in the period under review serious moves were being made by both sides to arrange for some *modus vivendi*. At this writing (July, 1950) negotiations were under way between the French government and Tunisian leaders which might open to this French protectorate new opportunities for gradual development. There was apparently a growing awareness on the part of some moderate Moslem leaders that the presence of the French had contributed substantially to the material and social progress of the area and facilitated the gradual evolution of various ethnographical elements of the population. For several decades large numbers of the younger Moslem generations had taken advantage of the incomparable intellectual and technical training that France afforded them. Notwithstanding their ardent nationalism, they were greatly influenced by French culture, and it was extremely significant that after the defeat of France and during the German occupation the North African countries had not ranged themselves with the enemies of France.

## MOROCCO

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY of Morocco was by far the largest of all the Jewish settlements in Moslem countries and, in fact, the seventh largest of all Jewish communities. It was estimated that in 1950 there were some 260,000 Jews in Morocco, about 225,000 in the French Protectorate, some 25,000 in the Spanish zone, and 10,000 in the international zone of Tangiers. Local estimates supplied the figures on the geographical distribution of the Jewish population in some selected cities, as shown in Table 1.

The latest estimate of the occupational distribution of Moroccan Jews indicated that 48 per cent were in business, peddling, and handicraft; 13 per cent were workers; 11 per cent were in white-collar occupations and professions; and 28 per cent were in various other occupations.<sup>1</sup>

The social structure of the Jewish population was characteristic in that there was practically no middle-class group. Except for a small group of rich families, large numbers of Jews were living in the most degraded conditions of misery. Housing and sanitary conditions of the population living in the *mellahs* were, according to local observers, utterly distressing. Most of the families lived in one unventilated room possessing the most elementary sani-

<sup>1</sup> Based on reports in JDC files.

TABLE 1  
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF JEWISH POPULATION IN  
SELECTED CITIES OF NORTH AFRICA

City	Population <sup>a</sup>
Casablanca	86,375
Marrakech	18,750
Meknes	15,842
Rabat	14,250
Mogador	7,425
Sefrou	6,958
Tafilalet	6,625
Safi	4,450
Mazagan	4,250
Sale	4,000

<sup>a</sup> Some of the figures include smaller localities within the district. The figure for Casablanca includes only Moroccan Jews (based on reports for 1948 in American Joint Distribution Committee [JDC] files).

tary conveniences. The majority slept on straw mats on the floor. Drinking water was not available on the premises and had often to be purchased and stored in containers. Given such housing conditions, it was no wonder that diseases of all sorts were prevalent among the Jewish population. Although no accurate statistics were available, one Jewish physician, a tuberculosis specialist in Casablanca, estimated that approximately 3.5 per cent of the city's Jews had positive sputums or open lesions.<sup>2</sup>

### *Civic and Political Status*

The Jews of Morocco were not citizens of the country but proteges—subjects—of the Sultan, and were considered by the Moslems as belonging to a second-rate nationality. They did not enjoy political rights, although in 1948 six Jewish delegates were admitted to the Moroccan section of the Consultative Council of the government. As the delegates were chosen from among the members of the boards of the various Jewish communities, they were able, to a certain extent, to express the wishes and desires of the Jewish section of the population.

The Moroccan Jews lived under a peculiar quasi-autonomous regime. In the field of internal organization they were governed by Mosaic Law, with all matters of personal status coming under the jurisdiction of special rabbinical courts established by the *dahir* (decree) of May 22, 1918, supplemented by subsequent legislation. All other matters involving Moroccan Jews were within the competence of the general Moslem courts.

### *Communal Organization*

During the period under review, Rabbi Saül Aben Danan was president of the High Rabbinical Court of Morocco, which had its seat in Rabat.

<sup>2</sup> JDC report for 1949.

Jewish social life was centered around communities whose aim was to look out for the religious interests of their adherents and to render assistance to the needy. Each of these communities, which existed in practically every city with a Jewish population, was governed by a committee whose competence was considerably restricted by French protectorate officials. Approval of the French functionaries was necessary for a number of acts, including sale of property and certain expenditures. The principal source of income of the communities was derived from taxes on the sale of wine and wheat. In 1949 the following were among the largest communities: Casablanca, with I. Sagury as chairman; Marrakech (I. Lasry); Rabat (J. Berdugo); Mogador (H. Cohen); Fez (Danon); Sefron (Benaich); and Safi (M. Levy).

The totality of Moroccan Jews were strict religious observers, and the rabbinate wielded considerable influence in their communal life. It is worth mentioning that in Casablanca alone there were, in 1950, seventy-two synagogues and houses of worship.

### *Jewish Education and Cultural Activities*

According to local observers, there were over 40,000 Jewish children of school age in Morocco in 1949. Some 25,000 were receiving some European education, the majority in the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. In 1950 the Alliance conducted sixty-eight schools in Morocco (including three in the Spanish zone and two in Tangiers) with 23,800 pupils.<sup>3</sup> An important achievement of the Alliance was the opening in Casablanca of a special school for children afflicted with trachoma, where 667 boys and girls were making good progress in both their studies and in their cure from the disease.<sup>4</sup> It should be mentioned here that the work of Alliance Israélite Universelle must be judged not only by its scope and the number of its schools, but also by its influence, via cadres of its former pupils, among the large masses of the Jewish population to whom for decades the Alliance had brought French culture and European standards of education.

Two thousand to 3,000 children were attending the approximately 65 religious schools of Ozar Hatorah. There were also large numbers of *hedarim* attended by 2,700 children. All local observers described these one-room schools as being on an extremely low educational level and located in unsanitary surroundings.

Considerable efforts were made by the Alliance Israélite Universelle and other groups to enlarge the educational facilities of the Jewish community, and measures were taken to prepare teachers for the increasing number of schools and children. The Ecole Maghen-David, established in 1918, may be mentioned in this connection. The curriculum of this school, which included Jewish and secular subjects, was planned to cover five years' study.

In the field of general education and development of varied cultural activities, a few other organizations may be mentioned. Among these are the Association de la Jeunesse Juive Charles Netter, established in 1929, which engaged in a type of Jewish center activities and which published a monthly

<sup>3</sup> *Les cahiers de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle*, 40-41, February-March, 1950, Paris, France.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, 37-38, November-December, 1949.

bulletin, *Noar*; and the *Éclaireurs Israélites*, established in 1944, which conducted a program of work similar to that of the Jewish boy scout organization and published a review, *Promesse*. Of particular importance in this field were societies of former pupils of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, a type of alumni organization around which the active and progressive younger forces of the community centered. There were, in addition, in Morocco three ORT schools for vocational training in which several hundred boys and girls were receiving professional preparation in various trades and crafts. On the whole, all these efforts resulted in a slow but steady progress in the field of education. It may also be mentioned that in recent years Alliance Israélite Universelle schools had enlarged the place of Hebrew and Jewish subjects in their curriculum to the satisfaction of the traditional element. Rabbi Saül Aben Danan had publicly acknowledged the efforts of the Alliance in this direction.<sup>5</sup>

### *Social Services*

Aware of the miserable living conditions of the majority of the Jewish population, the French authorities decided during the period under review to evacuate 1,500 Jews from the *mellah*. The project, involving an expenditure of 300,000,000 francs (about \$800,000) was part of a larger program for the inhabitants of the zone [Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), March 3, 1950]. There were, of course, a number of traditional Jewish charitable institutions in every city of Morocco, but the divergence between the extent of the need and the extent of the help afforded by these institutions was so great that their work could do little to alleviate the situation.

#### JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE (JDC)

Considerable effort was being made by JDC to develop in Morocco a program of welfare activities which, in conjunction with the extremely important work of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, might prove to be a lasting contribution to the welfare of the community. The activities of JDC, though restricted by financial limitations, covered a wide area of needs during the period under review—rehabilitation of youth, child care, medical aid, and general feeding. The role of JDC in Morocco was not solely one of assistance to the community; it had a larger and socially more important function there in assisting the local communal and welfare agencies to do a better job by gradually adopting modern standards of relief. In 1950, JDC reported that it was feeding some 15,000 children in a number of canteens conducted in various cities of the country. Special milk stations for infants were established where, in addition to the services provided, mothers were taught basic hygiene in the care of infants.

#### OSE ACTIVITIES

The JDC-supported OSE performed a considerable job in its specialized field of activities. In Morocco, OSE conducted some twenty medical institutions where about 46,000 children a month were treated for trachoma, tuberculosis, and favus, in addition to daily consultation and other services.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, 36, October, 1949.

Recognizing the importance of the medical activities of this Jewish health society, the governmental authorities agreed in April, 1950, to pay OSE a maximum annual subvention of 8,000,000 francs (about \$22,000) toward the support of its work in the country. In this connection the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) project in Morocco, through which UNICEF undertook to inoculate 3,000,000 persons against tuberculosis, was worthy of note. The Alliance Israélite Universelle put at the disposal of the UNICEF its school buildings, where the Jews were to receive their inoculations.

## SPANISH MOROCCO

**A**N ESTIMATED 25,000 Jews were living in some twelve communities of the Spanish zone of the protectorate. Among the Jewish settlements were those in the following cities: Tetuan, Melilla, Larache, and El-Ksar el Kbir. According to local reports, the community was well-organized and was taking good care of its welfare services. Since all the non-Moslem schools in that area were Catholic, the Jewish children attended Jewish schools. In Tetuan, the capital of the area, according to 1949 reports, a well-organized school, Ohr-leyeladim, provided daily instruction to Jewish children. The language of the school was Spanish, but a daily two-hour Hebrew course was included in the curriculum. There were also talmud torahs in all communities of the zone. Alliance Israélite Universelle conducted three schools, with an enrollment of 800 children, in the area.

## TANGIERS

**I**N THE INTERNATIONAL ZONE of Tangiers the Jewish population numbered some 10,000. There was a well-established Jewish community whose legal status was regulated by the Statute of Tangiers. Jews were afforded equal treatment with other subjects, and were represented in the international legislative assembly by three members.

During World War II substantial numbers of Jewish refugees passed through Tangiers and were assisted by the local welfare groups and supported by JDC. Most of the refugees had emigrated from Tangiers, leaving only some 300 to 400 still in the city.

Two Alliance Israélite Universelle schools with an enrollment of 900 pupils functioned in Tangiers, as well as a talmud torah with about one hundred pupils who were receiving French and Hebrew instruction.