North Africa

Tunisia *

AFTERMATH OF BIZERTE

THE EFFECTS of the Bizerte crisis (AJYB, 1962 [Vol. 63], pp. 432–36) reverberated throughout the year under review (June 30, 1961, to July 1, 1962). In January 1962 France and Tunisia resumed negotiations and Tunisia ceased vaunting its adherence to the Arab League. The solution of the Algerian problem, to which President Bourguiba responded with congratulations to France, further relaxed the atmosphere. In March the Tunisian delegate to the Arab League was officially instructed not to mix in "problems which did not concern him," i.e., he was to remain a spectator as far as the intrigues of the League were concerned. On June 20 the southern part of Bizerte was officially restored to Tunisian control, and at the same time diplomatic relations with France were resumed.

In July 1961 Tunisia had been isolated in the Arab world, treated with reserve by the unaligned nations because of her too close friendship with France, and suspected by the Communist countries because of President Bourguiba's personal pro-Westernism. In July 1962, without having lost—indeed, having strengthened—her technical and cultural ties with France, Tunisia had nevertheless gained the Bizerte base, regained her place in the Arab world, reestablished her prestige among the unaligned nations, and improved relations with the Soviet Union.

Relations with Other Countries

Difficulties had arisen between Tunisia and her two neighbors in the Maghreb. The official establishment on Moroccan soil of a Tunisian opposition group, the first extra-territorial opposition group to be formed since the departure of Salah ben Youssef from Egypt (AJYB, 1962 [Vol. 63], p. 434), was a severe shock to the Tunisian authorities. The Tunisian press hastened to denounce the Moroccan government and was, in turn, barred from Moroccan territory. A break between the two governments seemed in prospect.

* For meaning of abbreviations, see p. 433.

But the rapid development of the Algerian crisis soon relegated the Moroccan dispute to a secondary place. There were a number of public clashes, the last of which occurred in June, when Bourguiba attributed the pro-Castro position of the Algerian provisional government's leaders to the undue influence of the French newspapers *l'Express* or *France Observateur*. The provisional government reacted with "surprise that the President of the Tunisian Republic could thus interfere in [their] internal affairs." The presence in Tunisia of the FLN army, moreover, did not contribute to the peace of mind of the Jewish community, despite the feeling of reassurance which stemmed from the improvement of relations between France and Tunisia.

There was no significant change in Tunisian relations with the United States or the Soviet Union, although at the height of the Bizerte crisis Tunisian leaders indicated that they felt the United States had failed to give them the support to which they were entitled. Closer relations between Tunisia and Italy found expression in the visit of Italian Premier Amintore Fanfani in June 1962.

Domestic Affairs

Domestically, the year saw the vague beginnings of an opposition party headed by the former ministers of information, Mohammed Masmoudi and Bèchir Ben Yahmid. The most serious development was the increasingly sharp divergence between President Bourguiba's views and those of Tunisian students.

Five years of poor or average harvests had upset the precarious balance of the Tunisian economy. For the first two months of 1962 there was a deficit of 8 million dinars [1] as against one of 5,732,000 dinars for the first two months of 1961. The Tunisian budget was balanced by virtue of subsidies and loans. In the first place, France had tacitly continued its cultural and technical agreement with Tunisia, abrogation of which would have effected a shut-down of all French schools. Likewise, the resumption of royalty payments for the Edjelé pipeline, amounting to 14 million dinars a year, which had been momentarily interrupted during the Bizerte crisis, substantially helped the Tunisian economy. Other countries similarly came to Tunisia's assistance. From July 1, 1961, to June 30, 1962, United States help amounted to $27.5 million: $11.2 million, economic assistance; $10 million, development loan, and $6.3 million, development aid. The Soviet Union granted a loan of 12 million dinars for the construction of a dam, the Tunisian University, and a technical institute.

On May 31, 1962, President Bourguiba signed a law providing for a three-year plan designed to replace private initiative with state monopolies or cooperatives in the principal fields of economic activity. The plan provided for the establishment of 200 agricultural cooperatives in northern Tunisia, but was in other respects a continuation of the policy in effect since independence. Despite Tunisian efforts to reduce France's share of the country's

1 1 dinar = $2.39.

trade, which was some 60 per cent of the total, there was no noticeable change. In the hope of broadening Tunisia's markets, Planning Minister Ahmed Ben Salah made a number of trips to the United States and to the countries of the Soviet bloc. Work on the conversion of the Bizerte base into an oil refinery and steel mill began in April 1962; it was expected that this would be done in cooperation with one of the subsidiaries of the Italian state oil agency (ENI; Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi).

The most notable change in Tunisia's social structure during the year was the sharp reduction in the long-established Jewish (both Tunisian and European) and Italian communities. The Italian community, according to official figures, fell from 53,000 to 33,000 in three years of which a loss of 15,000 occurred after July 20, 1961, partly because of the economic depression and partly because of the Bizerte crisis and the consequent general exodus of Europeans. (The Italian government adopted measures on behalf of its repatriated citizens similar to those adopted by France.) This loss was an important one for Tunisia, since the Italians were very active in the Tunisian economy and furnished the bulk of all building and vineyard workers; it was discussed during Premier Fanfani's visit to Tunis.

The Jewish community also dropped sharply; although exact figures were hard to get, departures during the year under review were probably between 15,000 and 25,000.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Since the last population statistics for Tunisia dated back to 1955, it was possible to arrive at approximate Jewish population figures only by calculation. Thus, on the basis of a natural increase of 2.1 per cent a year for the Moslem population, the Tunisian population on July 1, 1961, was estimated to have been 4,200,000, while the Jewish community was estimated at 55,000 to 60,000, with 35,000 to 40,000 in Tunis and almost all the rest in Sfax, Sousse, and Djerba. On July 1, 1962, the population of Tunisia was estimated at 4,280,000, while the Jewish community fell to between 30,000 and 40,000. There were 20,000 to 25,000 in Tunis and about 3,500 in Djerba, 3,000 in Sfax, and 1,500 altogether in Gabès and Zarziz. About the only Jewish community which did not undergo important changes as a result of the Bizerte events was that of two villages on the island of Djerba, Hara Séguira and Hara Khébira. This community had a very special character and was believed to have been established thousands of years ago.

Jews played a major role in the liberal professions, furnishing 40 per cent of the doctors and lawyers, and above all in trade and banking. Some had important government positions.

Emigration

The causes of emigration were both long- and short-range. Tunisia was traditionally one of the Arab countries most favorably disposed towards the Jews. As far back as one could trace Tunisian history, Jews had been there—

perhaps even from the foundation of Carthage. There were numerous signs of a Jewish presence during the Roman period, such as synagogues and tombstones. Jews were eminent in the pre-Arab and pre-Moslem Tunisia of the Berbers, and after the Arabs and Islam came. Tunisia often served as a refuge for Jews driven from Spain, France, and Italy.

The large-scale Jewish emigration from Tunisia was unquestionably precipitated by the fortnight during the Bizerte crisis when it appeared that Bourguiba had completely reversed his pro-Western policy and had effectuated an enthusiastic reconciliation with Nasser and a total break with France. The Jews of Tunisia had the feeling of being caught in the net of Islamic Arab nationalism. Fundamentally, however, Tunisia had always followed a line of hostility to Israel, although the conflict between Bourguiba and Nasser had to a large extent masked it. Now their union suddenly threw into relief the anti-Israel policy of Tunisia, expressed by President Bourguiba in his speech at the United Nations in May 1961. It suddenly became impossible to be at the same time Tunisian and pro-Israeli.

Another cause of emigration was the economic situation in Tunisia. The three-year plan involved a rigid control of import licenses and a policy of austerity. Combined with foreign aid and investments, this might eventually raise the standard of living, but the existing situation was one of unemployment and underemployment. French colonialism, for all its faults, had sustained an economic boom from which the Jewish community had greatly profited. But now, as time passed, the key positions which the Jews had held in the economy disappeared one after another. State monopolies took over in precious metals and the grain market, soft goods, and olive oil and wine.

Exact figures on emigration were difficult to obtain. Tunisian statistics were in terms not of religious groups but of nationalities. From July 28, 1961, to January 1, 1962, the Fonds Social Juif Unifié (FSJU) reception bureau in Marseilles handled the cases of more than 4,000 Tunisian Jews (of whom 1,000 were sent to Israel) and 3,000 French Jews from Tunisia. In January 1962, 237 Tunisian Jews arrived, 134 of whom went to Israel; in February, the corresponding figures were 152 and 104; in March, 227 and 208; in April, 206 and 136; in May, 240 and 160. Between January and May the bureau helped about a hundred French Jews. Since most of the emigrants were middle-class, it can be assumed that many did not turn to FSJU, and were therefore not included in these figures. It may be estimated that between July 1, 1961, and June 30, 1962, 15,000 to 25,000 Jews left Tunisia.

While the Tunisian government, more flexible than that of Morocco, closed its eyes to this emigration, it did not permit the Jewish Agency to have an office in Tunisia, so that the agency had no official representation there. But the FSJU office in Marseilles functioned well. In addition, centers in Paris found work for the emigrants, helped them to find lodgings, regularized the status of the Tunisian Jews, and informed the French Jews of their rights.

Attitude Toward the Jews

Public opinion in Tunisia, after passing through something of an anti-semitic phase in the weeks following the Bizerte crisis, appeared at the time of writing to have quieted down. The charges leveled against Tunisian Jews suspected of having collaborated with the French at Bizerte lost their point when Franco-Tunisian relations were resumed. Nevertheless there was undeniably some alteration in the relations between Tunisian Moslems and Jews. Before Bizerte, Tunisian independence had involved genuine advancement even for the Jews. They were admitted to government employment, and some held important positions. There had even been a Jewish cabinet minister, André Barouch. Jews were active in Tunisian cultural and artistic life. Only in matters pertaining to Israel was the situation uncomfortable.

After Bizerte the two groups were much less close. Many Moslems felt that the Jews had shown that their first loyalty was to Israel and the West and many Jews felt that Moslems had shown that their westernism was only superficial and that their primary attachment was to Islam, with all that could imply in the way of fanaticism. Each group felt it could not count on the other. Such was the gap that Bizerte had opened. Nevertheless, anti-semitism found no official expression either in law or in fact. If no Jewish functionary was promoted to an important position during the year, those who had such positions retained them. A distinction was made between Jewish and Israeli. Everything which had to do with the Jewish religion was acceptable. Everything which might involve pro-Israeli behavior was forbidden. The grand rabbi took part in all official ceremonies, and the whole press noted his presence. On major Jewish holidays President Bourguiba sent telegrams of congratulations. The Jewish pilgrimage of the Ghriba, on the island of Djerba, was opened by the governor of the island and reported in detail by the Tunisian newspapers. The semi-official weekly *Jeune Afrique* devoted two pages to it, as it had each year.

In 1957 the rabbinical and Koranic tribunals were replaced by secular courts; since that time there had been no legal distinction between Jews and other Tunisian citizens. The suppression of polygamy and of divorce by repudiation, like the modification of the laws of inheritance, applied equally to all. The only civil distinction between Jew and Moslem was that, since Islam was the state religion of Tunisia, a Jew could never be president. But he had the right to vote, to be elected a municipal councilor or deputy, etc. But in fact these rights were little exercised. In the municipal elections less than 2 per cent of the Jews voted. The majority, indeed, did not even receive their voting cards.

There was no systematic discrimination against Jews in respect to employment. In private business they were sought for their competence. In public employment, however, the situation was not as good. There were instances in which Jewish employees were summarily dismissed. (In one case the law librarian, who had held her position for 12 years, was dismissed on one day's notice without compensation.) And certain things that were done

had the earmarks of antisemitism. Thus, the fiscal controls imposed immediately after Bizerte were applied mainly to Jews, both Tunisian and French, who were forced to pay fines which were not always justified and which came to as much as 10,000 dinars. The control over firearms led to arrests on grounds whose flimsiness the Tunisian press did not conceal. (Thus two revolvers buried in a garden since 1934 led to the imprisonment of a Tunisian Jew for three months.) There were also other arrests, including some of Frenchmen and of Tunisian Moslems, which seriously shook the confidence of Tunisian Jews in Tunisian justice. The most spectacular, and the one which aroused the greatest feeling in liberal circles in the capital, was that of the leader of the bar Chedly Khelladi, who had a reputation for integrity far beyond the frontiers of the country. Jews were legally but not actually eligible for military service; there was not a single Jew in the Tunisian army.

Communal Activities

The Provisional Committee set up in 1958 to handle Jewish communal affairs for a period of three months never subsequently secured a definitive status (AJYB, 1962 [Vol. 63], p. 436). It had a directorate of six, chosen from among the notables of the community. Its function, officially, was purely religious. Its budget was met essentially from the proceeds of taxes on the slaughtering of kosher meat and on the baking of *matzot,* and from gifts. In its recently acquired office in the rue Glatigny, it offered several courses in Hebrew and biblical history, attended by a hundred students. It also sponsored a preparatory class for ORT-school candidates, and a course in French. The only large-scale activity of the year was the Purim ball in a major hotel in the capital, featuring the election of a Queen Esther.

Almost all Jews in Tunisia, whether of Tunisian or Italian or French nationality, were Sephardi. Tunisia had over 300 synagogues; there were no plans for constructing any new ones.

In 1961–62, the five schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle had 3,768 students, of whom 1,833 were girls. At the end of the school year the number of students had fallen, as a result of departures during the year, to 3,543, of whom 2,082 were Jews. The rue Malta Srira school had 868 students and 36 teachers; the El Mechnaka school 913 and 32, respectively; the Hafsia school 718 and 20; the Sousse school 178 and 7, and the Sfax school 414 and 8. The ORT-Alliance School had 452 students, of whom 15 per cent were Arabs and 10 per cent Europeans. In all the elementary grades there were five hours of instruction in Hebrew weekly, as well as supplementary instruction in French, in addition to the normal program of the public schools. Instruction in Hebrew was provided by five teachers from the Hebrew Normal school of Casablanca. The Alliance paid the overhead expenses and the cost of Hebrew and French instruction, while the Tunisian government paid the teachers' salaries. The ORT school, in addition to its vocational courses, provided weekly two hours of Hebrew and one of Jewish history which were compulsory for Jews. According to the director, this

school was not expanding. It was expected that there would be an increasing number of Moslem students.

No Zionist movement was permitted in Tunisia, and all previously existing Zionist groups had been dissolved subsequent to independence. Even such youth movements as the Union of Jewish Youth, the Jewish Students of Tunisia, and the Jewish Scouts also disappeared. The Jews of Tunisia had very little contact with Israel.

The only Jewish communal organizations which officially existed were certain philanthropic agencies. The Garderie (for children) and Nos Petits were both included in the Tunis municipal budget, receiving together 100 dinars subsidy for the period between October 1961 and October 1962. OSE continued its activities in preventive medicine, vaccination, prenatal consultations, etc., and assisted in the resettlement of people leaving the communities of southern Tunisia for the cities of the north. Its great problem was that of personnel, since a number of its staff members (including the director, Lucien Tahar), were leaving Tunisia.

GILBERT COHEN-TANUGI

Morocco*

JEWISH COMMUNITY

According to official Moroccan figures, the Jewish population of Morocco in July 1960 was about 160,000, or 1.4 per cent of the total Moroccan population. Moroccan Jews were mostly urban. Demographically they were like the Moroccan Moslems, with a natural increase of over 2 per cent a year. Half of the Jews were below the age of 20. Jews furnished 10 per cent of the personnel of Moroccan commerce, 8 per cent of the industrial personnel and artisans, and 5 per cent of those in administrative posts and the liberal professions. Almost half the Jews of Morocco lived in Casablanca, the country's economic capital. Although only 30 per cent of the country's population were employed in the modern part of the country's economy, 99 per cent of Jews were.

Recent political events, and especially those of January 1961 (AJYB, 1962 [Vol. 63], pp. 40–41), produced a large emigration of Moroccan Jews to Israel. In mid-1962 the Moroccan Jewish community probably numbered about 130,000. It remained by far the largest Jewish community of North Africa.

* For meaning of abbreviations, see p. 433.

Attitudes Toward the Jews

Before the proclamation of Moroccan independence in 1956, the country's Jews had the status of *dhimmis,* that is, non-Moslems living on Islamic territory under the protection of the government and paying taxes. On his return from exile, King Mohammed V declared the Jews to be full citizens. The king had always shown particular solicitude for the country's Jews; under the Vichy regime, he had protected them from the antisemitic laws. After Mohammed's death, King Hassan II reaffirmed the legal equality of Jews and Moslems. The official position of the Moroccan state that Jews and Moslems are equal before the law, however, was not always actually practiced. Some types of more or less official discrimination were increasing. Certain administrative posts had always been completely closed to Moroccan jews, e.g., in the ministry of foreign affairs and in the police department. But Jews in other high posts were gradually being eliminated, and few were left.

Since independence, government circles had exhibited distrust toward Moroccan Jews, who were regarded as having done nothing for independence, or actually fearing it. Mutual mistrust increased after the Casablanca conference in January 1961 (AJYB, 1962 [Vol. 63], p. 440), in which President Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt personally took part. Jews were arrested, imprisoned, tortured, kidnapped, and the prospects were dim. The reassuring statements of the Crown Prince Moulay Hassan and Interior Minister Si Bekkai—as they then were—had no effect (AJYB, 1962 [Vol. 63], pp. 440–41).

Nevertheless, there was no systematic antisemitism, and the ordinary Moroccan Moslem got on very well with his Jewish neighbors. If there was antisemitism, it was latent and confined to certain well-defined circles, such as the weekly *Akhbar Ad-Dounia,* which was financed by Egypt. In an issue which had just appeared at the time of writing, it carried a eulogy of Hitler and Eichmann.

Emigration

After the sinking of the *Pisces* (AJYB, 1962 [Vol. 63], p. 440), middle-class and even rich Jews began to follow the lower-class Jews, many of whom had previously emigrated. It was estimated that up to the time of writing, total Jewish emigration from Morocco to Israel was about 100,000. (There was little emigration to France.) In November 1961, after the visit of Marcel Franco, president of the American Friends of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (during which he was received by King Hassan II), a *modus vivendi* was reached with the Moroccan government for the resumption of legal emigration, which had been stopped. Thousands of persons sought the assistance of UHS, which was in charge of organizing the departures.

The Moroccan opposition party, the left of center Union Nationale des Forces Populaire (UNFP), headed by the former president of the National Consultative Assembly, Mehdi Ben Barka, exploited the Jewish emigration

issue for political purposes. Every day its newspaper *At-Tahrir* published articles criticizing King Hassan II for allowing the Jews to leave, and demanding strict adherence to the terms of the Arab League charter. The press campaign, which disturbed the Moroccan government, because it felt itself discredited in the eyes of the other Arab states, eventually bore fruit.

The activities of an international swindler named George Harrar furnished the government with a pretext for action. In June 1962 he was arrested for trafficking in passports, which he illegally obtained from corrupt functionaries and sold for about 50,000 francs each. The day after Harrar's arrest Casablanca Governor Driss Ibn Omar, notwithstanding the fact that he was known to be a friend of the Jews, closed the offices of UHS. The interior ministry supported his action, and at the end of August 1962 the UHS offices were still closed. The only emigration taking place was that of people who succeeded in obtaining proper passports. This was not as difficult as it had been some months earlier. Although the orders were not always carried out, Colonel Driss did give orders that Jews were to have normal access to passports.

In a statement to Moroccan students in March 1962, Minister of Islamic Affairs Allal al Fassi, leader of the right-wing Istiqlal party, declared that as full Moroccans in a democratic state, Jews had the right to go wherever they saw fit. This statement was received with great relief by the Jews. Since the Istiqlal party was far from pro-Jewish and its newspapers on various occasions expressed unfavorable opinions on the Jewish community of Morocco, Allal al Fassi's statement was explicable only in terms of his party's desire to preserve the solidarity of the government on the question of Jewish emigration.

Communal Activities

In April 1962 the Council of Jewish Communities met for the first time since March 1961 (AJYB, 1962 [Vol. 63], p. 442–43). Léon Benzaquen, minister of posts and telegraphs in the first independent Moroccan government and a leading Jewish personality, who in 1961 had been in conflict with the majority of representatives, was named honorary president of the federation. David Amar was chosen president, and President Meyer Obadia of the Casablanca Jewish community became secretary general.

Two major problems faced the Jewish community of Morocco. The first was that of the prohibition of mail exchange with Israel, important because every Moroccan Jew had relatives in Israel. The second, even more serious problem was posed by the compulsory conversions of young Jewish girls to Islam, under pressure of the minister of Islamic affairs, who was zealous to convert the greatest possible number of Jews to Islam. Representations by David Amar to the ministry of justice received no reply. In June 1962 the communal monthly *La Voix des Communautés* devoted a special issue to the problem of forced conversions and called on the grand rabbis of Morocco to make a firm stand. As paid state functionaries, however, concerned with the dispensation of justice in matters pertaining to personal status and in-

heritance and with religious education among Jews, the grand rabbis were unable to take a position.

There was not, properly speaking, any spiritual head of the Jewish community of Morocco. At the time of writing there were 40 rabbis, headed by Saül Danan, president of the Supreme Rabbinic Tribunal and a descendant of Maimonides. The Institut des Hautes Etudes Rabbiniques, financed by the government, was still functioning but no longer trained chief rabbis. There was also a school at Casablanca which trained Hebrew teachers for the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. And there were some 15 *yeshivot,* five of them in Casablanca.

Most Moroccan Jews were poor. The committees of the various Jewish communities served as welfare organizations, giving assistance to the needy and sick, with the financial aid of JDC.

VICTOR MALKA

Algeria *

INDEPENDENCE AND EXODUS

AFTER THE defeat of the French generals' putsch in April 1961 (AJYB, 1962 [Vol. 63], p. 301, 447), a polarization took place which entirely eliminated as a political factor the European liberal element which favored a compromise solution. In the exasperation which followed the quick capitulation of Generals Maurice Challe and André Zeller, the "blackfeet" (Europeans indigenous to Algeria for several generations) lost all hope of arousing a sense of solidarity with the Metropolitan French. Hence they felt themselves betrayed by France, isolated and abandoned, dug in with their backs to the sea. They often compared their plight to that of Israel in 1948.

OAS and Jews

For the most part, the Jews of Algeria had supported the liberal groups until 1961. They had thought that somehow matters would ultimately be arranged without recourse to a complete overturn, placing their hopes in partition or dual nationality. Now they were confronted with an immediate problem which seemed to promise more terrible consequences for them than for the European Christians. They feared that the revenge of the formerly subject populace would be directed against them, not only as Europeans but also as Jews and as friends of Israel.

Hence the majority of Algerian Jews slipped bit by bit into the camp of the ultras and even, in the last period before the signing of the Evian agreement (AJYB, 1962 [Vol. 63], pp. 448–49), into that of the Secret Army

* For meaning of abbreviations, see p. 433.

Organization (OAS). This was particularly true in the city of Oran, where many of the 35,000 Jewish inhabitants were of Spanish descent, and the general atmosphere had always been rather Iberian. Nevertheless, Jewish support for OAS would have been much less had the Jews not shared the European conviction that their bloody tactics would eventually force the French government and international opinion to bow to the refusal of the Europeans of Algeria to accept a transfer of power to Arab nationalism. Like inmates of a prison, OAS supporters were subject to the most absurd rumors. Thus they had the illusion that when the showdown came the army would unanimously back the OAS demand for an *Algérie française,* and they expected active support from Spain, Portugal, the Union of South Africa, and Israel.

Confidence in OAS was reinforced by the fact that shortly after the defeat of the 1961 putsch, the supposedly vanquished OAS managed for all practical purposes to seize power in all of the cities inhabited by Europeans. In Algiers and Oran they met little or no resistance from the police and there was no serious attempt to prevent their "pirate" propaganda telecasts. Flights from Oran or Algiers to Paris required an OAS visa. Resistance to OAS orders was punished by death. Almost all blackfeet civil servants served as voluntary or involuntary OAS accomplices. In these conditions, loyal French officials operated perforce in the manner of subversive secret agents. The police of the anti-terrorist brigades assigned to Algiers were hunted down in the streets, the cafes, and even in their own rooms. On Yom Kippur 1961 Commissioner Alexei Goldenberg of the anti-OAS brigades, a veteran of the French Jewish resistance, was assassinated on the Algiers University campus. The OAS was in control and the "Gaullist agents"—the representatives of the Paris government—were their quarry. Excited by the repeated substantiations of slogans such as "OAS is watching" and "OAS strikes when it wishes, where it wishes, whom it wishes," the Europeans failed to recognize that the situation from which they seemed to be profiting was actually hastening Algeria's progress to independence, in so far as it demonstrated that the French government was incapable of preserving order or even itself.

European Status of Jews Reaffirmed

Meanwhile, negotiations and soundings were taking place regarding the status of the Jews under the agreements being negotiated at Evian. Up to a certain point, the Front of National Liberation (FLN) insisted categorically that the Jews were of indigenous origin and were therefore to receive the same consideration as native Algerian Moslems, rather than Europeans. From this point of view, Jews remaining in Algeria, unlike Europeans, would be denied the option of French citizenship; if they chose France, they would, like Moslems, forfeit the right to return to Algeria. The Algerian Jewish community, which had never as such taken an official position against independence, nevertheless insisted on its claim to French nationality. In March 1961 a delegation from the Comité Juif Algérien d'Etudes Sociales urged that

in the negotiations then in prospect, the French government secure the recognition of the French character of the Algerian Jewish community. They argued that the Crémieux decree of 1870, which had conferred French nationality on all the indigenous Jews of Algeria by collective naturalization, was irrevocable and could not again be annulled as it had been by Vichy under Nazi pressure. General de Gaulle, Premier Michel Debré, and the government accepted this principle. The Alliance Israélite Universelle and other Jewish organizations took the question up internationally and it was discussed with Algerian nationalist leaders by non-French quarters. Certain Jews who had lent support to the FLN, some of whom were under Communist discipline, had declared that they were "Algerians like the others"—i.e., like the Moslems. At first FLN cited these declarations. Later, nationalist circles took the position that it was to the interest of the new Algeria to raise the "Jewish question" as little as possible. Hence FLN and the Algerian provisional government (GPRA) agreed not to claim the entire Jewish population of Algeria as indigenous, and it was agreed at Evian to treat the Jews as Europeans.

Terror Mounts

The OAS reign of terror which began in the spring of 1961 was intensified and extended with almost incredible violence during the winter of 1962, with catastrophic consequences for the Algerian Jews. As elsewhere in North Africa, the Jewish quarters often straddled the Arab and European sections, and there were many Jewish enclaves in the Arab quarters and the reverse. Attacks by European terrorists sometimes evoked prompt Moslem reprisals, and it was naturally the non-Moslems of the "frontier" areas, the residents of the Jewish quarters, who sustained the first and frequently the only shock. This resulted in a mutual antagonism which often degenerated into battles between Jews and Arabs, especially between the youth of the two groups. On the second day of Rosh ha-Shanah 1961, in reprisal for the assassination by some Moslems of a Jew in the Jewish quarter of Oran, the Jewish youth launched a counterattack which quickly developed into a massacre of every Moslem within revolver range; the pattern had been set by the European youths of Oran and Bab-el-Oued, the working-class district of Algiers. It was the first time the Jews as such had participated in this type of action, which, particularly in Oran, had previously been the specialty of the young neo-French of Spanish origin. The novel fact that there had been a species of Jewish pogrom against the Arabs, albeit in reprisal, created consternation in the Jewish communities both of Algeria and of France. In a proclamation published in the August-September 1961 issue of *Information juive*, the organ of the Algerian Jewish community, these acts were clearly condemned and all anti-Moslem racism was energetically denounced. Nevertheless, some sensational Paris papers, notably the illustrated weekly *Match*, spotlighted the deplorable Jewish New Year in Oran with enormous exaggerations.

After these incidents, FLN issued several directives warning the Moslem population against letting itself be diverted into a war against the Jews. All

the evidence indicates that FLN sought to prevent the development of a fatal chain of pogroms and counter-pogroms. It also sought to influence international public opinion, and especially American public opinion, in this direction. Unfortunately, the FLN instructions in this respect, as in others, were not always followed by the uneducated and impulsive masses. Particularly in Constantine in late 1961, when the war between OAS and FLN reached its height, the large Jewish quarter was subjected to repeated Moslem attacks. The complete insecurity of the Jews of Constantine caused large-scale departures, amounting almost to an evacuation, even before the exodus of the Jews from other sections of Algeria began. OAS exploited the distress of the Jews of Constantine and, according to disclosures published in the Paris *Le Monde* of July 22–23, 1962, had even appealed for the aid of Israeli army officers. The OAS terror had meanwhile completely ruined the numerous small Jewish merchants who catered to Moslems, and even substantial medium-sized businesses collapsed under the impact of the continual bombings and the enormous "taxes" and "contributions" exacted by the OAS terrorists.

Demise of the Jewish Community

The structure of the Algerian Jewish community was formally the same as that of France, centering around the "religious associations" sanctioned by the law of 1905 but not subsidized or otherwise favored by the state. In fact, however, the ancient Jewish kehillah, directed by its president and rabbi, functioned autonomously, and the Federation of Jewish Communities united some 60 communities. (There were considerably more in Algeria, especially if one includes those of the Jews of the M'Zab and other southern territories [AJYB, 1962 (Vol. 63), p. 449].)

After the resignation of Benjamin Heller from the presidency of the Federation of Jewish Communities in 1961, the communal structure suffered a progressive disintegration, and community life was primarily a function of local customs and traditions. A number of *shelihim* and immigation experts from Israel had tried to recruit candidates for *'aliyah,* but had had little success.

Departures increased during the winter of 1961–62. In Constantine panic and a precipitate rush to ship and plane had already begun after the murder in June 1961 of Raymond Leyris, an oriental singer popular among Jews and Moslems. An Arab Christian converted to Judaism, he was also a thoroughly loyal partisan of FLN who had signed a manifesto disavowing any Jewish need or desire for guarantees in an independent Algeria. Many Constantine Jews had counted on Leyris and the few other FLN-aligned Jews to protect them. Yet Leyris was murdered by Moslems, not by OAS. It was the signal for the Jews to flee.

At about the same time the situation deteriorated seriously in the port of Bône, where the conflict between Europeans and Moslems at times became as violent as in Oran itself. Nevertheless, Chief Rabbi Rahamim Naouri, a man of unusual energy, decided to preserve the Bône community at all costs

in spite of the large-scale departures. At the end of June 1962 the Jewish community of Bône was one of the few in the country which still survived, and Chief Rabbi Naouri declared that he would remain as long as there was still a *minyan* in the synagogue.

In February and March panic seized the Jews of the extreme south, where there were few Europeans and where FLN had more or less installed its administration even before the provisional government's legal accession to power. The Jews of the city of Ghardaïa liquidated their goldsmiths', slipper-makers', and tanners' shops at sacrifice prices and, still dressed in their native costume and speaking little or no French (their language was Judeo-Arabic), set out for faraway Algiers to await passage to France.

In Algiers and Oran OAS violence daily exacted 50 to 60 Moslem lives. Departures were made difficult or even impossible by the OAS "police," who "mobilized" the entire European and Jewish population.

Yet it was in the small cities of the interior, where relations between most Jews and Moslems had been close, that the fear was greatest. Here the Jews had sources of information which were not quite as available to the Jews of Algiers and Oran. Thus the Moslem friends of the Jews of Tiaret and Ain-Temouchent, or Saida and Relizane (whose Moslem mayor, a close friend of the Jews, was assassinated by OAS), advised their Jewish friends to leave. Because of the long months of ferocious violence by the sadistic racists of OAS, it was expected that the proclamation of independence would be the signal for an outburst of Moslem violence. The flight of the Jews was not now, as it had been a few months earlier, merely the result of pessimism concerning social and economic prospects for the Jews in an independent Algeria. It was prompted purely and simply by fear of a pogrom.

Just as there were many and at times absurd contradictions in the actions and reactions of the Europeans of Algeria as a whole during the "last quarter of an hour," so there were contradictions in the attitudes of the Jews, even in the midst of their panic. While the majority of the Jews saw no alternative to an exodus, others tried last-minute approaches to the new transitional authorities, the members of the provisional executive installed by the French in the new administrative city called Rocher Noir. This provisional executive, whose president Abderrahman Farès was released from prison in Paris when he was named to it, was in the nature of a caretaker government, pending the election of a constituent assembly, planned for August 1962. A majority of the members of the executive, including Chawki Mostefai, who later negotiated an armistice and even a sort of peace with OAS, were representatives of FLN or otherwise obedient to it. Europeans such as the Gaullist mayor of Philippeville, Roger Roth, not compromised by the violence of the ultras and wanting to "play the game," were also represented. It was suggested to the executive that it coopt a representative of the Jewish population as a symbol of the brotherhood of Algerian patriots of the three religions, in the spirit of Mohammed V of Morocco who had made a point of naming a Jew to his government upon the proclamation of Morocco's independence. But nothing came of these proposals, very probably because of an FLN veto. Chief Rabbi

Naouri of Bône, who was at one time proposed as the Jewish member of the executive, never set foot in Rocher Noir. The failure of this project was considered as symptomatic even by Jews who did not make a habit of looking for anti-Jewish intentions on the part of FLN. It added to the atmosphere of depression and speeded up the rate of departures.

A fortnight after his release from internment in France in April 1962, and before he had even set foot in Algeria, Vice Premier Ahmed Ben Bella of the Algerian provisional government—whose conflict with the then Premier Yussuf Ben Khedda was not yet out in the open—was reported to have made a violent anti-Israel statement in an interview with a reporter for a leading Cairo newspaper. He reportedly declared that the Algerian revolution would not be complete until Algeria had contributed its armed assistance to the "liberation" of Palestine and promised to place 100,000 Algerian soldiers at the disposal of the Arab states in a future war against Israel. This statement, despite attempts to explain it away or deny it, further depressed the spirits of the Algerian Jews and caused many to flee who had hitherto hesitated. They reasoned that if the Algerian government should officially align itself with the belligerent Arab attitude towards Israel, the Algerian Jews would at best find themselves in similar straits to those of Morocco. Like them, they would have little or no freedom of movement, be denied passports, face closed frontiers, and be deprived of any contact with Israel. Psychologically, the many precipitate departures of Algerian Jews for France could be considered as a sort of advance escape of prisoners.

Prospect and Retrospect

On June 30, 1962, Algeria was on the verge of a referendum whose result—an overwhelming vote for an independent Algeria, cooperating in principle with France—was a foregone conclusion. At this last moment of the 132 years of l'Algérie française, Jacques Susini, a principal leader of OAS and former secretary general of the association of Algerian students, threw his support to the independent Algeria of FLN in return for a promise of amnesty for his followers, unofficially negotiated with leading members of the provisional executive. Susini had been the organizer of the large-scale racist assassinations of Arabs and the systematic campaign to murder all educated Moslems, especially physicians and pharmacists. At the end, he and his followers had applied scorched-earth tactics in an effort to "return" Algeria to the precise state in which it had been in 1830, on the eve of French colonization. It was in accordance with this policy that the buildings of the University of Algiers, including its precious library of tens of thousands of volumes, were burned. For several days after Susini's capitulation, terrorist attacks in Algiers ceased entirely. They continued for a while in Oran, but soon ceased there as well.

It was at this point that the sharp conflict between the leaders of the provisional government on the one hand, and the Army of National Liberation and Ben Bella on the other, came into the open. Ben Bella took a plane from Tunis to Tripoli and then Cairo, in order to avoid arrest by his colleagues of

the provisional government. Because Ben Bella still held strong cards, the conflict further complicated a situation already complex and confused enough.

By the end of July 1962 some 70,000 Jews had left Algeria for France; in addition, an estimated 5,000 had gone to Israel since Passover 1962, and some from Western Algeria had gone to Spain in the wake of thousands of settlers of Spanish origin from the Oran region. Some 6,000 of Oran's 35,000 Jews remained there. There was no longer a *minyan* in the Great Synagogue, much less in the small prayer-houses. The Oran Jewish community had long lacked a titular chief rabbi. Its former chief rabbi, David Askenazi, had been named chief rabbi of Algiers and Algeria, had later resigned his functions, and finally had departed for France. There were no candidates for the chief rabbinate of Oran sufficiently well qualified to win acceptance. The several thousand Jews who remained were almost completely without communal services. One of the assistant rabbis of the city, Rabbi Cohen, attempted to reconstitute a sort of community life in the context of the new situation. Together with Catholic priests, Protestant pastors, and the Moslem imam he took part in a solemn assembly of reconciliation sponsored by FLN. But some days later he received threats and left hastily for France.

In Algiers some 10,000 Jews remained of an estimated 30,000 before the exodus. Here a relative anonymity afforded some protection to the rank and file. But as in Oran, no Jewish organizations or institutions survived. The Great Synagogue in the ancient Jewish quarter at the foot of the Casbah, ravaged in the Christmas Eve riots of 1960, had been only temporarily restored. The Maimonides rabbinical college had not been functioning for some time. The offices of the World Jewish Congress and the Comité Juif Algérien d'Etudes Sociales had closed their doors. During the French army's search of Bab-el-Oued in March and April 1962, in reprisal for the machine-gunning of French soldiers by the local OAS, the synagogue of that quarter was ravaged in its turn. Algiers had long been without a chief rabbi.

In Constantine the large Jewish quarter in the very heart of the city had been completely evacuated, its empty buildings awaiting the installation of Moslem families. Of the city's 20,000 Jews, only a thousand remained. All of the score of synagogues were closed. This ancient stronghold of North African Jewish piety no longer had a *shohet* or a *mohel*. The mass departures from Constantine had been taking place since the beginning of the winter, and Passover was celebrated in a desolation appropriate to the 9th of Ab.

The eight to ten thousand Jews of Tlemcen had left; this city, too, had been a religious center with a famous Jewish holy place called the "Tomb of Raab" which had been for centuries the object of pilgrimages from all over North Africa, not only by Jews but also by Moslems and even Christians. At the last moment, the leading Jewish professional men and community leaders had hastily left Mostaganem, Relizane, and Tiaret, three of the more important cities of the Oran region. Almost all the Jews of the large community in Ain-Temouchement, between Oran and Tlemcen, were also gone.

Thus on the eve of independence close to half the Jewish population had left Algeria (pp. 424, 428), while others were planning to depart as soon as they had settled their affairs.[1] In contrast, the exodus of the European Christians, despite the extreme tension between Europeans and Moslems during the period of OAS domination, came to only a little more than a third of the total; it was about 300,000. Jews were almost a quarter of those "repatriated" from Algeria to France, although they had been only about 15 per cent of the non-Moslem population.

Among those who left were the Jewish communal leaders, the young, and the educated. Those who remained were largely either middle-class people whose businesses were dependent on geography, such as the date-exporters in the cities near the southern oases, and some (but very far from all) of the poor and uneducated with no connections in France. The Jews who remained were without leadership or organization. Practically nothing Jewish of importance remained in Algeria. Those who had not left made themselves as inconspicuous as possible and took no part in civic affairs. In mid-June FLN issued an appeal to the Jews to break away from "the criminals of the OAS." The last issue of the Algiers *Information juive* appeared in April 1962. This periodical, edited on a high level by Jacques Lazarus, had, despite its rigid attitude of neutrality and discretion in regard to Algerian politics, nevertheless served as a sort of spokesman and had provided guidance, even if this could only be read between the lines.

In Algeria and in the Algerian Jewish colony of France there were known to be a small number of new leaders and functionaries for "Jewish matters" who sought to re-orient the structure and point of view of the Algerian Jewish community in accordance with the new "revolutionary" times. These were the FLN Jews, including Communists and "progressives." For the most part, they had not previously been identified with Jewish interests or aspirations. They were chosen or chose themselves as the right men for the present situation, particularly because of their opposition to Zionism and the state of Israel. There was little reason to expect that as in Morocco, where the nucleus and cadres of the community had never disappeared, the new Algerian Jewish leaders would include people sincerely concerned with the survival and continuity of Judaism or the aims of Jewish welfare.

In recent years the long lethargy of Algerian Jewry, partly assimilated and partly immersed in conservatism, had begun to show signs of giving way to a spiritual renaissance. This was especially true among the youth, who had been inspired by the awakening of the Moslems and Arabs to affirm the Jewish content of their culture. This was now at an end.

The birth of an independent Algeria after a fierce and chaotic war lasting seven years was certainly one of the positive achievements of our era. In the last analysis, even if it was accomplished through a nationalism that was

1 No accurate figures were available as to the number of Jews in Algeria before the exodus. The figure of 130,000, based on the census of 1941 taken under the Vichy regime, was almost certainly too low, since there had been a fairly high rate of natural increase in the interim, especially among the Jews of the south. On the other hand, the estimate of 200,000 given by some Algerian Jewish sources in 1961 was almost certainly an overestimate.

often excessive and unjust, it represented a victory for human dignity, which could no longer accommodate itself to colonialism, however modified or attenuated. The majority of the people of the world fully understood this, as did President de Gaulle, who schemed and fought to confront his own country with a *fait accompli* and its justification. The State of Israel itself, in a telegram to de Gaulle in July 1962, hailed Algerian independence. Nevertheless, as has so often been true of Jews in the past, the Jews of North Africa were confronted by tragedy in the wake of an event which in itself called for rejoicing.

ARNOLD MANDEL