

## NEW ROOTS IN ANCIENT LAND

In the present article, I do not intend to survey the sociological structure of Jews from Germany now resident in Israel. Nor do I intend to contribute to that copious literature, aimed largely at a propagandist effect, which deals with the integration of German Jews in the work of Zionist construction. I shall confine myself to a few observations which throw light in a number of problems concerning that part of the Jewish immigration to Israel.

The process of German-Jewish migration to Israel is now complete, as the reservoir of German Jewry no longer exists. This is not altered by the fact that occasionally German Jews come to settle in Israel who have previously lived in other parts of the world.

It is probably true to say that the inner differentiation which existed among German Jews, separating them into Zionists and non-Zionists, had scarcely any importance for the integration of immigrants in Israel and is, in any case, no longer recognisable to-day. The old ideological differences soon vanished behind very different principles of adaptability to a new environment, of physical and psychological aptitude for a life in new conditions, so that it was individual success or failure which stood out in strong relief. Moreover, that differentiation applied only to the older generation of immigrants, the young people being all inspired by Zionist ideas and aims.

German Jews, while certainly forming an integral part of the population of Israel, are yet clearly recognisable as a group, just as, fundamentally, all groups of Israel's population retain marks of their origin, at least for the first generation of immigrants, if not beyond that. The Israeli melting pot does not remove all differences in the course of a few years or even decades. Habits and customs persist, even if they undergo some transformation. There are rich variations in speech, intonation and gesture, clothing and conduct, i.e. in everything that goes to make up the customs of a people. In this picture the German Jews of Israel stand out clearly. In many ways, their characteristics are of benefit to the whole community, in some, they hamper their own advancement. Sometimes they are smiled at, more often appreciated and occasionally even envied.

It is no accident that German Jews in Israel have maintained or developed their own organisational structure to a particularly large extent. Several causes have contributed to this. In conformity with German conditions generally, but also by natural inclination, German Jews were quite especially organisation-minded, and they have carried on this tradition in Israel. To this must be added that the peculiar circumstances of their emigration and of their integration into the life of this country, as well as their peculiar sociological structure, required the continuation of a many-sided and active organisational life. With the aid of the central organs of the Zionist movement,

they have thus created their own organisational framework: the Irgun Oley Merkas Europa, "IOME," which has weathered all the difficulties of the times and has, in many ways, become an almost unique model for other attempts at organisation in national groups. Above all, German Jews very soon recognised the need for creating themselves fundamental institutions of a social, economic and also cultural character, which were to benefit themselves, while being capable of gradually taking over some important functions for the whole of the Yishuv. Thus agencies created by IOME in connection with the German Aliyah became partly the precursors of institutions serving the mass aliyah after the foundation of the State of Israel, and the organisational structure of the State itself was in many ways decisively prepared and thus rendered possible by the same elements.

Against this background, a number of problems persist. In the first place, there is the question of group consciousness, which is undoubtedly strong among German Jews in Israel. It may be asked how far it extends, especially in time, or, in other words: what about the children of German Jews, children who came to this country young or who were born here? No definite answer can be given. Sometimes it seems as if this specific consciousness were already extinguished in children who, in their generation, live together with those of different origin. At other times one feels that even the children of immigrants have inherited a specific element forming part of their consciousness. The time has not yet come to judge these matters clearly. Under the impact of the demographic change of the Yishuv by immigration from the East in the last few years, there is increasing recognition of the fact that the maintenance of a specific group consciousness represents a value worth cultivating in the interests of the nation as a whole.

### **A Middle-class Immigration**

This problem is closely connected with two others. In the first place there is the question of social type. The German Jews largely represented such a type, and they still do in Israel to-day. It is the educated European middle class manifesting itself in them, with a wide range of interests, even if sometimes not free from the prejudices of the time, a type which knew how to enjoy life, or, at least, remembers such enjoyment, without regretting it. The people of this stratum do not generally belong to the truly rich, but there is a danger of their being very poor, even socially in need of help at a time when their incomes are still far from having sunk to that level at which one officially qualifies for aid in this country. Such falling-off is all too easy in members of our social type, and this fact, together with the relatively unfavourable age-structure of German immigrants has produced social problems which are bound to become ever more extensive with time. These social problems, which originate from the peculiar nature of our group, cannot be adequately understood and dealt with by the general institutions existing in the country for social relief work. This gives added importance to the supplementary

social aid which has been developed in Israel in the form of self-aid by German-Jewish circles and which is still functioning. Its tasks include care of the old generation and the ever recurring necessity for rapid and effective help in setting people up in some profession or trade or in re-training them.

### **Linguistic and Cultural Problems**

The second problem arising in this connection is inevitably that of language and culture. Both inside the country and outside it, people have talked and written about this a great deal. There is no doubt that in this respect German Jews had, and still have, far greater difficulties to overcome than immigrants from the centres of Jewish mass settlement in Eastern Europe with their Yiddish and national-religious tradition. Nevertheless, a considerable section of the German Jews have become successfully acclimatised to the linguistic and general cultural atmosphere of the country. Tensions have eased, partly, it is true, owing to the fact that there is a Babel of languages spoken in the country to-day, that the general cultural atmosphere in the country is at bottom very weak and that it does not show any clearly marked outlines. One can even assert to-day that among those who give serious thought to the culture of the country and to its reflection in the fate of Hebrew as a language, among all those who share this concern, there are not a few German Jews. They do not confine themselves to the facile assumption that in the next generation things will solve themselves, so to speak, the more so, as this assumption is untenable, because the mere fact that Hebrew has come alive among the young people does not prove that it is becoming the bearer of a genuine culture, worthy of our past.

It remains for me to say a few words about the achievements of the German Aliyah which played a material part in the building up of the country. Their contribution to agriculture centres above all in their successful attempts at building middle-class villages which have developed unique forms of co-operation. Without these attempts, a large part of the new settlements created in the last few years would not have been possible. The contribution of this Aliyah to industrial development can be readily seen from a glance at an industrial directory and at the names of the manufacturers listed. The influence of the German Aliyah on the development of the towns, on trade and banking has been described again and again the whole world over. If the towns of the country to-day show modern European features, this is, in the first place, due to the influence of that immigrant group, which later became an incentive for further development. We have already mentioned the German-Jewish contribution to the development of public and government institutions. The expert knowledge of many members of this group clearly was, and still is, of great value. But their special achievement in the cultural sphere must not be overlooked: higher education, and in particular the University of Jerusalem, is hardly conceivable without the participation of German-Jewish scholars. Men and women of this circle also play

an important part in schools and in education generally, and we must not forget art, music and the theatre, where they have found their place.

This enumeration is not intended to help a group, which is surely conscious of its value, in eulogising itself. It is intended to show the extent of material achievements which are, after all, a variety of personal successes. Because this one point must be made in conclusion: anybody who gives a little thought to things will probably conclude from the experiences of his life and the observation of his fellow-men that accounts do not balance. No account balances, not even that which we call Zionism and whose one aspect is Aliyah and the integration of people and certain groups of people. Accounts do not balance either as regards German Jews in Israel. Individuals—and, incidentally, many a visitor—often feel above all the differences, the remaining deficiencies. That is why it is necessary in a study of the situation to see both the problems at issue, on which a final judgment is frequently not yet possible, and the achievements, which are visible and which form a pillar in the structure of the whole.

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## FROM EUROPE TO AMERICA

About 140,000 Jewish refugees from Germany and another 60,000 from Austria found new homes in the U.S.A. since 1933. These figures may appear negligible in comparison with nearly 160 million American nationals; they are small even in relation to an entire five million American Jews. However, transient problems of their own adjustment proved as grave, though different in quality, as had confronted previous generations of immigrants, both Gentile and Jewish. Throughout most of American history, the newcomer had been a competitor, of untested loyalties, uprooted, initially unsure of himself and often unable to speak the language of the nation. The Refugees from Hitler met with similar objections. First there was the deep economic depression of the 'thirties; millions of unemployed—manual, white-collar and professional—could not be expected to welcome additional job seekers from abroad. Then there was World War II which stigmatized the refugees as "Enemy Aliens." However, side by side with temporary impediments, there existed another venerable American tradition, handed down, and kept alive, from the days of the Pilgrims and the Founding Fathers of the American Republic. It is compounded out of elements of individual voluntary co-operation, mutual tolerance and active sympathy for the oppressed. In a sense, voiced as recently as by President Eisenhower, the United States can claim that it reflects the spirit of "Judaean-Christian tradition." Indeed, it does so more neatly than any older European country. Pagan impulses and notions have survived in Europe; primitive