

SECOND START IN FRANCE

A large number of the Jews, driven from Germany in the first few years after Hitler had seized power, found refuge in France, the classic country of the right of political asylum.

The majority of these refugees later re-emigrated to overseas countries. Nevertheless, there were up to 40,000 German-Jewish emigrés on French soil at any one time, until Laval's pre-war government accelerated their further migration with its anti-alien police measures.

Deportation during the period of Nazi occupation, re-emigration and deaths have probably reduced the number of refugees from Germany now in France to about 7,000 to 8,000 (this includes refugees who have in the meantime become naturalised in France).

If France, in 1933, was generous in granting visas to persecuted German Jews, economic integration proved difficult in a country whose free professions barred foreigners whatever their origin and where continuing economic stagnation kept a certain amount of unemployment in being. To this must be added that foreign trade was much less important in France than for example in the countries of Northern Europe or America. The difficulties in the way of any economic activity on the part of the emigrés had a particularly cruel effect, because of those with earning capacity almost a third belonged to the academic professions, a further third had been in business or industry on their own account, 15 per cent. had been employees, 8 per cent. artists (this figure includes journalists) and the rest had been trade representatives or artisans. Thus, before the war, possibilities of legal employment were open only to business men and industrialists, as well as to artists, trade representatives and artisans. In the period up to 1939, the last two groups absorbed part of the former professional people and employees. Emigrés were still grappling with the hard task of establishing themselves, when the war shattered all hopes for years, deprived them of their last reserves and led thousands of them to their death.

A few years after the war, the position was changed by the generous policy France adopted towards the emigrés: the majority obtained French citizenship, and labour permits were granted to those not naturalised. On the other hand, the general restrictions affecting the establishment of all foreigners in business, dating back to 1938, remained in force. Thus, employees to-day represent the largest group among the refugees, followed by trade representatives and by artisans and workers (these last constituting a new occupational group among the emigrés) and lastly by those engaged in business on their own account.

The economic position in general is bad—apart from those with their own business firms. It is after all only ten years since emigrés reappeared from the "underworld" in which they had passed the

period of Nazi occupation. In 1945, the survivors of the occupation years were completely without means, and in most cases their state of health was hardly better than that of the deportees who had been saved. Without lodgings, occupation, possessions, clothing or linen, they appeared from nowhere, as it were, towards the end of 1944. If to-day they have generally not accumulated any reserves, this is due to the fact that they have had to re-equip themselves completely since the end of the war. Also, practically all of them lost their flats during the Nazi occupation and have been unable to find a new flat. Salaries and wages would often be adequate to maintain a family in modest fashion, if the majority of the emigrés were not compelled, in view of the general housing shortage, to live in unduly expensive hotel rooms, furnished rooms and flats, which frequently account for half their incomes, while even the French middle class never spend more than 10 per cent. of their income on accommodation.

The percentage of those without occupation has considerably increased because the emigrés are an ageing population group, so that to-day almost a third of the refugees must be considered to be in need of relief.

Apart from the first emotional wave of welcome in 1933, the political situation of the emigrés was bad, as the deep-rooted French aversion to everything German coincided with the anti-Semitism fanned by Germans. Emigrés laboured under all kinds of administrative restrictions, residence and labour permits were continually being reduced, their means of subsistence checked, etc. The war caught many without valid identity papers. This was followed by prolonged internment, first of the men, then also of the women. About half the men were more or less voluntarily drafted into the Foreign Legion and sent to North Africa, where most of them, instead of participating in the war against Fascism, were exploited in forced labour, until they were able to return to France. After the armistice the racial and political persecution of emigrés began, and after 1942 the period of their greatest suffering with the Nazi occupation of Southern France. Even now elderly people will contact French authorities only with anxiously beating hearts, although even emigrés who have remained stateless are under French protection. Thus elderly people will not claim the relief to which they are entitled, for fear that this might have adverse consequences, in particular: for fear that they might be expelled because they have lived on public funds. This deprives those most in need of a modest addition to their income. The great Jewish organisations, unfamiliar as they are with the psychological after-effects which years of persecution have had on this group, cannot do justice to its particular needs.

For years even after the war, the emigrés could not create their own organisations, because a grouping of former German nationals was impossible in the political atmosphere existing after four years of Nazi occupation with its horrors. Only in 1951 Jewish emigrés from Germany reorganised themselves in the *Solidarité*, which arranges meetings and social functions and publishes a bi-monthly information bulletin. This organisation has succeeded in obtaining a hearing and

later also in representing the interests of its members vis à vis French Jewish organisations effectively, so that refugees from Germany to-day generally play their part in Jewish life in France.

Relations with their environment have undergone a fundamental and lasting change as a result of the last few years of Nazi occupation, in which French people of all denominations, Jews from Germany and other immigré Jews, rose against the Nazis as their common enemy. In those terrible years, when their lives were in constant danger, German Jews overcame their isolation from other groups, found admittance to the resistance movement, made contact with the population through life in predominantly rural areas and became "gallicised" in those years much more rapidly and thoroughly than they would have done if they had continued living in large towns under normal conditions. One of the consequences of this fusion of the emigrés with the rural population were the numerous mixed marriages after the war. Many a young Jewish emigrant from Germany married the daughter of people who had helped him evade the Gestapo.

Jews who in Germany often hardly participated in the political life of the country have become politically conscious as a result of their bitter experiences since 1933. To-day, they know well from which quarters danger threatens. They have thus become politically much more active than they were. The achievements of emigrés in the economic and organisational sphere are frequently above average, especially in those branches of the economy where they could do pioneer work, i.e. which had not attained full development in France by 1933. In the sphere of learning, however, the achievement of the emigrés is extremely small, especially if compared with that in the United States and Great Britain. Despite the efforts of the *Comité des Savants*, of Professors Honnorat, Hadamar and Perrin and others, Jewish scholars from Germany could find hardly any work at universities, research institutes, etc. The few scholars and artists who had remained in France at the beginning of the war enjoyed priority in the allocation of U.S.A. visas and left Europe. Nevertheless, it was a young Jewish physicist from Germany who helped in 1940 to take the French supplies of that so very important "heavy water" safely to England.

Young people among the emigrés tend to merge with the young Jewish generation of France. A large part of the old-established Jewish population of France originates from Alsace, the Palatinate and Baden, from where they had come to France since the beginning of the nineteenth century until 1914. The integration of Jews from Germany is therefore historically in line with the past: the Jewish population of the country has always drawn reserves from this source. For the rest, the process of the cultural assimilation of immigrés in France is considerably accelerated by the strength and universality of French civilisation and by the intensity of the country's educational system. In the social sphere, the process of assimilation is hampered by the difference in living standards between the French-born and immigrés, who still have to struggle hard, even if they have been successful.