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The Immigration of German Jews

By **ABRAHAM REVUSKY**

WITH the completion of ten years of German-Jewish immigration into Palestine, it is of interest to examine the manner in which German Jews have participated in the upbuilding of Palestine since the advent of Hitler. The effectiveness with which they have adjusted themselves to life in the Jewish homeland is a tribute to their adaptability.

Prior to 1933, the upbuilding of Palestine was largely the work of pioneers and immigrants from Russia, Poland, Rumania, Lithuania and other East European countries. The fact that German Jews did not, until then, loom large in Palestine's affairs can be accounted for by their apparently stronger economic position.

From 1933 to 1939 Palestine received 50,546 Jewish immigrants from Germany. This total has been substantially increased since the beginning of the war and it is probably safe to estimate that, including the German-speaking Jews who arrived from countries bordering on the Reich (Austria, Czechoslovakia, etc.) approximately 100,000 have come to Palestine in the entire decade. It should be kept in mind that some 200,000 others came to Palestine in the same period from the countries which, one by one, fell into Nazi hands or became vassal states.

German Jewish immigration presented Palestine with a number of unusual problems. Accustomed to more favorable surroundings than the newcomers from Eastern Europe, German Jews found it more difficult to adjust to the pioneering life of the new country. Indeed it is easy to understand the plight of a young middle-class lawyer and his family who have suddenly found themselves uprooted from their accustomed life. After months of wandering he arrives penniless and despairing in a country that is still in the process of being built. With hands unaccustomed to manual labor and with mind fixed from long habit on the law and kindred subjects, he must take to the plow, toiling weary hours in the sun. Few of the comforts of his old life remain. In the early months the moving van in which his furniture was shipped is his only home. Little wonder that it takes time for him to re-establish himself. The validity of this picture is borne out by the statistics: only 16.7% of the adult German Jewish immigrants had ever followed agricultural pursuits or received even an elementary agricultural

training before their arrival; 21% of them belonged to the liberal professions, 28% had been engaged in commerce, 25% in industry and trade and 5% had been public officials.

Thus the immigration from Germany into Palestine became the decisive test of Palestine's ability to accept and absorb every type of Jew regardless of origin and cultural background. To the credit of Palestine as well as to the immigrants it may be stated that the test presented by the sudden influx of German Jews was met in a most satisfactory manner.

This applies with particular force to the German Jewish youth, which quickly caught the spirit of the new Jewish life in Palestine and soon became indistinguishable from other elements absorbed in the melting pot of the pioneering Palestine community. The older generation too, despite its natural conservatism, is gradually adjusting to the new surroundings and becoming an increasingly useful and constructive part of the Yishuv.

THE CENTRAL BUREAU

AS in the case of so many other phases of development in Palestine, the settlement of German Jews was conducted under the guidance and with the assistance of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, which receives its American support through the United Palestine Appeal. However, because of the complexity of the task, it was entrusted to an organization created especially for the purpose, the Central Bureau for the Settlement of German Jews in Palestine. Founded at the beginning of the new immigration, in 1933, it has done a remarkable job of settling German Jews on the land and assisting them in the establishment of various industries. In addition to the help it received from the Jewish National Fund and the Palestine Foundation Fund, the Central Bureau was able to use in these activities some of the special funds collected in other lands on behalf of persecuted German Jews. Up to the end of 1942 its constructive activities required a total of \$7,000,000 exclusive of the value of the land placed at the disposal of the settlers by the Jewish National Fund and the cost of improvements which was borne by the Palestine Foundation Fund.

A number of villages were settled exclusively by German

(Continued on page 100)

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German-Jewish Immigration

(Continued from page 96)

Jews, with the help of the Central Bureau, some of them on the principle of collective ownership and others on the basis of individual holdings. In addition, the Central Bureau was able to place thousands of young people in existing agricultural settlements of all types. The number of German Jews settled on farms now represents 24% of their total number in Palestine. This is about the same percentage as that prevailing among immigrants from other countries, and demonstrates that the belief in some quarters that German Jews in Palestine concentrate in the cities has no foundation in fact.

Many of the villages established by German Jews have achieved a considerable degree of economic stability. Some of them, as a result of the scientific methods adopted, have assumed a leading role in their respective branches of farming.

ESTABLISHED NEW INDUSTRIES

IN addition to agricultural settlements, a considerable number of urban industries have been set up by German refugees. These have a predominant position in the rapidly expanding chemical industry, and in the recently established production of drugs and vitamins. A number of other articles which were never before produced in Palestine are being manufactured by German Jews.

In the field of education and science, the German Jews in Palestine participate in an outstanding manner. They comprise the majority of the faculty of the Hebrew University, and are predominant in research institutes and laboratories. Hundreds of competent scientists who were not able immediately to obtain a foothold in the new land were assisted for a number of years by the Central Bureau. Nearly all of them are now absorbed in the rapidly growing war industry and in other branches of Palestine's economy.

While actively assisted by public institutions, many German Jews were able to invest considerable sums of their own in new agricultural and industrial enterprises. Because of the severe restrictions on "the flight of capital" from Nazi Germany they brought some of the money realized from the liquidation of their businesses and properties in Germany in the form of merchandise which they

(Continued on page 103)

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Oranges are Palestine's "golden apples."

The Immigration of German Jews

(Continued from page 100)

sold in the markets of Palestine and neighboring countries. Although the Nazis, through special "cases," took away a large portion of their money, the immigrants, with the assistance of "Haavara," a special transfer agency established for this purpose, were able to bring to Palestine, before the outbreak of the war, a sum equivalent to forty million American dollars. The money thus saved through "Haavara" formed the major financial basis for the settlement of the German Jews in Palestine.

CHILDREN ABSORBED

A SIGNIFICANT part in the immigration of German Jews into Palestine was taken by the Youth Aliyah, an organization established in 1933 for the special purpose of taking Jewish children out of Nazi Germany for settlement in Palestine. In the beginning, this activity was enabled to operate largely through funds made available by far-sighted parents who were as yet unable to leave Germany themselves. In later years, with the further expropriation of German Jewry and with the increasing difficulty of transferring money from the Reich, it was necessary to depend increasingly upon public funds. For a time the bulk of the funds came from European sources, but shortly before the war the principal responsibility was assumed in the United States by Hadassah.

Up to the beginning of 1943

more than 8,000 children, most of them between the ages of eleven and sixteen, were brought to Palestine in this manner. The great majority of them were raised and trained in farm communities and became, from the spiritual as well as from the material point of view, an extremely valuable element for the upbuilding of Palestine. Many of them have reached maturity and have found a useful place in Palestine's life. The fact that 76% of these "graduates" have remained in agriculture is convincing evidence of the idealistic spirit permeating the children of the Youth Aliyah under the leadership of Henrietta Szold, America's "grand old lady" in Palestine.

Another remarkable fact is the unusually large participation of the "graduates" as well as of other young German Jews in Palestine's war effort. They have fought with distinction in all engagements against the Nazi-Fascist forces in which they were permitted to participate.

It is clear from this brief review that Palestine has successfully overcome the initial difficulties presented by the great task of adjusting the 100,000 German Jews who found refuge there. These Jews now constitute a valuable and promising element in the Jewish National Home, which is preparing for the decisive role it must play in the final solution of the Jewish problem after the war.



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