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by Nathan Gould



***ORT as a
movement in
Jewish Life***

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PREFACE

ORT was founded in Czarist Russia in 1880. But it was not until after the Second World War, and then in the Western World, that it acquired its modern character.

Inevitably, the Industrial Revolution, with all its profound social and political impact upon society, arrived belatedly in the Romanov autocracy. While the countries of the West flourished, moving swiftly from artisan handicrafts to manufacture and thence to mass production, the Holy Russian Empire lumbered under its overwhelming peasant economy. The Industrial Revolution and the liberating spirit of the French Revolution opened new vistas for Western Europe and the Jewish communities there; while in Russia not industry, but virulent anti-Semitism, flourished apace.

The great Jewish populations were confined, that is condemned, to live only in the "pale of settlement." Thus were the great cities and the favored regions of Holy Russia quarantined from contamination by Jews. And not content with this stringent isolation, the government barred Jews also from the slowly emerging industrial life; barred them effectively by a long catalog of "exclusion laws"; trades and crafts in which Jews were prohibited to engage or practice. And lest the brutal enforcing governmental arms lag in their role of intimidation and repression, lest they develop the slightest tendency to relax fear, barbaric pogroms were unleashed periodically upon the centers—the ghettos—of Jewish concentration.

It was in this prevailing milieu, just as the Industrial Revolution was beginning to pierce the ramparts of monarchial imperturbability that a small, a select but influential group of Jews in St. Petersburg petitioned the royal court for the opportunity to provide training in agriculture and industry for Jews. In launching this program, its founders sought more than merely to make available to heretofore "excluded" Jews the evident economic and cultural benefits inherent in industrialization. It was this, of course; but more, much more. By integrating Jews into the contemporary industrial process, ORT's founding fathers felt that they could foster greater rapport, understanding and acceptance of the Jews by the Russian people,

and would ultimately break the chains of isolation of the ghetto Jews and thus, too, combat anti-Semitism.

These were the origins. For almost a century the ORT program shared and adapted itself to the great, the overwhelming vicissitudes of Jewish life. Following the massive waves of Jewish migrations fleeing oppression or seeking opportunity, the center of the ORT movement shifted from Russia to Eastern Europe; then to Eastern and Central Europe, where it flourished during the period between the two World Wars.

With the broken, bleeding remnant of our people, ORT emerged from the concentration camps where it had operated clandestinely all during World War II, and from the Displaced Persons camps where it had established rudimentary courses; and it went with the remnant as they resettled and regrouped in new lands and communities. Throughout Central and Western Europe workshops and classrooms were established, often in improvised and utterly inadequate quarters, but always where vocational training, however rudimentary, could bring some measure of solace and security into the wretched and ravaged lives of the survivors; could assist and accelerate the painful process of their reintegration into the larger society.

With the establishment of the State of Israel ORT began operations in that country too, providing in close cooperation with the government, a network of vocational education at the secondary school level as well as a variety of short-term courses; today Israel has become the largest center of ORT operations in the world. During the period of relative stability following the end of World War II and the rebirth of Israel as a nation, ORT moved too into North Africa and later, Iran, reversing dramatically in these ancient communities of "forgotten" Jews the inherited tradition of subsistence and marginal existence as beggars or peddlers and introducing an utterly new concept of purpose and productivity. In developing nations struggling to establish modern economic systems and a new social order, these skilled workers were desperately needed and ORT graduates were often in the vanguard of new industries.

For ORT this period of relative stability in Jewish life meant the opportunity to stabilize programs, to establish permanent institutions (although seldom in quarters originally intended as permanent), to develop long-term courses at the high school and even higher levels; in short, to move on a sustained basis toward its historic objectives.

But it meant, too, a larger student body, often enrolled for longer periods of time, and pressures—inexorable pressures—to expand the program and its opportunities. Whether in the Magreb or Europe or South America or Israel, whether in ancient communities or newly-formed centers of Jewish life, the threat of destruction of our people had been denied, and the decimation of the holocaust repudiated. A new generation had emerged. A people bereft of parents, brothers, sisters; a people permanently scarred by personal experience of man's inhumanity to man; such a people proclaimed to all the world the essential indestructibility of man.

Such a people—rootless in body, found roots in spirit and sunk those roots into the soil of their lands of resettlement and regroupment. From those roots sprung a generation of Jewish youth—a generation which, in increasing numbers and with implacable insistence, turned to ORT for security in a modern world: for economic security and often too—tragically—for security against recurrent anti-Semitic manifestations.

For, as the Jews of Czarist Russia were the disinherited children of the Industrial Revolution, these are the children of the technological revolution—but they will not be disinherited. Vast new fields beckon them; their horizons extend beyond the confines of sea and earth to the limitless reaches of space; and their selection of labor, of a skill or a trade as a way of life, has become for many youth of today, a matter of preference rather than necessity. And ORT, born of the needs of the Jewish people, must serve this generation and the next. As it has for nearly a century, ORT must continue to offer to the Jewish people and the Jewish communities of the world the fulfillment of the vision and concepts of its founding fathers in the context of present day needs.

It was in this milieu and in the profoundly altered form and scope of the ORT program, in this wholly technological context that the Executive Committee of World ORT Union sponsored a Colloquium which took place in Geneva, Switzerland in 1966. The task of this Colloquium was to probe the implications of the new technology and of the contemporary nature and position of Jewish community life overseas; to probe and to ascertain the influence for change in ORT's activities for the future inherent in the industrial and the social changes of our times.

Women's American ORT, as by far the largest, most active and most productive of the ORT family, was invited (among others) to prepare a

paper as a basis for discussion in the Colloquium. Toward this end, and following broad and intensive discussion within our National Board and National Executive Committee, Women's American ORT requested Nathan Gould, the National Executive Director, to prepare a paper codifying the views of our organization. It has come to be known in our own organization and in the World ORT family as the "Women's American ORT Position Paper." Following its formal adoption by the National Board (and subsequently by the 19th Biennial Convention) the paper was submitted to the World ORT Union Colloquium. What follows this preface is the Women's American ORT Position Paper.

ORT AS A MOVEMENT IN JEWISH LIFE

BY NATHAN GOULD
Executive Director, Women's American ORT

I.

ORT AS A MOVEMENT—ITS FUNDAMENTAL TENETS

The Social Role of ORT

In any consideration of the orientation or perspectives of ORT, Women's American ORT takes its point of departure from our persuasion that ORT as a philosophy, as a concept and a program is a movement. It is a movement in Jewish life in the epoch of industrialization and technology. Conceived philosophically as a way of life to integrate the Jewish people and their communities into industry and into the larger communities from which they had been alienated by discrimination and repression, the program was designed also, and has served effectively, as an antidote to anti-Semitic gestations and manifestations.

While ORT's practical efforts have improved the economic lot and the standard of living of millions of Jews and their families in the course of its distinguished history, its greatest achievement has been actually to transform the way of life of whole Jewish communities in scores of lands. It has thereby served a pre-eminently social role in Jewish life, and it is this role which is at the foundation of ORT as a movement in Jewish life.

The specific problems of the Jewish people and their communities have changed with the vicissitudes of Jewish life, causing ORT to alter its forms, methods and operations as well as its centers of concentration. But ORT's social role has by no means been exhausted, and the responsibility of the movement to continue its efforts for the transformation of Jewish communities remains, and will remain in the foreseeable future, testifying to the viability of this program and this movement. The technological age has widened and deepened the opportunities for this transformation, magnifying the challenge to our program, catapulting ORT into the forefront of Jewish life and thereby reinforcing it as a movement.

Although characteristic of virtually all ORT experiences since the program began, ORT's social role (and its concomitant effect on Jewish economic and cultural life) has been nowhere more dramatically pronounced in recent years than in North Africa, Iran and India and, in a very different way, in Israel. The potential for profound effects on South

America is also great. Interestingly, while the technological changes of the post-war decades raised the standards of performance in industry and consequently in the qualitative requirements of our operations, they have simultaneously opened vast areas at the lower levels of production, dictating the initiation and unprecedented expansion of accelerated vocational training, including apprenticeship and prevocational training. It is in the interrelation and integration of these two basic levels that ORT performs most meaningfully and most dynamically its social role for our people.

Along with this social role are at least two other tenets upon which ORT rests as a movement. These are:

- the global character of the ORT program;
- the Jewish character of the ORT program.

These, as we see it, are the principles which give our ORT program its unique character and distinctive role as a movement in Jewish life.

The International Character of ORT

The intercontinental scope of the ORT network is not merely a geographic, but is an ideological phenomenon as well. It reflects on the one hand the reality of Jewish life, problems and needs and on the other, the affirmation and the conscious expression of the programmatic character of the ORT movement. By philosophy and program ORT is international in character and therefore in responsibility and scope. It is the vocational training agency of the Jewish people throughout the world. Its efforts and installations are assigned, established and developed in accordance with the manifest needs of, and possibilities for our program in any country of Jewish population concentration. Need, receptivity and accessibility are the principal determinants. Freedom of action consistent with the integrity and identity of our program are equally vital.

ORT's non-political nature obliges not only abstinence from political issues, be they of Jewish or general public concern, but also widens the latitudes and reinforces the possibilities for the global employment of our program on the objective basis of need, thereby reinforcing the international character of the ORT program. The ebbs and flows of post-war immigration have reshaped the configuration, and in some respects the complexion, of the world Jewish community in a process, alas, far from completed. ORT's deployment of its operations must be in consonance with these shifts, not alone as they are apparent today, but as trends indicate they may be shaped tomorrow.

The ravages of prejudice and discrimination, of impoverishment and repression are dynamic, and our understanding of their nature and impulsion must likewise be dynamic. The maintenance of existing schools and operations, though dependent upon current student enrollment, is not nor should not be solely so dependent; should not be disposed of in fact nor in

perspective on the basis of present or immediate factors alone. Rather must the fate of existing facilities be weighed in the context of prospective developments and trends, including the possibilities of reactivated latent anti-Semitism and the recurrent flights that come in its wake.

But beyond the influences of immigration upon our perspective, the mission of combating, neutralizing and inhibiting anti-Semitism through vocational training, through programs operating today, for instance, in South America and elsewhere, is an equally vital factor in the determination of our perspectives. To combat anti-Semitism, to help make the life of Jews socially, culturally and politically palatable in their lands of being and their lands of preference are explicit purposes and missions of the ORT program. They are indeed prime purposes.

Unique Relation to Israel

In Israel ORT's role is invested with special qualities and distinctive forms because here, unlike anywhere else, ORT is a Jewish program functioning in a Jewish state. While ORT functions as a nongovernmental agency here as elsewhere, its educational aims and objectives in Israel are synchronized with the nation's and are extremely relevant to the economic, social and cultural perspectives of the nation as a whole. The size, the scope, the importance and effectiveness of our program in Israel bears witness to our special relationship with the state and to the responsibilities inherent in the confluence of ORT's Jewish character with that of this nation. ORT's program in Israel, therefore, is naturally and properly the largest of our national programs; and naturally and properly it is destined to grow larger—much, much larger.

It reflects first and foremost the brilliance and ingenuity of the ORT cadres in Israel, but it is also an inspiring example of the creative possibilities of such a program in an atmosphere congenial to expression and initiative and to cooperation with appropriate departments and institutions of government on the national and municipal levels. While such cooperation in pursuit of mutual or converging goals is indispensable to maximum progress, the independence of ORT's program in Israel is no less an essential prerequisite for performance and achievement.

Because of its size, its function and its special meaning to us attendant on its existence within a Jewish state, ORT Israel has been and must remain central to our attentions and energies as an international organization. But precisely because the pressures are so great and urgent and because our normal tendencies, understandably, bend to their attention, it is necessary to bear in mind and reassert the global character of ORT, the non-political character of ORT and our responsibilities to Jewish communities and Jewish people everywhere.

Schematic, arithmetic formulae for the distribution of support are not suitably applicable to qualitative factors. Qualitative elements cannot be

measured by arithmetic. But if we keep ever present in our minds the global character of the ORT program and our responsibility to the Jewish people everywhere, no program in clear and substantive need will be denied the means for adequate performance, quantitative or qualitative; nor will it be denied expansion where "accommodations problems" exist and persist. No country needing an ORT school will have its facilities retrenched or its program phased out; and in countries where no schools exist, the innovation of such programs will not be denied. This, the observance of the universality of ORT, is a severe challenge and a taxing task, but it is the essence of the commitment of our program and our movement. It is our character, our destiny and our strength. And it is on this basis that we shall rally support and resolve our budgetary difficulties now and in the future so that adequate performance shall not be denied by inadequate financing.

The World Jewish Community

The establishment of the State of Israel had, and has great meaning for the Jewish people beyond the borders of that country and across every community in the world. Israel's fate touches, and will touch the Jewish people and every Jewish community across the world. As a Jewish organization with a global program, our understanding of this invests our activity in and for that country with the special meaning and responsibility referred to earlier.

The establishment of the Jewish State has significantly ameliorated the Jewish problem, but it has not resolved it. After two decades the Jewish people, settled or in movement, who have had freedom of action, have made their choices. Many have chosen, and many others will continue to choose Israel as their homeland; others have not and will not. ORT's responsibility is to both those who have and those who have not. ORT's responsibility is to Israel and as well to the Jewish communities of France and Morocco and Italy and Iran and Argentina and Brazil and India and Tunis and elsewhere. Our striving must be to respond to every call with programs adequate in number, equal to needs and flexible for expansion and development as circumstances require.

The present disposition of our schools must be viewed from this vantage and the perspective for opening new programs in new countries must be studied and engaged from this vantage. Furthermore, present installations and possible new ones must be viewed in the context of immigration trends and plans must be made accordingly.

Continuing Emigration

Emigration from the Eastern European countries ebbs and flows. Countries such as Austria and Italy, serving now as way stations in the migration, have a need for our program, appropriately designed and suited to their purpose. Yet, it does not follow that they shall endure only as way

stations in transit and this possibility should be probed. But even should they be confined to such a limited role, our special programs will, of course, continue to be vital. Especially in Italy do their effects extend beyond the indigenous communities served to those in transit who may never enter the standard schools.

Present emigration from Eastern Europe is small, restricted, sporadic and delicately maintained. We are hopeful it will increase and involve progressively larger numbers. There will be way stations for emigrants should this develop, and the Jewish communities in the countries of reception, including Israel, will face new problems of resettlement, of rehabilitation, of training and retraining. Given such emigration trends from this and other areas, including Cuba, and given the recent liberalization of American immigration policy, it is not excluded that the establishment of some additional forms of vocational training facilities in the United States—not necessarily schools—may be required.

Emigration from North Africa also continues. In such receiving countries as Israel and France, but also in Italy, (in a miniscular and much more limited form) ORT will, on this account alone, require vigorous aid and added attention. Though the North African countries are scenes of declining Jewish population, the need for continuing attention to their programs is attested by large student enrollment whose downward trend is far less pronounced than the rate of decline in population. Here, in Morocco and Tunisia, local factors combine with a new and growing awareness of the importance of vocational education urgently to command the maintenance of our programs—for their service, for their inspiration and for the courage which they impart. In Iran, on the other hand, it is the relative stability of the Jewish population, coupled with the progressive development of the nation and the remarkable results of the ORT program there, which dictates continued and enlarged attention to the program, and its expansion once again—perhaps—beyond Teheran. And in the three South American countries of largest Jewish population concentration; Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, the swift development of full-scale ORT operations is a mandatory, and even an urgent requirement of our times.

Thus is the international character of the ORT program found to be at the foundation of our movement, confirmed and reaffirmed by the objective realities of our times. These objective realities have obtained continuously throughout ORT's long history. All indications affirm that they will continue to press ORT into global operations in the foreseeable future.

II.

THE JEWISH CHARACTER OF THE ORT PROGRAM

ORT was conceived as a program in and of Jewish life and it derives its character from this commitment. Wedding historic perspective to programmatic purpose, it has emerged as the vocational training agency for the Jewish people.

Given its commitment, ORT must perform predominantly for the Jewish people, its operations must be focused in countries and communities of Jewish population concentration, the overwhelming majority of its students in each school and aggregately must be Jewish and its decisive support must derive primarily from Jewish people in the communities and countries in which the program operates and beyond, via ORT organizations and Jewish communities throughout the world. Moreover, the essential vocational and technical curriculum should be augmented by subjects of Jewish cultural content to foster Jewish identification and each student's appreciation of our history and tradition as a people.

The Soil and the Root

Our program and our specialized services were born of historical necessity. The prejudices, the discriminations and the repressions—not episodic but sustained and fermenting and foisted for generations upon our people as a minority—invoked enforced alienation and imposed distortions of life. Although modified or altered here or there, these prejudices and discriminations, in greater or lesser degree and in one form or another, actively or latently, persist today, and they require our specialized services to overcome.

So a specialized program specifically angled to the peculiar needs of the Jewish people is required even where these prejudices and discrimination appear to have been wholly eradicated, to overcome the distortions, alienation and inherited liabilities. It is required even in free societies today, where the withdrawal of age-old discrimination is but recent and, though helpful, does not really serve to telescope the process required to overcome inherited and entrenched distortions and liabilities.

The phenomenon of Hitlerism made plain as nothing else did that discrimination and prejudice against Jews, while often latent, must be seen as a universal fact of life. So deeply entrenched are their roots that governmental decrees, acts and laws prohibiting discrimination in this country or that, though desirable and meaningful, cannot readily legislate them out

of existence. Continuing upheavals of Jewish communities, a steadfast and a substantial reality in Jewish life today, point to the special need for Jewish vocational schools to cope with the manifold problems of immigration and resettlement in the lands of reception.

It is, it can be seen, the distortions of society which create the special need for ORT to perform a service otherwise wholly unavailable or available without substantive equality for Jewish youth.

Growth the Test of Need

There is no greater tribute to the ORT philosophy nor more impressive testimony to the necessity for a special vocational program in Jewish life than the ORT schools themselves—their increased size and numbers. There is no greater vindication than the persistence of Jewish youth in seeking admission, creating what we in Women's American ORT call "The Accommodations Problem": the inability of schools in almost every country to accommodate all qualified applicants.

The accommodations problem has been with us stubbornly for many years. It is a source of deep concern and requires relentless effort to combat it. Yet it remains an obstinate fact of our life. Jews—and particularly Jewish youth—are attracted in increasing numbers, in part because in many respects ORT's vocational education and training program is today more advanced than other systems including, and especially, governmental systems of education. This is so in part because, unencumbered by the mass structure inevitable in governmental school systems, and less tormented by tradition, smaller and newer systems are in a position to react to change with greater facility. It is also because ORT, harnessed in the service of a minority people, a people discriminated against overtly and covertly by many societies and much of industry, has been and has had to be constantly on its mettle.

To assure our youngsters a successful transition from the classroom and the training shop to the office and the workshop, and to enable them to compete on the labor market, ORT has had to overcome such liabilities of discrimination as the innate or conscious reluctance of many to employ Jews. It has had to react swiftly to change, if not actually to anticipate it. Thus, while other school systems were concentrating upon skills and trades imminently, if not already obsolete, ORT had shifted its emphasis to tool and die making, to telecommunication, to industrial laboratory techniques, to electronics—at the higher levels. And on the more rudimentary levels, in response to a wholly different set of problems and opportunities and tasks, ORT developed a widespread and versatile system of accelerated training, accommodating with understanding and with imagination those more limited in time or opportunity or ability.

And for a people long denied, often uprooted and dislocated and too often accustomed to the fickleness of "fate"—oscillating between super-

ficial and tenuous acceptance and traumatic adversity—the quality, the compassion, the specialized understanding and rapport and above all the know-how and expertness of our program have offered a most secure gateway to the fulfillment of their yearnings, hopes and aspirations.

Tangential Activities—Latitudes and Limitations

All of this is not to deny that there may be, for ORT, responsibilities corollary to, and beyond the preeminent commitment to our own people, and that ORT may engage such responsibilities. In recent times ORT has responded to invitations to engage such tangential activities, rendering a meaningful service and contribution beyond the confines of our customary realm.

We are a technical education and vocational training program of and for the Jewish people. This is what is unique to our character, distinctive about our role, and differentiates us in purpose and performance from every other organization in Jewish life. It is the source of our strength, the propellant of our efforts, our essential *raison d'être*. We were thus created and only thus will we survive, in the context of a need to survive, of the need for vocational education facilities for Jews.

We are a program with large ideas, with vast capabilities, but with sorely limited resources. But even if our resources were tenfold greater we could not assume for ourselves or superimpose upon ourselves a role which by nature, design and magnitude is a responsibility of government. While technical assistance enterprises may legitimately be engaged by ORT, faithfulness to our mission as the vocational training agency of the Jewish people demands that we confine and control the degree and scope of such engagements.

Whatever the understandable instinct and inspiration to engage such technical assistance programs from the vantage of humanism, any such engagements must be strictly regulated so that the degree of involvement shall not alter the qualitative character of ORT, nor obfuscate nor derail the ORT program from its essential service to, and performance for the Jewish people. This was why Women's American ORT took exception to recommendations for the establishment of a separate technical assistance department in ORT and advocated instead that the decision to undertake any technical assistance engagement rest wholly and solely within the Executive Committee of World ORT Union.

Beyond the question of degree of engagement, which if not defined and regulated could pose the danger of programmatic mutation, are practical issues of moment in the technical assistance activities in which we do engage. Even where these engagements have been carefully confined (as has certainly been the case) so as not to infringe upon the basic character of the ORT movement, local practical and technical consequences must not

be overlooked. We must continue to guard against any dissipation of energies—in direction, in leadership, in administration and teaching—energies which could result in the weakening of our own operations, present and prospective.

Teacher Training

Operational decisions are not in our province and administrative proposals, in our view, are not in the realm of this paper; nor should they be. But to illustrate our point with respect to the regulation of material manpower commitments to technical assistance, should we not ask ourselves at this time of critical and growing shortage of teachers for our own network, whether the presence of a large number of technical assistance students at Anieres is constricting presently and potentially the possibilities for training more adequate numbers of sorely needed ORT teachers?

The teacher shortage from which ORT suffers, which plagues all fields of education almost everywhere, will not of course be solved by ORT's Institute for Teacher Training at Anieres, Switzerland alone, nor even by the development of similar programs and facilities in countries of large ORT operations, which we have advocated. But given the acute shortage, the issue of Anieres illustrates how the primacy of ORT as a Jewish movement can be jeopardized by the demands of technical assistance engagements on teaching personnel and other manpower.

III. ORT AS A PRESENT DAY MOVEMENT: TOWARD A LARGER SCOPE

The ORT Schools Among Jewish Community Institutions

The changes wrought in the operations of ORT over the past two decades—both the scope and the quality of these operations—have been profound, extensive and gratifying. The technological age has augmented opportunity and raised the standards of requirements, infusing manual proficiency with new intellectual and academic qualities. It has thereby fostered among Jewish youth a surge to vocational education and recast attitudes of Jewish communities toward vocational and technological occupations. By the same token it has catapulted ORT and its program into the forefront of Jewish life. No longer a subordinate or "incidental" feature on its periphery, the program of ORT is, as never before, in the mainstream of Jewish life and in the forefront of the transformation occurring before our eyes; more profound among Jews in some respects, than in society at large.

ORT operations have sought to keep pace, and with a remarkable degree of success have, in fact, kept pace with the challenge inherent in the trends. The growth of the program, the spiraling student enrollment, the increased facilities bear witness to the achievement. Equally and more do the qualitative changes which have taken place in our curriculum bear witness to the trend: the new standards set, the modernization of teaching methods and the shift in focus of the skills and trades taught.

Foresight has cast our planning deep into the future: modern pedagogic techniques and concepts have been embraced and employed. These achievements are magnified when considered in the light of obstacles encountered (and most often and so happily, overcome). It is a tribute to the dynamism, the ingenuity, the dedication and the determination of the leadership of World ORT Union and of each of our national sections, particularly in the major countries of ORT operations. ORT today receives almost universal recognition and its prestige and authority, pacing its accomplishments, have never been greater.

As ORT's program has become one of the most significant in Jewish life, so must our institutions become everywhere a significant symbol and part of every Jewish community, influencing them both in form and nature. Jewish communities are identified, and their characters and complexions

acquired and expressed, by their component programs and institutions. In the countries and cities of our operations, the ORT schools must become institutions of pivotal importance to the complexion of the communities.

The Permanent Facilities

There was a long period in the history of ORT when it was considered adequate for a school to be housed in some improvised store or building or garage. Times and educational needs have changed this—and ORT with it. The birth of Israel and the reconstitution of the Jewish communities of Europe have revitalized Jewish life since World War II. Permanent, stable communities are everywhere identified by their Jewish institutions: temples and synagogues, youth and community centers and Jewish day schools, hospitals and homes for the aged. Most symbolic of the modern character and role of today's Jewish institutions, perhaps, is the ORT school.

No longer can ORT perform adequately in makeshift facilities. The requirements of education today, the role of education in casting the cultural future, and the relative stability in Jewish life prohibit this. Large and permanent ORT installations, beautiful schools designed for effective teaching and equipped for specific training cultivate the love of learning among youth while advancing their technical education. They play a role not only in relation to the individual, but become a part of the life of the community, giving sustenance and quality to its Jewishness, performing a wide variety of tasks, general and specialized. Such schools are architecturally and physically suitable, attractive and congenial to study and work, and provide play areas and cultural activities to enhance the joy and broaden the scope of our youth. Dormitories help make our facilities accessible to youth from smaller communities adjacent to or remote from the principal centers.

Every ORT school must be a Jewish institution of which the community—Jewish and non-Jewish—can be proud. Whether high school, trade school or apprenticeship center, ORT institutions must be identified by their high quality of training, by their physical attractiveness, by their permanence in appearance no less than in reality. Such institutions help instill students with a sense of pride in their learning and their acquired craftsmanship, with an eagerness to excel; at the same time they invest the community itself with pride; strengthening it, solidifying it and enhancing its spiritual quality and Jewish identity.

The Cultural Dichotomy—Two Types

In the past decade or so the term "cultural dichotomy" has become popular in Jewish circles. Inspired by the ingathering of Jews in Israel and by immigration elsewhere, the term is used in association with the tasks and problems of integration and assimilation of Jews from one historic cultural

domain into a wholly different environment in the lands of resettlement. In Israel it has special meaning because that nation's population is now composed, almost in equal numbers, of Jewish people from Europe and from North Africa and the Middle East.

The founders of the State of Israel perceived its social, economic and political development and future in modern terms; i.e., in Western terms. Indeed, it had to survive and compete in a world in which the modes of industry, the codes of law, the criteria of finance, and the course of political and social development were primarily of a Western genre. In such a world survival of the nation—its economic and social viability—was possible only through a parallel orientation and direction. The standard of living of its people, international trade, fiscal viability and adequate defense depended upon agricultural and industrial production along the most modern lines accompanied by similar and related educational and social development. The nation's tempo, its discipline, its standards and its organization had to be attuned to the Western World. It was to this Western-oriented world that the tradition-bound Jews who came to Israel from North Africa and Eastern lands had to make a quick and thorough adjustment; nor is the problem confined to Israel, as we shall see.

A second type of cultural dichotomy, of far older and more traditional vintage, far more entrenched and therefore more difficult of resolution, further complicates Jewish life, and by no means in Israel alone. It is the product of the historic alienation of the Jew from industry; an alienation which is culturally in conflict with the modern mode of life in Western civilization, pronounced for decades but dramatically accentuated by the technological age. This dichotomy is far more universal than the first (the "ethnic" cultural gap of recent times) which is superimposed on it and compounds it. In the task of bridging both these cultural gaps—the "ethnic" and the "historic"—ORT has a vital, an indispensable role to play.

In neither case is ORT the sole, nor even the decisive corrective factor: the magnitude and complexity of the task requires engagement by comprehensive forces in diverse fields of social, educational and cultural endeavor. But the part ORT plays is great indeed, and as the vocational training agency of the Jewish people we are necessarily preoccupied with the problem. We address ourselves now to the first, the more recent manifestation of cultural dichotomy which, for lack of a better term, we shall call "the ethnic dichotomy."

Ethnic Origin

We have stated that in Israel the cultural dichotomy arises from a confrontation within a single social and political entity, of peoples from two wholly different historical backgrounds, cultural heritages, traditions and mores, habits and patterns and pace. The critical manifestations and expression of these cultural poles are to be found in the realms of science,

industry and education and, most especially, in the social, economic and technological spheres.

We know decidedly that neither Israel nor the Jewish communities in the diaspora that are confronted with similar problems wish to deny, negate or vitiate the unique, the distinctive characteristics and expressions of the oriental cultures that are reassembled within them. Not at all. Their music and language, the distinctiveness of their handicraft and the beauty of their art, their religious mores and institutions—all are cherished and afforded the widest arena of expression: their integrity is preserved and cultivated and blended into the larger society to the benefit and enrichment of the nation as a whole. Yet while preserving much that is precious from ancient heritage, the receiving communities—and particularly Israel—must fuse the new newcomers into a predominantly Western, industrial society. Must, or the society itself will suffer the distortions of frustration and inner contradiction.

The resolution of the “ethnic” dichotomy lies predominantly in the realms of economics, sociology and politics; in social organization and technology. It requires adjustment to the modes, patterns, systems and methods of rationalized industry and agriculture; to the variegated pace, tempo and levels of human activity in constructive, modern, social endeavor. The “bridging” process is, therefore, in the realm of education and training, in the classroom and the process of life. But the issue is—which mode and which form of social organization will prevail?

As indicated, the issue is not confined to Israel. If the North African Jew constitutes an infinitesimal portion of the total population of France, he does not constitute an infinitesimal portion of the French Jewish community. The French Jewish community today, like the Israeli one, is composed in approximately equal parts of Western and Oriental Jews. Here, of course, survival of the state is not at issue, but the nature and survival of the French Jewish community and its components may very well be—with far reaching implications for all European Jews.

As has been observed, if the North African Jews in France continue in isolation as a substratum in society and in the Jewish community, one of two alternatives becomes inevitable: either they will ultimately assimilate, seeking to lose their identity in a society which rejects their differences; or they will be permanently alienated, their underprivileged group identified, despite French citizenship, as strange and foreign. They and the community will become more vulnerable thereby as a focus of anti-Semitic sentiment. If, on the other hand, the North African Jew can become socially and economically integrated, if his patterns can be respected and his potential appreciated, his contribution will enrich both the national life and Judaism in France.

And so for France too, the alternative is clear. The North African

Jews must become a free part of a free community. If not, they will either be assimilated or their alienation will be complete.

Wherever Jews uprooted from “Oriental” countries settle, but particularly in Israel and France where the problem is most acute, unrestricted expansion and augmentation of ORT facilities on all levels become imperative requirements. Enlargement of our technical facilities is mandatory for the accommodation of all qualified applicants—indigenous or foreign—who seek access to our training.

Enlargement is required too, in anticipation of a program of accelerated training for those innately qualified but technically or academically unfit for jobs in modern industry. Means and systems must be found to telescope the transition of the most disadvantaged in background, culture and academic preparation from the most rudimentary state of comprehension, dexterity, proficiency and skill to much higher levels.

So it is that almost everywhere, but again most especially in France and Israel, we must seek the expansion of all of our facilities and the development of all of our know-how for accelerated pre-vocational and apprenticeship training. Swift and mass training serves not only to free trainees from dependence upon charity, makes of them useful and self-supporting citizens, contributes to the economic and social well-being of the lands in which they live; but in terms of the specific challenge, performs a vital cultural role. For it fashions a new outlook, a new understanding, a new discipline and a new mode of life in greater consonance with society at large. It identifies the beneficiaries of training with the society in which they live and work and with their immediate environment. It helps to overcome disabilities in education, in the understanding of social organization: it breaks through the barriers of isolation and opens untold gateways to self-betterment beyond immediate economic improvement: to self-development, to more fruitful lives with expanding horizons.

Historical Origin

We return again to Israel and its problems. To be sure, the issue of the “ethnic” cultural dichotomy is the most imminent of its fateful problems. ORT’s contributions, past and present, to the resolution of this complex and manifold problem are well known. But there is, we know, a larger issue of which the ethnic cultural dichotomy has, by “accident” of history, become a part; but which prevails independently, would exist even were there no ethnic dichotomy and is only compounded by the latter’s existence. Nor is it confined to Israel alone. It is a problem, as we have said, which arises inevitably from our long history of enforced alienation from industry and is therefore a cultural problem as well.

The viability of the State of Israel, like that of every modern state, depends upon a sustained, regenerating mass of productive workers in industry and agriculture. Such an army is differently constituted in different

times and different places under different economic environments and sociological and political circumstances. But for any modern society to grow and prosper and for its peoples to benefit, such an army must exist.

It must exist and be sustained and each generation of this army must be replaced by new and succeeding generations. No society can live and prosper simply by virtue of doctors, lawyers, professors, journalists, artists and engineers. At the core of the wealth of nations today and as far into the future as we can see, is their productivity, which is a function of manpower; skilled, trained and dedicated to the economic vitality of the nations.

In a free society, and especially in a prospering one, the creation of an army of skilled manpower, possessed of pride and creativity, depends in large and in growing measure on the people's acceptance of skilled manpower, not only as an economic necessity, but at least equally as a cultural asset which fortifies and expands the achievements of society.

Such acceptance is not deeply imbedded in contemporary Jewish tradition, although it was widespread in ancient times. Our age-old roots in this tradition have been torn asunder and the fields in which they once flourished have been left fallow for thousands of years. We need but recall our own problems in ORT only a decade or two ago when, in circumstances of dire urgency, herculean and ingenious methods were needed to persuade youth, and more especially their parents, to accept vocational education. Only in recent years, with the advent of the technological revolution, have we overcome in fair measure—not yet everywhere, but in many places—this stubborn resistance. Acceptance is still delicate as a tendril and by no means firmly rooted. For Israel—especially for Israel—this is a factor of obstinate and telling significance.

For this generation and succeeding ones in Israel, the issue does not and must not refer to the Oriental Jew alone, for then its implications for social stratification would be deep and menacing. If succeeding generations of workers and farmers are to be looked for in one ethnic segment rather than another, then far from bridging the gap between cultures, vocational education would serve to widen it and stratification would be ossified beyond redemption.

The issue then refers not to a segment, but to all of Israel. It speaks to the next generation and the part which this generation must play now in creating the climate to foster the acceptance of efforts to develop the productive capabilities of the nation itself, today and in the future. This is the larger issue in whose resolution, we believe, ORT is destined to play a significant role.

But the heritage of alienation is deep. And if we approach this knotty question from the limited and practical viewpoint of this generation, with reference to its immediate needs alone, can we succeed in educating and reorienting a people to the cultural acceptance and assimilation of the

ideology of manual work? The answer, it can be seen, has to do, not simply with training, but with the general outlook and education of our people. It points to another kind of cultural dichotomy; our heritage on the one hand and its consequences and implications on the other. It must not, we reiterate, be restricted to any segment of this generation, but must apply to the whole generation; not just to this generation, but to the next and all future generations. It is in terms of this issue that the present can cultivate, absorb and impart skilled manual labor as a way of life that is consonant with our culture.

It is here that ORT, understanding its strategic position in Israel (or in North Africa and Iran from yet another aspect; but yes, in France and in South America as well) it is here that ORT must broaden its scope of responsibility and activity. It is here especially that ORT must move beyond the pragmatic confines of an operational program. It is here, in Israel, that ORT expresses and fulfills itself as the instrument of a movement which seeks to disseminate a culture and a way of life; which seeks to create in the life and bloodstream of a people the acceptance of the idea of manual labor and skilled work as a way of life that transcends ethnic, social or other origins.

The question then arises in terms of the future, in terms of how the present will prepare the future, not just by the training, but by the education and the cultural insemination of the country as a whole.

IV.

AN EXPANDING ROLE FOR ORT

We believe it is timely in Israel and throughout the world for ORT to expand its concern, now centered exclusively in training operations, to embrace general community education and cultural development.

The ORT program is certainly one of the most vital, if not the most vital program in Jewish life today. In every city and country where it exists it has great meaning for the community as a whole and for the Jewish community especially. We referred earlier to the need to replace all remaining improvised ORT schools with permanent installations that will be the pride not only of ORT but of every community in which they exist. Our aim must be for every school to become the fountainhead of broad education for the community-at-large—a center of the ORT philosophy and of Jewish culture. Let us make them that. Let the ORT school stand not only as a training center for students but as a cultural center for, and at the service of the whole Jewish community. Let the training program be the core around which a wide periphery of other social and cultural activities develop in the interest of the whole Jewish community. Let it be more than a school. Let it become a center in and of the community.

Let us provide libraries and auditoriums and classrooms useful to the community for programs of cultural enrichment directly and indirectly related to our specific work and purpose. Let there be lectures and symposiums and study groups and cultural events and discussion rooms and recreation rooms available to a wide periphery of the Jewish community. And let the conduct and supervision of these activities devolve not primarily on the school administration but on the ORT country organizations, their leadership and membership drawn from among their own Jewish community.

Membership Organizations as the Base of Support

As we broaden ORT's horizon, so let us broaden the base of financial support for the ORT school in the community. Let the ORT school, under ORT's aegis and control, become a community institution consciously performing for the community in vocational education but also in other cultural endeavors. Let it become an institution in and of the community. And let it become, under our direction and control, a responsibility of the community.

We believe this should be the approach of a movement and the application of the mass membership concept to the overseas arena.

It has been expertly asserted that from the financial point of view an ORT school in a Jewish community of less than ten thousand is not economical. Most, if not all of our schools, therefore function in Jewish communities of ten thousand or more. Such a community can become a broad base of support for the ORT program and the ORT institution. Well, then, let us organize these communities. Let us mobilize them. Let us form large and numerous ORT chapters in each community and in every country where a school exists and enlist their dedicated support. Let membership organizations replace the present small and select ORT committees.

The alumni associations, brilliantly conceived, must be activated and developed, given an arena of expression, purpose and accomplishment, or they will atrophy. They must be developed into stable organizations in and around the ORT schools, with clear programs and defined activities, using the school facilities for organizational expression and as a springboard to the community. But beyond the alumni, let us draw for active interest and support upon the ten thousand or more Jews in each of the communities in which there is an ORT center.

By its nature, a movement is based upon mass, is influenced and propelled by mass and acquires its health and dynamism from its interrelationship with mass. An agency, on the other hand, tends to rely upon agreements and contracts and small-group negotiations for one-time grants and agreements renegotiable and hopefully renewable each year: it is dependent upon friends, whose priorities are otherwise placed and to whom ORT is of necessity a secondary consideration at best. The subventions and the grants which we receive from governments and from friends and agencies are generally most welcome. But we must understand their inherent limitation as well as those which we must ourselves set.

Viability and Integrity of a Program Assured by Basic Independence

How, after the experience of the Alliance Israelite, can any independent program in Jewish life, in a responsible and dynamic circumstance, rely predominantly upon governmental subventions or other agency grants for its performance and survival? In twenty-four hours, almost literally, the Alliance Israelite had its character changed, its program massively reduced and its independence wholly curtailed in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Every one of our programs, while welcoming grants and subventions from diverse sources, must always be sufficiently independent, ideologically and materially, to determine its own destiny and survive any change of circumstance or relationship.

We believe and we have always said that any organization or program which is not decisively sustained by its own resources and its own educated,

stable and committed membership and periphery of staunch and knowledgeable followers is, potentially or actively, precariously placed.

But we believe that we have the program to rally mass support even where Jewish communities are relatively small. If we implement our role as a movement, broaden our approach and frame our activities in the context of the community, we will assuredly gain financial support sufficient to enlarge our school system to meet the needs of our people and, at the same time, to sustain and preserve the unique character of our program as a movement.

For Theoretical and Popular Journals

And we believe, too, that it is in the nature of a movement for its component parts to relate to each other; our national sections must find ways to relate to each other in terms of interest, knowledge and concern—not only about each of their own programs but about every other ORT program as well.

World ORT Union could meet this need by publishing a theoretical journal on a very high level—perhaps quarterly, maybe semi-annually—in any event, a publication that would reflect the ideology of ORT and would be a medium for the exchange of views, thoughts, theories and experiences in the realms of academic and vocational education, technology and Jewish life. Such a periodical, in several languages, could serve not only to unify ORT in a common philosophy but could help to educate the wider community of which we spoke earlier, give greater prestige to ORT, and be of invaluable service to the Jewish community.

A more popular organ, which would keep the organizations, their members and the communities informed about ORT developments, would also be in order.

* * * *

The pressures of our program and the demand for our schools will continue. They will not be abated. So also is the surge to vocational education among the Jewish youth destined to continue. The expansion of ORT's program and operations will be mandatory for the proper fulfillment of our obligation. In France, in Israel, in South America, in Italy, in Iran—in different ways and at different stages and in different degrees—ORT will continue to grow. It is becoming increasingly clear that the issue of financial solvency and adequacy will be drawn along the lines of faithful performance, and a clear decision against inordinate dependence upon subventions and contracts. Fundamental dependence upon broad-based membership

organizations—not committees, but organizations—will best serve the principles, character and role of ORT.

We believe wholly, and more deeply with greater reflection, that the answer to ORT's problem and to ORT's future is in our development as a movement. We believe that we must enlarge our horizons, broaden the base of membership of ORT in every country, broaden our responsibilities and embrace a wider arena of expression. We believe that only thus can ORT fulfill its historic mission to the Jewish communities of the world today.

organization—its activities, its members—will best serve its
practical, educational and social goals.

We believe that, with more thought and greater reflection, that the
future of ORT's membership and ORT's future lie in the development as a
movement, by both men and women, of a broader, broader base
of membership of ORT's community service, and the responsibilities and
ambitions of wider areas of responsibility. The future of ORT
today lies in the responsibility of the present.

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