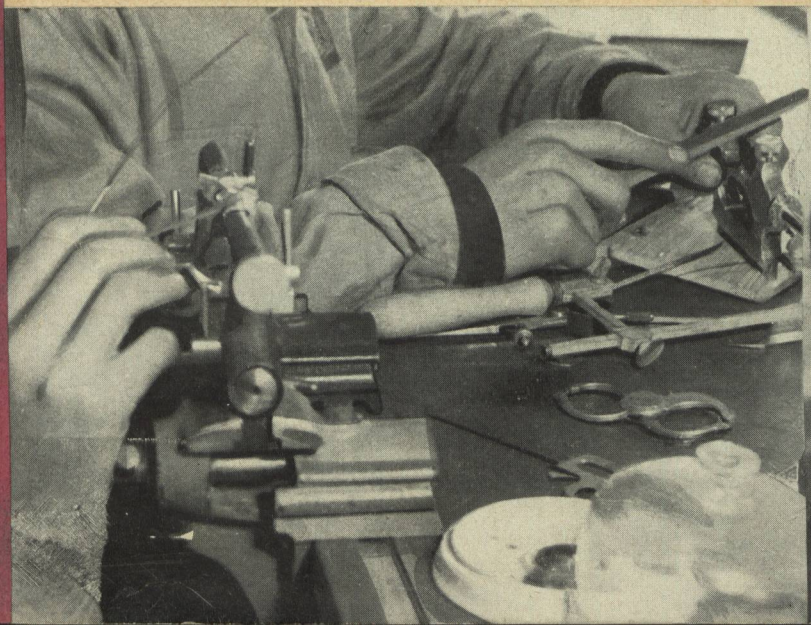
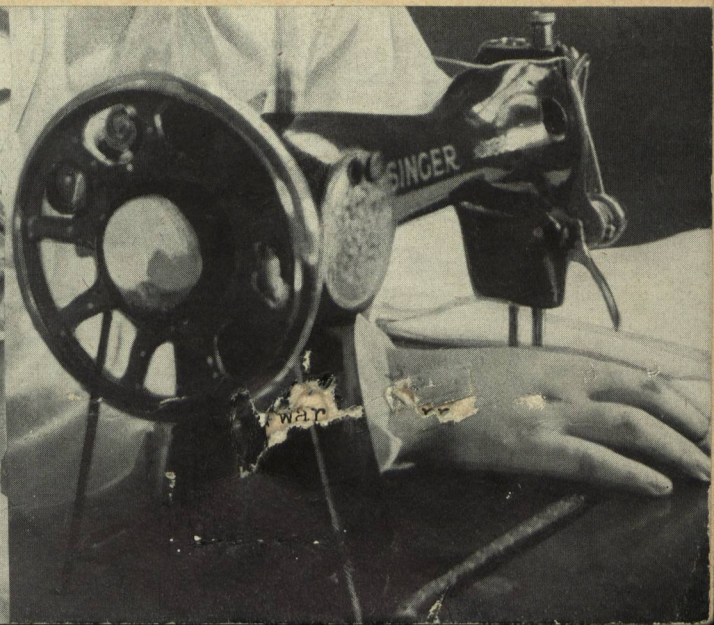
ORT's MESSAGE

to

the First Sephardic World Congress

Held in Paris, November 4-7th. 1951





THE ORT WORLD UNION OF SOCIETIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF HANDICRAFTS AND OF INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL WORK AMONG THE JEWS EXTENDS GREETINGS TO THE DELEGATES OF THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITIES AND THEREBY TO SEPHARDIC JEWRY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

Assembled in Paris in the heart of Europe at a time when decimated European Jewry is in a state of fatigue after all the misery it has suffered, the World Congress of Sephardic Jewry constitutes an encouragement, a call to gather the creative forces towards the material and moral strengthening of our people.

We note with satisfaction that the initiators of the Congress included the tasks of vocational training in the agenda, and we combine our greeting with the subsequent brief survey of ORT's work in this field and of present problems.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORT ORGANIZATION

The Society for the Promotion of Handicrafts and of Industrial and Agricultural Work among the Jews (abbreviated ORT) was created 72 years ago, based on the program drawn up by a group of Russian Jewish notables in the second half of the 19th century with the aim of reforming the Jewish situation in the country. Subsequently, ORT developed into a Union of democratic organizations which established trade schools and other institutions for the promotion of artisanal and agricultural work in the various countries.

Up to the second world war, some 100.000 persons benefitted by artisanal and agricultural training given in ORT's schools, courses and training farms. Many among them emigrated to America, to South Africa and to Palestine.

Hundreds of ORT establishments fell victim to the war of annihilation initiated against Jewry by the Germans in 1933. Some 3.000 ORT instructors, teachers and workers were killed.

Immediately after the termination of World War II, the reconstruction of ORT Organizations and institutions throughout the world was begun by the World ORT Union with the assistance of the American ORT Federation. During recent years, this work was supported with the help of the AJDC, and with funds of the United Jewish Appeals in the U.S.A., in South Africa and in other countries.- To-day the mayor share of ORT's budget is provided by the local ORT Committees and by governmental grants of countries with ORT institutions in operation.

THE ORGANIZATION'S PRESENT STATUS

The World ORT Union has French statutes and comprises 25 organizations in Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Denmark, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Holland, Iran, Israel, Italy, Morocco, Mexico, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Uruguay and the United States.

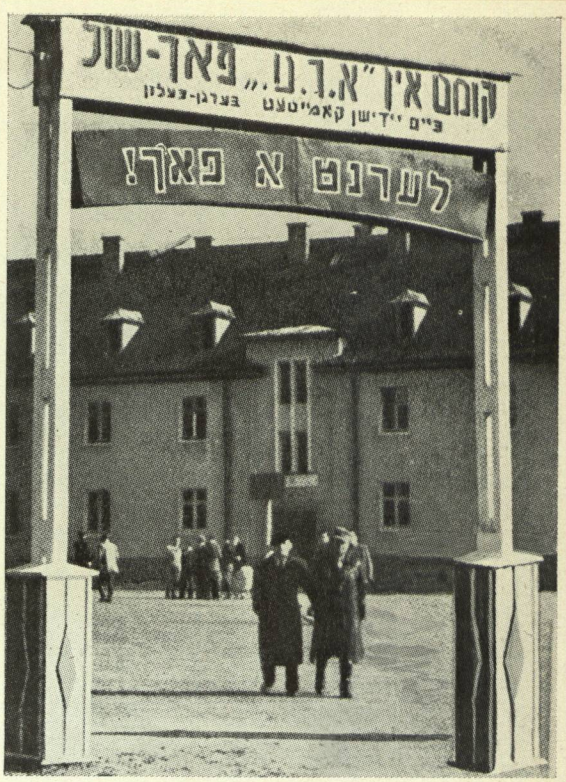
The national organizations are everywhere based on local laws and led by an élite of Jewish personalities. Likewise, all ORT Committees dispose of technical and pedagogical commissions composed of leading experts.

The World ORT Union's leading bodies are:
The CENTRAL BOARD of the ORT Union grouping 63 members elected by a Congress of delegates from all national ORT organizations;
The CENTRAL EXECUTIVE of World ORT Union with 21 members.

The ORT Union Central Office in Geneva services ORT institutions throughout the world both financially and technically, the latter through its Technical and Pedagogical Department which studies the advances in vocational training throughout the world, provides the various ORT organizations with syllabi and teaching material containing the fruit of these studies , and inspects individual schools.

ORT'S POST-WAR ACTIVITIES

Among new problems arising after World War II, that of the DP's in German, Austrian and Italian camps was the most acute. However, also in France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland it was vital that large numbers of refugees and repatriated persons should be prepared for further emigration or for eco-



Above: Entrance to the former Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp.

Right: Entrance of the ORT School at Bergen-Belsen.

nomic integration. Simultaneously, the tasks in North Africa, Israel and Iran came to the foreground and attained increasing scope.

Important results were achieved by ORT's constructive initiative of installing 300 well-equipped training workshops and schools for male and female adolescents and accelerated courses for adults in the DP countries subsequent to the termination of hostilities. More than 50.000 persons were trained as

skilled workers to continue their lives in Israel and in other countries of emigration.

In other Western European countries, particularly in France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland, ORT established a network of modern trade schools prominently featuring metal and wood work and electrical trades.

In the Radio Atelier of the ORT School at Montreuil (Paris)

As stated above, ORT's first institutions in Italy were established for the benefit of DP's and emigrants. At this moment, however, 85% of ORT's students there are Jewish ghetto children from Rome, Turin, Leghorn, Trieste and Milan, most of whom had previously fallen prey to street peddling and begging.

In ORT's Motorists' Workshop in Rome

In ORT's School for motorists in Rome (Class Room)

Embroidery Section of the ORT Girls' School in Rome

Haute Couture Section of the ORT Girls' School in Rome

ORT's work in North Africa was initiated at the end of 1946. In Casablanca two big trade schools were set up to train boys in mechanics and joinery and a four-section vocational school was established for girls. They were subsequently followed by two schools for adolescents in Tunis (mechanics) and

In the ORT-Alliance mechanical School at Tunis

by a welding course for adults. In Morocco and Tunisia, a collaboration was entered into with the Alliance Israélite Universelle according to which the latter organization provides teachers of general subjects.- An ORT center for training mechanics, electricians and joiners was set up in Algiers, to be followed by a mechanics school in Constantine in 1949.

The misery of the Jews in the Moroccan and Tunisian ghettos is incredible. More than two thirds of the population are economically inactive. The majority of economically active persons are proletarized street and bazaar hawkers. A major part of Jewish artisans are unskilled and their economic position compares unfavourably with that of their Arabian counterparts. Meanwhile, a rather rapid process of industrialization is proceeding in these countries, which is bound to increase the economic distress of the Jews unless they are enabled to adapt themselves to requirements. In view of this situation, the vocational training of neglected Jewish youth in these countries is a true work of salvation. And this work must be enormously expanded.

In the course of the present school year, new sections are to be opened in the Casablanca boys' and girls' schools. The boys' school in Tunis has been moved to the recently constructed house; a girls' school has been opened and evening classes are to be installed for Jewish children undergoing training with private masters. In addition, a masonry course is planned.

At Gabès, a joinery school and a girls' school are to be established.

In Algiers, a girls' school will be set up in the course of the present school year.

An ORT Committee was founded in Tlemcen and is preparing for the organization of joinery and dressmaking schools.

In the course of this year, ORT erected two big new school buildings in Casablanca. Another school is to be built in Algiers on a site provided by the Jewish Community. Lack of funds has prevented ORT from setting up the urgently required trade schools and vocational courses in some provincial towns of North Africa.

ORT's schools in Israel, where work was started at the beginning of 1949, have attained a particularly high technical standard. Owing to large-scale immigration, to increased building activities and industrial development, the training of first-rate skilled workers has become one of the country's most vi-

tal problems. The foundation of the politically and culturally entirely neutral Israeli ORT and the establishment of ORT schools in cities, settlements and kibbutzim were hailed both by Government and people.

In the ORT School's mechanical workshop in Jaffa

To be noted is the fact that local ORT schools include such highly-skilled vocations as agromechanics, watchmaking, refrigeration mechanics, toolmaking (chiefly for sephardic youngsters from Bulgaria), electromechanics, machine maintenance (a four-year trade school in the "Thora Umlacha" Yeshiba), modern dental mechanics, etc.

In addition to the days' schools for adolescents, and the vocational courses for unskilled newly immigrated adults of both sexes, ORT has also installed short-term proficiency courses for industrial workers in Israel towards the end of 1950. At present, ORT and the Vocational

In ORT's automechanical workshop in Jerusalem

Training Department of the Ministry of Labour collaborate in raising the skill of industrial workers whose low standard of training otherwise impedes industrial progress.

In the Machine Knitting School of ORT at Holon (Israel)

An important field of work is to be found in Iran. Here, a start was made in August 1950, with the establishment of training workshops in the camps for Kurdish refugees. This was followed by the foundation of large day-schools for boys and girls in Teheran and Isfahan. The Iranian ORT Committee incorporates an élite of active leading Jewish men and women. So far, six ORT school buildings have been erected. The choice of trades and curricula are in accordance with the economic requirements of the State of Israel, inasmuch as the present tendency towards persian nationalism has considerably endangered the position of Jewry in Iran and, as a consequence, professional training has become most topical for emigration.

"Aron Kodesch" - Examination piece executed at ORT carpentry School, Teheran

INSTITUTE FOR INSTRUCTORS

At the beginning of 1949, the ORT Union opened the Central ORT Institute for the Training of Vocational Teachers at Anières near Geneva. This school arose from recognition of the fact that the shortage of instructors and specialized teachers for Jewish trade schools in all countries, particularly North Africa and Iran, is very pronounced.

At the present moment, the Institute has 74 students from 17 countries studying mechanics, electricity, technical installations or joinery.- The language of instruction is French.- The curriculum comprises also Jewish History and Hebrew.

The first group of 16 students graduated in July, 1951, under a board of governmental experts . At present, the graduates are doing nine months of paid practice in Swiss precision factories. Subsequently, they will pass a

One of the mechanical Workshops at the Central ORT Institute at Anières near Geneva

pedagogical examination at the Institute to acquire their diplomas and take up their jobs in Israeli, Iranian, North African and Latin American O R T - schools.

Another branch of ORT's work which dates back to pre-war times was developed in South America where electrical, metal working and dressmaking schools

Library and Reading Room at the Centrale ORT Institute, Anières near Geneva

are operated in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. ORT also maintains a watchmaking and a men's tailoring school in La Habana, Cuba.

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Since the termination of hostilities more than 110.000 persons underwent training in ORT institutions. The number of graduates during the current year is 3614. In addition, 6837 students have emigrated before the examinations. Total enrolment in ORT institutions this year amounted to 19.685.- Although the majority of our German and Austrian students have emigrated, there are still 9.234 pupils frequenting the ORT schools in the various countries. Adolescents comprise 80% of the student body.

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ORT's student body in all countries did and does include a great many Sephardic youths.

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Youth's desire for thorough vocational training has enormously increased as compared with the pre-war period. In most countries, however, and particularly in France, Israel, Iran and North Africa, this urge is in no way sett off by the capacity of ORT's schools. This raises problems which can only be solved with a larger amount of funds.

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The preparation of Jewish adolescents and adults for a productive profession means help for the individual and the strengthening of the entire community. ORT's work does not only serve the technical progress of our countries of operation, but, beyond this, increases Jewry's material and moral strength.

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In submitting to you this brief survey, we wish the Congress the best of success. May its decisions correspond to the glorious history of Sephardic Jewry and to Jewry's topical tasks throughout the world.

Judge Léon MEISS
Chairman Central Board
World ORT Union

Dr. A. SYNGALOWSKI
Chairman Central Executive
World ORT Union

October, 1951

ORT STUDENT MOVEMENT AND ENROLMENT AS OF OCTOBER 15, 1951

COUNTRY	Graduates and Students having emigrated before Examinations during School Year 1950/1951.	Number of Students as of Oct. 15, 1951	Total Enrolment during School Year 1950/1951
ALGERIA	32	188	220
ARGENTINA	102	102	204
AUSTRIA	680	314	994
BELGIUM	274	475	749
BRAZIL	62	123	185
CHILE	47	--	47
CHINA	57	--	57
CUBA	41	--	41
FRANCE	1.774	1.789	3.563
GERMANY	2.511	584	3.095
GREAT BRITAIN	108	87	195
GREECE	41	35	76
HOLLAND	355	450	805
IRAN	395	1.010	1.405
ISRAEL	1.154	1.428	2.582
ITALY	688	1.098	1.786
MOROCCO	540	831	1.371
SOUTH AFRICA	42	12	54
TUNISIA	--	214	214
URUGUAY	85	46	131
U. S. A.	1.449	380	1.829
CENTRAL INSTITUTE, GENEVA	20	62	82
TOTAL	10.457	9.228	19.685