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**The 'Jewish Councils' of Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis**

**By:**

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# **The ‘Jewish Councils’ of Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis**

**Submitted for D.Phil examination**

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This thesis investigates the form and function of the Jewish representative organisations of western Europe during the Nazi occupation from a comparative perspective: the Dutch Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam (JR), the Belgian Association des Juifs en Belgique (AJB) and the French Union Générale des Israélites de France (UGIF). It is the first study in which the three organisations are fully compared and contrasted. The aim in doing so is to move away from the inherently moral approach that has been taken towards their study. Methodologically, this thesis extends beyond individual national contexts within which these organisations have been scrutinised as isolated examples. Instead, it highlights their transnational nature, and shows that it is impossible to assess these Jewish organisations without understanding the broader western European context in which they were forced to operate.

Three themes are investigated: the organisations’ socio-historical foundations, their organisational structures and their connection to illegal networks. First, the thesis looks at those men who went on to become chairmen of the JR, the AJB and the UGIF between 1941 and 1943/1944. It examines how their status in the prewar Jewish communities affected their wartime position and the nature of their leadership. This, in turn, had an impact on the extent to which they were accepted by Jewish communities. Second, the thesis shows that the history of how the Jewish organisations’ were established as well as ways in which they functioned, means that the Germans did not have a clear plan about what the remit of these organisations was supposed to be. As a result, the organisations’ leaders relied strongly upon ad hoc decisions. Third, the thesis reflects upon the various ways in which the organisations were used as cloaks for clandestine activities and also highlights the participation of some of the central board members in these activities. It argues that the Jewish organisations facilitated clandestine activities and that these would not have been possible without their existence. The assessment of these themes contributes to a more inclusive perspective, in which the function of the JR, the AJB and the UGIF is considered within the broader themes of Jewish representation and the nature of the National-Socialist regime.

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## List of Abbreviations

ACIP	Association Consistoriale Israélite de Paris
AIU	Alliance Israélite Universelle
AJB / VJB	Association des Juifs en Belgique / Vereniging der Joden in België
ANDB	Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerders Bond
ASG	Amsterdamse Studenten Groep
CA	Contact Afdeling
CAR	Comité d'Assistance aux Réfugiés
CBJB	Comité voor Bijzondere Joodsche Belangen
CC	Consistoire Central
CCOJA	Commission Central des Organisations Juives d'Assistance
CDJC	Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine
CDG	Comité Général de Défense
CDJ	Comité de Défense des Juifs
CGQJ	Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives
CRIF	Conseil Représentatif des Israélites de France
CUDJF	Comité d'Unité et de Défense des Juifs de France
CvJV	Comité voor Joodsche Vluchtelingen
EIF	Eclaireurs Israélites de France
FI / OF	Front d'Indépendance / Onafhankelijkheidsfront
FSJF	Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France
FTP-MOI	Francs-Tireurs et Partisans - Main d'Oeuvre Immigrée
JCC	Joodse Coördinatie Commissie
JR	Joodsche Raad
LIRO	Lippmann, Rosenthal & Co.
NIK	Nederlands Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap
NSB	Nationaal Socialistische Beweging
NZB	Nederlandse Zionistenbond
NV	Naamloze Vennootschap
OCIS	Oeuvre Centrale Israélite de Secours
OJC	Organisation Juive de Combat

ONE	Oeuvre National d'Enfance
OSE	l'Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants
ORT	Organisation Reconstruction Travail
SDB	Sociaal-Democratische Bond
SSJ	Service Sociale des Jeunes
UGIF	Union Générale des Israélites de France
UKC	Utrechts Kinder Comité
VNV	Vlaams Nationaal Verbond

## Introduction

On 21 September 1939, Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Sicherheitspolizei und Sicherheitsdienst (SiPo-SD), communicated the first decree establishing the *Jüdische Ältestenrat* (Jewish Councils of Elders) in the occupied Polish territories. He did so in the form of an urgent circular letter (*Schnellbrief*), which he sent to the chiefs of all special task forces (*Einsatzgruppen*) operating in the region. The letter set out the design of the Councils' structure and indicated that the leading officials and Rabbis who were to head the organisations were primarily held responsible for the maintenance of order and the prevention of acts of sabotage for assistance in the process of concentration of Jews.<sup>1</sup> Even though the *Schnellbrief* at this point only related to Poland, it became the foundation of the numerous Jewish Councils, representative bodies forced upon the communities by the Nazis, that were later established in the occupied eastern European lands. In the context of western Europe, no order of this nature has ever been found. Nevertheless, Jewish representative organisations were established in western Europe in 1941 as well. An examination of their form and function shows that in some respects they differed significantly from one other, even more so than the *Judenräte* in eastern Europe. This thesis is centred on the notion that while the histories of the western European Jewish organisations are intertwined, they also differ in crucial respects. Even though all organisations were so-called representative bodies, each was distinctive in terms of its origin, construction and personnel and the way its leadership decisions were taken. Hitherto, no fully comparative analysis of the subject has been sufficiently conducted. This research comprises the first comprehensive comparative study of the Jewish representative organisations of the Netherlands (De Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam, JR), Belgium (Association des Juifs en Belgique, AJB, or Vereeniging der Joden in België, VJB) and France (Union Générale des Israélites de France, UGIF).

Existing literature has primarily examined the role of these western European Jewish organisations in the context of the nation-state.<sup>2</sup> However, their establishment and function largely

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996; first ed. 1972), 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Rudi van Doorslaer and Jean-Philippe Schreiber, *De curatoren van het getto: de vereniging van de joden in België tijdens de nazi-bezetting* (Tielt: Lanoo, 2004); Michel Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal: l'UGIF face aux réalités de la shoah, 1941-1944* (Paris: Liana Levi, 2003); Willy Lindwer, *Het fatale dilemma: De Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam, 1941-1943* (Den Haag: SDU Uitgeverij Koninkinnegracht, 1995).

depended upon circumstances and decisions that were made outside the confines of national borders. The essentially transnational nature of these organisations is exemplified by the recurring meetings in Berlin between Judenreferenten Wilhelm Zöpf, Kurt Asche and Theodor Dannecker, Nazi experts on Jewish affairs who were responsible for the Jewish organisations in the Netherlands, Belgium and France respectively.<sup>3</sup> During these meetings, they discussed progress towards the solution of the so-called ‘Jewish problem’, the implementation of anti-Jewish legislations and other ways that might unify anti-Jewish policies in western Europe.<sup>4</sup> Often held in the presence of SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann, these meetings symbolise the transnational nature of the implementation of the ‘Final Solution’ in Europe more broadly and in western Europe in particular. A more detailed analysis of the level and timing of anti-Jewish directives points to some form of cooperation between those Nazis who were responsible for the supervision of the Jewish organisations.

The implementation of the yellow star is an example of this. After the Wannsee Conference in Berlin on 20 January 1942, during which the so-called ‘Final solution to the Jewish question’ and the deportation all European Jews to forced labour and extermination camps in Poland was discussed, Dannecker wanted to facilitate deportation by introducing the yellow star in France.<sup>5</sup> In order to overcome the objections of the Military Administration, which was sensitive to Admiral François Darlan’s prediction of a negative response from the French non-Jewish population, he encouraged his counterparts in Belgium and the Netherlands to introduce this distinctive sign simultaneously. In a telegram sent to the German authorities in Brussels in February 1942, Dannecker proposed to negotiate with the Military Befehlshaber of Belgium and the occupied French zone on this matter.<sup>6</sup> In response, the head of the Security Police in France, Helmut Knochen, proposed a meeting between the Judenreferenten of the Netherlands, Belgium and France

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the report on the meeting between Eichmann, Zöpf, Asche and Dannecker in Berlin on 4 March 1942, XXVI-18, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC), Mémorial de la Shoah; Telegram of senior commander of the SiPo-SD in Paris Helmut Knochen to SiPo-SD commander in Brussels Ernst Ehlers concerning the yellow star, 10 March, 1942, XLIX1-49, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Dannecker’s report on a meeting between Zöpf, Asche and Dannecker in Berlin, 15 June 1942, Eichmann Trial documents TR.3-585, Yad Vashem; Yaacov Lozowick, *Hitler’s Bureaucrats. The Nazi Security Police and the Banality of Evil* (London/New York: Continuum, 2002), 88–92, 100–105, 190–193.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, “The Nazis and the Jews in Occupied Western Europe, 1940-1944” in: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (1982), 700-701.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 234-240.

<sup>6</sup> Telegram of Dannecker to the German authorities in Brussels concerning the introduction of the yellow star in occupied France, 26 February 1942, XLIXa-45, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 235-236.

on 14 March to discuss the implementation of the measure.<sup>7</sup> Even though, as we will see, the idea of a simultaneous implementation of the star failed, this shows that the timing of its introduction in Belgium and the Netherlands depended upon the initiative of the French Judenreferent. The structures in which the Jewish organisations were forced to operate were in large part defined by processes that were not limited by their country's borders. This idea is reinforced by postwar statements from leading Nazi officials such as Willy Lages, the German chief of the Sicherheitsdienst (SD) in Amsterdam. As head of the Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auswanderung (Central Bureau for the Jewish Emigration), he was responsible for the deportation of Dutch Jews. After the war, Lages referred to visits from his colleagues in Belgium and France, describing how the men kept one another informed about the progress of the organisations in 'their' countries.<sup>8</sup> The underlying rationale was that uniform anti-Jewish laws had to be implemented at a similar pace in the three countries. This transnational aspect has barely been addressed in existing historiography because of the prevailing analyses of these Jewish bodies in their national contexts.

Restricting historical examination of the Jewish organisations to the nation-state makes it difficult to contextualise the choices made by these organisations' leaderships, and this in turn risks fostering moral judgements.<sup>9</sup> The behaviour of leaders is often analysed on an individual basis and proper attention is not paid to the larger situational circumstances from which leaders emerged. With the exception of some monographs, including those of Vicki Caron and Michel Laffitte on France, little overall attention is given to the position of the leaders in the prewar Jewish communities in western Europe, or to how the nature of particular Jewish communities affected

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<sup>7</sup> Meeting of the Judenreferenten at the RSHA - IVB4, 4 March 1942, Berlin, XXVI-18, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Telegram of Knochen to Ehlers concerning the distinctive sign for Jews, 10 March 1942, XLIXa-49, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Meeting report of Asche and Dannecker concerning the identification of Jews, 15 March 1942, as printed in: Klarsfeld, *Recueil des documents*, 1er Janvier 1942 au 31 Mai 1942.

<sup>8</sup> Statement of Willy Lages, Nationaal Archief (NA), Centraal Archief voor de Bijzondere Rechtspleging (CABR), nummer toegang 2.09.09 inventarisnummer 107491 I (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>9</sup> The term 'leadership' will be used to address those who stood at the helm of the Jewish organisations in Western Europe. Dan Michman proposed the term 'headship' as an alternative in the context of the Jewish organisations. However, despite the objections raised by Michman to the use of the term 'leadership', the council board members did fulfil a leadership function. The tasks they took on and the decisions they were forced to make can in my opinion best be understood through this term. See: Dan Michman, "Jewish Leadership in Extremis" in: Dan Stone, *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (New York: Palgrave: Macmillan, 2004), 319-340; Dan Michman, "'Judenräte' und 'Judenvereinigungen' unter nationalsozialistischer Herrschaft: Aufbau und Anwendung eines verwaltungsmäßigen Kozepts" in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* Vol. 46, No. 4 (1998), 293-304.

their leadership.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the decision-making processes of the Jewish organisations and their general operations depended upon the decisions and actions of central board members. At the same time, these decisions relied strongly on larger (socio-)historical developments where these leaders generally had little influence. A comparative analysis of the varying external conditions in which the organisations were forced to operate highlights the importance of these factors.

Furthermore, little research has been done on the workings of the Jewish organisations within the broader context of German persecution of the Jews in western Europe. As a result, the depiction of German attitudes towards the organisations has been oversimplified. The institutions have traditionally been seen as instruments of Nazi oppression, effectively aiding the process of identifying, registering, isolating and deporting the Jews they were ostensibly representing. Accordingly, they have been assessed as part of debates about the mortality rates of the Jews in individual countries (25%, 40% and 75% in France, Belgium and the Netherlands respectively).<sup>11</sup> As a result, the Dutch Jewish Council, which functioned more effectively, is considered to have played a more pivotal role than other similar organisations.<sup>12</sup> The problem with this approach is that it is based on the highly contested intentionalist perspective which considers that the ‘road to Auschwitz’ was carefully planned and premeditated. If we accept this viewpoint, then we also have to accept that Jewish organisations were established in order to carry out the orchestrated process of removing Jews from occupied countries. However, this approach has long been challenged, first and most notably in the early 1960s by Raul Hilberg, who suggested that an order for the so-called ‘Final Solution’ might not have existed. Instead, he proposed that the genocide of the Jews resulted from a sequence of decisions. To him, the annihilation of European Jewry was above all ‘functionalist’, a bureaucratic process of destruction.<sup>13</sup> Rather than trying to pinpoint the precise course of events that would explain Nazi policies in terms of continuity, some historians became

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<sup>10</sup> For France, see: Vicki Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish refugee crisis, 1933-1942* (Stanford: University Press, 1999). Caron provides a thorough overview of the impact of the prewar refugee stream on the leadership of the Jewish community. However, she does not examine how the prewar structures affected the nature of the UGIF’s leadership; Michel Laffitte, “Between Memory and Lapse of Memory: The First UGIF Board of Directors” in: John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell (eds.), *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 674-687. For the Netherlands and Belgium, such analyses are conspicuously absent.

<sup>11</sup> For an overview of the mortality rates, see: Hans Blom, “De vervolging van de Joden in Nederland in internationaal vergelijkend perspectief” in: *Gids*, Vol. 150, No. 6/7 (1987), 494.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Griffioen and Zeller, “Jodenvervolging in Nederland en België tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog: Een Vergelijkende Analyse” in: *Oorlogsdocumentatie ’40-’45*, Vol. 8 (1997), 38-49; Hans Blom, “The Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands: A Comparative Western European Perspective” in: *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 19 (1989), 347-349.

<sup>13</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (London: Allen, 1961), 177.

increasingly convinced of the Holocaust's unplanned nature and of the reduced role of Hitler in the decision-making process.<sup>14</sup>

Decades of debate ensued between 'functionalists' and 'intentionalists', and those who positioned themselves somewhere inbetween. The functionalists focussed on the structure of the Nazi regime while the intentionalists focussed on Hitler's ideology and intentions to explain the course of events. In 1998, Longerich proposed a model in which both views were combined, noting that vaguely-worded orders required the personal initiative of those in authority locally, who possessed considerable latitude.<sup>15</sup> This more balanced view focussed on the interactions between central and local authorities. Kershaw shared this view in his biography of Hitler, where he argued that the Nazi leader approved the initiatives of those 'working towards the Führer', ultimately turning into what we now know as the 'Final Solution', without any clear or decisive turning points.<sup>16</sup> It is clear that historiography has evolved during recent decades so that we can no longer understand the nature of these Jewish organisations in the context of the intentionalist perspective.

By focussing on the broader transnational context of the Jewish organisations and of the National-Socialist regime, this thesis builds upon current trends in historiography that explain Nazi rule in Europe as unplanned and irrational, represented by the work of historians including Mark Mazower and Dan Michman. Mazower has focussed primarily on eastern Europe, arguing that the incredible speed of military expansion there outpaced the administrative and intellectual readiness of those Nazis responsible for the implementation of genocidal measures. This, according to Mazower, explains improvisation on a local level.<sup>17</sup> Michman centred his research around the eastern European ghettos, claiming that the Nazis 'never had a clear and unequivocal definition of what the ghetto was or should be'.<sup>18</sup> This thesis situates such findings in western Europe, and reveals that the same characteristics can be identified in the context of the western European Jewish representative organisations. It shows that the German position vis-à-vis these organisations was not

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Uwe Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1972), and Karl Schleunes' *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews* (Illinois: University Press, 1970).

<sup>15</sup> Peter Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung: Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung* (München: Piper, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1936: Hubris* (London: Allan Lane, 1998); *Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis* (London: Allen Lane, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How The Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Dan Michman, *The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos During the Holocaust* (New York / Cambridge: University Press, 2011), 3.



decided in a political or geographical vacuum. It also reveals that the German administration was never completely unified, nor had the sole overriding aim to deceive Jewish leaders into assisting with the process of destruction throughout the war. Rather, the history of the organisations' establishment is characterised by improvisation and rivalry between the various institutions involved in overseeing Jewish affairs.

These institutional rivalries materialised differently in the Netherlands, Belgium and France and contributed to the establishment of diverse Jewish representative organisations, despite attempts to unify anti-Jewish policies in western Europe. Other factors also contributed to their differing forms and functions. In order to understand the origins of the organisations' functional differences, this thesis analyses: 1) their socio-historical foundations and the ways that they represented the Jewish communities, 2) the histories of their establishment and the variations in their structures and, 3) their possible roles as covers for clandestine activities. This comparative approach allows us to better understand the western European Jewish organisations in their respective countries. It also enables us to distance ourselves from the moral approach of apportioning blame for the deportations. Contrasting the three case studies leads to a fuller review of those factors which contributed to variations in form and function. This, in turn, allows for a better understanding of the period of Nazi occupation at large. Other key themes in the historiography of the Jewish organisations can be better understood when positioned in a comparative context. These include questions about how representative these organisations were and about when and how their leaders decided to take up responsibility or resign it.

In contrast to the recent comparative study on the Netherlands, Belgium and France conducted by Griffioen and Zeller, this thesis does not assume that the function of the organisations and the decisions of their leaders were a contributing factor to the different mortality rates of the Jews in the three countries.<sup>19</sup> Many factors have already been investigated to attempt to explain these differences. In 1961, Raul Hilberg argued that the discrepancies might be explained by a combination of circumstances including, but not limited to, geographical location, different occupational structures and the overwhelming number of Jews who were concentrated in Amsterdam.<sup>20</sup> Other scholars have emphasised additional aspects including the fact that the

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<sup>19</sup> Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België 1940-1945: overeenkomsten, verschillen, oorzaken* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011), 665-686.

<sup>20</sup> Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 365.

Netherlands had had no experience of the First World War, which meant that there was no existing model for the organisation of resistance groups, and the fact that Jews living in the Netherlands were well integrated in Dutch society and therefore had a false sense of security.<sup>21</sup> The almost unlimited power of the German SS and police in the organisation and execution of deportations from the Netherlands, compared to Belgium and France, has also been highlighted.<sup>22</sup> Assessing the role of the Jewish organisations and, more specifically, their leaders in relation to deportation rates is problematic for two reasons: 1) it includes an inherent value judgement; and 2) the organisations had little influence over their operational efficiency as their room for manoeuvre was predominantly decided by the contexts in which they operated. Therefore, this thesis primarily examines the complexity of the situation in which the Dutch, Belgian and French Jewish organisations operated, providing a nuanced, differentiated and multi-causal understanding of the varied responses of their leaders and members in the context of the harsh daily realities with which they were confronted.

### **‘Jewish Councils’ in Europe: a historiographical overview**

In both western and eastern Europe, historiography on the ‘Jewish Councils’ began in the immediate postwar period with an understandably emotional and strongly moralistic response. Later, historians attempted to reach a more objective (though still morally weighted) account of their function and the choices made by their leaders. Most of the literature remains marginal, hidden in more general works on the histories of these countries during the Nazi occupation. In the last two decades, attempts to bridge this gap have produced monographs on the Jewish organisations of Belgium and France. Rudi van Doorslaer, Jean-Philippe Schreiber and Michel Laffitte have published studies focussing on the AJB and the UGIF respectively. Their work has expanded our understanding of the structure and function of these organisations. Yet their analyses remains limited by national borders. In the Netherlands, the Joodsche Raad is still contentious and no monograph on the Council has yet been written apart from Knoop’s critical assessment, which dates back to 1983. An overarching study of these organisations in western Europe does not yet exist.

In this respect, western European historiography has lagged behind its eastern European counterpart. In 1972, Trunk published what is still considered to be the key comparative work on

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<sup>21</sup> See, for example: Blom, “De vervolging van de joden in Nederland in internationaal vergelijkend perspectief”, 501.

<sup>22</sup> Dan Michman “The Uniqueness of the Joodse Raad in the Western European Context” in: *Dutch Jewish History*, Vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1993), 376; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 651.

Jewish Councils in eastern Europe. Despite the limited availability of primary sources, Trunk was able to give a very detailed and valuable insight into their nature. In his work, the divergent characteristics of the *Judenräte* in various German occupied countries, such as the Councils' relationship with German authorities, were highlighted. Moreover, Trunk assessed the various stages of the organisations' activities over the course of occupation and the relationship between the *Judenräte* and clandestine groups. One of his central conclusions is that Jewish participation or non-participation in the deportations had no substantial influence on the final outcome of the Holocaust in eastern Europe.<sup>23</sup> As a result, Trunk's work became the foundation of a new approach towards Jewish representative organisations that was less emotional and more focussed on the specific historical context in which they operated.

In the period that followed, prominent Holocaust historians such as Yehuda Bauer, Yitzak Arad, Israel Gutman, Aharon Weiss and Dan Michman entered the debate.<sup>24</sup> This, in turn, fostered new insights into the broader theme of Jewish leadership during the Nazi occupation. In the edited volume *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945* (1977), some of these historians reflected upon the function of local Jewish representative organisations. By underlining the particular circumstances of the ghettos in which the *Judenräte* were forced to operate, their analyses resulted in the gradual loosening of the more generalised, stigmatising approach to the study of Jewish organisations.<sup>25</sup> Increasingly, *Judenräte* came to be regarded as an 'expression of the Jewish community's desire to conduct its affairs within the framework of a hostile regime whose exact intentions were unknown'.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, there has not been a conceptual breakthrough in the study of eastern European *Judenräte* since the publication of Trunk's comparative work. This is the direct result of a lack of comparative works that have built upon his analysis. By providing a comparative perspective on the Jewish organisations of western Europe, this thesis contributes not only to the development of western European historiography, but also to that of eastern Europe, so that the conclusions of this

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<sup>23</sup> Trunk, *Judenrat*, xxxv.

<sup>24</sup> For an overview of the different views in the debate on the Jewish organisations, see: Aharon Weiss, "Jewish Leaders in Occupied Poland: Postures and Attitudes" in: *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 12 (1977), 335-365.

<sup>25</sup> See the various articles in Yisrael Gutman and Cynthia Haft (eds.), *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe, 1933-1945: Proceedings of the Third Yad Vashem International Historical Conference – April 1977* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1979).

<sup>26</sup> Yehuda Bauer, "The Judenräte: some conclusions", in: Gutman and Haft (eds.), *Patterns of Jewish Leadership*, 397.

research can be applied to Jewish leadership in Europe under Nazi occupation more broadly. The themes discussed in this study – including Jewish leadership, the social foundation of the Jewish organisations and their involvement in resistance activities – are common to both eastern and western Europe, and also apply to the southern and south-eastern regions of the continent. Therefore, this research fosters new insights into the broader theme of Jewish representation during Nazi occupation.

### *The development of historiography on the JR: the Netherlands*

The historiography on the Joodsche Raad in the Netherlands was personal and emotional in the initial postwar years. This is a tendency that can be identified more broadly in both eastern and western Europe. The ways in which the activities of the JR were perceived both by scholars and others who publicly disseminated their views on the Council seemed, at times, to depend upon the aid they themselves had received from the organisation. The first monograph on the Joodsche Raad was published in 1945 by the non-Jewish lawyer Koert Berkley, son-in-law of the chairman of the Council's finance committee. Berkley focussed chiefly on its establishment history and activities. In his conclusion, which serves as an overall assessment of role of the JR, Berkley underlined that the organisation had attempted to serve the interests of the Jewish community. In addition, he emphasised that the JR was established by German order and that its leadership had tried to buy time by hampering anti-Jewish regulations.<sup>27</sup> In the years that followed, a more critical evaluation of the JR followed, in the public as well as in academic domains.

After 1945, emotional responses to the JR were reinforced by the so-called 'honour trial', which was instituted at the beginning of 1946. In this, leading members of the Council were tried by their own Jewish community members who had organised themselves in the Contact-Commissie van de Joodse Coördinatie-Commissies (Contact Commission of the Jewish Coordinating Committees).<sup>28</sup> In December 1947, the honour court ruled that leading Council members had behaved reprehensibly according to various accounts and that they ought to be excluded from all

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<sup>27</sup> Koert P.L. Berkley, *Overzicht van het ontstaan, de werkzaamheden en het streven van den Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Plastica, 1945), 95-96.

<sup>28</sup> Nanno Klaas in 't Veld, *De Joodse Eereraad* ('s Gravenhage: SDU Uitgeverij, 1989), 37; Ido de Haan, "An Unresolved Controversy: the Jewish Honor Court in the Netherlands, 1946-1950" in: L. Jockusch and G. N. Finder (eds.), *Jewish Honor Courts: Revenge, Retribution and Reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust* (Wayne State: University Press, 2016), 117-118.

leading positions in the Jewish community for life.<sup>29</sup> Not only were the JR chairmen Abraham Asscher and David Cohen indicted by the honour court, but they were also officially indicted by the Dutch public prosecutor at the end of 1947 while the honour court was reaching its verdict – a circumstance unique to the Netherlands. The arrest of Asscher and Cohen in November 1947 led to much controversy within the community. Newspaper articles show that the trial was substantially covered both in the Jewish and non-Jewish press. The illegal newspaper *Het Parool* published an article titled ‘Was dat nodig?’ (Was that necessary?) as a response to the arrest of both men in November, after which they were interned ‘like the Dutch collaborators (NSB-ers) and SS-ers’ were.<sup>30</sup> In early 1950, the public prosecutor formulated an indictment in which Asscher and Cohen were accused of helping the enemy by facilitating the deportation of Jews and refusing to accept the advice of those who warned against collaboration with the Germans. Shortly thereafter, however, the charges were dropped. Asscher died in May 1950 and there was a change of sentiment as people longed for a return to normality. Most cases against ‘collaborators’ were dropped and those who were convicted received parole.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the indictments by both the honour court and the public prosecutor are indicative of the unfavourable sentiment vis-à-vis the JR in the immediate postwar period.

This sentiment is also visible in the academic works published in this period. In 1947, the German Jewish journalist Heinz Wielek, who had managed to obtain a position at the Expositur, a department of the Jewish Council where the registration of so-called *Sperren* (exemptions from deportation) were processed, argued that the Joodsche Raad had been ‘submissive’ and ‘naive’. At the same time, he was convinced that its leaders should not be considered traitors.<sup>32</sup> In his personal account of the deportations, *Deportaties: Westerbork, Thersiënstadt, Auschwitz, Gleiwitz* (1945), Siegfried Van den Bergh took a more radical position, vilifying the ‘Jewish leaders’ because they had not shared their supposed knowledge about what awaited the Dutch Jews upon their arrival in eastern Europe.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> De Haan, “The Jewish Honor Court in the Netherlands”, 125.

<sup>30</sup> *Het Parool*, 8-11-1947, Amsterdam, KBII, Inv. No. 1894, NIOD.

<sup>31</sup> De Haan, “The Jewish Honor Court in the Netherlands”, 127.

<sup>32</sup> Heinz Wielek, *De oorlog die Hitler won* (Amsterdam: Amsterdamsche Boek- en Courantmij, 1947), 108.

<sup>33</sup> Siegfried van den Bergh, *Deportaties: Westerbork, Thersiënstadt, Auschwitz, Gleiwitz* (Bussum: Van Dishoeck, 1945), 10.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the first detailed overviews of the history of the Netherlands during the Second World War appeared, with varying analyses and assessments of the role of the Joodsche Raad. A few years after the initial emotional responses, the first attempt was made to write a detailed overview of the history of the Netherlands during the Second World War by Abel Herzberg. Herzberg survived Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and had defended the joint-chairmen of the JR when they were censured by the Jewish honour court in 1947. His book, *Kroniek der Jodenvervolging* (1950), was the outcome of the research he had conducted for their defence.<sup>34</sup> It has been argued that Herzberg's personal involvement with both Asscher and Cohen undoubtedly helps explain his more conciliatory depiction of their behaviour.<sup>35</sup> He underlined that Asscher and Cohen were forced to function in isolation and were unable to find a sounding board for their ideas within the Jewish community.<sup>36</sup> He also concluded that they had tried their best to support their fellow Jews, emphasising that they had worked hard, acted cordially and had been very dedicated. Despite the fact that things worked out in an unforeseen, terrible way, he concluded that their motivations had been honest.<sup>37</sup> His analysis had a major impact as it was published while the previously mentioned criminal case court was being filed against the Council leaders.<sup>38</sup> Partly as a result of Herzberg's claims, the charges against Asscher and Cohen were dropped, as we have seen.<sup>39</sup> Herzberg's work also became a central text for later authors and 'opened the debate on the role of the Jewish Council in earnest by defending aspects of its conduct' as historian Bob Moore has indicated.<sup>40</sup> In subsequent historical analyses, however, the organisation would be regarded less favourably.

In 1965, a radical stance was taken by Jacques Presser, who had unsuccessfully tried to flee to England after the German invasion of the Netherlands. During the first year of the German occupation, due to German anti-Jewish regulations, he was first suspended from his job and subsequently fired on 1 March 1941. In 1943, his wife Dé Appel was deported to Sobibór where she was killed. Presser went into hiding in May 1943 and, after the war, he became a Professor at the

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<sup>34</sup> Johannes Houwink ten Cate, "De justitie en de Joodsche Raad" in: E. Jonker en M. van Rossem, *Geschiedenis en cultuur: achttien opstellen* ('s Gravenhage: SDU, 1990), 149-168.

<sup>35</sup> Bob Moore, *Victims and Survivors: The Nazi persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, 1940-1945* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 4.

<sup>36</sup> Abel Jacob Herzberg, *Kroniek der Jodenvervolging 1940-1945* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1978; first ed. 1950), 153.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 169.

<sup>38</sup> Houwink ten Cate, "De justitie en de Joodsche Raad", 160-162.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>40</sup> Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 4.

University of Amsterdam (UvA). In 1950, the Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (RIOD) asked him to write the history of the Jews in the Netherlands between 1940 and 1945, which resulted in his momentous work *Ondergang: de vervolging en verdelging van het Nederlandse Jodendom 1940-1945* (1965). Presser blamed the Council chairmen for being submissive and for failing to initiate any form of resistance against the German regulations. Furthermore, he condemned them for their active role in fostering illusions among the Jews who were deported.<sup>41</sup> In what he later considered to be the most central section of his book, Presser wrote on the JR: ‘You have been the tool of our enemies. You have contributed to our removal’.<sup>42</sup> While thousands of copies were sold within days and reprints soon appeared, scholars considered the work to be too emotional, and Presser was criticised for the double standards he seemed to adopt: he had requested and received help from the Jewish Council himself during the war.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, Presser’s work, published two years after Hannah Arendt’s provocative statements about the detrimental role of Jewish leaders in the deportation of their coreligionists, set the agenda for future discussions in the Netherlands.<sup>44</sup>

Presser’s work also influenced Louis (Loe) de Jong, shaping his perspective on the Joodsche Raad. After Germany occupied the Netherlands, De Jong had fled to London where he became a popular political commentator for the Dutch radio broadcast Radio Oranje. After the war, De Jong was asked to write the entire history of the Netherlands during the Second World War.<sup>45</sup> His

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<sup>41</sup> Jacques Presser, *Ondergang: de vervolging en verdelging van het Nederlandse Jodendom, 1940-1945*, Vol. 1 (Den Haag: Staatsuitgeverij Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 507-509.

<sup>42</sup> Presser, *Ondergang*, Vol. 1, 514; Conny Kristel, *Geschiedenis als opdracht: Abel Herzberg, Jacques Presser en Loe de Jong over de jodenvervolging* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1998), 147. Cohen was very disappointed by Presser’s analysis of the JR, see: Letter of David Cohen to Line van Gelder-Cohen, 20 June 1965, as cited in Piet Schrijvers, *Rome, Athene, Jeruzalem: leven en werk van Prof. dr. David Cohen* (Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij, 2000), 221.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Henriette Boas, “The Persecution and Destruction of Dutch Jewry 1940-1945” in: *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 6 (1967), 366-367, 372. Both Herzberg and Kisch also detested Presser’s criticism of the Council.

<sup>44</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), 104-119. In this well-known work, Arendt among other things underlined ‘the role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people’ (p. 104) and argued that if the Jewish people had been unorganised and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and six million people (p. 111). Dutch Jewish Council chairman David Cohen wrote a report in response to Arendt’s publication in which he claimed, among other things, that Arendt had made many mistakes and that her view was a classic example of Jewish self-hatred, see: Schrijvers, *Rome, Athene, Jeruzalem*, 236.

<sup>45</sup> Loe de Jong, *De Duitse vijfde colonne in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1953). The extraordinary military and political successes of Hitler made citizens believe that these successes could be explained by the ‘invisible hand’ of intelligence agents of the Fifth Column. De Jong provided an overview of the hysteria surrounding this *Vijfde Colonne* and proved that it had been a mere projection of fears that had existed in the Netherlands. The central conclusion of his doctoral thesis was that the *Colonne* had not played a significant role in German military victories between 1939-1940.

subsequent fourteen-volume *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (The Kingdom of the Netherlands During the Second World War, published between 1969 and 1991) highlighted a central problem in Dutch historiography: the ‘categorisation of individuals, institutions and their actions as either *goed* (correct) or *fout* (false)’.<sup>46</sup> Since De Jong’s work focussed on these two extremes, a moral judgement was inherent in the work, leaving little space for the grey areas in between. On the role of the Joodsche Raad, De Jong’s judgement was harsh: they had aided the Germans in the deportation of Dutch Jewry, he argued. As a result, he considered the Council leadership to be co-responsible for the fate that befell the Jews.<sup>47</sup> By claiming that the JR members could have refused to cooperate with the Germans, De Jong seems to believe that a refusal to do so would have been of benefit to the Jews in the Netherlands. In doing so, he ignored the fact that if Asscher and Cohen had refused to cooperate, the Germans would simply have appointed a new leadership.

In 1983, journalist Hans Knoop presented an even more critical verdict. In the only monograph dedicated solely to the Joodsche Raad, Knoop suggested that the JR was a creation of the two Council chairmen, Asscher and Cohen. Whereas the German representative of Reichskommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart for the city of Amsterdam, Hans Böhmcker, had originally only conceived of a group to represent the Jewish quarter, it was Asscher who proposed the idea of *Judenrat* insisting that Jews should be represented by notables of whom there were none in the Jewish quarter.<sup>48</sup> In light of this claim, Knoop contended that the chairmen were well aware of where their actions might lead. He considered their decision to take the lead over the Jewish community as an act of arrogance by the Jewish bourgeoisie at the cost of poor and working-class Jews.<sup>49</sup> Knoop thereby dismissed the idea that some members of the Amsterdam Jewish community in fact genuinely saw it as their task to take up a leading role under increasingly threatening circumstances. In the 1990s, historians adopted a more distanced perspective, positioning the activities of the JR and the decisions of its leadership in the broader context of German coercion. In 1995, Houwink ten Cate proposed a more nuanced approach by emphasising the difficulties faced by the leadership. He also underlined that although the socio-geographic background of the Council

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<sup>46</sup> Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Loe de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, part VII, Vol. 1 (Den Haag: SDU Uitgeverij Koninginnegracht, 1976), 352.

<sup>48</sup> Hans Knoop, *De Joodsche Raad: Het drama van Abraham Asscher en David Cohen* (Amsterdam/Brussel: Elsevier, 1983), 22.

<sup>49</sup> Knoop, *De Joodsche Raad*, 87-89.



members might have been unbalanced (75% lived in the richest neighbourhoods of Amsterdam), Asscher and Cohen had also exempted middle class Jews from deportation.<sup>50</sup> In doing so, although he did not dismiss the notion that they failed to act in the interest of the poor, Houwink ten Cate challenged the assumption that the Council had only tried to protect the upper class of the Dutch Jewish community.<sup>51</sup>

Between the mid-nineties and the present day, research on the JR has varied between analyses of its establishment history and moral approaches that condemn the Council's elite for refusing to face reality.<sup>52</sup> There still is a strong focus on the small circle of JR leaders and their actions. Wasserstein's recent (2013) contribution, looking at one of the members of the Joodsche Raad, Gertrude van Tijn, is an example of how a more nuanced perspective might be constructed.<sup>53</sup> Wasserstein underlined how beneficial the work of some of the Council's departments was, focussing in particular on social welfare and education. However, his work also demonstrates that there is still a tendency to take a moralistic approach towards the JR and, most often, towards its two chairmen. Before the war, Van Tijn, Asscher and Cohen were all involved together in the Comité voor Bijzondere Joodse Belangen (the Committee for Special Jewish Interests, CBJB), headed by David Cohen and Abraham Asscher in order to protect Jewish interests, and its subcommittee, the Comité voor Joodsche Vluchtelingen (Committee for Jewish Refugees, CvJV). Despite their shared history, for Wasserstein the choices they made concerning social welfare diverged during the course of the war. Wasserstein was keen to promote Van Tijn, who was a known critic of the Council leaders, and especially of David Cohen. As a result, he has again created a

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<sup>50</sup> Johannes Houwink ten Cate, "De Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam 1941-1943" in: Lindwer (ed.), *Het fatale dilemma*, 26.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, an extensive nota written by the Dutch State Prosecutor, mr. L.W.M.M. Drabbe in 1950. He condemned the Council leaders for their failure to participate in resistance activities and accused them of being a *klasse-instituut* (class institute), favouring members of the bourgeoisie over lower-class Jews. In doing so, they had played a repellent political game, he argued. L.W.M.M. Drabbe to attorney general Dullemen, 23 May 1950, Doc. II-366A, NIOD. Others who condemned the Council for being a class institute included Hans Knoop and Élie Aron Cohen, a Jewish doctor who survived Auschwitz and published a doctoral thesis on the German concentration camp. See: Knoop, *De Joodsche Raad*, 22; E.A. Cohen in: *De Volkskrant*, 1 May 1982, KBII-2258, NIOD.

<sup>52</sup> For the contradictory views of Houwink ten Cate and Michman on the history of the establishment of the Joodsche Raad, see: Michman, "The Uniqueness of the Joodse Raad in the Western European Context" and Johannes Houwink ten Cate, "Heydrich's Security Police and the Amsterdam Jewish Council" in: *Dutch Jewish History*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1993), 371-381, 381-393. Other contributors to the topic include Ad van Liempt, Pim Griffioen, Ron Zeller, Hans Blom, Erik Somers, Ido de Haan and Conny Kristel.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard Wasserstein, *Gertrude van Tijn en het lot van de Nederlandse Joden* (Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers, 2013), 238-256. This work was published in English in 2014 as *The ambiguity of virtue: Gertrude van Tijn and the fate of the Dutch Jews* (Cambridge/Massachusetts: Harvard University Press).

moral dichotomy in which Van Tijn is seen as *goed* (correct), while the JR leaders are perceived as *fout* (false).

### *The development of historiography on the AJB: Belgium*

In Belgium, historiography on the Nazi occupation developed differently. The first studies on the German occupation of the country only appeared around the mid-1960s. Contrary to developments in other countries – including the Netherlands and France – there was no remarkable surge of research in Belgium in the period directly following the end of the war and initial studies were very limited in scope.<sup>54</sup> Several reasons might explain this delayed development. First, there was the so-called *Koningskwesie*, a political conflict between the Belgian King and the government. Unlike the government, which had gone into exile, Belgian King Leopold III had retreated as a Prisoner of War to his castle in Laken after the Belgian capitulation. As he was convinced that Germany would win the war, he wanted to safeguard his position as leader of Belgium. However, Leopold did not receive any jurisdiction over the country during Germany's occupation. Both during and after the war, his choices were severely criticised.<sup>55</sup> This complex history of the Belgian occupation reinforced the more broadly shared notion in western Europe that it was important to look forward rather than backwards in order to rebuild one's country. This discouraged Belgian historians from investigating the German occupation of the country in the postwar period. The continued presence of a large majority of immigrant Jews who did not feel a compelling affinity with Belgian-Jewish history and the linguistic complexity (knowledge of French, Dutch, German, Yiddish, Hebrew and English is required in order to carry out research effectively) also worked as deterrents.<sup>56</sup>

Although the first comprehensive scholarly works on the occupation in Belgium only appeared in the 1960s, the Belgian judiciary was forced to deal with the issue of the AJB as early as October 1944, when Lazare-Maurice Liebmann filed a complaint with the Brussels Military Court against the organisation's leadership.<sup>57</sup> Liebmann, whose father had unsuccessfully tried to obtain a

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<sup>54</sup> Dan Michman, "Research on the Holocaust: Belgium and General" in: Ibid. (ed.), *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Studies, 1998), 20.

<sup>55</sup> On the history of the *Koningskwesie* and King Leopold III during the Nazi occupation of Belgium, see: Jan Velaers and Herman van Goethem, *Leopold III: De koning, het land, de oorlog* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1994).

<sup>56</sup> Michman, "Research on the Holocaust: Belgium and General", 25.

<sup>57</sup> Nico Wouters, "De Jodenvervolging voor de Belgische rechters, 1944-1951" in: Rudi van Doorslaer, Emmanuel Debruyne, Frank Seberechts and Nico Wouters (eds.), *Gewillig België: overheid en jodenvervolging tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam / Antwerpen: Meulenhoff / Manteau, 2007), 915-922.

leading position in the AJB, blamed the organisations' leaders, and the Brussels branch leader Salomon van den Berg in particular, for their arrogant and 'immoral' behaviour.<sup>58</sup> He filed a complaint based on Penal Article 118-bis and 115, dealing with political and economic collaboration.<sup>59</sup> Roger van Praag, who had worked for the Comité de Défense des Juifs (Jewish Defense Committee, CDJ), a leftist organisation uniting various Jewish organisations that were engaged in clandestine activities, filed a second complaint with the Military Court. His main criticism was that the AJB leadership had established registration files, including lists of names, had propagated the creation of local AJB sections, and had distributed summonses for mandatory labor.<sup>60</sup> As in the Netherlands, these charges eventually evolved into a move to officially investigate the actions of the seven AJB leaders, lasting throughout 1945 and 1946. In this period, several other local leading AJB members were also brought to court.<sup>61</sup> For more than two years, however, there was no actual investigation. In the end, the Belgian Military Prosecutor decided to drop the charges and permanently closed the cases against the less prominent defendants in January 1947. Six months later, it closed the cases against Ullman, Blum, Benedictus and Van den Berg, arguing that the leadership of the AJB had followed the Belgian policy of 'the lesser evil', meaning cooperation with the Germans in order to prevent a potentially worse outcome, and therefore could not be convicted for collaboration or betrayal of the Belgian State. According to the judgement, the AJB had worked with the Germans to protect the interests of the Jewish people, and never intended to betray the interests of the Belgian State.<sup>62</sup>

It took almost twenty years before scholars started paying attention to the AJB during the war. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the first publications on the German occupation and the AJB appeared. On one end of the spectrum, scholars perceived the Association as a resistance organisation, while others underlined the detrimental role it had played in the deportation of Jews

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<sup>58</sup> Veerle van den Daelen and Nico Wouters, "'The Lesser Evil' of Jewish Collaboration? The Absence of a Jewish Honor Court in Postwar Belgium" in: Laura Jockusch and Gabriel N. Finder, *Jewish Honor Courts: Revenge, Retribution and Reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015), 198. Also see: André Donnet, *Le procès de l'A.J.B. n'aura pas lieu: Analyse du dossier 8036/44 de l'Auditorat Militaire de Bruxelles* (unpublished PhD thesis).

<sup>59</sup> Van den Daelen and Wouters, "'The Lesser Evil' of Jewish Collaboration?", 207.

<sup>60</sup> Statement by Roger van Praag, 26 November, 1946. Archives of the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office, Brussels, Penal file AJB (8036/44).

<sup>61</sup> These were Salomon Ullman, Maurice Benedictus, Alfred Blum, Salomon van den Berg, David Lazare, Nico David Workum and Juda (Jules) Mehlwurm. See: Van den Daelen and Wouters, "'The Absence of a Jewish Honor Court in Postwar Belgium'", 208.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-212.

from Belgium.<sup>63</sup> In 1965, Betty Bieloguska-Garfinkels published a study on resistance activities during the war. In it, she also discussed the activities of the AJB. The fact that she was the wife of the former local Luik AJB secretary, Grigorijs Garfinkels, contributed to her conciliatory and even positive approach towards the Association. She venerated the AJB by pretending that the Comité de Défense des Juifs had been its clandestine extension.<sup>64</sup> Although some members were indeed involved in clandestine activities and worked for the CDJ, her portrayal of the AJB as a resistance organisation was severely criticised by others, including French historian Lucien Steinberg in his study on the Jewish Defense Committee: *Le Comité de défense des Juifs en Belgique, 1942-1944* (1973).<sup>65</sup> Steinberg proposed a more balanced perspective on the AJB's functions. In his view, the AJB had played a detrimental role as an intermediary in the deportation of Belgian Jews to death camps in eastern Europe.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, he acknowledged that the AJB had become a cloak for clandestine activities at a later stage, impeding the very regime that had created the instrument in the first place. By doing this, Steinberg made an important step in acknowledging that the nature of the AJB had changed over time and that it had fulfilled various – apparently contradictory – roles simultaneously.

Between 1983 and 1996, Belgian historian Maxime Steinberg published the first comprehensive study on the fate of Belgian Jewry: *L'étoile et le fusil*. Despite his attempt to provide a solid overview of the period of Nazi occupation, armed Jewish resistance and German perpetrators were the main subjects of his analysis. As a result, his approach to the war contained an inherent moral dichotomy. This becomes apparent in his largely negative and incriminating discussion of the AJB, in which he focused exclusively on the correlation between the activities of the AJB and the *Endlösung*. Steinberg positioned the actions of the AJB directly in opposition to the attitude of resistance organisations and argued that the AJB had remained in control of the 'legal ghetto' during the first period of occupation, informing their fellow Jews that they should obey German demands up to the very limits of the politics of 'the lesser evil'.<sup>67</sup> Throughout the last two

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<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Betty Garfinkels, *Les Belges face à la persécution raciale, 1940-1944* (Brussel: ULB, 1965); Marcel Liebman, *Né juif. Une enfance juive pendant la guerre* (Paris/ Gembloux: Duculot, 1977).

<sup>64</sup> Garfinkels, *Les Belges face à la persécution raciale*, 88-92.

<sup>65</sup> Lucien Steinberg, *Le comité de défense des Juifs en Belgique, 1942-1944* (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université, 1973), passim.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>67</sup> Maxime Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil: La traque des juifs 1942-1944*, Vol. 2 (Bruxelles: Vie ouvrière, 1986), 248. This work was published in three parts. Part 1: *La question juive 1940-1942*, Part 2: *1942. Les cent jours de la déportation des juifs de Belgique*. Part 3 (2 volumes): *La traque des juifs 1942-1944*.

years of the occupation, the AJB, in his view, played only a minor role due to increasing resistance and disobedience among the Jews. By refusing to perceive illegality as an alternative approach to Germany's occupation of the country, Steinberg observed, the decisions of the AJB leaders were ill-considered: 'their responsibility lay in the fact that they bowed down before the Germans [...], they submitted to the orders of the occupier, and urged the Jewish population to follow this legal behaviour'.<sup>68</sup>

Only at the end of the 1990s did Michman propose a more balanced perspective. In 1998, he rejected the notion that the actions of the AJB leaders should be exclusively regarded in the context of the so-called 'Final Solution'. A closer look at the emergence of the AJB, together with a comparative viewpoint would, in his view, contribute to more 'subtle conclusions'.<sup>69</sup> Six years earlier, Michman had published an article in which he compared the Dutch Joodsche Raad with its western European counterparts. The failure of subsequent historians to satisfy Michman's demands for more comparative analysis was the result of two factors. First, the number of publications in Belgium on the subject was minimal up until the late 1990s. Second, foreign researchers seemed little inclined to include the Belgian case in their (comparative) studies since doing so would require solid knowledge of both French and Dutch.<sup>70</sup>

The most recent publication on the history of the AJB is an edited volume by Rudi Van Doorslaer and Jean-Philippe Schreiber in 2004. The contributors cover various themes relating to the Association's establishment, activities and postwar reception. The focus on the German perspective – in particular the continuous struggles between the Military Administration and the Sipo-SD – contributes to a better understanding of the opportunities the AJB had to thwart German policies. At the same time, the analysis is almost exclusively limited to the AJB and Belgium itself. Moreover, the work is largely descriptive and lacks a thorough analytical framework. A broader perspective outlining the AJB's antecedents or its position in contemporary Belgian society, for instance, is absent. In addition, the authors were unable to distance themselves from judging

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., "The Trap of Legality: The Association of the Jews of Belgium" in: Michael Marrus, *The Nazi Holocaust: The Victims of the Holocaust*, Vol. 2 (Toronto: Mecklermedia, 1989), 820.

<sup>69</sup> Michman, "Research on the Holocaust in Belgium and in General: History and Context" in: Michman (ed.), *Belgium and the Holocaust*, 33.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 27-28. Only two non-Belgian scholars, Canadian historian Michael Marrus and Dutch historian Hans Blom, tried to integrate Belgium into a broader picture and to draw conclusions from the resulting comparisons with other countries. Michael Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988); Blom, "The persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands: a comparative Western European perspective", passim.

historical events, despite their attempts to use a more objective approach. This is most obvious in the concluding chapter where Van Doorslaer and Schreiber condemn the AJB leaders for favouring the small minority of assimilated Jews over the more numerous but less fortunate group of Jewish immigrants.<sup>71</sup> In their view, while the AJB had begun with good intentions, it had been unable to disentangle itself from a situation in which it was used by the Nazis in ways that were detrimental to Belgian Jewry.<sup>72</sup>

### *The development of historiography on the UGIF: France*

The development of French historiography is less linear than that of the Netherlands and Belgium, where the approaches to the JR and the AJB evolved from moralistic studies focussed on individual leaders to attempts to position their actions within the context of the German occupation. This might be explained by the fact that the UGIF itself was less of a uniform organisation than its western European counterparts. The organisation in fact consisted of two organisations, one in the occupied and one in the unoccupied zone, and each functioned distinctly.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the organisations that were forced under the umbrella of the UGIF in the unoccupied zone also generally functioned independently during the occupation. In the immediate postwar period, approaches to the activities of the UGIF were nuanced compared to the literature on the JR in the Netherlands and the AJB in Belgium. In the period that followed, approaches varied from moralistic assessments of the UGIF leaders to attempts to understand their activities in the broader context of the German persecution of the Jews.

Between 1944 and 1947, the UGIF leaders were, like their Dutch counterparts, tried by a so-called *jury d'honneur* (honour court) imposed by the French Jewish resistance.<sup>74</sup> The aim was to restore the internal cohesion of the Jewish community, which had been seriously dented by wartime experiences.<sup>75</sup> There were two instances in which this was attempted. First, the Comité d'Unité et

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<sup>71</sup> Van Doorslaer and Schreiber, "Besluit" in: *De curatoren van het getto*, 356.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 335-337.

<sup>73</sup> It should be noted that the 'occupied zone' and 'unoccupied zone' were renamed the 'northern zone' and 'southern zone' respectively after the German invasion of southern France in November 1942 (in response to the Allied landings in North-Africa).

<sup>74</sup> Simon Perego, "Jurys d'honneur: the stakes and limits of purges among Jews in France after Liberation" in: Laura Jockusch and Gabriel N. Finder (eds), *Jewish Honor Courts: revenge, retribution, and reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015), 137-164.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

de Défense des Juifs de France (Committee for the Unity and Defence of the Jews of France, CUDJF) arrested UGIF's president Georges Edinger and set up a purge commission that investigated the activities of the organisation's employees.<sup>76</sup> Second, the Conseil Représentatif des Israélites de France (Representative Council of the Israelites of France, CRIF) created a jury of honour to investigate, among other things, the culpability of five leading UGIF members in the arrest of Jewish children who had been living in Neuilly in one of the organisation's facilities.<sup>77</sup> The CRIF had been established in January 1944 and officially represented both immigrant and French Jews. It was created in order to coordinate political action among Jews in France and included representatives from the Central Consistory, the FSJF, the UJRE and other Bundist, Zionist and youth groups.<sup>78</sup>

The jury concluded that mistakes had been made, but the president of the CRIF Léon Meiss launched a follow-up inquiry in January 1947, after which the verdict was reversed in favour of the UGIF. This kept the inquiry from being expanded to examine the conduct of the UGIF in general.<sup>79</sup> Contrary to the Dutch and Belgian cases, the French Court of Justice made no attempt to bring the Jewish leaders to trial. In light of the postwar (moral) reconstruction of the country, this was apparently not considered desirable. The very fact that there was no official judgement of the actions of the UGIF leaders encouraged a re-intensification of moralistic discussions about the relationship between the Germans, Vichy and the UGIF in the first decades after the war.<sup>80</sup> The earliest example of this dates back to 1947, when both leaders of the collaborationist Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives (General Commission for Jewish Affairs, CGQJ), a collaborationist

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>77</sup> Michel Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande* (Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2006), 323-27; Anne Grynberg, "Juger l'UGIF (1944-1950)?" in: Hélène Harter, Antoine Marès et al. (eds), *Terres promises: Mélanges offerts à André Kaspi* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008), 507-526. For the conclusions of the CRIF investigator on the specific case of the deportation of children, see: Comité d'Épuration, *Déportation des enfants: conclusions de l'enquêteur*, CRIF, MDI 311, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>78</sup> The name of the Conseil Représentatif des Israélites de France was subsequently altered to Conseil Représentatif des Juifs de France because the term *Israélites*, commonly used to refer to French Jews specifically, was considered too narrow. For an overview of the establishment of the CRIF, see: Jacques Fredj, "Le Consistoire Central et la création du CRIF" in: *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah: Le Consistoire durant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, No. 169 (2000), 164-180; Ibid., *La Création du C.R.I.F. 1943-1967*, mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction de Jean-Marie Mayeur (Université de Paris, 1988), can be consulted at the CDJC. Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 157, 219; Shannon Fogg, *Stealing Home: Looting, Restitution, and reconstructing Jewish lives in France, 1942-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 155. For an overview of all organisations associated with the CRIF, see: "Sous l'égide du CRIF", undated report, CRIF MDI-192, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>79</sup> Perego, "Jurys d'honneur", 144.

<sup>80</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 322.

Vichy body that directly oversaw the UGIF, were tried: Xavier Vallat and Darquier de Pellepoix. Vallat incriminated the Jewish organisation's leaders. This confused French public opinion on the status of the UGIF leaders and their role in the deportation of the Jews even further.<sup>81</sup>

The first major postwar publications in France relied on the archives established within the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC, Contemporary Jewish Documentation Center), which had been clandestinely established during the war in order to document the persecution of the Jews in the country. Léon Poliakov, Joseph Billig and Zosa Szajkowski were the first historians to investigate the German occupation of France and the role of the UGIF.<sup>82</sup> In 1947, the Jewish French-American historian Szajkowski (born in Poland) identified the conflicting views that existed on the *Judenräte* in general and the UGIF in particular. His perspective on the UGIF was moderate. Whereas the French Zionist leader Marc Jarblum, who had refused to be appointed as a UGIF central board member, demanded that the organisation's leaders should be brought to trial immediately after the war, Szajkowski argued instead that the leaders were not to be blamed for their actions. He claimed that the UGIF had played a heroic role, because all clandestine activities undertaken in France had been cloaked by the organisation.<sup>83</sup> Besides, he argued that historians should withhold themselves from any moral judgements as they are generally unaware of the hardships that the leaders faced.<sup>84</sup> In a similar vein, Léon Poliakov emphasised how he mistrusted any moral judgement of the past.<sup>85</sup> However, in his 1954 publication *Harvest of Hate: The Nazi Program for the Destruction of the Jews of Europe* he failed to follow his own credo by claiming that 'many outright scoundrels insinuated themselves into the councils'.<sup>86</sup> Around the same period, historian Joseph Billig took a more nuanced approach in his work on the CGQJ in which he highlighted the complexity of the history of the UGIF and the multi-faceted nature of the

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., "L'UGIF, collaboration ou résistance?" in: *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah* No. 185 (2006), 47.

<sup>82</sup> See Lisa Moses Leff's *The Archives Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) for the story of Jewish historian Zosa Szajkowski who stole tens of thousands of archival documents related to French Jewish history and illicitly moved them to New York in his attempt to preserve the remnants of the past.

<sup>83</sup> Zosa Szajkowski, "The Organisation of the 'UGIF': in Nazi-Occupied France" in: *Jewish Social Studies* Vol. 9 No. 3 (1947), 254.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>85</sup> "Le Monde Juif", August-September 1949, Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris.

<sup>86</sup> Léon Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate. The Nazi Program for the Destruction of the Jews of Europe* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1954), 88-89.



organisation.<sup>87</sup> These early works focussed in particular on the personalities of the Jewish leaders and their relation with German and Vichy authorities.<sup>88</sup>

It would take almost two decades before historians would undertake alternative approaches towards the subject, focussing less on the leaders' personalities and more on institutional contexts. In the late 1970s Vicki Caron made an important connection between the UGIF and clandestine organisations, arguing that the existence of the UGIF was important, and even essential, to making illegal aid to Jews available during the occupation.<sup>89</sup> In doing so, she encouraged scholars not to perceive the UGIF as a monolithic institution, but instead to understand it within its socio-historical environment, and in the context of its relations to other organisations. In the period that followed, the nature of studies varied. With the opening of the French national archives and the systematic collection of survivor testimonies in the 1980s, more studies appeared on the persecution of the Jews in France, but many failed to follow Caron's contextual lead.

The first monograph on the UGIF appeared in 1980, written by left-wing journalist Maurice Rajsfus, whose parents were murdered during the Holocaust: *Des Juifs dans la collaboration: UGIF (1941-1944)*. The title of this work – Jews in collaboration – is indicative of its content. Rajsfus was himself the son of immigrant Jews from eastern Europe, and his perspective was highly moralistic and disapproving. He accused 'established Jewry' of sacrificing foreign Jews while pursuing their own, class-based interests. In particular, Rajsfus blamed the UGIF leaders for their failure to reflect upon their own decisions: '[they are convinced] that they have rendered an invaluable service to their Jewish community and pursue their actions without departing from this certainty'.<sup>90</sup> In addition, he condemned the fact that they lied to their 'coreligionists' about the condition of those who had already been deported.<sup>91</sup> It is clear that Rajsfus assessed the function of the Jewish organisation with the preconception that they were collaborators. In contrast to this approach, Serge Klarsfeld argued that the provision of aid was the central objective of the UGIF. In his work *Vichy-Auschwitz* (1983), he underscored how the majority of French Jewry was able to

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<sup>87</sup> Joseph Billig, *Le Commissariat général aux Questions juives, 1941-1944*, 3 volumes (Paris : Éditions du Centre, Paris, 1955, 1957 and 1960).

<sup>88</sup> Laffitte, "L'UGIF, collaboration ou résistance?", 49.

<sup>89</sup> Vicki Caron, "The UGIF: the failure of the Nazis to establish a Judenrat on the Eastern European Model" (New York: Columbia University Center for Israel and Jewish Studies, 1977), 17-19.

<sup>90</sup> Maurice Rajsfus, *Des Juifs dans la collaboration: l'UGIF 1941-1944* (Paris: Études et Documentation Internationales, 1980), 131.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

survive as a result of their activities, even through the deportation of others could not be prevented. Even though the UGIF was not established as a resistance organisation, he claimed that its leaders – André Baur, Raymond-Raoul Lambert, Marcel Stora and Fernand Musnik – all died as resistance fighters. He also emphasised that the number of Jews the UGIF had helped outweighed the number it had led towards Drancy.<sup>92</sup>

In the same period, Cynthia J. Haft published *The Bargain and the Bridle* (1983), in which the UGIF was uncritically referred to as a *Judenrat*. She defined the UGIF as an institutional trap and claimed that it was an impeccable machine that could be equally efficient in any country in which it was established.<sup>93</sup> Haft did not make a distinction between the French Jewish organisation and its eastern European counterparts, and the work lacked a thorough understanding of the essentially different natures of the UGIF from eastern European *Judenräte*. Five years later, Jacques Adler, who had participated in a Jewish unit of the Communist resistance during the war, assessed the function of the UGIF in Paris within a broader context. The prewar differences between the bourgeois French Jews of Paris' western arrondissements and the immigrants in working-class communities were accentuated during the war, so much so that the French Jews did little to save the immigrant Jews, he claimed. Adler underlined the UGIF's failure to warn the foreign Jews against the major Vélodrome d'hiver (Vél d'hiv) roundup of 16-17 July 1942 in time. That day, around 13,000 Jewish, men, women and children from Paris were arrested. The UGIF had been informed about the upcoming mass arrest on 1 July, but informed immigrant organisations only on 13 July. Above all, Adler argued that the UGIF was to blame for its failure to protect children whose parents had been deported, or whose parents had voluntarily handed them over to UGIF care. He claimed that the UGIF should have dispersed the children into hiding during the last phase of the German occupation (July 1944). Their failure to do so, in his view, resulted in the arrest of these children and their deportation to Auschwitz.<sup>94</sup> Despite these accusations, however, he did not consider the organisation's leaders guilty of betrayal. Rather, he argued they were men of conscience who tried

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<sup>92</sup> Serge Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz: le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France*, vol. 2 (Paris: Fayard, 1983), 167, 171.

<sup>93</sup> Cynthia J. Haft, *The Bargain and the Bridle. The General Union of the Israélites of France, 1941-1944* (Chicago: Dialog Press, 1983).

<sup>94</sup> Jacques Adler, *The Jews of Paris and the final solution: communal response and internal conflicts, 1940-1944*, transl. from the French original (New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987; first ed. 1985 [French]), 220-221.

to provide the help they could to deportees.<sup>95</sup> Even though Adler managed to introduce some nuance into his argument, his judgement of the UGIF remained clear.

In the mid-1980s, Annette Wieviorka made an important contribution to the debate by making a solid distinction between the eastern European *Judenräte* and the UGIF. She highlighted that in contrast to the Councils in eastern Europe, the UGIF had never been used to directly organise deportations. According to Wieviorka, the French organisation was never as instrumental to the aims of the German occupier as were the eastern European *Judenräte*.<sup>96</sup> In 1985, Cohen edited Raymond-Raoul Lambert's diary, head of the UGIF-Sud and 'arguably the most important French Jewish official in contact with the Vichy government and the Germans during the war', for publication.<sup>97</sup> This allowed for a more 'internal' examination of the workings of the UGIF and of the dilemmas its leaders faced. Most importantly, Cohen placed the UGIF within the larger context of prewar social tensions between different Jewish groups.<sup>98</sup> Two years later, he published a detailed study of the French Jewish leadership during the Holocaust: *The Burden of Conscience: French Jewish Leadership during the Holocaust* (1987).<sup>99</sup> Here, Cohen was the first to make an analytical distinction between the nature of the UGIF-Nord in the occupied zone and the UGIF-Sud in the unoccupied zone, illustrating his wish to differentiate between the two Jewish organisations in France. He underlined how the social structures in which these two bodies operated were markedly disparate. The social backgrounds of those individuals who worked for the organisations were by no means uniform, either. By focussing on the struggles between the traditional leadership of the Consistoire Central des Israélites de France (Central Israelite Consistory of France, CC), the body governing the Jewish Congregations of France, and the newly appointed UGIF leadership, Cohen provided a thorough insight into the nature of the prewar Jewish communities in France, providing a reference point to explain how the Jewish organisations emerged.<sup>100</sup> In an attempt to give an overall evaluation of the actions and decisions of UGIF functionaries, he argued that its leaders

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Annette Wieviorka, "l'UGIF n'a jamais été un Judenrat" in: *Pardès* No. 2 (1985), 191-209.

<sup>97</sup> Michael Marrus, "Jewish Leaders and the Holocaust" in: *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Duke: University Press, 1987), 316.

<sup>98</sup> Richard I. Cohen (ed), "Introduction" in: Raymond-Raoul Lambert, *Diary of a witness, 1940-1943*, transl. from the French by Isabel Best (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007; first ed. 1985 [French]), xlvi.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., *The Burden of Conscience: French Jewish Leadership during the Holocaust* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: University Press, 1987).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. On the history of the Consistory during the Second World War, see: *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah: Le Consistoire durant la seconde guerre mondiale*, No. 169 (2000), CDJC.

were forced to operate in an impossible situation, but that they were also guilty of wishful thinking, exaggerated legalism and an unfounded confidence in the robustness of French liberal traditions.<sup>101</sup>

In the decade that followed, historiography did not take a uniform direction. Whereas Schwarzfuchs focussed on the problematic nature of the UGIF, Laffitte instead showed how the UGIF had been beneficial to the Jewish community and to other Jewish social welfare organisations. Schwarzfuchs claimed that *only* because of the aid of other community organisations, such as the Consistory and the Rabbinate, the UGIF had not been instrumental in the solution of the so-called ‘Jewish question’ in the way the eastern European *Judenräte* had been.<sup>102</sup> In his aim to provide a more inclusive picture of the behaviour of Jews in France during the occupation, he positioned the UGIF in opposition to that of other Jewish organisations, claiming that the latter did everything they could to obstruct Nazi, and Vichy policies – and that the UGIF did not. By doing this, he once again made the UGIF an example of the ‘wrong’ kind of Jewish institutional behaviour. Schwarzfuchs’ chapter focussing specifically on the UGIF is tellingly named *le drame de l’UGIF* – the disaster of the UGIF.

In 2003, Laffitte published a monograph on the UGIF entitled *Un engrenage fatal: l’UGIF face aux réalités de la Shoah 1941-1944*. He provided a different perspective from that of his predecessors, denouncing the accusatory approach that had hitherto been a part of research on the subject. Instead, he focussed on different aspects of the UGIF’s history, demonstrating, for example, its important work as a social welfare organisation.<sup>103</sup> Laffitte underlined the complexity of the social structures in wartime France, in which various parties – the Consistory, the Comité de Coordination and UGIF-Nord and UGIF-Sud – had entirely different and changing perspectives on the occupation. The opposition between the various parties involved, including the issue of immigrant Jewry, shows the difficult context from which the organisation emerged. The lack of comparative analysis, however, makes Laffitte’s work less useful for understanding the broader context of German rule in which the UGIF functioned. Laffitte touched upon the question of how the UGIF has been seen as part of a broader European memory and argued that Michman’s

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<sup>101</sup> Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience*, 212-214.

<sup>102</sup> Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Aux prises avec Vichy: Histoire politique des Juifs de France, 1940-1944* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1998), 399.

<sup>103</sup> Michel Laffitte’s two key works on the UGIF and the Jewish community during the German occupation are *Un engrenage fatal: l’UGIF face aux réalités de la shoah, 1941-1944* (Paris: Liana Levi, 2003) and *Juif dans la France allemande: institutions, dirigeants et communautés au temps de la Shoah* (Paris: Tallandier, 2006).

comparative approach towards the Jewish organisations is problematic. He claimed that the UGIF's history is specifically French and its memory specifically Jewish.<sup>104</sup> His predominant focus on the UGIF in its national context is indicative of the general lack of comparison with the histories of other Jewish representative organisations (in western Europe) in existing literature.

### **Methodology and structure: a thematic approach**

This research is organised thematically and will be based on a series of case studies. The three major themes – the Jewish organisations' socio-historical nature, their organisational structures and their connections to clandestine operations – are examined through a combined bottom-up and top-down analysis. This allows for an understanding of the larger structures from which the JR, the AJB and the UGIF unfolded, and of the ambiguity of German intentions throughout the course of the occupation, while also examining the choices and experiences of the Jewish leaders. The often changing contexts and the ways in which this affected the leaders' individual agency highlight the stressful circumstances in which they were forced to operate. This comparative perspective emphasises the impact of varying external conditions on the function of the organisations and on their leaders' choices.

The function of these Jewish bodies was largely defined by the national contexts in which they operated and a comparative approach, rather than a transnational approach, is therefore central to this research. Yet, the transnational nature of the Holocaust, including, for example, the German decision-making processes and the passing of information between the countries under investigation, will also be reflected upon. The main aim is to compare and contrast the nature and function of the Jewish representative organisations and to explain and understand their differences and similarities in the broader context of the occupation (in their respective countries). A comparative approach allows for a better understanding of the distinctive characteristics of the Jewish organisations and the unique national contexts in which they operated. These aspects cannot be, and have not been, recognised in analyses that are limited to the level of the nation-state (which, as we have seen, has been the predominant approach in existing historiography on these Jewish organisations). The fact those responsible for Jewish affairs, the so-called *Judenreferenten*, met in Berlin to discuss and align anti-Jewish measures in the Netherlands, Belgium and France shows that

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<sup>104</sup> Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 332.

the implementation and execution of measures was also depended upon decisions that were made outside the borders of the nation-state. These *Judenreferenten* exchanged ideas and shared their experiences not only when they physically met in Berlin, but also, as we will see, through letters and reports on the state of affairs in ‘their’ countries. Transnational aspects such as these were inherent to Nazi bureaucracy, and will be taken into accounts throughout this research.

It should be noted in particular that the organisational and functional divergence between the UGIF-Nord in the occupied zone and the UGIF-Sud in the unoccupied zone, even after the German invasion of the southern zone in November 1942, necessitates an approach that considers the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud as two separate organisations. The two central UGIF boards, one for each zone, in fact never met in common session until 15 February 1943, when the plans for a reorganisation of the UGIF into a centralised body in Paris were discussed.<sup>105</sup> We will therefore examine four case studies: the Dutch JR, the Belgian AJB, the French UGIF-Nord and the French UGIF-Sud. This thesis focuses predominantly on the Jewish representative organisations instituted in the Netherlands, Belgium and France, excluding other western European countries and colonies or overseas territories of these countries, either because similar organisations were not imposed on their communities, or because the nature of the organisations in those instances was essentially different. In Algeria (under the rule of Vichy France), for example, a Jewish representative organisation was established by decree on 14 February 1942: the Union Générale des Israélites d’Algérie (UGIA), modelled after the UGIF.<sup>106</sup> Like the UGIF, the UGIA became the substitute for all existing Jewish organisations and its board members were chosen from among the Jewish leadership.<sup>107</sup> After the Allied landings in North Africa in November 1942, the organisation was

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<sup>105</sup> Because it was established by Vichy, the presidency of the UGIF and the office of the general-secretary were situated in the unoccupied (later southern) zone. For the meeting on 15 February, see: Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 140; Laffitte, “Between Memory and Lapse of Memory”, 674.

<sup>106</sup> Yves C. Aouate, “La place de l’Algérie dans le projet antijuif de Vichy (octobre 1940-novembre 1942)” in: *Revue française d’histoire d’outre-mer*, Vol. 80, No. 301 (1993), 605; Valérie Assan, “Israël William Oualid, juriste, économiste, professeur des universités” in: *Archives Juives*, No. 1, Vol. 46 (2013), 140. It should be noted that Richard Ayoun has inaccurately claimed that the UGIA was instituted by decree on 31 March 1942. See: Richard Ayoun, “Les Juifs d’Algérie dans la Tourmente Antisémite du XXe siècle” in: *Revue Européenne des Études Hébraïques*, No. 1 (1996), 77.

<sup>107</sup> Ayoun, “Les Juifs d’Algérie dans la Tourmente Antisémite du XXe siècle”, 77-78. For further reading on the UGIA and its distinct position in relation to the UGIF, see: Aouate, “La place de l’Algérie dans le projet antijuif de Vichy (octobre 1940-novembre 1942)”, 605-607.

disbanded. In Morocco and Tunisia, no traces can be found of a similar Jewish organisation.<sup>108</sup> This has to be understood against the background of the impediments encountered by Vichy in these two countries. Whereas the application of racial laws was done on ‘extremely fertile terrain’ in Algeria, Italian and Spanish influence in Tunisia and Morocco served to hamper the implementation of Vichy racist policies.<sup>109</sup> Since the UGIA was hardly functional and operated in a different (colonial) context than the Jewish organisations in the Netherlands, Belgium and France, it was not considered fruitful to include this case study. In the case of Luxembourg, the fact that the country had a very small Jewish community made the existence of such an organisation superfluous. Over 3,000 Jews fled the country immediately after the beginning of the military campaign in the West in May 1940 or left by October 1941 for France or Belgium. Around 816 Jews remained, of whom 664 were deported in a total of seven transports – the first in October 1941 and the last in June 1943.<sup>110</sup> In Norway and Denmark, Jewish organisations modelled after the *Judenräte* were never established for various reasons, including the fact that relatively few Jews lived in these countries.<sup>111</sup>

The western European Jewish organisations, and the Dutch JR in particular, are often looked at as derivatives of the *Judenräte* in Poland. However, even though the term *Judenrat* is used across the continent, a direct comparison between eastern and western Councils would not be relevant to this study. The Netherlands, Belgium and France have been chosen as case studies in a comparative framework because the intentions of the Nazi occupiers in these western European countries were similar. In contrast to eastern Europe, the West was considered capable of some degree of Nazification. The context in eastern Europe was entirely different. The conditions in the General Gouvernement, where ghettos were present, is only one example of this. For the same reasons, a comparison with Germany and the German Jewish representative organisation, the Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland, established in 1939, was not considered useful. The Reichsvereinigung was established for different purposes than were the JR, the AJB and the UGIF,

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<sup>108</sup> For further reading on the Jews in North Africa specifically during Nazism, see: Michel Abitbol, *The Jews of North Africa during the Second World War*; translation from French by Catherine Tihanyi Zentelis (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989); *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah: Les Juifs d'Orient face au nazisme et à la Shoah, 1930-1945*, Vol. 205 (2016).

<sup>109</sup> Abitbol, *The Jews of North Africa*, 74-83.

<sup>110</sup> Marc Schoentgen, “Luxembourg” in: Wolf Gruner and Jörg Osterloh, *The Greater German Reich and the Jews: Nazi Persecution Policies in the Annexed Territories 1935-1945* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), 307-311.

<sup>111</sup> For an overview of the persecution of Jews in Norway, see: Bjarte Bruland, “Norway’s role in the Holocaust: The destruction of Norway’s Jews” in: Jonathan Friedman (ed.), *The Routledge history of the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 2011), 232-247. For Denmark, Mette Bastholm Hensen and Steven Jensen, *Denmark and the Holocaust*. (København: Institute for International Studies, Department for Holocaust and Genocidestudies, 2003).

namely to encourage mass emigration, an aim that was no longer possible by the time the western European organisations were established. In addition, whereas the German association was founded in the perpetrator country, the other bodies were established by a foreign occupying power. In the cases of the Netherlands, Belgium and France, the ground for making a fruitful comparison is solid with similar characteristics across the cases. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to limit the analysis of this research to these three countries exclusively. The German Reichsvereinigung as well as the eastern European *Judenräte* unquestionably served as blueprints for the western European Jewish organisations and there are parallels between some of their functions and leaders. This thesis recognises these connections and, when relevant, takes them into consideration.

The first chapter of this thesis explores the structure of society and the composition of the Jewish communities in the Netherlands, Belgium and France before the war, and highlights the similarities and differences between the three countries' social structures. These include the number and outlook of (eastern European) Jewish immigrants, the presence of official religious Jewish representation and Jewish integration in non-Jewish society in each case. The chapter shows the impact of contextual variation on the form and function of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud. Central themes are the level of integration of Jews into the non-Jewish communities, the position of immigrant Jews vis-à-vis the longstanding Jewish population, the level of religious adherence, the role of religious institutions and the organisational structure of the Jewish communities. An investigation of these themes is necessary in order to understand the premises on which the Jewish organisations were built.

The chapter also looks at the position of the Jewish organisations' leaders within their respective communities. With a few exceptions, the representatives of local branches have been left out of the analysis because the decision-making processes and the operations of the Jewish organisations mostly depended upon the central boards. In the cases of Belgium and France, attention is paid to all members of the AJB, UGIF-Nord, and UGIF-Sud central boards (between 6-9 in total). By contrast, in the Dutch case, the emphasis is on the two Council chairmen, Asscher and Cohen, because of the power of their positions. We see that whereas in Belgium and France, all central board members played important roles in the organisations' decision-making process, the administration of the JR was exclusively in the hands of these two chairmen.



By assessing the prewar social positions of the leaders, as well as their personal backgrounds and (religious) beliefs and convictions, the wide social variation in the organisations' central board membership becomes evident. This allows for a better understanding of the extent to which the central board members of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud (felt they) represented the Jewish communities. It also contextualises their acceptance by these communities. We will see that the variations in this regard affected the motivations of the chairmen to take up a leading role in the organisations. Some chairmen exhibited a confident belief that there was no one else who could better take up the leadership of such an important organisation, while others felt uncertainty and discontent about having been forced into the situation. The central board members' confidence, or lack thereof, determined their choices at later stages. These different attitudes also help to explain some organisational divergences, including why some of the leaders of the AJB and the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were replaced while the Dutch leadership remained in place until the JR was dismantled in 1943.

The second chapter deals with the organisational structures and functions of the four Jewish bodies. Although the German policies for western Europe were decided centrally in Berlin, and the *Judenreferenten* of the Netherlands, Belgium and France (who supervised the deportation of Jews from their countries) met there in order to discuss anti-Jewish legislation in their respective countries, the structure of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud differed. This chapter explores the causes and nature of these discrepancies. Germany's intentions for each of the organisations are highlighted, with a focus on the rivalry between the various German (and, in the French case, Vichy) institutions that affected the course of events. The chapter shows that the Germans improved and copied blueprints from elsewhere, without taking the context of the specific country into consideration. In this sense, it is interesting to assess German expectations of the organisations and how these altered during the course of the war.

This chapter looks at the organisation and daily obligations of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud. In the decades following the war, we have seen that historians like Maurice Rajsfus in France, Heinz Wielek in the Netherlands and Maxime Steinberg in Belgium have assessed the behaviour of the organisations' leaders from the perspective of collaboration.<sup>112</sup> This method has stood in the way of an objective analysis of the daily activities of the organisations.

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<sup>112</sup> Rajsfus, *Des Juifs dans la collaboration*; Wielek, *De oorlog die Hitler won*; Maxime Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil*.

The vague wording of the establishment orders indicated that it was partly up to the chairmen themselves to find a suitable structure. Although there are similarities in the way such orders were executed – social welfare was at the centre of each of the organisations’ activities, for instance – the differences are more striking and would prove decisive for the course of events. This chapter reflects upon the day-to-day functions of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, unveiling discrepancies between German aims and the practical functioning of the organisations. The conclusions of this chapter demonstrate why the JR, from the German point of view, functioned better than its Belgian and French counterparts.

The last chapter deals with the Jewish organisations’ connections to organised resistance groups and other forms of opposition. The topic is delicate since their leaders have often been condemned for their failure to resist any form of cooperation with the Nazis. The Jewish organisations were, after all, essentially created by the occupying power for the purpose of complying with German demands. Resistance, therefore, was an exception. Nevertheless, the focus on apportioning guilt to the organisations’ leaders after the war by official courts (of honour) has encouraged a misguided analysis of their wartime activities. The perspective from which these courts assessed the behaviour of the organisations’ administrators, namely whether they were indeed guilty of having collaborated with the Germans, obscured the complexity of activities in which they had been (passively) engaged. The aim of this chapter is not to argue that these Jewish organisations were resistance organisations. Rather, by providing an overview of the various forms of opposition that took place in and around their presence, this research gives more balanced analysis of the complex mixture of activities in which the leadership and membership were engaged during occupation.

The chapter assesses two central themes, the first being the way in which the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were used by others as cloaks for clandestine activities. Overall, the very presence of these organisations in all three countries facilitated, in varying degrees, clandestine activities that would never have been possible without their existence. The connections between official Jewish bodies and illegal subversive groups in Belgium and France were complex, manifold and fluid. The similarities between these two countries are measured against the different situation in the Netherlands, where the legal nature of the Joodsche Raad, and the information and financial resources it possessed, were barely taken advantage of by clandestine workers. The chapter also reflects upon the illegal activities of the organisations’ members themselves and shows

that the JR's leadership's absence of engagement in such activities is distinct from the situation in Belgium and France.

## **Terminology**

The term *Jewish Councils* (the literal translation of the term *Judenräte*) is in fact not entirely accurate in the context of the Jewish representative bodies of Belgium (the AJB) and France (the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud). Only the Dutch Jewish Council was officially referred to as a *Judenrat*. The AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were *Vereinigungen* (Associations), whose form and functions were based on the example of the German Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland. This thesis highlights the institutional (dis)similarities between these organisations and therefore terminologically differentiates between the JR on the one hand and the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud on the other. The Dutch JR will be referred to as a *Jewish Council*, the Belgian and French bodies, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, are referred to as *Associations*. For general claims on the four organisations, the term 'Jewish (representative) organisations' is used. Even though the organisations were not always considered as representative by a (substantial) part of the Jewish communities, this was essentially what both their leaders and the Germans aimed for.

For the discussion of Jewish communities in Belgium and France, the plural *communities* rather than the singular *community*, will be used in order to underline the diverse nature of these populations. Using the term *community* would imply a form of coherence which was absent in these two countries. The first chapter shows that the influx of sizeable numbers of immigrants in the prewar period contributed to the diversified nature of the Jewish communities in both countries. Finally, it should be noted that the term 'collaboration' will not be used with reference to the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud. In historiography, the notion of collaboration has been used to describe the behaviour of the Jewish organisations' leaders. Recently, sociologist Evgeny Finkel has re-evaluated the terminology used to describe Jewish behaviour during Nazi rule. He introduced four strategies in which the Jews engaged during the Holocaust: (1) cooperation and collaboration; (2) coping and compliance; (3) evasion; and (4) resistance. Finkel makes an important distinction between 'cooperation' and 'collaboration', two terms traditionally used to describe the behaviour of Jewish leadership during the Second World War. In his view, the key difference is the intended goal of the actions taken. Those who cooperated 'wanted to preserve the

community and its members' and those who collaborated 'knowingly acted to the detriment of the community's or individual Jews' survival'.<sup>113</sup> One can furthermore argue that collaboration implies some form of identification with the enemy's goals, in this case those of the German occupier, which was absent in the case of the representative organisations forced upon the Jewish communities. This thesis is built on the notion that cooperation, rather than collaboration, is the more accurate term to use in the context of the western European Jewish organisations.

## Sources

The variety of sources used in this thesis uncovers the heterogeneous nature of the Jewish organisations and shows that their function changed over the course of time. Correspondingly, the (self-) perception of their leaders and their intentions altered and were by no means consistent. It should be noted that only a handful of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud employees kept diaries or reported on the course of events during the war. Those who survived gave relatively few testimonies after the war. It is therefore necessary to combine administrative documents, trial records, personal testimonies (wartime and postwar) and biographical documents to reach an understanding of personal motives and experiences and of the choices made by the Jewish leaders. The sources used for this thesis fall broadly into four categories: 1) prewar immigration and naturalisation reports; 2) administrative documents; 3) wartime reports written by the Jewish leaders; 4) postwar (honour) trial reports and accounts of Jewish, German or Vichy individuals who were involved in the affairs of the Jewish organisations. These sources are for the most part stored in national archives across western Europe, the United States and Israel. In light of the themes and scope of this research and in consultation with local archivists, local archives were considered less critical since most relevant local archival material (or copies of it) was available at central research institutions.

In the cases of the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, the majority of the administrative documentation is concentrated in Paris, primarily at the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC) – Mémorial de la Shoah (YIVO, Fonds UGIF, MDC). The meeting reports of the Commission Central and the Central Consistory of late 1941 and early 1942 highlighted the traditional leaders' criticism of the institution of the French Association and this proves essential for

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<sup>113</sup> Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival during the Holocaust* (Princeton: University Press, 2017), 7.

understanding its position in French Jewish society. Although this aspect has been examined in existing literature, this research sheds new light on the impact of these discussions on the function of both the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud.<sup>114</sup> Its leaders were aware that they were constantly scrutinised, and this contrasts with the Netherlands, where the JR received fairly little coordinated criticism. At the National Archives in Paris, the papers of the Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives (AJ38) and trial documents, including those of Xavier Vallat (3W/ 336-338), Louis Darquier de Pellepoix (3W/142) and Armand du Paty de Clam (3W/168) have been employed by other historians seeking to examine Vichy and the Jews.<sup>115</sup> This research has used these sources specifically in order to understand how CGQJ officials, who directly oversaw the UGIF, as well as Jewish leaders, reflected upon the interaction between the two organisations.

In Belgium, the entire body of AJB administrative documentation is stored at Kazerne Dossin in Malines (the collections of the Joods Museum voor Deportatie en Verzet and the Centre National des Hautes Études Juives). This material was first extensively explored in Rudi van Doorslaer and Jean-Philippe Schreiber's 2004 book: *De Curatoren van het Getto: De Vereniging van de joden in België tijdens de nazi-bezetting*. The Belgian Ministry of Justice's Foreign Police (N. 682.302) files, including the naturalisation reports, were hitherto unexplored in the context of the AJB. This thesis shows that this source material provides a significant insight into the nature of the organisation's leadership, since some of the leaders were (recent) eastern European immigrants. This differs from the situation in the Netherlands and, as we shall see, to some extent from that in France too. In the Centre for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society (CEGESOMA), interviews conducted with Jews in Belgium in the 1960s and 1970s about the Jewish organisations and the resistance (AA1196) proved insightful for understanding how the Jewish organisations were wittingly or unwittingly used as cloaks for various forms of illegal activity. Postwar reports by various individuals involved in the AJB, including the first chairman Salomon Ullman (AAMIC/41) and Maurice Heiber (AA1915/22), head of its social service department, also proved useful in this regard. At the Belgian Military Krijgsauditoraat, the

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<sup>114</sup> See, for example: Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 81-82; Laffitte, *Juif dans la France Allemande*, 46-50; Cohen, "Le Consistoire et l'UGIF: La situation trouble des Juifs Français face à Vichy" in: *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah: Le Consistoire durant la seconde guerre mondiale*, 28-37; Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience*, 57-67.

<sup>115</sup> See, for example, Laurent Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale": histoire du commissariat général aux questions juives, 1941-1944* (Paris: Grasset, 2006); *Ibid.*, *Xavier Vallat (1891-1972): Du nationalisme chrétien à l'antisémitisme d'État* (Paris: Grasset, 2001); Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*; Renée Poznanski, *Jews in France During World War II*, transl. from the French by Nathan Bracher (Brandeis: University Press, 2001), 1-2. An updated version of this book, with a new afterword, was published in 2018.

testimonies that were conducted in preparation for the trial against the AJB leaders (No. 8036 N 1944), in combination with the as yet little explored trial documentation against members of local AJB branches (ARA2, Militair auditoraat) show how ambiguously Jewish society reflected upon the function of the AJB.

The quantity of material available in Belgium and, especially, France is immense compared to that in the Netherlands, where substantial parts of the Joodsche Raad archive are missing (with much destroyed during the war). The remaining material, including the administrative documents, is mainly stored at the NIOD Institute for War-, Holocaust- and Genocides Studies in Amsterdam. In existing literature, the personal (both wartime and postwar) documents of the JR's leaders and administrators, David Cohen, Gertrude van Tijn and Mirjam Bolle, have been used independently in earlier research, but rarely in a combined analysis.<sup>116</sup> Since the focus of this thesis extends beyond the level of individual Council leaders or members, the combination of these sources yields a multifaceted perspective on the experiences and choices of the Jewish leaders. As the last, and only, monograph on the Dutch Jewish Council dates back to 1983 and as the documentation on the JR has not been thoroughly explored since, this thesis uncovers new sources.<sup>117</sup> For example, it uses the documentation of the local Leeuwarden branch of the JR, located at the Yad Vashem archive in Israel. Moreover, the author has carried out interviews with Mirjam Bolle, who worked as a secretary of the Dutch Council. At the National Archives in The Hague, the legal documents of the proceedings against the JR leadership (CABR 107491) and against SS-Hauptsturmbahnführer Ferdinand aus der Fünten (CABR 66) and SS-Sturmbahnführer Willy Lages (CABR 140) highlight the views of both the JR's leaders and their German overseers about the course of events. All of these sources have their limitations. Administrative documents, for example, rarely show the doubts, fears and reluctance of the Jewish organisations' leaders. Trial documents often contradict one another because people largely tried to depict their actions in a positive light. Postwar memories and testimonies are coloured by information received after the events. Individuals' recollection of events often changes over the course of time. Nevertheless, by cross-checking sources, it is possible to overcome most of these limitations.

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<sup>116</sup> See, for example, Mirjam Bolle, *"Ik zal je beschrijven hoe een dag er hier uit ziet": Dagboekbrieven uit Amsterdam, Westerbork en Bergen-Belsen*, ed. and foreword by Johannes Houwink ten Cate (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Contact, 2003). In this thesis, the 2005 reprint of this work has been used; David Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad: de herinneringen van David Cohen, 1941-1943*, edited and foreword by Erik Somers (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2010); Wasserstein, *Gertrude van Tijn en het lot van de Nederlandse Joden*.

<sup>117</sup> Knoop, *De Joodsche Raad*, passim.

This research is unique because it combines a large variety of sources, including those to which there is limited access such as the Dutch CABR legal records of individuals who were accused of collaboration, stored at the national archive in The Hague. Moreover, the comparative nature of this research ensures that primary material that might have been considered less relevant by researchers who have looked at the Jewish organisations in a national context, is now considered relevant. This is true, for example, in the case of the immigration and naturalisation reports of some of the AJB's board members in Belgium. This research constructs a new analytical framework on the basis of both previously discovered material and newly discovered documentation.

## Chapter 1.

### The Councils' Socio-Historical Foundations

On the eve of the Nazi occupation, the vast majority of the Jews in Belgium and France were immigrants from central and eastern Europe. In total, around 95%, 45% and 15% of the Jews in Belgium, France and the Netherlands respectively were immigrants.<sup>1</sup> They had mainly settled either at the turn of the century or during the 1930s, when anti-Jewish hostilities grew in their home countries. Their presence affected the nature of the Belgian and French Jewish communities to a large degree. Immigrants organised themselves in so-called *Landsmannschaften* and maintained their own traditions. The large majority did not assimilate into the longstanding Jewish population. Partly because of this, traditional representative organisations such as the Consistory were under pressure. The lack of unity ensured that they could no longer represent the Jewish communities in the way they had done for centuries. In the Netherlands, by contrast, the vast majority of Jews belonged to families who had been living in the country for at least a hundred years. Since the number of immigrants, mostly from Germany, was relatively low, the refugee crisis had less impact on the nature of the community.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the Jewish community and its leadership was better able to keep existing structures in place throughout the 1930s.

This chapter shows that the nature of the prewar (Jewish) communities and the position of prewar Jewish leadership in these communities was decisive in shaping the self-perception of the wartime Jewish organisations' leaders. Prewar social structures largely determined the level of acceptance of these organisations by Jewish communities. The chapter argues, among other things, that the relatively well-integrated prewar position of the Dutch Council leadership – Abraham Asscher and David Cohen – in combination with a relatively stable Jewish community, resulted in a more confident self-perception of their role compared to that of their Belgian and French counterparts. This in part explains why they remained in place until the JR was dissolved in September 1943, whereas their Belgian and French counterparts were either voluntarily or forcibly removed from their positions during the course of the war. This chapter highlights the impact of these voluntary and forced removals. It argues that the change of leadership in Belgium and France

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the estimated number of Jews in each country at the outbreak of the war and their composition see: Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 170.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



unintentionally created a form of disorder and chaos and thereby fostered the ideal circumstances to delay the execution of Nazi anti-Jewish measures.

Three aspects are crucial if we want to understand the context in which the Jewish leaders took up their positions. First, unlike the situation in some eastern European countries, those who refused to be appointed to the central boards in western Europe were not punished. By contrast, the Jews who were appointed to the *Judenrat* in Bilgoraj (Lublin district in Poland) were threatened with the death penalty in the event that they refused to accept their appointment. In the case of Kolomyja (Poland, currently Ukraine), Chaim Ringelblum and his family were taken away after refusing to accept his nomination. But nothing similar occurred in any of the three western European countries.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in many communities in eastern Europe, the establishment of the Councils was accompanied by intimidation, threats, humiliation and massacres.<sup>4</sup> In western Europe, there were Jews who refused their nomination despite German pressure as well as those who resigned their positions either before or shortly after having been appointed. For example, in the Netherlands Rabbis Lodewijk Hartog Sarlouis and David Francès refused to accept their appointment by the Germans.<sup>5</sup> In France, we see that the same applied in the cases of Marc Jarblum and René Mayer. In Belgium, Joseph Teichmann did not take up his assigned role. There were no repercussions in any of these cases. Taking this context into consideration, there is a need to examine the motivation of those who did accept appointments as central board members to lead the organisations. For some, their appointment was the definitive wider official representation they had been working towards for years. This was particularly the case for Asscher and Cohen in the Netherlands and to some extent for Raymond-Raoul Lambert, leader of the UGIF-Sud in France. For others, including the chairman of the Belgian Jewish Association Salomon Ullman, this aspect hardly played a role. It is exactly these kind of differences that this chapter seeks to explain and understand.

Second, it was not yet clear to the Jewish leaders in 1941, when the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were established, what the exact tasks of these organisations would be. We will see that even the Germans themselves were not sure of the organisations' remit. The basis on

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<sup>3</sup> Moshe Taytelboym, *Bilgoray. Yizkor bukh* (Jerusalem, 1955), 108 as cited in: Trunk, *Judenrat*, 21.

<sup>4</sup> Trunk, *Judenrat*, 22-26.

<sup>5</sup> Berkley, *Overzicht van het ontstaan, de werkzaamheden en het streven van den Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam*, 12-13; Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 80.

which the Jewish leaders accepted their nomination in 1941 was mainly that of providing social welfare, something that has been obscured by the literature, which has understood their function in the context of deportation. Third, it was clear that if Jews were to decline their appointment to the central board, which occurred in all three countries, others would be nominated instead. Thus, even if Jews had refused to take up their designated role, the four Jewish organisations would still have been established. Furthermore, a recurring criticism of the Jewish leaders is that they were not representative of their communities since they were ‘notables’ and could not represent its (highly diversified) nature.<sup>6</sup> In this context, it is important to acknowledge that the Germans would never have opted for a Jewish representative of the lower echelons of society. Since the Germans in all three countries indicated that the organisations ought to unite the Jewish communities, they were specifically looking for Jews who had a prominent prewar social standing.

### **1.1 The pre-1940 structures of the Jewish communities**

To understand the leaders of the Jewish organisations in the context of the communities they were supposed to represent, and to examine whether their appointment at the helm of these bodies should be considered a continuation or discontinuation of prewar structures, one needs to be aware of the social structures that predated the establishment of the bodies. Aspects including the level of Jewish integration into non-Jewish communities, the position of immigrant Jews vis-à-vis the longstanding Jewish population, the level of religious adherence, the influence of Zionist thinking and the traditional organisation of the Jewish communities, are all elements that contributed to the different fabric of the Jewish communities in the Netherlands, Belgium and France before the outbreak of the Second World War. As soon as the Germans invaded the three western European countries, they encountered entirely different communities. During the occupation, the Germans voiced the intention that the Jewish organisations should represent and coordinate all Jews in each country respectively, but the extent to which this was viable will be examined below.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Lieven Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad: een geschiedenis van Antwerpen en zijn joodse bevolking, 1880-1944* (Tielt: Uitgeverij Lannoo, 2000), 502-503; Knoop, *De Joodsche Raad*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 57; Van Doorslaer and Schreiber, *Curatoren van het getto*, 85; Knoop, *De Joodsche Raad*, 81-82.

### *Traditional organisation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries*

Between 1870 and 1920, the Netherlands underwent a process of accelerated change, expansion and prosperity which was felt by almost all sections of society, including Jews.<sup>8</sup> In 1889, 98,000 Jews lived in the country. They were mostly concentrated in the major cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague) with the largest percentage in Amsterdam (56%). In terms of religious orientation, the 1848 declaration of a separation of Church and State resulted in a remodelling of the Portugese-Israelite and Dutch-Israelite (Ashkenazi) denominations in 1870. Elected in 1874, the Chief Rabbi of the Nederlands-Israëlitische Hoofdsynagoge (Dutch-Israelite Synagogue) Jozef Hirsch Dünner (1833-1911) and the wardens of the Sephardic Jewish community (parnassim) left their imprint on Jewish religious life for years.<sup>9</sup> Under their leadership, religious life became a remarkable combination of Orthodox religious services, ‘an “orderly” conduct of worship and the acceptance of a rather lax observance of the Jewish commandments by large groups of affiliates’.<sup>10</sup> Apart from major celebrations, a decline in regular synagogue attendance and observance was visible, exemplifying the increasing secularisation of Dutch Jews.<sup>11</sup> The country’s economic, social and cultural circumstances ensured emancipation, assimilation and acculturation as well as integration.<sup>12</sup> It was increasingly difficult to speak of the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi Jewish community from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, a distinction that had divided Jews in the Netherlands for decades.<sup>13</sup> We will see that fragmentation of the Jewish community in the Netherlands was less rigid in comparison to neighbouring Belgium and France.

In the period between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the social and political orientation of Dutch Jews, specifically in Amsterdam, changed. Jewish labour organisations were founded and a few pioneer Jewish workers entered the socialist movement. While the anti-authoritarian disposition of the Sociaal-Democratische Bond (Social Democratic Union, SDB) as well as its anti-clericalism, had previously fitted ill with the traditions and convictions of Jewish

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<sup>8</sup> J. C.H. Blom and J.J. Cahen, “Jewish Netherlanders, Netherlands Jews, and Jews in the Netherlands, 1870-1940” in: J.C.H. Blom, R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld et al., (eds.), *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, transl. from the Dutch by Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans (Oxford: Littman library of Jewish civilization, 2002; first ed.: 1995 [Dutch]), 230.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>11</sup> Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Blom and Cahen, “Jewish Netherlanders”, 231.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

workers, Jews now became well-integrated in the labour movement and were ‘conscious of being a worker and socialist in the first place and a Jew second (if at all)’.<sup>14</sup> This was partly caused by the general economic decline in the late 1880s. The decline strongly affected the diamond industry and spawned unemployment and poverty among the Jewish diamond workers, who were traditionally well-represented in this industry. Combined with the fact that the socialists had become more moderate and were no longer as unpopular as in the early 1880s, this was a major catalyst for the shift of Jewish workers to the socialist movement.<sup>15</sup> Jews also worked in other areas, including the cigar industry and the garment sector, where they entered the respective unions. Through the socialist movement, Jews became involved in the SDAP, the Dutch socialist party in which Henri Polak – head of the Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerders Bond (the General Dutch Diamond Workers’ Union, ANDB) played a leading role.<sup>16</sup> Overall, Jewish participation in trade unions meant relative integration into Dutch (working class) society even though inside the SDAP, Jewish members were occasionally seen primarily as Jews rather than socialists.<sup>17</sup> Between 1813 and 1940, positions that officially represented the State, such as those of mayor, Commissioner of the King, governor or ambassador, generally remained inaccessible to Jews. Only two Jewish ministers were appointed in this period and only a few Jews served in the First Chamber, the Second Chamber (which, together with the First Chamber, formed the Dutch parliament), the Provincial Councils or Municipal Councils.<sup>18</sup> In 1940, eight out of 100 members of the Second Chamber were Jews: four socialists, two progressive liberals, one liberal and one communist.<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that these members of the Dutch parliament had Jewish origins, but did not necessarily feel connected to Jewish life and culture; they included, for example, converted Jews. It is indicative of prewar anti-Jewish sentiment that those in Dutch society generally believed that Jews ought not to fulfil political representative functions. In 1933, for example, strong criticisms were voiced when four Jews (of different political parties) were simultaneously elected as Aldermen in the municipality of

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<sup>14</sup> Karin Hofmeester, “Image and self-image of the Jewish workers in the labour movements in Amsterdam, 1800-1914”, in: Chaya Brasz and Yosef Kaplan (eds.), *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 187-190.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 195-197.

<sup>16</sup> Jozeph Michman, Hartog Beem and Dan Michman, *Pinkas: Geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Nederland* (Amsterdam / Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Contact, 1999; first ed. 1992), 110.

<sup>17</sup> Hofmeester, “Image and self-image”, 199.

<sup>18</sup> Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 107; Henri Polak, “Het wetenschappelijk antisemitisme: weerlegging en vertoog” in: *Volksdagblad voor Gelderland*, 27 December 1938.

<sup>19</sup> Hans Daalder, *Politiek en historie. Opstellen over Nederlandse politiek en vergelijkende politieke wetenschap* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2011; first ed: 1990), 105-106.

Amsterdam.<sup>20</sup>

The relatively high level of Jewish social and cultural integration and assimilation meant that Zionist ideas did not flourish well in the Netherlands. For various reasons, including the Chief Rabbis' wishes to combine Orthodox Judaism in the religious sphere with the integration of Jews into the national culture, the socialist and orthodox movements were hostile to Zionism.<sup>21</sup> The neutral position of the Netherlands during the First World War resulted in an increase of Zionist activity in the country in this period, in part because the Belgian Zionist Federation transferred its office to the Dutch capital city of Amsterdam. Germany's invasion of Belgium in August 1914 prompted the exodus of thousands of Belgian citizens who had been predominantly dispersed among France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. In the following months, 'all the frontier communities in the Netherlands were invaded by a continual flood of refugees'.<sup>22</sup> On 1 November 1914, as many as 320,000 Belgian refugees resided in the country.<sup>23</sup> The influx of thousands of Jewish refugees from Belgium, almost all of them Jews originally from eastern Europe, caused a stronger impulse of organised Zionist activity, although there remains disagreement among historians as to the exact impact of Zionist ideas in this period.<sup>24</sup> Whereas some scholars, including Blom and Cahen, have suggested that the role of Zionism was marginal, others such as Brasz underlined its importance in strengthening Jewish identity in preventing further assimilation into non-Jewish society.<sup>25</sup> However, we can say that Zionist activity was stimulated throughout the 1930s. By 1936, the earlier rejection of Zionism by the Dutch Rabbis had radically changed: Lodewijk Hartog Sarlouis could only be appointed Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam because he agreed not to oppose Zionism.<sup>26</sup> In this period, the Nederlandse Zionistenbond (the Dutch Zionist Union,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>21</sup> Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 119-120. Blom and Cahen, "Jewish Netherlanders", 254- 255. It should be noted that in contrast to Belgium and France, there was no Chief Rabbinate for the Netherlands as a whole. Nevertheless, the chief Rabbis of the central synagogues would meet from time to time at gatherings. In these meetings, the Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam played a leading role.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Gatrell and Philippe Nivet, "Refugees and exiles" in: Jay Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge history of the First World War*, Vol 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 190.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. At the end of 1914, refugees came under pressure to return home, which resulted in a decrease of the number of refugees during the war years to 85,000 in 1915. Mainly as a result of the evacuation of several thousand children, the number increased again to 100,000 in early 1918.

<sup>24</sup> Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 122.

<sup>25</sup> Blom and Cahen, "Jewish Netherlanders", 273-274; Chaya Brasz, "Dutch Jews as Zionists and Israeli Citizens" in: Yosef Kaplan et al., *Dutch Jews as Perceived by themselves and by others: Proceedings of the eighth International Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2001), 223.

<sup>26</sup> Blom and Cahen, "Jewish Netherlanders", 274.

NZB) noted a strong increase in members: from 2094 in 1931 to 4246 in 1939.<sup>27</sup> This can mainly be explained by the fact that Jews were concerned for those Jews being persecuted abroad. In this period, the Zionist movement's sense of national solidarity was turned primarily towards matters of social welfare rather than politics.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the blurring of distinctions between separate Jewish communities, Jews could nonetheless not be considered a homogeneous group in the interbellum. Conflicts regarding religious and economic divisions encouraged some to move away from religious observance and from regarding themselves as Jewish at all.<sup>29</sup> The organised Jewish congregations in Amsterdam, both the Hoogduitse (Ashkenazi) and the Portuguese (Sephardi), lost their central function in Jewish life. Instead, they focussed on Jewish religious affairs exclusively.<sup>30</sup> Many Jews felt a stronger connection to their Dutch, rather than their Jewish, roots. However, despite Jewish integration into socialist circles and other forms of non-Jewish life, Jewishness continued to remain an important distinctive feature. This was in large part the result of the nature of the Dutch society, which was structured according to so-called *zuilen* – pillars. Protestants and Catholics each had their pillar. Even though Jews did not officially have their own pillar, they still occupied a distinct position.<sup>31</sup>

There exists a gap in the literature about the nature of Belgian Jewry at the beginning of the twentieth century and in the interwar period. In the absence of a comprehensive overview, the analysis of this period here is based on book chapters, articles and fragmentary discussions of the subject. After Belgian independence in 1830, Jews from the Netherlands and France (mostly from Alsace-Lorraine) settled in the country. Increasing poverty in the Dutch countryside and discrimination against Jews in Germany and France fuelled immigration to Belgium, which was the pioneer country in terms of industrialisation on the continent and provided an open political climate. As in other western European countries, the history of the small group of Jews in Belgium can be

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<sup>27</sup> Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 152.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>29</sup> Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 130.

<sup>31</sup> Ernst Heinrich Kossmann, *The Low Countries 1780-1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 348. Integrated subcultures (*zuilen*) cut across class lines, uniting disparate economic and social groups on the basis of their religious affiliation. The Calvinists and Roman Catholics were followed by a social democratic *zuil* which emerged after the 1880s, and while never so clearly visible, there was also evidence of a liberal *zuil* (neutral) creating the foundation of a vertically integrated society. These four pillars encompassed a large proportion of the Dutch population and were bound together by a common adherence to what might essentially be termed bourgeois precepts and beliefs.

characterised by increasing emancipation and assimilation from the end of the eighteenth century onwards. From the 1880s, there was a significant influx of eastern European Jews from Poland, Russia and Austrian Galicia (among other places) who were fleeing antisemitism and poverty. As a result, the Belgian Jewish community, which had been very small at the beginning of the nineteenth century, increased ten times in size in the second half of the nineteenth century to around 20,000 in total.<sup>32</sup> The presence of these newcomers, who settled mainly in the cities of Brussels, Antwerp, Arlon, Gand and Liège, radically changed the nature of Jewish society in Belgium. This was particularly visible in terms of demography and in the social and religious outlook of Jews. The immigrants introduced new socialist-Zionist ideas and the movement grew in size and diversity, varying from the leftist Linke Poale Tsion to supporters of Jabotinsky's revisionist Zionist ideas and from the orthodox-zionist Mizrachie to the atheist and marxist Hashomer Hatsaïr.<sup>33</sup> Zionist ideas had a larger scope and impact than in the Netherlands and France at this stage. Although at first a movement of opposition against the status quo, the Zionist movement underwent a process of accelerated change and after the First World War even became part of the Jewish establishment in Belgium – unlike the situation in the Netherlands and France.<sup>34</sup> Even in the more traditional Consistory circles, pro-Zionist views were introduced as early as 1926. Historian Daniel Dratwa has convincingly argued that this continued to be the case throughout the 1930s with the nomination of Rabbi Joseph Wiener, an adherent of Zionist ideology for the post of Chief Rabbi in 1932.<sup>35</sup>

As in France, immigrants to Belgium from central and eastern Europe remained wedded to their political and religious traditions. They distinguished themselves from the longstanding Jewish population and even more so from Belgian non-Jewish society, despite the fact that there was a wish to integrate into Belgian society in exchange for 'a decent existence'.<sup>36</sup> As a result, Jews rarely fulfilled representative political functions for the Belgian State.<sup>37</sup> There were a few exceptions,

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<sup>32</sup> Ludo Abicht, *De Joden van België* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Atlas, 1994), 44.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., *Geschiedenis van de Joden van de Lage Landen* (Antwerpen: Meulenhoff / Manteau, 2006), 258-263.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Dratwa, "The Zionist Kaleidoscope in Belgium" in: Michman, *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans*, 34.

<sup>35</sup> Dratwa, "The Zionist Kaleidoscope", 53. Dratwa argued against the idea that the role of Zionists was marginal. Contrary to what historians have often assumed, he believes there was no unbridgeable distinction between immigrants and native-born Jews.

<sup>36</sup> Rudi van Doorslaer, *Kinderen van het getto: Joodse revolutionairen in België, 1925-1940* (Antwerpen / Baarn: Hadewijch, 1995), 40.

<sup>37</sup> For a biographical overview of Jews in Belgium in the 19th and 20th century, see: Jean-Philippe Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique des Juifs de Belgique: Figures du judaïsme belge XIXe-XXe siècles* (Bruxelles: Éditions De Boeck Université, 2002).

including Léon Sasserath and Herbert Speyer. Sasserath was mayor of Dinant and senator of the liberal party in the Namur-Dinant-Philippeville department from 1935 but he had no ties to the Jewish community.<sup>38</sup> Speyer was, among other things, senator of the liberal party in the Arlon-Marche-Bastogne-Neufchâteau-Virton department between 1912 and 1925.<sup>39</sup>

Religious orthodoxy became stronger with the influx of eastern European immigrants in Belgium. The traditional Jewish leadership of the Consistory was forced to respond to these transformations. Aware of the increasing Jewish orthodox presence in the country, it aimed to safeguard the position of this group in Belgian society. It successfully ensured that the renewed influence of orthodoxy was acknowledged by the Belgian State and this included the recognition of the orthodox Machsike Hadass communities of Brussels and Antwerp.<sup>40</sup> These communities also participated in the Consistory and, in doing so, played a role in the spiritual development of Belgian Judaism.<sup>41</sup> The liberalism that was an essential feature of the Jewish Central Consistory encouraged the broadening spectrum of ideological diversity and pluralism among Jews. In a Jewish society that was increasingly changing, the Consistory managed to remain the central religious representative organisation of Jews in Belgium. Combined with top-down governance of Jewish communities under the umbrella of the Consistory, this created a form of stability.<sup>42</sup> As we shall see, this was about to change in the 1930s, after the second influx of eastern European Jews into the country.

In France, by the end of the nineteenth century, around 72,000 Jews resided in the country.<sup>43</sup> Outside Alsace-Lorraine, Jews were traditionally heavily concentrated in towns, but with the exception of a few cases, ‘no city [...] seems to have boasted more than a thousand Jews’.<sup>44</sup> In Paris,

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<sup>38</sup> Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 306; Paul van Molle, *Het Belgisch parlement: 1894-1972* (Antwerpen: Standaard, 1972), 294.

<sup>39</sup> Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 322-323; Van Molle, *Het Belgisch parlement*, 306.

<sup>40</sup> Machsike Hadass is a Haredi Jewish community, which rejects modern secular culture and can be considered strictly, or even ultra, orthodox. Hachsike Hadass literally means ‘Adherents to God’. On the early history of Machsike Hadass, see: Rachel Manekin, *The Growth and Development of Jewish Orthodoxy in Galicia: The “Machsike Hadas” Society 1867-1883* (unpublished dissertation [Hebrew], Hebrew University, 2000); Ibid., “Orthodox Jewry in Kraków at the turn of the twentieth century” in: *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, No. 23 (2011), 165-198.

<sup>41</sup> Willy Bok, “Vie juive et communauté, une esquisse de leur histoire au vingtième siècle” in: *La Grande Synagogue de Bruxelles: Contributions à l’histoire des Juifs de Bruxelles, 1878-1978* (Bruxelles: Communauté Israélite de Bruxelles, 1978), 153-154.

<sup>42</sup> Jean-Philippe Schreiber, *Politique et Religion: le consistoire central israélite de Belgique au XIXe siècle* (Bruxelles: Editions de l’Université de Bruxelles), 398.

<sup>43</sup> Eugen Weber, “Reflections on the Jews in France”, in: Frances Malino and Bernard Wasserstein (eds.), *The Jews in Modern France* (Hanover/London: University Press of New England, 1985), 9.

<sup>44</sup> Weber, “Reflections on the Jews in France”, 10.



by contrast, the Jewish population had grown exponentially throughout the nineteenth century. By 1900, 50-60 percent of the Jews in France lived in the capital city, in part because of the influx of many Jewish refugees from Alsace-Lorraine (annexed by the Germans in 1871). During a period in which cultural integration was running its course, Jews increasingly integrated in French society and competed with other Frenchmen on all professional levels. By the end of the nineteenth century, as in other western European Jewish communities, the self-definition of French Jews 'was expressed even more consistently within the acceptable framework of a religious rather than an ethnic subculture'.<sup>45</sup>

The leadership of French Jewry was traditionally in the hands of the Consistory, which not only enjoyed a monopoly of Jewish religious association, but also spoke for French Jewry at large, thereby wielding enormous power. As well as the religious appointment of Rabbis, it made all policy decisions affecting French Jewry as a whole. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Consistory conservatively asserted that the ideological and institutional structure of Jewish society, in which it played a vital role, had proven itself. Consequently, newcomers were expected to adapt to the existing institutional framework. This resulted in a relatively homogenous Jewish community in France in terms of class, ethnicity and ideology by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> Having benefited from the economic development of French society, Jewish occupations varied from clerks and small tradesmen to financial occupations. All were part of the petite or haute bourgeoisie.<sup>47</sup> Some 90,000 French Israelites belonged to families that had long been established in France and were well integrated in French society. Up until almost the end of the nineteenth century, French Jewry enjoyed the reputation of being the most successfully assimilated and stable Jewish society in western Europe.<sup>48</sup> However, even though earlier historiography has argued that French Jews sought to negate Jewish particularity by embracing a politics of assimilation, more recent studies have shown that acculturation was an inconsistent process and that French Jews never intended to

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<sup>45</sup> Paula Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry 1906-1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 7.

<sup>46</sup> Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, 26-27.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

fundamentally integrate into French society.<sup>49</sup> As Birnbaum has shown, even at the highest levels of the French State Jews actively continued to operate in their Jewish circles.<sup>50</sup> Through institutions such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), founded in 1860 by a group of French intellectual Jews dedicated to Jewish emancipation in the territories under French control, the continued ties of French Jews to their ethnic background were accentuated.<sup>51</sup>

The Dreyfus Affair (1894-1906) was emblematic of the changing perspectives towards Jews in the late nineteenth century. On 15 October 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, an officer attached to the 39th infantry regiment of the French Army, was arrested and accused of high treason, namely, spying for the Germans. The media, including the antisemitic *La Libre Parole* were quick to seize on the fact that Dreyfus was a Jew. The evidence presented during his trial in December of that year was far from convincing. A secret dossier, not shown to the defence, in the end convinced the judges of Dreyfus's guilt, but this was only the beginning of the Dreyfus Affair, which attracted widespread public attention. By the time Émile Zola published his famous letter *J'Accuse*, in which he criticised the army for covering the errors that had led to Dreyfus' conviction, France was split into two opposing camps: the anti-Dreyfusards, who were against moves to reopen the case and considered these an attempt of the enemy to discredit the army; and the Dreyfusards, who sought to exonerate Dreyfus. Even though Zola did not risk alienating potential support by reflecting on antisemitism as a motivating force for Dreyfus's conviction, it had undoubtedly played a role.<sup>52</sup> Antisemitism was pervasive in France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century following the influx of large numbers of Jews from Alsace-Lorraine, Germany and Austria, which nourished

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<sup>49</sup> For the earlier historiography see: Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation. A Study of the French Jewish Community at the time of the Dreyfus Affair* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); David Weinberg, *A Community on Trial: The Jews of Paris in the 1930s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). For those who have argued that Jews deliberately maintained aspects of their minority culture, see: Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*; Jay Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century France* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989); Phyllis Cohen Albert, *The Modernization of French Jewry: Consistory and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press, 1977).

<sup>50</sup> Pierre Birnbaum, *The Jews of the Republic: A Political History of State Jews in France from Gambetta to Vichy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), *passim*.

<sup>51</sup> For more information on the AIU, see: André Chouraqui, *Cent Ans D'Histoire: L'Alliance Israélite Universelle et la Renaissance Juive Contemporaine, 1860-1960* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965); Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Laurent Grison, "L'Alliance israélite universelle dans les années noires" in: *Archives Juives* No.1, Vol. 34 (2001), 9-22; André Kaspi (ed.), *Histoire de l'Alliance israélite universelle de 1860 à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Collin, 2010).

<sup>52</sup> David Drake, *French Intellectuals and Politics from the Dreyfus Affair to the Occupation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 20.

hostile feelings among French workers who accused the Jews of taking their jobs.<sup>53</sup> These feelings increased after the Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, when French Jewry had to contend with substantial further immigration by eastern European Jews.<sup>54</sup>

In 1906, when the separation of Church and State (which in the Netherlands had been introduced as early as 1848) came into effect, the position of the Consistory was undermined. Jewish institutions and organisations were now able to function independent of the Consistories. It was a period of time in which the disaffected members of the upper class, who had turned away from the Consistory, could make their voice heard. They were encouraged to establish their own religious associations and they challenged the notion that Consistorial circles could speak for all of French Jewry.<sup>55</sup> The Consistory also found its authority constrained by the immigrant communities which were growing in size and self-confidence. Whereas previously immigrants had not been allowed to serve on the Consistory's council, this decision had to be repealed in 1919 because of the ever growing number of immigrants. The Consistory recognised that a policy of exclusion would eventually lead to its own marginalisation since newcomers could organise themselves into separate communities and would by far outnumber Consistory circles. The acceptance of immigrant Jews into their council therefore seems to have been driven more by self-protectionism than by goodwill towards the immigrants in question.<sup>56</sup> There were those, including William Oualid, a prominent jurist of Algerian birth and a member of the Paris Consistory, who publicly criticised the organisation for not having allowed immigrant Jews to be part of the organisation's leadership earlier on.<sup>57</sup>

As in the Netherlands, but in contrast to Belgium, Zionist ideas were relatively weak in France in the interwar period. For the majority of assimilated Jews in western Europe, Zionism was

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<sup>53</sup> Doris Bensimon-Donath, *Socio-démographie des juifs de France et d'Algérie 1867-1907* (Paris: Publications Orientalistes de France, 1976), 96-97. The exact figures for Jewish immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century vary considerably. There seems to be a consensus that, as Nancy Green has argued, their number was more than 35,000. See: Nancy Green, *The Pletzl of Paris. Jewish Immigrant Workers in the Belle Époque* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), 206.

<sup>54</sup> Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, 27-29.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-30.

<sup>56</sup> There were restrictions as to who was eligible for a position in the council: only immigrant Jews who were resident in Paris for 10 years and had been members of the Consistory for 5 years, were allowed to apply. Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, 145.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* For further reading on the personal history of Oualid, see: Assan, "Israël William Oualid, juriste, économiste, professeur des universités", 130-143.

considered to be contradictory, and even a threat to their position as relatively well-assimilated citizens. Traditional institutions such as the AIU and the Consistory publicly displayed their anti-Zionist stance, claiming that the longing for a Jewish nation obstructed emancipation and would have severe consequences for Jews in the diaspora.<sup>58</sup> However, throughout the 1920s, and prompted by French Jewry's contribution to the First World War, especially with the arrival of central and eastern European Jews in the 1930s, Zionism began to leave its imprint on French society.<sup>59</sup> Increasing anti-Jewish persecution led to a growing interest in Zionist activity and its ideas began to spread among existing institutions. Some people became convinced that Zionism was the only solution to the refugee problem and committees were instituted in order to support Jews, including, most importantly, the CAR. Its secretary-general was Lambert, who would later play a crucial role in the institution of the UGIF.<sup>60</sup> Interest in a Jewish Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s is now recognised to have been more widespread than was initially thought.<sup>61</sup> The movement even began to prevail among the Consistory.<sup>62</sup> Above all, as Lee has shown, it was the youth who felt a growing affinity with Zionism in this period. Zionism and Jewish culture influenced, for example, the Jewish scouts movement (EIF) which by the 1930s had reshaped its focus from traditional religious Judaism into a more plural understanding of Judaism in which Jews from a range of social, political and religious backgrounds were welcomed. This new understanding of Jewish identity and its accompanying support for the Zionist cause did not contradict the youth's commitment to France, however. Instead, Zionism was woven into the identities of Franco-Jewish EIF members.<sup>63</sup>

### *Refugees and immigrants in the interbellum*

In the aftermath of the First World War, economic stagnation and antisemitism forced eastern European Jews to seek refuge elsewhere. With the imposition of immigration quotas by the US,

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<sup>58</sup> Cathérine Nicault, "Face au Sionisme, 1887-1940" in: André Kaspi (ed.), *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010), 189-226; Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, 163-165.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 154. Nicault, "L'Acculturation des Israélites Français au Sionisme après la Grande Guerre" in: *Archives Juives*, No. 1, Vol. 39 (2006), 14. As Aron Rodrigue has shown, the development of Zionist ideas in France was a complex process that took shape in the aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair. Rodrigue, "Rearticulations of French Jewish Identities after the Dreyfus Affair" in: *Jewish Social Studies*, No. 2, Vol. 3 (1996), 1-24.

<sup>60</sup> Caron, *Uneasy Asylum*, 105.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Nicault, *La France et le sionisme, 1897-1948. Une rencontre manquée?* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1992); Ibid., "L'Acculturation des Israélites Français au Sionisme après la Grande Guerre", 9-28.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 176. Also see: Michel Abitbol, *Les deux terres promises: les Juifs de France et le sionisme, 1897-1945* (Paris: Perrin, 2010; first ed. 1989), 146-158.

<sup>63</sup> Daniel Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children: French Jewish youth and the Vichy regime, 1940-1942* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34- 43.

South American countries, Canada, Australia and South Africa, western Europe became the only alternative. In the Netherlands, Belgium and France, the influx of Jewish immigrants in the 1920s and 1930s (significantly) altered the nature of the Jewish communities. Whereas we have seen that each of these country's Jewish communities was relatively stable and well-integrated into the non-Jewish community by the turn of the century, this changed in the interwar period. The French and Belgian Jewish communities in particular were greatly destabilised in this period because both the absolute and relative numbers of immigrants in Belgium and France were large. Since the immigrant communities struggled to integrate well into the longstanding Jewish population, a great variety of parallel Jewish communities lived alongside each other. In the Netherlands, the number of immigrants, mainly from Germany, was smaller and their composition more uniform compared to neighbouring countries. We will see that, as a result, it was easier to unite the Jewish community in the Netherlands under the umbrella of the Jewish Council.

The small group of Jews from eastern Europe who settled in the Netherlands after the First World War drew attention to a more traditional Jewish way of life. Among Dutch Jewry, this led to a greater sensitivity to Jewish origins.<sup>64</sup> Many spoke Yiddish among themselves and kept their old traditions alive. We have seen that not all Jews, incidentally, were Orthodox; their number also included socialists and Zionists. In 1930, the Jewish population numbered almost 112,000 – 77.4% lived in one of the three major cities, with 65,523 Jews residing in Amsterdam (58,6%).<sup>65</sup> This number would increase in the following years. Hitler's assumption of power on 30 January 1933 and the subsequent anti-Jewish legislations in Germany, created a stream of German refugees. Estimates of the number of German refugees in the Netherlands in the period between 1933 and 1940 vary from 35,000 to 50,000.<sup>66</sup> These numbers exclude transmigrants who managed to move on to other countries overseas and those who only stayed in the country for a short period of time, and therefore do not represent the number of refugees in the country at any given moment. At the time of the German invasion in May 1940, around 140,000 Jews resided in the country, including around 22,000 Jewish immigrants (16% of the Jewish population), in some cases because they had not been able to leave the country in time.<sup>67</sup> The refugees comprised both Germans and a substantial number

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<sup>64</sup> Blom and Cahen, "Jewish Netherlanders", 231.

<sup>65</sup> Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 91-92, 125-126.

<sup>66</sup> Daan Bronkhorst, *Een tijd van komen. De geschiedenis van vluchtelingen in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Mets, 1990); C.K. Berghuis, *Joodse Vluchtelingen in Nederland 1938-1940. Documenten betreffende toelating, uitleiding en kampopname* (Kampen: Kok, 1990); Michman, Beem, et al., *Pinkas*, 149.

<sup>67</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 170.

of eastern European nationals and stateless Jews, ‘primarily so-called Ost-Juden, who had been resident in Germany but had lost their former nationality and now sought to acquire a new one’.<sup>68</sup> They came from a wide range of classes and occupational backgrounds, ‘from left-wing working-class activists to the highest echelons of the German Jewish bourgeoisie’.<sup>69</sup> Overall, 60% of the Jews were concentrated in Amsterdam, 10% in The Hague and 8% in Rotterdam.<sup>70</sup> The Dutch Jews ‘had little in common either with the German-speaking westernised, liberal Jews from metropolitan Germany, or with the Yiddish speaking, central European Ost-Juden’.<sup>71</sup> As was the case in all three countries, albeit to differing degrees, there were tensions and disputes between immigrants and the longstanding Jewish population, and these affected the stability of the Jewish community.

In Belgium and France, the situation was different and more complicated. Here, the immigrants deeply affected the nature of the established Jewish communities and the ways in which they were represented.<sup>72</sup> Between 1925 and the beginning of 1940, a wave of immigrants, mainly from eastern Europe, entered Belgium including refugees from Poland (responsible for almost half of the total number of immigrants), Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary Austria, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic states and the Netherlands.<sup>73</sup> After the German annexation of Austria in March 1938, around 10,000 German refugees also sought refuge in the country. The influx of these immigrants, who were motivated by social, economic and political push factors, caused national political unrest in Belgium and in western Europe more broadly. In light of economic depression and high unemployment rates, these individuals were considered a threat. Legal refugees were housed in centres throughout Belgium. Around a thousand Jews obtained asylum in the Belgian colony of Congo, where their arrival was heavily contested by the white colonists.<sup>74</sup>

Thousands of poor immigrant Jews did not integrate in Belgian society the way their predecessors had. Antwerp became an important city for orthodox Jews to settle in, and this was a

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<sup>68</sup> Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 32. Also see: *ibid.*, *Refugees from Nazi Germany in the Netherlands, 1933-1940* (Dordrecht/ Boston/ Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1986), 17-27.

<sup>69</sup> Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 32.

<sup>70</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 170.

<sup>71</sup> Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 32. Also see: Dan Michman, “Die jüdische Emigration und die niederländische Reaktion zwischen 1933 und 1940” in: Katharina Dittrich and Max Würzner (eds.), *Die Niederlande und das Deutsche Exil, 1933-1940* (Königstein: Athanäum Verlag, 1982), 82-85.

<sup>72</sup> Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 40.

<sup>73</sup> Bok, “Vie juive et communauté”, 161; Van Doorslaer, *Kinderen van het getto*, 25.

<sup>74</sup> Ludo Abicht, *Geschiedenis van de Joden van de Lage Landen* (Antwerpen: Meulenhoff / Manteau, 2006), 281-282.

unique phenomenon in the mostly liberal-oriented cities of western Europe.<sup>75</sup> As a result, the social and political fabric of the Jewish population in Antwerp changed even more so than that in Brussels.<sup>76</sup> Liberal, religious and socialist Zionism and especially Communism, which had a breakthrough in the 1930s with its political utopia of equality and ideological rigidity, all struggled to find their place in the increasing antisemitic climate of Belgium.<sup>77</sup> Although the Council of Jewish Associations in Brussels and the Central Council of Jewish organisations in Antwerp tried to unite the Jews living in Belgium, the politically and socially distinctive elements remained deliberately aloof from one another.<sup>78</sup> As historian Lieven Saerens has indicated in the case of Antwerp, there existed a mosaic of different communities and individuals, all with their own convictions and behaviour.<sup>79</sup> As immigrants remained wedded to the political and social beliefs that had characterised the communities they had left behind, a single ‘Jewish leadership’ cannot be identified at the outbreak of the war. As in France, several Jewish administrations headed different Jewish communities, often with distinctive religious, social and political backgrounds.<sup>80</sup> Whereas the Jewish communities had traditionally been mostly governed top-down and served under the umbrella of the Consistory throughout the nineteenth century, there was now a de facto grassroots community, composed of a large variety of religious, political, cultural, professional and charitable institutions.<sup>81</sup> Symptomatic of this is the fact that more than 100 different periodicals appeared between 1930 and 1940, including 6 daily newspapers in Yiddish.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Veerle Van den Daelen, *Laten we hun lied verder zingen: de heropbouw van de joodse gemeenschap in Antwerpen na de Tweede Wereldoorlog, 1944-1960* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 166.

<sup>76</sup> Initially, the growth of the population was mainly visible in the port city of Antwerp, but in the 1930s in particular it also spread to Brussels where many German and Austrian refugees had been stranded. Van den Daelen, *Laten we hun lied verder zingen*, 166.

<sup>77</sup> Dratwa, “The Zionist Kaleidoscope”, 81.

<sup>78</sup> For more information about the different currents of Zionism in Belgium and their relation to one other and to the Belgian communities in the interwar period, see Van Doorslaer, *Kinderen van het getto*, 33-40.

<sup>79</sup> Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad*, 27; Also see: Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil. La question juive 1940-1942*, 75-78.

<sup>80</sup> Dan Michman, “De oprichting van de VJB in internationaal perspectief” in: Van Doorslaer and Schreiber (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 28.

<sup>81</sup> Jean-Philippe Schreiber, “Les Juifs en Belgique: une présence continue depuis le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle” in: *Cahiers de la Mémoire contemporaine - Bijdragen tot de eigentijdse Herinnering*, No. 2 (2000), 13-37. For an overview of the nature of the Jewish communities in Belgium in the interbellum, including their political composition, see: Van Doorslaer, *De kinderen van het getto: Joodse immigratie en communisme in België, 1925-1940*, band 1, Proefschrift Rijksuniversiteit Gent, Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte, 11-61.

<sup>82</sup> Schreiber, “Les Juifs en Belgique: une présence continue depuis le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle”, passim. For an overview of the Jewish press in Antwerp until May 1940, see: Ephraim Schmidt, *Geschiedenis van de Joden in Antwerpen* (Antwerpen: Uitgeverij S.M. Ontwikkeling, 1963), 253-255.

Both Antwerp and Brussels were economically attractive for Jewish migrants: Antwerp for its diamond industry and Brussels for its leather industry.<sup>83</sup> The immigrants were therefore primarily concentrated in the agglomerations of these cities.<sup>84</sup> There was a specific concentration of Jewish immigrants in the small-scale semi-industrialised production of luxury goods: in textile, diamond and leather trade companies.<sup>85</sup> This threw many Jewish immigrants during the economic crisis of the 1930s back into the hopeless situation they had hoped to leave behind in eastern Europe.<sup>86</sup> By contrast, the Belgian Jewish minority (6.6% of the total Jewish population) formed the social elite in trade and industry. They occupied important positions in banking, financing and the diamond industry.<sup>87</sup> The Belgian bourgeoisie, small in number, had been living in Belgium from the beginning of the nineteenth century and earlier. They were relatively well-integrated into Belgian non-Jewish society, particularly in the capital city Brussels.<sup>88</sup>

The figures given for the number of Jews residing in Belgium on the eve of the Nazi occupation vary.<sup>89</sup> There seems to be a consensus that around 66,000 Jews resided in the country in 1940, of whom 45% lived in Brussels and 45% in Antwerp – 9% of the Jews lived in Liège or Charleroi. Out of these 66,000 Jews, 62,000 (94%) were immigrants and refugees from eastern Europe and Germany without Belgian citizenship.<sup>90</sup> The explanation for the small percentage of Jews in Belgium with Belgian citizenship is twofold. First, these Jews were reluctant to become Belgian citizens because of ‘an inherent fear of state bureaucracy, based largely on their experiences

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<sup>83</sup> Frank Caestecker, *Alien Policy in Belgium, 1840-1940: The Creation of Guest Workers, Refugees and Illegal Aliens* (New York / Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), 104-105.

<sup>84</sup> For an overview of where exactly Jews of specific origin (Poles, Romanians, Hungarians) resided in these agglomerations, see: Van Doorslaer, *De kinderen van het getto: Joodse immigratie en communisme in België 1925-1940*, band 1, Proefschrift Rijksuniversiteit Gent, Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte (ca. 1990), 20-23.

<sup>85</sup> Israël Shirman, “Een aspekt van de ‘Endlösung’. De economische plundering van de joden in België.” in: *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, No. 3 (1974), 174.

<sup>86</sup> Van Doorslaer, *De kinderen van het getto: Joodse immigratie en communisme in België 1925-1940*, band 1, Proefschrift Rijksuniversiteit Gent, Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte, 33.

<sup>87</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *De Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 163; Van den Daelen, *Laten we hun lied verder zingen*, 70.

<sup>88</sup> Van Doorslaer, *Kinderen van het getto*, 27-28.

<sup>89</sup> Maxime Steinberg estimated between 64,000 and 70,000 Jews in *l'étoile et le fusil. La question juive 1942*, 76, 83-85. Dan Michman based his research on data published in 1980, claiming 65,696 Jews lived in the country. See: Michman, “Belgium” in: Israel Gutman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: MacMillan, 1990), 161. Lieven Saerens claimed there were 56,000 Jews residing in the country by the end of 1940. See: Saerens, “De Jodenvervolging in België in cijfers” in: *Bijdragen tot de eigentijdse geschiedenis* 30/60, No. 17 (2006), 200.

<sup>90</sup> Griffioen en Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 170. For the features of the Jewish population in Brussels and Antwerp specifically, see: Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad*, 551-552.



in Tsarist Russia'.<sup>91</sup> Second, the Belgian State obstructed an easy naturalisation process by 'insisting upon a "bond" with the country, a ten-year residence period (after 1932), and by making the process increasingly costly'.<sup>92</sup> As a result, the large variety of Jewish communities in Belgium remained non-integrated.

In France, as in Belgium, there were strong differentiations among the 300-330,000 Jews living in the country on the eve of the Second World War – both between foreign and French Jews, but also within both of these groups.<sup>93</sup> In addition to the Jews who had sought refuge in France at the turn of the century and in the early twentieth century, a new wave of immigrants arrived in the 1930s. They formed small organisations, the so-called *Landsmannschaften*, which were brought under one umbrella in the Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France (FSJF), established in 1913. This organisation was headed by Marc Jarblum, leader of the Zionist Poalei Zion, who later refused to become part of the UGIF-Sud.<sup>94</sup> On the eve of the war, around 130,000-140,000 Jews in France were immigrants from eastern Europe and Germany (around 45%).<sup>95</sup> There were around 190,000-200,000 Jews with French citizenship, of whom around 86,000 lived in the greater Paris region. Overall, 46% of the Jews lived in this region; 24% lived in Lyon, Marseille or Bordeaux.<sup>96</sup> Around 22,000 Jews resided in Alsace-Lorraine and were expelled into the Vichy zone after the German annexation of the region in 1940.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 167.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. Also see: Frank Caestecker, "The Reintegration of Jewish Survivors into Belgian Society, 1943-1947" in: David Bankier (ed.), *The Jews are Coming Back: The Return of the Jews to their Countries of Origin after World War II* (New York / Jerusalem: Berghahn / Yad Vashem, 2005), 73-74.

<sup>93</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France During World War II*, 1-2; Abitbol, *Les deux terres promises*, 110.

<sup>94</sup> Leni Yahil, "The Jewish Leadership of France" in: *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi-Europe 1933-1945: Proceedings of the Third Yad Vashem International Conference* (1977), 318-321.

<sup>95</sup> Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz: la "solution finale" de la question juive en France* (Paris: Fayard, 2001; first published as *Vichy-Auschwitz le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question Juive en France*. Paris: Fayard, 1983), 359-360; Griffioen and Zeller, *De Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 170. As Sémelin has highlighted, the studies on the waves of Ashkenazi Jewish immigration have neglected the parallel influx of Jews from the Balkans at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century. Around 15,000 so-called Levantine Jews arrived in France during the interwar period. Another little-known migration is that of the Jews from North-Africa in this period. Sémelin, *The Survival of the Jews in France, 1940-1944* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2018; revised and updated version of the French *Persécutions et entraides dans la France occupée*, Paris: Éditions les Arènes-le Seuil, 2013), 19-20; Nadia Malinovich, *French and Jewish: Culture and the Politics of Identity in Early Twentieth-Century France* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 2008), 109.

<sup>96</sup> Bensimon, "Socio-Demographic Aspects of French Jewry" in: *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*, Vol 12, No. 1 (1978), 12; Griffioen and Zeller, *De Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 170.

<sup>97</sup> Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932-1945*, transl. from the Hebrew by Ina Friedman and Haya Galai (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 177.

As in Belgium, these new immigrants distinguished themselves from France's longstanding Jewish population. They spoke Yiddish and generally regarded the government as an entity to be wary of.<sup>98</sup> Their political sensitivity, be they Bundists, Communists, Zionists or militant anti-Fascists, was markedly different from that of the French Jews.<sup>99</sup> Unlike the immigrants, French Jewry was very much wedded to the French State and, after the resolution of the Dreyfus affair, they believed they had every reason to put their trust in the government.<sup>100</sup> Ironically, the Jews of the Consistory believed the immigrants were not sufficiently French, and the immigrants opposed the French Jews because they believed they were not sufficiently Jewish.<sup>101</sup> As in both other countries, the immigrant Jews were seen as a threat: French Jews feared for their position in the increasingly antisemitic society. Particularly during the recession of 1926-1927, immigrants were perceived as illegitimate competitors for the limited positions available in the French economy.<sup>102</sup> Whereas immigrant leaders expected to be on an equal footing in the prewar period, Consistorial circles disregarded the immigrants' culture and ideologies.<sup>103</sup>

A large part of the French Jews rejected the immigrants' leftist political orientation, believing that its revolutionary character was, first, a threat to their own status as Jews and, second, a threat to their wealthy bourgeois material interests.<sup>104</sup> French Jewry's perception of these Jewish immigrants has been a subject of debate for decades. A number of journalists and historians, including Rajsfus, an immigrant Jew himself, accused French Jews of betraying the refugees in the 1930s, claiming that they failed to offer support to Jewish immigrants and even actively collaborated with the government when it sought to restrict immigration.<sup>105</sup> By contrast, others, including most recently Sémelin, highlighted that even though there was indeed a fear that these immigrants would threaten their position in society, French Jewry nonetheless did institute several

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<sup>98</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 7.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>101</sup> Schwarzfuchs, *Aux prises avec Vichy*, 10.

<sup>102</sup> Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, 129. In 1931, there were 2.9 million immigrants (7% of the entire population) in France. For a general overview of the history of immigration in France, see: Yves Lequin (ed.), *Histoire des étrangers et de l'immigration en France* (Paris: Larousse, 2006).

<sup>103</sup> Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, 148.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>105</sup> Rajsfus, *Des Juifs dans la collaboration*, 27-35.

committees to help refugees.<sup>106</sup> Vicki Caron has persuasively argued that several phases in the approaches to immigrants can be identified, characterised by a wide range of Jewish responses to the new arrivals from central and eastern Europe. Rather than a progressive hardening of policy after a brief liberal period in 1933 culminating in the extremely harsh immigrant laws of 1938, as historians have generally posited, Caron demonstrated that there were two major periods in the anti-refugee crackdown of the 1930s; the first in 1934-1935 and the second in 1938. Her work focuses on the fluidity of policy towards refugees and rightly makes a distinction between the government treatment of the problem, the role of public opinion and the role of the longstanding Jewish community.<sup>107</sup>

Caron underlined that the Consistory, and especially its director Jacques Helbronner, was reluctant to be involved in refugee relief, believing above all that identifying French Jewry with foreign Jews would encourage the government to ‘lump all Jews, French and foreign, together’.<sup>108</sup> It also feared that any engagement in non-religious activities would ‘only substantiate the administration’s effort to define Jews on ethnic or racial lines, thus facilitating anti-Jewish rather than anti-foreign discrimination’.<sup>109</sup> At the same time, there were also pro-refugee Consistory members. Refugee organisations such as the Comité d’Assistance aux Réfugiés (Committee for Assistance to Refugees, CAR), supported by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, were created by the French Jewish establishment to provide for refugees. The CAR leadership maintained a distance from hard-liners like Jacques Helbronner and instead adopted a more moderate outlook which was ‘above all represented by Raymond-Raoul Lambert, the CAR’s secretary-general, as well by Albert Lévy, its president and member of the Central Consistory; William Oualid, a member of the Paris Consistory and vice-president of the AIU; and Louise Weiss, a prominent journalist and feminist leader’.<sup>110</sup> Lévy and Lambert became directors of the UGIF

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<sup>106</sup> Sémelin, *The Survival of the Jews in France*, 26-27. These committees included the Comité National de Secours aux Réfugiés Allemands Victimes de l’Anti-Sémitisme, the Comité pour la Défense des Droits des Israélites en Europe Centrale et Occidentale and the Comité d’Assistance aux Réfugiés, founded by Raymond-Raoul Lambert.

<sup>107</sup> Caron, *Uneasy Asylum*, passim.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 303. Jacques Helbronner was vice-president of the Central Consistory and became its president in March 1941. Born in 1873, Helbronner was nominated as auditor at the Conseil d’État in 1898. In 1917, he was appointed as director of Paul Painlevé’s military cabinet in 1917. A decorated First World War veteran, he became state councillor while also fulfilling representative functions in the Jewish community as, among other things, a member of the central committee of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), founded in 1860 to promote the emancipation of Jews and raise the cultural level of Jewish communities outside France. See: Laffitte, *Juif dans la France Allemande*, 46.

(both -Nord and -Sud) and the UGIF-Sud respectively. In a period when the traditional Consistorial rule was being challenged by a disaffected upper class, differences in perspectives on the 'refugee problem' crystallised.

### *Jewish representation and the institution of Jewish refugee organisations*

The influx of large numbers of refugees and the passive attitude of the indigenous governments vis-à-vis these Jews in terms of providing social welfare and shelter encouraged and even necessitated initiatives from the Jewish communities themselves. In the case of the Netherlands and France, the later chairmen of the JR, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, along with other central board members, fulfilled various representative positions in Jewish refugee organisations before the war. We have seen that in France, for example, Raymond-Raoul Lambert was the president of the central refugee organisation the CAR. This was not the case in Belgium where the central board members had comparatively little prewar social welfare leadership experience. By highlighting either the continuation or discontinuation of prewar structures in this regard, we will see that the nature of the wartime Jewish leadership was crucially different in the three countries.

In the Netherlands, Professor of Classical History David Cohen (1882-1967), who served on the board of the Permanent commission of both the Dutch-Israelite and Portuguese church congregations, took the initiative to establish a committee that would coordinate refugee aid.<sup>111</sup> Cohen was firmly rooted in Dutch social and cultural life and had close bonds with Dutch Jewry. In some respects, he represented the assimilationist form and functioning of the Jewish community of the time. Although discussions have been raised about the exact position he held in the Dutch Zionist movement, we know that he was a convinced Zionist.<sup>112</sup> Together with Abraham Asscher (1880-1950), who also served as board member of the church congregations, he established the Comité voor Bijzondere Joodse Belangen in March 1933. Asscher was the owner of the best-known diamond factory in Amsterdam, politically active as the provincial leader of the Liberal party and, above all, president of the religious Nederlands Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap (Dutch Israelite

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<sup>111</sup> For a biography of David Cohen, see: Schrijvers, *Rome, Athene, Jeruzalem*.

<sup>112</sup> On the one hand, Cohen has been referred to as a misunderstood (*miskend*) Zionist leader as he never became the clear leader of the Dutch Zionist Association (Nederlandse Zionistenbond, NZB). On the other hand, it has been argued that this might never have been his aim in the first place because, as a Zionist propagandist and humanitarian aid-giver, he was more concerned with NZB activities on the periphery. See KBI Inv. No. 1420 Prof. Dr. David Cohen, NIOD; Evelien Gans, *Review Biografie Bulletin* jaargang 10, Nr. 2 (2000), 153. For further reading on Cohen and Zionism in the Netherlands, see: Schrijvers, *Rome, Athene, Jeruzalem*, 70-86, 191-193.

Congregation, NIK), an Israelite church federation established in 1814, with which Cohen was also associated.<sup>113</sup> His appointment at the helm of the NIK, combined with the other functions he fulfilled, made him the principal representative of Jews at the time.<sup>114</sup> The central aim of the CBJB was to serve as a non-violent response to the Jewish persecution in Germany and to take care of German Jewish refugees in the country by providing social and financial support.<sup>115</sup> In order to promote this aim, its leadership established the Comité voor Joodse Vluchtelingen (the Committee for Jewish Refugees, CvJV), as a sub-commission.<sup>116</sup> The CBJB worked closely together with Stichting Joodse Arbeid, a Zionist organisation that aimed to prepare young Jews for their emigration to Palestine.

In a difficult, unstable period in which Dutch Jewry became increasingly secular, Asscher and Cohen ensured there was a close link between refugee work and the NIK. In addition, they tried to unite the Jewish community through the CBJB, with the aim of bringing together various Jewish interests groups: orthodox and liberal; Ashkenazic and Sephardic; assimilationist and Zionist.<sup>117</sup> The outlook of the CBJB on its future role in the community was therefore more ambitious than merely providing aid to refugees. At the same time, they deliberately excluded the religious leadership as well as socialist and communist Jewish groups.<sup>118</sup> A 1939 letter from Asscher's hand as head of the NIK sent to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Amsterdam, indicates that his aims reached higher than merely carrying out the duty of supporting Jewish welfare. Asscher feared the influence of the Liberaal Joodse Gemeenschap (Liberal Jewish Congregation) in the Netherlands. This congregation consisted mostly of German Jews, many of whom had only recently immigrated into the Netherlands.<sup>119</sup> He considered the fact that its members had to pay dues, that it consisted mostly of Germans and that even non-Jews were accepted in the congregation as 'a threat for the rest and peace' within the Jewish society.<sup>120</sup> The firmness and tone of Asscher's letter marks a line of

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<sup>113</sup> Blom and Cahen, "Jewish Netherlanders", 282; Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 134.

<sup>114</sup> Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 134.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>116</sup> In 1955, David Cohen published a monograph on Jewish refugees in the Netherlands between 1933-1940, including a description of the activities of the CvJV. Cohen, *Zwervend en dolend: de Joodse vluchtelingen in Nederland in de jaren 1933-1940, met een inleiding over de jaren 1900-1933* (Haarlem: Bohn, 1955), 60-79.

<sup>117</sup> Moore, *Refugees from Nazi Germany in the Netherlands*, 27.

<sup>118</sup> Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 148; Blom, "In de ban van de Joodse Raad", 52.

<sup>119</sup> Dan Michman, *Het Liberale Jodendom in Nederland, 1929-1943* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1988), 107.

<sup>120</sup> "Brief gericht aan het college van burgemeester en wethouders van Amsterdam", KBI, Liberaal Joodse Gemeente, A. Asscher, Inv No. 200, NIOD. For an overview of Asscher's openly hostile position towards German Jews who associated themselves with the liberal movement, see: Michman, *Het Liberale Jodendom in Nederland*, 107-108.

demarcation between immigrant and Dutch Jewry, while at the same time he positions himself at the centre of the Jewish community. He did not afford the mostly liberal German Jews the same status as Dutch Jews. Although the NIK was a cooperation between ‘liberal’ and orthodox Dutch Jews which aimed to unite Dutch Jewry and to be a universal *volkskerk* (church of the people), the presence of the German liberal congregation was a step too far for Asscher. Above all, the leadership of the CBJB enabled Asscher and Cohen to definitively establish their position as leaders within the community in this period.<sup>121</sup> These two men, as well as Henri Eitje (1889-1943) and Gertrude van Tijn-Cohn (1891-1974), who organised the actual running of the CvJV while Cohen served as its chairman, would fulfil (prominent) positions in the Dutch Jewish Council from 1941 onwards.

In France, the influx of refugees and the criticisms that were voiced from various sides about the way in which the traditional leadership dealt with the problem forced the Consistory to establish aid organisations. In reality, however, Consistorial leaders and members generally continued to regard refugee Jews with suspicion, believing that they constituted a threat to their own position. This mistrustful perspective vis-à-vis immigrant Jews is a tendency that can be identified in the traditional Jewish institutions in all three countries where attempts were made to remove refugees from the country. For example, throughout the 1930s, the Consistory’s president, Jacques Helbronner ensured that migration and repatriation of refugees (rather than providing social assistance for immigrants to remain in France) became the sole priorities of the Comité National de Secours aux Réfugiés Allemands Victimes de l’Anti-Sémitisme (National Aid Committee for German Refugees: hereafter Comité National), headed by Baron de Rothschild. Together with the Comité pour la Défense des Droits des Israélites en Europe Centrale et Occidentale (Committee for the Defence of the Rights of Jews from Central and Western Europe), this was the among the most important sources of refugee assistance in 1934.<sup>122</sup> Helbronner’s hesitant involvement in refugee aid is indicative of a broader sentiment in which the traditional Jewish leaders carefully measured their own decisions against the possible repercussions in a larger society which increasingly perceived the Jew as a foreign threat.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Hans Blom, “In de ban van de Joodse Raad” in: *Ibid.*, *In de ban van goed en fout? wetenschappelijke geschiedschrijving over de bezettingstijd in Nederland* (Bergen: Octavo, 1983), 52.

<sup>122</sup> Caron, *Uneasy Asylum*, 107; Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 28-29; Sémelin, *The Survival of the Jews in France*, 27.

<sup>123</sup> Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, 23.

We have seen that the approach of French Jewry towards refugees was not exclusively negative. A substantial number of French Jews became sympathetic to the achievements of the Zionist movement in Palestine. Refugee organisations, such as the CAR and the Comité National of the Central Consistory competed with each other to have the upper hand in political influence about Jewish matters, and about the influx of Jewish refugees specifically. Throughout the 1930s, as head of the CAR, Lambert had taken up a pro-refugee stance after the deteriorating anti-refugee outlook of the Comité National. Increasingly influenced by Zionist ideas, he worked hard to find jobs for refugees between 1933 and 1935, permitting them to stay in France.<sup>124</sup> At the same time, Lambert was not an extreme radical on the matter; he accepted certain government policies, such as isolating eastern European immigrants and making a distinction between political and economic refugees.<sup>125</sup> Despite this, his opposition to the established Jewish authorities is clear.

The refugee problem of the 1930s therefore altered the power balances within French Jewish communities. With the divisions between immigrant and French Jewry becoming more visible than before in this period of political, economic and social instability, the Consistory lost the last element of its exclusive authority over the Jews. Although a significant degree of consensus was reached by 1939 on the issue of refugees among pro-refugee organisations, namely that France could only function as a transit country under its contemporary economic and political circumstances, there was a range of other issues that divided the communities.<sup>126</sup> This instability encouraged some Jews who had been part of the Jewish establishment for years to publicly voice their discontent with the way the Consistory ruled Jewish society. The future leader of the UGIF-Sud, Lambert, was among those who did so.

In Belgium, as in the Netherlands and France, the government was reluctant to take care of Jewish refugees. Jewish communities instituted various aid organisations, including the Antwerp Komiteit der verdediging der Rechten der Joden (Committee for the Defence of the Rights of Jews) and the Brussels Comité d'Aide et d'Assistance aux Victimes de l'Antisémitisme en Allemagne (the Brussels Committee for Aid and Assistance to Victims of Antisemitism in Germany), which were both established in 1933 as a response to the influx of German Jewish refugees. The Brussels

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<sup>124</sup> Caron, *Uneasy Asylum*, 105, 303. Other refugee organisations were established in the 1920s and 1930s, including the Comité pour la Défense des Droits des Israélites en Europe Centrale et Occidentale and the Organisation Reconstruction Travail (ORT), founded in 1921 to offer various training programs in craftsmanship and technical skills.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

committee functioned under the auspices of the Central Consistory and was supervised by Max Gottschalk (1889-1976), a high ranking international functionary and one of the most important community leaders of Belgian Jewry. However, as in the cases of the Dutch and French traditional leadership, their solidarity with German Jews was not without limits.<sup>127</sup> Assuming that Belgium was only a transit country for immigrants, the humanitarian limits of the Comité d'Aide et d'Assistance were reached when it turned out that Brazil and Uruguay had closed their borders for immigrants on 26 September 1933: they advised refugee Jews to go back to either Germany or Poland.<sup>128</sup> Simultaneously, the Central Consistory encouraged the creation of philanthropic societies to help immigrants and promoted recognition of the diverse forms of worship they brought with them.<sup>129</sup> As we have seen, however, when Belgium faced difficulties in integrating large number of refugees, the Central Consistory struggled to find a way to substantiate its role as the representative of all Jewish communities.

After the German invasion, many of those who had held leading positions before the war fled abroad and did not return after the German occupation. Among them were Chief Rabbi Joseph Wiener, the majority of the Board of Directors of the Israelite community and other prominent members of Belgian Jewish society.<sup>130</sup> Consequently, there was a leadership vacuum in what was already a disorganised Belgian Jewish society at the outbreak of the war. This pattern can be seen too in the occupied zone in France, where a large part of the traditional leadership also fled after the German invasion. In the Netherlands and the French unoccupied zone the situation was different. We will see that these differences had an impact on the nature of the wartime Jewish leadership.

## **1.2 1940-1941: Restructuring communal representation**

In May 1940, the Germans unleashed their forces on France and the Low Countries and their rapid advance resulted in chaos, panic and astonishment. Particularly in the Netherlands, where people had strongly believed in the power of neutrality, the German invasion shocked its citizens and, when it became clear the Dutch army could not resist Germany's advancement, many tried to flee

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<sup>127</sup> Caestecker, *Ongewenste gasten*, 31.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>129</sup> Dratwa, "The Zionism Kaleidoscope in Belgium", 46.

<sup>130</sup> Van Doorslaer, "Salomon van den Berg of de ondraaglijke mislukking van een joodse politiek van het minste kwaad" in: *ibid.* and Schreiber (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 116.



abroad.<sup>131</sup> In Belgium and France, the fear of a German occupation also incited refugee streams to the South, which resulted in some 3 million refugee civilians in West Flanders and a rapid population drain in the towns and cities in the north of France.<sup>132</sup> The responses of the Jews, who had observed the increasing persecution of their coreligionists in Germany, varied from outright distress and panic to more moderate reactions based on the belief that the situation in the West would be different from that in Germany and eastern Europe.<sup>133</sup> The flight abroad of some of the prewar Jewish leaders after the German occupation, combined with a feeling that the communities needed to confront the Nazis in a unified way, resulted in the restructuring of communal representation. We will see that this materialised differently in each of the countries.

### *German representation and the machinery of government*

The nature of the German occupation differed across the three countries under investigation. Whereas a Civil Administration (*Zivilverwaltung*) was introduced in the Netherlands, a Military Administration (*Militärverwaltung*) governed Belgium and France. This difference is important in terms of understanding the particular contexts in which Nazi and Vichy officials forced the Jewish organisations' leaders to operate. Initially, the plan was to establish a Military Administration in all three countries. According to Kwiet, Hitler's last-minute order to introduce a Civil Administration in the Netherlands on 18 May 1940 exemplifies his impulsivity and the improvised nature of his decisions.<sup>134</sup> The choice can be explained by the fact that the Netherlands, in contrast to France and Belgium (Wallonia in particular), was considered a *Germanisches Brudervolk* (Germanic brother people), which at some point ought to be included in the German Reich. By contrast, the German generals preferred a Military occupation in Belgium and France for strategic reasons because they eventually wished to use these countries as a venture point for an invasion of Great Britain.<sup>135</sup> The initially accommodating attitude of King Leopold III of the Belgians and the armistice agreement with France, leaving the south and parts of the east of the country unoccupied until November 1942,

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<sup>131</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 15-16.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>133</sup> Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 164; Poznanski, *The Jews in France during World War II*, 23-29.

<sup>134</sup> "Erlaß des Führers über Ausübung der Regierungsbefugnisse in den Niederlanden", 18.5.1940 in *Reichsgesetzblatt* part I, 788. Published as *Erste Verordnung* (VO I/1940) in *Verordnungsblatt für die besetzten niederländischen Gebiete* (VOBL), 1940 (part 1), 4; Konrad Kwiet, *Reichskommissariat Niederlande: Versuch und Scheitern nationalsozialistischer Neuordnung* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1968), 49-50.

<sup>135</sup> Kwiet, *Reichskommissariat Niederlande*, 61-68.

also served to help the establishment of a Military Administration in these countries.<sup>136</sup>

In light of the aim to Nazify the *Brudervolk* in the Netherlands, German leaders with strong ideological backgrounds, led by Reichskommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart, were appointed in the country immediately after the occupation.<sup>137</sup> Together with the highest Military commander, Friedrich Christiansen, Seyss-Inquart could make all necessary arrangements for a military operation in Britain.<sup>138</sup> There was a strong presence of the SS in the Netherlands. Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer Hanns Albin Rauter was the highest SS representative in the country and stood in direct communication with Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler in Berlin. By contrast, in Belgium and France, the party and the SS were hardly represented at first. In France, only Werner Best (Military Administration) and Otto Abetz (ambassador) were important ideologists of the occupation regime. The SS established an office of the SiPo-SD in Paris, but its influence was initially restricted because the Military Administration did not allow it any executive role. In Belgium, there were no representatives of the party or SS present within the leadership of the Military Administration. As a result, the SiPo-SD had a weaker position here than in France. This continued to be the case even after the head of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (the Reich Security Main Office, RSHA) Reinhard Heydrich appointed a direct representative for France and Belgium, Max Thomas, Beauftragter des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD für Belgien und Frankreich.<sup>139</sup>

The differences in the nature of occupation found their expression in the implementation of anti-Jewish legislation. Whereas the presence of the Military Administration in Belgium and France resulted in a more gradual introduction of anti-Jewish legislation, the SS in the Netherlands was more radical.<sup>140</sup> This difference can be explained by the fact that the Military Administration took

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<sup>136</sup> Albert de Jonghe, *Hitler en het politieke lot van België (1940-1944). De vestiging van een Zivilverwaltung in België en Noord-Frankrijk: Koningskwesitie en bezettingsregime van de kapitulatie tot Berchtesgaden, 28 mei - 19 november 1940*, Vol. 1 (Antwerpen: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1972), 313-323.

<sup>137</sup> For an overview of the history and structure of the Reichskommissariat in the Netherlands, see: Gerhard Hirschfeld, *Nazi Rule and Dutch Collaboration: The Netherlands under German Occupation, 1940-1945*, transl. from the German by Louise Willmot (Oxford/New York/Hamburg: Berg, 1988; first ed. 1984 [German]), 12-54.

<sup>138</sup> Hirschfeld, *Nazi Rule and Dutch Collaboration*, 18-19.

<sup>139</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 107-108; Hans Umbreit, *Der Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich* (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1968), 107-108; Joseph Billig, *Die "Endlösung der Judenfrage". Studie über ihre Grundsätze im III. Reich und in Frankreich während der Besatzung* transl. from the French by Eva Schulz (New York: The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1979), 99; Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil. La question juive 1940-1942*, 22.

<sup>140</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 233-234.

the responses of the non-Jewish populations more carefully into consideration, in part because it was chiefly interested in exploiting resources for the German war effort and limiting the use of German manpower; aims that necessitated stability over disruption.<sup>141</sup> Particularly during the first phase of the occupation, the presence of the Military Administration in Belgium and France served as an inhibiting factor in the process of persecution and in the preparations for the large scale deportation of Jews. This can be explained by the provisional nature of Nazi policy toward the Jews in this period. From the outbreak of the war in western Europe in April 1940 until the autumn of 1941, the so-called ‘Final solution of the Jewish question in Europe’ still vaguely encompassed a ‘yet unspecified project of mass emigration’.<sup>142</sup>

The various German occupation authorities would pursue anti-Jewish objectives primarily by ‘controlling the movements and organizations of Jews, confiscating their property, enumerating them, and sometimes concentrating them in certain regions’.<sup>143</sup> In Belgium, Militärverwaltungschef Eggert Reeder prevented the SiPo-SD from engaging in a *Judenpolitik* of its own in this period, safeguarding his own position as well as stability and order. In order to do this, Reeder confirmed in January 1941 that the SiPo-SD was only permitted to arrest Jews when instructed or approved to do so by the Military Administration.<sup>144</sup> Only in the summer of 1942, shortly before the start of the deportations of Jews from Belgium did the SiPo-SD enlarge its influence. As we shall see, this was the result of a dramatic reversal of Nazi policy towards Jews. The SiPo-SD’s increasing power is highlighted by its authorisation to arrest Jews without the permission of the Military Administration through the *Schutzhaftbefehl* and to send Jews to concentration camps without trial from 1 June 1942.<sup>145</sup>

In France, the Military Administration initially obstructed the French Judenreferent Dannecker’s attempts to concentrate Jews in order to commence their forced deportation as quickly as possible. It wished to limit the number of internment camps in the occupied zone and considered the mass arrest of Jews to be a matter for the French. Moreover, the Military Administration wanted

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<sup>141</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 78-81; Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil. La question juive 1940-1942*, 19-25; Ibid., *La Persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 37.

<sup>142</sup> Marrus and Paxton, “The Nazis and the Jews in Occupied Western Europe”, 687.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil. La question juive 1940-1942*, 25-27.

<sup>145</sup> De Jonghe, “De strijd Himmler-Reeder om de benoeming van een HSSPF te Brussel (1942-1944)” in: *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (BGTW), No. 3 (1974), 197-199; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolgving in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 235.

to restrict the power of the SiPo-SD and the Judenreferat in order to safeguard its own position.<sup>146</sup> From autumn 1941, the faltering campaign in Russia showed that the war would last longer than Hitler had expected. As a result, Nazi policies changed and Jews in western Europe, no longer allowed to emigrate from occupied countries, were segregated and interned.<sup>147</sup> As a result, the SiPo-SD increased its power at the cost of the Military Administration. However, as we shall see, the continued rivalry between the two institutions sometimes frustrated Dannecker's radical plans.<sup>148</sup> The occupation of France had its own peculiarities as the French regime opted for an armistice with the Germans, while the country was administered by the collaborationist Vichy regime, headed by Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain. The Vichy regime thus operated alongside the German Military Administration, creating a rivalry between the French and German institutions. For example, Vichy outpaced the Germans by introducing the *Statut des Juifs*, the first widespread anti-Jewish legislation, first in October 1940 and then in June 1941.<sup>149</sup> Above all, when the deportations began in the summer of 1942, the Judenreferat had to share its control over the deportations of Jews with both the Military Administration and Vichy.

In the Netherlands, the persecution of the Jews was an affair directly overseen by the SiPo-SD and Rauter, the Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer (HSSPF), which gained increasing operational freedom through the course of the occupation.<sup>150</sup> Unlike its western European counterparts, the JR was exclusively subordinate to the local German civil and police authorities, Beauftragter Böhmcker and the Zentralstelle, and this was emblematic of the German aim to oust the Dutch government bureaucracy, sitting in The Hague.<sup>151</sup> In March 1942, Rauter informed Karel Johannes Frederiks, Secretary-General of Internal Affairs, that Jews no longer fell under Dutch government authority.<sup>152</sup> As a consequence, the Germans had more operational freedom to implement anti-

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<sup>146</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 179-181; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 77-82.

<sup>147</sup> Marrus and Paxton, "The Nazi Jews in Occupied Western Europe", 687-688.

<sup>148</sup> Steur, *Theodor Dannecker: ein Funktionär der "Endlösung"* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1997), 47-91. For an overview of the increasing initiatives taken by the SiPo-SD to gain power over anti-Jewish policies in France, see: Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 181-192.

<sup>149</sup> Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 75-100, 190-200; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 305.

<sup>150</sup> For an overview of the process in which the SiPo-SD gained increasing power in the Netherlands, which was by no means a linear process, see: Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 216-226; Houwink ten Cate, "Der Befehlshaber der SiPo-SD in den besetzten niederländischen Gebiete" in: Wolfgang Benz, Gerhard Otto and ibid. (eds.), *Die Bürokratie der Okkupation. Strukturen der Herrschaft und Verwaltung im besetzten Europa* (Berlin: Metropol, 1999), 87-133; Hirschfeld, *Nazi Rule and Dutch Collaboration*, 45-54.

<sup>151</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 649.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

Jewish legislation compared to their counterparts in Belgium and France. From the end of February 1942, the policy of persecution came under the supervision of Eichmann's IV B4 Berlin office, a sub-department of the Gestapo and the RSHA that was directly responsible for the deportation of Jews to concentration camps in eastern Europe.<sup>153</sup> After the summer of 1942, Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart, who was at first directly subordinate to Hitler, was also overseen by Reichsführer-SS Himmler. From this point on, Seyss-Inquart was forced to reach agreements with SS-representatives in the Netherlands, most notably Rauter, even in non-police matters.<sup>154</sup> Seyss-Inquart's generally good relations with Himmler and, as Gruppenführer of the SS, his affinity with the ideas of the SS, combined with the fact that Himmler's agreement had become necessary 'for almost every development in the occupied Netherlands' encouraged him in doing so.<sup>155</sup> We will see that these differences in occupational structure affected the form of forced Jewish representative organisation – either a *Judenrat* model, or a *Judenvereinigung* model – that was established in the three countries.

#### *German dissatisfaction with existing Jewish representative organisations*

In the period between the Nazi invasion of the three countries in May 1940 and the institution of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud in 1941, Jewish representative organisations which aimed to unite the Jewish communities were already in existence. They were established either before the war, or as direct consequence of the German occupation. All were so-called 'Coordinating Committees' which generally aimed to oversee all Jewish philanthropic work and to unite the various Jewish communities.<sup>156</sup> From the German perspective, the existence of these national representative Jewish bodies may have decreased the perceived need to institute Jewish Councils immediately after the occupation. Furthermore, the absence of a central order to force such institutions upon the communities in western Europe undoubtedly played a role in delaying their establishment. Heydrich's 1939 *Schnellbrief*, in which he ordered the establishment of Jewish

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<sup>153</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolgung in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 222-223; De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, volume 5, 1031-1035.

<sup>154</sup> Hirschfeld, *Nazi Rule and Dutch Collaboration*, 47-48.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>156</sup> Yahil, "The Jewish Leadership of France", 320-321; Michman, "De oprichting van de VJB in internationaal perspectief", 36-37; Jozeph Melkman, "De briefwisseling tussen Mr. L.E. Visser en Prof. Dr. D. Cohen" in: *Studia Rosenthaliana*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1974), 109-114.

Councils for occupied Poland, did not apply to countries other than Poland.<sup>157</sup>

Prior to the forced establishment of the AJB, the Comité de Coördination (Coordinating Committee, CC) of the Jewish communities was established in April 1941 in Belgium at the initiative of the German SS.<sup>158</sup> Initially, Jewish community representatives voiced objections, because they wanted to safeguard the organisational autonomy of religious institutions. However, after careful deliberation, the Chief Rabbi – Salomon Ullman – was appointed head of the CC.<sup>159</sup> Various social welfare organisations, including the Hilfswerke für die Juden aus Deutschland (Aid Organisations for Jews from Germany), were included in the organisation.<sup>160</sup> In France, the Comité de Coördination des Oeuvres de Bienfaisance Israélites à Paris (the Coördination Committee of the Israelite Charities of Greater Paris) was established by a German order in January 1941, and was made up of the Paris Consistory and various Jewish welfare organisations.<sup>161</sup> In October 1941, the Commission Centrale des Organisations Juives d'Assistance (Central Committee for Jewish Aid Organisations, CCOJA) was created in Marseille under the aegis of the Chief Rabbi of France, Isaïe Schwartz, 'regrouping the nine major welfare organisations that were still operative, or had reconstituted themselves in the unoccupied zone'.<sup>162</sup> While Lambert's CAR was its chief operating agency, the CCOJA worked closely with the Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France (Federation of Jewish Societies of France, FSJF), one of the major Jewish immigrant aid organisations, and the Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (Children's Aid Society, OSE), a children's welfare organisation that after the armistice focused its efforts on obtaining the release of as many internees as possible, primarily children, from the camps in the unoccupied zone.<sup>163</sup> The CCOJA was disbanded in March 1942, unable to achieve many of its objectives. In the Netherlands, Lodewijk Ernst Visser, president of the Hoge Raad, the Dutch Supreme Court, and one of the central figures inside the Jewish community, initiated the establishment of the Joodsche Coördinatie Commissie (Jewish

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<sup>157</sup> Dan Michman, "On the Historical Interpretation of the Judenräte Issue: Between Intentionalism, Functionalism and the Integrationist Approach of the 1990s" in: Moshe Zimmermann (ed.), *On Germans and Jews under the Nazi Regime: Essays by Three Generations of Historians* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2006), 392; Michman, "Jewish Leadership in Extremis", 334.

<sup>158</sup> Steinberg, "The Jews in the years 1940-1944", 354; Michman, "De oprichting van de VJB in internationaal perspectief", 36-37.

<sup>159</sup> Michman, "De oprichting van de VJB in internationaal perspectief", 36.

<sup>160</sup> "Betrifft: Organisation der Juden in Belgien", 23 April 1941, *Verwaltungsabteilung / Gruppe VII: Fürsorge - Juden*. SVG, Documentation Marburg, Film XIV, R.184/Tr50.077, Documentatie Oorlogsslachtoffers (DOS).

<sup>161</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 63; Moore, *Survivors*, 105.

<sup>162</sup> Rajsfus, *Des juifs dans la collaboration*, 73; Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 132.

<sup>163</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 132.

Coordinating Committee, JCC) in December 1940.<sup>164</sup> Established under the auspices of the Dutch Zionists in the commissions of both the Dutch-Israelite and Portuguese-Israelite Church, the aim of the organisation was to provide a representative organ for Jews in the Netherlands at the outbreak of the war.<sup>165</sup> In all three countries, the Germans were dissatisfied with how the committees functioned.<sup>166</sup>

In the Netherlands, Lodewijk Visser refused to cooperate with the Germans, and this is clear from the letters he sent to Cohen in response to the JR's establishment.<sup>167</sup> Partly as a result, the JCC was disbanded on 10 November 1941. This is remarkable, because whereas the Coordinating Committees in Belgium and France were largely dysfunctional, the JCC functioned comparatively well. There was a central committee with local subcommittees in places where Jews lived throughout the Netherlands. Although this committee successfully fulfilled the major social welfare tasks that were later allotted to the Joodsche Raad, the Germans did not make use of the JCC. In part, this was undoubtedly a result of Visser's refusal to cooperate with the Germans. The Germans had the power to put the organisation under severe pressure and to nominate a new director who *was* willing to work with them, and this would have been the easiest solution. Instead, an entirely new organisation in the form of a *Judenrat* was founded. The classic Nazi policy of what we might call 'institutional Darwinism', that is, superimposing additional organisations rather than rationalising existing policies and institutions, can be clearly seen here. The Joodsche Raad competed with the Coördinatie Commissie and, in the end, proved to be more useful for Nazi aims. In Belgium and France, the Military Administration and the SiPo-SD respectively did not believe that the Coordinating Committees had successfully united the Jewish communities.<sup>168</sup> In all three countries, the supposed failures of the committees served as the springboard for establishing alternative representative bodies: the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud.

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<sup>164</sup> For a short biography of Visser, see J.A. Polak, *Leven en werken van mr. L.E. Visser* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep, 1997). For the history of the Hoge Raad between 1930 and 1950, see: Corjo Jansen and Derk Venema, *De Hoge Raad en Tweede Wereldoorlog: recht en rechtsbeoefening in de jaren 1930-1950* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011).

<sup>165</sup> Melkman, "De briefwisseling", 109.

<sup>166</sup> In his diary, Lambert stated that the authorities did not recognise the CCOJA 'which got no further than its pretensions'. It 'only organised some discussion sessions, and accomplished nothing'. Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 11 December 1941, 80.

<sup>167</sup> Melkman, "De briefwisseling", 110.

<sup>168</sup> For France, see: Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience*, 30; For Belgium, see the comments of the officials of Group 7 (beneficence) of the Military Administration concerning the SiPo-SD proposal for the establishment of a central organisation for the Jews of Belgium. Marburg, Film XIV, R184/ Tr50.077 as cited in: Dan Michman, "De oprichting van de VJB in internationaal perspectief", 37.

The attempt to marginalise the Jews through the 'Jewish Councils' was part of increasing anti-Jewish legislation that aimed to exclude and isolate Jews from the non-Jewish public sphere. To understand the nature of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud and the tasks which their leaders were assigned, we will now analyse the two models of Jewish representative organisations that were implemented in western Europe. Aiming to unite the Jewish communities in the Netherlands, Belgium and France, and to establish a properly functioning representative organisation through which they could communicate their regulations, the Germans appointed at the head of these Jewish organisations Jews whom they believed would achieve these goals. In all cases, the Germans first approached (Chief) Rabbis. Only in Belgium, however, did the Chief Rabbi take up the chairmanship of the Jewish organisation.<sup>169</sup> As we shall see, the official nomination of Jews to serve as heads of the organisations depended on two factors. First, the German conception of who would make the most suitable leaders, and second, whether or not the 'chosen' leaders were willing to serve in this capacity. A 1939 report of the SD's Jewish Department shows that the Germans analysed the Dutch Jewish community prior to the occupation of the Netherlands.<sup>170</sup> In Belgium and France, the Germans also issued reports concerning the structures of the (prewar) Jewish communities shortly after the occupation.<sup>171</sup> Even though it is impossible to prove that these investigations directly resulted in the appointment of specific individuals at the head of the Jewish organisations, it is clear that the power balances in the communities were known to the occupiers.

Extensive documentation on how the Jewish organisations were established in western Europe is lacking. However, it is clear that the difference in functional structure between the JR on the one hand, and the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud on the other, was a consequence of the distinct occupational structures to which the countries were subjected. In the Netherlands, the Germans followed the example of the so-called *Judenräte* in eastern Europe, which were Jewish representative organisations on a local scale. In Belgium and France *Judenvereinigungen*, inspired

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<sup>169</sup> We will see that in the Netherlands, Rabbis Lodewijk Hartog Sarlouis and Francès refused to serve as chairs of the JR. In France, Dannecker initially approached Rabbi Marcel Sachs and the Chief Rabbi of Paris Julien Weill, who also refused to serve. For France, see: Cohen, *Burden of conscience*, 26; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 57-58. For the Netherlands, see: Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 80.

<sup>170</sup> Michman, "Preparing for Occupation? A Nazi *Sicherheitsdienst* document of Spring 1939 on the Jews of Holland" in: *Studia Rosenthaliana*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1998), 177.

<sup>171</sup> See Dannecker's report on the "Judenfrage in Frankreich und ihre Behandlung". 1 July 1941, XXVI-1, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Maxime Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil: La question juive 1940-1942*, 75.



by the German model, were established. As Michman has convincingly shown, wherever the SS and police were strongly represented, the local model was applied.<sup>172</sup> In the Netherlands, the presence of the Civil Administration in combination with the generally harsher occupation, where the influence of the SS was larger, did indeed lead to the establishment of a Jewish Council based on the eastern European *Judenrat* model.

Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart and Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer Rauter, both Austrian born, had previously observed the establishment of *Judenräte* with only local authority in eastern Europe. They had also witnessed the transformation of the Viennese Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG) into an organisation directly overseen by Nazi SS-Obersturmbannführer Eichmann, regrouping all existing Jewish organisations in 1938.<sup>173</sup> Most likely inspired by these examples, an identical institution was established in the Netherlands.<sup>174</sup> The use of the term *Judenrat*, the literal copy of the wording that was also used in Heydrich's Schnellbrief of 21 September 1939, and the fact that the Council, contrary to the AJB and the UGIF, was not anchored in law, all demonstrate how its inception was based on that of the eastern European *Judenräte*.<sup>175</sup> Even the personal order of Hans Böhmcker to institute the JR resembled that of the eastern European Councils, which were usually established on a personal basis (e.g. by the town commander appointing a prominent Jew).<sup>176</sup> By contrast, we will see that the AJB and the UGIF were established on the basis of an official decree.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> See Michman, "Judenräte, Ghettos, Endlösung: Drei Komponenten einer antijüdischen Politik oder Separate Faktoren?" in: Jacek Andrzej Mlynarczyk and Jochen Böhrer (eds.), *Der Judenmord in den eingegliederten polnischen Gebieten 1939-1945* (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2010), 167-176; *Ibid.*, "On the Historical Interpretation of the Judenräte Issue", 395.

<sup>173</sup> From 1939 until December 1942, the IKG functioned as a Jewish Council, serving as an intermediary between the Germans and the Jews. After December 1942, the IKG was transformed into an Ältestenrat. See: Bernard Klein, "The Judenrat" in: *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1960), 27. On the role of the IKG in the emigration and deportation of Jews, see: Lisa Hauff, *Zur politischen Rolle von Judenräten, Benjamin Murmelstein in Wien, 1938-1942* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2014), 99-283. The Kultusgemeinde is often considered the prototype of the later *Judenräte*. See, for example, Doron Rabinovici, *Instanzen der Ohnmacht. Wien 1938-1945. Der Weg zum Judenrat* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 2000), 425.

<sup>174</sup> Dan Michman, "De oprichting van de 'Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam' vanuit een vergelijkend perspectief" in: *Derde jaarboek van het Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie* (1992), 87.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 88; Michman, "Research on the Holocaust in Belgium and in General: History and Context", 33.

<sup>176</sup> Michman, "Research on the Holocaust in Belgium and in General: History and Context", 33.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, "De oprichting van de 'Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam' vanuit een vergelijkend perspectief", 88; *Ibid.*, "Research on the Holocaust in Belgium and in General: History and Context", 33; Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 172.

In Belgium and France, where the Military Administration had a strong presence, *Judenvereinigungen* were established. This model was introduced in order to limit the power of the SiPo-SD.<sup>178</sup> In both countries, the Military Administration was initially reluctant to force a Jewish representative body on the Jewish societies, in part because it feared the responses of non-Jews to this measure, a theme we will explore later. Partly as a result of the Military Administration's reluctance, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were established, under pressure from the SS authorities, only in November 1941.<sup>179</sup> Documents suggest that the 'Jewish experts' of the SS in Belgium preferred the eastern European *Judenrat* organisation to the *Judenvereinigung* type.<sup>180</sup> However, their limited power meant that they had to compromise with the Military Administration who favoured a different model.<sup>181</sup> In France, the collaborationist Vichy regime commanded the establishment of the UGIF after prolonged negotiations with the Nazis.<sup>182</sup> This body replaced the Comité de Coordination in the occupied zone and filled an organisational vacuum in the unoccupied zone. We will see later that the tasks of the Jewish organisations as envisioned by the German occupier, and their responsibilities, were different in each of the three countries under investigation.

The main functional difference between the Jewish Council of the Netherlands and the Associations of Belgium and France is the authority the organisations were initially supposed to have over their respective communities. Contrary to institutions with a nationwide authority, such as the Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Germany, the Belgian AJB and the French UGIF, the Joodsche Raad was initially meant to have authority only over the Jewish community in Amsterdam.<sup>183</sup> On 25 October 1941, the Amsterdam Jewish Council, which until then had only had jurisdiction in the city of Amsterdam, officially extended its influence to the entire country. As a result, local branches of the Coördinatie Commissie, including those in The Hague, Rotterdam and Den Bosch, were taken

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<sup>178</sup> See Michman, "Judenräte, Ghettos, Endlösung", 167-176; Ibid., "On the Historical Interpretation of the Judenräte Issue", 395; Ibid. "Research on the Holocaust in Belgium and in General: History and Context", 35-36.

<sup>179</sup> Michman, "Research on the Holocaust in Belgium and in General: History and Context", 35-36.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> The institutional rivalry between the various Germans (and in France, Vichy) departments in the Netherlands and France, and the discussions that preceded the official institution of the Jewish organisations will be discussed in chapter 2.

<sup>183</sup> Michman, "The controversial stand of the Joodsche Raad in the Netherlands: Lodewijk E. Visser's struggle", 18; Van Doorslaer and Schreiber, "Inleiding" in: Ibid., *De curatoren van het getto*, 9.

over and transformed into local branches of the central Amsterdam Jewish Council.<sup>184</sup> The local JR branch of Enschede, whose leaders were involved in the Comité Duitse Vluchtelingen (Committee for German Refugees) that had provided social welfare to German refugees before the occupation, was also created in October 1941, while the Groningen branch was established one month later.<sup>185</sup> In a memorandum of May 1941, David Cohen emphasised the need to establish local branches of the JR throughout the country. The leaders of these local branches (between 3 and 5 in total per branch) ‘will be appointed by the Jewish Council of the Netherlands [sic]’, he wrote.<sup>186</sup> However, he seemed to have been overly optimistic about the central board’s influence on these local branches. Although the local branches were dependent upon Amsterdam, they could be used directly by the SiPO-SD – without the involvement of the Amsterdam central board.<sup>187</sup> The Belgian AJB had a nationwide authority from the outset with a central seat in Brussels and local branches in the most important cities where Jews lived: Brussels, Antwerp, Charleroi and Liège. The leaders of these four cities were also represented in the AJB’s central board. As in the cases of the JR, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, there were also representatives of the Belgian Jewish Association in other cities where Jews lived, including Gand, Oostende and Arlon, although these were not official local branches.<sup>188</sup>

In France, we have seen that the physical occupation of the northern half and the western coastal areas of the country until November 1942 resulted in a split of the UGIF into an UGIF-Nord and UGIF-Sud, both of which functioned differently.<sup>189</sup> The structure of the UGIF was heterogeneous and its eighteen members never met as a group.<sup>190</sup> Unlike the UGIF-Nord, which was German-inspired, the UGIF-Sud came into being as a result of the initiative of Xavier Vallat, head of the Vichy Commissariat Général, to unify the anti-Jewish laws in both zones and to

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<sup>184</sup> The enlargement of the *Joodsche Raad*’s influence to the entire country and the disbandment of the Coördinatie Commissie has been subject of controversy between the leaders of the Coördinatie Commissie and the Jewish Council. See: Melkman, “De briefwisseling”, *passim*. For the letter of Asscher and Cohen to former local Coordinating Committee members in the Hague in early November 1941, see: M.19, No. 4, pp. 45, 51, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

<sup>185</sup> Memorandum David Cohen, Doc I 248-0294, Prof. D. Cohen, Inv. No. 1, NIOD. For the Enschede branch of the JR, see: Marjolein Schenkel, *De Twentse Paradox: De lotgevallen van de joodse bevolking van Hengelo en Enschede tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003), 89-95.

<sup>186</sup> Memorandum David Cohen, Doc I 248-0294, Prof. D. Cohen, Inv. No. 1, NIOD.

<sup>187</sup> Michman, “Oprichting van de Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam in vergelijkend perspectief”, 91.

<sup>188</sup> Insa Meinen, “De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB” in: Van Doorslaer and Schreiber (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 51.

<sup>189</sup> Yahil, “The Jewish Leadership of France”, 323-325; Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 137.

<sup>190</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 140; Laffitte, “Between Memory and Lapse of Memory”, 674.

promote French sovereignty ‘by making the law of the French State prevail in both zones’.<sup>191</sup> The UGIF-Sud was thus established in a unique way, wholly unlike the eastern European model of a *Judenrat*, and was given the rare opportunity to develop its own bureaucratic structure. As a consequence, compared to the JR, the AJB and the UGIF-Nord, the framework of UGIF-Sud was entirely different; it was a federative structure in which existing Jewish organisations such as the OSE and FSJF were assembled together and retained their (administrative) autonomy. Itself a heterogeneous entity, whose members preferred a loose association with the UGIF, the UGIF-Sud lacked any real authority and influence over its departments and over the Jewish communities.<sup>192</sup> Its main office was situated in Marseille, with regional and local offices in a large number of cities, including Lyon (three offices), Nice, Montpellier, Perpignan, Valence, Saint-Etienne, Grenoble, Pau, Limoges, Périgueux and Vichy.<sup>193</sup>

The UGIF-Nord had a complex bureaucratic structure that was based on numerous departments and sub-departments. The majority of its services were concentrated at various locations in Paris, with 32 localities in different arrondissements. Georges Edinger was responsible for establishing local UGIF branches in the occupied zone, ‘wherever there were sizeable communities’ and local Consistories were approached to find representative French leaders.<sup>194</sup> Local branches were instituted in Amiens, Besançon, Montbéliard, Le Mans, Lunéville, Montargis, Nancy, Poitiers, Troyes, Versailles, Bayonne, Bordeaux, Epinal and Rouen.<sup>195</sup> Whereas the UGIF-Sud in practice consisted of organisations which were still operating autonomously, the leadership of the UGIF-Nord attempted (in vain) to oversee and control all 48 departments of its organisation.<sup>196</sup> The aim to unite the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, which was inspired by the German wish to establish a stronger and more effective Jewish representative body, proved futile: reorganisation challenged the existence and independence of the UGIF-Sud and could therefore ‘not be but rejected by it’.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 239; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108-109.

<sup>192</sup> Rajsfus, *Des juifs dans la collaboration*, 147-148.

<sup>193</sup> For an overview of all regional and local UGIF-Sud offices, see: *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>194</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 110-111. Edinger believed that the UGIF should be solely led by French Jews, fearing that foreign Jews were a threat to traditional Jewry.

<sup>195</sup> Rajsfus, *Des juifs dans la collaboration*, 147.

<sup>196</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 115-116.

<sup>197</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, x; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 133-161.

### 1.3 1941-1944: Continuation or discontinuation? The nature of the Jewish leadership

The varied nature of the communities from which the Jewish organisations emerged affected the ways in which their leaders perceived their role. We have seen that whereas the Dutch Council chairmen fulfilled major representative functions in the prewar Jewish community, this was not the case in Belgium, where a leadership vacuum existed after the prewar leaders had fled the country in May 1940. In France, the situation was different yet again, since the central board of the UGIF, both in the occupied and the unoccupied zone, consisted of a mixture of people who had belonged to the traditional Consistory and Jews with relatively little leadership experience. These variations in prewar positions influenced the self-perception of the organisations' leaders, their acceptance by the Jewish communities, and the decisions they made. This, in turn, affected how the Jewish organisations could function. Whether the position of the leaders was either a continuation or discontinuation of prewar structures played an important role in this regard.

#### *The JR: a continuation of prewar social structures*

To turn to the Netherlands first, the Germans approached three influential Jews to head the Joodsche Raad on 12 February 1942: the famous diamond merchant Abraham Asscher; Lodewijk Hartog Sarlouis, Chief Rabbi of the Dutch-Israelite Hoofdsynagoge (Main Synagogue); and David Francès, Chief Rabbi of the Portugese-Israelite community. The formation of a *Judenrat* was ordered after the provocative actions of the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging (National-Socialist Movement, NSB) against the Jews in Amsterdam resulted in a fight with a Jewish *knokploeg* (action group) in early February 1941. One member of the NSB's paramilitary Weerafdeling (WA), Hendrik Koot, was seriously injured and died three days later.<sup>198</sup> This disruption fostered the idea that a representative Jewish body should be established that could be held responsible for maintaining order in the Jewish quarter.<sup>199</sup>

The choice of Asscher, Sarlouis and Francès was well-founded, as the three men played a central role in the community: Asscher on a social and economic level, and Sarlouis and Francès on a religious level. Whereas Asscher agreed to his assigned role, Rabbis Sarlouis and Francès refused,

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<sup>198</sup> Berkley, *Overzicht van het ontstaan, de werkzaamheden en het streven van den Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam*, 12; Ben Sijes, *De Februari-staking: 25-26 februari 1941* ('s Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1954), 100-112.

<sup>199</sup> Michman, "De oprichting van de 'Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam' vanuit een vergelijkend perspectief", 88.

because they felt they could not carry out any other task than the provision of religious and spiritual care.<sup>200</sup> They may also have been discouraged by seeing what the Viennese Kultusgemeinde or the eastern European *Judenräte* had been manipulated into. Even though it is impossible to assess exactly what knowledge Jews had of Councils in eastern Europe at this stage, the (German) Jewish refugees who had emigrated to the Netherlands did bring information. Undoubtedly, this also included information about the German *Reichsvereinigung* and similar institutions elsewhere. Once the Council was established, Sarlouis took a seat on the central board of the JR, though not as chairman. We might also therefore explain his refusal to take on the position of chairman in light of decreasing religious activity in Dutch Jewish society. Sarlouis might not have considered himself to be the most appropriate official representative of the community. As a result, Asscher turned to David Cohen, with whom he had worked closely together for years while he headed the CBJB; the latter agreed to cooperate.<sup>201</sup>

The two chairmen were responsible for appointing the other central board members, between 15 and 20 in total throughout the JR's existence. In his memoirs, Cohen emphasised that they mainly chose Jews who fulfilled official representative functions in the community – Chief Rabbis, chairmen of the Church councils and leaders of major Jewish organisations.<sup>202</sup> These included J. Arons (a doctor), N. Beneditty (a judge), A.B. Gomperts (a lawyer), I. de Haan (occupation unknown), A. de Hoop (former chairman of the Nederlandse bioscoopbond, the Dutch cinema association), M.L. Kan (a lawyer and chairman of the Nederlandse Zionistenbond, the Dutch Zionist Association), I. Kisch (a university teacher), A. Krouwer (director of the Handelsmaatschappij Europa-Azië, the Europe-Asia Trading Company), S.J. van Lier (secretary of the Amsterdam municipality), A.J. Mendes da Costa (former secretary of the Portugese-Israelite community), J.L. Palasche (a professor at the University of Amsterdam), M.I. Prins (an expert in constitutional law), A. Quiros (a butcher), D.M. Sluys (secretary of the Dutch-Israelite Hoofdsynagoge Amsterdam), A. Soep (a diamond trader), H.I. Voet (former chairman of the

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<sup>200</sup> Berkley, *Overzicht van het ontstaan, de werkzaamheden en het streven van den Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam*, 13.

<sup>201</sup> Documents sent by David Cohen to his lawyers during the State investigation of his wartime activities, 10 January 1949, p. 79, 181j, Inv. No. 11, NIOD; Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 80.

<sup>202</sup> Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 83.

Algemene Diamant Bewerkers Bond, the General Diamond Workers Union) and Rabbi Sarlouis.<sup>203</sup> Despite his initial reservations, Isaac Kisch, a member of the Jewish Coordinating Committee, also took a seat on the JR's board in order to have the JCC represented on the newly established body. He did so after consultation with the JCC's head Lodewijk Visser who objected to any form of cooperation with the Germans.<sup>204</sup> His letter of resignation to Cohen shows that he left the board again on 21 September 1941 because he objected to the JR's functions. After the second major raid had taken place in June 1941, Kisch believed the Council should have been dismantled which, as we will see, Asscher had in fact proposed (though the plan was not carried out).<sup>205</sup> Shortly after Kisch sent this letter, the Germans ordered the Coordinating Committee to cease all its activities.<sup>206</sup>

There were two Jews who refused to take positions on the JR board: Professor Herman Frijda, who believed the JR was an instrument in the hands of the Germans, and A. van Dam, for medical reasons.<sup>207</sup> The central board members were primarily notables: doctors, lawyers, Rabbis, leading functionaries within the Jewish congregation, university professors and affluent and influential traders.<sup>208</sup> As in the eastern European Jewish Councils, the JR leadership was in the hands of the two chairmen rather than those of the entire central board. Neither the other members of the central board, nor the members of the Joodsche Beirat – the sub department of the Joodsche Raad that consisted of, and represented, German Jews in the Netherlands – and not even the leaders of the local branches established throughout 1942 possessed the power to change the directives of the JR.<sup>209</sup> Nor did they have a voice in any matters of principle. Gertrude van Tijn, who headed the Hulp aan Vertrekkenden (Aid to those Departing) section of the JR, highlighted in a 1944 report written in Palestine that these local branches were simply informed about the new procedures and

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<sup>203</sup> See: *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 83 n75; *Leden van de Joodse Raad voor Amsterdam*, 182.1, NIOD. In 1941, Quiros, Kisch and Voet left the central board. I.H.J. Vos (liberal politician) and A. van den Bergh (notary) were later included in the board. From July 1942 some of the central board members were deported and while Voet returned, Chief Rabbi S. Dasberg also became board member. For an overview of the central board members on 15 March 1943, see: *De Gids*, 15 March 1943, 182.1, NIOD.

<sup>204</sup> Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 83.

<sup>205</sup> Letter of Kisch to Cohen, 21 September 1941, DOC I 248-0895A, Prof. Mr. I Kisch, Inv. No. 4, NIOD.

<sup>206</sup> Melkman, "De briefwisseling", 111-114; Meeting of the Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam, 16 October 1941, 182.3, NIOD.

<sup>207</sup> Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 83.

<sup>208</sup> Ies Voet resigned after a few weeks because of ill health. Presser, *Ondergang*, Vol. 1, 82.

<sup>209</sup> The Joodsche Beirat initially consisted of 10 individuals. Later, this number was increased to 20. From October 1942, the Beirat leader prof. Max Brahn was invited to attend meetings of the central Council board. He did not have a right to vote, however. See: NIOD Doc I 248-1720 Gertrude van Tijn, Inv. No. 1, 5.

about decisions that had already been taken.<sup>210</sup>

We have seen that Abraham Asscher and David Cohen were firmly rooted in Dutch social and cultural life and maintained close bonds with Dutch Jewry.<sup>211</sup> Both men were well integrated into wider Dutch society. In addition, they had fulfilled leading functions in the prewar refugee aid organisations CBJB and the CvJV. Considering the initial social welfare remit of the western European Jewish representative bodies, the leadership of Asscher and Cohen can be considered a continuation of the prewar activities in which they had both been engaged. The contacts they had established through these organisations ensured they were able to build upon a network of people familiar with social welfare work. In a society characterised by decades of assimilation and secularisation, in which the influx of immigrants did not drastically affect the existing structures of the Jewish community as it did in Belgium and France, Asscher and Cohen were in fact more appropriate representatives of their community than has been often argued.<sup>212</sup> Of course, they were notables, part of the upper class bourgeoisie, and they did not mirror the nature of Jewish society at large, which had a large presence of poor Jews and Jewish proletarians who were not represented in the central board at all. At the same time, it would be naive to think that a representative from the lower echelons of the community would have been acceptable to the German occupier. With the absence of an official secular representative of Dutch Jewry, Asscher and Cohen served as spokespersons. As Mirjam Bolle, former secretary of the CvJV which was incorporated into the Joodsche Raad in 1941, said during a recent interview: if Asscher and Cohen were not representatives of their community, then who would have been?<sup>213</sup>

It has been argued that even though the socio-geographic background of the JR members might have been unbalanced, with 40% living in the richest neighbourhoods of Amsterdam, the

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<sup>210</sup> Gertrude van Tijn, “Bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland van 10 mei 1940 tot juni 1944”, 8. Doc. I 248-1720B, Inv. No. 1, NIOD. In July 1944, Gertrude van Tijn was part of a group of Jews, also including Mirjam Levie, that was released from Bergen-Belsen in exchange for Germans in Palestine. For further reading on this history, see: Wasserstein, *Gertrude van Tijn en het lot van de Nederlandse Joden*, 188-210.

<sup>211</sup> For an overview of Cohen’s activities in the Jewish community between 1926 and 1941, see: Schrijvers, *Rome, Athene, Jeruzalem*, 161-201.

<sup>212</sup> Recently, for example, by Katja Happe in “The Role of the Jewish Council during the Occupation of the Netherlands” in: Frank Bajohr and Andrea Löw (eds.), *The Holocaust and European Societies: Social Processes and Social Dynamics* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 216; Herzberg, *Kroniek der Jodenvervolgving*, 144.

<sup>213</sup> Interview of with Mirjam Bolle by the author, Jerusalem (June 2016). Also see statement of Gerard Polak in: Lindwer (ed.), *Het fatale dilemma*, 136.



leadership also aimed to protect Jews who belonged to the lower social classes.<sup>214</sup> They did this through the so-called *sperre* system, administered by the Jewish Council. The *sperre* stamp temporarily harboured its bearer against arrest and deportation *bis auf weiteres* (until further notice). The Council members and Jews who were essential to the war industry, or possessed passports of ‘friendly states’, were automatically exempted from deportation. Since the stamps provided some sort of security in an unstable period, many Jews attempted to arrange them for themselves or their families. At the end of July 1942, SS-Stürmbannführer aus der Fünften indicated that around 25,000 Jews in total (including Jews in the provinces) could receive a *sperre* which fed the belief that the JR would be able to save a substantial number of Jews from deportation.<sup>215</sup> As Houwink ten Cate has pointed out, overall less than a quarter of those who received a temporary exemption from deportation lived in the richest Amsterdam neighbourhoods (Appollobuurt, Museum and Concertgebouw buurt), 40% resided in middle class neighbourhoods (Rivierenbuurt, Stadionbuurt, Plantage) and around a quarter lived in the poorer areas (Oude Pijp, Oude Jodenhoek, Oosterparkbuurt, Weesperstraat, Weesperzijde, Nieuw Pijp, Transvaalbuurt).<sup>216</sup> The JR ensured that younger Jews from service professions, such as carpenters and cooks, received a protective stamp in their identity cards.<sup>217</sup> Even though there was nepotism involved in the appointment of JR employees, the implication that the JR *exclusively* served the interests of the bourgeoisie is therefore too simplistic.

Asscher and Cohen considered themselves the most appropriate representatives of the Dutch Jewish community. After the war, Cohen stated that he considered that he and Abraham Asscher were the most suitable and capable leaders of the Dutch Jewish community at that moment. According to Cohen, at different stages during the war, both men had considered resigning. However, he writes, the thought of two other Jews taking over their position was one of the reasons that forced them to take up their position in the first place and to remain until the very end.<sup>218</sup> In a similar vein, Asscher indicated he was convinced he had the confidence of the Jews in the Netherlands: ‘we (Cohen and Asscher) thought it was evident we would do it, because we had been

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<sup>214</sup> Houwink ten Cate, “De Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam 1941-1943”, 26-27; Herzberg, *Kroniek der Jodenvervolgung*, 157-160.

<sup>215</sup> Houwink ten Cate, “De Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam 1941-1943”, 26-27.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> David Cohen, “The history of the Jews during the occupation”, 18 August-5 September 1945, p.13, 181j, Inv. No. 10, NIOD.

doing this work our entire lives'.<sup>219</sup> Their prewar involvement in the community contributed to the idea that they would be best able to defend the position and rights of the Jews. This idea is supported by, among other things, Asscher's unwillingness to flee the country. Postwar testimonies like that of Abraham van Dam indicate that the JR leader did not want to abandon the Jewish people: 'he would rather shoot himself through the head than join us in Switzerland [...] he considered that to be treason vis-à-vis the other Jews'.<sup>220</sup> In the 1990s, the son of David Cohen, Herman Cohen, indicated it would have surprised him if his father had not taken up the position. He claimed that his father undoubtedly drew on his extensive leadership experience and probably never even hesitated to head the Council, not yet knowing that his task would be very different from his previous leading roles.<sup>221</sup>

There is another motivation that needs to be taken into consideration here. For years, Asscher and Cohen had committed themselves to the well-being of the Jews in the Netherlands. Both men had aimed to serve the interests of the Jews in various roles. However, they were not (yet) the undisputed leaders of Dutch Jewry. Taking up the leadership of the Joodsche Raad might have contributed to a feeling that this was a chance to finally and officially establish their leading position in relation to the Dutch authorities. Both Asscher and Cohen had been angling for official government recognition for some years and their appointment at the head of the JR was an opportunity to achieve that status. This idea is strengthened when we consider the attitude of the chairmen towards the only other major Jewish representative organisation in the Netherlands: the JCC. Cohen considered this organisation an impediment to the power of the JR. The anger of Asscher, and particularly of Cohen, during a meeting of the Council on 16 October 1941, after the JCC had encouraged Jews not to follow the instructions of the JR, is indicative thereof.<sup>222</sup> The meeting report shows that Cohen wanted the JCC to be dissolved in case it continued to obstruct the work of the JR. The entire board supported this viewpoint.<sup>223</sup> After Cohen's repeated requests to the Germans to give the JR national authority, the Council's sphere of influence extended to the entire

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<sup>219</sup> Report of Abraham Asscher in the preparation for the trial against Willy Paul Franz Lages, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 140-VI (BrC 394/49).

<sup>220</sup> Statement of Abraham van Dam, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 III, IV (PF Amsterdam T70982). Also see the statement of Gerda Jonker who added that Asscher feared he would cause a *paniekstemming*, a mood of panic, among Jews in the Netherlands in the event that he left the country.

<sup>221</sup> Herman Cohen in: Lindwer (ed.), *Het fatale dilemma*, 60.

<sup>222</sup> Report of the meeting of the Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam, 16 October 1941, 182.3, NIOD.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

Dutch occupied territory in October 1941, after which the JCC was disbanded.<sup>224</sup> Cohen did not reflect his own role in the dissolution of the JCC in his memoirs. He only stated that the German disbanded the organisation and that the two organisations had continued to cooperate closely until the JCC's dissolution.<sup>225</sup>

*The UGIF-Sud: a break with decades of Consistorial rule*

The nature of the UGIF central boards has previously been assessed by French historian Michel Laffitte. This research deviates from his approach by differentiating between the social standing of the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud central board members. Laffitte underlined the heterogeneous nature of those on the UGIF central boards by highlighting that their paternal origins were diverse. They came from Algiers (Alfred Morali and Marcel Stora in the unoccupied zone), from Poland (Joseph Millner) and from Holland (Juliette Stern in the occupied zone). Around half of the central board members were of Alsatian descent.<sup>226</sup> At the same time, Laffitte emphasised the uniform middle-class social standing of the UGIF central board membership. He showed that the UGIF consisted of a mixture of lawyers (Lucienne Scheid-Haas, Wladimir Schah and Raphaël Spanien), doctors (Benjamin Weill-Hallé and Alfred Morali), translators or journalists (Marcel Stora and Raymond-Raoul Lambert), and engineers (Marcel Wormser, Joseph Millner and Robert Gamzon) and that some came from the families of Rabbis.<sup>227</sup> Middle-class bankers and merchants were also represented and only a few belonged to the upper middle class: André Baur, a banker from a prominent family that was closely linked to the Rabbinate, and Albert Weil, former member of the Coordinating Committee.<sup>228</sup> However, whereas Laffitte has approached the UGIF as one organisation, arguing that the central board membership was highly heterogeneous in terms of professions, ancestry, education and religious practices, it is important to differentiate between the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud central boards. Only then can we understand the foundations of these two distinct organisations. By making a differentiation, we can identify more common patterns among the UGIF-Nord central board members, and, in turn, among the UGIF-Sud central

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<sup>224</sup> Melkman, "De briefwisseling", 111-114; Meeting of the Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam, 16 October 1941, 182.3, NIOD.

<sup>225</sup> Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 70-76.

<sup>226</sup> Laffitte, "Between Memory and Lapse of Memory", 685. It should be noted that Laffitte mistakenly claimed that Robert Gamzon came from Poland when he was in fact born in Lyon (France) in 1905.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 674.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 683.

board members, than has hitherto been recognised.

The prewar position of the UGIF-Sud leadership was unlike that of the UGIF-Nord, the JR and the AJB. Whereas the JR leadership can be considered a continuation of prewar structures, we will see that the appointment of Ullman at the head of the AJB represents a discontinuity in this regard. The UGIF-Sud leaders stand inbetween these two ‘opposites’ since their appointment at the helm of this organisation on the one hand represented a break with decades of traditional Consistory leadership (a discontinuity), while many had fulfilled prominent leading positions at the same time. It has been argued that, with the exception of Robert Gamzon, founder of the first EIF Jewish scout troop in Paris, the UGIF central boards (both Nord and Sud) did not consist of true representatives of the Jewish communities.<sup>229</sup> In 1923, Gamzon had created the first EIF Jewish scout troop in Paris – by then, the scouting movement was highly popular in France with separate Catholic, Protestant and Secular scouting associations – and attempted to create a unified movement among Jewish political youth factions.<sup>230</sup> The EIF members were diverse and Jews from all religious and educational backgrounds were welcome.<sup>231</sup> Before the war, ‘the movement’s overwhelmingly French leadership had built connections with high-ranking personalities in the national administration and had developed excellent relations with France’s other scouting associations’.<sup>232</sup> We will see that the other UGIF central board members did indeed not represent the various Jewish communities in France equally, although it would have been difficult to truly represent the many Jewish groups who lived in the country. Nevertheless, if we compare the French to the Belgian case, the UGIF-Sud leadership was more fundamentally part of the traditional structures than was the case in Belgium. Rather than being a continuation of prewar structures as was the case in the Netherlands, however, the core of the UGIF-Sud leadership symbolised an alternative form of representation. While its leaders had been part of traditional structures for years, they represented a deviation from the Consistory rule that had been predominant for decades at the outbreak of the

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<sup>229</sup> Rayski, *The Choice of the Jews under Vichy: Between Submission and Resistance*, transl. from the French by William Sayers (Indiana: Notre Dame, 2005; first ed 1992), 64.

<sup>230</sup> Lee, *Pétain’s Jewish Children*, 36-40. For further reading on the origins and development of the EIF, see: *ibid.*; Alain Michel, *Les Éclaireurs Israélites de France pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, septembre 1939 - septembre 1944: action et évolution* (Paris: Éditions des Éclaireurs Israélites de France, 1984); *Revue d’Histoire de la Shoah: le Monde Juif: Les éclaireurs israélites de France dans la guerre*, No. 161 (1997); For the memoirs of Gamzon, a journal which was edited and published posthumously, see: Robert Gamzon, *Les eaux claires, journal 1940-1944* (Paris: Éclaireurs Israélites de France, 1981).

<sup>231</sup> Lee, *Pétain’s Jewish Children*, 76.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 70. The history of the EIF and the recognition it (successfully) sought from Vichy in the summer of 1940 lie beyond the scope of this research. It has been discussed by Daniel Lee in *Pétain’s Jewish Children*, 70-89.

war.

Prewar instability in French Jewish society, where the Consistory failed to function as a (religious) representative organisation, had in some respects created a leadership vacuum, though not to the same extent as in Belgium. After the German order for the establishment of a French Jewish representative organisation, the head of the CGQJ – Xavier Vallat – approached Jacques Helbronner, president of the General Consistory from 1940 and the most influential Jew in France at the time, and asked him to cooperate in the institution of an overarching, mandatory organisation.<sup>233</sup> The connection between these two men dated back to the First World War, when Helbronner headed the military department and ‘was alleged to have supported Pétain’s nomination to lead the French armies in 1917’.<sup>234</sup> According to Helbronner, he met Pétain once a week until July 1941 as a result of which he became known as the ‘Juif de Maréchal’ in the Jewish community.<sup>235</sup> The Vichy government had established the CGQJ primarily in order to oversee Vichy’s spoliation and Aryanisation measures. It also supervised and organised the implementation of anti-Jewish policies in France which until then had been the responsibility of individual ministerial departments.<sup>236</sup> The draft for a Jewish representative organisation that Vallat presented to Helbronner was more comprehensive than the Germans had proposed and grouped all existing Jewish organisations together under one umbrella, undoubtedly in an attempt to show the Germans that ‘France was equally capable and determined to deal with the Jewish Question’.<sup>237</sup> Since Helbronner refused to cooperate, there was an opportunity for a new leadership to present itself. As Laffitte claimed, the German occupation was a chance for the ‘new elite’ to establish their power and to break the Consistorial monolithic power for good.<sup>238</sup> The opportunity was used by Raymond-Raoul Lambert, whose disappointment in the Consistory’s dealings with the Jewish immigrants made him into someone who aimed to break permanently with centuries of Consistory rule.

Born in 1895 in Montmorency (Seine-et-Oise), Lambert had received several Military decorations for his efforts during the First World War. Before the Second World War, he had been

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<sup>233</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 132.

<sup>234</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 95.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> For a detailed overview of history and function the Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives, see: Joly, *Vichy dans la “solution finale”*, passim; Billig, *Le Commissariat général aux questions juives*, passim.

<sup>237</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 88-89.

<sup>238</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 25, 45.

involved in several humanitarian (refugee) organisations, among other things, as secretary-general of the CAR in Marseille. He condemned both the xenophobic responses by French Jewry and those of French society more generally towards the arrival of thousands of refugees and believed that French Jewry had a responsibility to take care of their coreligionists. Lambert was also a board member of the Zionist Federation in France, where he had tried to improve the integration of Jews in French society while simultaneously preparing them for emigration to Palestine. Former editor of the *Univers Israélite*, the mouthpiece of the Central Consistory, he was a leading figure in French Jewry who, similar to Asscher and Cohen in the Netherlands, held key posts within the non-Jewish community as well.<sup>239</sup> Lambert felt strongly connected to the French State; ‘pulling off these roots would be worse than amputation’ he wrote in his diary.<sup>240</sup> With his background in relief work, one of Lambert’s aims was to represent and protect the interests of immigrant Jews through the UGIF, as their voice had often been ignored, particularly by the French ruling class.<sup>241</sup>

While he negotiated with Vallat on the establishment of the UGIF, Lambert claimed he was afraid that if *he* did not take up a leading role, there would be a lack of concern for immigrant representation.<sup>242</sup> Richard Cohen has indicated that Lambert’s meeting with Vallat in preparation for the establishment of the UGIF in the summer of 1941 was the turning point in his career: ‘it was to catapult him into one of the most influential positions in Jewish life in unoccupied Europe’.<sup>243</sup> The leading role Lambert took up was not well received by the Rabbinate and Consistory, and they belittled his actions as the ‘unauthorised acts of a layman’.<sup>244</sup> This is unique compared to the Netherlands and Belgium, where the Dutch-Israelite religious community was represented in the JR central board through Rabbi Sarlouis while Chief Rabbi Salomon Ullman served as head of the AJB in Belgium. The Consistory’s rejection of Lambert’s leadership was a constant source of trouble for

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<sup>239</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 53.

<sup>240</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 15 July 1940, 9. Lambert’s diary covers three years of the war, terminating on the day before his arrest on 21 August 1943.

<sup>241</sup> Laffitte, “l’UGIF, collaboration ou résistance?”, 55.

<sup>242</sup> Raymond-Raoul Lambert’s chronicle concerning the establishment of the UGIF, 20 Sept. 1941 - 9 Jan. 1942, Chronological description and texts of documents addressed to Albert Lévy, president of the Comité d’assistance aux réfugiés, Reel 2, MK490, 2.1:2:60 (YIVO), Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>243</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 53. For a description of this meeting, which was attended by Pierre Bloch, former socialist deputy of the Aisne department and appointed as assistant commissioner at the Interior Ministry of the Free French government in Algeria on 17 November 1943, see: Pierre Bloch, *Jusqu’au dernier jour. Mémoires* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1983), 185.

<sup>244</sup> Zosa Szajkowski, *Analytical Franco-Jewish Gazetteer, 1939-1945* (New York: Shulsinger Brothers, 1966), 49-50. Also see the letter of Rabbi Maurice Liber to Raymond-Raoul Lambert, 11 December 1941, p. 7, CCLXVI-48, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

him and he often vented his anger and disappointment in his diary. In one entry, he described an encounter with the Consistory's president on 30 July 1942 on the platform of Lyon-Perrache station: 'I ask for a meeting the next day, but Mr. Helbronner will not agree to meet before Sunday. He is expecting Mr. Schwartz the same day. The president of the Consistory seems more deaf to me, more pretentious and older than ever. The fate of the foreigners doesn't move him in the least'.<sup>245</sup>

Although the UGIF did not officially represent the Consistory, neither was it disconnected from it. We have seen that Lambert had been closely involved with the Consistory through his work for the *Univers Israélite*. The same applies to Albert Lévy, the first president of the UGIF. Lévy was a member of the Consistory from 1935 until his choice to take up the presidency of the UGIF forced him to resign in February 1942.<sup>246</sup> He had close personal, social and institutional ties to Lambert, not least as leader of the CAR and also as fellow member of the Paris literary community in the 1930s.<sup>247</sup> In a report written at the end of February 1942, Lévy indicated that he had been nominated president of the UGIF without having been informed of this beforehand. It was a role he had not been willing to take and he initially signed a collective refusal letter. Eventually, however, after Vallat threatened to choose central board members who had never been involved in welfare activities, Lévy claimed he agreed to take on his position in the UGIF in order to ensure social care for all Jews living in France. Like Lambert, he felt forced to do so because he believed that the position taken by the Consistory in relation to the refugee problem was wrong. For Lévy, taking up a leading position in the UGIF was a good way to represent and protect immigrant Jewry.<sup>248</sup> A few days thereafter, the Consistory accused him of treason: '[t]he Consistory repudiated me [because of my decision], but it simultaneously tried to hide from responsibilities and it was grateful that I did take on this [responsibility] vis-à-vis the government and French Jewry'.<sup>249</sup> As we shall see, despite the antagonism between the two organisations, the Consistory and the UGIF grew closer again during the course of the occupation, aiming to use their combined efforts to help Jews.

For the central board of the UGIF-Sud, Xavier Vallat nominated Jews who had fulfilled prominent positions in the prewar Jewish society. Gaston Kahn had close ties to the CAR, where he

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<sup>245</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 6 September 1942, 130.

<sup>246</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 35-37.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>248</sup> Memorandum of Albert Lévy to the Central Consistory regarding of the UGIF and the attitude of the Consistory to the UGIF, end of February 1942, p. 34, Reel 2, MK490.2 (YIVO), Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

had served as director. Other appointed members were David Olmer and Professor William Oualid, both of whom worked for the Organisation de Reconstruction et le Travail (Organisation for Reconstruction and Work, ORT). Oualid, born in 1880 in Algeria, was one of the central leaders of French Jewry before the war. Among other positions, he held the chair of Political Economy at Sorbonne, was chief of the Employment Office at the Ministry of Labor in 1919, and was vice-president of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU). As a respected member of the Central Consistory, Oualid was actively engaged in several refugee organisations in the prewar period and was closely associated with Marc Jarblum, the president of the FSJF.<sup>250</sup> The other appointed members were René Mayer, head of the HICEM, an organisation that helped European Jews to emigrate, Maurice Pléven, representative of the AIU, and Dr Joseph Weill, who worked for the OSE. Clearly, the majority had been involved in (immigrant) aid organisations before the war.

Contrary to Lambert, who already had agreed to fulfil a leading position in the UGIF through his negotiations with Vallat, the majority of these Jews had not agreed to work for the Jewish organisation prior to their appointment. Some were uncertain about whether to accept their nomination. The community leaders were split between those who advocated either continuing negotiations in order to improve the UGIF's establishment decree or terminating negotiations, and those who recognised the inevitable and resigned themselves to this new form of organisation. The Consistory publicly advocated terminating further negotiations.<sup>251</sup> Initially, many refused their nomination. In his diary, Lambert wrote that that Mayer and Olmer were the first to do so; 'Oualid and Jarblum then followed them'.<sup>252</sup> Jarblum opposed bringing all Jewish organisations under the control of an antisemitic government that collaborated with the Germans.<sup>253</sup> Mayer refused on personal grounds and suggested someone else be appointed in his place. Olmer refused on the grounds of legal principles, and Oualid refused unless Vallat could provide guarantees about the nature of the organisation.<sup>254</sup> Larger underlying factors also played a role here. At this stage, it was not yet clear what kind of organisation the UGIF would become. There also existed a general fear that the responsibilities of the organisation would go beyond providing social welfare.

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<sup>250</sup> See: Caron, *Uneasy Asylum*, 218; 302. On Oualid see: Georges Wormser, *Français israélites: Une doctrine – une tradition – une époque* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1963), 143-148.

<sup>251</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 63.

<sup>252</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 28 December 1941, 85.

<sup>253</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during WWII*, 133.

<sup>254</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 102.



Although Lévy, Gamzon, Millner and Lambert were prepared to accept their nomination, they decided to support the *réfus collectif* (collective refusal) out of solidarity.<sup>255</sup> Lambert reflected upon this episode in this diary:

Albert Lévy, Millner, Gamzon, and I could not possibly accept under the circumstances. So we decided to go along with the others, and all of us signed the same letter declining the office.<sup>256</sup>

On 24 December 1941, all appointed members sent a letter to Vallat stating the reasons for declining their nomination: ‘the reasons mainly concern the limited competences of the *Union* and its board of directors’ and the fact that ‘it could not exclusively dedicate its attention to uniting French Jewry and welfare work’.<sup>257</sup> From Lambert’s diary becomes clear he was dissatisfied with the course of events:

I am convinced that this is an imbecilic step to take, but we’ll see what happens! Oualid had a failure of nerve...I wrote a personal letter to Vallat to notify him of this collective refusal, since I am the only one who has any power to save this thing any longer – I’m right about that.<sup>258</sup>

Vallat, who had become increasingly agitated, initially decided to replace those individuals who had expressed their reservations. In his diary, Lambert reflected upon the course of events at the end of December 1941:

Vallat can’t wait any longer. He is leaving for Paris on the 5th [of January]. Besides Mr. Marcel Wormser, whom he chose himself and who had accepted, he will choose eight Jewish individuals not involved in our social work. He will have an easy time finding eight “mercenaries” he says, people living in Vichy who know nothing about our organizations but will be happy to have a role in them, if only because this will give them the authorization to stay.<sup>259</sup>

Lambert asked Vallat to reconsider the appointment of alternative ‘mercenaries’, encouraging him to send personal telegrams to all those who had initially sent a collective refusal.<sup>260</sup> This effort was successful as most of them then accepted their nomination to the central board. Existing literature has claimed that Olmer, Oualid and Jarblum refused to work for the UGIF and that they saved their

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<sup>255</sup> See, for example, the report of the meeting between the Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France (FSJF) and the UGIF concerning the incorporation of the FSJF in the UGIF, 27 June 1942, CCXIII-57, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>256</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 28 December 1941, 87.

<sup>257</sup> Letter of Gamzon, Mayer, Lambert, Millner, Jarblum, Oualid, Olmer and Lévy to Xavier Vallat, 24 December 1941, XXVIIIa-13, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>258</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 28 December 1941, 87.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 January 1942, 91.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

honour and that of the Jewish community in so doing.<sup>261</sup> Nonetheless, the acceptance telegrams sent by these men on 4 January 1942, sent alongside those of Lévy, Lambert, Millner and Gamzon, show otherwise.<sup>262</sup> All men emphasised they would only engage in charity and social work. Olmer and Jarblum added an attachment to their telegram, outlining three conditions: 1) the tasks of the entire organisation would be limited to *questions d'assistance*; 2) there would be no other task than this; and 3) they wanted to personally discuss the composition of the organisation with Vallat.<sup>263</sup> Lambert's diary shows that the 'qualified replies' from Oualid, Olmer and Jarblum were not accepted. Instead, Lambert proposed three others to serve in the UGIF-Sud board: Raphaël Spanien, Laure Weill and André Lazard.<sup>264</sup>

On 9 January 1942, all positions in the central board of the UGIF-Sud were assigned and approved.<sup>265</sup> Although Albert Lévy was officially the president of the UGIF, Lambert was in fact the one taking the lead.<sup>266</sup> It is therefore not surprising that when Lévy fled to Switzerland in December 1942, Lambert took over his presidency in March 1943.<sup>267</sup> In sum, the UGIF-Sud central board comprised Lambert, Gamzon, Schah, Spanien, Lazard, Weill, Marcel Wormser and Millner, who was replaced on 11 May 1942 by Pierre Seligman. Seligman had been honorary member of the State Council where Helbronner had been his colleague until he was forced to resign as a result of the *Statut des Juifs* of October 1940 that, among other things, banned Jews from top government administrative positions. During the war, he also worked for the juridical service of the Consistory. In a letter to Lambert, he showed his reservations about working for the UGIF-Sud: 'Although I

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<sup>261</sup> See, for example: Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience*, 67; Rajsfus, *Des Juifs dans la collaboration*, 366; Szajkowski, "The Organisation of the 'UGIF': in Nazi-Occupied France", 248; Yahil, "The Jewish Leadership of France", 323-325.

<sup>262</sup> Telegrams of Lévy, Lambert, Jarblum, Oualid, Gamzon and Millner to Xavier Vallat, accepting their position in the Conseil d'Administration of the UGIF, January 1942, CCXIII-31, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. In January 1942, Gamzon sent a letter to leaders of the EIF, explaining his motives and conditions for joining the UGIF. See Michel, *Les Éclaireurs Israélites de France*, 105-109.

<sup>263</sup> Telegrams of Lévy, Lambert, Jarblum, Oualid, Gamzon and Millner to Xavier Vallat, accepting their position in the Conseil d'Administration of the UGIF, January 1942, CCXIII-31, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>264</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 8 January 1942, 94.

<sup>265</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 102-103.

<sup>266</sup> Cohen, "Introduction" in: *Diary of a witness*, xlv.

<sup>267</sup> Laffitte, "l'UGIF, collaboration ou résistance?", 57; Marrus, "Jewish Leadership and the Holocaust: The Case of France" in: *Ibid.*, *The Nazi Holocaust: The Victims of the Holocaust* (part 6), Vol. 2, 786. In the existing literature, Albert Lévy and his actions have at times been misrepresented. Cynthia Haft, for example, confuses Albert Lévy with his namesake who headed the first direction of the UGIF Lyon branch, see: Haft, *The Bargain and the Bridle*, 14. Yehuda Bauer mistakenly claimed that Lévy remained president until he resigned because of ill health in February 1943. See: Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, 237. Mordecai Paldiel incorrectly claimed that Lévy fled to Switzerland only in December 1943. Paldiel, *Saving One's Own: Jewish Rescuers During the Holocaust* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 211.

could accept being appointed by Mr. X.V. (Xavier Vallat) it did not please me to be named by a note signed by his successor (Louis Darquier de Pellepoix). I am afraid it will be impossible to work with the latter'.<sup>268</sup>

*The UGIF-Nord: a continuation of the Comité de Coördination*

In the French occupied zone, the appointment of leaders at the helm of the UGIF-Nord proved less difficult. The central board was a mere continuation of the Comité de Coördination des Oeuvres de Bienfaisance, the umbrella of philanthropic organisations established at the end of January 1941. The UGIF-Nord therefore inherited its staff, areas of activity and points of conflict. Many Jews were concentrated in Paris, partly because of the refugee influx from the Alsace-Lorraine region. As a result of the mass exodus of Jews from Paris in May-June 1940, the former centre of Jewish life in Paris had been broken apart. Instead, Jews were concentrated in the provinces. It was the first stage of the scattering of Jews throughout France, which made it difficult for umbrella organisations to carry out their work.<sup>269</sup> Of the nine central board members of the UGIF-Nord, six had previously worked for the Comité de Coördination.<sup>270</sup> As a consequence, whereas immigrant movements were represented in the unoccupied zone through the CCOJA, this was not the case in the occupied zone, where the CCOJA's equivalent, the Amelot Committee, had not been involved in the negotiations.<sup>271</sup> The Paris negotiations with Vallat only involved leaders close to the Consistory. Therefore, immigrant leaders had little trust in the goodwill of their French counterparts and in their apparent concern for immigrant communities.<sup>272</sup>

André Baur was appointed leader of the UGIF-Nord. He was a banker from a wealthy family with links to both the Rabbinate and Zionism. Baur, only 37, was the son of a prominent and established Jewish family with close ties to the Paris Consistory. He was the grandson of the former

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<sup>268</sup> Letter of Pierre Seligman sent to Raymond-Raoul Lambert, 6 May 1942, CDX-86, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>269</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during WWII*, 66-67.

<sup>270</sup> Laffite, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 75. Of these six, five all (with the exception of Lucienne Scheid-Haas) had been part of the directory board of the Comité de Coördination.

<sup>271</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 104. The Amelot Committee was made up from three political groups (the Bund, and the left and right wings of the Poale-Zion), and two other organisations, the FSJF and the Colonie Scolaire. See Béatrice le Douarion, "Le Comité 'Rue Amelot', 1940-1944 à Paris. Assistance aux Juifs et Sauvetage des Enfants", master's thesis Paris Sorbonne (1994), 1-2, 8. The activities of the Amelot Committee, and its relation to the UGIF-Nord, will be examined later in this thesis.

<sup>272</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 70.

Chief Rabbi of France, Emmanuel Weill, and second cousin to the Chief Rabbi of Paris, Julien Weill. He accepted his nomination without hesitation and to the very end, he aimed to preserve the links between the notables of the Consistory and the UGIF-Nord.<sup>273</sup> In the occupied zone, Baur's close connections to the Consistory decreased the tensions that existed between these two organisations.<sup>274</sup> German pressure quickly intensified in the occupied zone, and there was therefore a need to unite Jewish responses despite the existing opposition between the UGIF and the Consistory.<sup>275</sup> Baur, like Lambert, considered Zionism as a lifebuoy, a solution to the crisis in which European Jewry found itself.<sup>276</sup> Other members of the first UGIF-Nord central board were also Zionists, including Juliette Stern, Georges Edinger, Benjamin Weil-Hallé and Fernand Musnik. In that sense, the impact of the large number of refugees who introduced Zionist ideas into French society was visible in the UGIF-Nord leadership.

The UGIF-Nord central board members had a different background and social standing in society from their UGIF-Sud colleagues. Some of the central board members did have organisational experience, including Juliette Stern (general secretary of the WIZO), Fernand Musnik (a member of the Directory Board of de Fédération de la Jeunesse Sioniste et Pro-Palestienne de France), and Georges Edinger (President of the Temples Consistoriaux since 1916 and treasurer of the CAR). Furthermore, Baur had played a prominent role in the Comité de Coördination and represented the *haute bourgeoisie* of Paris while Marcel Stora had been his secretary.<sup>277</sup> Stora had lived by doing modest jobs until the 1930s. He had worked as a representative for a funerary marble firm and later obtained a position as translator for the publishing house Gallimard.<sup>278</sup> However, they were not representative at the same level in the prewar Jewish communities when compared to those in the UGIF-Sud and the JR. In fact, many of the leaders designated by the Germans and chosen by Vichy in the occupied zone had never held a high public position before the war. As a result, the social foundations of the Jewish society in the occupied zone were, compared to the unoccupied zone, much more unstable.<sup>279</sup> Some members of the UGIF-Nord were not experienced leaders at all. The experience they had gained through the Comité de Coördination was very limited

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<sup>273</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 55.

<sup>274</sup> Cohen, "Le Consistoire et l'UGIF: La situation trouble des Juifs français face à Vichy", 29-30.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>276</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 35-37.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 55; Laffitte, "Between Memory and Lapse of Memory", 682.

<sup>278</sup> Laffitte, "Between Memory and Lapse of Memory", 682.

<sup>279</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 53.

in duration. Lucienne Scheid-Haas, for example, who had had only a minimal prior commitment to and involvement in the Jewish society, became head of the juridical service of the UGIF. After the war, Scheid-Haas indicated that she was encouraged to take part in the organisation by her strong feeling that she ought to aid her fellow Jews.<sup>280</sup> The larger number of inexperienced leaders in the UGIF-Nord central board was a direct result of the flight of the traditional leadership to the unoccupied zone, where some joined the UGIF-Sud.

### *The AJB: improvised leadership*

In Belgium, there was a discontinuity in Jewish leadership after the German occupation of the country. This had two causes. First, the absence of those who had taken up leading positions before the Nazi occupation. Second, the generally disorganised state of the Belgian Jewish communities. Although the future Dutch Joodsche Raad leaders had established their positions as key functionaries in the Jewish community in the 1930s, the large influx of Jewish immigrants meant that it was impossible to identify a distinctive Jewish leadership in Belgium before the war. Both the German occupier and the Jews had to look for people who could appropriately fill the leadership vacuum resulting after the flight from Belgium of the prewar leadership. Only Salomon Ullman, Chief Rabbi of Belgium, former head of the Comité de Coördination and military chaplain, and Rabbi of Antwerp Markus Rottenberg, both representatives of the former Jewish communities' structures, remained.<sup>281</sup> Ullman had been made a prisoner of war, but was returned to Belgium on 12 June 1940.<sup>282</sup> This leadership vacuum might explain why, despite German disapproval of the way the Comité de Coördination had functioned, the majority of the Jews who had been active in this committee were again appointed to serve in the AJB, including Salomon Ullman who was appointed as its first head.<sup>283</sup> Although it has been argued that the choice of Chief Rabbi Ullman was somewhat arbitrary, it can very well be explained from the German perspective.<sup>284</sup> In a splintered Belgian Jewish society where numerous sorts of Jewish life were represented, from non-Zionist to Zionist, from Bundist to communist, and from conservative to Modern Orthodox, including Agudat Yisrael and even Hasidic Jewry, the choice of a traditional Rabbinic leadership

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<sup>280</sup> Interview with Lucienne Scheid-Haas, 24 April 1978, as appendix to Rajsfus, *Des Juifs dans la collaboration*, 345-348.

<sup>281</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil, 1942. Les cent jours de la déportation*, 31.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., "The Trap of Legality", 799.

<sup>283</sup> Michman, "De oprichting van de VJB in internationaal perspectief", 36.

<sup>284</sup> Schreiber and Van Doorslaer, "Inleiding" in: Ibid. (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 8-9.

seems well-reasoned.

The position of the AJB central board members in Belgian society was essentially different from that of their Dutch and French counterparts. Although AJB members had fulfilled representative functions within Jewish public life before the war and also had ties to the Consistory, which was unlike the example of the Netherlands, their appointment cannot be considered a continuation of prewar structures.<sup>285</sup> Overall, the Belgian AJB leaders had either not been involved in prewar Jewish communal life, or had been involved in activities only on a local scale. To some extent, Brussels' AJB representative Salomon van den Berg was an exception in this regard, despite the fact that he had 'only' been a wholesale dealer before he was nominated vice-president of the Jewish community in 1940. After he returned from his flight to southern France in 1940, he was one of the few members of the prewar Belgian Israelite establishment who remained in Brussels. In the face of few alternatives, he was nominated vice-president of the community, a role he was more than willing to take on. In his diary, Van den Berg wrote: 'I allowed myself to be nominated vice-president of the Israelite community, being one of the oldest members present in Brussels in Belgium, which was a rare thing in these times'.<sup>286</sup> Very much focussed on his own well-being, and with a negative perception vis-a-vis German Jews who continued to play a role in the *Hilfswerk für Deutsche Juden*, Van den Berg seemed to consider the AJB as a mere continuation of and substitute for the Consistory tradition he had been part of before the war.<sup>287</sup> In fact, he did not even try to hide his feeling of repugnance towards foreign Jews. His diary shows that his central aim was to maintain his privileged position in society, using the AJB to establish his longed-for position of leadership.<sup>288</sup>

The first chairman of the AJB, Salomon Ullman, was not involved in major public activities before the war in the way that Asscher and Cohen in the Netherlands or Lambert in France had been. Ullman was born in Budapest in 1882, went to school in Antwerp but then returned to Hungary to attend *yechivah*, a talmudic school. After studying in Frankfurt am Main and Bern, he

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<sup>285</sup> See, for example, Van Doorslaer and Schreiber, "Besluit" in: *Ibid.*, (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 338-339; Laffitte, "L'Association des Juifs en Belgique (AJB): Des notables postiers de la solution finale" in: *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah* (2006), 91.

<sup>286</sup> Salomon van den Berg, *Journal de guerre*, p. 36, Buber Collection, A006685, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>287</sup> Van Doorslaer, "Salomon van den Berg", 118.

<sup>288</sup> Salomon van den Berg, *Journal de guerre*, p. 36, Buber Collection, A006685, Kazerne Dossin; Van Doorslaer, "Salomon van den Berg", 111.

once more returned to Hungary between 1907 and 1909 to continue his Rabbinic education. Ullman unsuccessfully applied for the post of Rabbi of the Brussels orthodox community in 1914 but was not elected. After living in the Netherlands for seven years, he eventually became secretary of the Machsike Hadass community, a small ultra-orthodox, generally non-Zionist, Antwerp community his father had founded in 1892.<sup>289</sup> It was a minor movement with a largely immigrant congregation. A few years later, Ullman became the community's Rabbi. From 1937, he was the main chaplain (*hoofdalmoezenier*) of the Belgian Army but his leadership cannot be seen as the product of a long-term development in Belgian Jewish society and Ullman can hardly be considered typical of Belgian Jewry at this time.

After the German occupation of Belgium and the disappearance of Jews who had fulfilled major representative functions before the war, Ullman had been unwillingly put forward as a candidate to become Chief Rabbi of the country. Yitzak Kubowitzki, leader of the Brussels Jewish Zionist community, had been important in the process of reorganisation after the Nazi occupation and was anxiously looking for any Jewish representative left who could take care of the remains of the Jewish community.<sup>290</sup> Via Marcel Blum, the only board member of the Israelite Community of Brussels left in the city, Kubowitzki approached Antwerp Rabbi Halevi Brod and Rabbi Schapiro to become chief Rabbi of Belgium. Both of them refused.<sup>291</sup> In a postwar report on the activities of the AJB, Ullman claimed he was not inclined to accept this job either. However, Rabbis Brod and Markus Rottenberg declared that a refusal on his part would have a disastrous impact on the Jewish communities of Belgium.<sup>292</sup> Kubowitzki, Brod and Schapiro encouraged Ullman to take up the position.<sup>293</sup> Ullman claimed that his decision to do so was among other things motivated by German Jewish refugees who tried to 'profit' from the lack of representation and leadership within Jewish society by presenting themselves to the Germans as the communities' representatives. Ullman considered this potentially harmful. In addition, the pressure from the German side was severe, he claimed.<sup>294</sup> As a result, he gave in to demands voiced by both the Jewish and German sides and became interim chief Rabbi of Belgium, in the absence of Joseph Wiener. Quite unexpectedly,

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<sup>289</sup> Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 343-344.

<sup>290</sup> Interview with Yitzak Kubowitzki, 12 November 1964, AA 1196, CEGESOMA; Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 203-204.

<sup>291</sup> Interview with Yitzak Kubowitzki, 12 November 1964, AA 1196, CEGESOMA.

<sup>292</sup> Report by Salomon Ullman "l'Activité de l'Association des Juifs en Belgique", undated, AA MIC/41, CEGESOMA.

<sup>293</sup> Interview with Yitzak Kubowitzki, 12 November 1964, AA 1196, CEGESOMA; Report by Salomon Ullman "l'Activité de l'Association des Juifs en Belgique", undated, AA MIC/41, CEGESOMA.

<sup>294</sup> Report by Salomon Ullman "l'Activité de l'Association des Juifs en Belgique", undated, AA MIC/41, CEGESOMA.

Salomon Ullman therefore suddenly fulfilled a central role in the Jewish communities of Belgium only two years before he was appointed head of the AJB. Fela Perelman, wife of Chaim Perelman and who, as we will see, worked both for the AJB and the clandestine CDJ, claimed after the war that Ullman was not able to play the important role of chairman of the AJB at such an important moment in Jewish history because he lacked the necessary experience:

Seeing as though you've asked me, Chief Rabbi Ullman was certainly not a traitor in my opinion. He was just ignorant. And he was not able to assume such an important role at such an important moment in Jewish history in general and the Jewish community in Belgium in particular. Chief Rabbi Weiner was gone. Ullman had never been a Chief Rabbi before. He was a secretary. And suddenly he held this responsibility [...].<sup>295</sup>

The same pattern of having relatively minor prewar representative positions, if any, can be identified if we look at the other AJB central board members. This issue affected the self-perception of the central board membership. In a number of cases, they were either unwilling to head the organisation or not confident about their leadership. We will see that this eventually resulted in resignations from the central board. As a consequence, the status of the AJB and the way in which its leadership carried out their functions was different from that of the JR or the UGIF-Sud. The other members of the central board were appointed by the Germans and could only resign if approved by the *Militärbefehlshaber* of Belgium and Northern France, Alexander von Falkenhausen. Ullman was not involved in this nomination process.<sup>296</sup> Unsurprisingly, the central board members were chosen from among the largest Jewish communities in Belgium, representing Antwerp (Maurice Benedictus), Brussels (Salomon van den Berg), Charleroi (Jules Mehlwurm) and Liège (Noé Nozyce).

The appointment of the Antwerp AJB representative, who would also serve as the AJB's vice-chairman, had been a complex process. Initially, the secretary of the Antwerp Diamant Club, M. Louis Judels, was chosen to head the Antwerp branch, but he pretended to be a half-Jew and instead nominated Isaac Benedictus, who belonged to one of the oldest families in Antwerp. As he was too old, his son Maurice Benedictus was put forward in his place. Arguing that he lacked the necessary competence and would not be at all capable as a leader, Maurice refused. His reluctance

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<sup>295</sup> Interview with Fela Perelman-Liwer, conducted by Jean-Philippe Schreiber, 14 April 1988, p. 80, Fondation de la Mémoire Contemporaine.

<sup>296</sup> Interview with Salomon Ullman concerning Jewish organisations and the resistance, 1970, AA 1196/12, CEGESOMA.



was not unreasonable. He had been a cigar-maker before the war and was not at all involved in Jewish public life.<sup>297</sup> Like Ullman, he had been unwilling to take up a leading position in Jewish society after the German occupation. Despite this, Ullman informed Benedictus that he was obliged to take on this responsibility due to intense German pressure.<sup>298</sup> As a result, someone who had only been remotely connected to Jewish public life became leader of the Antwerp AJB branch.<sup>299</sup> The story of Maurice Heiber is very similar. He entered the central board as head of the local Brussels AJB board on 9 December 1942. He reflected on his involvement with prewar Jewish society: ‘[until the end of 1940] I did not have any contact with the Jewish community in Belgium, whose problems and members were entirely unfamiliar to me’.<sup>300</sup> There were also AJB members whose prewar position in the society had been better established, such as Salomon van den Berg, former administrator of the Israëlite Community and Nico Workum, director of the Belgian Communications Network, but they were few and far between.

When we look at other central board members, some of whom joined the AJB at a later stage in the war, we see that some had immigrated to Belgium only recently. Although the existing literature has emphasised the fact that the vast majority of AJB board members possessed Belgian nationality, the presence of some Jews who did not (yet) have Belgian citizenship constitutes a major difference with the JR, where none of the central board members was a recent immigrant.<sup>301</sup> The following individuals were all involved in the local branches of the AJB, while simultaneously taking a seat on the central board. Noé Nozyce, president of the local AJB Liège board, was born in Cieszyn (Poland), and arrived in Liège in 1928 where he became a fur trader.<sup>302</sup> Grigorijs Garfinkels, board member of the local Liège board, was born in Liepaja (Latvia) and immigrated to Belgium in 1925.<sup>303</sup> Chaïm Perelman, born in Warsaw, was throughout the 1930s still going through

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<sup>297</sup> Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 48.

<sup>298</sup> Maurice Benedictus, “Historique du problème Juif en Belgique depuis le 10 Mai 1940 jusqu’au 21 Décembre 1942”, 18 Feb 1943, p.5, A006683, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid. Also see: Steinberg, “The Trap of Legality”, 801.

<sup>300</sup> Eyewitness account by Maurice Heiber, “The Jewish Children in Belgium” (1956), p.2, 1656/3/9/274, Wiener Library.

<sup>301</sup> See, for example: Steinberg, *La Persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 181-182; Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad*, 502-503.

<sup>302</sup> Report on Noé Nozyce, Inv. No. 19186/45, Conseil de Guerre de Liège, Auditorat Militaire, Algemeen Rijksarchief België (ARA 2).

<sup>303</sup> Report on Grigorijs Garfinkels, Inv. No. 4030/44, Conseil de Guerre de Liège, Auditorat Militaire, Algemeen Rijksarchief België (ARA 2).

a process of naturalisation to become an official Belgian citizen.<sup>304</sup> Perelman's family had settled in Antwerp in 1925 and while Chaïm quickly pursued a career at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), he only received Belgian nationality in 1936.<sup>305</sup> One of the founders of the local Liège AJB branch, Idel Steinberg, born in Rezina (Bessarabia, Romania) was also in the middle of a naturalisation process in the 1930s.<sup>306</sup> The president of the Charleroi branch of the AJB, Juda Mehlwurm, who was born in Poland, arrived in Charleroi in 1923 and only received Belgian citizenship after the war, in March 1955.<sup>307</sup>

Mehlwurm's successor, Louis Rosenfeld, nominated at the end of 1942, never intended to live in Belgium. Shortly before the Nazi occupation of the country, Rosenfeld was still uncertain about whether or not he would reside only temporarily in Belgium. He was a German trader in women's clothing and visited Belgium occasionally in this capacity. It was only as late as April 1939 that he asked for a Belgian visa, because his intention to emigrate to Britain was suddenly thwarted when the British Consul failed to grant him authorisation to enter the country.<sup>308</sup> After the German invasion, he became president of the Oeuvre de Secours aux Israélites d'Allemagne (Aid Society for the German Israelites) that succeeded the Hilfswerk der Arbeitsgemeinschaft von Juden aus Deutschland.<sup>309</sup> Despite this, his prominent position in the AJB, attained only a little over two years after circumstances forced him to remain in Belgium, does seem remarkable. The fact that the board consisted of people whose integration into the prewar Jewish communities of Belgium was only recent suggests that the nomination of the majority of these individuals to relatively prominent positions in the Belgian AJB was somewhat random.

Saerens has argued that in the case of the Antwerp AJB branch, the board members were not at all representative of the city's Jewish communities, since almost all possessed Belgian citizenship

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<sup>304</sup> Report of Foreign Police (Vreemdelingenpolitie), Chaïm Pinchos Perelman, N 682.302 / A 143129, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>305</sup> Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 271-272.

<sup>306</sup> Report of the Foreign Police (Vreemdelingenpolitie), Idel Steinberg Steinberg, N 682.302 / 1313133, Kazerne Dossin; Steinberg, "The Trap of Legality", 801.

<sup>307</sup> Report of the Foreign Police (Vreemdelingenpolitie), Juda (Jules) Mehlwurm, N 682.302 / 1160919, Kazerne Dossin. Before the German occupation, Mehlwurm was actively engaged in relatively minor revisionist Zionist socialist circles. Their meetings were closely guarded by government officials. The gendarmerie of Charleroi indicated in March 1935 that these kind of organisations continued to be an object of discreet surveillance on their part. Mehlwurm also fulfilled a representative function as the Charleroi representative of the Communauté Israélite before the war.

<sup>308</sup> Report of Foreign Police (Vreemdelingenpolitie), Louis Rosenfeld, N 682.302 / A317631, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>309</sup> Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 295.

and belonged to the *moyenne bourgeoisie*, as well as living in non-Jewish neighbourhoods.<sup>310</sup> He has highlighted the fact that these were assimilated Jews and that even Machel Majer (Max) Grätzer, of Polish origin, was representative of the Jewish bourgeoisie because he served as secretary of the Consistory.<sup>311</sup> In a similar vein, Steinberg highlighted that the vast majority of AJB employees were Belgian citizens, which was in accordance with the demands of Wilhelm von Hahn, the spokesperson for the AJB at the *Militärverwaltungsstab* of Eggert Reeder. When the deportations commenced, Von Hahn indicated to Benedictus and Nozyce that the positions of the AJB ought to be occupied as much as possible by Belgian Jews.<sup>312</sup> The examples we have seen here suggest that the nature of the AJB leadership was rather different, reflecting a more complex reality. In the organisation's central board, there were in fact a number of Jews who did not possess Belgian citizenship and, compared to their Dutch counterparts, the relative lack of overall experience in leading positions among the board members was significant. They were not representative of the highly diverse Jewish (immigrant) communities of Belgium but neither were they traditional leaders with years of leadership experience like Asscher and Cohen.

The social-historical context in which the AJB central board was established meant that its acceptance by the Jewish communities was minimal.<sup>313</sup> In a postwar interview, Ullman was asked whether those nominated as central board members of the AJB received the confidence of the Jewish communities in Belgium. He answered:

None. They were generally never in touch with Jews. I mean, some of them you have to know, one of them was Benedictus, that was the cigar factory Benedictus in Pienkov, in the Catenstrasse. He was a member. And one of them was Nossatsche (?) [Nozyce], a short man from Liège, A fur trader. Then you had Hellendahl [Hellendall], from Brussels, he had a well-known company in Brussels, he was hardly in touch with Jews.<sup>314</sup>

Whereas Belgian historians Schreiber and Van Doorslaer have argued that there was a general sense of trust among the Belgian population in the AJB at least until the summer of 1942, the image

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<sup>310</sup> Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad*, 502-503.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Report of meeting between Benedictus, Nozyce and Von Hahn, 14 September 1942, A007418, Centre National des Hautes Études Juives (CNHEJ), Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin; Steinberg, *La persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 181-182.

<sup>313</sup> Interview with Salomon Ullman, 1970, concerning Jewish organisations and the resistance, AA 1196/12, CEGESOMA.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

portrayed here by Ullman is quite different.<sup>315</sup> This again underlines the point that he had little trust in the form and function of the AJB.

The fact that the Belgian Jewish leaders' positions were not a continuation of prewar structures certainly affected their perceptions and choices. The treasurer of the local Brussels AJB board, Alfred Blum, indicated in a postwar interview that Ullman regretted he had been appointed as director: *il était fort ennuyé*.<sup>316</sup> Without any real previous leadership experience and also a rather unwilling leader, he never seemed to take his role as Jewish Association leader as seriously as either Asscher or (particularly) Cohen had done in the Netherlands, nor as Lambert had done in France. The postwar testimony of Alfred Rosenzweig, who was a lawyer in Berlin before fleeing to Belgium in the 1930s, gives a valuable insight in the way Ullman was perceived in his role as a communal leader. According to Rosenzweig, Ullman was an honest and good man but was not the most capable person to represent the Belgian Jewish communities and was even less prepared for his job than other members of the central board.<sup>317</sup> As a consequence, his leadership lacked determination.<sup>318</sup> Ullman's role in the AJB was therefore secondary. Maurice Benedictus occupied the central position instead, first as secretary and later as head of the administration of the AJB which presided over the local branches and various commissions.<sup>319</sup> Despite Benedictus' initial unwillingness to become a representative, he fulfilled his positions with much more confidence and courage than Ullman.<sup>320</sup>

The unwillingness Ullman and Benedictus initially felt was shared by others. It has been argued that the AJB leaders did not use the establishment of this body to gain power in Jewish society, but we might take this claim one step further, and conclude that the majority of the future central board members were far from willing to take on any representative position whatsoever.<sup>321</sup> They rejected the 'offer' to form the leadership of the Association as they considered it to be a *guet-apens* – a trap.<sup>322</sup> Although only Joseph Teichmann, who was designated to become the local

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<sup>315</sup> Van Doorslaer and Schreiber, "Besluit", 339.

<sup>316</sup> Interview Alfred Blum, Farde Histoire Oral III, 5 December 1972, p. 4, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>317</sup> Interview Alfred Rosenzweig, 3 February 1972, p. 26, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>318</sup> Steinberg, *La persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 185.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, "The Trap of Legality", 801.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, *La persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 185.

<sup>321</sup> See Van Doorslaer and Schreiber, "Besluit", 338.

<sup>322</sup> Survey of M. Benedictus regarding the experiences of the Jews of Belgium during the war years, until September 1943, Archive Record Group O.29, File No. 17, Document Number 98, Yad Vashem.

Antwerp representative, refused to work for the Association, the general lack of eagerness to become AJB representatives among the central board members, and in the case of Salomon Ullman specifically, is an important difference from the examples of the Dutch Council chairmen and the UGIF-Sud chairman Raymond-Raoul Lambert.<sup>323</sup> From a comparative viewpoint, two important observations can be made. The AJB's leadership, and specifically its chairman, did not have the same prewar status as the majority of their counterparts in the Netherlands and France. Even compared to UGIF-Nord, the AJB leadership was less entrenched in the country's Jewish communities. As a result, the confidence which particularly Asscher and Cohen especially had in their own leadership and their feeling that they were the right representatives of Jewish society in the Netherlands, was generally absent in the Belgian case. The following paragraphs show how this affected the course of events.

#### **1.4 Self-perception and the choices of the Jewish leaders**

##### *Internal pressure? (The absence of) coordinated institutional criticism*

The nature of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud was such that their leadership received criticism from the communities they were forced to represent. Their function as spokespersons while also cooperating with the Germans led to disagreement, protest and anger among the Jewish communities. In all three countries, Jews generally seemed to feel that it was wrong to comply with the German demand of establishing a Jewish representative organisation in the first place. At the same time, many understood the motives of the central board members for taking up their role during the earliest stages of the organisations' existence. It was clear that in the event that the appointed leadership refused to serve, there would always be others who were willing to do the job. In the case of France, historians seem to agree that the UGIF was initially perceived more positively by Jews in France than during the last phase of the German occupation. The critics in part based their anger on the fact that the organisation had failed to protect the Jewish children who lived in the UGIF-Nord home of Neuilly. Initially, the children of the Neuilly home had been evacuated in anticipation of upcoming raids. However, they were brought back because the UGIF leaders feared reprisals. On 25 July 1944, these children were arrested and sent to Drancy, after

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<sup>323</sup> For the notice on the refusal of Joseph Teichmann, see: AJB central board meeting, 25 November 1941, 497/146 666, DOS.

which they were deported to Auschwitz.<sup>324</sup> This supposedly highlighted the detrimental role the organisation's leadership played in the last phase of the occupation.<sup>325</sup> The same holds true for Belgium, where the AJB initially gained the trust of an important part of the Jewish population, at least until the summer of 1942 and even thereafter. Even though the Association was considered an instrument in the hands of the Germans, aiding them in their policies of persecution, it also responded to the increasing needs of the Jewish population.<sup>326</sup> This ambivalence was inherent in the way the Jewish organisations in all three western European countries were perceived.

At all levels of society, Jews criticised the organisations' leaders and the way they responded to German demands. In the case of the Netherlands, for example, the Dutch Council popularly came to be referred to as Jewish treason (*verraad*) or trouble (*onraad*), in part because the chairmen had agreed to hand over a list of the names of unmarried men between the ages of 18-40 for work-camps in the Netherlands in order to 'forestall disruptions as far as possible'.<sup>327</sup> Mirjam Levie, secretary of the JR, alluded to a joke that was common among Jews in the Netherlands, highlighting that its leaders were considered too cooperative with the Nazis: The Germans summon Asscher and Cohen and inform them that the Jews will be gassed, to which Cohen immediately responds 'do you deliver the gas, or are we responsible for doing so?'.<sup>328</sup> Criticisms of the Jewish leaders were also voiced by the organisations' own members. In France, for example, one month after the liberation of the country, Joseph Lehman, the director of the UGIF-Sud Marseille branch, denounced the actions of Gaston Kahn, interim director of the UGIF, in the *Notre Voix* newspaper (a French edition of the Yiddish newspaper *Unzer Wort*, which had been published clandestinely since June 1940). In Lehman's view, Kahn had failed to prevent the deportation of Jewish children, knowing full well their destination.<sup>329</sup> He claimed that the UGIF never fought against the orders of Vichy or

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<sup>324</sup> It should be noted that there is disagreement about the exact number of children who resided in the Neuilly home. Whereas Laffitte has indicated there were 16, Klarsfeld stated there were 17. Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 314-315; Serge Klarsfeld, *French children of the Holocaust: a memorial* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 1822.

<sup>325</sup> Perego, "Jurys d'honneur", 143; Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 324.

<sup>326</sup> Van Doorslaer and Schreiber, "Besluit" in: *Ibid.*, *De curatoren van het getto*, 339.

<sup>327</sup> Minutes of Council meeting, 3 March 1942, 182.3, NIOD as cited in Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 86-87.

<sup>328</sup> Bolle, "*Ik zal je beschrijven hoe een dag er hier uit ziet*", 123; This 'diary' consists of letters which Mirjam Levie wrote to her fiancé Leo Bolle who resided in Palestine while she was in Amsterdam during the German occupation of the Netherlands. The letters were never sent but were published in 2003 and provide Mirjam Levie's detailed reflections on the activities of the Council and the choices of its leadership.

<sup>329</sup> Excerpts of article in *Notre Voix* republished in *La Presse Nouvelle*, 27 September 1944, No. 4, CMXXV-23, Mémorial de la Shoah.

Gestapo officials and instead followed such orders faithfully.<sup>330</sup> In Belgium, the lack of trust in the organisation is underlined by the fact that affluent Jews with Belgian nationality refused to support the AJB through the *cotisations* – the forced contributions. As a result, the Association had little income from contributions by its own community members.<sup>331</sup> In all three countries the intensity and degree of these criticisms changed during the war and, naturally, the perception of these Jewish organisations varied from person to person. Rather than analysing the disapproval that existed on the individual or societal level, we will examine (the absence of) coordinated criticisms voiced at the institutional level. While in all three countries similar criticisms were voiced, the level of coordinated protest against the Jewish leaders' actions varied. This research suggests that this affected the self-perception of the leaders and, as a consequence, their position in the communities and the choices they made.

The nature of the institutional criticism the JR received was markedly different from that received by the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud. Whereas Asscher and Cohen faced criticisms, including from their own board members, the strength of this can hardly be compared to the centrally orchestrated condemnation of the Consistory which the UGIF leaders faced. In fact, we have seen that the Jewish religious authority in the Netherlands was represented in the JR's central board through Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam Sarlouis, which was not the case in the French equivalent. The criticism of the Dutch Council was voiced most powerfully by Lodewijk Visser, President of the Hoge Raad, the Dutch Supreme Court, and head of the Coördinatie Commissie.<sup>332</sup> From the first moment, Visser strongly opposed the establishment of the Joodsche Raad. As we have seen, he rejected the idea of any form of cooperation with the Germans and strongly disagreed with the decrees with which the Joodsche Raad had complied, most notably that which resulted in Jews no longer being allowed to address the Dutch government on their own account. The letters Visser exchanged with Cohen in the period after the JR's establishment give a valuable insight in the different viewpoints of the two Jewish notables.<sup>333</sup> While Visser actively fought to combat the Germans, Asscher and Cohen continued their 'policy of lesser evil', gaining (minor) concessions through cooperation. Through this strategy, Asscher and Cohen were, for example, often able to get

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Report on the functioning and activities of the CDJ, AA1915, Dossier 13, CEGESOMA.

<sup>332</sup> Melkman, "De briefwisseling", 108.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 110.

Jews in mixed marriages released after they were arrested.<sup>334</sup>

We have seen that there were prominent Jews who refused to serve in the central board of the Dutch JR, including professor of Economics Herman Frijda. Isaac Kisch initially fulfilled a position in the JR in order to keep Visser updated about the latest developments but resigned before the Council became an entity with nationwide influence. In a postwar trial testimony, Kisch indicated that he had considered the Joodsche Raad an unsound machine, with two incapable leaders.<sup>335</sup> These people who openly challenged the existence of the Joodsche Raad and the actions of its leadership were generally from the same *haute juiverie* as Asscher and Cohen.<sup>336</sup> However, there was never an organised anti-movement that provided an alternative to the strategy of the JR. Visser's attempts to remain in touch with Dutch Secretaries-General and to act against the Nazi statutes were all personal efforts.<sup>337</sup> He opposed the working of the JR through the Coordinating Commission until it was abolished in November 1941.<sup>338</sup> It therefore never had the chance to truly affect the course of the JR. There were also occasions on which the choices of the chairmen were disputed by JR central board members. Gertrude van Tijn, who headed the Hulp aan Vertrekkenden (Aid to those Departing) department of the JR, highlighted in a report written in 1944 that there were several occasions on which the other central board members showed their discontent with the decisions taken by Asscher and Cohen. For example, on 4 July 1942 there was a meeting of the entire JR central board after the Germans had announced that Jews would be called upon to work in Germany. The task of the JR was to ensure that Jews would report themselves when they received a call for deportation. According to Van Tijn, the meeting became heated: 'many of us thought the Jewish Council should refuse to cooperate in what we rightly assumed to be the beginning of the deportations'.<sup>339</sup> These kinds of criticisms were not sufficient to make Asscher and Cohen alter their

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<sup>334</sup> Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 125.

<sup>335</sup> Statement of Isaac Kisch, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491, III (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>336</sup> Visser, who was appointed Chief of Justice of the Dutch Supreme Court in 1939, helped Jewish refugees from 1918 onwards. He was not a Zionist, but as chairman of Keren Hayesod, he was involved in the care of Jews. Established in response to the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the aim of Keren Hayesod was to be the official world-wide fundraising organisation for the rebuilding of the Jewish community in Palestine.

<sup>337</sup> Visser wrote an extensive report on his personal efforts to minimise the impact of German regulations, for example by approaching the Dutch Secretaries-General. See: report of L.E. Visser, 11 December 1941, Doc. 00003185, Joods Historisch Museum (JHM).

<sup>338</sup> Melkman, "De briefwisseling", 115.

<sup>339</sup> See, for example, Gertrude Van Tijn's, "Bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis der joden in Nederland van 10 mei 1940 tot juni 1944" Palestine, Nahariah (1944), p. 48, Doc 1 248-1720 Inv. No. 1, NIOD.



decisions or rethink their position at the helm of the JR. As Mirjam Levie wrote in her diary, Cohen listened (to objections of) the board members but in the end acted the way he wanted.<sup>340</sup> In a postwar interview, she claimed that even though other board members at times voiced their uncertainty about increasing German demands, Asscher and Cohen had often already agreed to cooperate.<sup>341</sup> Overall, Cohen was the one who at times, according to Mirjam Levie, at times acted the despot, making all the decisions while the other JR board members, including Asscher, hardly had any say.<sup>342</sup>

In France, there were strong voices of protest against the establishment of the UGIF. Opposition took various (organised) forms and was expressed on different levels. The Jewish communists, who radically opposed the Jewish organisation, remained completely underground and published illegal newspapers in which the UGIF members were referred to as ‘little brown Jews’, a reference to the Sturmabteilung (SA) uniform, and were accused of helping the Germans to organise deportations.<sup>343</sup> We have seen that in August 1941, the Chief Rabbi of Paris Julien Weill, and Rabbi Marcel Sachs refused to meet the demand to establish a Jewish representative organisation as ordered by SS Hauptsturmführer and chief of the Judenreferat Theodor Dannecker. The idea that a Jewish leadership might be secular disturbed the Consistory and the French Rabbinate.<sup>344</sup> In the period prior to and after the institution of the UGIF in November 1941, there was strong opposition between the Consistory and the UGIF central board, which lasted for a year.<sup>345</sup> The Consistory condemned the German racial definition of Jewishness and ‘upheld the secular interpretation: a religion confined to private life’.<sup>346</sup> Helbronner, who became president of the Consistory in 1940, was careful to maintain contacts with the Vichy government and believed that the French authorities would not undermine the status of French Jews.<sup>347</sup> He indicated he did

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<sup>340</sup> Bolle, “*Ik zal je beschrijven hoe een dag er hier uit ziet*”, 58.

<sup>341</sup> Mirjam Bolle-Levie in an interview with Johannes Houwink ten Cate, 17 September 2003, Doc I 248-2366, M. Bolle-Levie, Inv. No. 2, NIOD.

<sup>342</sup> Mirjam Bolle-Levie, Interview with Johannes Houwink ten Cate, 12 August 1999, Doc. 1 248-2366, M. Bolle-Levie, Inv. No. 1, NIOD. This is confirmed by other individuals as well. See, for example, Herman Cohen in: Lindwer (ed.), *Het fatale dilemma*, 38-39.

<sup>343</sup> Annette Wieviorka, *Ils étaient juifs, résistants, communistes* (Paris: Denoël, 1986), 76.

<sup>344</sup> Cohen, *Burden of conscience*, 26; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 57-58.

<sup>345</sup> For an overview of the tensions in this period between the two organisations and Helbronner and Lambert specifically, see: Cohen, “Le Consistoire et l’UGIF: La situation trouble des Juifs Français face à Vichy”, 28-33; Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 46-50.

<sup>346</sup> Laffitte, “Between Memory and Lapse of Memory”, 675.

<sup>347</sup> Yahil, “The Jewish leadership of France”, 323.

not want to be involved in the establishment of the UGIF and openly objected to the course taken by Lambert, fearing that the UGIF would result in the formation of a ghetto.<sup>348</sup> More broadly, leaders of the Consistory objected to the principle of a mandatory organisation because it would place French and foreign Jews in the same group; it would ‘implicitly replace the religious definition of a Jew with a racial one, and further widen the gap that each new antisemitic measure was creating between French Jews and their non-Jewish compatriots’.<sup>349</sup> In short, it would separate French Jews from their fellow Frenchmen.<sup>350</sup> The UGIF leadership believed this approach could not be maintained in the context of the antisemitic government decrees of October 1940 and June 1941. As Lambert wrote in his diary on 30 November 1941: ‘The Union des Juifs [Union of Jews] will be created with us, without us, or against us’.<sup>351</sup>

The outright refusal of the Consistory, and Helbronner in particular, to establish any form of cooperation with Xavier Vallat was less absolute than has been proclaimed.<sup>352</sup> While historian Adam Rayski, for example, claimed that Lambert was the sole negotiating partner, he does not refer to the endless meetings Lambert had with representatives of the Commission Central and the Consistory to report on his conversations with Vallat.<sup>353</sup> In fact, reports of the meetings indicate that Helbronner even visited Vallat to discuss the establishment of the UGIF with him.<sup>354</sup> The Central Consistory and CCOJA drew up a counterproposal and presented it to Vallat, aiming for a change of wording in the central tasks of the UGIF, from that of *particularly (notamment)* limited to relief and social assistance, to *exclusively* limited to these tasks.<sup>355</sup> These attempts underline that there was a strong feeling against the UGIF becoming anything more than a purely welfare agency.<sup>356</sup> Although Vallat did make some amendments, the final text remained unacceptable to many among the Jewish

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<sup>348</sup> Szajowski, “The Organization of the ‘UGIF’ in Nazi-Occupied France”, 247; Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience*, 57.

<sup>349</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 133.

<sup>350</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 58.

<sup>351</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 30 November 1941, 76.

<sup>352</sup> See, for example, Rayski, *The Choice of the Jews under Vichy*, 56-59. Here, Rayski claimed that Lambert was the sole negotiating partner.

<sup>353</sup> See the various meeting reports of the Commission Central, including CCXIII-73; CCXIII-74; CXIII-76; CCXIII-79, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>354</sup> Meeting of Commission Central and Consistory, 24 October 1941, CCXIII-73, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; See, for example, the Memorandum of Albert Lévy to the Central Consistory regarding of the UGIF and the attitude of the Consistory to the UGIF, end of February 1942, Reel 2, MK490.2 (YIVO), Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>355</sup> Yahil, “The Jewish Leadership of France”, 324-325. See also René Mayer’s letter to Lambert in which he noted that the definition of UGIF’s functions was open-ended, being ‘notably’ a matter of social welfare. Letter of Mayer to Lambert, 2 December 1941, CCXIII-20, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>356</sup> Caron, “The UGIF: The Failure of the Nazis to Establish a Judenrat on the Eastern European Model”, 11-12.

leadership. We have seen, however, that some felt it was their duty to accept their assigned positions in order to aid the vulnerable Jewish population and also believed it was possible to operate solely as a welfare organisation. Through a legalistic argument accepted by Vichy, namely that religious institutions were not allowed to assume responsibilities in secular organisations, the Consistory retained its independence from the UGIF.<sup>357</sup> The official stance of the Consistory in relation to the UGIF remained deliberately critical. It thereby functioned as a check on the UGIF and provided an alternate source of authority. In his diary entry of 29 March 1942, Lambert compared himself to Léon Blum in 1936, who faced scepticism when he tried to forestall the hatred of the far Right: ‘The very wealthy Jews, who are the majority of the Consistory, are afraid the *Union* will make them pay too much for the poor [...] What a sad, confused mentality!’<sup>358</sup> While concerns about the role of the Jewish organisations were raised in all three countries, it was only in France that the level of criticism and discontent was voiced in such an intense and organised manner. Although the power of the Consistory had been fading, the impact of its negative view on the UGIF should not be underestimated as it had the means and power to frustrate the actions of the organisation.

After the German occupation of the south of France in November 1942, the two bodies grew closer to one another and the Consistory acknowledged the value of the UGIF’s work to relieve the hardship of the Jews. The deterioration of both of their financial situations furthermore brought the two organisations closer together.<sup>359</sup> This conciliation was strengthened in January 1943, with the start of deportations from Marseille, where many French Jews resided: ‘Jewish leaders from the UGIF, the chaplain’s office, the rabbinate, and the Central Consistory frantically tried everything they could to bring a halt to the arrests of Jews, or at least shelter certain categories (French Jews, war veterans, Jews from the Alsace-Lorraine region, and Jews working with the charitable programs) [...]’.<sup>360</sup> There were frequent consultations and even joint appeals by the organisations’ leadership: ‘Helbronner had seemingly reached the conclusion that the real enemy of the Consistory was neither Lambert nor the UGIF, but the German Gestapo and its French collaborators’.<sup>361</sup> On 13 August 1943, Lambert went to Lyon to talk with Consistorial leaders about the Jews’ deteriorating

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<sup>357</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as resistance*, 82.

<sup>358</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 29 March 1942, 112.

<sup>359</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 212-213; Cohen, “Le consistoire et l’UGIF: La situation trouble des Juifs Français face à Vichy”, 33.

<sup>360</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 373.

<sup>361</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 179.

situation because, as he wrote in his diary, ‘in hard times one makes peace’.<sup>362</sup> In late August 1943, after Lambert and Baur were interned in Drancy, Helbronner even went so far as to say that it was imperative that they be released, realising that the two men were crucial to the provision of social welfare to Jewish communities in France.<sup>363</sup>

Despite this rapprochement, differences between the UGIF and Consistory remained. This was particularly so in the case of the UGIF-Sud, where Lambert did not align himself with the French Jewish aristocracy and, unlike the majority of Consistory officials, felt driven by a primordial social need to protect immigrant Jews.<sup>364</sup> Throughout 1943, the Consistory was finally able to control the UGIF through Georges Edinger who had been appointed as its last president.<sup>365</sup> Georges’ father, Léon Edinger, was president of the administrative department of the Central Consistory from 1943 onwards. Edinger’s close ties with the Consistory enabled him to restore the authority of the Consistory. The same was true in the case of Raymond Geissman who was appointed the head of the UGIF-Sud in December 1943. Like Edinger, he had close family connections to the Consistory and was able to reinstate its power ‘which had been temporarily breached by the maverick Raymond-Raoul Lambert’.<sup>366</sup>

The discussions between various Jewish organisations on the role of the UGIF continued and increased in the summer of 1944. By then, the dissolution of the Jewish organisation was discussed by representatives of the Consistory, the Comité Générale de Défense des Juifs (CGD)<sup>367</sup> and the UGIF.<sup>368</sup> One of the CGD representatives, Adamitz, proposed the dissolution of the UGIF because Jews did not trust the organisation and disapproved of its activities: ‘[t]he UGIF is an organisation imposed on the Jews by the Germans and Vichy with a specific goal: to help the

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<sup>362</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 17 August 1943, 196.

<sup>363</sup> Cohen, “French Jewry’s Dilemma on the Orientation of Its Leadership: From Polemics to Conciliation, 1942-1944” in: *Yad Vashem Studies*, No. 14 (1981), 199.

<sup>364</sup> Cohen, “Le Consistoire et l’UGIF”, 31.

<sup>365</sup> Laffitte, “Between Memory and Lapse of Memory”, 675.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid*; Schwarzfuchs, *Aux prises avec Vichy*, passim.

<sup>367</sup> In January 1944, the Comité d’Union et de Défense des Juifs (CUDJ) was formed in Paris, following the establishment of the Comité Général de Défense des Juifs (CGD) in the South. Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 214-222. For an overview of these discussion, see: Fredj, “Le Consistoire Central et la création du CRIF”, 164-180.

<sup>368</sup> Polemic on the role of the UGIF during the occupation, Documents of the CRIF, 13 August 1944, CMXX-17, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Adler, *the Jews of Paris*, 161; Fredj, “Le Consistoire Central et la création du CRIF”, 174-176.

Germans surround Jews to better control them'.<sup>369</sup> He continued that '[s]ince the outset of its existence, the UGIF has not been able to rule out or prevent anti-Jewish persecution, including raids, arrests and deportations. It did not even manage to release either its own arrested employees no other arrested Jews'.<sup>370</sup> In the end, partly as a result of the (practical) objections to the UGIF's dissolution raised on various sides, for example by the UGIF-Sud director Geissmann and by Léon Meiss, there was no definitive decision taken about its liquidation.<sup>371</sup>

In Belgium, the establishment of the AJB also provoked discussion among Jews. However, the debates between opponents and supporters seemed not so bitter, and did not materialise on such a personal level as they did in the Netherlands and France. While Asscher and Cohen, for example, were often perceived as arrogant, the general unwillingness of the AJB leadership to take up the positions they were assigned probably contributed to less outrage in this regard. Moreover, whereas in France the Consistory was a strong opponent of the UGIF, the withering of Consistorial power in Belgium combined with Chief Rabbi Ullman's chairmanship of the organisation meant that the AJB never faced the same level of organised protest. Still, anti-AJB attitudes existed. The Belgian Communist Party (PCB/KPB) opposed the AJB and accused the organisation of 'playing cards with the Nazis',<sup>372</sup> while the left-wing Socialist-Zionists appealed to the Jewish people to 'defend its human and national honour', encouraging them not to participate in the mission the AJB represented.<sup>373</sup> We will see that other organisations, including the Comité de Défense des Juifs, also advised Jews to ignore the regulations of the AJB.<sup>374</sup>

The differences in institutional criticism faced by the Jewish organisations affected the position of the Jewish organisations' leaders. For example, tensions between the UGIF and the Central Consistory in France and the latter's criticism of the organisation's policies divided the

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<sup>369</sup> For an overview of all objections raised by Adamitz, see: Rajsfus, *Des Juifs dans la collaboration*, documents, 372-373.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Fredj, "Le Consistoire Central et la création du CRIF", 174-176.

<sup>372</sup> *Temps Nouveaux*, 20 December 1941, p.7.

<sup>373</sup> *Unzer Wort*, December 1941, No.1. Cited in Maxime Steinberg, "Three strategies for coping with a tragedy" in: *Belgium and the Holocaust*, 362.

<sup>374</sup> Bob Moore "Integrating Self-Help into the History of Jewish Survival in Western Europe" in: Norman J.W. Goda (ed.), *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust: New Transnational Approaches* (New York/ Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), 196.

community.<sup>375</sup> In his diary, Lambert reflects on the different positions taken by Helbronner and by the Consistory more broadly: ‘the Jewish agencies, the militants, the philanthropists, and those whom I call the “Jewish princes” are agitated, jealous, and already criticizing me...Mr. Helbronner, who kept his head down before the *Statut* was published, when he should have been courageous, asked me indiscreet questions when I saw him in Lyon’.<sup>376</sup> It has been argued that the Consistory’s criticism hardly affected Lambert since he made no further effort to achieve peace with its officials and turned his energies elsewhere.<sup>377</sup> From a comparative viewpoint, with the (relative) absence of coordinated institutional criticism from rival authorities in both Belgium and the Netherlands, we have to conclude that the position of the UGIF leadership was different from that of its counterparts. Despite Lambert’s efforts to ignore the rivalry, it is clear that it was a major determinant, particularly in the first years of the German occupation.

*Resign or remain? Jewish leaders faced with a difficult choice*

The foundations of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud central boards and the presence or absence of coordinated criticism affected how the organisations’ leaders understood their role and the extent of representation they were to offer. This analysis will reveal how far these differences affected the decisions made by the organisations’ leaders. Whereas the JR chairmen decided to remain in place until the JR was dissolved in September 1943, Salomon Ullman and Maurice Benedictus in Belgium voluntarily withdrew from their positions. The position was different again in France, where the first chairmen – Lambert of the UGIF-Sud and Baur of the UGIF-Nord – were forcibly removed from their chairmanship by the Germans. In both Belgium and France, the removals necessitated the appointment of new leaders. In addition, substantial parts of the Belgian and French central boards were replaced during the occupation. It should be noted that the composition of the JR central board also changed over the course of its existence. Whereas some Jews were arrested, others, including Krouwer and Van Lier, were forced to resign because they were not considered *Volljuden*, meaning they did not have three or four Jewish grandparents.<sup>378</sup> We have also seen that Kisch raised moral objections and in September 1941 he refused to work for

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<sup>375</sup> For an overview of the changing relations between the Consistory and the UGIF during the war, see: Cohen, “Le Consistoire et l’UGIF”, 28-37.

<sup>376</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 30 November 1941, 76.

<sup>377</sup> Cohen, “Introduction” in: *Diary of a witness*, xlix.

<sup>378</sup> Somers, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 83 n75.

the JR any longer. Because Asscher and Cohen maintained their solid position in the central board by autocratic means, the replacement of these members did not make a real difference to the functioning of the JR. During the transitional phase that followed the replacement of board members, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud could not maintain the level of continuity which characterised the JR. As a result, the position of the Dutch Council was different to that of its counterparts. As we will see, these differences affected the German view of the organisations' function and effectiveness.

Although the context of occupation in which the JR operated, with the strong presence of the SS, proved to be particularly challenging, the two Dutch chairmen remained in place until the JR was dissolved in 1943. During the war, Cohen at times seemed to question his own tactics of cooperation. For example, while he aimed to convince prominent members of the Amsterdam Jewish community of the importance and usefulness of the JR in early January 1942, he also showed his uncertainty by asking for the opinions of those present (including Marinus Levenbach and the *voorganger* of the liberal-German Jews) on the impact of the Council's policies.<sup>379</sup> Although historian Jacques Presser, who was present at the meeting, indicated after the war that it was a one-sided exposé of the political directions of the JR, the urge Cohen felt to convince others about his policies, as well as his quest for their opinions, does suggest his feelings of vulnerability in regard to the choices that were being made. At the same time, he never truly reconsidered his policies. Asscher seemed to harbour more serious doubts about the course of the Joodsche Raad and about his own role in this process. For example, he proposed the dissolution of the JR on 12 June 1941 because there had been a mass arrest of Jews shortly before. The Jewish leaders had demanded they would be informed about upcoming raids ever since the first mass arrest on 22 and 23 February 1941 in Amsterdam, during which 425 Jewish men were arrested. Out of this group, 390 were deported to Buchenwald concentration camp on 27 February and while forty died of maltreatment and inhuman living conditions, others were transported to Mauthausen in May 1941.<sup>380</sup> Reports of the death of these young and healthy men soon reached the Netherlands, causing unrest among the Jewish community. In a postwar interview, the secretary of the JR, Mirjam Bolle-Levie said:

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<sup>379</sup> Statement of Marinus Levenbach, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 III, IV (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>380</sup> Kirsten Snijders, *Nederlanders in Buchenwald, 1940-1945: een overzicht over de geschiedenis van Nederlandse gevangenen die tijdens de nationaal-socialistische bezetting van 1940-1945 in het concentratiekamp Buchenwald zaten* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001); Hans de Vries, "Sie starben wie Fliegen im Herbst" in: Ibid. (ed.), *Mauthausen: 1938-1988* (Bredevoort: Achterland, 2000), 7-18.

When all these letters came in indicating ‘Auf der Flucht erschossen’ or ‘pneumonia’ or anything of that sort, we understood it was a matter of only a few months before everyone would be dead. And that is how it was. There were rumours that this was not true. I did not believe those [rumours].<sup>381</sup>

Rather than keeping their promise not to undertake another mass arrest without the JR’s knowledge, SD officials arranged a meeting with Asscher and Cohen under false pretences on 11 June 1941. While the Jewish leaders were kept in the office of the SD for hours, more than 200 Jews were arrested.<sup>382</sup> The next day, Asscher’s proposal to dissolve the Council was rejected during the meeting of the central board, with only one vote in favour of his plan.<sup>383</sup>

On 27 June 1942, another occasion arose at which the JR leadership questioned whether the continued existence of the JR would serve the interests of Jews in the Netherlands. The day before, SS-Hauptsturmführer aus der Fünften had communicated to Cohen, Abraham de Hoop, head of the Lijnbaansgracht department, and Edwin Sluzker, head of the Expositur, that all Jewish men and women between the age of 18 and 40 would be subject to work under police supervision (*Polizeiliche Arbeitseinsatz*). Although this disturbing new regulation caused unrest among the other board members, Cohen decided in the end to continue the activities of the JR, fearing that the Germans would otherwise turn to violent measures to secure the implementation of the measure.<sup>384</sup> Sustained by the idea that they were the most suitable representatives of the Jewish communities in the Netherlands, both men decided to stay at the helm of the Council. Until after the war, Cohen remained convinced of the strength and quality of his leadership. Former Jewish leaders from across the European continent generally either remained silent about their wartime activities, or could no longer comment upon their role because they had been murdered. By contrast, Cohen did not show any reluctance to discuss his choices after the war. On various occasions, he explicitly indicated that he still approved of the choices he had made during the war.<sup>385</sup> At the same time, though, his letter

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<sup>381</sup> Interview Mirjam Bolle by Johannes Houwink ten Cate, 12 August 1999, Doc I 248-1366, M. Bolle-Lévie, Inv. No. 1, NIOD.

<sup>382</sup> Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 103-106.

<sup>383</sup> It should be noted that the report of this meeting, cited in De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, vol. 5, 550, Herzberg, *Kroniek der Jodenvervolgung*, 151 and Somers, “Kanttekeningen bij de Joodse Raad” in: Ibid. (ed.), *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 30 cannot be found in the archives of the JR stored at NIOD. Nevertheless, there are several sources that confirm that this meeting took place, see: “Letter of Prof. Mr. I. Kisch (member of the Council’s central board) to David Cohen, 21 September 1941”, Doc I 248-0895A, Inv. No. 4, NIOD”; “Nota over mijn pogingen betreffende de Joodsche gijzelaars”, p. 4, mr. L.E. Visser, Doc I 248-1798A, Inv. No. 9, NIOD.

<sup>384</sup> Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 133-136; Berkley, *Overzicht van den Joodsche Raad*, 67-69.

<sup>385</sup> See, for example, the postwar report of David Cohen on the JR, p.1, Inv. No. 10, NIOD; Mirjam Bolle-Lévie in: Lindwer (ed.), *Het fatale dilemma*, 99.



to James G. McDonald, former League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, indicates that even though he considered he ‘acted in the right way’, he also made it clear that if he had ever learned about the fate of those who had been deported (he was adamant that he did not), he should have resigned immediately.<sup>386</sup> The attitude of the JR leadership bears a resemblance to that of Benjamin Murrelstein, who served as head of the Jewish Council in Theresienstadt from November 1944 onwards. Murrelstein was criticised by many after the war for being a collaborator. In a postwar interview with Claude Lanzmann, Murrelstein indicated he had tried to maintain the model camp Theresienstadt and compared himself to Sancho Panza, ‘a pragmatic and calculating realist’ who achieved more than Don Quixote, who continued to fight a useless battle.<sup>387</sup>

In Belgium, chairman Ullman was not the absolute ruler of the AJB. Instead, he was quickly overpowered by the members of the central board.<sup>388</sup> Rather than being personally involved in issues related to the functioning of the AJB, Ullman seemed to function more as a symbolic figurehead, distanced from the realities of leadership. In the context of scattered Jewish communities which could not be easily united and the general reluctance to head the AJB, Ullman fulfilled his position very different from that of his Dutch counterpart. On 24 September 1942, a series of events seems to have given Ullman the last push to quit his position as AJB chairman. On this day, Kurt Asche sent Ullman, Van den Berg, Blum, Hellendall and Benedictus to Fort Breendonk, a prison and Auffangslager (detention centre) where conditions were similar to those of a concentration camp.<sup>389</sup> Here, they were told they would be interned until all Jews had been evacuated from Belgium. They were accused, among other things, of passive resistance, acts of sabotage and seeking contact with the Belgian queen.<sup>390</sup> Rotkel, a Hungarian Jew, was arrested as well and immediately sent to Malines transit camp from where he was deported to the East. Salomon van den Berg described these days in the camp as a traumatic experience; after not having eaten for two days, they had to consume ‘infected soup with white cabbage’.<sup>391</sup> Thereafter, they

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<sup>386</sup> Lehmann papers (Columbia Papers, New York), James G McDonald Papers G.70 ‘C’. Cohen to McDonald, 27 December 1953 as cited in: Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 248.

<sup>387</sup> Benjamin Murrelstein - Theresienstadt Judenälteste, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Film, Accession Number: 1996, 166 RG-60.5009.

<sup>388</sup> Interview Alfred Rosenzweig, 3 February 1972, 26-27, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>389</sup> Patrick Nefors, *Breendonk 1940-1945: de geschiedenis* (Antwerpen: Standaard Uitgeverij, 2011; first ed. 2004), 24-25.

<sup>390</sup> Report on the arrest of Ullman, Van den Berg, Blum, Hellendall, Benedictus and their stay in concentration camp Breendonk from 24/2/’42 until 3/10/’42, AA MIC/41, CEGESOMA. Also see: Van Doorslaer, “Salomon van den Berg”, 127-130.

<sup>391</sup> Salomon van den Berg, *Journal de guerre*, p. 65, Buber Collection, A006685, Kazerne Dossin.

were locked with many others in tiny rooms. The work they were forced to do was physically exhausting ‘especially for a Chief Rabbi’ and they were beaten if the work was not done fast enough.<sup>392</sup> Ullman’s traditional beard was cut, ‘which was a miserable thing to see’.<sup>393</sup>

On 3 October, the AJB leadership was released as a result of interventions by the Militärverwaltungschef Eggert Reeder.<sup>394</sup> The conditions during internment had been inhumane. Ullman sent his letter of resignation to Von Falkhausen, the Militärbefehlshaber of Belgium and Northern France, shortly after this short internment in Breendonk on 8 October 1942.<sup>395</sup> In the existing literature, Ullman’s decision to resign as AJB chairman has been understood either in the context of his experiences in Breendonk, or as a response to the mass raids of August 1942.<sup>396</sup> However, the reality was more complex. His resignation should be understood against the background of a combination of factors that include his initial reluctance to become Chief Rabbi and his intrinsic belief that he could not represent the Jews in Belgium. The increasing German pressure on the organisation, the mass arrests, the indignity with which he had been treated and the horrors he had witnessed in Breendonk also played a role. As we shall see, after the raids in August and September 1942, Belgian and Jewish resistance became more organised and provided alternatives to the AJB. This undermined and weakened the AJB’s position, and this may have strengthened Ullman’s notion that his organisation was no longer of use to the Jews.<sup>397</sup>

A letter from the Militärbefehlshaber of Belgium and Northern France sent to the AJB on 28 December 1942 shows that only two and a half months later, Von Falkhausen officially approved Ullman’s resignation.<sup>398</sup> In the existing historiography, the role that Ullman continued to play in the Jewish community as Chief Rabbi from this moment onwards has been entirely neglected, perhaps because he himself claimed that he had not been in contact with the organisation after he had

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 60-74.

<sup>394</sup> Van Doorslaer, “Salomon van den Berg”, 129.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>396</sup> For an overview of existing literature that explains Ullman’s resignation primarily in response to the raids of August 1942 or his internment in Breendonk, see: Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 343-344; Schreiber and Van Doorslaer, “Inleiding” in: *ibid* (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 8; Steinberg, *L’étoile et le fusil, 1942. Les cent jours de la déportation*, 52-54.

<sup>397</sup> Steinberg, *L’étoile et le fusil, 1942: Les cent jours de la déportation*, 223-226; *Ibid.*, *La persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 180-181; Meinen, “De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB”, 55-56.

<sup>398</sup> Letter of the head of the Military Administration to the AJB, concerning the demission of Salomon Ullman, 28 December 1942, A006900, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

resigned.<sup>399</sup> The exchange of letters between the AJB Antwerp branch and Ullman nevertheless shows that he remained tied to the organisation. For example, on 6 May 1943, a letter he sent to the administration of the AJB Antwerp branch highlights how he encouraged the AJB to provide care to a woman named ‘De Leeuw’, whose husband had died in Breendonk and who had no family to support her.<sup>400</sup> In turn, the AJB depended upon Ullman’s support, for example to ensure the provision of parcels to individuals in the internment camp of Rekem. Ullman replied to the AJB Antwerp leadership’s request that he was taking care of the situation in Rekem, but that the internees themselves had already sent ‘hundreds of begging letters’ and that there were some who were receiving between five and ten parcels a week.<sup>401</sup>

Ullman’s resignation did not have direct consequences for him personally. He was neither punished, nor deported. Nevertheless, he indicated in a postwar report on the activities of the AJB that the Military Administration accepted his resignation reluctantly.<sup>402</sup> This reluctance is highlighted by the months it took the Military Administration to accept Ullman’s resignation officially. In addition to Ullman, Maurice Benedictus also decided to withdraw in December 1942. From the beginning, his role had been complicated and laden with uncertainty. He was appointed as the chief individual responsible for the forced labour of Jews in eastern Europe, and soon became conscience-stricken. In his memoirs, he wrote that some of his colleagues considered him a traitor while others understood his attempt to lighten the burden on the Jewish communities.<sup>403</sup> Benedictus claimed he tried to deal with this difficult task, knowing about the situation in the Netherlands, where the JR had taken up a similar task.<sup>404</sup> Testimonies show that he discussed his difficult position with others, including prominent people in the Belgian resistance.<sup>405</sup> At the end of 1942, Kurt Asche announced that, from 1943 onwards, Belgian Jews would be deported alongside immigrant Jews. In doing so, Asche deliberately thwarted the Military Administration. Wilhelm von Hahn had promised AJB representatives that he would speak to Asche about arranging a higher

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<sup>399</sup> Report by Salomon Ullman “L’Activité de l’Association des Juifs en Belgique”, undated, AA MIC/41, CEGESOMA.

<sup>400</sup> Letter of Ullman to the AJB Antwerp branch, 6 May 1943, A003931.1, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>401</sup> Letter of the AJB leadership to Salomon Ullman, 13 May 1943, A003934.1, Kazerne Dossin; Letter of Salomon Ullman to the Antwerp branch of the AJB, 16 May 1943, A00395.1, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>402</sup> Report by Salomon Ullman “L’Activité de l’Association des Juifs en Belgique”, undated, AA MIC/41, CEGESOMA.

<sup>403</sup> Maurice Benedictus, “Historique du problème Juif en Belgique depuis le 10 Mai 1940 jusqu’au 21 Décembre 1942”, 18 Feb 1943, pp. 13-14, A006683, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> Witness account of Pierre Bolotius, No. 8036 N 1944, Algemeen Rijksarchief Brussel, Krijgsauditoraat.

level of protection for the AJB leaders and their families. In response, the AJB leaders encouraged those close to them not to go into hiding.<sup>406</sup> However, Asche still decided to deport Belgian Jews. As a result, Benedictus felt he could no longer help the Jewish communities in his role as the Association's leader. In the second week of December 1942, he embarked on a difficult journey and managed to reach Portugal via France and Spain, where he arrived in January 1943.<sup>407</sup> He returned to Belgium in September 1945.<sup>408</sup>

In the meantime, the replacement of Ullman and Benedictus spawned debate between the AJB, the Military Administration and the SiPo-SD. The AJB central board proposed Machel Majer Grätzer, chairman of the representative body of the Israelite communities in Antwerp.<sup>409</sup> Judenreferent Kurt Asche was strongly opposed to the appointment of a Polish Jew and opted for a German representative instead. He proposed Felix Meyer and Louis Rosenfeld, both German Jews. After the interference of Salomon Ullman and Gerard Romsée, secretary-general of the collaborationist Vlaams Nationaal Verbond (VNV), the Military Administration voiced its objections to Asche's proposal and argued that a Belgian Jew should take up the position of leader. In response, the AJB central committee suggested Salomon van den Berg, representative of the AJB Brussels branch, but Judenreferent Fritz Erdmann, Asche's successor, rejected this proposal.<sup>410</sup> In December 1942, 2,5 months after Ullman's resignation, the SiPo-SD, the Military Administration (and the AJB representatives) finally agreed that he would be succeeded by Marcel Blum.<sup>411</sup> As a compromise, Meyer and Rosenfeld were appointed as members of the AJB central board and local

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<sup>406</sup> Report of Rosenfeld concerning his meeting with SS-Obersturmführer Asche on 10 and 14 November 1942, R486/Tr146.666, DOS.

<sup>407</sup> Van Doorslaer, "Salomon van den Berg", 128; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolgving in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 620; Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad*, 505. In Portugal, Benedictus wrote several reports on the occupation of Belgium and the catastrophe that had befallen the Jews, including "Historique du problème juif en Belgique depuis le 10 mai 1940 jusqu'au 31 décembre 1942", which he wrote on 2 February 1943. It is not known exactly how Benedictus managed to reach Portugal. His name is neither mentioned in the archives of the Belgian Legation in Lisbon, nor in the archives of the Belgian ambassador, nor in the reports of Belgians who were trying to learn the fate of Belgian refugees in Portugal. He is not listed on the lists of incoming refugees and he did not refer to his journey in the report he wrote in Lisbon on the Jews in Belgium during the war. Maurice Benedictus, "Historique du problème Juif en Belgique depuis le 10 Mai 1940 jusqu'au 21 Décembre 1942", 18 Feb 1943, A006683, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>408</sup> Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 48.

<sup>409</sup> Meeting report of the AJB central committee, 29 October 1942, A006745, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin. Also see: Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil, 1942. Les 10 jours de la déportation*, 52-54.

<sup>410</sup> Meeting report of the AJB central committee, 26 November 1942, A006740, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 December 1942, A007146, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

Charleroi branch respectively.<sup>412</sup> Other members of the AJB central board were replaced as well, either because they had been arrested or because they no longer wished to fulfil their representative function. For example, Juda Mehlwurm, the Charleroi representative on the AJB, had gone into hiding in September 1942 after the Germans had asked him for an updated list of Jews resident in the city.<sup>413</sup> Eugène Hellendall and his wife were arrested because they had left their home on 23 October 1942 without wearing the yellow star.<sup>414</sup> Neither his Belgian citizenship nor his position in the AJB could help Hellendall. Most likely, the ‘passive resistance’, for which he was interned in Breendonk played a role in his arrest as well. All these events weakened the AJB.<sup>415</sup>

In France, the first general director of the UGIF, Albert Lévy, fled to Switzerland in December 1942 in order to avoid persecution.<sup>416</sup> As previously noted, the two leaders of the UGIF-Sud and the UGIF-Nord respectively, Lambert and Baur were forcibly withdrawn from the central boards because they refused to cooperate with increasing German demands. Throughout 1943, SS-Hauptsturmführer Aloïs Brunner had increased the pressure on Jewish society by his brutal actions and by the continuous arrests taking place throughout France. For Lambert, the measures were too much to accept and he spoke out against the direction of events. On 16 May 1943, he wrote in his diary that it had been ‘a month of anxiety, or ordeals and actions difficult to carry out’.<sup>417</sup> He objected in particular to the increasing anti-Jewish measures taken by the Gestapo in the weeks preceding his arrest. In the spring of 1943, Lambert, as well as Baur and Marcel Stora, negotiated with the SS about the ‘redundancy’ of foreign employees of the UGIF, whose removal they were not able to prevent.<sup>418</sup> As a result of his attempt to negotiate with the Germans, combined with the objections he was increasingly voicing, Lambert was arrested on 21 August 1943 and interned in Drancy, together with his wife and their four children. Gaston Kahn replaced Lambert and was in

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<sup>412</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil, 1942. Les cent jours de la déportation*, 115.

<sup>413</sup> André Donnet, “Het onderzoek door het militaire gerecht: het geheugen buitenspel gezet” in: Van Doorslaer and Schreiber (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 299; Insa Meinen, *De Shoah in België*, transl. from the German by Iannis Goerlandt (Antwerpen: De Bezige Bij, 2011; first ed. 2009 [German]), 89.

<sup>414</sup> Report of interview at the S.D. from 27 October 1942, A007424, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin; Letter from Noé Nozyce to Maurice Benedictus, 28 October 1952, A007425, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>415</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil, 1942. Les cent jours de la déportation*, 223-226; *Ibid.*, *La Persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 180-181; Meinen, “De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB”, 55-56; Van Doorslaer, “Salomon van den Berg”, 132.

<sup>416</sup> Laffitte, “l’UGIF, collaboration ou résistance?”, 57; Marrus, “Jewish Leadership and the Holocaust: The Case of France” in: *Ibid.*, *The Nazi Holocaust: The Victims of the Holocaust* (part 6), Vol. 2, 786. For the different views on when Lévy resigned and fled abroad, see p. 86 n267.

<sup>417</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 16 May 1943, 178.

<sup>418</sup> Laffitte, “Between Memory and Lapse of Memory”, 682.

turn replaced by Raymond Geissmann in mid-December 1943. Other UGIF central board members who had tried to negotiate with the Germans were arrested as well, including André Lazard and Marcel Stora.<sup>419</sup>

In the UGIF-Nord, in contrast to the AJB and the UGIF-Sud, none of the central board members voluntarily resigned or fled abroad.<sup>420</sup> However, as in the case of Lambert in the unoccupied zone, important members of the organisation were forcibly removed from the central board: André Baur, Marcel Stora and Fernand Musnik were deported to Auschwitz in the summer of 1943. Up until this moment, as we shall see, the UGIF-Nord had limited itself mainly to social relief activities and had not been called upon to change its course of action. However, when Brunner demanded that the UGIF-Nord become a watchdog over the community, pressuring families to join their arrested family members so they could be deported all at once, rather than individually, to eastern Europe, the UGIF-Nord leadership refused.<sup>421</sup> In doing so, as its members declared after the war, they saved the soul (*l'âme*) of the UGIF.<sup>422</sup>

We can identify a pattern in the four case studies under investigation. In those cases where the social foundation of the initially appointed leaders was – relatively speaking – weaker, the fluctuation of central board members was larger. This is especially true for the UGIF-Nord and the AJB. It shows that the individuals in question were either not sufficiently confident about their leadership, or that they disagreed with the way in which their positions were being used by the Germans, or that the Germans were dissatisfied with their function. In fact, the first two factors have much in common. Taking the case of Salomon Ullman as an example, we can see that he had a low perception of his own leadership qualities. When he was faced with the horrors that the Jews in Belgium were going through in Kazerne Dossin, and was asked by the Germans to continue and even expand his activities, his limits were quickly reached. The combination of these factors undoubtedly caused him to resign willingly whereas Asscher and Cohen, who were confident about the quality of their leadership, did not do so. Naturally, there were other contextual factors that affected these choices as well. The personalities of each of the leaders differed and they had

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 273.

<sup>421</sup> Georges Edinger, report on the activities of the UGIF: concerning its 'official work' and 'clandestine work' from 1941 to 1944, p. 16, CCCLXXIX-33, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. In chapter 2, Brunner's attempts to make the UGIF more functional as part of his ambition to deport Jews from France as quickly as possible will be discussed.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

different motivations for having taken up the leadership in the first place. In the French case, where the chairmen were forcibly removed, Lambert and Baur, for example, felt that they could no longer cooperate with the Germans in light of the worsening anti-Jewish legislation. They increasingly objected to the regulations and were arrested as a result. This feeling was not shared by their Dutch counterparts, who believed there was a need to maintain their position for the sake of their community. We will see that the existence of other Jewish representative aid organisations in Belgium and France also played an important role in this regard. Whereas the JR quickly became the sole representative body that could aid Jews, the existence of alternatives to the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud might have contributed to the feeling that their work was not indispensable.

In both French zones, as well as in Belgium, the (voluntary or involuntary) withdrawal of the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud central board members affected the course of events. The continuous changes to the board created a certain disorder that was advantageous to the AJB and to the UGIF leadership as it meant there was room to delay and postpone new anti-Jewish regulations. For example, after Baur and Lambert were arrested in the summer of 1943, the UGIF was only reorganised towards the end of that year. On 23 November 1943, Georges Edinger was appointed as chairman of the UGIF while Gaston Kahn replaced Lambert as head of the UGIF-Sud. One month later, Kahn was again replaced by Raymond Geissmann, the UGIF regional director for Lyon, Vichy and Clermont-Ferrand and the former head of the Entr'aide Français Israélite (EFI), the French Israelite mutual aid organisation devoted to the assistance of French Jews.<sup>423</sup> The successors of the initial organisations' leaders were already much better aware of German aims in relation to the Jewish organisation than those who had been forced to take up leadership at the end of 1941. Their agreements to work for the organisations was therefore based on different premises and principles.

By late 1942 and early 1943, in response to the radicalisation of the Nazi occupation in the summer of 1942, resistance organisations were fully operative in Belgium and France. There was a gradual trend towards the unification and coordination of the various resistance groups across the

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<sup>423</sup> Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945* (Wayne State: University Press, 1981), 238. Also see: Michel Laffitte, "Les rafles de Janvier 1944 à Bordeaux et les raisons de l'aveuglement de l'UGIF" in: *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah* No. 203 (2015), 324.

countries, even when they had different political, organisational or ideological backgrounds.<sup>424</sup> As a result, being part of the Jewish organisations' central board became an opportunity to, for example, communicate information and financial resources to illegal organisations. This does not necessarily mean that the later heads were more outspokenly anti-German. As Zuccotti claimed in the case of France, especially after the arrests of courageous leaders like André Baur and Raymond-Raoul Lambert, the UGIF directors and employees were 'weak and terrified of breaking the law'.<sup>425</sup> Nevertheless, as we shall see, there were central board members, like Marcel Blum and Juda Mehlwurm in Belgium and Juliette Stern and Robert Gamzon in France, who decided to use their position in the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud to facilitate illegal activities, particularly during the second half of the German occupation.<sup>426</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined the various contextual factors that contributed to the position of the leaders of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud in their respective communities, and at the ways they perceived their leadership roles. These factors have been overlooked in existing historiography, yet they are crucial in understanding the nature of the organisations and the foundations on which they were built. This chapter has three central conclusions. First, while the nature of the communities from which the four organisations emerged had similarities, there were also some crucial differences. The traditional organisation of the communities, the number of immigrants and the impact of those immigrants on the Jewish communities were important distinguishing factors. Most importantly, the position of the Jewish leaders in these communities was markedly different in different cases. Second, those Jews who had a stable and well established leading position in the prewar Jewish communities were more self-confident about their leadership during the war than those who had not. Third, the presence or absence of coordinated institutional criticism was a determinant in the outlook of the central board members. In the Netherlands, where such institutional criticism was absent, the leadership was more inclined to follow their initial policy of 'lesser evil' than in France, where the leaders were continuously subjected to criticism

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<sup>424</sup> For further reading on (the organisation of the) resistance in Belgium and France, see, for example: Moore, *Survivors*, 99-207; Lagrou, "Belgium" in: Moore (ed.), *Resistance in Western Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 27-64; Olivier Wieviorka. "France" in: *ibid.*, 125-156; José Gotovitch, "Resistance Movements and the 'Jewish Question'" in: Dan Michman (ed.), *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1998), 273-285.

<sup>425</sup> Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French and the Jews* (Nebraska: University Press, 1999; first ed. 1993), 200.

<sup>426</sup> Statement of Marcel Blum, AA753, CEGESOMA. Also see: Maxime Steinberg, *La Persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 201.



from rival Jewish (representative) institutions, most prominently the Consistory. We will see that the presence of coordinated criticism might in fact have encouraged Lambert to look for alternative (illegal) forms of representation.

In the Netherlands, the leadership of Asscher and Cohen from the establishment of the JR in February 1941 until the day they themselves were transported to Westerbork was confident and determined and their leadership can be considered as a continuation of prewar social structures. The social construction of the Belgian AJB central board was entirely different. To some extent, Van Doorslaer and Schreiber were right when they claimed that the leading figures of the AJB in Brussels and Antwerp occupied religious, official, or even representative functions prior to the AJB being established.<sup>427</sup> At the same time, the comparative analysis has shown that Salomon Ullman, as well as the majority of AJB central board members, did not have representative functions before the war in the same way that the JR leadership had done. We should take a nuanced view of the notion that AJB central board members considered their appointment to be a logical result of their prewar position.<sup>428</sup> It was only because those Jewish notables who had fulfilled leadership roles in the Belgian prewar Jewish communities were absent that the appointment of these individuals instead could be considered a logical alternative. From a comparative viewpoint, the AJB central board never obtained the same unequivocal status as their Dutch counterparts. This meant, too, that their position was also not as autocratic. These factors affected the position of Ullman as chairman of the AJB. Whereas Asscher and Cohen in reality made all decisions together without seeking the consent of the entire board, Ullman was soon overruled by the other members of the central board. The majority of the AJB's central board lacked real leadership competence and was not used to representing diverse communities.

In France, we have seen that Raymond-Raoul Lambert, the central protagonist of the UGIF during the first period of the Vichy regime, used the Jewish refugee problem and the need to have a representative Jewish organisation as an opportunity to establish once and for all his leadership position in the community. Although the same has been said about Asscher and Cohen in the Netherlands, the situation was nonetheless quite different. Asscher and Cohen were representative of change in a Jewish community that had gradually developed over the years. Lambert represented an anti-movement and a break with the dominance of the Consistory. Furthermore, the impact of

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<sup>427</sup> Van Doorslaer and Schreiber, "Besluit", 338.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

French leadership was never as predominant and monolithic as it was in the Netherlands. This was in part the result of organisational differences, but the ongoing debates between, most importantly, the Consistory on the one hand and the UGIF on the other, about the position of the organisation's leadership also contributed.

The fluctuation of board positions in both Belgium and France prompted discussions about the role and position of the organisations, both among the Jewish leaders and among the Germans. For example, after Baur and Lambert were arrested, the latter attempted to persuade the remaining leaders to dissolve the entire UGIF, which had been weakened since his removal.<sup>429</sup> Lambert, who had increasingly become involved in clandestine activities, criticised the leaders who had replaced him for their failure to disperse the children of the La Verrière children's home run by the UGIF. All children and staff there were seized by the Gestapo and sent to Drancy, including the director who voluntarily joined the transport.<sup>430</sup> Indeed, the few letters he sent from Drancy show Lambert's disappointment with the leaders' decision to do so.<sup>431</sup> At the same time, the Consistory encouraged the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud to continue their activities.<sup>432</sup> We have seen that in Belgium, the replacement of Ullman and Benedictus resulted in tensions between the AJB, the Military Administration and the SiPo-SD and delayed the appointment of new representatives.

The replacement of the organisations' leaders meant that the Germans (and in France, Vichy officials) lost the central contact through which, for a significant period of time, they had communicated with Jewish communities. The period of transition to a new leadership undoubtedly hampered the effectiveness of the Jewish organisations from the German perspective. The change of leadership in Belgium and France unintentionally created a form of disorder that risked delaying the execution of Nazi anti-Jewish measures. For example, after Ullman resigned the AJB was rendered useless as far as the Germans were concerned.<sup>433</sup> The appointment of Blum months after Ullman's

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<sup>429</sup> See Lambert's letter to Maurice Brener sent from camp Drancy, 26 October 1943 as published in Cohen (ed.), *Diary of a Witness*, 205-206. It should be noted that in February 1943, following the raids in Marseilles, Wladimir Schah had attempted to convince Lambert that the physical UGIF offices ought to be closed (while the UGIF continued its activities). By that point, Lambert was not yet convinced of the benefit of doing so. See: Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 319.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid.; Szajkowski, *Analytical Franco-Jewish Gazetteer*, 168.

<sup>431</sup> Letters to Maurice Brener written from Drancy, 10 October 1943 - 5 November 1943 as published in Cohen (ed.), *Diary of a Witness*, 201-210.

<sup>432</sup> Cohen, "Le Consistoire et l'UGIF", 35.

<sup>433</sup> Michman, "Research on the Holocaust in Belgium and in General", 36; Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, 269.

resignation did not serve German interests either, since the AJB limited itself to social work, while deportation remained in German hands.<sup>434</sup> As Michman has argued, the Germans made only limited use of the organisation in doing the ‘dirty work’ and the AJB hardly participated at all in the deportation process in Belgium.<sup>435</sup> In September 1942, the AJB leaders had already refused to send out further notices for deportation, and Ullman’s resignation shortly thereafter seems to have served as a reminder that the AJB should not become anything but a social welfare organisation. We will see that some members of the AJB in this period took the step to coordinate illegal Jewish activities; this is also true in the cases of both the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud.

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Michman, “Research on the Holocaust in Belgium and in General”, 36.

## Chapter 2.

### **The Councils' Organisational Differences and Similarities: Causes and Consequences**

At the end of January 1942, Ernst Ehlers, head of the Dienststelle of the SiPo-SD in Brussels, published "Sonderbericht. Das Judentum im Belgien", covering various topics related to the Jews in Belgium. The report covered, among other things, the institution of the AJB and highlighted the active cooperation of the Dienststelle with the Military Administration.<sup>1</sup> In the Sonderbericht, Ehlers was clear about the nature of the AJB: it was modelled after the Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Germany.<sup>2</sup> As Michman has pointed out, the establishment order of the AJB, published on 25 November 1941, was indeed an exact copy of its German counterpart. Ironically, the objective of the Association was to 'promote emigration of the Jews' while the directive to prohibit emigration of Jews from Belgium was drafted by Chief of the Gestapo Heinrich Müller in the same period (October 1941), on the orders of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler.<sup>3</sup> In fact, on 23 October 1941 Müller informed Beauftragter des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD für Belgien und Frankreich Max Thomas of the prohibition on emigration.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that German policies towards Jews had fundamentally changed and it is implausible that those responsible for the AJB's establishment were unaware of this. That the Reichsvereinigung's blueprint was copied word for word highlights the fact that Nazi policies were improvised and were not adapted for the specifics of the Belgian situation. This is especially remarkable when we go on to consider that the Belgian Jewish Association, and the Jewish organisations in western Europe more broadly, seemed so important to the various German institutions involved in their establishment.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Sonderbericht: Das Judentum in Belgien', 31 January 1942, 37-38, SVG-R.184/Tr 50 077, Marburg Documentation, DOS. In July 1940, Eggert Reeder, head of the Belgian Military Administration, had asked the RSHA for reinforcement of the Geheime Feldpolizei (GFP), one of the two police forces of the Military Administration. As a result, the Dienststelle for Belgium and the occupied French territories was instituted. The Dienststelle had two branches: one in Brussels and one in Paris. From February 1942 until March 1943, the Brussels branch was headed by SS-Sturmbannführer Ernst Ehlers. For reading on the rivalry between Himmler and Reeder on the influence of the SiPo-SD in Belgium, see: De Jonghe, "De strijd Himmler-Reeder", passim.

<sup>2</sup> 'Sonderbericht: Das Judentum in Belgien', 31 January 1942, 37-38, SVG-R.184/Tr 50 077, Marburg Documentation, DOS.

<sup>3</sup> Johannes Tuchel, "Heinrich Müller: Prototyp des Schreibtischtäters" in: Hans-Christian Jasch and Christoph Kreuzmüller (eds.), *Die Teilnehmer: die Männer der Wannsee-Konferenz* (Berlin: Metropol-Verlag, 2016), 120.

<sup>4</sup> 'Müller to Thomas', 23 October 1941, Tr-3/1209, Yad Vashem, as cited in: Michman, "De oprichting van de VJB in internationaal perspectief", 43.

The notion that the Germans did not carefully think through the establishment of the AJB fits into a broader trend in historiography that highlights the improvised nature of Nazi rule. In the earliest studies on the Holocaust, historians assumed that Hitler had given ‘the order’ for the Final Solution.<sup>5</sup> In 1961, Raul Hilberg was the first to suggest that such an order might not have existed. Instead, Hilberg suggested that the genocide of the Jews resulted from a sequence of decisions. To him, the annihilation of European Jewry was above all a bureaucratic process of destruction.<sup>6</sup> Rather than searching for an exact chain of events that would explain Nazi policies as controlled continuity, some historians were increasingly convinced of their unplanned nature and also that the role of Hitler in the decision-making process was less than had been previously thought.<sup>7</sup> This resulted in decades of debate between functionalists and intentionalists as well as those who positioned themselves somewhere inbetween. Functionalists focussed on the structure of the Nazi regime to explain the course of events, while intentionalists emphasised Hitler’s ideology and intentions. It gradually became clear that the destruction of European Jewry was the result of an interplay between Hitler and the Nazi leadership at the centre and those on the periphery at the local level.<sup>8</sup>

In his influential 2008 work on Nazi rule in Europe, Mazower elaborated on this perspective. From his point of view, the incredible speed of military expansion outpaced the level of administrative and intellectual preparation by those Nazis who were responsible for the implementation of measures. This explained why Nazi rule in eastern Europe was unplanned and apparently irrational: there was a need to improvise, particularly at the local level.<sup>9</sup> Although Mazower focused mainly on eastern Europe, the same could be argued for the West. We shall see that in the Netherlands and France, as well as in Belgium, the absence of a clear plan for Jewish representative bodies also resulted in improvisation and the borrowing of blueprints from

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<sup>5</sup> See the works of Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempts to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945* (New York: Beechurst Press, 1953); Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate*; Wolfgang Scheffler, *Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich 1944 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1961); Helmut Krausnick and Martin Broszat, *Anatomy of the SS State*, transl. from the German by Dorothy Long and Marian Jackson (New York: Walker & Co., 1968, German first ed: 1965).

<sup>6</sup> Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 177.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich*; Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Peter Longerich who proposed a model in which vaguely worded orders required personal initiative of local authorities who possessed considerable latitude. Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, passim. Ian Kershaw shared this view in his biography on Hitler, where he argued that Hitler approved initiatives of those ‘working towards the Führer’ which turned into what we now know as the so-called ‘Final Solution’, without any clear or decisive tuning points. Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, passim; *ibid.*, *Nemesis*, passim.

<sup>9</sup> Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: How The Nazis Ruled Europe*, passim.

elsewhere. The Nazi leadership in western Europe used examples from eastern Europe, Germany and, in the cases of Belgium and France, from the Netherlands as well. In so doing, they often ignored the specific contexts of the countries concerned. The absence of a clear and carefully thought out master plan resulted in rivalry between the various German institutions, and this continued after the JR, the AJB and the UGIF had been officially established. The exact remit of each of the Jewish organisations was unclear and interpreted differently by the various institutions involved in the process. There was uncertainty on all sides about the precise role that Jewish organisations were meant to play and this again led to much improvisation. As a result, the Jewish organisations in western Europe were all organised in different ways and all functioned differently, despite the strong German desire to unify anti-Jewish policies.

This chapter examines the discrepancy between the German desire to unify (the implementation of) anti-Jewish policies in the Netherlands, Belgium and France on the one hand, and the differences in form and function between the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud on the other. In February 1941, Reeder, the Belgian Militärverwaltungschef, indicated that a uniform *Judenbegriff* (understanding of what constitutes a Jew) must be developed throughout Europe, following the *Reichsgesetzgebung*, the laws of the Reich.<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, there was an attempt to implement antisemitic legislation equally across western Europe and the Jewish organisations were used, to varying degrees, to try to accomplish this. Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler and Director of the Reich Security Main Office Reinhard Heydrich did not want any deviations (in timing) between the countries in the occupied West in terms of the implementation of anti-Jewish legislation, because they believed that any differences would lead to a wave of Jewish refugees. A variable policy might encourage Jews to flee from the country where a particular anti-Jewish law was implemented to a neighbouring country where this was not yet the case. For these reasons, SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann also preferred the simultaneous implementation of legislation in the Netherlands, Belgium and France.<sup>11</sup> The relative similarities in terms of the nature and timing of the occupation of these three countries, which contrasted with the situation in eastern Europe, enabled equivalence in this regard. The policies for these three countries were therefore decided centrally during meetings in Berlin in which the Judenreferenten of the

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<sup>10</sup> 'Draft, Concerns: Measures Against Jews', Administration Department Group 7: Care, February 1941, SVG-R.184/Tr 50 077, DOS.

<sup>11</sup> Steinberg, *l'Étoile et la fusil. La question juive, 1940-1942*, 21-22; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 395.

Netherlands, Belgium and France took part. These Judenreferenten, advisors in Jewish affairs, supervised the deportation of the Jews in the countries for which they were responsible and they served under the direct responsibility of Adolf Eichmann's RSHA in Berlin.

In the Netherlands, Wilhelm Zöpf was the Judenreferent. In Belgium and France, Kurt Asche and Theodor Dannecker respectively served in this capacity. Wilhelm Zöpf was born in Munich in 1908, and while studying law he became a member of the NSDAP in May 1933. Four years after joining the SS in 1937, his close connection to Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD (BdS) Wilhelm Harster brought him to the Netherlands, where he served under the BdS from March 1941.<sup>12</sup> Kurt Asche, born in 1909, joined the Nazi party in 1931 and the SD in 1935. From 1936, he became Hilfsreferent, assistant expert, in the Jewish department, where he operated alongside Adolf Eichmann, Theodor Dannecker and Dieter Wisliceny. He was sent as SS-Einsatzkommando member to occupied Poland in 1939, where he served as expert on Jewish affairs under SS-Polizeiführer Odilo Globocnik.<sup>13</sup> At the end of 1940, he became Judenreferent in Brussels. Dannecker, born in 1913, was a fanatical antisemite with years of experience in the anti-Jewish bureaucracy of the SS. After subscribing to the NSDAP in 1932, he served in the SS in one of the local sections of the SD. In March 1937, he joined the SD in Berlin and worked for Eichmann's Jewish affairs department.<sup>14</sup> In 1938, Dannecker, Eichmann and Herbert Hagen went to Vienna in order to establish the Central Office for Jewish Emigration, and at the end of the following year Dannecker was sent to Poland to explore the possibilities for emigration in the region.<sup>15</sup> In the summer of 1940, he was appointed as Eichmann's representative advisor on Jewish affairs in France and, as Judenreferent, headed the IVB4 Paris RSHA office. This was 'the most active of the German agencies involved with long-range planning of Jewish policy in France and with efforts to prod Vichy into more active anti-Jewish measures'.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Urteil in dem Strafverfahren gegen 1. dr. Wilhelm Harster, 2. Wilhelm Zoepf, 3. Gertrud Slotke*. Das Schwurgericht bei dem Landgericht München II 12 Ks 1/66 (München: Landesgericht München s.a., 1967), 22-25.

<sup>13</sup> Lutz Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher, Die Karriere des SS-Führers Franz Alfred Six* (Munich: Beck, 1998), 187-198.

<sup>14</sup> Steur, *Theodor Dannecker*, 21; Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz: la "solution finale" de la question juive en France*, 38; Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 110.

<sup>15</sup> Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 112. For biographical information on Herbert Hagen, see: Klarsfeld, *Le livre des otages: la politique des otages menée par les autorités allemandes d'occupation en France de 1941 à 1943* (Paris: Éditeurs français réunis, 1979), 280-288.

<sup>16</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 79.

Throughout the course of the war, these Judenreferenten were in touch with each other to discuss the impact and execution of anti-Jewish measures in their respective countries.<sup>17</sup> For example, a letter to Amsterdam SS Sturmbahnführer Willy Lages on 15 March 1942 shows that Kurt Asche and Theodor Dannecker wanted to create a uniform policy on the implementation of the yellow star.<sup>18</sup> We have seen that Asche and Dannecker had already worked together in Berlin and they continued to do so in their respective positions as Judenreferenten of Belgium and France. They were both directly supervised by the Beauftragter des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD für Belgien und Frankreich Max Thomas. Both held similar roles in almost identical contexts where the Military Administration operated as their direct superior. As a result, Asche and Dannecker faced similar procedural and political problems.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, despite their wish to unify the timing and implementation of anti-Jewish measures across all three countries, there are a number of factors that obstructed the ability of the Jewish organisations (which were held responsible in varying degrees for the communication and execution of these measures) to function in parallel.

We will explore where the differences of form and functions in the Jewish organisations originated highlighting, among other things, the variations in German power structures and the diverse ways in which the organisations were governed by their Jewish leaders. In doing so, this chapter makes three key points. First, it shows that the Germans did not have a carefully thought-out plan about what the remit of these Jewish organisations was supposed to be. Instead, we see ongoing institutional rivalry between the various German institutions and local bodies involved. Second, this absence of a clear plan laid the foundation for differences between the Jewish organisations in terms of their efficiency and effectiveness (from the German viewpoint). The rivalry between German departments meant that the Jewish leaders often interpreted their role according to their own understanding and preferences and these divergent interpretations formed the basis of the different organisational structures. Third, the Germans' perceptions about how these organisations functioned in practice differed widely in each country. Whereas the Germans were

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<sup>17</sup> There were numerous occasions on which the Judenreferenten met in Berlin, see, for example, 'Meeting of the Judenreferenten at the RSHA - IVB4, 4 March 1942, Berlin', XXVI-18, Mémorial de la Shoah; 'Concerning the identification of Jews', 15 March 1942 in: Klarsfeld, *Recueil des documents des dossiers des autorités allemandes concernant la persécution de la population juive en France (1940-1944)*, 1er Janvier 1942 au 31 Mai 1942; Letter of the Reichskommissar of the occupied Dutch territories to the Militärbefehlshaber of Belgium and France, 3 December 1940, Marburg Documentation, Kaserne Dossin.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from gez. Lischka Sturmbannführer (Paris) to the Aussenstelle Amsterdam, SS-Sturmbannführer Lages, 16 March 1942, XLIXa-49, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>19</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolgung in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 206.



reasonably satisfied with the organisational effectiveness of the Dutch Council, they took issue with how the Belgian and French Associations functioned. By highlighting the factors that led to the differences between the organisations, we can better understand the various contexts in which the Jewish leaders were forced to function.

## 2.1 Institutional rivalry and conflicting German aims

The introduction to this thesis has shown that the actions and decisions of the Jewish leaders have been a central theme in the historiography. Especially in the first decades after the war, the interrelation between the leaders' actions and the deportation of Jews from their respective countries was highlighted.<sup>20</sup> A proper analysis of the contemporary situation shows that the JR, the AJB and the UGIF were not in the first instance instituted in order to carry out anti-Jewish legislation, nor were they set up as instruments to enable mass deportation of Jews to eastern Europe. As Michman has indicated, the Jewish Councils and Associations, both in eastern and in western Europe, were not originally perceived as the means to implement the solution to the so-called 'Jewish question'.<sup>21</sup> Instead, one could argue that the establishment of these organisations was seen simply as a way to structure society and to coordinate diverse Jewish communities. This notion is strengthened by the fact that, in all three cases, the Jewish leaders were first ordered to unite and calm agitated communities. As far as we know, there was never a single order by a supreme Nazi authority to establish these Jewish representative bodies in western Europe. As we have already seen, the *Schnellbrief* in which Heydrich ordered the establishment of Jewish Councils in September 1939 related only to Poland.<sup>22</sup> The history of the institution of the western European Jewish organisations should rather be understood in the context of the struggle for dominance between the various German bodies that were in charge in the Netherlands, Belgium and France.

The idea of forcing a Jewish representative body into existence was voiced in France in October 1940 by Theodor Dannecker who wanted the Jewish Consistorial Association of Paris

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the Banality of Evil* (1963); De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk* (1969-1991); Garfinkels, *Les Belges face à la persécution raciale, 1940-1944* (1965); Liebman, *Né juif. Une enfance juive pendant la guerre* (1977); Jacques Adler, *Face à la persécution: les organisations juives à Paris de 1940 à 1944* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1985); Van den Bergh, *Deportaties: Westerbork, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, Gleiwitz* (1945).

<sup>21</sup> Michman, "Judenräte, Ghettos, Endlösung", 171.

<sup>22</sup> Michman, "On the Historical Interpretation of the Judenräte Issue", 392.

(ACIP) to serve as a representative force for the Jews in occupied France. However, in this early stage of the occupation, he was ‘unable to force the Jews to voluntarily join in a central Jewish organisation’.<sup>23</sup> We shall see that his plans for a Jewish organisation modelled on the German Reichsvereinigung der Juden were obstructed both by the Military Administration and by Xavier Vallat after Vallat’s appointment as head of the CGQJ in March 1941.<sup>24</sup> In Belgium, there were several attempts to organise the Jewish communities in early 1941 which eventually resulted in the establishment of the Comité de Coordination, the predecessor of the AJB, in April of that year.<sup>25</sup> In terms of the formation of an actual Jewish Council, only in the Netherlands was an early decision made to force this body upon the Jewish community (in February 1941, nine months before the Council’s counterparts in Belgium and France were established). Various levels of institutional rivalry were at the root of these differences in timing.

#### *The Netherlands: Civil Administration versus the SiPo-SD*

The period in which the JR was established was marked by contradictions and by the competing interests of the German institutions involved. Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart, appointed by Hitler himself and dependent upon his support, headed the Civil Administration while Friedrich Christiansen was the highest military commander. The position of the SiPo-SD, headed by Wilhelm Harster, was always stronger in the Netherlands than in Belgium and France, and grew in importance as the occupation progressed.<sup>26</sup> Because there is little documentation about the establishment of the JR, historians continue to disagree about exactly how it came to be. Houwink ten Cate claimed that Hans Böhmcker and Generalkommissar Schmidt (a protégé of the Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels and Martin Bormann, head of the Nazi Party Chancellery), took advantage of Hanns Albin Rauter’s sick leave and initiated the institution of a Jewish Council in Amsterdam. Neither Schmidt nor Böhmcker was an SS functionary.<sup>27</sup> Michman has argued instead that BdS Wilhelm Harster, with the backing of Rauter ‘and following the guidelines of the Jewish

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<sup>23</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 59.

<sup>24</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108. Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 58-68; Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 239, 246-249.

<sup>25</sup> Michman, “De oprichting van de VJB in internationaal perspectief”, 35-36.

<sup>26</sup> Frits Boterman, *Duitse daders: de jodenvervolgving en de nazificatie van Nederland, 1940-1945* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij de Arbeiderspers, 2015), 17.

<sup>27</sup> Houwink ten Cate, “Heydrich’s Security Police”, 384.

expert of the SD', proposed the establishment of an Amsterdam Jewish Council of the Polish type. He also claimed that Seyss-Inquart, who had served as head of the Civil Administration of the Militärverwaltung in Cracow in late 1939, accepted the idea 'because this was the only model he knew from personal experience'.<sup>28</sup> As a result, Michman says, he ordered Hans Böhmcker to apply this idea. Whereas Michman has claimed that Seyss-Inquart played a role in this process despite his absence from the country at this time, Houwink ten Cate argued that Seyss-Inquart was not involved. Houwink ten Cate asserted that the SS was not involved in the establishment of the Council, while Michman has stated that Harster in fact proposed the establishment of the JR. Neither during his trial interrogations in 1948, nor during his conversations with prominent Dutch historians Louis de Jong and Dolf Cohen in 1949, did Harster describe what his exact role in the establishment of the JR had been.<sup>29</sup>

In light of the absence of documentation, it is impossible to offer a definitive conclusion on the history of the JR's creation or about the specific role of the various German officials and departments involved. Nevertheless, we can establish that the rivalry between, and among, various German offices was an important part of its institution. The wish of the SiPO-SD to dominate anti-Jewish policies at the expense of the Civil Administration became increasingly visible in the two months following the JR's establishment in February 1941. Rivalries surfaced regarding the supervision of the Council, primarily between Seyss-Inquart, who answered to Hitler directly, and the highest SS representative Rauter, who was subordinate to Heydrich and Himmler. The SiPo-SD had already tried to take over anti-Jewish policies when its officials pressed for the establishment of a Judenreferat in the Netherlands in the autumn of 1940.<sup>30</sup> In Belgium and France the Judenreferaten were, as part of the office of the SD, responsible for Jewish affairs. Seyss-Inquart opposed this idea because he did not want to lose his control over anti-Jewish policies. At the same time, Heydrich had grown increasingly dissatisfied with Seyss-Inquart's policies and ordered the establishment of a branch of the Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auswanderung, perhaps hoping that it would function in a similar way to the Judenreferaten in Belgium and France.<sup>31</sup> The Zentralstelle

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<sup>28</sup> Michman, "The Uniqueness of the Joodse Raad", 376.

<sup>29</sup> For Wilhelm Harster, his postwar trials in both the Netherlands and Germany and the postwar statements on his role as Befehlshaber der SD und Sicherheitsdienst, see: W.Harster Doc. I 639, NIOD, including L. de Jong en A. E. Cohen, "Twee gesprekken met Dr. W. Harster"; Dossier W. Harster, CABR, Nationaal Archief; Dick de Mildt, *De rechter en de deporteurs* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2018); Theo Gerritse, *Rauter: Himmlers vuist in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2018), 173-178.

<sup>30</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 216.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

was intended to work as the body that would oversee the emigration of Jews from the Netherlands. For Heydrich at this time, emigration was to be part of the solution of the so-called ‘Jewish question’ in all European countries.<sup>32</sup>

As soon as the Zentralstelle was established, Seyss-Inquart unsurprisingly attempted to decrease its sphere of influence. After continued discussions between Rauter and Seyss-Inquart about who should exercise authority over the Zentralstelle, Wilhelm Zöpf, a protégé of Harster (head of the SiPo-SD) was nominated on 1 April 1941. In response, Seyss-Inquart formulated an alternative plan with the help of jurist Kurt Rabl. In this, the Zentralstelle would be governed by the Reichskommissar (that is, Seyss-Inquart himself). In addition, the Jewish Council would be replaced by a Verband der Juden in die Niederlanden which, in turn, would be subject to the Zentralstelle.<sup>33</sup> As Michman has indicated, the task of the Verband der Juden was, among other things, ‘to supervise all aspects of Jewish life in the occupied Dutch territories and to give them the necessary instructions’ as well as to promote ‘the emigration of Jews living in the occupied Dutch territories’.<sup>34</sup> The regulations for the proposed Jewish organisation were very similar to that of the Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland which had been established in February 1939.<sup>35</sup> Clearly, Seyss-Inquart wanted to keep the authority of the Joodsche Raad within the sphere of his Amsterdam representative Hans Böhmcker. The alternative model he presented indicates that, to him, the Joodsche Raad as it existed at that point in time was not the definitive version. However, Seyss-Inquart’s proposals were never implemented.<sup>36</sup> As Zöpf did not arrive in Amsterdam until August 1941, Willy Lages was in charge of the Zentralstelle and transferred the supervision of its daily work to SS-Hauptsturmführer Ferdinand aus der Fünten.<sup>37</sup> In practice, the Zentralstelle was largely dysfunctional, as it never actually assisted in arranging the emigration of Jews. Instead, it took on an executive role in the deportation process while also directly supervising the work of the

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<sup>32</sup> Letter from Rauter to Seyss-Inquart, 18 April 1941, 020 Generalkommissariat für Verwaltung und Justiz, Inv. No. 1461, NIOD. Also see Jozeph Michman, “Planning for the Final Solution against the Background of Developments in Holland in 1941” in: *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 17 (1986), 150-151.

<sup>33</sup> Preliminary draft B, Section II, ‘Verband der Juden in den Niederlanden’, paragraph 7, 21 May 1941, 020 Generalkommissariat für Verwaltung und Justiz, Inv. No. 1461, NIOD.

<sup>34</sup> Michman, “Planning for the final solution”, 149.

<sup>35</sup> See: Preliminary draft B, section I, ‘Verband der Juden in den Niederlanden’, paragraph 1, 21 May 1941, 020 Generalkommissariat für Verwaltung und Justiz, Inv. No. 1461, NIOD.

<sup>36</sup> Dan Michman, “Jewish Headships under Nazi Rule: The Evolution and Implementation of an Administrative Concept” in: *ibid.*, *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective. Conceptualization, Terminology, Approaches and Fundamental Issues* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 169.

<sup>37</sup> Boterman, *Duitse daders*, 99-101; Wasserstein, *The ambiguity of virtue*, 122-123.

Over time, the SS became increasingly powerful in the Netherlands at the expense of Seyss-Inquart and the Civil Administration. Seyss-Inquart had previously successfully obstructed attempts to establish a separate department responsible for Jewish Affairs (similar to the Judenreferaten in Belgium and France). However, through the course of 1942, the situation began to change. In February 1942, in response to decisions at the Wannsee Conference in which the position of the SiPo-SD was strengthened in the occupied territories, an official Judenreferent was placed at the head of the IV B 4 in the Netherlands. The department was remodelled on the basis of Eichmann's Referat IV B 4 in Berlin and headed by Harster's protégé Zöpf. As a result, Harster became responsible for a framework in which IV B 4 was the central organisation in charge of Jewish affairs.<sup>39</sup>

It is evident that the German authorities involved had no clear idea about what the remit of the proposed Jewish Council ought to be. Since Hans Böhmcker had not given any specification about the (long term) tasks of the JR, there were differing interpretations of its function.<sup>40</sup> Whereas overseeing the emigration of Jews was the primary task outlined for the German *Judenvereinigung*, we have seen that the JR's initial task was to restore order after the fights that had broken out in the Jewish quarter in early February 1941. Additionally, the JR would be held responsible for controlling the 'Ausweisen' necessary to enter the ghetto.<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that a closed-off ghetto similar to those in eastern Europe was never established in Amsterdam, despite Böhmcker's wish that it should be. Consequently, the Ausweisen were not introduced.<sup>42</sup> What, then, were the longer term tasks of the JR? After the war, Harster claimed that the JR was primarily instituted to allow mediation with the Jews and that the restrictive measures it communicated did not constitute

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<sup>38</sup> Anna Hájková, "The making of a Zentralstelle: Die Eichmann-Männer in Amsterdam" in: Jaroslava Milotová, Ulf Rathgeber et al. (eds.), *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* (Institut Theresienstädter Initiative, 2003), 367; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 223.

<sup>39</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 222-223.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Böhmcker to Seyss-Inquart, 17 Feb. 1941, "Betr. Bildung des Amsterdamer Judenrats, Einrichtung des Amsterdamer Ghettos", Inv. No. 149, 014 Reichskommissar für die besetzten niederländischen Gebiete, NIOD. Also see: Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 210.

<sup>41</sup> Documents sent by David Cohen to his lawyers during the State investigation of his wartime activities, p. 79, 181j, Inv. No. 11, NIOD; Michman, "De oprichting van de 'Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam' vanuit een vergelijkend perspectief", 88.

<sup>42</sup> Katja Happe, *Veel valse hoop: de jodenvervolging in Nederland, 1940-1945*, transl. from the German by Fred Reurs (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Atlas Contact, 2018; first ed. 2017 [German]), 77-78; Presser, *Ondergang*, Vol. 1, 392-398.

preparations for the deportation of Jews.<sup>43</sup> To complicate things further, the establishment order of the JR, the so-called *ontwerpstatuut*, indicates that the organisation was held responsible for the ‘non-religious interests of Dutch Jews’.<sup>44</sup>

The vague wording of the *ontwerpstatuut*, together with the varying descriptions of the JR’s responsibilities, have led to different interpretations on what its exact function was supposed to have been. De Jong, Presser and Herzberg have argued that Hans Böhmcker wanted to establish a *Judenrat* headed by the experienced religious authorities of both the Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jewish communities, and that he entrusted Asscher with its formation.<sup>45</sup> Knoop argued instead that Böhmcker was only aiming for a representative institution of the *Jodenwijk* – the Jewish quarter – in Amsterdam and that the idea of the JR as an umbrella organisation was introduced by Abraham Asscher rather than by the Germans.<sup>46</sup> This lack of a clearly defined purpose fostered improvisation and created an atmosphere in which the rivalry between the various German institutions could continue to prosper.

#### *Belgium and France: Military Administration versus the SiPo-SD*

In Belgium, the presence of a Military Administration rather than a Civil Administration (as in the Netherlands) limited the authority of the SiPo-SD, particularly during the first phase of the occupation. Conflicts arose between the SiPo-SD and the Military Administration about the implementation of anti-Jewish regulations and the creation of a representative Belgian Jewish organisation. The nature of the discussion was nevertheless different from that in the Netherlands. The question of *who* should be responsible for the organisation’s establishment and functioning was less important in Belgium than *whether* a Jewish representative body should be established at all.

During the first phase of the occupation of Belgium, the different outlooks of the SiPo-SD and the Military Administration were immediately apparent. As a result of the restricted power of the SiPo-SD in relation to the Military Administration and of the limited cooperation of the Belgian

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<sup>43</sup> Excerpt from the Willy Lages Dossier, statement of Harster, September 1952, Doc. 1 248-0639 Dr. Wilhelm Harster, NIOD.

<sup>44</sup> Draft statute of the Joodsche Raad, article 3, Archief van de Joodse Raad, 182.1, NIOD.

<sup>45</sup> De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, vol. 1, part 2, 884-885; Presser, *Ondergang*, vol. 1, 81-82; Herzberg, *Kroniek der Jodenvervolgving*, 143.

<sup>46</sup> Knoop, *De Joodsche Raad*, 82.

authorities, it was initially difficult to institute anti-Jewish legislation in Belgium.<sup>47</sup> Whereas Heydrich and Himmler wanted a unified, centralised SS policy for western Europe, the Belgian head of the Militärverwaltung, Eggert Reeder, was not willing to consent to a diminution of his power.<sup>48</sup> In March 1941, SS-Obersturmführer Kurt Asche tried to increase his control of Jewish affairs. He initiated the institution of a Belgian version of the CGQJ, the Vichy body that directly oversaw the French UGIF, so that a local Belgian authority would be involved in the execution of anti-Jewish policies. The reasoning behind this was simple: if Belgians were involved, attention would be deflected from German responsibility. Asche also suggested a name for this putative Belgian institution: the Commissariat Royal aux Questions Juives. However, he never succeeded because the Military Administration, fearing that Belgian extremists would take over such an institution, failed to cooperate.<sup>49</sup> They were especially afraid that their position would be threatened by radical Belgian civil servants in the event of the establishment of a Belgian Commissariat headed by Asche.

In contrast to the Civil Administration in the Netherlands, the Belgian Military Administration was strongly preoccupied with the responses of the native non-Jewish population. This explains why it opposed the institution of a Belgian alternative to the *Judenräte* from the start, making a number of objections. In a letter to the Generalkommissar für Verwaltung und Justiz in the Netherlands, Friedrich Wimmer,<sup>50</sup> the head of the ‘Fürsorge’ department of the Militärbefehlshaber in Belgien und Nordfrankreich argued that the Belgian non-Jewish population did not feel that the country had *ein rassisches Problem* (a racial problem).<sup>51</sup> From his perspective, this meant that it would be impossible to implement anti-Jewish regulations in the same way as in Germany, where anti-Jewish sentiments had been growing over the years as a result of deliberate Nazi policies.<sup>52</sup> In

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<sup>47</sup> See, for example: Steinberg, *La Persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 45-46, 54-58; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 197.

<sup>48</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *De Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 199.

<sup>49</sup> Steinberg, *l'Étoile et la fusil: La question juive 1940-1942*, 122-123.

<sup>50</sup> The Generalkommissariat für Verwaltung und Justiz was one of the four ministries of the Reichskommissariat that was established by the Nazis.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from the Militärbefehlshaber in Belgien und Nordfrankreich (Chef der Militärverwaltung Gruppe Fürsorge) addressed to the *Reichskommissar für die besetzten niederländischen Gebieten – Generalkommissar für Verwaltung und Justiz*, 21 December, 1940, SVG-R.184/Tr 50 077, DOS. It should be noted here that Dan Michman’s assumption that the Military government did not believe there existed a so-called ‘Jewish question’ stems from an incorrect translation of the text. See Michman, “De oprichting van de VJB in internationaal perspectief”, 37.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from the Militärbefehlshaber in Belgien und Nordfrankreich (Chef der Militärverwaltung Gruppe Fürsorge) addressed to the *Reichskommissar für die besetzten niederländischen Gebieten – Generalkommissar für Verwaltung und Justiz*”, 21 December, 1940, SVG-R.184/Tr 50 077, DOS.

September 1941, another objection was raised: namely that it would be difficult to find a Belgian leadership willing to head the organisation since the upper layer of Belgian Jewry had fled to France at the time of the Nazi invasion in May 1940. This, in turn, raised questions about the financial backing that could be offered by the Jewish community.<sup>53</sup> At the end of October 1941, representatives of the Oberkriegsverwaltungsrat (OKVR) and the Kriegsverwaltungsrat (KVR) of the Military Administration, Löffler (OKVR), Duntze (OKVR) and Höllfritsch (KVR) raised more objections, including the notion that Belgian Jewry was by no means united. They argued that this lack of homogeneity would prevent the emergence of a sense of communal responsibility among the Jews. This in turn would provoke tensions which could endanger Nazi interests.<sup>54</sup> The absence of a unified Jewish leadership and the lack of support from the Belgian authorities could also prove problematic. Prominent officials inside the Militärverwaltung argued that these issues could not be ignored.<sup>55</sup>

During the course of the war, the authority of the Military Administration was increasingly challenged by the SS. Although Reeder had wanted to take a cautious approach in relation to Belgian Jewry, he was quickly pressured to implement the same anti-Jewish measures that had been implemented in neighbouring countries.<sup>56</sup> The power of the Militärverwaltung was further damaged by the regular meetings of the Judenreferenten in Berlin, during which anti-Jewish legislations in all three countries were discussed.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps to maintain what influence they could over the process, and because they realised that it was necessary to isolate Jews from their non-Jewish neighbours, officials inside the Military Administration took the decision at this point, in the autumn of 1941, not to hamper the creation of a Belgian Jewish organisation any longer, despite their initial objections.<sup>58</sup> In light of these developments, the AJB can be considered a compromise between SS-Obersturmführer Kurt Asche's wish for a *Judenrat* modelled on the eastern European style, and the initial reluctance of the Military Administration to institute a representative organ at all.<sup>59</sup> The AJB

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<sup>53</sup> Draft of 30 September 1941, p.1, Administration Department, Group 7: Care, SVG-R.184/Tr 50 077, Marburg Documentation, DOS.

<sup>54</sup> Report of the Military Administration, "Betr: Errichtung einer Vereinigung der Juden in Belgien", 15 October 1941, Administration Department. Group 7: Care, Marburg Collection, SVG- R.184 / Tr 50 077, DOS.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil. La question juive 1940-1942*, 23-25; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 199-200.

<sup>57</sup> De Jonghe, "De strijd Himmler-Reeder", 33-35, 41-42.

<sup>58</sup> Michman, "De oprichting van de VJB in internationaal perspectief", 40.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 42.



was eventually set up following the more moderate model of a *Vereinigung* (Association) rather than that of a *Judenrat*. As a result, it was officially anchored in Belgian law and placed under the control of the Ministry of Interior and Public Affairs. Whereas the SiPo-SD supervised the eastern European *Judenräte* and eventually the Dutch JR as well, the AJB was directly overseen by the Military Administration.<sup>60</sup> As the SiPo-SD was responsible for the planning and execution of the deportation of Jews to eastern Europe, it continued to clash with the Military Administration during the course of the war about the question of the supervision of the AJB. Partly because of this, it was often not clear to the Jewish leaders which of the two institutions was in charge.<sup>61</sup>

German views about the role of the AJB had already changed a number of times before the organisation was officially established. In line with the antisemitic laws that were already in place, the Military Administration's officials agreed during a meeting in October 1941 that the principal aim of the Association would be the restriction of Jewish economic activities in Belgium and the elimination of Jews from public social life.<sup>62</sup> At the end of this meeting, an important addition was made: the *Vereinigung* had to support all tasks that in the future might be ascribed to it.<sup>63</sup> In short, while the initial aim of the AJB was to eliminate Jews from social and economic life, all options were kept open. We have seen that the actual establishment order of the AJB on 25 November 1941 indicated that its main task was the 'promot[ion] of emigration of the Jews' and the provision of social welfare and *schoolwezen* (education).<sup>64</sup> In addition, the *Zwangsorganisation* was supposed to function as an executive power for anti-Jewish legislation; all Jews in Belgium had to become members.<sup>65</sup> In doing so, the primary aim of the AJB was to unite Belgian Jewry.<sup>66</sup> The tasks outlined here, on 25 November 1941, differ from those outlined less than a month earlier, and this discrepancy requires consideration.

The fact that the written establishment order of the AJB was identical to that of the

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<sup>60</sup> Steinberg, *La Persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 182; Schreiber and Van Doorslaer, "Inleiding" in: *ibid.*, *Curatoren van het getto*, 8.

<sup>61</sup> Meinen, "De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB", 38-49, 64-66.

<sup>62</sup> Report concerning the establishment of a *Vereinigung der Juden* in Belgium, 15 October 1941, 184/Tr50.077, Marburg Documentation, DOS.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Michman, "De oprichting van de VJB in internationaal perspectief", 41-42. For the establishment order, see: *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, No. 63, 2 December 1941, A012077, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>65</sup> Meinen, "De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB", 46.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, *De Shoah in België*, 85.

Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland, and that the AJB was subsequently held responsible for the emigration of Jews abroad, raises questions about how carefully the functions and structure of the AJB had been thought through by the Germans. We have seen that by the time the establishment of the organisation was publicly announced, Himmler had decided that the emigration of Jews would be formally prohibited. The change in wording in relation to the central tasks of the AJB is indicative of uncertainty about its precise role. The feeling that there must be a representative Jewish organisation simply because these also existed in the Netherlands, eastern and central Europe, seems to have been more of a driving force than any carefully considered sense of *how* and *why* such a body would be necessary or helpful in the solution of the so-called *Judenfrage* in Belgium itself. This conclusion is reinforced by the knowledge that the Military Administration did not consider a Jewish representative institution would be in any way beneficial.

In France, there were similarities with the Belgian case, as rivalry between the Military Administration and the SS can be identified here as well. The Militärbefehlshaber in France, headed in 1941 by Otto von Stülpnagel had sole authority at the beginning of the occupation but was increasingly forced to share its powers with other German agencies. In fact, no fewer than five branches of German government authority were involved in Jewish matters in France.<sup>67</sup> The Security Police, which Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler had, in 1939, merged with the Sicherheitsdienst into the Reich Security Main Office, was the most important rival to the Military Administration.<sup>68</sup> The differences in approach to the so-called ‘Jewish question’ between the two institutions continued throughout the occupation. Whereas the Military Administration ‘worried about international law, feared antagonizing French public opinion and were eager to obtain the cooperation of the French government’, SS-Hauptsturmführer Dannecker did not have such reservations.<sup>69</sup> When the Security Police was granted administrative autonomy in May 1942, after which it answered directly to Himmler’s office in Berlin, the friction between the two bodies, including on Jewish matters, increased still further.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> For an overview of the various German authorities involved, see: Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 77-80.

<sup>68</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 78-79. In France, the RSHA was headed by SS-Obersturmführer Helmut Knochen, who was appointed as Heydrich’s representative in Paris in June 1940. Max Thomas served as Himmler’s representative in the RSHA in France. Also see: Joly, *Vichy dans la “solution finale”*, 111-112.

<sup>69</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 80-81.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

The existence of the Vichy regime made the situation even more complex compared to the two other countries. Whereas German departments directly supervised the JR and the AJB, it was the Vichy CGQJ that held direct authority over the UGIF. In recent years, the role of Vichy, and the nature of the relationship between the regime and its Jewish citizens, has been reevaluated. In the early 1980s, Marrus and Paxton published their famous work revising the long held view that Vichy's policies towards Jews were created as a result of German orders. They provided a detailed overview of the level of collaboration and the initiatives taken by Vichy officials themselves in carrying out anti-Jewish policies. In their view, Vichy's own antisemitism offered the Germans more substantial help than they received anywhere else in western Europe and more, even, than they received from allies like Hungary and Romania.<sup>71</sup> As we shall see, Vichy sometimes resorted to measures even more radical than the Germans proposed, with the aim of maintaining its own authority of the Jews in France. The institution of the UGIF in *both* the occupied and the unoccupied zones, while the Germans had only opted to have such an organisation in the occupied zone, bears witness to this.<sup>72</sup>

Recent studies do, however, show that the nature of French society and the Vichy regime was more diversified than has been argued by Marrus and Paxton and by others in the decades that followed.<sup>73</sup> These studies underline its ambiguous nature. Wolfgang Seibel, for example, investigated the negotiations between Vichy officials and the Germans in 1942 and 1943. He demonstrated that Vichy officials provided crucial assistance to the deportations in 1942, but were more hesitant later on. The massive roundups of foreign Jews in Paris and in the unoccupied zone in the summer of 1942, which provoked public outrage, resulted in a Vichy-German agreement that the French police would not be responsible for arresting French citizens. Throughout 1943, Vichy cooperation with the solution to the so-called "Jewish question" decreased, which culminated in the Laval's refusal to denaturalise all Jews who were provided French citizenship since 1927.<sup>74</sup> In 1944, deportations intensified again with the aid of the Milice Française, headed by Laval. Vichy thus both facilitated and (temporarily) obstructed the solution to the so-called "Jewish Question" in

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 369.

<sup>72</sup> Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 239; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108-109.

<sup>73</sup> As Daniel Lee has indicated, after Marrus and Paxton some scholars continued to perceive Vichy as an antisemitic bloc, without differentiating between the choices and behaviour of Vichy officials. See, for example, Jacques Adler, who argued that all of Vichy's ministers were antisemites. Adler, "The Jews and Vichy: Reflections on French Historiography" in: *Historical Journal* Vol. 44 No.4 (2001), 1069.

<sup>74</sup> Wolfgang Seibel, *Macht und Moral: Die "Endlösung der Judenfrage" in Frankreich, 1940-1944* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2010), 304-317.

France. Sémelin emphasised that 75% of the Jews in France managed to survive despite the presence of the collaborationist Vichy regime. Without exonerating Vichy's antisemitism, he argued that historians need to understand the 'French paradox' within a many-layered analytical framework.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, as a recent study by Lee has convincingly shown, Vichy policies were inconsistent, especially during the first two years.<sup>76</sup> On the one hand, there were senior Vichy officials who considered the marginalisation of Jews an 'absolute priority', as well as those who believed that 'Jewish influence had brought about the defeat'.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, for a number of Vichy's leading figures 'the antisemitic legislation only served as an inconvenience and a distraction from their principal ministerial responsibilities'.<sup>78</sup> To many, the reconstruction of the country, rather than ideological antisemitism, was the central driving force in this period. Most recently, Joly has highlighted the ambiguous nature of the Vichy regime, arguing that its policies against Jews can be characterised as a combination of antisemitism, impulses towards sovereignty and the desire for collaboration.<sup>79</sup> We can therefore conclude that Vichy was never a monolithic bloc.

Recent studies have also reevaluated the relationship between the *Militärbefehlshaber* and the SiPo-SD. Eismann, for example, has argued that the differences between the Military Administration and the SiPo-SD in France were not as clear as has been argued in the past.<sup>80</sup> Rather than considering the Military Administration as a restraining factor in the implementation of anti-Jewish legislation in western Europe, she claimed that it pioneered the radicalisation of antisemitic policy in occupied France, outpacing the SiPo-SD. Eismann showed that the German Military and Security forces often cooperated closely with each other at the local level.<sup>81</sup> Since the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, as well as the JR and the AJB, were overseen by the central authorities in Paris and Berlin, where institutional rivalries were omnipresent, this argument is hard to sustain in this

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<sup>75</sup> Sémelin, *The Survival of the Jews in France*, passim.

<sup>76</sup> Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children*, passim.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Laurent Joly, *L'État contre les juifs: Vichy, les nazis et la persécution antisémite* (Paris: Éditions Grasset, 2018), passim.

<sup>80</sup> Gaël Eismann, *Hôtel Majestic: Ordre et sécurité en France occupée, 1940-1944* (Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2010), passim. In doing so, she disputed the traditional assumption that a clear line can be drawn between the Military Administration and the SiPo-SD. See, for example, Umbreit, *Der Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich*; Eberhard Jäckel, *Frankreich in Hitlers Europa. Die deutsche Frankreichpolitik im zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1966).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

context. However, we shall see that prominent German officials involved with the UGIF did at times disagree while also cooperating, not least because they often had strong ties to both the SS and the Military Administration. Werner Best offers an example of this. As a senior member of the SS, he also served as head of the administrative section of the Military Administration in France.<sup>82</sup>

The inconsistent nature of the Vichy regime, together with the rivalry between the SiPo-SD and the Military Administration, created a complex situation. The representatives of these bodies all had different views about the scope of anti-Jewish regulations and the pace at which they ought to be implemented. When, after repeated demands from Heydrich and Himmler, army officials agreed in October 1940 that the development of anti-Jewish policies in France would be in the hands of the SiPo-SD-led Judenreferat, Dannecker became one of the central figures in initiating anti-Jewish legislation in France.<sup>83</sup> Continuing conflicts of interest between the three bodies over the execution of anti-Jewish legislation seems to have been an important driving force in allowing Dannecker to establish his authority by forcing a Jewish organisation into existence. The rivalries and disagreements between different institutions, in particular between the SS and Vichy officials, affected the course of events even more in France than they did in Belgium or the Netherlands. In Belgium, the power of the Military Administration began to fade as the war continued. In the Netherlands, the position of the Civil Administration in relation to the SS began to weaken. But the presence and influence of Vichy could not be downplayed and it served to influence how the UGIF was established and how it functioned.

Shortly after his arrival in France on 5 September 1940, Dannecker pressured Jewish leaders in Paris to establish a *Zwangsvereinigung* to deal with all political, social and cultural problems relating to the Jews in France. He wanted to merge the existing Jewish relief agencies and hoped to gain access to their financial resources.<sup>84</sup> He contacted Chief Rabbi Julien Weill ‘to inform him that he expected the ACIP to acknowledge itself as the representative of all the Jews in Paris and accept

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<sup>82</sup> Werner Best occupied a multitude of positions across Europe (Germany, Poland, France and Denmark) during Nazi rule. Between August 1940 and mid-June 1942, as senior member of the SS, he served as the head of the administrative section of the Military Administration in France. For an excellent overview of the positions of Werner Best and the complicated relations and overlaps between the Military Administration, SiPo-SD and German Embassy in France, see Ulrich Herbert, *Best: biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1903-1989* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996), 251-322.

<sup>83</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 182-183; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 79; Steur, *Theodor Dannecker*, 47-48.

<sup>84</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 58-68.

responsibility for their social and charitable needs', which was the first indication of the German intention to represent Jews officially through a single body.<sup>85</sup> His efforts failed, largely due to the lack of the support from the Military Administration 'which in September 1940 was more concerned with the preparations of the campaign against England'.<sup>86</sup> The situation in France was radically different from that in Germany or eastern Europe, where *Judenräte* had first been established: 'there was no ghetto as in eastern Europe [...]; and direct German control was limited to the occupied zone [where] the German authorities had neither the manpower nor the desire to run things without the assistance of French services'.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, Dannecker was unable to force the ACIP to act as he wished because the 1905 Law of Church and State Separation ruled that no representatives of religious institutions were permitted to assume responsibilities in secular organisations. Sachs and Weill used this legal principle as the basis for refusing Dannecker's demand.<sup>88</sup>

After this failed attempt, Dannecker changed track, emphasising the philanthropic possibilities for French Jewry once all were united under one umbrella organisation.<sup>89</sup> As the needs of the Jewish people increased, both immigrant and French Jewish leaders decided to use this opportunity to improve their relief activity, despite their reservations about German involvement. As we have seen, this gave rise to the Comité de Coordination, established in January 1941 on the basis of a German order. It was made up of the Paris Consistory, the Comité de Bienfaisance Israélite, Organisation Reconstruction Travail (ORT), OSE and Amelot Committee. Dannecker hoped the organisation would form the essence of a full-scale French Jewish Council.<sup>90</sup> In order to ensure this, on 18 March 1941, he brought two Austrian Jews, Leo Israelowicz-Ilmar and Wilhelm Biberstein, to Paris. They were members of the Viennese Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG), which served as an intermediary between Jews and Germans until December 1942, when it was transformed into an *Ältestenrat* (Council of Elders). By then, most Austrian Jews had either migrated or been

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<sup>85</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 57.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>87</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58; Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 26.

<sup>89</sup> Dannecker referred to an organisation 'die ihr Leben leitet und für ihren Unterhalt in der Gegenwart und für ihre Berufsmöglichkeiten sorgt'. Report of SS-Obersturmführer Theodor Dannecker of the French SiPo-SD in Paris, titled 'the Jewish question in France and its treatment', 1 July 1941, XXV-1, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>90</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 63; Moore, *Survivors*, 105.

deported.<sup>91</sup> Irsaelowicz-Ilmar and Biberstein took control of the Comité de Coordination and were ordered to transform it into an ‘effective’ Jewish organisation, using the experience they had acquired in Vienna.<sup>92</sup> German reports show that Dannecker believed the two men to be *technischen Ratgeber* and considered their advice important.<sup>93</sup> Israelowicz, for example, reported to Dannecker about the nature and organisation of French Jewry before the war and advised him which organisations – he included the Comité de Bienfaisance de Paris, the OSE and La Colonie Scolaire – could continue their activities through the CC.<sup>94</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the aims of the Jewish community and Dannecker were different. While participating Jewish organisations were determined to continue offering aid through the Comité de Coordination without losing their financial and operational autonomy, Dannecker wanted the committee to be geared towards the solution of the so-called ‘Jewish question’, which at that moment still meant the emigration of Jews from the country.<sup>95</sup> In order to achieve this, he felt that the community had to be united under the umbrella of the Comité de Coordination. In response to increasing German pressure and the arrest of 3,710 foreign Jews on 14 May 1941, the Amelot Committee seceded from the committee four months after its establishment.<sup>96</sup> As we shall see, Amelot then explored the potential for a shift to illegal activity.<sup>97</sup> Since the Comité de Coordination failed to unite Jews in France, Dannecker began to look for alternatives and decided to involve the French government more actively in his plans. He believed that experiences in Germany and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia proved that forcing an organisation into existence would be essential for the progressive removal of Jews from French society.<sup>98</sup> In Austria, the Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auswanderung (Central Office for Jewish Emigration), instituted in August 1938 by the Security Police, had successfully supervised the emigration and expulsion of the Jews from the

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<sup>91</sup> Klein, “The Judenrat”, 27; Rabinovici, *Instanzen der Ohnmacht. Wien 1938-1945. Der Weg zum Judenrat*, 311-317; On the role and history of the Viennese Kultusgemeinde, later transformed into the Ältestenrat, and the role of Benjamin Marmorstein, see: Lisa Hauff, *Zur politischen Rolle von Judenräten, Benjamin Marmorstein in Wien, 1938-1942* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2014).

<sup>92</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 71; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 65, 281-288.

<sup>93</sup> German reports on the establishment of the Comité de Coördination, MK490.2., Reel 1, 1.1:1:1 (YIVO), Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>94</sup> German reports on the establishment of the Comité de Coördination, MK490.2., Reel 1.5:1:35 (YIVO), Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>95</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 175; Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 29.

<sup>96</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 106.

<sup>97</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 175-176; Moore, *Survivors*, 106; J. Brauman, G. Loinger, and F. Wattenberg (eds), *Organisation juive de combat: résistance / sauvetage, France 1940-1945* (Paris: Ed. Autrement, 2002), 232.

<sup>98</sup> Activity report of Dannecker, 22 February 1942, XXVI-80, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

country and later also from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>99</sup>

In a similar way, the Jewish Religious Congregation of Prague (JRC) had been given jurisdiction over all individual Jews and congregations in the Protectorate on 5 March 1940.<sup>100</sup> While it was initially concerned mainly with the provision of social welfare and the liquidation of Jewish assets, from October 1941 the JRC was held responsible for the concentration and evacuation of Jews from the area; in 1943 it was converted into an *Ältestenrat*.<sup>101</sup> It is notable that Dannecker refers to the situation in Bohemia and Moravia even though the nature of the occupation of France was very different and the organisation of the Jewish community in France did not lend itself to supervision by a body resembling either the Zentralstelle or the JRC. If we look at his previous attempts to transform the Comité de Coordination into a more effective Jewish organisation, based on the Viennese IKG, we can see that Dannecker had not taken into consideration the realities of the French context when developing his plans.

In the winter of 1940-1941, one of Dannecker's central objectives had been to establish a French body that would bring together all anti-Jewish policies. However, Vichy officials were reluctant to carry out a unified anti-Jewish policy dictated by the Germans.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, they were 'thrown off balance' by the Nazi system of rivalry and conflicting jurisdiction that more than once forced them to deal with several German agencies.<sup>103</sup> Between December 1940 and February 1941 relations between Vichy and German officials, which had been complicated since the armistice on 22 June 1940, further deteriorated. Pétain had fired his vice-president Pierre Laval who had formed a close working relationship with the German ambassador Abetz in the autumn of 1940 and was 'the only French leader who possessed an independent link to the Führer'.<sup>104</sup> The German occupying authorities strongly disapproved of Pétain's actions and immediately banned the passage of civil servants and men aged from 18 to 45 over the demarcation line.<sup>105</sup> After this conflict, Admiral François Darlan – Minister of Navy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of the Interior

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<sup>99</sup> For an overview of the formation of the Zentralstelle, see: Gabriele Anderl and Dirk Rupnow, *Die Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auswanderung als Beraubungsinstitution* (Wien: Oldenbourg, 2004), 109-154.

<sup>100</sup> Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia facing the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015), 116.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-137.

<sup>102</sup> Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 113-115.

<sup>103</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 77.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>105</sup> For a detailed overview of the 'French-German crisis' between December 1940 and February 1941, see: Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 116- 119.



and, from February 1941, vice-president of the Council of Ministers – ‘was ready for all concessions to win the favour of Nazi Germany and to reach a negotiated peace’.<sup>106</sup>

In early 1941, Dannecker set up various meetings with the representatives of all German agencies involved in Jewish affairs, including the Military Administration, in order to press ahead with his radical approach.<sup>107</sup> He proposed the establishment of a central Jewish office – a *Zentraljudenamt* – to trace Jews, remove them from all professional and social domains, and centralise the administration of their property ‘until the date of their deportation’.<sup>108</sup> In a detailed report on the institution and function of this central Jewish office in Paris, Dannecker claimed that while the Military Administration had already taken the first steps towards removing Jews from the country, it had become clear that the French authorities wanted to follow the strict letter of the law and showed ‘no political understanding of the necessity of a general cleansing [of Jews]’.<sup>109</sup> Within weeks, the other German agencies agreed with Dannecker’s plan and were well aware that they needed the cooperation of Vichy officials to carry it out.<sup>110</sup> In a telegraphic report to Minister of Foreign Affairs Joachim von Ribbentrop on 6 March 1941, Otto Abetz wrote that Vichy’s support was necessary because the central Jewish office would then have a legal basis, and the German influence on the office’s work in the occupied zone could have such an impact that the unoccupied zone would also be forced to implement the measures taken.<sup>111</sup> Initially, Darlan was reluctant, taking refuge behind objections he attributed to Pétain who, he said, was worried about the impact upon French Jews and about distinguished war veterans.<sup>112</sup> Afraid he would be surpassed by rival institutions and aiming to safeguard a working relationship with the Germans which, as we have seen, had been seriously dented in the months prior to this, Darlan eventually succumbed less than

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 120.

<sup>107</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 80-82; Joly, *Vichy dans la “solution finale”*, 115.

<sup>108</sup> Dannecker’s report on the establishment and function of the central Jewish office in Paris, 21 January 1941, V-59, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. Also see Billig, *Le Commissariat général aux questions juives*, Vol. 1, 46-47.

<sup>109</sup> Dannecker’s report on the establishment and function of the central Jewish office in Paris, 21 January 1941, V-59, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>110</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 82.

<sup>111</sup> Report of Otto Abetz to Joachim von Ribbentrop, 6 March 1941, CCXXIV-43, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. For more information on Abetz’ role in France, see: Ahlrich Meyer, *Täter im Verhör: die “Endlösung der Judenfrage” in Frankreich, 1940-1944* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), passim; Barbara Lambauer, *Otto Abetz et les Français: ou l’envers de la collaboration* (Paris: Fayard, 2001); Pascal Ory, *Les Collaborateurs, 1940-1945* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1976), 12-18.

<sup>112</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 82.

two weeks later in mid-March 1941.<sup>113</sup> On 29 March 1941, he officially instituted the CGQJ.<sup>114</sup>

French and German politics seemed to have found common ground: the persecution of foreign Jews. The policies of Darlan became emblematic of the approach of senior Vichy officials towards the Jews: to sacrifice the foreigners under the pretext of saving the French. In reality, between 1940 and 1944, leading Vichy officials like Darlan, Laval and Bousquet, head of the French police, came to see the Nazi projects as a way of getting rid of the Jews in their country.<sup>115</sup> Although the Germans had provided two lists of candidates they preferred for the position of head of the CGQJ – one signed by Otto Abetz and the other by Kurt Ihlefeld, the Paris correspondent of the NSDAP's newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* – , the Germans gave Darlan the autonomy to make the final decision.<sup>116</sup> He chose Xavier Vallat, a fanatical antisemite and proponent of the extreme nationalist movement Action Française.<sup>117</sup> Vallat, a distinguished First World War veteran, was active in conservative and Catholic political circles and a strong supporter of Pétain. In July 1940, he was appointed secretary for veterans' affairs and created the Légion Française des Combattants, 'whose supporters intended to become the principal mass organization of the new regime'.<sup>118</sup> Vallat reflected upon his appointment at the head of the CGQJ when he was brought to court after the war and claimed that that he felt competent to take up this position because he had been deliberating about the 'Jewish question' for a long time.<sup>119</sup> To Vichy, Vallat was a logical choice given that, as we will see, Vallat had an anti-German outlook and would therefore be able to hamper German influence on the solution to the so-called 'Jewish question' in France. This, in turn, fostered Vichy's autonomy.<sup>120</sup>

The forced establishment of a well-functioning representative Jewish body in France

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<sup>113</sup> Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 213; Ibid., *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 120; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 82.

<sup>114</sup> According to Paxton, Darlan was arguably the most important figure in the Vichy regime in 1941. He held various offices and was also designated *dauphin*, successor to Pétain in case of incapacity or death. See: Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001 [revised ed.]; first ed. 1972), 109-135. For an excellent biography of Darlan, see: Hervé Coutau-Bégarie and Claude Huan, *Darlan* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).

<sup>115</sup> Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 131-132.

<sup>116</sup> Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 213-214.

<sup>117</sup> Message of Dannecker, 22 February 1942, XXVI-80, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>118</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 88; Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 195-211.

<sup>119</sup> Statement of Xavier Vallat during his postwar trial, 3 December 1947, p.4, LXXIV-8, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>120</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 81-83; 87-89; Asher Cohen, *Persécutions et sauvetages: Juifs et Français sous l'occupation et sous Vichy* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1993), 130-133.

remained a problem in the first half of 1941. SS-Sturmbahnführer Kurt Lischka, deputy of Knochen at the Paris SD department, insisted that the Comité de Coordination would be transformed into such an organisation in early 1941.<sup>121</sup> Dannecker communicated Lischka's demand to Vallat on 3-4 April when they met in presence of Abetz and Werner Best, head of the administrative section of the Military Administration in France.<sup>122</sup> Vallat, who ardently hated German interference in affairs relating to the 'Jewish question', initially refused to institute an umbrella organisation.<sup>123</sup> He managed to stall Dannecker's wish for a *Zwangvereinigung* until August 1941. In the existing literature, the role of the various German departments involved in the establishment of the UGIF remains unclear. Laffitte has pointed out that the law establishing the organisation, published on 2 December 1941, was a *loi d'État*, decreed by Pétain and co-signed by various Vichy officials, including Darlan, but he reflects hardly at all on the role of the Germans in this specific process.<sup>124</sup> Cohen emphasised the role of Jonathan Schmid, head of the *Verwaltungsstab* of the Military Administration, who supposedly pressured Vallat to establish the *Zwangvereinigung*.<sup>125</sup> Billig has asserted that Dannecker, bypassing the authority of the Military Administration, approached Vallat on 17 September 1941 and threatened to establish a *Judenrat* himself in the event that Vallat refused. According to Billig, it was specifically in response to Dannecker's pressure that Vallat quickly established a Jewish organisation in both zones, in consultation with the relevant Vichy government officials.<sup>126</sup> Documentation shows that the Military Administration *was* directly involved in the establishment of the UGIF. On 29 November 1941, Military commander Otto von Stülpnagel in fact ordered the creation of a Jewish *Zwangorganisation*.<sup>127</sup> Pétain published the decree for the establishment of the UGIF several days later, on 2 December, while the UGIF-Sud's establishment was decreed on 8 January 1942.<sup>128</sup> From this we can deduce that from the summer of 1941, pressure on Vallat increased, from both the SS and the Military Administration. In the end, the

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<sup>121</sup> Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 48-49.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.; Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 150-152.

<sup>123</sup> Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 239, 246-249; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108.

<sup>124</sup> Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 50-51.

<sup>125</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 51.

<sup>126</sup> Billig, *Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives*, Vol. 1, 210-212; Ibid., *Die "Endlösung der Judenfrage"*, 100-101.

<sup>127</sup> The Militärbefehlshaber had already encouraged Vallat to institute a *Zwangvereinigung* in August 1941, see: letter of Military Administration to Xavier Vallat, 28 August 1941, LXXVI-16, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. Another document dating from 22 February 1942 indicates that the Militärbefehlshaber ordered the establishment of the *Zwangvereinigung* by letter on 29 November 1941, XXVI-80, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. Also see: Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108-109.

<sup>128</sup> For the text of this decree, see: Raymond Sarraute and Paul Tager, *Les Juifs sous l'occupation: Recueil de textes français et allemands* (Paris: Éditions du Centre, 1945), 102-103; *Journal officiel*, 2 December 1941.

ongoing institutional rivalry between representatives of the Military Administration, the Vichy regime and the SS were instrumental in the formation of the UGIF. In particular, Dannecker's willingness to overpower those who in his view were not sufficiently radical was crucial to the establishment of the organisation. The pressure he exerted to ensure that a Jewish representative organisation was established was probably inspired by his wish to suppress the influence of the *Militärverwaltung* which had thwarted his plans and ideas for such an organisation on numerous occasions.<sup>129</sup>

An important motivation for Vichy officials in instituting the UGIF was their belief that they would lose control over the confiscation of Jewish property in the occupied zone if the organisation were to serve under German authority.<sup>130</sup> The choice to have a Jewish representative organisation in both zones was prompted by the fear that foreign Jews would otherwise be expelled to the Vichy-controlled unoccupied zone which the Germans considered a 'place to dump their unwanted Jews' well into 1941.<sup>131</sup> Vallat tried to maintain Vichy sovereignty and aimed for complete control over the UGIF. His mistrust of Dannecker furthermore encouraged him to make the UGIF directly subordinate to the CGQJ.<sup>132</sup> In September 1941, Vallat wrote to Dr Storz, the Ministerial Advisor to the Administrative Department of the Military Administration, that three important points had to be settled: 1) that the organisation (UGIF) should function across all of France and that the members in the occupied zone should be appointed by *French authorities*; 2) that the central board of the occupied zone should be under the authority of the CGQJ and; 3) that the security of (UGIF) members would be safeguarded.<sup>133</sup> Despite Vallat's attempts to gain the upper hand, the UGIF was formed according to the wishes of the Germans and ultimately controlled by them.<sup>134</sup> The UGIF-Sud's leader Lambert reflected upon this in his diary and wrote that the promises of Vallat about the protection of First World War veterans, should not be taken for granted 'since he is not free [to act]'.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 58; Steur, *Theodor Dannecker*, 52; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 182-183.

<sup>130</sup> Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order*, 184.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 184.

<sup>132</sup> "Letter of Vallat to Storz", September 1941, AML, fonds Vallat, 21ii-42 as cited in Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 262; *Ibid.*, *Xavier Vallat*, 239. Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108-109.

<sup>133</sup> Archives Municipales de Lyon (AML), fonds Vallat, 21ii-42, letter sent to doctor Storz, September, 1941 as cited in Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 243.

<sup>134</sup> Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 243.

<sup>135</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 22 June 1941, 45.

The third condition in Vallat's letter to Storz is indicative of his particular attitude towards French Jewry, which dated back to his experiences in the First World War. As a French soldier during the First World War, he had fought alongside Jews at the front.<sup>136</sup> The friendships he formed at that time help to explain the distinction Vallat would continue to make between Jews 'in general' and those Jews whom he believed deserved to remain members of the national community because they had defended *la patrie*.<sup>137</sup> During a personal meeting with Dannecker on 17 February 1942, Vallat highlighted the ways in which his own antisemitism differed from Dannecker's.<sup>138</sup> He elaborated on this in his memoirs, where he claimed he did not hate Jews and underlined that he had Jewish friends, including three Jewish 'combat friends' made in the period 1914-1918. Instead, he 'mistrusted' and 'feared' strangers or outsiders (*l'étranger*), a feeling that he considered to be universal.<sup>139</sup> He was particularly influenced by the Catholic Church and the measures it had passed against Jews through the centuries.<sup>140</sup> His racial laws were therefore 'a continuation of French and Catholic restrictive measures that sought only to reduce Jewish influence in France'.<sup>141</sup> Like Charles Maurras, Vallat advocated a form of 'State antisemitism' that attempted to regulate Jewish existence by State agencies 'for the benefit of all Frenchmen'.<sup>142</sup> Even though his general antisemitic outlook did not significantly alter after the First World War, his differentiation between the minority of 'israélites' who were able to forget their origins and the large majority of dangerous, unassimilated Jews, whom he felt constituted a threat to the French race, does suggest a modestly nuanced viewpoint.<sup>143</sup>

Vallat and German officials like Dannecker and Best had different perspectives on the role of the CGQJ in the solution of the so-called 'Jewish question' in France and about the responsibilities of the UGIF. This had become clear during the first meeting between Vallat, Best and Von Stülpnagel on 3-4 April 1941. Vallat explained that he considered the expulsion and

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<sup>136</sup> Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 90-93.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>138</sup> Report of the meeting between SS-Obersturmführer Dannecker and the French Commissaire for Jewish Questions Xavier Vallat, 17 February 1942, p. 25, XXIV-21 CDJC. Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>139</sup> Xavier Vallat, *Le Nez de Cléopâtre: souvenirs d'un homme de droite, 1919-1945* (Paris: Éditions "Les Quatre Fils Aymon", 1957), 221.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 246-247 as cited in: Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children*, 58.

<sup>141</sup> Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children*, 58-59.

<sup>142</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 89.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

internment of Jews to be a matter for the government and the police, whereas the Germans had hoped for the cooperation of the French in this regard.<sup>144</sup> In his memoirs, Vallat reflected upon the disagreements between himself and the Germans and claimed that he considered Dannecker's attempts to separate Jews from non-Jews in Paris in early 1941 through the formation of a ghetto 'old-fashioned'; he could not grasp how Dannecker imagined a ghetto could exist in a city like Paris.<sup>145</sup> As to the function of the UGIF, Vallat considered it to be an institution permitting notable Jews to control the untrustworthy and generally lower class immigrant Jewry.<sup>146</sup> By contrast, the Germans wanted the UGIF to be part of a new phase in the process of separation between Jews and non-Jews. Dannecker also aimed to unite Jewish relief agencies under one umbrella.<sup>147</sup> It should be noted that although the existing literature asserts that Dannecker wanted a French *Judenrat*, he himself did not use this word.<sup>148</sup> This is important because the eastern European *Judenräte* were very different in form and function from the Associations in Germany, Belgium and France. We have seen that Dannecker was affected by his experiences in eastern Europe and referred to Bohemia and Moravia as proof that an organisation which had been forced into existence could be vital for the progressive removal of Jews from French society. However, he did not use the term *Judenrat*, used to describe the Jewish organisations in eastern Europe, but instead referred to the French Jewish representative organisation as a *Zwangvereinigung*, modelled on the German *Reichsvereinigung*.<sup>149</sup>

These examples show that if we want to understand the context in which the Jewish organisations were established, it is important to look beyond the limits of national borders. In all three cases, the Jewish organisations were built using blueprints from elsewhere. The rivalry between the various German institutions in each of the countries found its origin at the very top of

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 96-97; Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 219-221.

<sup>145</sup> Vallat, *Le Nez de Cléopâtre*, 253.

<sup>146</sup> Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 241.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108.

<sup>148</sup> See, for example: Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 241; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 108; Donna Ryan, *The Holocaust and the Jews of Marseille: The enforcement of anti-Semitic policies in Vichy France* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 157.

<sup>149</sup> For the use of the term *Zwangvereinigung*, see Dannecker's report on the "Judenfrage in Frankreich und ihre Behandlung", 1 July 1941, XXVI-1, p.25, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Activity report of Dannecker, 22 February 1942, XXVI-80, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. See also the letter of the commander of the Greater Paris region to the Military Administration, 25 April 1941, LXXVI-14, CJDC, Mémorial de la Shoah. In this letter, the commander indicated that the German Jewish organisation served as an example for Kurt Lischka's plans for a Jewish organisation in the French occupied zone.

the Nazi party in Berlin. This means that the establishment of these organisations should be understood within the broader context of Nazi rule in occupied Europe. Looking at the creation of the Jewish organisations in the three countries, there are a number of important similarities. First, their existence resulted in part from competition between various (Nazi) institutions as prominent officials rushed to take the initiative and tried to consolidate their own power over anti-Jewish legislation at the cost of rival institutions and individuals. The second factor relates to the first, as the examples demonstrate that a clear notion of exactly *what* the (long-term) tasks of the organisations would be was not made explicit. Therefore, the months and weeks prior to, and even after, the establishment of the organisations were characterised by improvisation more than anything else. This can be explained by the fact that events often followed each other so quickly that German policy-making could not catch up and responses had to be ad hoc. The majority of Nazi bureaucrats did not have any prewar experience in dealing with the kind of situation they now found themselves in. It is therefore not surprising that anti-Jewish policies and regulations that had been introduced elsewhere were simply copied without any serious account being taken on the particularities of the country in question. The fact that Dannecker was thinking of instituting a *Zwangvereinigung* in France by reference to Bohemia and Moravia, and planned to establish a ghetto in Paris even though it would have been impossible to do so, further supports this view. The foundations on which the organisations were built were therefore far from predetermined. Instead, they were largely the result of institutional rivalry and questions about their exact form and function were moved to the sidelines.

Institutional rivalry surfaced between the various sections of the German occupation regime and in all three countries the SS encountered obstacles when trying to establish its dominance in the execution of anti-Jewish policies. In practice, the situations varied. In the Netherlands, we have seen that the presence and influence of the SS increased more rapidly during the course of the war than it did in Belgium and France. Rivalry with the SiPo-SD was an important factor in motivating Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart to make sure that the supervision of the JR would be in the hands of the Civil Administration. In a similar vein, both Asscher and Cohen tried to ensure that the JR would continue to be responsible to Hans Böhmcker rather than to the SS. This made it vulnerable because there was always the threat that the SS would take over if they did not comply with Böhmcker's orders.<sup>150</sup> The rivalry between the SS and the Civil Administration was directly felt by

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<sup>150</sup> Houwink ten Cate, "Heydrich's Security Police", 384.

a JR member of the local Arnhem branch in February 1943. After this individual had approached a Wehrmacht commander on his own initiative, he was arrested and most likely deported to Westerbork, something SS-Hauptsturmbahnführer Ferdinand aus der Fünften pointed out during a meeting of all chairmen in February 1943.<sup>151</sup> Above all, the increasing influence of the SiPo-SD together with an overlap of functions resulted in a rapid succession of anti-Jewish measures in the Netherlands.

In the two other countries, the situation was different. In Belgium, we have seen that it remained unclear which of the rival institutions supervised the AJB because both the SiPo-SD and the Military Administration continued to be actively involved with it. Furthermore, the Belgian authorities were also in communication with the AJB. Even Judenreferent Asche was unsure who was responsible for policies vis-à-vis the AJB. On 17 April 1942, Maurice Benedictus and Saül Pinkous, representative AJB Antwerp branch and secretary of the central board respectively, asked Asche whom they should approach in order to gain more information about the recently announced legislation concerning the specific identity card Jewish workers in Charleroi and Liège would need in order to be on the streets after 8pm.<sup>152</sup> Initially, Asche directed them to the Feldkommandatur but a few days later he claimed instead that the Sicherheitspolizei of Charleroi was responsible in this case.<sup>153</sup> In order to buy time, the AJB could approach different institutions and, in doing so, was able to create organisational confusion to its own benefit. For example, Benedictus used the absence of a formal order to hamper the provisions for forced labour by Jews in the *Organisation Todt* (OT) camps in the north of France that had been announced on 11 March 1942.<sup>154</sup> In June 1942, he refused to hand over lists of Jews to the Arbeitsamt (labor office) of the Belgian secretaries-general, one of the authorities with which the AJB leaders communicated and which sat in a larger

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<sup>151</sup> Meeting of Council chairmen, 2 February 1943, M. 19 (Joodse Raad, Friesland), Inv. No. 2, p. 118-119, Yad Vashem. The name of this member of the local JR Arnhem branch remains unknown.

<sup>152</sup> *Verordnungsblatt*, Nr. 54, 29 August 1941.

<sup>153</sup> Minutes of the AJB central board meeting: report of the visit of Benedictus and Pinkous to Obersturmführer Asche, 17 April 1942, R497/Tr206891, DOS; Report of the conversation between SS-Obersturmführer Asche with M. Benedictus and N. Nozice, 27 April 1942, R497/Tr206891, DOS as cited in: Sophie Vandepontseele, “De verplichte tewerkstelling van joden in België en Noord-Frankrijk” in: Van Doorslaer and Schreiber (ed.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 153. For an overview of the various German and Belgian authorities involved in the forced labour of Jews, see: *Ibid.*, 149-155.

<sup>154</sup> Report of a meeting between d’Hoedt of the Arbeitsamt, Benedictus and Feiertag, 27 June 1942, A008453, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin. It took the Military Administration almost two months to establish the legal framework for the forced labour of Jews in OT camps. After the general announcement of the regulation on 11 March 1942, the second (final) regulation was circulated on 8 May that year, see: *Verordnungsblatt*, No. 70, 18 March 1942 and *Verordnungsblatt*, No. 76, 15 May 1942.



disorganised web of Belgian and German organisations overseeing the forced labour of Jews in the OT camps.<sup>155</sup> He claimed that he could not do so in the absence of a formal order from an ‘authorised authority’, aiming to use the organisational ambiguity to his own advantage.<sup>156</sup> Even though the Germans in the end did not need the lists because they already had the necessary documentation, this example shows how the AJB leadership used the presence of rival institutions to attempt to frustrate German plans.

In France, the ongoing institutional rivalry between the Military Administration, the SiPo-SD and Vichy officials dominated the politics of the UGIF. As in Belgium, this rivalry delayed the establishment of the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud in the first place. Furthermore, it affected the implementation of anti-Jewish measures like that of the yellow star for which the Germans needed the cooperation of the French administration, and, in particular, of the French police. After Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, who succeeded Xavier Vallat, had taken office at the CGQJ, Werner Best and Theodor Dannecker hoped against all odds that the former would see to it that the yellow star was imposed in both zones.<sup>157</sup> However, Vichy officials at this point drew a line between foreign and French Jews and were unwilling to introduce a measure that would stigmatise all Jews equally. In the unoccupied zone, the star was never introduced and the UGIF-Sud was the only Jewish organisation in western Europe that was not held responsible for distributing the stars.<sup>158</sup> In both Belgium and France, institutional rivalry resulted above all in postponements and, from the German perspective, in a looser grip on the organisations. As a result, as we shall see, there was more room for manoeuvre for the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, allowing them to foster their engagement in illegal activities.

## 2.2 The “Councils” organisational structures and day-to-day operations

Despite the plethora of sources on the daily functions of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the

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<sup>155</sup> For more information on the Belgian *Arbeitsambten* that operated under the *Rijksarbeidsambt*, the successor of the Nationale Dienst voor Arbeid en Werkloosheid (NDAP), reporting to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, see: Bart Brinckman, “Een schakel tussen arbeid en leiding: het Rijksarbeidsambt (1940-1944)” in: *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, No. 12 (1989), 85-161; Nico Wouters, *De overheid en collaboratie in België, 1940-1944* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2006).

<sup>156</sup> Report of the meeting between d’Hoedt of the Arbeitsamt, Benedictus and Feiertag, 27 June 1942, A008453, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>157</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 236.

<sup>158</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 242-248.

UGIF-Sud, including the letters of Mirjam Bolle and the diaries and reports of David Cohen, Salomon van den Berg and Raymond-Raoul Lambert, the organisations' activities have not been examined to the same degree in existing literature. They are highlighted in some of the (most recent) literature on the AJB and the UGIF but not within the broader context of the nature and impact of these Jewish organisations. Nor are the AJB's and UGIF's activities compared to those of their western European counterparts.<sup>159</sup> The large majority of the organisations' operations concerned very basic and practical activities, mostly related to social welfare and assistance. Although analyses have been primarily focussed on questions of *whether* and *why* the Jewish leaders collaborated or cooperated with the Nazis, this was only a marginal question during the period of occupation itself. Rather, the leaders were busy providing assistance with housing, education and medical care. For example, the communication of the JR central board with the Leeuwarden branch shows that the Dutch Council aimed to find out the whereabouts of Jews who were missing, and that it also discussed financial issues and the general functioning of the organisations and distributed information sheets indicating, for example, what to do in case family members died or when people moved.<sup>160</sup> A telling example of the minor details with which the Joodsche Raad busied itself is the notice it sent to Jews in the provinces urging them to make sure they would shut down the electricity in their houses before their forced relocation to Amsterdam.<sup>161</sup> A detailed description sent out by the Dutch JR of *how* people should pack their bags, also bears witness to this.<sup>162</sup>

The four Jewish organisations were in touch with one another in order to try to control the movement of Jews to neighbouring countries. The AJB, the JR, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud communicated amongst themselves when trying to find out the whereabouts of Jews who had fled to one of the two other countries, urging their counterparts to protect members of the community. There were also requests to send the personal papers of Jews. In June 1943, for example, the JR contacted the AJB in order to retrieve the baptismal papers of a Jewish woman who lived in the Netherlands. The AJB managed to retrieve these documents at the municipality and sent them to

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<sup>159</sup> See, for example, Van Doorslaer and Schreiber, *De curatoren van het getto*; Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*; Jacques Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 109-132. As we have seen, the last (and only) monograph on the Dutch Jewish Council in which these kind of perspectives are entirely absent was published in 1983 by Hans Knoop.

<sup>160</sup> See, for example, the letters and documents sent between the JR central council board and the Friesland branch (with its main office in Leeuwarden), 1941-1943, M.19, Yad Vashem.

<sup>161</sup> Letter of JR central board to those Jews outside Amsterdam who would be forcibly relocated to the capital city, 19 March 1942, 182.2, NIOD.

<sup>162</sup> Letter of the Amsterdam central board to the JR Leeuwarden branch, 10 May 1943, M. 19, Inv. No. 2, Yad Vashem.

Amsterdam. The AJB and the UGIF also exchanged lists of known concentration camps in eastern Europe, encouraging one another to supplement the lists with available information.<sup>163</sup> There was also communication between the Jewish communities in Germany and Belgium. Before the AJB's creation, members of the German Reichsvereinigung der Juden had been in touch with a predecessor of their Belgian counterpart. On 26 February 1941, for example, the German Association sent a letter to the Assistance Sociales Juives, urging the Jewish leaders to inform Günther Hertz, in possession of an American passport, that he was summoned to the US consulate in Stuttgart. The Reichsvereinigung representative asked whether the organisation could take Hertz to the US consulate in Antwerp as soon as possible.<sup>164</sup>

The provision of social welfare characterised all Jewish organisations, but the ways in which the leaders carried out these activities varied, in part because the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were structured differently and operated in different contexts. Whereas the JR quickly gained the exclusive power over the Jews in the Netherlands, the existence of still other Jewish (representative) organisations meant that the AJB and the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud never fulfilled the same function in their respective societies. The autocratic position of the JR in combination with the absolute power of its chairmanship was markedly different from the Belgian case, where local boards were effectively represented in the central board. In the French unoccupied zone, the situation was yet again different because the Jewish organisations within the UGIF-Sud generally retained their autonomy. As we will see, these differences affected the daily organisational reality and the effectiveness of the organisations, both from the Jewish and the German perspective. The ways in which the Jewish organisations were structured depended on a variety of factors: the institutional rivalry between the various German (and Vichy) departments involved as highlighted previously, the blueprints they were modelled after, the structure of the communities and the outlook and choices of the Jewish leaders.

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<sup>163</sup> Exchange of letters between the AJB, the UGIF and the JR, Feb 1943-July 1943, A004273; A004304; A004323.01; A003626; A003838; A003904, JMDV, Kazerne Dossin. For further exchanges between the organisations see, for example, Letter of the interim director of the UGIF to the administrator of the UGIF-Nord on an exchange project with the AJB, 11 November 1943, CDXI-193, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>164</sup> Letter of the Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland to the Association des Juifs en Belgique, 26 February 1941, A003037.03, Joods Museum voor Deportatie en Verzet (JMDV), Kazerne Dossin.

*The JR: the absolute power of the two chairmen*

We turn first to the Dutch case. As we have seen, the Amsterdam Jewish Council became a body with nationwide authority in September 1941, seven months after its establishment. As early as May 1941, the JR leadership had developed a blueprint for the structures of a nationwide Council: the Joodse Raad voor Nederland (the Jewish Council of the Netherlands), even though this name was never used in practice. A memorandum from this period notes that all other Jewish associations and foundations were to be incorporated into the JR. While they were allowed to maintain their name and outward independence, their activities and financial resources were directly overseen by the JR.<sup>165</sup> The blueprint shows that the plan was to establish eight provincial JR branches in cities across the country with each representing either a few cities or entire provinces: 1) Haarlem, for the province of Noord-Holland (with the exception of Amsterdam); 2) Den Haag for the cities of The Hague and Leiden, 3) Rotterdam for the city of Rotterdam and other cities in the province of Zuid-Holland; 4) Utrecht for the province of Utrecht; 5) Arnhem for the province of Gelderland; 6) Enschede for the province of Overijssel; 7) Groningen for the northern provinces (Groningen, Drenthe, Friesland) and, 8) Eindhoven for the southern provinces (Limburg, Noord-Brabant, Zeeland).<sup>166</sup> At the time the plan was drafted, the JR was still officially functioning only as a local Amsterdam organisation. After the Coördinating Commission was dissolved in November 1941, the JR took over the local committees that had previously served the CC and began to extend its influence to the entire country.

A letter to all local and provincial Jewish representatives dating from 18 November 1941 shows that the eventual structure of the local branches was slightly different from that proposed in May of that year. Rather than eight provincial branches, a representative was appointed in *each* of the provinces, eleven in total, and each was obliged to report directly back to Asscher and Cohen.<sup>167</sup> The appointment of these local representatives had to be approved by the central board in Amsterdam first. In every city or town where Jews lived, there was also a community

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<sup>165</sup> Ontwerp statuut Joodsche Raad voor Nederland, Memorandum - samenstelling van de Joodsche Raad, 2 May 1941, p.2, 182.1, NIOD.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>167</sup> Communications of the Joodsche Raad, 18 November 1941, p.1-2, M.19, No.4, Yad Vashem. In this letter, the JR leaders aimed to create an overview of the organisation and functions of the JR local branches 'because there seem[ed] to be misunderstandings' in this regard. In total, there were 12 provincial representatives as the province of Zuid-Holland was divided up in a northern and southern zone, with The Hague responsible for the northern half of the province, and Rotterdam for the southern half.

representative: the *plaatselijk hoofdvertegenwoordiger* (main local representative). The number of community representatives depended on the size of the local Jewish community; larger communities had more representatives.<sup>168</sup> On 24 February 1942, the JR distributed a list of all employees, including the representatives of the provincial JR branches.<sup>169</sup> Whereas Jozeph Michman has argued that there was relative autonomy for the local branches, especially for Enschede and The Hague, we will see that, compared to Belgium and France, local branch representatives in the Netherlands generally had little or no impact on the central board's policies and decisions.<sup>170</sup>

It should be noted that the Enschede branch was unique because it functioned relatively independently of the JR's central board. Its chairman, Sig Menko, was convinced that the directions of the central board in Amsterdam ought not to be followed. As various testimonies indicate, the Enschede leaders encouraged Jews to go into hiding while being seemingly loyal to the Germans.<sup>171</sup> This was in contrast to what Asscher and Cohen were doing in Amsterdam. In the end, around half of the Jews in Enschede managed to survive, and this can partly be ascribed to the position taken by Menko.<sup>172</sup> It should also be noted that Enschede is situated near the border with Germany, through which many German Jewish refugees had passed in the 1930s, so it is likely that the Jews there may have been more aware of the consequences of German persecution and were therefore more willing to go into hiding. The presence of an active organised resistance group in the area, the Overduin group, which arranged hiding places for Jews, together with the considerate attitude of Enschede's non-Jewish population have also been emphasised in this context.<sup>173</sup> Other contributory factors include the presence of an anti-German police commissioner until the end of December 1942 and a mayor who protested against the German measures on a number of occasions.<sup>174</sup>

The dependence of the other local branches was in part the result of their financial reliance

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>169</sup> Letter to the members of the Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam, 24 February 1942, 182.1, NIOD.

<sup>170</sup> Jozeph Michman, "The Controversy Surrounding the Jewish Council of Amsterdam. From its Inception to Present Day" in: Michael Marrus (ed.), *The Nazi Holocaust: Victims of the Holocaust* (Westport/London: Greenwood, 1989), 826.

<sup>171</sup> "Resisting Forces – the Jewish Council in Enschede 1941-1943", item ID 8413288, Film Center, Yad Vashem; Cecile Kanteman in: Lindwer (ed.), *Het fatale dilemma*, 115-121.

<sup>172</sup> Schenkel, *De Twentse Paradox*, 94-95.

<sup>173</sup> Presser, *Ondergang*, vol. 1, 407.

<sup>174</sup> Schenkel, *De Twentse Paradox*, 131-132.

on the Amsterdam main office. The JR central board was unwilling to give the local boards freedom to act. Wartime exchanges between the central board and the local Leeuwarden branch show that the central board encouraged local branches to execute the instructions of the central board in Amsterdam as quickly and precisely as possible.<sup>175</sup> In the blueprint of May 1941 about the transformation of the Joodse Raad voor Amsterdam to the Joodse Raad voor Nederland, the specific role of the local branches as perceived by the JR leadership was outlined. The text highlights the intended centralised power of the Amsterdam main office:

The provincial Jewish Councils are subject to the Joodse Raad voor Nederland and execute its orders and decrees in their respective areas. They communicate externally only with consent of the Joodse Raad voor Nederland.<sup>176</sup>

There was extensive communication on an almost daily basis between the central JR board and its local branches. Indeed, on one occasion, the representative of the province of Friesland (Leeuwarden), Maurits Troostwijk, expressed dissatisfaction that there had not been communication for several days, showing just how often the central board was usually in touch with local branches.<sup>177</sup> Local branches were not only subject to the Amsterdam central board. They also worked under the direct supervision of the SiPo-SD – the Nazi authorities thus had the power to intervene without informing the Amsterdam leaders. This created some room for manoeuvre for the local boards but never altered the high-level policies carried out by the JR leadership.<sup>178</sup>

In addition to the local branches that were responsible for the Jews in certain towns and regions, the JR had various sub-departments that were responsible for particular social sectors, including the department of immigration, the Hulp aan Vertrekkenden (Central Bureau for Assistance to People Departing), the education department and the socio-pedagogic department. Whereas the local branches were simply taken over from the Coördinatie Commissie, these social

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<sup>175</sup> Letter of the JR central board to Mr. Troostwijk (representative of the Leeuwarden branch), 28 May 1943, p. 29, M. 19, Inv. No. 2, Yad Vashem. Also see the statement of a German police officer who worked for the Judenreferat in The Hague, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491, I (PF Amsterdam T70982). He indicated that the Hague branch of the JR never took any decision on its own and that the central office in Amsterdam always had to be consulted first.

<sup>176</sup> Ontwerp statuut Joodsche Raad voor Nederland, Memorandum - samenstelling van de Joodsche Raad, 1941, p.1 182.1, NIOD.

<sup>177</sup> Letter of Troostwijk to the Amsterdam central Council board, Joodse Raad voor Leeuwarden, 27 May 1943, p. 31, M.19, Inv. No. 2, Yad Vashem. Troostwijk indicated that the last internal information (*interne informatie*) had been received on 20 May 1943 and that they wanted to receive an update about the course of events.

<sup>178</sup> Michman, De oprichting van de ‘Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam’ vanuit een vergelijkend perspectief, 91.

departments were newly established. Administrative documents show that all these departments frequently reported back to the JR's central board.<sup>179</sup> There was also the so-called Joodsche Beirat, which was formed by, and represented, German Jews in the Netherlands. In a postwar report, Cohen indicated that the task of the Beirat was to advise the JR and that, as such, it had a major impact on the decisions of the organisation.<sup>180</sup> However, in practice, the Beirat was never officially part of the Joodsche Raad. It had neither substantial autonomy nor a real say in the Council's decisions or regulations, in part because its members did not have the right to vote.<sup>181</sup> By contrast, the Expositur department of the JR, headed by Austrian Jew Edwin Sluzker, was more important in its function. Initially, it exclusively aided Jews filling in their emigration forms. However, its responsibilities increased as the war progressed, in particular after the evacuation of Jews in the Netherlands to Amsterdam and the first deportations to eastern Europe commenced in the summer of 1942. It was responsible for providing social welfare to Jews in the Hollandsche Schouwburg (during the war renamed Joodsche Schouwburg), an assembly place of Jews before they were sent to Westerbork in the north of the country. The Expositur *also* arranged exemptions at the office of the Zentralstelle, headed by aus der Fünten.<sup>182</sup>

An investigation of the JR's activity reports shows that its members dedicated much of their time to offering practical help for Jews. For example, from 7 November 1941 onwards Jews were no longer allowed to travel (or to move to a new place) without a travel permit. The JR responded to this measure by arranging permits for Jews who needed to travel on a daily basis, including those wanting to visit family members who had fallen ill.<sup>183</sup> When the deportations of Jews to eastern Europe commenced, the JR's employees busied themselves with the practical necessities that needed to be taken care of in this context, in the same way that their counterparts in the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were doing. Among other things, the Jews needed proper, solid shoes and rucksacks. At the end of July 1942, The Hulp aan Vertrekkenden department was

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<sup>179</sup> See: Joodse Raad voor Amsterdam, Landelijke bureaus 182.4, NIOD; Letters and documents sent between the JR central council board and the Friesland branch (with its main office in Leeuwarden), 1941-1943, M.19, Yad Vashem.

<sup>180</sup> Cohen, "Geschiedenis van de Joden in de oorlog" [unpublished manuscript], p. 128, Doc I 248-0294, Inv. No. 10, NIOD.

<sup>181</sup> Statement of David Cohen, 24 March 1947, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491, V (PF Amsterdam T70982). Also see: Report of Gertrude van Tijn, "Bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland van 10 mei 1940 tot juni 1944", p. 5, 248-1720B, Inv. No. 1, NIOD. For the interactions between the Beirat and the central board in Amsterdam, see: Beirat "voor niet-Nederlandse joden", 182.36, NIOD.

<sup>182</sup> Presser, *Ondergang*, Vol. 1, 465; Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 90-94.

<sup>183</sup> Reports of (and notes concerning) discussions of the chairmen of the JR with the German authorities, April 1941-September 1943, 182.4, NIOD.

instituted in order to safeguard this aid for Jews. Gertrude van Tijn, who worked for the emigration department of the JR, by now largely redundant, was asked to head the newly established department. Its central aim was to ‘prepare Jews for the journey that awaited them’.<sup>184</sup> Van Tijn has indicated that she focussed exclusively on the provision of social welfare and did not want to be held responsible for the political decisions of the JR leadership.<sup>185</sup> In the first months of its existence, Hulp aan Vertrekkenden provided thousands of blankets, 350 overcoats, 900 packs of sanitary napkins, 4,000 plates, 500 sets of baby underwear, thousands of other items of clothing, boots and towels, medicine and over 2,000 tubes of toothpaste.<sup>186</sup> In the meantime, other JR departments were also primarily concerned with the provision of social welfare. The Ondersteuning en Maatschappelijk werk (Support and Social Work) department, for example, attempted to arrange exemptions from deportations. The JR also oversaw the provision of education to Jewish children who were banned from public schools from the end of August 1941.<sup>187</sup>

During the course of the occupation, the Joodsche Raad continued its welfare activities, despite increasing German pressure. This pressure was felt, for example, in July 1942 when 700 Jews were held hostage by the Nazis and Asscher and Cohen were coerced into encouraging 4,000 Jews who had received an *oproep* (call) to report themselves.<sup>188</sup> Overall, the leadership tried to make communication with the Germans as efficient as possible, aiming to win time by giving in to certain demands while at the same time asking for concessions from the Germans: *om erger te voorkomen*. This phrase was used to explain and excuse the tactics of the Jewish leaders in that they had attempted to ‘prevent worse’, including deportation to Mauthausen, by complying with German regulations. Mauthausen gained an unsettling reputation in the Netherlands in the spring of 1941 when a group of Jewish hostages was sent there and reports of their death soon reached their families. After that, the Germans used Mauthausen as a threat to make the JR carry out its instructions.<sup>189</sup> Apart from the situation in this particular camp, Cohen claimed after the war that he

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<sup>184</sup> Wasserstein, *Gertrude van Tijn en het lot van de Nederlandse Joden*, 148.

<sup>185</sup> Report of Gertrude van Tijn, “Bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland van 10 mei 1940 tot juni 1944”, p. 48, 248-1720B, Inv. No. 1, NIOD.

<sup>186</sup> Presser, *Ondergang*, vol. 1, 309

<sup>187</sup> Minutes of meetings of the JR about the activities of the JR, the division of labour between the CC and the JR, the education of Jews, the employment of Jews, the introduction of the star, the dissolution of Jewish societies etc., 13 February 1941 - 2 June 1943, 182.3, NIOD.

<sup>188</sup> Meeting report of the Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam, 14 July 1942, 182.3, NIOD.

<sup>189</sup> Henny Dominicus, *Mauthausen: een gedenkboek* (Amsterdam: Stichting Vriendenkring Mauthausen, 1999; first ed. 1995), 13; Knoop, *De Joodsche Raad*, 102;



had not known the fate of the Jews who were deported to camps in the East; a claim that was widely criticised by historians such as Knoop and Van der Zee.<sup>190</sup> Cohen also said after the war that in order to make their tactics work, he and Asscher at times divided the meetings with particular Nazis between themselves, because, for example Cohen got along better with aus der Fünten and Asscher with Willy Lages.<sup>191</sup> Cohen elaborated on their strategy and indicated that the central aim had been to receive exemptions, to gain time and, in doing so, to serve the interests of the Dutch Jewish community at large.<sup>192</sup> As we have seen, whether or not this was a successful strategy has been a subject of debate in the historiography of the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands for decades.

*The AJB: the authority of local branch leaders*

As in the case of its Dutch counterpart, the Belgian AJB was instructed to incorporate into itself Jewish charitable institutions, as stated in its establishment order of 25 November 1941.<sup>193</sup> The Military Administration could either insist upon incorporation or, alternatively, give the order to dissolve social welfare organisations other than the AJB, transferring their possessions and financial resources to the newly established Jewish organisation.<sup>194</sup> In order to achieve the centralisation of welfare activities under the organisation's umbrella, the AJB planned several meetings with existing organisations, including with the most important ones in Brussels: The Rusthuis voor Bejaarden, a home for the elderly, the OCIS, the central Jewish relief society established in 1920, and the Israëlitisch Weeshuis, the Israelite Orphanage.<sup>195</sup> In January 1942, the AJB central board still

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<sup>190</sup> See, for example, Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 136. For the criticism on Cohen's statements see: Nanda van der Zee, *Om erger te voorkomen. De voorbereiding en uitvoering van de vernietiging van het Nederlandse jodendom tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1997), 97-140; Knoop, *De Joodsche Raad*, passim.

<sup>191</sup> Statement of David Cohen in the preparations for the trial against Willy Paul Franz, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 140-VIII (BrC 394/49).

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, No. 63, 2 December 1941, A012077, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>194</sup> Report of the Military Administration, "Betr: Errichtung einer Vereinigung der Juden in Belgien", 15 October 1941, Administration Department. Group 7: Care, Marburg Collection, SVG- R.184 / Tr 50 077, DOS; *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, nr. 63, 2 December 1941, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin; Report of meeting of M. Benedictus, E. Hellendall and S. Pinkous with the Comité de la Rue Ruysbroeck, 27 March 1942, A008428, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin; Schreiber, "Tussen traditionele en verplichte gemeenschap" in: Van Doorslaer and Schreiber (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 73.

<sup>195</sup> Catharine Massenge, "De sociale politiek" in: Van Doorslaer and Schreiber (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 216-218.

granted these organisations financial autonomy, allowing them to receive membership dues and gifts.<sup>196</sup> During the following months, individual local AJB branches developed different policies in relation to the various social welfare organisations. For example, while the Brussels branch in February 1942 ruled that none of these organisations would be allowed to receive memberships dues any longer, the Antwerp branch still allowed Beth Lechem, a Jewish organisation dedicated to poor relief, to do so.<sup>197</sup>

In May 1942, despite the incorporation of organisations such as the Hilfswerk für Juden aus Deutschland, the centralisation of Jewish social welfare remained ineffective and the AJB leadership accepted at this point that it would merely oversee the organisations rather than incorporate them.<sup>198</sup> In the report “La Centralisation de la Bienfaisance” written in the spring of 1942, Oscar Teitelbaum, a member of the AJB Antwerp branch, indicated that centralisation was no longer the main aim. He claimed it would be detrimental to *armenzorg* (poor relief) and that members of the individual organisations were reluctant to serve in a subservient role under the leadership of the AJB.<sup>199</sup> Whereas social welfare was centrally organised by the Dutch JR in late 1941, the AJB in the spring of 1942 thus still depended upon autonomously operating welfare organisations that worked in conjunction with its local branches. During a meeting in this period between the Jewish leaders and Wilhelm von Hahn, spokesperson for the AJB at the *Militärwachtungsstab* of Eggert Reeder, the decentralised nature of Jewish social welfare was highlighted. Individual Jewish aid organisations continued to receive financial support from a variety of Belgian institutions in response to the financial difficulties they faced in the wake of the liquidation of Jewish enterprises.<sup>200</sup> Von Hahn voiced his dissatisfaction with the Jewish community’s dependence on the financial aid of non-Jewish organisations, emphasising that the Reichsvereinigung successfully took care of all the costs of social work in Germany.<sup>201</sup> This

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<sup>196</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the local Brussels board, 28 January 1942, A006941, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin; Massenge, “De sociale politiek”, 218.

<sup>197</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the local Brussels board, 28 January 1942, A006939, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin; Minutes of the meeting of the local Brussels board, 11 February 1942, A006941; Minutes of the meeting of the local Brussels board, 4 March 1942, A006944; Minutes of the AJB central board, 5 February 1942, A006703, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin; Massenge, “De sociale politiek”, 218.

<sup>198</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil. La traque des Juifs 1942-1944*, 94.

<sup>199</sup> Oscar Teitelbaum, “La Centralisation de la Bienfaisance”, spring 1942, A005269, Musée de la Résistance, Kazerne Dossin; Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil, 1942. Les cent jours de la déportation*, 35.

<sup>200</sup> “Report of meeting between Dr. Löffler, Von Hahn, S. van den Berg and M. Benedictus”, 8 April 1942, A007599, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

comparison with the German Jewish Association underlines once again that the Nazis continued to see this body as the AJB's reference point.

Some social welfare organisations continued to function outside the AJB throughout the course of the occupation in Belgium, including the OCIS. The situation was similar in the unoccupied French zone, where Jewish welfare organisations also maintained their autonomy. However, in France, organisations were still officially grouped under the umbrella of the UGIF-Sud, whereas the OCIS in Belgium was not officially part of the AJB. The diverse nature of the Jewish communities in both Belgium and France and the influx of large numbers of Jews in the decades before 1940 necessitated the existence of a large variety of Jewish aid organisations.<sup>202</sup> As there were no retaliation measures for the failure to bring all organisations under the umbrella of the AJB, these social welfare groups did not feel pressured to surrender their autonomy. According to Schreiber, the fact that the Belgian administration legally recognised organisations like the OCIS, which was part of the Israelite congregation, made it impossible for the Germans to disband this organisation.<sup>203</sup> The unwillingness of the OCIS to be incorporated in the AJB Brussels branch led to increasing tension between the two organisations in February 1943, because the former wanted to remain functionally autonomous while the AJB was trying to consolidate its hold on the Brussels community. By then, the OCIS was no longer financially autonomous since it received substantial financial support of the AJB.<sup>204</sup> Leo Feiertag, secretary of the Brussels AJB branch, complained about the function of the OCIS, arguing that it was not working properly because it failed to help people who were ill and dependent on social support.<sup>205</sup> Although the OCIS finally agreed that it would be incorporated in the AJB's social service division on the condition that its executive committee remained in existence, the AJB disagreed and its leadership's wish for close cooperation between the two organisations was therefore not realised.<sup>206</sup>

On 28 June 1943, the Military Befehlshaber of Belgium and Northern France, Alexander

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<sup>202</sup> Massenge, "De sociale politiek", 238.

<sup>203</sup> Schreiber, "Tussen traditionele en verplichte gemeenschap", 85-86. For an overview of the Belgian judicial structure during the Nazi occupation, see: David Fraser, *The Fragility of Law: Constitutional Patriotism and the Jews of Belgium, 1940-1945* (Abingdon: Routledge-Cavendish, 2009), passim.

<sup>204</sup> Minutes of the 49th meeting of the local Brussels board, 3 March 1943, A006996, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>205</sup> Minutes of the 48th meeting of the local Brussels board, 24 February 1943, A006994.04, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>206</sup> Minutes of the 51st meeting of the local Brussels board, 17 March 1943, A006998, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

von Falkenhausen, aware that the unification of Belgian Jewry under the AJB's umbrella had not been successful, commanded that all Jewish welfare organisations had to be incorporated into local AJB branches as soon as possible. Among these were local aid organisations such as the Société Israélite des Secours Efficaces, the Société des Mères et Orphelines Israélites and the Orphelinat Israélite de Bruxelles, as well as the OCIS.<sup>207</sup> One month later, Chaïm Perelman was appointed to function as an intermediary between the AJB Brussels board and the executive committee of the OCIS in order to meet Von Falkenhausen's demand.<sup>208</sup> Whether or when these organisations were officially incorporated into the AJB remains unclear. In April 1944, the OCIS still operated alongside the social service department of the AJB and the two bodies cooperated in providing care to 753 families in Brussels.<sup>209</sup> The difference with the Netherlands, where the JR served as the sole representative body of the Jews in the Netherlands soon after its establishment (even more so after the Coördinatie Commissie was dissolved in November 1941), is striking.

We have seen that the AJB central office was situated in Brussels and that local branches were established in cities with large numbers of Jews: Brussels, Antwerp, Charleroi and Liège. There were also Jewish representatives of the AJB in Gand, Oostende and Aarlen, but these were not official local branches.<sup>210</sup> Unfortunately, the records of the Antwerp and Charleroi branches have been almost completely destroyed. Most of the archival material for the local Liège branch has not been found and was probably destroyed as well. Whereas the chairmen of the local Councils in the Netherlands only had an advisory role to the central board, the local AJB leaders of the largest communities in Belgium were in fact also part of the central board themselves. Juda Mehlwurm, for example, headed the local AJB Charleroi board and was also member of the central board.<sup>211</sup> This gave these local leaders a much larger role in determining AJB policies. Meeting reports of the central board show that at least one representative of each of the local boards was required to be present in order to make the meetings, and the decisions made in them, legitimate. Seven members of these local boards were appointed by the central board, and three others could be appointed by the local branches themselves, although the central board had to approve these

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<sup>207</sup> Minutes of the 68th meeting of the local Brussels board, 30 June 1943, A007021.03, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>208</sup> For a biographical overview of Perelman, see: Alan Gross and Ray Dearin, *Chaïm Perelman* (New York: State University Press, 2003); Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 271-274.

<sup>209</sup> Massenge, "De sociale politiek", 238.

<sup>210</sup> Meinen, "De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB", 51.

<sup>211</sup> Nico Workum, Juda Mehlwurm, Noé Nozyce (Nozice) headed the Antwerp, Charleroi and Liège local AJB board respectively and, consequently, were also part of the AJB's central board.

appointments first.<sup>212</sup>

Members of the local boards implemented the decisions made by the central board and had to provide a monthly report of their daily activities. To take the local Liège branch as an example, its first task was to ensure that all Jews in the area would become AJB members, in line with the regulation of 25 November 1941.<sup>213</sup> The AJB Liège leadership immediately compiled an updated Jewish register, most likely based on sources such as the municipal record of Jews, in order to inform all Jews in the area that they had to register at the AJB.<sup>214</sup> At the outbreak of the war, around 1,900 Jews lived in the Walloon city of Liège, situated in the east of Belgium, not far from the border with the Netherlands. In the broader Liège area, with a total of 161,073 inhabitants, there were 2,560 Jews in residence.<sup>215</sup> The Liège board consisted of seven Jews, headed by Noé Nozyce, who had little leadership experience in the prewar Belgian community. As we have seen, this was emblematic of the AJB leadership more broadly.<sup>216</sup> The local branch was responsible for six advisory commissions: Finance, Charity and Social Work, Education, Worship Services, Emigration, and Arts and Culture.<sup>217</sup>

The Liège branch, like its Dutch counterparts, was also forced to provide education for Jewish children, who were no longer allowed to attend public schools after the regulations of 25 November 1941. This was difficult because there was a lack of Jewish teachers with a degree.<sup>218</sup> On 15 July 1942, AJB central board members were summoned to Kurt Asche and Anton Burger, SS-lieutenant and representative of Adolf Eichmann. They were instructed to facilitate the forced employment of Jews ‘within the boundaries of the former German empire’.<sup>219</sup> The first calls for employment reached the Liège branch by the end of July. The local board distributed the calls

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<sup>212</sup> Document explaining the organisation of the AJB, December 1941, A003710, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>213</sup> *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, No. 63, 2 December 1941, A012077, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>214</sup> Thierry Rosenblum, “Een plaatselijk voorbeeld: het comité van Luik” in: Van Doorslaer and Schreiber (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 270-271.

<sup>215</sup> 8.56% of the Jews in Liège had Belgian nationality. Other nationalities include Polish (60.18%), Romanian (6.14%), Czechoslovakian (3.13%), German (2.77%), Dutch (1.43%), Hungarian (0.44%) and there were also stateless Jews (10.26%). See: Rosenblum, “Een plaatselijk voorbeeld”, 267.

<sup>216</sup> Rosenblum, “Een plaatselijk voorbeeld”, 270.

<sup>217</sup> For a list of members of the local AJB Liège branch, see: A007325, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>218</sup> *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, nr. 63, 2 December 1941, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin; Rosenblum, “Een plaatselijk voorbeeld”, 273.

<sup>219</sup> Maurice Benedictus, “Historique du problème Juif en Belgique depuis le 10 Mai 1940 jusqu’au 21 Décembre 1942”, 18 Feb 1943, p.22-24, A006683, Kazerne Dossin.

among the designated Jews in the region.<sup>220</sup> In addition, it provided social welfare to Jews in the region, including the supply of clothes and food to the interned.<sup>221</sup> In September 1942, the Gestapo raided the AJB Liège office, arresting all present. Because of his Belgian citizenship, Grigorijs Garfinkels was released. Shortly thereafter, he decided to dissolve the physical office in Liège because the raid had shown that it was an easy target. Despite the absence of an office, the AJB Liège branch continued to function under the leadership of Nozyce until April 1943, when all Liège board members were arrested and deported.<sup>222</sup>

The local branches thus carried out the policies that were forced upon them, and dictated by the central board in Brussels. The central board also supervised the expenses of the local branches and, as a document on the organisation of the AJB dating from December 1941 indicates, their financial resources were considered the exclusive property of the AJB central board.<sup>223</sup> Local branches were only allowed to communicate with the Germans through the central board.<sup>224</sup> Despite these restrictions, the local AJB branches in Belgium were in practice more independent than most of the JR's local branches, with the exception of Enschede. For example, the Brussels branch had large sums of money at its disposal and organised many welfare activities autonomously. It coordinated its own schools, children's homes, homes for the elderly and hospitals.<sup>225</sup> On 3-4 September 1943, an extensive operation (Iltis) was launched against all Jews of Belgian nationality, with the purpose of placing them to work in the East. As a response, all local AJB branches, except for the Brussels local office which merged with the central office, ceased to exist.<sup>226</sup> Between April and October 1943, all the Jewish communities of Antwerp, Charleroi, Gand, Mons, Arlon and Liège were liquidated. Members of the local AJB branches were generally relocated to the central Brussels board.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Rosenblum, "Een plaatselijk voorbeeld", 279.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 282-283.

<sup>223</sup> Document explaining the organisation of the AJB, December 1941, A003710, Kazerne Dossin

<sup>224</sup> See document explaining the organisation of the AJB, December 1941, A003710, Kazerne Dossin; Meeting report of the 58th meeting of the local Antwerp board, A007213, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>225</sup> Meeting report of the 24th meeting of the local Brussels board, A006062, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin. The total budget in December 1942 was 169,220 France per month. In February 1943, the budget amounted to 170,100 francs per month. In March 1943, the Brussels branch possessed 587,892,60 Belgian Francs.

<sup>226</sup> The Iltis Plan for the Detainment and Expulsion of Jews who are Belgian Subjects, 1 September 1943, AA556, CEGESOMA; Schreiber, "Tussen traditionele en verplichte gemeenschap", 104-105.

<sup>227</sup> Schreiber, "Tussen traditionele en verplichte gemeenschap", 104-105.

Whereas the AJB central board had a different kind of relation to its local branches than its Dutch counterpart, the organisation and structure of the social welfare provision was almost identical. Departments such as Maatschappelijke Hulp (Social Assistance), Centrale Onderwijscommissie (Education), Speciale Hulp (Special Aid), Centrale Huisbeheer (Housing Management) and Onmiddellijke Bijstand (Immediate Assistance) all had their own specific function and fell under a more broadly defined division of labour (including local committees, the secretary, finances, welfare, education, emigration, and culture and the arts).<sup>228</sup> These departments were responsible for large numbers of Jews and this, together with rapidly changing circumstances and the lack of prewar organisational working experience of most of the Jews involved in these organisations, meant that communication and cooperation between the various departments was strained.<sup>229</sup> Those involved had almost no experience, for example, in how to set up, structure and operate an education system. The only exception was Chaïm Perelman, who had been a professor at the Université Libre de Belgique (ULB) before the war.<sup>230</sup> The lack of coordination in some sections, including the department of education, resulted at times in the development of complex and confusing organisational structures. The Jews in Belgium therefore depended far more than their counterparts in the Netherlands upon local organisational branches and their initiatives.

*The UGIF-Nord: an extensive social welfare apparatus through complex bureaucracy*

As in the Netherlands and Belgium, the provision of social welfare was one of the central preoccupations of the UGIF in both zones. Vicki Caron has convincingly argued that this is a crucial distinction between the UGIF, and western European Councils more broadly, and the *Judenräte* of eastern Europe which developed into political organisations whose duties included the forced roundup of Jews.<sup>231</sup> We have seen that the UGIF had a different organisational foundation in the occupied and unoccupied zones. This affected the daily activities of the two bodies. As in the two other countries, the UGIF-Nord was divided into individual departments, each with particular social welfare responsibilities, including Jeunesse et Reclassement Professionnel (Youth and Redeployment, *groupe 4*), Maisons d'Enfants et Dispensaires (Children's Homes and Clinics,

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<sup>228</sup> Letter of the Antwerp AJB board to the Arbeitsamt concerning the statute and the role of the AJB, 29 June 1942, A005945.01, JMDV, Kazerne Dossin; Dickschen, "De VJB en het onderwijs", 183.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> Caron, "The UGIF: The Failure of the Nazis to establish a Judenrat on the Eastern European Model", 3.

*groupe 5*) and Cantines et Approvisionnement (Canteens and Supplies, *groupe 6*).<sup>232</sup>

The majority of the UGIF-Nord central board members were assigned to administer individual departments. For example, Georges Edinger, Fernand Musnik and Juliette Stern were responsible for administration and finances (*groupe 2*), youth and redeployment (*groupe 4*) and social services (*groupe 3*) respectively. *Groupe 2* had direct control over certain UGIF provincial offices such as Seine-et-Oise, Lunéville, Nancy, Bordeaux and Rouen.<sup>233</sup> *Groupe 1*, including all general services and headed by Marcel Stora, was the most important section. Besides the general secretariat, it included ‘the population card index, the legal department, dispatch of food supplies to camp inmates, the *Bulletin de l’UGIF*, liaison with the Germans and the Préfecture de Police, the control commission, the administrative committee, and the administration of the UGIF’s provincial committees’.<sup>234</sup> We shall see that, as in Belgium, the entire central board, including Edinger, Musnik and Stern, was important in defining the course of the organisation. This contrasts with the Dutch situation, where authority rested exclusively in the hands of the two chairmen.

Despite the fact that the structure of the UGIF-Nord seemed clear in terms of the existence of these individual ‘groups’, its bureaucratic structure was highly complex. In the second half of 1942, it consisted of 48 different departments.<sup>235</sup> In the first *groupe*, for example, there were many sub-departments, including department 14, which served as the liaison between the UGIF and the Germans. The leadership’s wish to maintain firm control over all these departments resulted in an impractical situation in which ‘[n]o independence of operation within departments was tolerated’.<sup>236</sup> Moreover, in a similar way to its predecessor the Comité de Coördination, the UGIF-Nord suffered from a lack of cooperation from immigrant community leaders.<sup>237</sup> This has been explained by the fact that the UGIF-Nord leaders followed a legalistic model of behaviour, ‘rooted in a trust in France and fostered by generations of emancipation’.<sup>238</sup> However, as will see, this analysis is too narrow since we know that clandestine activities were undertaken under the cloak of the UGIF-

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<sup>232</sup> For a complete overview of the individual departments of the UGIF and its sub-departments, see: Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 404-407.

<sup>233</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 115.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> Adler, *The Jews in Paris*, 116.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-116.

<sup>237</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 70; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 87, 96-106.

<sup>238</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, x.



Nord and by its own members. The strong divisions among French Jewry and its non-unified nature combined, with central and eastern European Jewish immigrants' distrust of Nazi policies better explain the lack of immigrant support for the UGIF. They had, after all, already voiced their opposition during the establishment of the UGIF when Communists and Bundists stated that no collaboration with Vichy was acceptable.<sup>239</sup>

One of the major tasks of the UGIF-Nord was to provide aid to Jews suffering from hunger in internment camps in the occupied zone like those at Pithiviers and Beaune-la-Rolande. The organisation also secured contact between Jews in the camps and their family members outside.<sup>240</sup> Conditions were especially harsh in Drancy, which the Germans established as an internment camp for foreign Jews in August 1941 and from where Jews were systematically deported from the summer of 1942 onwards.<sup>241</sup> The UGIF-Nord became directly responsible for relief activities in the camp, including the supply of nursing staff and medical supplies.<sup>242</sup> When deportation from France commenced in March 1942, Dannecker, inspired by the effectiveness of the eastern European *Judenräte* which were made to deliver the required number of Jews for each transport, wished to make the Jewish organisation instrumental in achieving his objectives.<sup>243</sup> He aimed to introduce the ghetto system in France in order to achieve this, but was once again obstructed by the Military Administration.<sup>244</sup> In lieu, he chose to make the UGIF instrumental in providing supplies for the Jews who were to be deported. For example, the UGIF-Nord leadership was held responsible for the collection of shoes and blankets for 1,000 men in early March 1942. As a result of this demand, the central board faced a political and moral dilemma: 'it neither wished to collaborate in a police measure nor did it want these men to be deported without basic survival equipment'.<sup>245</sup> In the period that followed, we shall see that disagreements prevailed between Dannecker and the UGIF-Nord leaders who believed that Dannecker's wish to make the UGIF instrumental in the deportation

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<sup>239</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 87.

<sup>240</sup> Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 55.

<sup>241</sup> From the summer of 1941 until the summer of 1944, 67,000 of the 75,000 Jews deported from France, mostly foreigners, passed through Drancy; 80,000 people who were defined as Jews stayed in the camp for a period of time ranging from a few hours to three years. For an excellent overview of the history of and life in Drancy camp, see: Annette Wieviorka and Michel Laffitte, *À l'intérieur du camp de Drancy* (Paris: Perrin, 2012).

<sup>242</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 118.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> Letter of Dannecker to the Military Administration, 18 April 1942, LXV-11, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>245</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 118.

of Jews was incompatible with the organisation's social objectives.<sup>246</sup>

As the mass deportations began in July 1942, the German demands for supplies drastically increased. In early July, the UGIF was required to supply goods on an industrial scale. This made it clear to the Jewish leaders that there was a direct relation between these demands and the deportations.<sup>247</sup> André Baur, for example, noted in a letter to the CGQJ on 6 July 1942 that asking his coreligionists for donations would demonstrate that deportations were imminent and that this, in turn, would spread unwanted panic and fear.<sup>248</sup> Despite his objections to the ways in which both Vichy and German officials attempted to make the UGIF(-Nord) instrumental to their aims, his wish to help persuaded Baur to emphasise the social objectives of his organisation, including the care for Jewish children.<sup>249</sup> After the first deportations of adult foreign Jews had commenced in March 1942, their French-born children had been left behind because the Germans proved unwilling to transport anyone under the age of 16.<sup>250</sup> The UGIF-Nord took care of those Jewish children who were released from Drancy while their parents were interned, deported or otherwise absent (*enfants isolés*), housing them with together with orphans and other children whose parents had voluntarily entrusted them to their care (*enfants libres*).<sup>251</sup> Initially, the social service employees dispersed these children among various children's homes and Jewish families in the occupied zone.<sup>252</sup> During a meeting between the French authorities and Dannecker on 8 July 1942, in preparation for the major Vél d'Hiv raid a little more than a week later, it was decided that all Jewish children would be assembled in the children's homes that were overseen by the UGIF.<sup>253</sup> Because of this centralisation of care, it became easier for the German authorities to trace the children. Shortly thereafter, Vallat asked Baur how many Jewish children the UGIF-Nord could accommodate, indicating that he

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<sup>246</sup> In the section on the German perceptions of the Jewish organisations' effectiveness, these disagreements between the UGIF-Nord leadership and Dannecker are discussed. See, for example: Letter of Baur to the CGQJ, 26 March 1942, XXVIII-23, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Minutes of the Administrative Council UGIF-Nord, 6 July 1943, Reel 3, MK490.4.3:3:1 (YIVO), Mémorial de la Shoah; Georges Edinger, Report on the activities of the UGIF: concerning its 'official work' and 'clandestine work' from 1941 to 1944, p. 16, CCCLXXIX-33, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 159-164; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 150.

<sup>247</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 121.

<sup>248</sup> Letter of Baur to CGQJ, 6 July 1942, YVA 0-9/6 as cited in Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 121-122.

<sup>249</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 121-122.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid*, 123-127; Moore, *Survivors*, 263.

<sup>251</sup> For an overview of the ways in which these children were labelled - *isolés*, *bloqués* and *fichés* -, and the implications thereof, see: Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 214-215.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid*, 205-213; Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 333-334.

<sup>253</sup> Report of meeting between Germans and French authorities, including Dannecker and Darquier de Pellepoix, 8 July 1942, XXVb-55, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

expected the organisation to take care of an even larger number of Jewish children in the future.<sup>254</sup>

When the first deportations began, Vichy officials had attempted to persuade the German authorities in Berlin to deport foreign Jewish children with their parents, but they had not yet received a decision by 16 July 1942 when the first major round-ups commenced.<sup>255</sup> As a result, while some children were interned and deported with their parents, others were left on their own.<sup>256</sup> The UGIF did not have enough capacity to house the children either in orphanages or in other institutions and whereas some, mainly French, children were distributed among their neighbours or relatives, others were housed under inhumane conditions or left on the streets.<sup>257</sup> In January 1943, all children in the care of the UGIF were 'blocked' and their addresses carefully inventoried by the authorities, making them easy targets for arrest. This is indeed what happened in Paris on 10 February 1943, when 42 children were arrested. A few months later, children in the departments of l'Oise and La Seine-et-Oise suffered the same fate.<sup>258</sup>

#### *The UGIF-Sud: a federation of departments and sections*

The UGIF-Sud's federative structure resulted in a situation where a substantial number of Jewish (welfare) bodies were officially administered by the organisation while in practice they remained autonomous. Its different *directions* (sections) therefore represented organisations that already existed before the war. In designing the UGIF-Sud, Lambert had been well aware of the differences between the groups of Jews who resided in France. When he instituted the seven departments with subsections, he therefore allowed a wide range of welfare activities that represented the prevailing currents in the different communities.<sup>259</sup> For example, the first department of the organisation consisted of two sections, incorporating the CCOJA, the Entr'aide française Israélite de Société de Bienfaisance Israélite de Marseille (French Israelite Mutual Aid Society of Marseille), the Maison Israélite de Refuge (Israelite Refuge House) in Lyon and the Union des Sociétés de Bienfaisance

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<sup>254</sup> List of premises available, orally communicated by André Baur, 13 July 1942, XXVIII-36, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>255</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 263.

<sup>256</sup> Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 209-212.

<sup>257</sup> Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 209. Also see the report of the WIZO on its activities between 1941 and 1944, undated, CCXVII-9, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>258</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 334.

<sup>259</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 137.

Israélite (Union of Israelite Charity Societies) in Toulouse. The second section incorporated the Oeuvre d'Aide Sociale Auprès des Populations Repliées d'Alsace Lorraine (Organisation for the Social Aid to Displaced Populations of Alsace Lorraine) in Périgueux. Other sections, seven in total, incorporated Jewish welfare organisations such as the ORT, OSE, EIF and HICEM.<sup>260</sup> In contrast to the JR, the AJB and the UGIF-Nord, the individual departments of the UGIF-Sud were also financially autonomous. The OSE and the Jewish scouts were, for example, only loosely associated with the UGIF-Sud and could follow their own policies with little intervention.<sup>261</sup> These organisations legally aided the Jewish communities in the unoccupied zone by providing social welfare such as clothing and food. As we shall see, they simultaneously engaged in clandestine activities, including the provision of hiding places for children.

The UGIF-Sud was similar to the JR, the AJB and the UGIF-Nord, in that local branches were put in place in cities with a (large) Jewish presence (Marseille and Toulouse, for example). Compared to the JR and the AJB, the number of local branches of both the UGIF-Nord and UGIF-Sud was considerable and, in the case of the UGIF-Sud, these local branches remained operative well into 1944. Correspondence between the various UGIF directors show that some of the UGIF-Sud branches were centralised in April/May 1944. In early April 1944, the local branches of le Brive, Périgueux and Vichy were closed, after the Chambéry-Grenoble branch had been closed two months earlier and the personnel arrested.<sup>262</sup> As a consequence, the UGIF's last director Geissmann sent a letter to Kurt Schendel, who as *chef de liaison* served as an intermediary between the UGIF and the Germans, and indicated that the local branches of Chateauroux, Guéret and St. Amand had transferred their activities to the regional office of Limoges while the Peau branch had been transferred to Toulouse.<sup>263</sup>

Initially, the UGIF-Sud leadership expected a gradual dissolution of welfare organisations and their transference into the Jewish organisation. However, this did not happen.<sup>264</sup> In contrast to its western European counterparts, the UGIF-Sud 'remained a federation of the departments and their sections, in which the decentralised nature of French Jewry prevailed' and its leadership lacked

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<sup>260</sup> For an overview of the administration of the UGIF-Sud, see: Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 408-409.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>262</sup> Correspondence of the general director of the UGIF with its president and Rabbi Deutsch on the liquidation of regional offices, 7 April 1944 - 30 May 1944, CDX-59, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>264</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 107.

any real authority and influence over departments or the Jewish community.<sup>265</sup> With the aid of organisations such as the OSE and EIF, which merged into the organisation's departments 3 and 4 respectively during the summer of 1942, the UGIF-Sud was responsible for a large variety of relief activities, including the provision of care for interned Jews and for thousands of children whose parents had been interned or deported.<sup>266</sup> As a result of its federative structure, the organisation was never exploited by the Nazis to carry out arrests, deportations or selections. Moreover, as Cohen has indicated, the leadership never attempted to direct the communities into a particular course of action.<sup>267</sup> Despite the negative public perception of both the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, which increased during the war, we have to conclude that their actual scope of action was limited.<sup>268</sup> Since the UGIF-Sud did not have independent financial resources and only had a few autonomous areas of activity, which included its relations with the authorities and their engagement in relief work, it had limited influence. The organisation was functioning as a polyarchy 'unable to serve the German designs even if it so desired'.<sup>269</sup>

Throughout the war, various attempts by the UGIF-Nord's leader André Baur to unify the entire UGIF under one umbrella were rejected by the UGIF-Sud leadership, which was unwilling to give up its autonomy. The UGIF-Nord leadership, which considered Lambert and Lévy inadequate leaders, had favoured their removal from the inception of the UGIF and wished to take over the leadership at their expense. On 3 March 1943 André Baur even composed a report in which he recommended the centralisation of the two boards into a single board located in Paris, with which the UGIF-Sud, so he claimed, complied. The new board would exist of the UGIF-Nord board accompanied by three UGIF-Sud board members. However, this plan was never realised.<sup>270</sup> On 21 March 1943, Lambert reflected upon this episode in his diary: '[o]ur colleagues in Paris act a bit as though they want to treat us, here in the field of battle as we say nowadays, as if we were minors and needed a guardian'.<sup>271</sup> Only during the last months of the occupation in 1944 was UGIF no longer separated between two zones, but centralised in Paris.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>266</sup> Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 138-150, 246-273.

<sup>267</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 138.

<sup>268</sup> For an overview of the ways in which the UGIF was perceived, both during the war and in the period after France's liberation, including by historians, see: Laffitte, "L'UGIF, collaboration ou résistance?", passim.

<sup>269</sup> Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience*, 138.

<sup>270</sup> On the history of UGIF-Nord's attempt to incorporate UGIF-Sud, see: Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 133-161.

<sup>271</sup> Lambert, *The diary of a witness*, 21 March 1943, 174.

<sup>272</sup> Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 21.

The four case studies have shown that the Jewish organisations all had a comparable outlook. Overall, the leaders aimed to use a legal framework to provide social welfare to their Jewish communities. The social welfare departments in each organisation resembled one another. At the same time, we have seen how the structures and functions of these departments differed in practice. The same is true for the position of the chairmen versus other central board members, and (local) branches versus the central organisation. Whereas the JR and the UGIF-Nord leadership attempted, with varying degrees of success, to maintain firm control over all local branches, the AJB's local branches enjoyed relative autonomy. In the case of the UGIF-Sud, the various sections even had full (financial) autonomy. Furthermore, there were major differences in the ways in which the Jewish leaders organised and managed their organisations; Asscher and Cohen's autocratic rule can be considered an exception in this regard. The responsibilities of the leaders varied. The UGIF-Nord, for example, carried a heavier burden of responsibility than its southern counterpart, particularly from the summer of 1942 onwards. It had to take care of impoverished Jews in the occupied zone and was forced to bear the full cost of deportations. This included Jews from the Vichy zone, who had begun arriving in Drancy in the summer of 1942. It was also forced to make material preparations for the deportations. In that respect, the position and responsibilities of the UGIF-Nord were more similar to those of the AJB and JR. As we shall see, these variations in structure affected how their Nazi (and in the case of France, Vichy) overseers judged their effectiveness.

### **2.3 German views on the organisations' effectiveness: from optimism to frustration**

In light of how vaguely the responsibilities of the Jewish organisations had been set out, there is a need to examine how the Germans judged their effectiveness throughout the course of the war. German satisfaction or dissatisfaction can tell us whether and how the functions of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were (re)considered at various stages during the war. As the occupation continued, the German (and Vichy) departments involved in Jewish affairs increasingly wanted to consolidate their control over the Jewish organisations, either to gain more power at the cost of their rival institutions or to speed up the process of anti-Jewish legislation and persecution. Whether or not the Jewish organisations lived up to German expectations is important for our understanding of both the nature of the interaction between these organisations and their German (or Vichy) overseers, and the broader dynamics of occupation in each of the three countries.

In the case of Belgium and France, the responsible German officials were largely dissatisfied with the organisations' effectiveness. In the Netherlands, by contrast, the role of the JR in the implementation of anti-Jewish legislation was more positively received. German perceptions about the nature of the organisations changed during the course of the war. The same is true for the Jewish leaders, who envisioned a different task than the one the Germans had set for them. If we start with Belgium, we can see that the AJB's leadership focussed primarily on providing social aid to the Jews in their country. Initially, they concentrated on saving as many arrested Jews as possible, but from the summer of 1942 onwards, the priority shifted to arranging exemptions from deportations.<sup>273</sup> After SS-Obersturmführer Kurt Asche indicated that he expected the AJB to scrupulously carry out the tasks set out by the Germans, Maurice Benedictus – Antwerp representative in the AJB central board – candidly replied that, from his perspective, the AJB only existed in order to serve the interests of the Jewish community in Belgium.<sup>274</sup> At this point, in April 1942, Asche also communicated that he did not want the AJB to become a continuation of the passive resistance previously offered by other Jewish organisations. Benedictus replied in his defence that the AJB had busied itself exclusively with the obligations imposed on it since the organisation's establishment. Asche's fear was, he said, therefore unfounded.<sup>275</sup> This lack of trust so soon after the AJB's establishment encapsulates the nature of the communications between the Germans and the Belgian Association leadership throughout the war.

On 16 July 1942, the SiPo-SD announced the first deportations of Jews from Belgium and demanded that the AJB make the necessary preparations for this. Only half of the Jews who were called for reported themselves to Kazerne Dossin in Malines.<sup>276</sup> As a result, the SiPo-SD pressured the AJB to encourage Jews to comply with the calls for deportations in order to avoid retaliation measures. During a meeting of the AJB with twelve representatives of other central Jewish representative organisations, not including the communist Main d'Oeuvre Immigrée (immigrant workforce, MOI) and the Zionist Linke Poalei Zion, Ullman was pressured by the other community

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<sup>273</sup> Meinen, "De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB", 68.

<sup>274</sup> Report of the visit of M. Benedictus and S. Pinkous to SS-Obersturmführer Asche, 17 April 1942, R497/ Tr46.665, DOS.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil, 1942: les cent jours de la déportation*, 223-227; Ibid., *La traque des Juifs*, Vol. 1, 65-81.

representatives to sign a ‘call for obedience’ that encouraged the Jews to obey the German orders.<sup>277</sup> Despite this commitment, the Germans did not consider the AJB to be useful in helping with the deportation of Jews in the period that followed.<sup>278</sup> The SiPo-SD did not manage to gain a direct and definitive grip on the Jewish leadership, most importantly because alternative representations outside the AJB remained in existence, as the following sections of this chapter will show.

German discontent with the AJB’s function led both the Militärverwaltung and the SiPo-SD to maintain contact with the Hilfswerk for German refugees, an aid organisation whose leadership was not represented in the AJB. In doing so, both German institutions undermined the power of the AJB. The German motivation for turning to this alternative organisation has been described as laziness.<sup>279</sup> However, in the context of German dissatisfaction with how the AJB was functioning, the choice to turn to Hilfswerk as an alternative representative body should be differently explained. Officials from both the SiPo-SD and the Militärverwaltung were anxiously looking for a Jewish representative organisation that would promote two of their major aims: 1) the facilitation of the implementation of anti-Jewish regulations in the country and; 2) an increase in their own authority at the expense of their rival German institution. In the end, the two Jewish organisations ended up in rivalry themselves and this increased still further when one of the Hilfswerk committee members falsely presented himself to the Germans as an AJB representative in June 1942. Without informing the AJB leadership, or asking for its consent, he agreed that the AJB would be responsible for the distribution of the yellow star.<sup>280</sup> German attempts to create a more functional line of communication with Jewish community representatives by approaching the Hilfswerk did not contribute to a more effective implementation of anti-Jewish regulations. On the contrary, the existence and position of the Hilfswerk complicated an already difficult situation in which the AJB aimed to serve as an umbrella relief organisation for all Jews in Belgium.<sup>281</sup> Therefore, the plan was a failure.

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<sup>277</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil, 1942: les cent jours de la déportation*, 184-188; Ibid., *La persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 245-246; Laurence Schram, “De oproepen voor ‘tewerkstelling’ in het Oosten” in: Van Doorslaer and Schreiber (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 260-263

<sup>278</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil, 1942: les cent jours de la déportation*, 223-227; Ibid., *La traque des Juifs*, Vol. 1, 65-81.

<sup>279</sup> Meinen, “De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB”, 55.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.; Meeting report of Maurice Benedictus and Salomon Ullman with dr. Gentze, 6 June 1942, R497/Tr146.666, DOS.

<sup>281</sup> Meinen, “De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB”, 55.



The AJB dealt with the various departments of the Military Administration and the SiPo-SD through a complicated network of communication. The fact that it was unclear to which German authority the AJB leaders ought to address themselves prevented effective communication. For example, when the central board members approached the Military Administration and asked who was directly responsible for the daily functioning of the AJB, Johannes Duntze, representative of the Oberkriegsverwaltungsrat, directed them to three different functionaries.<sup>282</sup> At the SiPo-SD, the Jewish leaders were forced to address four subsequent Judenreferenten: first SS-Obersturmführer Kurt Asche (until the end of November 1942); then SS-Hauptsturmführer Fritz Erdmann; from mid-October 1943 SS-Hauptscharführer Felix Weidmann; and from March 1944 SS-Obersturmführer Werner Borchardt.<sup>283</sup> Moreover, the AJB also had to communicate with the Antwerp Jewish department of the SiPo-SD, headed by Erich Holm, and with the administrators of Mechelen camp: SS-Hauptsturmführer Steckmann, SS-Sturmbannführer Philipp Schmitt and SS-Sturmscharführer Johannes Frank.<sup>284</sup> This complex network of communication led to tensions among those in responsibility in the German authorities. In September 1942, Kurt Asche, who felt he was losing grip on the AJB, summoned 20 of the organisation's leading members to his office, blaming them for disloyalty and sabotage which resulted in the internment of five members of the central board and the local Brussels board in *Auffangslager* Breendonk.<sup>285</sup> They were told they would not be released until all Jews were deported from the country.<sup>286</sup> Although the interned AJB leaders were released nine days later, after both the Belgian authorities and the Military Administration put pressure on Asche, the SiPo-SD's ongoing dissatisfaction with how the AJB functioned is clear.

We have seen that after Salomon Ullman and Maurice Benedictus resigned and Juda Mehlwurm went into hiding, the quest for a new head of the Association resulted in a meeting between Felix Meyer, Louis Rosenfeld and Kurt Asche in mid-November 1942. The latter wanted Rosenfeld to become the new director, but Rosenfeld's refusal led to the nomination of Meyer instead. In turn, Rosenfeld became an AJB central board member. Both men immediately voiced a number of demands that they wished to have met in order to relieve the situation of the Jews in

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<sup>282</sup> Letter of Duntze to the AJB, 25 March 1942, A007397, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin; Minutes of the AJB central board meeting, 19 March 1942, A006709, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>283</sup> Meinen, "De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB", 48.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>286</sup> Report of Salomon Ullman, L'Activité de l'Association des Juifs en Belgique, undated, AA MIC/41, CEGESOMA; Salomon van den Berg, Journal de guerre, p. 57-58, Buber Collection, A006685, Kazerne Dossin.

Belgium, including an immediate amnesty for those Jews who had been arrested after they had failed to wear the yellow star, a halt to deportations until the spring and the possibility of establishing an intermediary service for those who had already been deported. Asche replied that he might be able to give in to these demands, but he simultaneously criticised the AJB's lack of effectiveness up to that point.<sup>287</sup> Perhaps hoping the leadership would become more amenable to his own aims, Asche proposed to organise a new inscription of Jews in Belgium onto a 'special register'. The Jews inscribed in this register would not have to fear deportation until the spring of 1943.<sup>288</sup> There are no indications, however, that this plan was executed. Above all, the AJB leadership adhered to social welfare aims, hoping to use the negotiations as a way of protecting their community (although often without much success), and this did not correspond to Asche's perceptions of what the Jewish organisation should be. Furthermore, German functionaries were convinced that the AJB was engaged in illegal activities and were concerned that the organisation was offering help to Jews in hiding. As late as spring 1944, there was an official prohibition for the AJB on offering financial aid to these illegal Jews, proving the level of German suspicion about the AJB's activities.<sup>289</sup>

In France, the situation was different from Belgium and the Netherlands, as the Vichy-led CGQJ functioned in practice as an intermediary between the UGIF and the Germans.<sup>290</sup> The relation between the Germans and the CGQJ was complicated. Theodor Dannecker did not feel supported by Vallat in his ferocious attempt to remove the Jews from France as soon as possible and he harboured a strong sense of mistrust towards him.<sup>291</sup> Since Vallat believed his role did not stretch beyond isolating Jews socially and categorically refused to collaborate in the arrest, internment and deportation of Jews, this view was shared by other German officials.<sup>292</sup> As Joly has highlighted, the relation between these two men was calamitous and Vallat, in turn, considered Dannecker, who was

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<sup>287</sup> Report presented by Mr. Rosenfeld on the conversations at the Sicherheitsdienst with SS Obersturmführer Asche, 10 and 14 November 1942, A007428, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Report of the general meeting of the central board and the local Brussels board, 30 March 1944, R497/Tr146.665, DOS.

<sup>290</sup> Towards the end of this analysis, a distinction will be made between the observations on the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud. This is because the communications between the CGQJ and the Germans mostly concerned the functioning of the UGIF in general. In spite of the fact that the bodies operated differently in both zones, the UGIF was still perceived as one organisation.

<sup>291</sup> Steur, *Theodor Dannecker*, 69; Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 248.

<sup>292</sup> Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 248; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 96-97.

22 years his junior, to have a ‘juvenile impulsiveness’ and ‘a deceitful intransigence’.<sup>293</sup> This difference in understanding is indicative of the difference between the Germans and the Vichy regime more broadly. As Paxton has argued, without German pressure Vichy would probably have been content with professional discrimination and measures to hasten the departure of foreign Jews.<sup>294</sup> We have seen that Vallat was reluctant to execute German orders and believed that French and immigrant Jews should not be treated identically. This is why he had opposed the establishment of a *Jüdische Zwangsvereinigung* – a Jewish compulsory organisation – in the first place. To be sure, Vallat was an ardent antisemite and, like Dannecker, he aimed to remove Jews from French society. However, his feeling of revulsion towards the Germans, and Dannecker in particular, was as strong as, and perhaps even stronger than, his antisemitic outlook.<sup>295</sup>

Whereas in eastern Europe, the Jewish Councils were directly responsible for delivering the required number of Jews for each transport, none of the western European Jewish organisations was made to do so.<sup>296</sup> In the case of France, historian Jacques Adler has argued that this was because, despite attempts by the Gestapo, no ghetto system was introduced. The fact that the Jewish population remained dispersed over the country made internment a necessary transitional stage. When the deportations began in 1942, the UGIF was not yet ready to play the role Dannecker assigned to it.<sup>297</sup> The legal basis for the UGIF had barely been completed and ‘it ha[d] just begun to be drawn into the concentration camp vortex’.<sup>298</sup> Dannecker became angry with Vallat’s attitude and could not understand that there was still no properly functioning Jewish representative organisation in France by February 1942. He also wondered why Vallat had not financially supported the UGIF to help them establish an effective organisation. Vallat replied that Dannecker was not supposed to interfere as this was his responsibility alone.<sup>299</sup> Their conflicting views continued to hamper their relationship and in the end resulted in the discharge of Vallat in mid-May 1942. Dannecker’s outspoken dissatisfaction with Vallat’s obstinate attitude and with his refusal to become a tool in

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<sup>293</sup> Message for Pierre Laval, 16 April 1942, AML, fonds Vallat, 21ii-42 as cited in Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 247.

<sup>294</sup> Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order*, 174.

<sup>295</sup> See: Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 246-249.

<sup>296</sup> For the history and function of the eastern European Judenräte (from a comparative viewpoint), see: Trunk, *Judenrat*, passim.

<sup>297</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 118.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> Report of the meeting between SS-Obersturmführer Dannecker and the French Commissaire for Jewish Questions Xavier Vallat, 17 February 1942, p. 25, XXIV-21, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

Nazi hands, played a major role in this decision.<sup>300</sup>

The position taken by Vallat to some extent worked to the benefit of the UGIF – at least, this is what the UGIF leaders believed. Lucienne Scheid-Haas, a member of the UGIF-Nord central board and head of its juridical service, gave a fairly positive account of Vallat's actions and attitude vis-à-vis the UGIF.<sup>301</sup> She highlighted the ways in which Vallat tried to protect French Jews and even more so the *anciens combattants* (veterans) and she recollected two occasions on which he involved himself in acts of benevolence.<sup>302</sup> It should be noted that some prominent UGIF members were First World War veterans, including Raymond-Raoul Lambert, Alfred Morali, Georges Edinger and Albert Weil.<sup>303</sup> In his diary entry of 16 July 1941, Lambert reflected upon this and stated there seemed to have been a mutual sense of respect between him and Vallat because of their shared First World War experience:

With my friend Pierre Bloch [...] I went to see Xavier Vallat [...] who received us cordially. A strange conversation! [...] Xavier Vallat considers the two of us as comrades-in-arms, but, as a good follower of Maurras, he no longer wants any Jews in the administration, in politics, or in banking... He doesn't know anything about the issue but seems relatively sensible, well brought up and very much the "war veteran".<sup>304</sup>

Raymond Geissmann, general director of the UGIF from December 1943 onwards and member of the Paris Consistory, also indicated that Vallat's attitude towards him seemed to be one of comradeship. Vallat promised to do as much as he could to take care of veterans. As Geissmann also noted, however, it seemed that Vallat actually did very little to ameliorate the situation of the Jews.<sup>305</sup> Gaston Kahn, interim director of the UGIF, agreed with Geissmann on this point. He referred to the hypocrisy of only protecting former First World War combatants and gave examples

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<sup>300</sup> For the process of the marginalisation of Xavier Vallat and the disputes that led to his discharge, see: Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 277-313; Gerard Reitlinger, *The Final Solution* (New York: Beechurst Press, 1953), 312-313; Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 287.

<sup>301</sup> Testimony of Lucienne Scheid-Haas, dossier Xavier Vallat, 15 April 1946, 3W 337 (2), No. 33, Archives Nationales de Paris (AN).

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 192-195.

<sup>304</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 16 July 1941, 56. For a description of this meeting, see: Bloch, *Jusqu'au dernier jour*, 185.

<sup>305</sup> Testimony of Raymond Geissmann, dossier Xavier Vallat, 28 December 1945, 3W 337, No. 37 (2), AN; Also see the testimony of Robert Lévy, dossier Xavier Vallat, 5 January 1946, 3W 337 (2), AN. Robert Lévy states that two views on Vallat prevailed. On the one hand, some believed that Vallat tried to defend *les français Israélites* and above all the veterans. On the other hand, some believed he had deliberately given these French Jews a false sense of security which would ultimately make it easier to deport this group of Jews.

of Vallat's harmful behaviour towards all Jews in France.<sup>306</sup> We have seen that in his memoirs, Vallat referred to his Jewish First World War comrades as friends, insisting that he did not hate Jews as such but instead feared strangers.<sup>307</sup> He also said that he had helped the coreligionists of André Baur, an *ancien combattant*, and that he had no difficulty in 'recognising in this charitable and profoundly religious Israelite a privileged and righteous soul'.<sup>308</sup> We have to understand these statements in light of the analysis of Vallat by French historian Laurent Joly. Vallat was an ardent antisemite who (only) made an exception for Jews who had managed to fully integrate into French society and who had defended the country during the First World War. Notwithstanding the concessions he had made for this specific group, Vallat nonetheless harboured fundamentally antisemitic views.<sup>309</sup>

Although opinions on Vallat may vary, all the UGIF's employees were united in believing that, compared to his successor Darquier de Pellepoix, Vallat better served the interests of the French Jews. After the war, for example, Gaston Kahn indicated that there was no doubt that the attitude of Darquier de Pellepoix towards the Jews had been more rigorous and brutal than that of Vallat.<sup>310</sup> The fact that the UGIF-Nord *suffered* from Dannecker's decision to deny Vallat access to the occupied zone, as historian Richard Cohen has argued, supports this view.<sup>311</sup> Vallat followed a broader Vichy tendency to increasingly resist German pressure in order to maintain some form of administrative autonomy. In this case, autonomy meant control over the spoliation of Jewish industrial and commercial property. Paxton has argued that this was probably motivated by self-interest since 'aryanisation all too often meant Germanization'.<sup>312</sup> Nevertheless, Vichy resistance to German measures in some cases worked to the benefit of the Jews in France. Vallat, for example, resisted the introduction of the yellow star in the unoccupied zone when this was proposed in March 1942 and 'even [Vallat's] successor, Darquier de Pellepoix was forced to succumb to Vichy pressure not to cooperate on this issue'.<sup>313</sup> The star was therefore never implemented in the unoccupied zone. These ambiguities in Vichy policy in general and the differing viewpoints of its officials make it

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<sup>306</sup> Testimony of Gaston Kahn, dossier Xavier Vallat, 26 June 1946, 3W 337, No. 37 (2), AN.

<sup>307</sup> Vallat, *Le Nez de Cléopâtre*, 221.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>309</sup> Joly, *Xavier Vallat*, 369.

<sup>310</sup> Testimony of Gaston Kahn, dossier Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, 28 December 1945, 3W 142, AN.

<sup>311</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 73.

<sup>312</sup> Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order*, 177.

<sup>313</sup> Caron, "The UGIF: the Failure of the Nazis to Establish a Judenrat on the Eastern European Model", 7.

difficult to assess how the CGQJ functionaries judged the effectiveness of the UGIF. As previous sections have demonstrated, the Germans were highly critical of the Jewish organisation and were dissatisfied with the position taken by the CGQJ, and by Vallat in particular.

It is not surprising that Dannecker loathed the way Vallat dealt with anti-Jewish policies and that the UGIF's ineffectiveness angered him. Although the UGIF-Nord had not protested about the deportations, it had definitely not been helpful in achieving the number of deportees Dannecker had wanted.<sup>314</sup> Hoping to make the UGIF more instrumental in achieving German aims, the SiPo-SD was closely involved in the appointment of Vallat's successor, Darquier de Pellepoix, in May 1942. In contrast to his predecessor who had been chosen by Darlan, Darquier was the candidate of the German Embassy and the Sicherheitsdienst.<sup>315</sup> As former director of the Rassemblément Antijuif (Anti-Jewish League), a federation of antisemitic organisations officially instituted in 1938, Darquier was in several ways different from Vallat. Whereas Vallat was 'a personage of rank and distinction' at Vichy, Darquier – an 'unsuccessful businessman and a marginal journalist' – always remained an outsider. He also did not carry out his work at the CGQJ with the same care and diligence as Vallat did.<sup>316</sup> Above all, he did not share any of Vallat's principled anti-Germanism and can be considered an even more radical antisemite than his predecessor.<sup>317</sup>

Even after the appointment of Darquier de Pellepoix, the German perspective on the effectiveness of the UGIF did not significantly alter. In May 1942, Darquier de Pellepoix presented his vision for the role of the CGQJ. He underlined that he wanted to take a different approach from his predecessor by ensuring that the *Statut des Juifs*, the anti-Jewish legislation passed by the Vichy regime, was implemented and applied to all Jews.<sup>318</sup> A letter Darquier sent to Albert Lévy, written on 18 July 1942, shows that he was keen to tell the UGIF's president about the changes he was planning to make. He noted that, in terms of its expenses, the UGIF had gone through a phase of trial and error which he considered 'inevitable' for a newly instituted organisation but he claimed that new responsibilities would soon be given to the UGIF.<sup>319</sup> The letter highlights that the UGIF's

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<sup>314</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 80.

<sup>315</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 284.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 283; Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 296. For an excellent biography of Darquier de Pellepoix, see: Joly, *Darquier de Pellepoix et l'antisémitisme français* (Paris: Berg, 2002).

<sup>317</sup> Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 313; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 284.

<sup>318</sup> Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale"*, 314.

<sup>319</sup> Letter of the Commissaire Général aux Question Juives to Albert Lévy, 18 July 1942, XXVIIIa-109, Mémorial de la Shoah.

sphere of activity was still not strictly defined in July 1942 which is remarkable when we consider that the Dutch JR had already been fully operational for almost a year and a half by this point.<sup>320</sup> Despite his ambitions, Darquier was unable to make the UGIF more effective in implementing anti-Jewish legislation and the Germans continued to be dissatisfied with how it worked. The organisation's leaders persisted in their refusal to be responsible for the internment of Jews, and Dannecker was enraged when only 5,000 Jews (out of the 20,000 he had anticipated) were interned in the unoccupied zone in the summer of 1942.<sup>321</sup>

In neither zone did the UGIF become an organisation uniting French Jewry, though this was one of the central aims the Germans had voiced prior to its establishment. Throughout 1942, Dannecker's radical approach to the Jews and towards Vichy officials had become a source of irritation for Helmut Knochen, head of the Security Police in France. Both men had successfully increased the authority of the SiPo-SD over that of the Military Administration. After they succeeded in doing so, Knochen, having reached his goal, even seemed to lose interest in the Jews. He wanted to cooperate with the Vichy regime for the sake of order and to safeguard his authority.<sup>322</sup> Knochen's unwillingness to jeopardise collaboration with the Vichy regime, or to further alienate French public opinion, was highlighted when he vetoed SS-Obersturmführer Heinz Röthke's plan for a major roundup of French Jews by the German police in Paris in September 1942.<sup>323</sup> By contrast, Dannecker, like Röthke and SS-Hauptsturmführer Aloïs Brunner, wanted to deport all Jews from France.<sup>324</sup> Dannecker's 'undiplomatic' attitude towards Vichy undermined Knochen's work and his authority. In July 1942, Dannecker, who became Eichmann's representative in Bulgaria (and later in Italy and Hungary), was replaced by Heinz Röthke.<sup>325</sup>

In the summer of 1943, the German authorities altered their approach to the UGIF-Nord. While the CGQJ was given a free hand in overseeing its affairs in the first years of its existence, the presence of Aloïs Brunner, who directed Drancy camp from 2 July 1943, drastically changed things. Between 1938 and 1942 Brunner had worked for, and later headed, the Zentralstelle für Jüdische

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Report of Dannecker on his visit to the unoccupied zone, 20 July 1942, XXVI-43, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Steur, *Theodor Dannecker*, 84.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>323</sup> Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French and the Jews*, 159-160.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>325</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 218.

Auswanderung in Vienna. In February 1943, he was posted as Judenberater to Greece, where he brutally and efficiently organised the deportation of at least 43,000 Jews.<sup>326</sup> Sent by Eichmann, Brunner arrived in Paris in early June 1943, aiming to speed up the process of deporting Jews from France. In order to strengthen the position of Röthke's Judenreferat, Brunner brought his own task force with him, consisting of around 25 Austrian SS men.<sup>327</sup> While Röthke remained Judenreferent for France, Brunner was authorised to act independently of the German police chain of command and was accountable only to Berlin. Both men competed to gain the upper hand in the so-called 'Final Solution' in France. Brunner soon managed to secure the leading role.<sup>328</sup>

Aiming to outmanoeuvre the French police, Brunner 'launched a violent press campaign against Bousquet and Laval and accused them of "protecting" the Jews'.<sup>329</sup> After Brunner's takeover of the direction of Drancy camp, Vichy lost control over the administrative network of deportation and the French police and bureaucracy 'were excluded from any influence on the composition of convoys to the east'.<sup>330</sup> In June 1943, in response to Germany's need for manpower and the Service du Travail Obligatoire (STO) which Laval had introduced in February 1943, Brunner and Röthke ordered the UGIF-Nord to open its own factories.<sup>331</sup> One month later, in his attempt to remove the Jews from France as quickly as possible, Brunner aimed to directly oversee the UGIF, thereby sidestepping Röthke as well as the Commissariat.<sup>332</sup> On 30 June, Brunner identified one of the main 'problems' of the UGIF during a discussion with UGIF-Nord leader Baur: 'the discipline and solidarity among the Jewish population in Paris is not sufficiently developed [...], [therefore] the UGIF does not have any authority among this population'.<sup>333</sup>

Brunner indicated to Baur that he wanted the UGIF-Nord to take on two key tasks in order to speed up the process of deporting the Jews. First, the organisation would oversee the

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<sup>326</sup> Meyer, *Täter im Verhör*, 192.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 148-149; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 330.

<sup>328</sup> Meyer, *Täter im Verhör*, 193; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 330-331.

<sup>329</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 330.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.; Meyer, *Täter im Verhör*, 193.

<sup>331</sup> Minutes of the Administrative Council of the UGIF in the Northern Zone, 8 June 1943, Reel 3, MK490.4.3:3:1 (YIVO), Mémorial de la Shoah. For further reading on the STO and Germany's need for manpower, see: Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order*, 367-370. Across Europe, being productive offered a possibility for survival for Jews and Jewish leaders adopted this strategy in order to safeguard the survival of (part of) their communities, see: Gutman, "The Concept of Labor in Judenrat Policy" in: *Patterns of Jewish Leadership*, 151-180.

<sup>332</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 90; Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 154-156.

<sup>333</sup> CDJC YIVO 3-116 as cited in Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 155.



administrative management of the camp at Drancy, which Brunner now wanted to transform into a concentration camp under the direct control of the SS. Second, the UGIF-Nord should encourage families of interned Jews to report themselves so that the whole family could be deported together.<sup>334</sup> The UGIF-Nord leadership refused to turn the UGIF into an arm of the Gestapo and was unwilling to carry out or participate in any police measures.<sup>335</sup> André Baur agreed only to function as an intermediary between Brunner and the French administration in the reorganisation of the camp and made it clear the UGIF would only engage in relief activities that would ease the situation of the Jews as they departed.<sup>336</sup> His refusal to do more was not taken lightly and tensions between the UGIF-Nord leadership and Brunner increased still further when two men, including Baur's cousin Adolphe Ducas, escaped from Drancy and the UGIF-Nord, despite its best efforts, failed to find the two men. Shortly thereafter, Baur was arrested together with his wife and their four children. On 4 September, Stora and Musnik, the other main protagonists of the UGIF-Nord who had temporarily assumed the leadership of the organisation, were arrested as well because they failed to meet Brunner's previously voiced demands.<sup>337</sup> All three men were deported on 17 December 1943 and none of them survived the war.<sup>338</sup> Brunner's pressure on the UGIF's leaders and his dissatisfaction with the organisation's effectiveness in the deportation of Jews from France did not change the UGIF-Nord's policies. Its leadership, headed by Georges Edinger and Juliette Stern, viewed the organisation as the only relief agency still available to the Jews and continued to focus on its relief work.<sup>339</sup>

The UGIF-Sud was even less successful in living up to German expectations. The heterogenous federative structure of the organisation meant that there was anything but a unified UGIF policy in the unoccupied zone. We have seen that the UGIF-Sud central board had neither any

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<sup>334</sup> Report of the meeting between Baur and Brunner, 30 June 1943, Reel 3, MK490.4.3:3:1 (YIVO), Mémorial de la Shoah; Georges Edinger, Report on the activities of the UGIF: concerning its 'official work' and 'clandestine work' from 1941 to 1944, p. 16, CCCLXXIX-33, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 89.

<sup>335</sup> Minutes of the Administrative Council UGIF-Nord, 6 July 1943, Reel 3, MK490.4.3:3:1 (YIVO), Mémorial de la Shoah; Georges Edinger, Report on the activities of the UGIF: concerning its 'official work' and 'clandestine work' from 1941 to 1944, p. 16, CCCLXXIX-33, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 159-164; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 150.

<sup>336</sup> UGIF Board of Directors, 6 July 1943, CDJC YIVO 3-120 as cited in Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 162.

<sup>337</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 151-152.

<sup>338</sup> Serge Klarsfeld, *Le mémorial de la déportations des juifs de France* (Paris: Klarsfeld, 1978), liste alphabétique du convoi No. 63.

<sup>339</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 152-153; Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 105.

real authority over their departments, nor any influence over the Jewish community.<sup>340</sup> In the summer of 1943, the German authorities were still not satisfied with the numbers of Jews being deported from France; those arrested had already been taken from the camps and it became harder to find Jews.<sup>341</sup> As we shall see, rather than acting to achieve the German aim of swiftly arresting and deporting Jews from France, the UGIF-Sud in this period was increasingly being used as a cloak for clandestine activities, both with and without the direct participation and knowledge of its leaders. The arrest of Lambert, who refused to cooperate with the Germans any longer in the summer of 1943 is indicative of the level of German dissatisfaction with the UGIF-Sud's function and the position taken by its leadership.

The CGQJ was also not content with the organisation's effectiveness. Auguste Duquesnel, the CGQJ director responsible for the control of the UGIF, believed that the problem stemmed from organisational deficiencies and claimed that the organisation was not cooperating sufficiently.<sup>342</sup> A plan to reorganise the entire UGIF, centralising its organisation in Paris, had been discussed by both the Germans and CGQJ officials, in liaison with the UGIF-Nord leadership, from the summer of 1942 onwards.<sup>343</sup> The plan became even more relevant when the financial situation of the UGIF-Nord reached a critical state in April and May 1943 and it was considered that the resources of UGIF-Sud could be applied to resolve the problem.<sup>344</sup> However, as we have seen, the UGIF-Sud's leadership rejected any proposals for unification and resolutely maintained the organisation's independent structure.<sup>345</sup> In September 1943, the CGQJ had changed its perspective and opposed the unification of the UGIF under one umbrella, possibly fearing that it would lose its authority over the organisation. By then, Duquesnel claimed in a report that centralisation would result in the elimination of the UGIF-Sud's leadership and a loss of control by Vichy.<sup>346</sup> That the CGQJ was uncertain about the role and future of the UGIF-Sud becomes clear from a statement in the same period saying that there was no alternative for the UGIF's deplorable situation but to dismiss the

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<sup>340</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 138.

<sup>341</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 321.

<sup>342</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 146.

<sup>343</sup> For an overview of the discussion of the centralisation of the UGIF, see: Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 133-161; Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, x.

<sup>344</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 146.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 133-161.

<sup>346</sup> See the report of Duquesnel, XXVIII-219, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 152; Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 161.

UGIF-Sud leadership and ‘proceed with the centralisation in Paris’.<sup>347</sup> The ongoing discussions about the reorganisation of the UGIF show that both German and Vichy officials were dissatisfied with the way it worked.

The nature of the occupation and of the Jewish communities in France meant that the function and structure of the UGIF was not significantly altered during the course of the war, despite the occupier’s pronounced dissatisfaction with the organisation. The Germans took a number of measures to improve the effectiveness of the UGIF. First, we have seen that CGQJ-head Vallat, who was considered too moderate by Dannecker, was replaced by Darquier de Pellepoix who, in turn was replaced by Charles du Paty de Clam in February 1944. In June 1944, Du Paty de Clam was himself replaced by Joseph Antignac.<sup>348</sup> Second, Dannecker was replaced in July 1942 in order to improve the communication with both Vichy officials and the Military Administration.<sup>349</sup> Third, as we have seen, those UGIF leaders who refused to cooperate and who displayed troubling signs of independence were interned and deported. Ultimately though, even apparently compliant leaders such as Edinger and Geissmann were no more obedient to German rule than their predecessors had been.<sup>350</sup> The UGIF failed to unite Jews in France or to become a tool in the hands of the German occupier. Instead, it continued its social welfare activities within the limits provided by the Nazis and, as the next chapter will show, at times also outside these limits (resistance). At the same time, like their western European counterparts, the French Jewish leaders were forced to make decisions that harmed their communities and even led to the arrest and deportation of their coreligionists. The example of the arrested children in the UGIF homes in July 1944, and Edinger’s refusal to disperse these children through a mass escape by disbanding Jewish organisation, was one of the three points for which the UGIF leadership was criticised during the commission of inquiry imposed on the organisation after liberation by the CRIF.<sup>351</sup> The decision not to dissolve the organisation was inspired by the feeling that it still had an important role to play as a relief

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<sup>347</sup> UGIF-Nord board meeting, 3 September 1943 as cited in Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 152.

<sup>348</sup> Du Paty de Clam was a career colonial official who had been serving in Damascus in the interwar years. His appointment at the head of the CQGJ was primarily because of his name, as descendant of the famous staff officer Du Paty du Clam who arrested Captain Dreyfus in 1894. Antignac was a former cavalry officer who had become the director of the Police for Jewish Affairs in Limoges in 1940. Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 289, 334; Joly, *Vichy dans la “solution finale”*, 237-238, 742-745; Dossier Joseph Antignac, AJ38 6278, AN; Dossier Charles du Paty de Clam, AJ38 6302, AN.

<sup>349</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 218.

<sup>350</sup> Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 176; For the role of Edinger in the UGIF after the arrest of its first leadership, see: *Ibid.*, 175ff.

<sup>351</sup> Fredj, “Le Consistoire Central et la création du CRIF”, 177.

organisation and its continued existence was considered imperative for the maintenance of the remaining Jews in France.<sup>352</sup>

As in Belgium and France, Dutch JR leaders clashed with their German overseers. These conflicts were mainly caused by the fact that the JR believed the Germans were not living up to the promises they had made. For example, the leadership protested against the raid of 11 June 1941, during which many so-called Palestina Pioniers (Palestine Pioneers), formerly residents of the working village in the Wieringermeer, were arrested and sent to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. In March, the village of the Palestine Pioneers had been evacuated. When the Germans had ostensibly agreed in June to allow the Palestine Pioneers to go back to the working village in order to continue their preparations for emigration to Palestine, David Cohen had provided the names and addresses of the Jews concerned.<sup>353</sup> Thereafter, the Jews were arrested and deported. The Germans had thus asked the JR's chairman to provide this information under false pretences. There were also other occasions on which the JR's leadership objected to the course of events, for example when head of the Zentralstelle aus der Fünften indicated during a meeting on 21 May 1943 that 7,000 JR members ought to report themselves for forced labour in Germany only four days later.<sup>354</sup> Asscher, Cohen and Edwin Sluzker, head of the Expositur, protested and claimed that it would be impossible to continue the work of the JR without these individuals. The meeting report indicates that Lages then threatened them with severe retaliations in the event that they would not comply.<sup>355</sup> When the chairmen communicated the measure to which they eventually consented, 'in order to prevent worse', to the other central board members, some considered resigning from their position, including Gertrude van Tijn and Abraham Asscher himself, who seemed to have reconsidered his decision.<sup>356</sup> In the end, Van Tijn and Asscher continued to work for the Council until it was dissolved in September 1943.

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<sup>352</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 158-159.

<sup>353</sup> Somers, "Kanttekeningen bij de Joodse Raad" in: *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 30.

<sup>354</sup> Report of meeting between aus der Fünften, Lages, Blumenthal, Asscher and Cohen, 21 May 1943, 182.4, NIOD. It should be noted that Cohen mistakenly claimed after the war that they were forced to hand over a list of 7,500 names. The previously mentioned meeting reports of that period show that the number amounted to 7,000. See: Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 166.

<sup>355</sup> Report of meeting between aus der Fünften, Lages, Blumenthal, Asscher and Cohen, 21 May 1943, 182.4, NIOD. Also see: Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 166.

<sup>356</sup> Minutes of the JR, 21 May 1943, 182.3, NIOD; Wasserstein, *Gertrude van Tijn*, 176-177; Herzberg, *Kroniek der Jodenvervolging*, 151.

Despite the inevitable conflicts between the JR leaders and the Germans, the apparently friendly ‘cooperation’ between the Germans, in particular aus der Fünten and Lages, and the Council leadership, was emphasised by both sides after the war.<sup>357</sup> Reischskommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart as well as commander of Westerbork transit camp Albert Conrad Gemmeker and SS-Sturmbannführer Willy Lages infamously claimed that the Germans would never have been able to deport so many Jews without the aid of the Joodsche Raad.<sup>358</sup> Lages even referred to the Joodsche Raad as a ‘German department’ because Asscher and Cohen were so cooperative that it was not necessary to appoint a German at the head of the Council.<sup>359</sup> Lages also claimed that his Nazi colleagues in Belgium and France were surprised about the results that had been accomplished: ‘they indicated they were incapable of achieving the same in Belgium and France’.<sup>360</sup> While these statements need to be treated with caution, given that the Nazis were trying, in court, to downplay their own involvement in the deportation of the Jews and to shift blame onto the JR, we must acknowledge that the level of cooperation in which Asscher and Cohen were prepared to engage went beyond what their Belgian and French counterparts were forced to do or were willing to do. The assistance provided in registering Jews who had been called for transport and the fact that the JR’s leadership became responsible for the registration of Jews who were forced to work under police supervision (*Polizeiliche Arbeitseinsatz*) are just two examples of this.<sup>361</sup> After the war, Cohen indicated that ‘they’, most likely he and Asscher, believed that those who were called for *Arbeitseinsatz* were better off than others who were deported, which is why they agreed to cooperate.<sup>362</sup> Overall, in contrast to the Associations of Belgium and France, the JR seemed to have met the constantly changing, and often poorly defined, German expectations. The disagreements between the JR and the Germans never reached a point of outright conflict. This partially explains why Asscher and Cohen, in contrast to their Belgian and French counterparts, were able to remain leaders of the JR until it was dissolved in September 1943.

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<sup>357</sup> Statement of Abraham Asscher in preparation for the trial against Lages, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 140-VI (BrC 394/49); Statements of Willy Lages and Ferdinand aus der Fünten, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 I (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>358</sup> Procedural documents, dossier Abraham Asscher and David Cohen, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 I (PF Amsterdam T70982); Statements in preparation for the trial against aus der Fünten, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer CABR 66 (BrC 50/55).

<sup>359</sup> Statement of Lages, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 I (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>361</sup> See the various meeting reports of the JR at the start of 1942, relating to the JR’s cooperation in the distribution for calls for *Arbeitseinsatz*: Meeting report of the JR, 12 January 1942, 182.3, NIOD; Meeting report of the JR, 5 March 1942, 182.3, NIOD.

<sup>362</sup> Cohen, “Geschiedenis van de Joden in de oorlog” [unpublished manuscript], p. 57, Doc I 248-0294, Inv. No. 10, NIOD. Also see: Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 121-125.

## 2.4 The origins of the functional dissimilarities and German (dis)satisfaction

The preceding sections have highlighted the differences in the foundations of the Jewish organisations and in German views of their effectiveness. Although the obvious similarities cannot be ignored, it has become clear that the Dutch Jewish Council was distinctively different in both respects from the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud. Only in the Dutch case did the leadership have an autocratic position in relation to other central board members, local Councils and other Jewish aid organisations. The JR was the only Jewish organisation whose functioning was viewed positively by the Germans. We have also seen differences between the Associations of Belgium and France, although these are less obvious at first glance. The following sections address the roots of these differences, which can be broadly divided into two areas: 1) factors inherent to the Jewish communities and the nature of their leaderships; and 2) the nature of the German occupation. In offering an analysis at this level, the aim is to deflect attention from the choices of the Jewish leaders, an area which has often occupied the centre of attention in explaining events in the three countries, and to focus instead on the context in which these choices were made.

### *The nature of the Jewish leadership*

The differences in the motivations of the Jewish leaders when taking up the chairmanship of the organisations should not be underestimated as a factor in explaining the differing forms and functions of these bodies. Asscher and Cohen's will to gain power and control over the Dutch Jewish community was significant. In addition, we have seen that the country's Jewish community had been moving in a particular direction, of which both Asscher and Cohen were representative: they were secular, well-integrated Jews. The starting position of the JR's chairmen, in February 1941, was different from that of their counterparts in Belgium and France, who were appointed nine months later. Although anti-Jewish regulations had already been implemented by the time Asscher and Cohen took up their positions (Aryan civil servants, for example, were forced to register themselves in the *ariërverklaring*, Jews had to register themselves, Jewish civil servants were fired and Jews were not allowed to visit cinemas), mass arrests and deportations had not yet taken place in western Europe. Whereas the UGIF and the AJB came into existence as Nazi policies were slowly evolving from antisemitic regulations into the attempt to remove all Jews from these countries, this was by no means the case in the Netherlands. The Dutch Council leadership thus

accepted their nomination on different grounds.

Even as anti-Jewish policies unfolded, the German intentions with regard to the Jews were never entirely clear and the JR's leaders rarely attempted to understand what fate awaited the Jews as the war went on. Their strong belief in their own ability to make the right decisions and their trust in the legal path they had chosen, perhaps combined with a feeling they could not truly obstruct Nazi policies even if they wanted to, resulted in a degree of blindness with respect to German intentions. Even though recent studies have dedicated much attention to the question of what people in the Netherlands 'knew' of the fate that was awaiting the Jews, wartime documentation shows that this was rarely discussed by the Jewish leaders during the JR's board meetings.<sup>363</sup> Instead of trying to anticipate unpredictable Nazi regulations, or trying to understand what was going on in 'the East', the Dutch Jewish leadership, like its western European counterparts, was predominantly focused on the (time-consuming) provision of social welfare to impoverished Jewish communities. The wish to maintain order was central to the leadership's policies, and this is highlighted in Asscher's speech of 14 February 1941, made in response to the unrest that had broken out in the Jewish quarter. At this, one of his first public appearances as head of the JR, he encouraged Jews to hand over their weapons so that order could be reinstated.<sup>364</sup> There were further occasions when the JR's leaders voiced this aim. During a meeting between Willy Lages, Ferdinand aus der Fünten and the two Council chairmen on 4 August 1942, for example, Asscher and Cohen encouraged the two men not to spread information that would cause distress in the community. They were referring to Generalkommissar Schmidt's public statements on the tough fate that awaited Jews once they were

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<sup>363</sup> See: Bart van der Boom, *'Wij weten niets van hun lot': gewone Nederlanders en de Holocaust* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2012) and the ensuing debate about what people in the Netherlands 'knew' about the fate of the Jews in Eastern Europe. Van der Boom's argument that 'ordinary Dutch citizens' did not know about the fate of the Jews was most severely criticised by Remco Ensel and Evelien Gans. See: Ensel and Gans, "Nivellering in de geschiedenis: wij weten iets van hun lot" in: *De Groene Amsterdammer*, No. 50, 12 December 2012; Ibid., "Over 'Wij weten iets van hun lot' in: *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 6 February 2013; Ibid., "Niet weten van gaskamers verklaart passiviteit niet" in: *NRC/Handelsblad*, 16 May 2013; Ibid., "Historikerstreit. The Stereotypical Jew in Recent Dutch Holocaust Studies" in: Ibid., *The Holocaust, Israel and the 'Jew'. Histories of Antisemitism in Postwar Dutch Society* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 341-372. For a recent analysis of the debate, see: Krijn Thijs, "Ordinary, ignorant, and noninvolved? The Figure of the Bystander in Dutch Research and Controversy" in: Christina Morina and ibid. (eds.). *Probing the Limits of Categorization. The Bystander in Holocaust History*. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018), 247-265.

<sup>364</sup> Public speech of Abraham Asscher, 14 February 1941, Doc. 00003186, JHM. For other documents that testify to the leadership of the JR's overarching wish to maintain order see, for example, Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 81-82; Letter of the JR to the Sicherheitspolizei in Amsterdam, 7 May 1941, 182.22, NIOD; Statement of Laura Mazirel, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 III (PF Amsterdam T70982). In the court case against Asscher and Cohen, the Dutch State Prosecutor, mr. L.W.M.M. Drabbe wanted to use Mazirel as a crown witness. See Houwink ten Cate, "De justitie en de Joodsche Raad", 158.

deported to the East. Although Asscher and Cohen were interested in the accuracy of this information, they emphasised above all that these type of statements caused disquiet in the community which would hamper their own work.<sup>365</sup>

A similar situation can be identified in the French unoccupied zone, where Raymond-Raoul Lambert sought recognition for his prewar role in the French Jewish community, particularly in the CAR welfare organisation. The distaste about the treatment of immigrant Jews by the Consistory and the rift this caused within the organisation were decisive factors in fostering his desire to take a leading role providing aid to Jewish refugees before the war. The same factors continued to affect his perception of the Consistory during the war, and he had little faith in the competence and compassion of its leaders.<sup>366</sup> His prominent position was reaffirmed when he entered negotiations with Vallat about the establishment of the UGIF. Whereas the power of the Consistory was still significant in France, the Nazi occupation proved to be an opportunity to make a different voice heard: ‘I am now a central figure in French Jewry, which means I am discussed and attacked by some and flattered and encouraged by others, but I am acting and that is what matters’, Lambert wrote in his diary on 11 December 1941.<sup>367</sup> He continued with the same confidence: ‘It was I who, for personal reasons and because of my experience (I have been known to the ministry people for ten years) was summoned by Vallat to act as an unofficial liaison agent or technical expert. From there it’s only a step to saying that I am Vallat’s man’.<sup>368</sup> Despite his self-confidence, Lambert could not carry out his role as UGIF-Sud chairman in the autocratic way that Asscher and Cohen did in the JR. We have seen that the prewar positions of both Lambert and the UGIF-Nord chairman Baur ensured that their status was less absolute compared to their Dutch counterparts. Both men represented opposition to the century-long domination of the Consistory and even though they had played a significant role in the prewar Jewish community, the presence of powerful men within the Consistory who did not wish to see the UGIF established in the first place, affected Lambert and Bauer’s self-perception and their choices. Because of the organised criticism of and interference in their work by the Consistory, which created divisions in the communities, the UGIF leaders did not have the same level of autonomy as Asscher and Cohen in the Netherlands.

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<sup>365</sup> Report of a meeting between Lages, aus der Fünten, Asscher and Cohen, 4 August 1941, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 II, “Stukken van overtuiging” No 1-108. (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>366</sup> Cohen, “Introduction” in: *Diary of a witness*, xlvi.

<sup>367</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 11 December 1941, 79.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.



Unlike Asscher and Cohen, Lambert refused to cooperate with the Germans when pressure on the Jewish communities, and on him personally, was increased. On 1 May 1943, a bombing in Marseilles left two SS men seriously wounded. In response, the Germans asked for a list of persons to be arrested in retaliation. On 5 May Lambert's diary records:

At 6 p.m. I am called to the German police who demand, under the threat of arresting me and 10 percent of my staff, a list of two hundred prominent Jews of Marseilles. I refuse, as I must. Their answer is that I will find out in the morning the decision of the German authorities as a result of my refusal, and that I will be informed of this decision by telephone during the morning.<sup>369</sup>

His growing refusal to cooperate with the Germans in this period resulted in his arrest in May 1943. In the UGIF-Nord, André Baur, like Lambert, refused to become a watchdog over his community and focussed instead on welfare work.<sup>370</sup> This is not to say that the UGIF leaders never gave in to German demands, or that they were immune to threats. For example, on 4 March, 1943, André Baur wrote to Lambert that the threat of measures against the rest of their personnel and against the French Jews had compelled him to reconsider his resistant, anti-German attitude. After weeks of negotiation the UGIF central board agreed to the German concession that they might retain up to 15% of their foreign workers, surrendering the rest of them (they had until then been exempt from deportation) to the Nazis.<sup>371</sup>

In Belgium, we have seen that the position of the leadership was relatively weak. Both Ullman and Benedictus were unconfident and had not even wanted to become the AJB's leaders in the first place. Unlike the Dutch leaders, they did not consider themselves the most suitable representatives, as the testimonies of both men make clear.<sup>372</sup> There were exceptions in this regard, most notably Salomon van den Berg, who was more than willing to take up a position in the AJB 'being one of the oldest members present in Brussels in Belgium, which was a rare thing in these times' as he claimed in his diary.<sup>373</sup> Overall, however, the Belgian AJB was never able to function as

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<sup>369</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 18 May 1943 [reflection upon the events of 5 May], 181. Also see: Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 129; Laffitte, "Between Memory and Lapse of Memory", 682.

<sup>370</sup> Georges Edinger, Report on the activities of the UGIF: concerning its 'official work' and 'clandestine work' from 1941 to 1944, p. 16, CCCLXXIX-33, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>371</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 137.

<sup>372</sup> Maurice Benedictus, "Historique du problème Juif en Belgique depuis le 10 Mai 1940 jusqu'au 21 Décembre 1942", 18 Feb 1943, p.5, A006683, Kazerne Dossin; Interview Alfred Rosenzweig, 3 February 1972, p. 26, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin; Steinberg, *La persécution des Juifs en Belgique*, 185; Steinberg, "The Trap of Legality", 801.

<sup>373</sup> Salomon van den Berg, Journal de guerre, p. 36, Buber Collection, A006685, Kazerne Dossin.

a truly representative organisation because most of its leaders had fled the country and those who remained often lacked leadership experience and a solid network of contacts.<sup>374</sup> The scattered nature of the Belgian Jewish communities contributed further to this problem.<sup>375</sup> The fact that Jews who had immigrated to Belgium in the late 1920s were part of the AJB board, including Noé Nozyce, Louis Rosenfeld, Grigorijs Garfinkels and Chaïm Perelman, highlights how the nature of the AJB leadership differed when compared to the JR.<sup>376</sup> This is exemplified by the case of Maurice Heiber, head of the AJB Brussels branch from 9 December 1942, who in a postwar interview claimed that he did not have any prewar connection to the Belgian Jewish communities.<sup>377</sup>

Whereas Asscher and Cohen were prepared to make serious concessions in order to safeguard their position and the continued existence of the JR, for example by providing a list of JR employees who ought to be exempted from deportation at the expense of others, the first leaders of the Belgian AJB and the French UGIF-Nord and UGIF-Sud were more reluctant to do this sort of thing.<sup>378</sup> We have seen that on a number of occasions the JR leaders exhibited doubts about the role of the JR, but they were more afraid that if the Council were to be dissolved, the Germans would be free to impose arbitrary measures.<sup>379</sup> By contrast, in Belgium and France, important board members (they included Ullman, Baur and Lambert) stepped down from their positions, or were forced to do so, when they disagreed with German regulations and when pressure on their organisations increased. In general, the boards here did not carry out policies that went beyond the realm of welfare activities. For example, we have seen that when on 30 June 1943 Brunner presented André Baur with an outline of his proposed changes and an account of the role he expected the UGIF-Nord to play in carrying out his demands, the UGIF-Nord board refused to carry out, or participate in, any

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<sup>374</sup> Van Doorslaer, “Salomon van den Berg”, 116.

<sup>375</sup> Dratwa, “The Zionist Kaleidoscope”, 81; Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad*, 27; Steinberg, *L'Étoile et le fusil. La question juive 1940-1942*, 75-78.

<sup>376</sup> For the history of these men’s immigration to Belgium, see: Report on Noé Nozyce, Inv. No. 19186/45, Conseil de Guerre de Liège, Auditorat Militaire, Algemeen Rijksarchief België (ARA 2); Report of Foreign Police (Vreemdelingenpolitie), Louis Rosenfeld, N 682.302 / A317631, Kazerne Dossin; Report on Grigorijs Garfinkels, Inv. No. 4030/44, Conseil de Guerre de Liège, Auditorat Militaire, Algemeen Rijksarchief België (ARA 2); Report of Foreign Police (Vreemdelingenpolitie), Chaïm Pinchos Perelman, N 682.302 / A 143129, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>377</sup> Eyewitness account of Maurice Heiber, “The Jewish Children in Belgium” (1956), 1656/3/9/274, p.2, Wiener Library.

<sup>378</sup> Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 166-171.

<sup>379</sup> Somers, “Kanttekeningen bij de Joodse Raad”, 28.

police measures.<sup>380</sup> Their successors were also not willing to do so. As Adler has noted, for example, the ‘arrest of most of the leaders of the UGIF in Paris did not [...] mean a change of policy on its part’.<sup>381</sup> Edinger and Stern, rather than cooperating with the Germans, focused primarily on the welfare activities of the UGIF-Nord and, as we shall see, also engaged in clandestine activities to achieve this.<sup>382</sup>

The varied nature of the different leaderships explains why the Jewish organisations were governed differently. In particular, it explains why Asscher and Cohen ruled the Jewish Council autocratically, with little room for intervention of others. This aspect of the JR probably contributed to German satisfaction with the organisation’s functioning; German policies could be communicated fairly easily through the leadership and we have seen that there were few formal objections from other board members or from Jewish organisations to obstruct the implementation of these policies. In Belgium and France, we have seen that the changes of leadership that followed after the initially appointed chairmen either voluntarily resigned, or were forced to do so, resulted in the Germans losing their grip on the Associations. The different backgrounds and motivations of the Jewish leaders in taking up their positions, as well as the concessions they were prepared to make in order to safeguard them, partially explain the varying German perceptions about the effectiveness of the organisations.

#### *The nature of society: alternative representations in Belgium and France*

A second factor that explains the differences in the function and potency of the Jewish organisations is the nature of the societies from which they emerged. More specifically, the presence or absence of alternative kinds of representation could affect the extent of the control that the organisations could exercise over the communities and therefore, from the German perspective, their potential effectiveness. We have seen that large numbers of immigrants in both Belgium and France had brought with them whole new sets of ideas and convictions before the war. In these two countries, the highly diversified and scattered nature of the Jewish communities made it impossible to

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<sup>380</sup> Minutes of the Administrative Council UGIF-Nord, 6 July 1943, Reel 3, MK490.4.3:3:1 (YIVO), Mémorial de la Shoah; Georges Edinger, Report on the activities of the UGIF: concerning its ‘official work’ and ‘clandestine work’ from 1941 to 1944, p. 16, CCCLXXIX-33, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Laffitte, *Un engrenage fatal*, 159-164; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 150.

<sup>381</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 152-153.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*; Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 105.

represent the Jews through umbrella organisations such as the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud. The wide range of social welfare organisations that were established to take care of these different groups of Jews, such as the Main d'Oeuvre Étrangère (MOE), a communist foreign workers' organisation, and the Solidarité Juive, which was created in 1939 specifically to aid political refugees from Poland, continued to exist after the German invasion of Belgium and France in May 1940.<sup>383</sup> The existence of other Jewish representative organisations in both Belgium and France, compared to an absence of alternative powerful Jewish representative bodies in the Netherlands, is an aspect that has been overlooked in the existing historiography because there has until now been no solidly comparative approach. Whereas Adler, for example, has indicated that the UGIF, as the sole official source of support and assistance, occupied a central place in the Jews' struggle for survival, we will see that there were strong alternative representative groups in the French Jewish communities that continued to operate alongside the UGIF.<sup>384</sup> These included both the Consistory and secular aid institutions. In Belgium, alternative forms of representation came primarily in the form of secular aid institutions. These served to hamper the potential organisational effectiveness and absolute power of the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud.

The Germans initially considered the Jewish Associations in Belgium and France as potential coordinators of both social and religious life. We have seen, for example, that Dannecker attempted in the first instance to convince Rabbis Sachs and Weill to transform the ACIP into an organisation representative of the Jews in Paris, responsible for the social and charitable needs of the Jewish people.<sup>385</sup> Nevertheless, the nature of the Jewish communities in France was such that the Consistory continued to represent religious Jewry independently. The law even required that religious institutions should be able to execute their practices independently.<sup>386</sup> Above all, the vast number of Jewish immigrants, whose religious orientation varied widely, could not be represented by a singular umbrella organisation that failed to respect the specificity of their spiritual beliefs. Although the Consistory did not represent the large variety of religious beliefs either, it was at least focussed on religious life exclusively whereas the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were not.

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<sup>383</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil, 1942: Les cent jours de la déportation*, 60-61; Van Doorslaer, "Jewish Immigration and Communism in Belgium, 1925-1939" in: Michman (ed.), *Belgium and the Holocaust*, 68-81; Moore, *Survivors*, 175.

<sup>384</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 133.

<sup>385</sup> For Dannecker's attempt to transform the ACIP into a *Zwangvereinigung*, see the report of SS-Obersturmführer Theodor Dannecker titled 'the Jewish question in France and its treatment', 1 July 1941, XXVI-1, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. For Belgium, see the account of a meeting between Benedictus, Pinkous and Kurt Asche on 17 April 1942, Report of meeting of the AJB central board, 23 April 1942, A006713, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>386</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as resistance*, 82.

In the Netherlands, the religious Dutch Israelite Congregation (NIK) remained in existence during the war and, as Michman has shown, the Joodse Coördinatie Commissie, headed by Visser, encouraged cooperation between the leaders of the NIK and liberal Jewry in order to face difficult times together during the first phase of the German occupation.<sup>387</sup> However, the dissolution of the Coördinatie Commissie meant that pressure to unify the two church federations faded from November 1941. This can be explained by the fact that the JR received national authority in this period and Asscher and Cohen were attached to the traditional church federations of the NIK, whose chief Rabbis remained reluctant to cooperate with the liberal Jews.<sup>388</sup> Above all, even though the Portuguese and Dutch Israelite church federations continued to cooperate alongside the JR, we have seen that increasing secularisation, shown in the decline in regular synagogue attendance, diminished their power and influence before the war.<sup>389</sup> The waning influence of the church federations was further reinforced by internal disputes among and between the various Jewish factions, most notably the liberals, Zionists and the Dutch-Israelite representatives.<sup>390</sup> Therefore, unlike France, there was no powerful religious authority in the Netherlands that could function as an alternative to the JR.

We have seen that the French Consistory at times (vehemently) opposed the UGIF's existence and policies. Disagreements between the UGIF leadership and the Consistory were omnipresent, especially in the period prior to, and immediately after, the organisation's establishment.<sup>391</sup> The Consistory believed that the institution of the UGIF would be a major mistake. Although tensions decreased during the course of the occupation, and the two bodies occasionally even cooperated, some discord was always present.<sup>392</sup> The UGIF central board members were closely watched by highly esteemed members of the French Jewish community, who still exerted a significant influence and at times led the UGIF to reevaluate their decisions or dissolve the organisation.<sup>393</sup> It becomes clear from Lambert's diary that the first meeting of the UGIF-Sud's

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<sup>387</sup> Michman, *Het Liberale Jodendom in Nederland, 1929-1943* (Amsterdam: Van Genneep, 1988), 134-137.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>389</sup> Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 25; Michman, Beem et al., *Pinkas*, 130-131.

<sup>390</sup> Michman, *Het Liberale Jodendom in Nederland, 1929-1943*, 107-122.

<sup>391</sup> Cohen, "Le Consistoire et l'UGIF: La situation trouble des Juifs Français face à Vichy", 28-33.

<sup>392</sup> See, for example, the memorandum of Albert Lévy to the Central Consistory regarding the UGIF and the attitude of the Consistory to the UGIF, end of February 1942, Reel 2, MK490.2 (YIVO), Mémorial de la Shoah; Meeting reports of the Commission Central 16 October 1941, CCXIII-74; 26 October 1941, CCXIII-75; 12 November 1941, CCXIII-76, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>393</sup> For an overview of the opposition between the Consistory and the UGIF, see: Cohen, "Le Consistoire et l'UGIF: La situation trouble des Juifs Français face à Vichy", 28-37.

central board was held as late as 4 May 1942, almost half a year after its official establishment order.<sup>394</sup> By then, the Dutch JR had already been fully operative for more than a year. While this delay can partially be explained by the problems that surfaced during formation of the board which, as we have seen, took two months, the further delay in the UGIF's organisation resulted from the Jewish communities' internal disputes and from the disapproval shown by leading Consistory members towards the UGIF. Lambert reflected upon the continuing anxiety in this period:

there continues to be agitation and back-fence talk among the Jews, led by people who have nothing to do and are jealous of our useful action, jealous especially of the trust the authorities have shown in me [...].<sup>395</sup>

In Belgium, the situation was different because Ullman presided over the Consistory while he simultaneously headed the AJB. In contrast to France, where the opposition to the UGIF took a solid, organised form, the protests against the AJB were therefore not centrally orchestrated by the Consistory. The fact that prewar Consistorial leaders, as we have seen, had fled abroad at the outbreak of the war, removed the main potential mouthpiece for criticism of Ullman's policies. Only in France did the criticisms voiced by the Consistory therefore actually serve as a constraint on the policies of the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud.

Secular aid institutions that obstructed the authority of the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and UGIF-Sud were manifold in Belgium and France. In Belgium, Zionist youth movements engaged in welfare activities and increasingly cooperated with one another during the war. As Moore has indicated, 'the cooperation between different welfare and resistance organizations in Belgium during the occupation, coupled with the willingness of Jewish and non-Jewish groups across the political spectrum to work together provided the basis for an organization unique in Western Europe'.<sup>396</sup> This attempt at unity materialised through the CDJ, a leftist charitable organisation that united various Jewish organisations and originated among members of the Front d'Indépendance (FI).<sup>397</sup> The FI was a resistance movement founded on 15 March 1941 by journalist Fernand

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<sup>394</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 5 May 1942, 118.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 February 1942, 97.

<sup>396</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 175. For an overview of the history of the organisations that helped Jews to avoid persecution and deportation in Belgium, see: *Ibid.*, 166-207.

<sup>397</sup> The Front d'Indépendance was referred to as the Onafhankelijkheidsfront (OF) in Dutch.

Demany, who brought together leaders from various political strands.<sup>398</sup> The initiative for the CDJ emerged from far-left Jewish circles almost simultaneously in five major cities in response to the first threats of deportation in July 1942.<sup>399</sup>

While the organisation's activities were centred in Brussels, Antwerp lagged behind and engagement in the CDJ only commenced at the end of 1943.<sup>400</sup> Saerens has explained this difference by focussing on the specificity of Antwerp under Nazi rule. In the 1930s this city had seen a remarkable increase in the display of hatred against foreigners by Belgian nationalists. A combination of factors contributed to this 'Antwerp specificity', including the large refugee stream into the city at the end of the nineteenth century, coinciding with the emergence of a new, 'modern' form of antisemitism: a combination of religious, socio-economic, socio-political and racial prejudices.<sup>401</sup> These factors, combined with the ignorance of the local authorities and a lack of resistance compared to that shown in other Belgian cities, led to Antwerp becoming the first city in which Jews were called for forced work at the Atlantikwall, the systematic fortification of the Atlantic coastal areas in 1942. Fearing they would fall into the hands of the Germans, the Jewish communists that were united under the MOI immediately left Antwerp and moved to Charleroi where they played a central role in the institution of the CDJ. Their departure from Antwerp further hampered the development of Jewish resistance in this city.<sup>402</sup>

The CDJ functioned in close connection with the FI and was eventually taken under its wing.<sup>403</sup> Hertz Jospa, a communist of Romanian/ Bessarabian origin and member of the Conseil National of the FI, proposed the establishment of the CDJ as a way to assist the Jewish population.<sup>404</sup> He was supported by his wife, Yvonne Jospa. Another important individual was Emile Hambresin, former editor of the periodical *Avant Garde* and president of the Comité Belge Contre le Racisme, who knew Jospa from their shared membership in the Ligue pour combattre

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<sup>398</sup> De Lathouwer, *Comité de défense des Juifs (CDJ). Témoignages et documents recueillis entre 1947 et 1985*, copied text, introduction, AB2167, CEGESOMA.

<sup>399</sup> Steinberg, *Le Comité de défense des Juifs*, 39; De Lathouwer, *Comité de défense des Juifs*, 2; Saerens, "Die Hilfe für Juden in Belgien" in: Wolfgang Benz and Juliane Wetzel (eds.), *Solidarität und Hilfe für Juden während der NS-Zeit*, Vol. 2 (Berlin: Metropol, 1998), 250.

<sup>400</sup> Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad*, 695-696.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 735.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, 696.

<sup>403</sup> Gotovitch, "Resistance Movements and the 'Jewish Question'", 280-28; Steinberg, *Le comité de défense des juifs*, 36. It should be noted that many of the CDJ's records remained in private hands or were lost in the postwar period.

<sup>404</sup> Steinberg, *Le comité de défense des Juifs en Belgique*, 38. Herz Jospa is also referred to as Ghert or Joseph.

l'Antisémitisme in the 1930s.<sup>405</sup> Jospa and Hambresin were joined by six others, including Abusz (Abous) Werber of the left-wing Poale-Zion, and Israël (Maurice) Mandelbaum of Solidarité Juive.<sup>406</sup> In order to create a broad base of representation in the CDJ, the right-wing oriented Chaïm Perelman, who was associated with the AJB, was also included.<sup>407</sup> Other CDJ representatives were Benjamin (Benno) Nykerk, industrialist, and Edouard Rothel, secretary of the Brussels Jewish community and Eugène Hellendall, a wealthy industrialist who also served for the Brussels branch of the AJB.<sup>408</sup> They all set aside their fears about becoming involved with left-wing organisations, including the communists, in order to create an organisation that would help the Jewish communities in Belgium.<sup>409</sup> The only major Jewish organisation that was not represented in the CDJ was the Bund.<sup>410</sup>

From September 1942, the CDJ was a powerful alternative to the AJB for the Jews in Belgium, helping an estimated 15,000 people into hiding.<sup>411</sup> In total, the organisation 'may have helped up to 30,000 individuals with false papers, encompassing not only the Jews in Belgium, but also those passing through the country, and several thousand labour draft evaders'.<sup>412</sup> The group also attempted on a number of occasions to sabotage the German war machine by derailing trains and setting fire to factories. The CDJ became one of FI's most effective groups.<sup>413</sup> While focussing on propaganda, finance and the provision of false papers and material aid, the rescue of children was the CDJ's central occupation.<sup>414</sup> We will see that its members actively aimed to hamper the actions of what they considered the collaborationist AJB, for example by encouraging Jews not to cooperate with its directives, even though the opposition of CDJ members to the AJB was not as

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<sup>405</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil. La traque des Juifs*, Vol. 1, 66.

<sup>406</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 175.

<sup>407</sup> Saelens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad*, 695; Also see the interview in the USC Shoah collection with Noémi Mattis (Perelman), daughter of Chaïm Perelman and Fajga Perelman, where she describes the life, including the wartime activities, of her father: Interview Noémi Mattis (Perelman), 24 November 1995, Interview No. 9178, USC Shoah Foundation. Accessed at the American University of Paris, Paris.

<sup>408</sup> De Lathouwer, *Comité de défense des Juifs*, 22-23.

<sup>409</sup> Steinberg, *Le comité de défense des Juifs*, 68; Moore, *Survivors*, 176.

<sup>410</sup> Lucien Steinberg, "Jewish Rescue Activities in Belgium and France" in: *Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977), 603-604; Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil. La traque des Juifs*, Vol. 1, 67-69; Garfinkels, *Les Belges face à la persécution raciale*, 88-89.

<sup>411</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 176.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, 179; De Lathouwer, *Comité de défense des Juifs*, 8.

<sup>413</sup> De Lathouwer, *Comité de défense des Juifs*, 2.

<sup>414</sup> Steinberg, *Le comité de défense des Juifs*, 74-75; De Lathouwer, *Comité de défense des Juifs*, 2-18; Moore, *Survivors*, 176.



uniform as has been suggested in the literature.<sup>415</sup>

In addition to the CDJ, there were other social welfare organisations still functioning during the occupation, including the Secours Mutuel (Mutual Aid), Secours Populaire (Popular Aid), Secours Sioniste (Zionist Aid), Solidarité Juive (Jewish Solidarity), and Oeuvre Nationale de l'Enfance (National Children's Aid, ONE). Furthermore, Jewish youth organisations had been officially united under one umbrella: sports-club Maccabi (Maccabi Hatsair) an organisation which was able, with the help of the AJB, to carry out illegal activities.<sup>416</sup> In Belgium, the organisation and unification of Jewry by means of the AJB (which was what the Germans wanted), had not been achieved by the middle of 1943, despite Asche's demand (reiterated in the summer of 1942) to ban any autonomous activity of organisations other than the AJB.<sup>417</sup> A number of organisations continued to provide alternatives to the assistance offered by the AJB. Indeed, after the first wave of deportations in the summer of 1942, the AJB's importance lessened for the majority of non-Belgian Jews.<sup>418</sup> In contrast to its counterpart in the Netherlands, the organisation also became less important to the occupier towards the end of 1942 because it was not managing to effectively represent the Jews in Belgium.<sup>419</sup>

In France, there were various secular organisations that offered aid to Jews (illegally) with the aim of ensuring that they could escape from Vichy and from German persecution. George Weller has divided Jewish resistance in France into three categories: 1) those devoted to self-help through escape or hiding, including the Amelot Committee and the OSE; 2) those who were part of both the Jewish resistance and the armed French resistance, including Organisation Juive de

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<sup>415</sup> See, for example, Moore, *Survivors*, 179.

<sup>416</sup> Van den Daelen, *Laten we hun lied verder zingen*, 231.

<sup>417</sup> Report on the order given to Robert Holzinger by SS Obersturmbannführer Asche, 21 August 1942, A007416, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>418</sup> Steinberg, *L'étoile et le fusil, 1942: les cent jours de la déportation*, 223-227; *Ibid.*, *La traque des Juifs*, Vol. 1, 65-81.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*

Combat (OJC), Main d’Oeuvre Immigrée – Franc-Tireurs et Partisans (FTP-MOI)<sup>420</sup> and the EIF; and 3) the communist armed resistance organisations which included Jews but had no direct contact with the Jewish community.<sup>421</sup> Alternatives to the UGIF primarily belonged to the first group. The Amelot Committee was made up of three political groups (the Bund, and the left and right wings of the Poale-Zion), and two other organisations, the FSJF and the Colonie Scolaire.<sup>422</sup> Its leaders had been politically active long before they arrived in France. Léo Glaser, Amelot’s first treasurer, had been sought by the Tsarist police after the 1905 uprising in Russia, and the first secretary-general of the organisation, Yéhuda Jacoubovitch, was a Bundist from Poland who had been imprisoned for his opposition to Tsarism.<sup>423</sup> David Rapoport had been involved in the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 before he arrived in France in 1920. As Moore has shown, the leftist background of these men did not result in the cooperation of the Amelot Committee with the communists, in part because cooperation of this sort would have increased the chance of surveillance by the Gestapo.<sup>424</sup> Instead, the communists were organised under the umbrella of the Solidarité which was founded in September 1940.<sup>425</sup>

We have seen that the Amelot Committee was represented on the Coordinating Committee instituted on 30 January 1941 to oversee the distribution of relief France.<sup>426</sup> After Amelot seceded from the Coordinating Committee twice, finally in the summer of 1941, it continued its ameliorative aid alongside the communist Solidarité, primarily helping immigrant Jews in the larger cities and those held in internment camps.<sup>427</sup> Another organisation that falls into this ‘self-help’

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<sup>420</sup> After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the French Communist Party developed its own armed wing: the Operation Spéciale (OS), which later became the Franc-Tireurs et Partisans (FTP). In the summer of 1942, after the Paris police’s arrest of hundreds of clandestine immigrant MOI members, the organisation seconded ten percent of its members to form armed detachments, which became known as the FTP-MOI. David Drake, *Paris at War, 1939-1944* (Cambridge/Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 320; Robert Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows: A New History of the French Resistance* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), 223-224. For a general overview of the role of the immigrants of the MOI in the resistance, see: Stéphane Courtois, Denis Peschanski and Adam Rayski, *Le Sang de l’étranger: Les immigrés de la MOI dans la résistance* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), passim.

<sup>421</sup> As cited in Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 26. For an overview of the different reflections on the Jewish identity of Jewish communist organisations, see: *ibid.*, 26-27. There are many memoirs and histories by the FTP-MOI workers and their leaders. See, for example: Adam Rayski, *Nos illusions perdues* (Paris: Balland, 1985); Louis Gronowski-Brunot, *Le Dernier grans soir: Un Juif de Pologne* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980); Boris Holban, *Testament* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1989).

<sup>422</sup> See: Le Douarion, “Le Comité ‘Rue Amelot’”, 1-2, 8; Moore, *Survivors*, 104.

<sup>423</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 104-105; Le Douarion, “Le Comité ‘Rue Amelot’”, 10.

<sup>424</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 105.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>426</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 63; Moore, *Survivors*, 105.

<sup>427</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 106-107.

group was the Jewish scout movement EIF. After the institution of the UGIF in November 1941, all these organisations – whether legal, illegal, or quasi-legal – remained operative and assisted those in need.<sup>428</sup> The EIF, for example, was incorporated into the UGIF as the Service Sociale des Jeunes (SSJ), but it also engaged in clandestine operations from July 1942. It primarily focused on the provision of aid to young people, but also developed a section to help adults in securing hiding places and false identity papers. Some of its members also became involved in armed resistance activities, although this kind of activity had never been envisaged by the group's founders.<sup>429</sup>

From the summer of 1942, after the indiscriminate mass arrests and deportations of foreign Jews (including men, women, children and the old and sick), these (aid) organisations faced serious problems. The communist Solidarité had lost a high portion of its members as many immigrant Jews had either been arrested or were in hiding.<sup>430</sup> The Amelot Committee was paralysed and had not yet decided whether it would make use of the protection offered by the UGIF's identity cards which provided temporary exemption from deportation.<sup>431</sup> However, both organisations managed to resume their operations: Solidarité increased its armed resistance activities and Amelot, encouraged by Solidarité, sought to direct its welfare activities towards close liaison with non-Jewish organisations.<sup>432</sup> We will see that some of the organisations that remained in existence after the summer of 1942, most notably Amelot, operated alongside the UGIF-Nord while at the same time providing a counterweight to the collaborationist agenda forced upon it. These organisations were important alternatives to the UGIF-Nord, especially for immigrants, because they provided advice and, even more important, they provided contacts with trustworthy people who could help.<sup>433</sup>

In the French southern zone, the fact that the UGIF-Sud served as an umbrella for welfare organisations that in practice continued to function autonomously created the unique situation: such organisations were officially part of the UGIF while also serving as an alternative to it. Before the

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<sup>428</sup> For an overview of the history of the organisations that helped Jews in the Vichy zone to avoid persecution and deportation, see: Moore, *Survivors*, 123-165.

<sup>429</sup> See the report on the activities of the EIF from 1939 until shortly after the liberation, CCXVII-9, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Moore, *Survivors*, 112.

<sup>430</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 196-197.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.* We will see that, in the summer of 1942 the Amelot Committee decided to use these cards after all, despite moral objections to the use of protective cards issued by the Nazis.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-201. The conflict that existed between the various immigrant organisations, including the Communists and the Amelot Committee, about the nature of their organisations' activities lies beyond the scope of this research. For further reading, see: Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 206-209.

<sup>433</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 199.

establishment of the UGIF-Sud, both national and international Jewish organisations were part of a commission that coordinated assistance for those in internment camps, as decreed by the Vichy Ministry of the Interior on 20 November 1940. They included the OSE, EIF, HICEM and Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).<sup>434</sup> The EIF, whose institutions were moved to unoccupied France in June 1940, was the largest and most important Jewish youth movement during the occupation; its predominantly French leadership had access to a substantial network of high-ranking officials in the Vichy administration. The organisation was restructured in the summer of 1940 and worked, among other things, in the Vichy internment camps to improve conditions for internees, and specifically for children (at the behest of the Ministry of Youth).<sup>435</sup>

The incorporation of the EIF into the UGIF-Sud in 1941 had very little effect on the daily activities of the organisation, even though it officially lost its independent juridical status.<sup>436</sup> Through his contacts with General Lafon, the head of the Scoutisme Français whose friendship with Vallat was known to many, Robert Gamzon was able to secure a special status for the EIF: while the organisation was part of the UGIF, it was under direct control of the Ministry of Youth and Scoutisme Français.<sup>437</sup> Gamzon furthermore managed to obtain a position on the UGIF's central board, while the EIF became the organisation's youth department. Lambert's diary entry for 28 December 1941 notes that Gamzon was already involved in the organisation from early on. According to Lambert, Gamzon encouraged André Weil, Oualid, Millner and Lambert to agree to work for the UGIF at the end of 1941.<sup>438</sup> Robert Gamzon's wife Denise indicated in her memoirs that there had been doubts among the EIF's leadership about whether the EIF should become part of the UGIF.<sup>439</sup> Refusing to join the UGIF would mean that all rural and local scout groups and the EIF children's homes would be dissolved. She indicated that, as most French citizens were indifferent or even hostile towards the Jews, it would therefore have become much harder to secure

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<sup>434</sup> Other French and international organisations were also part of this commission, including the French Red Cross, Secours Nationale, CIMADE, the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers) and YMCE. See: Moore, *Survivors*, 123; Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 90-91.

<sup>435</sup> Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children*, 70-75.

<sup>436</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France*, 134. As Daniel Lee has shown, this was mainly thanks to General Lafont, head of the Scoutisme Français, who wanted the EIF to continue to practise scouting. Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children*, 81-82.

<sup>437</sup> Letter from Robert Gamzon to General Lafont, 19 December 1941, CMXLIV, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah as cited in Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children*, 81.

<sup>438</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 28 December 1941, 85. Lambert's statement is verified by Alain Michel in *Les Éclaireurs Israélites de France pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (Paris: EIF, 1984), 101-108. Also see Gamzon's acceptance telegram to Vallat, 4 January 1942, CCXIII-31, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>439</sup> Denise Gamzon, *Mémoires* (Jerusalem: published by author, 1997), 80.

hiding places for Jewish children and youth. In the end, therefore, the decision was taken to join the UGIF.<sup>440</sup> After the summer of 1942, the EIF launched its programme to hide foreign Jewish children and, in so doing, it relied strongly on the network it had established among the Scoutisme Français.<sup>441</sup> As we shall see, the interconnections between the illegal work of the organisation and the legal UGIF were many, and this was in part because of Gamzon's dual role.

Another longstanding welfare organisation from which Jewish children in France particularly benefited was the OSE. Established in 1912 in St Petersburg, the OSE provided aid for children and Jewish victims of Tsarist persecution. When it moved its headquarters to Berlin in 1923, the OSE became an international organisation, also gaining an office in Paris established by Professor Eugène Minkowski.<sup>442</sup> From 1938, the OSE primarily dedicated its efforts towards refugee aid, mainly helping children from Austria, Czechoslovakia and Germany.<sup>443</sup> After May 1940, the organisation continued its prewar activities, centred on the coordination of children's homes. In 1941, the OSE started transferring children out of the camps. By November 1941, it controlled nine homes housing 1,200 children and in 1942 the number of children's homes under its direct control had grown to 14.<sup>444</sup> By the end of 1941, although it remained operative in the northern zone, the OSE's main office had been moved to Montpellier in the unoccupied zone. From here, it concentrated on the improvement of conditions and medical care in the internment camps where Jewish children were being held. It also organised help for children across the country. Joseph Millner, born in Poland, headed the organisation in the southern zone.<sup>445</sup> As Laffitte has indicated, Millner's life course reflects that of many Jewish immigrants who were forced to adapt to the new conditions in their host countries. Born in Chelm in Poland in 1882 (some documents indicate 1888), then part of the Russian Empire, Millner fled to France in 1921, where he was

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<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>441</sup> Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children*, 84.

<sup>442</sup> Sabine Zeitoun, "L'OSE au secours des enfants Juifs" in: *Le Sauvetage des Enfants Juifs de France. Actes du Colloque de Guéret - 29 et 30 May 1996* (Guéret: Associations pour la recherche et la sauvegarde de la vérité historique sur la Résistance en Creuse, undated), 95.

<sup>443</sup> Laurence Rosengart, "Les maisons de l'OSE: parcours d'une enfance fragmentée" in: Martine Lemalet (ed.), *Au secours des enfants du siècle* (Paris: Nil, 1993), 83.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., 87; Renée Poznanski, "De l'Action philanthropique à la résistance humanitaire" in: Lemalet (ed.), *Au secours des enfants du siècle*, 59; Cohen, *Persécutions et sauvetages*, 103; Sabine Zeitoun, *L'Oeuvre de secours aux enfants (O.S.E.) sous l'occupation en France* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1990), 124.

<sup>445</sup> For a biographical overview of Millner, see: Michel Laffitte, "L'OSE de 1942 à 1944: Une survie périlleuse sous couvert de l'UGIF" in: *Revue de la Shoah*, Vol. 2, No. 185 (2006), 66-67.

unable to practise his profession as a chemical engineer until his naturalisation in 1938.<sup>446</sup> During the negotiations with Vallat about the establishment of the UGIF, Millner had been Lambert's confidant, but in January 1942, he was deprived of his French citizenship and forced to resign from the UGIF's central board. Millner continued to play a central role in the OSE and used the organisation to arrange the clandestine passage of Jewish children to Switzerland until the end of 1943, at which time he advised the UGIF to disperse those children who were still resident in the homes overseen by the organisation.<sup>447</sup>

On 8 March 1942, the OSE was forced to function under the umbrella of the UGIF, but continued to work in cooperation with the ORT and EIF even as pressure on its facilities increased with the liberation of children from the camps and the disbandment of many smaller charitable organisations.<sup>448</sup> As we shall see, though the OSE initially only operated legally, from the summer of 1942 it began to engage in clandestine operations in both the occupied and unoccupied zones. The operational autonomy of organisations like the OSE and the EIF ensured that there was a wider range of welfare organisations available to Jews in the unoccupied (later: southern) zone of France than in the Netherlands. Although immigrant organisations in Paris suffered as a result of arrests, deportation and continuous supervision by the Gestapo, they were nonetheless firmly established by mid-1943, not least because a constant stream of refugees continued to need their help.<sup>449</sup>

The existence of alternative (welfare) organisations as late as the summer of 1943 and even thereafter undermined the exclusive authority of the AJB and of the UGIF's leaders. In both countries, Jews could turn for advice and social welfare to representative organisations that were not directly supervised by the Nazis, when they were willing to take the risks that were frequently involved in this. Doing so offered more opportunities for Jews not to follow the legal approach and to investigate non-legal ways to escape German persecution, for example by going into hiding. The large number of independent organisations and the range of beliefs they represented fostered strong internal divisions which lasted until after the war. This became apparent in the case of the CUDJF,

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<sup>446</sup> Ibid., 66-70.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 67; Cohen, *Diary of a witness*, 81 n4.

<sup>448</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 271; Hillel Kieval, "From Social Work to Resistance: Relief and Rescue of Jewish Children in Vichy France", BA Harvard University (1973), 3; Laffitte, "L'OSE de 1942 à 1944", 67-70.

<sup>449</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 214.

established in 1944 in Paris by organisations including the OSE and the Amelot Committee.<sup>450</sup> In August 1944, after the liberation of Paris, the CUDJF arrested Edinger, the last head of the UGIF, and instituted a purge commission. After the CUDJF transferred its documents to the CRIF, the latter instituted a commission of inquiry, headed by members of organisations that had provided alternatives to the UGIF, including Marc Jarblum (president of the FSJF) and André Weill (from the Central Consistory).<sup>451</sup> The CRIF held the UGIF leadership accountable for its failure to remove children from the homes that were overseen by the Germans.<sup>452</sup> These children had become easy targets for arrest and deportation, but when the Allies drew closer in July 1944 and Brunner aimed to seize as many Jews as possible, the UGIF workers in Paris had not taken special measures to protect these children.<sup>453</sup> Between 21 and 25 July, Gestapo agents raided eight of the eleven UGIF children's homes and all but around ten of the children were deported to Auschwitz on the large last convoy on 31 July.<sup>454</sup>

In the Netherlands, organised Jewish self-help groups were rare. In contrast to Belgium and France, the secular community organisations that existed before May 1940 had no political or representative role, 'continued to eschew any involvement with political refugees and kept a distance from any communist or social democratic organizations'.<sup>455</sup> Furthermore, the ban on political activity by foreigners prevented refugees from organising their own representation.<sup>456</sup> As early as May 1941, many Jewish organisations in the Netherlands were dismantled and their activities taken over by the JR.<sup>457</sup> There were some organisations that continued to operate illegally outside the JR, but their area of influence was limited. One of these was the Palestine Pioneers who, in response to the first deportation in August 1942, planned an escape line for their group to Switzerland.<sup>458</sup> Although the plan failed and the initial group of ten was arrested, one of the group's

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<sup>450</sup> Fredj, "Le Consistoire Central et la création du CRIF", 176n. For an overview of the welfare activities of the CUDJF intended to ameliorate the situation of the Jews in Paris after the liberation, including financial assistance and lodging, see: "Mesures à envisager pour l'amélioration immédiate de la situation des Juifs de Paris" (ca.1944), Fonds CRIF, MDI-192, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>451</sup> Fredj, "Le Consistoire Central et la création du CRIF", 176.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>453</sup> Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French and the Jews*, 200-201.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.* For the list of those who were taken to Auschwitz on the last convoy (No. 77), see: Klarsfeld, *Le mémorial de la déportation des Juifs de France*.

<sup>455</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 211; *Ibid.*, *Victims and Survivors*, 34-35.

<sup>456</sup> Moore, *Refugees from Nazi Germany*, 158-159.

<sup>457</sup> For an overview of the Jewish organisations, and the meetings that preceded their official dismantlement, see: "Opheffing verenigingen", May-June 1941, Archief van de Joodse Raad 182.189, NIOD.

<sup>458</sup> Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 168.

members, Joop Westerweel (a non-Jew), continued their work and managed to help between 150 and 200 Jews. Among them were 70 Palestine Pioneers, and while most were given shelter in France, around 80 crossed into Spain. Westerweel also helped to find hiding places for Pioneers who could not leave the country.<sup>459</sup>

Other illegal organisations, including the Nanno and Oosteinde resistance groups, were engaged in similar activities. The Oosteinde group, which consisted of German Jewish refugees, was assisted by the JR member Jacques van de Kar.<sup>460</sup> The Oosteinde group had come into existence in the years before the German occupation. Its activities included taking care of illegal immigrants by trying to ameliorate their living conditions in the refugee camps.<sup>461</sup> When it became clear that refugees from Germany would first be targeted for deportation, the group's area of activity increased. From the first deportation in July 1942 until the spring of 1944, the Oosteinde group distributed illegal papers, including *Het Parool*, *Vrij Nederland* and *De Waarheid*, and falsified documents for themselves and other resistance groups. It also took care of people in hiding.<sup>462</sup> Nevertheless, the scope of these Jewish organisations, considered in terms of the number of Jews they helped, was not on the same scale as those Jewish aid organisations operating in Belgium in France alongside the Jewish Associations. They therefore never had the capacity to serve as an alternative to the JR.

The Jews in the Netherlands continued to depend on the JR, because it was the only organisation that provided social welfare for them. Their dependence increased even further when, from 1 January 1943, the Joodsche Raad began to supervise the 26,000 bank accounts held by Jews at the Lippmann, Rosenthal & Co (LiRo), a Jewish bank that was taken over by the Nazis with the aim of registering and then plundering the money and possessions of these Jews. Such supervision meant that Jews holding these accounts could no longer directly withdraw their monthly stipends. Instead, they became dependent upon the JR for financial support.<sup>463</sup> On 18 December 1942, the Joodsche Weekblad, the Jewish weekly published under the auspices of the JR, announced:

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<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>461</sup> Ben Braber, *Passage naar vrijheid: Joods verzet in Nederland 1940-1945* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 1987), 31.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>463</sup> Philip Staal, *Roestvrijstaal: speurtocht naar de erfenis van Joodse oorlogswezen* (Delft: Eburon, 2008), 186.



Since the firm of Lippmann, Rosenthal & Co., Sarphatistraat, will cease to make payments to Jews from 1 January and since, from that date, such benefits will be paid by the Jewish Council, it is essential that everybody who has been drawing, or has applied for, benefits in accordance with *Verordnung 58/1942* in November and December 1942 from the above mentioned firm, resubmits these applications to the Jewish Council.<sup>464</sup>

We have already seen that the structure of the Jewish communities affected the jurisdiction and authority of the four organisations. The fact that the authority of the Belgian and French Associations was constrained by the existence of alternative representative groups meant that they never gained the same representative power as the JR in the Netherlands. This allows us to better understand why they functioned differently. It also serves to explain different German perspectives about the effectiveness of the organisations because, as we have seen, it was precisely the lack of representative power held by the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud that led the Germans to become dissatisfied with them.

### *The nature of the German occupation*

The difference between the German occupation regimes in the Netherlands, Belgium and France is a third factor that has to be understood when we examine the Jewish organisations' (perceived) functionality. As we have seen, in all three countries, rivalries played out between the various German departments responsible for supervision of the Jewish organisations. In the Netherlands, the presence and control of the SS was soon felt, despite several attempts by Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart to outmanoeuvre them.<sup>465</sup> Compared to the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, the JR had fairly limited room for manoeuvre. The strong presence of the SS and the German police meant that the JR gradually became completely subordinate to the orders of the German police in Amsterdam.<sup>466</sup> In Belgium and France, by contrast, the Jewish bodies had a broader scope for negotiation with rival German institutions. In France, as we have seen, both the Military Administration and the Vichy regime delayed or even restricted the implementation of anti-Jewish measures during the first phase of the occupation. Despite the increasing authority of the SS in France and Belgium through the course of the war, the situation remained markedly different from

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<sup>464</sup> Het Joodsche Weekblad: uitgave van den Joodschen Raad voor Amsterdam, 18 December 1942, Vol. 2, printed by Omniboek (Den Haag) in 1979.

<sup>465</sup> For Seyss-Inquart's attempts to outmanoeuvre the SiPo-SD, with varying degrees of success, see: Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 207-226.

<sup>466</sup> Michman, "The Uniqueness of the Joodse Raad", 377.

that in the Netherlands.<sup>467</sup> For example, although Dannecker aimed to increase pressure on the Jewish community, he was not able to meet the expectations he set for himself in terms of the solution to the so-called ‘Jewish question’. The nature of the occupation in France, including the presence of the Vichy regime and the fact that, initially, only the north-western part of the country was occupied, obstructed the Judenreferat in France from effectively carrying out the deportation of Jews from the country.<sup>468</sup>

The institutional rivalry between the various departments involved in anti-Jewish politics worked out favourably for the Jewish Associations in Belgium and France. Because there was no unified policy, and as rival departments obstructed one another with competing interests, there was a delay in the implementation of anti-Jewish measures compared to the Netherlands.<sup>469</sup> This lessened the pressure on the AJB and the UGIF relative to that exerted on the JR. We can say how this played in, for example, the display of the yellow star, which was implemented in the Netherlands six weeks earlier than in Belgium and France. The delay was largely due to practical constraints, together with the Military Administration’s concern about the response of the non-Jewish population in these two countries.<sup>470</sup> As we have seen, the measure was not even introduced in the French unoccupied zone because of the objections of Vallat. The leaders of the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud could use disagreements between rival institutions to their own advantage. In the case of Belgium, we know that the central board of the AJB used the rivalry between the SiPo-SD and the Military government to create room for manoeuvre in their negotiations with both of these departments.<sup>471</sup> In the Netherlands, by contrast, the struggle for dominance did not result in a delay in the implementation of anti-Jewish legislation because the various German institutions overall agreed on the nature of the policies. The rivalry resulted in an

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<sup>467</sup> For the shifting power balances between the Military Administration and the SS throughout the war, see: Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 218; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 179-206.

<sup>468</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 80-81; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 401- 418.

<sup>469</sup> For an overview of anti-Jewish regulations and the preparation for deportations between 1940 and 1942 as well as the differences in terms of the scale, pace and implementation of anti-Jewish regulations in the Netherlands, Belgium and France, see: Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 231. For an overview of the impact of the institutional rivalry in the three countries, see: Ibid., 642-651 and the schematic overview on page 652.

<sup>470</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 236; Allgemeine Übersicht für die Zeit vom 1. Dezember 1941 – 15. März 1942, 16 March 1942, Brussels, in: *Dokumente. Die Endlösung der Judenfrage in Belgien*, published by Serge Klarsfeld and Maxime Steinberg (New York: The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1980).

<sup>471</sup> Meinen, “De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB”, 63-64; Griffioen and Zeller, “Jodenvervolging in Nederland en België tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog”, 45.

overlap of responsibilities, and these were carried out faithfully by the departments involved. As a result, anti-Jewish measures followed one another with increasing rapidity.<sup>472</sup>

## Conclusion

In order to understand how the organisations functioned, it is essential to understand the context in which they began. Although there was an attempt to reach a unified policy across all three of the western European countries, many factors ensured that the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud operated differently. As a result, German perceptions about their effectiveness were also different in each case. The nature of the occupation, rivalries between the various German departments responsible for the execution of anti-Jewish measures, the attitude of the *Judenberater* responsible for the deportation of Jews, and the nature of society from which the Jewish organisations emerged, together with the personalities of their leaders, led to differing types of foundations in the case of each organisation and to the development of different structures. Above all, the lack of a carefully thought out plan about the exact remit of these organisations played a crucial role in determining the course of events. Ad hoc personal initiatives and competing interests became decisive for their form and function.

Putting these findings into a broader context shows that the moral approach taken in the existing scholarship has paid too much attention to the behaviour and attitude of the Jewish leaders. The actions and decisions of the organisations' leaders have been disproportionately scrutinised and evaluated. In the Netherlands, the relatively well-integrated Jewish community, the nature of prewar immigration, and the strong prewar positions of Asscher and Cohen, as well as the absence of other authoritative representative organisations that could operate alongside the JR, ensured a solid foundation for Asscher and Cohen's leadership. This, in combination with their personalities, meant that they felt increasingly empowered as leaders of the Dutch Jewish community. As a result of the relative security of their positions, they also felt able to shrug off criticism. All these factors reinforced the belief of the JR's leadership that their approach to the Germans was the right one, that is, that following German directions would prevent a potentially worse outcome. The particular nature of the occupation in the Netherlands, as rival German agencies vied to be in control of executing anti-Jewish legislation, combined with the attitude of the JR's leadership, increased the

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<sup>472</sup> Boterman, *Duitse daders*, 99-101; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 236.

pace of the implementation of anti-Jewish measures, and this acceleration proved harmful to the Jews in the Netherlands.

In Belgium, we have seen that the existence of plural Jewish communities, resulting from the large influx of immigrants, meant that there was no comprehensive Belgian leadership, especially after the elite of the Jewish community fled the country in May 1940. The leadership vacuum could not be properly filled, and neither Salomon Ullman's position at the helm of the AJB, nor the position of the other board central members, was comparable to that of the JR chairmen. This instability resulted in several changes to the Association's leadership. These factors, combined with the nature of the occupation and the continued conflicts between the Military Administration and the SiPo-SD, ensured that the tactics used by the various AJB leadership differed from those of the Dutch leadership. The presence of other Jewish representative organisations also contributed to this difference. Although the leadership naturally wanted to protect their Jewish communities, their particular situation meant that they reached the limits of cooperation with the Germans much sooner than their counterparts in the Netherlands.

The same argument holds for France, where the UGIF leadership, and, in particular, the UGIF-Sud's chairman Raymond-Raoul Lambert, was determined and self-confident. However, pressure from various organised groups, not least the Consistory, as well as the continued existence of other representative Jewish organisations ensured that the authority of the UGIF was, from the first, weaker than that of its Dutch counterpart. The autonomy of the various departments of the UGIF-Sud, which in reality were mere continuations of prewar (social welfare) organisations, decreased the effectiveness of the Jewish organisation from the German perspective. The presence of other representative groups, along with the rivalry between and among German and Vichy officials for control over the implementation of anti-Jewish legislation, resulted in a disorderly situation which was to the benefit of the Jews in France.

The form of the Jewish organisations as well as their functionality thus depended on much more than the character and choices of their leaders alone. The three occupied countries offered such different contexts that the German aim to have a unified plan for the implementation of anti-Jewish regulations across all three countries, and for the functioning of the Jewish organisations in particular, seems in retrospect naive. It shows that there was a lack of understanding about the specific conditions in each of the three countries, particularly in terms of the impact of the

occupation, and of the differences between the Jewish communities. A detailed understanding of this variety of factors allows us to offer a more nuanced analysis of the nature of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud specifically and of the period of occupation more broadly.

## Chapter 3

### **Between Legality and Illegality: Resistance and the ‘Jewish Councils’**

In August 1942, Irène Zmigrod entered the social welfare department of the Belgian AJB and was in direct contact with those Jews who needed help.<sup>1</sup> Her main task was to take care of children whose parents had been arrested. In order to achieve this, Belgium, like France, had specifically designated children’s homes that were, directly or indirectly, associated with the AJB.<sup>2</sup> Zmigrod used her legal position in the organisation to give clandestine aid to Jewish children whose parents had not (yet) been deported. During an interview in 1953, she outlined how the AJB operated alongside the illegal CDJ:

Many parents came to the AJB and asked us to put their children in the homes. We refused this placement, since the Gestapo forbade us to keep children whose parents were not deported. However, we took note of the name and addresses of these people, which we forwarded to the CDJ. [The CDJ] then sent a social worker to the address and made every effort to hide the child.<sup>3</sup>

Even though the organisations forced upon the Jewish communities by the Nazis have traditionally been seen as channels of collaboration, this example shows that the wartime reality was more complex. We shall see that the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were either wittingly or unwittingly used as cloaks for various forms of illegal activities that aimed to prevent Jews from being deported throughout the course of the war. To varying degrees, the Jewish leaders used their cooperation with the Nazis to simultaneously resist Nazi policies. Although, as we have seen, the provision of social welfare was at the centre of the organisations’ activities, increasing German pressure on the Jewish communities made the leaders reconsider the law-abiding position they had adopted. For some central board members, including Raymond-Raoul Lambert and Salomon Ullman, their original motivation for leading the organisations, namely that by cooperating with the Nazis they could serve the interests of the Jewish communities through law-abiding means, began to change over the course of time. In other words, they either passively allowed the organisations to

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<sup>1</sup> Massenge, “De sociale politiek”, 217.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 220. In an attempt to safeguard the protection of children and the elderly, the number of institutions in which they were housed by the AJB increased during the course of the war. See, for example, the meeting report of the central board, 12 January 1943, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>3</sup> Eyewitness account by Irène Zmigrod entitled “A Social Worker’s Report on her Experiences in Belgium during the Time of the Nazi-Occupation”, 1956, p.8, 1656/3/9/262. Testimony Collection, Wiener Library. Also see the interview with Maurice Heiber in which he corroborates Zmigrod’s statement, R.715/Tr248.00, Archives Marcel Blum, DOS.

be used as cloaks for clandestine operations or they became actively involved in facilitating such activities.

The JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were all used in various ways to protect Jews against persecution and to prevent them from being deported through illegal means. The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, it highlights the diverse ways in which the Jewish organisations were wittingly and unwittingly used as cloaks for clandestine activities by individuals and groups. Second, it examines the active engagement of the organisations' leadership and membership in these activities. The central aim is to explore the concepts of opposition and resistance in relation to the legal character of these bodies. Existing scholarship has focussed primarily on individuals who crossed the line between legality and illegality, outwardly conforming while also working outside the legal organisations.<sup>4</sup> This research takes the analysis one step further and investigates whether and how the organisations were used for clandestine activities in ways that extended beyond this individual level. By examining the interconnections between the legal existence of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud and illegal organisations more broadly, we shall see that the very existence of the Jewish organisations led to a wide range of activities that were not necessarily consistent with their official policies, but would nevertheless have been impossible without their existence.

### **3.1 'Jewish resistance': the evolution of a term**

The historiography on the subject of 'Jewish resistance' is large and the concept itself remains contested by many scholars. In the period following 1945, there was little appreciation of Jewish resistance because 'so few Jewish resisters survived' and because their efforts had been carried out

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example: Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience*, 123-129; Laffitte, *Juif dans la France Allemande*, 261-261; Massenge, "De sociale politiek", 229-230; Schreiber and Van Doorslaer very briefly reflected upon the nature of the interrelations between the AJB and illegality in their conclusion to *De curatoren van het getto* (p. 349-350), questioning whether the presence of some resistance members in the AJB (Perelman, Heiber and Ferdman) was the personal choice of those involved or part of a wider strategy of the resistance. However, they do not provide a satisfactory answer to this question. In Dutch historiography on the Jewish Council, no attempts have been made to investigate the interrelations between clandestine activity and the JR, most likely because, as we shall see, there were comparatively few direct interconnections between illegal groups and the Jewish leaders.

in secret.<sup>5</sup> The overwhelming focus on Nazi documents in this period, contributed to a distorted view of Jewish behaviour in which those who either did offer armed resistance, or fled Nazi persecution, were considered to have gone to their death ‘like lambs to the slaughter’.<sup>6</sup> In the early 1960s, Raul Hilberg and Hannah Arendt invoked this famous phrase and stressed the passivity of the victims of the Holocaust in their respective works *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961) and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963).<sup>7</sup> Hilberg emphasised that the Jewish victims had exhibited little, if any, outward defiance. Their behaviour was characterised by an ‘almost complete lack of resistance’ which was consistent with a 2,000-year-old experience of ‘placating and appeasing’, rather than resisting, their enemies.<sup>8</sup> Arendt mainly focussed on how the Jewish Councils had served as instruments in the hands of the Nazi occupiers.<sup>9</sup> Assertions of Jewish passivity in the late 1950s and early 1960s stimulated research into armed resistance. In this period, the term resistance was therefore exclusively used to indicate the armed struggle against the enemy and research on Jewish resistance predominantly focused on ghetto uprisings and armed struggles in eastern Europe.<sup>10</sup> In 1972, Isaiah Trunk’s comparative work on the eastern European *Judenräte* led to a broader understanding of the term that went beyond armed confrontation. Trunk highlighted that the Jewish leadership had been very active in supporting cultural and spiritual resistance against Nazi efforts to dehumanise the Jews.<sup>11</sup> This notion of retaining spiritual integrity and dignity in the context of persecution and dehumanisation altered the perspective about Jewish responses, including Jewish

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Marrus, “Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust” in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1995), 96; Yehuda Bauer, *They Choose Life: They Chose Life: Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust* (New York: American Jewish Committee, Institute of Human Relations, c. 1973), 25 as cited by Richard Middleton-Kaplan, “The Myth of Jewish Passivity” in: Patrick Henry (ed.), *Jewish resistance against the Nazis* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 15.

<sup>6</sup> Middleton-Kaplan, “The Myth of Jewish Passivity”, 15; Robert Rozett, “Jewish Resistance” in: Dan Stone (ed.), *The historiography of the Holocaust* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 341-342.

<sup>7</sup> Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 104-111; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, passim. The phrase itself was taken from contemporary testimonies. See, for example, Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. Jacob Sloan (New York: McGraw Hill, 1958), 316 and Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: A Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. Anthony Polonsky (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 151 as cited in: Moore, *Survivors*, 369n.

<sup>8</sup> Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, as cited in Michael Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 109.

<sup>9</sup> Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 104-111.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Philip Friedman (ed.), *Martyrs and fighters: the epic of the Warsaw ghetto* (New York: Praeger, 1954); Keshev Shabbetai, *As Sheep to the Slaughter? The Myth of Cowardice* (Bet Dagan: Keshev Oress, 1962); Meyer Barkai (ed.), *The fighting ghettos* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1962); Yuri Suhl, *They Fought Back: the story of the Jewish resistance in Nazi Europe* (Michigan: Crown Publishers, 1967); Lucien Steinberg, *La Révolte des justes: les juifs contre Hitler, 1933-1945* (Paris: Fayard, 1970). For an overview of the historiography on Jewish resistance, see: Rozett, “Jewish Resistance”, 341-363; Patrick Henry (ed.), *Jewish resistance against the Nazis* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), passim.

<sup>11</sup> Trunk, *Judenrat*, 388ff.



resistance, to Nazi rule.

In the decades that followed, concerted attempts were made to define the complex nature of Jewish resistance. This resulted in a more nuanced understanding of the term. The concept of *amidah*, a Hebrew term that can be literally translated as ‘making a stand’, was central in reframing the discussion on Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. In 1968, Mark Dworzecki argued that the term included ‘all expressions of Jewish “non-conformism” and [...] all the forms of resistance and all acts by Jews aimed at thwarting the evil designs of the Nazis’.<sup>12</sup> In addition to their physical destruction, this also included the German aim to deprive Jews of their humanity.<sup>13</sup> Rather than perceiving resistance exclusively as an armed form of revolt historians in the field began to formulate more inclusive definitions. Among those doing so were Yehuda Bauer, Isaiah Trunk, Dan Michman, Michael Marrus and Lucien Lazare.<sup>14</sup> They all stressed in their own manner that Jewish resistance took many forms, including those of everyday sabotage and survival. Bauer argued that ‘any Jewish action, whether by a group or by an individual, that ran counter to real or perceived Nazi-German policies, has to be regarded as active nonacceptance of such policies, that is, resistance’.<sup>15</sup> In direct opposition to the claim that Jews passively complied with their destruction, Bauer contended that: ‘in Poland, after the war had begun, German rules were so brutal that, had the Jews passively acquiesced – even though every infringement of Nazi law was punishable by death – they would have died out in no time at all’.<sup>16</sup> For Bauer, *amidah* included ‘smuggling food into ghettos; mutual self-sacrifice within the family to avoid starvation or worse; cultural, educational, religious, and political activities taken to strengthen morale; the work of doctors, nurses, and educators to consciously maintain health and moral fiber to enable individual and group survival; and, of course, armed rebellion or the use of force (with bare hands or with “cold” weapons) against the Germans and their collaborations’.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Mark Dworzecki, “Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust”, 153 as cited in Rozett, “Jewish Resistance,”, 346.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Bauer, *They Chose Life*, passim; Ibid., *The Jewish emergence from powerlessness* (London: MacMillan, 1980); Isaiah Trunk, *Jewish responses to Nazi persecution: collective and individual behavior in extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979); Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, passim. For an overview of the studies in the 1970s and 1980s that assessed Jewish behaviour from the perspective of resistance, see: Rozett, “Jewish Resistance”, 352.

<sup>15</sup> Bauer, “Jewish Resistance in the Ukraine and Belarus during the Holocaust” in: Henry, *Jewish resistance against the Nazis*, 483.

<sup>16</sup> Bauer, *They Chose Life*, 23-24.

<sup>17</sup> Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 120; Ibid., “Jewish Resistance in the Ukraine and Belarus during the Holocaust”, 483.

Marrus contributed to the debate by arguing that Jewish resistance encompassed symbolic, polemic, defensive, offensive and enchained resistance. Symbolic resistance in his understanding included gestures and (religious) expressions which showed that Jews remained committed to their religion or culture.<sup>18</sup> Sémelin has pointed out that it is impossible to categorise exactly what resistance encompasses as the motivations of those involved are many and various.<sup>19</sup> Above all he argued that we must recognise that ‘resistance’ involves many layers of ‘non-cooperation, disobedience and opposition to Nazism and the foreign invader’.<sup>20</sup> In the context of the legal nature of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, this chapter understands resistance as the ways in which their leaders and members attempted to act against the interests of the Germans while continuing to serve as spokesmen of a legal representative body. The last president of the UGIF, Georges Edinger, reflected on this idea and argued that the official work of the UGIF was resistance to the extent that it served to alleviate the suffering of the Jews and reduce the impact of racial persecution.<sup>21</sup>

The provision of social assistance was of great importance to the Jewish communities and has received comparatively little attention in the literature on the four Jewish organisations. As French historian Michel Laffitte asserted, assistance to impoverished Jews in France was vital up until the very last weeks before the liberation.<sup>22</sup> Cohen, in turn, highlighted that the UGIF was criticised by the Germans for distributing financial resources for welfare purposes beyond what was deemed necessary but noted that ‘the council ignored the criticism and continued to allocate close to 4 million francs monthly for welfare purposes to more than 7,000 Jewish families’.<sup>23</sup> In a similar vein, Klarsfeld showed that UGIF aid was of the utmost importance, since it allowed the majority of the French community to survive. Even though the organisation was not established for the purpose of resistance, the UGIF was primarily an instrument of survival and those leaders deported in 1943

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Marrus, “Varieties of Jewish Resistance: Some Categories and Comparisons in Historiographical Perspective” in: Yisrael Gutman (ed.), *Major Changes within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), 269-300; Ibid., “Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust”, 92-103.

<sup>19</sup> Sémelin, *Unarmed Against Hitler: Civilian Resistance in Europe, 1939-1943* (Westport CT: Praeger, 1993), 25.

<sup>20</sup> Bob Moore, “Introduction: Defining Resistance” in: Ibid. (ed.), *Resistance in Western Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 1.

<sup>21</sup> Georges Edinger, Report on the activities of the UGIF: concerning its ‘official work’ and ‘clandestine work’ from 1941 to 1944, p. 1, CCCLXXIX-33, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>22</sup> Michel Laffitte, “Was the UGIF an obstacle to the rescue of Jews?” in Jacques Sémelin, Claire Andrieu et al. (eds.), *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 407.

<sup>23</sup> Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience*, 103.

(Lambert, Baur, Stora and Musnik) all died, according to Klarsfeld, as ‘resistance fighters’.<sup>24</sup> He noted, furthermore, that the UGIF helped more Jews to preserve their freedom and their lives than that it led Jews towards the transit camp in Drancy.<sup>25</sup> Overall, the Jewish leaders were not in a position to stop German anti-Jewish legislation from being implemented, but they could certainly aim to alleviate the suffering of the Jews. We have seen that the central board members in all three cases were clearly determined to provide social welfare even though they were operating under severe pressure.

Whereas some members of the central boards – including Raymond-Raoul Lambert, André Baur, Salomon Ullman and Maurice Benedictus – decided that it was no longer in the interests of the Jews for them to keep their posts when the implementation of anti-Jewish legislation increased, others decided to remain in place.<sup>26</sup> Kurt Schendel, liaison officer between the UGIF and the Germans, explained his motivation for maintaining his position during the postwar honour trial initiated by the CRIF. To Schendel, it would have been fairly easy to abandon his position at the UGIF, to get himself *faux papiers* (fake papers) and to go into hiding along with his wife. However, he decided not to:

Time and again, people whom I had saved proposed this to me. I did not do it and stayed in my position until the liberation, despite all the risks that my work entailed. I considered it my duty to fulfil my task until the last moment: to save as many Jews as possible and to relieve the fate of the internees.<sup>27</sup>

His willingness to provide aid to the Jews in France outweighed the dangers inherent in that choice. Similar explanations have been voiced by those in the Dutch leadership who decided to remain in place until the end of the Council’s existence, despite receiving encouragement from others to go into hiding.<sup>28</sup> Even though the JR’s leaders, like their counterparts in Belgium and France, had the financial means and social connections to go into hiding, they continued to serve at the helm of the organisation. They sincerely believed that they could still aid the Jewish communities by continuing to act legally. While the provision of social welfare as a form of resistance to German intentions and

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<sup>24</sup> Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz: le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Fayard, 1983), 167, 171 as cited in Laffitte, “Between Memory and Lapse of Memory”, 680.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 180.

<sup>27</sup> Statement of Kurt Schendel, 2 December 1946, CRIF MDI-310.7, Mémorial de la Shoah; For Schendel’s report on the *service de liaison*, see: Rapport sur le Service de Liaison et mon activité dans ce service, 2 September 1944, CCXXI-26/27, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the notes of David Cohen ‘Aantekeningen II’, 181j, Inv. No. 11, NIOD.

actions is important in the context of the Jewish organisations, we will shortly be focussing primarily on those (organised) clandestine activities that aimed to prevent Jews from being deported and help them survive. This will allow us to examine the level of interplay between legality and illegality.

### **3.2 The development of organised resistance in the Netherlands, Belgium and France**

In order to help Jews escape German persecution, and, especially, avoid deportation, Jewish organisations operated alongside non-Jewish bodies, and vice-versa. As we shall see, the types of interconnection between Jewish and non-Jewish organisations were different in Belgium, France and the Netherlands. Considerable differences can be identified between the Netherlands on the one hand and Belgium and France on the other. In the Netherlands, there was comparatively little engagement in (organised) clandestine activities during the first phase of the German occupation.<sup>29</sup> A number of factors have been used to explain this: geographical position and topography; the fact that the main response to occupation after 1940 remained one of reaching an accommodation with the occupier; and the absence of a First World War experience.<sup>30</sup> It was fairly easy for the Germans to track down and dissolve the earliest organised illegal activities, as those arranging them had little relevant knowledge or experience.<sup>31</sup> As we shall see, differences in the development of resistance in western Europe affected how illegal organisations' used the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud.

In Belgium and France, the echo of the First World War fed patriotic feeling and stirred very early expressions of resistance after the defeat in 1940.<sup>32</sup> However, this did not immediately yield organised forms of resistance because resistance groups, in the case of Belgium, were barely organised and individual groups functioned inefficiently and suffered from internal crises.<sup>33</sup> At the

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<sup>29</sup> Bob de Graaff, "Collaboratie en Verzet : Een Vergelijkend Perspectief" in: Joost Jonker and Albert Kersten (eds.), *Vijftig jaar na de inval: geschiedschrijving en de Tweede Wereldoorlog, bijdragen aan het congres gehouden aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam op 11 en 11 mei 1990* ('s Gravenhage: SDU Uitgeverij, 1990), 96; Dick van Galen Last, "The Netherlands" in: Bob Moore (ed.), *Resistance in Western Europe*, 190.

<sup>30</sup> Van Galen Last, "The Netherlands", 189-190; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 365; Moore, *Survivors*, 234.

<sup>31</sup> Van Galen Last, "The Netherlands", 194-195.

<sup>32</sup> Lagrou, "Belgium", 33; Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, 37-38. Lagrou has argued that we can identify three decisive moments in the entry of different categories of individuals into active resistance in Belgium. For an overview thereof, see: Lagrou, "Belgium", 33-48.

<sup>33</sup> Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 537.

start of the deportation of Jews in the summer of 1942, the Belgian FI was the first major umbrella organisation to unite different social and political forces. It was instituted on the initiative of the communists in March 1941. The FI connected various groups and included the communist Solidarité, which focused on helping the persecuted, including those in hiding.<sup>34</sup> Among the wide spectrum of social and political forces united in the organisation were representatives of the catholics, socialists and liberals as well as the communists.<sup>35</sup> At first, the FI did not have a department dedicated to helping persecuted Jews.<sup>36</sup> The organisation's foremost ambition was to mobilise support in all social circles and to fight against the labour draft.<sup>37</sup> Jews were considered a marginal group in society and the small number of assimilated Jews who joined general resistance groups did not establish Jewish resistance organisations because they were reluctant to be associated with immigrants who, as we have seen, had failed to integrate into Belgian society.<sup>38</sup>

After the major raids in the summer of 1942, representatives of leftist Jewish circles decided to institute a committee that would centre its activities exclusively around the creation of aid networks for Jews who were threatened with deportation. Organised Jewish resistance was most visible among the communists. The MOI, which worked in affiliation with the FI, was a communist foreign workers' organisation that predated the German occupation under the name Main d'Oeuvre Étrangère (MOE).<sup>39</sup> It was the communist party's liaison unit, intended to recruit immigrant workers into the party and to unite communist immigrants.<sup>40</sup> In both Belgium and France, large numbers of immigrant Jews who had experienced persecution in eastern Europe were generally less inclined to follow official regulations and were often the first to become involved in clandestine movements.<sup>41</sup> The MOI strongly opposed the law-abiding course taken by the AJB leadership and,

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<sup>34</sup> For an overview of all organisations that were included in the FI, see: Jul Puttemans, *De bezetter buiten: beknopte historiek van het onafhankelijkheidsfront, nationale verzetsbeweging, 1941-1945* (Lier/Almere: NIOBA, 1987), 19-24.

<sup>35</sup> Lagrou, "Belgium", 49-50

<sup>36</sup> Gotovitch, *De Rouge au Tricolor*, 204-220; Puttemans, *De bezetter buiten*, 27-54; Gotovitch, "Resistance Movements and the 'Jewish Question'", 279-280.

<sup>37</sup> Lagrou, "Belgium", 50-51; For an overview of FI member Jean Terfve's postwar attempts to ensure that all meritorious Belgians, not just those who had engaged in armed resistance, were recognised, see: Ibid., *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 52-58.

<sup>38</sup> Gotovitch, "Resistance movement and the 'Jewish Question'", 279-280.

<sup>39</sup> Van Doorslaer, "Jewish Immigration and Communism in Belgium, 1925-1939", 68-81; Gotovitch, "Resistance Movements and the 'Jewish Question'", 280.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> See Renée Poznanski "A methodological approach to the Study of Jewish Resistance in France" in: *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. XVIII (1987), 3; Griffioen and Zeller, *Jodenvervolgving in Nederland, Frankrijk en België*, 658.

sponsored by the FI, the MOI organised concerted acts of resistance. Among the earliest operations were the murder of Robert Holzinger, a German Jew who worked for the AJB, and the destruction of copies of AJB files that contained the personal information of Jews who were to be called for 'labour' in the East.<sup>42</sup> Even though the destruction of the AJB files was ineffective because the original files were saved, both actions underline the resentment felt by organised Jewish resistance groups against the AJB. We have already seen that, on the initiative of MOI-member Jospa, the CDJ was established, and functioned in close connection with the FI, focussing primarily on social welfare work, the production of false identity papers and securing hiding places for Jews.<sup>43</sup> It went on to become the most important clandestine Jewish aid organisation. As Moore has argued, the activities and success of the CDJ rested largely on the assistance of non-Jewish individuals and organisations, including the Catholic Church.<sup>44</sup> The work of Vromen has highlighted that while the story of the rescue of Jews was primarily a story of Jews saving Jews, the Catholic Church was an important institution that assisted Jews, and Jewish children in particular, who were in search for help.<sup>45</sup> While help was initially given in the form of providing (false) baptismal certificates, it later 'also encompassed requests for shelter, ration cards, or help to escape the country altogether'.<sup>46</sup> In order to secure these lines of assistance, many priests acted in cooperation with the CDJ and vice-versa, mainly in Brussels but also outside the capital.<sup>47</sup>

In France, the presence of the Vichy regime initially hampered the emergence of resistance activities. A large majority of the population trusted the Vichy government, feeling that it had ended a useless war.<sup>48</sup> The resulting 'wait-and-see' policy meant that, apart from small groups of communists and supporters of General Charles de Gaulle (a previously little known army officer who had gone to London and denied the legitimacy of the armistice and the Vichy regime), there

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<sup>42</sup> Maxime Steinberg and José Gotovitch, *Otages de la terreur Nazi: Le Bulgare Angheloff et son groupe de Partisans juifs Bruxelles, 1940-1943* (Bruxelles: Uitgeverij VUBPRESS, 2007), 85.

<sup>43</sup> Gotovitch, "Resistance Movements and the 'Jewish Question'", 280-281. Many of the records of the activities of the CDJ remained in private hands or were lost in the postwar period. De Lathouwer, *Comité de Défense des Juifs*, introduction; Steinberg, *Le Comité de Défense des Juifs*, 36.

<sup>44</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 188.

<sup>45</sup> Suzanne Vromen, *Hidden children of the Holocaust: Belgian Nuns and Their Daring Rescue of Young Jews from the Nazis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), passim.

<sup>46</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 192.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 194; Vromen, *Hidden Children of the Holocaust*, 11-12. The discrepancy between non-Jewish rescuers in the French-speaking Walloon region and the Flemish-speaking areas is an interesting phenomenon that extends beyond the limits of this thesis. For an overview thereof, see: Moore, *Survivors*, 205-207.

<sup>48</sup> Annette Wiewiorka, "France", in: Bob Moore (ed.), *Resistance in Western Europe*, 127.

was no organised resistance in the country in 1940 or during the first half of 1941.<sup>49</sup> In terms of Jewish engagement in clandestine activities, the presence of the Vichy regime resulted in a profound split between French Jews on the one hand and immigrant Jews on the other. During the first years of occupation, in particular, responses to the persecution and willingness to engage in illegal activities varied widely. Many Jews, in particular those with French nationality, believed at first that the French State was submitting to pressure from the German occupier and hardly recognised the fact that it was carrying out its own policy. These Jews believed, falsely, that they would be protected against German anti-Jewish legislation.<sup>50</sup>

A striking example of this attitude can be seen in a proclamation by Jacques Helbronner, president of the Central Consistory, from March 1941: ‘The only hope resides in the presence as the head of the State of Monsieur le Maréchal Pétain, with whom I have been in contact regularly who gives me hope of future reparations for the injustice imposed’.<sup>51</sup> Raymond-Raoul Lambert referred in his diary to ‘my friend Vallat’, head of the CGQJ, who was always ‘very open and frank’ with him.<sup>52</sup> Lambert trusted Vallat ‘and believed that owing to his animosity towards the Germans and his respect for veteran French Jews, he was willing to ease somewhat the suffering of French Jewry’.<sup>53</sup> As Poznanski has shown, these feelings were fed by the apparently warm and friendly attitude of leading Vichy officials towards the French Jewish leaders.<sup>54</sup> As a result, many Jews complied with the regulations of the Vichy regime and adapted themselves to the new reality. Throughout 1942, the UGIF leaders continued to send telegrams to Pétain and other Vichy officials asking for his intervention in various affairs, including the deportation of foreign Jewish children and women – ‘whose only crime is that they are non-Aryans’ – to the occupied zone.<sup>55</sup> In some ways, the situation can be compared to that in the Netherlands, where the relative integration of

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. The fact that the legal authority of Vichy was contested created ambivalence and confusion. The different perceptions of events in the occupied and unoccupied zones during the earliest phases of the war, and their impact on the development of resistance activities is a subject that extends beyond the limits of this research. For an overview thereof, see: Nathan Bracher, “Up in Arms: Jewish Resistance against Nazi Germany in France” in: Patrick Henry (ed.), *Jewish resistance against the Nazis*, 74-75.

<sup>50</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during WWII*, 68-74, 272; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 88.

<sup>51</sup> Meeting of March 16-17 1941, AIU, CC-1-b as cited in: Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 8 January 1942, 90.

<sup>53</sup> Cohen, “Introduction” in: *Diary of a witness*, xlvii.

<sup>54</sup> Poznanski, *The Jews in France during WWII*, 78-79.

<sup>55</sup> See telegrams of Albert Lévy and Raymond-Raoul Lambert to Marechal Pétain and Jacques Guérard, 4 September 1942, LVII-54, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. Also see, for example, the telegram of Lambert to the secretary-general of the police on the UGIF members interned at Rivesaltes camp, 13 September 1942, CDXVI-139, Mémorial de la Shoah.

Dutch Jews into non-Jewish society is often considered to have created a false sense of security against German persecution.<sup>56</sup> Because of this integration, Jews were less susceptible to the fear of being singled out as Jews and many considered themselves to be primarily Dutch rather than Jewish.<sup>57</sup> The presence of large numbers of immigrants in France makes the situation different from that in the Netherlands. Jews who had recently immigrated to France did not share the feeling of ‘trust’ in the French State. Immigrant Jews, many of whom had already suffered the burden of persecution, were at this stage already more inclined not to follow the path of legality. As we shall see, this was especially true in the case of the communists and Zionists.<sup>58</sup>

Throughout 1941 and the beginning of 1942, various resistance groups operated in the French occupied and unoccupied zones individually, without strong, central coordination. As Gildea has shown, they were drawn from all parts of the political spectrum.<sup>59</sup> The help offered by non-Jewish organisations to the Jews, who were increasingly suffering under the yoke of the occupation was marginal in this period. Racist and xenophobic prejudice, partly inherited from the nineteenth century and further encouraged by the economic (and political) crises of the 1930s, fed the notion that the Jews were not, and could never become, truly French.<sup>60</sup> Members of the French resistance were ideologically susceptible to these ideas and also showed caution for strategic reasons, suspecting that much of the population would have been influenced by antisemitic propaganda, and therefore not wanting to alienate French citizens. They believed that if they supported the Jews, they would validate Nazi propaganda that condemned the war as Jewish.<sup>61</sup> Fear of alienating the Arabic-Islamic world, and the failure to perceive the gravity of the threat to the Jews, contributed to the decision not to make a distinction among victims, ‘at a time when France as a whole was under the occupier’s yoke’.<sup>62</sup> As a result, ‘with very rare exceptions [...], the organised resistance did not engage in the battle against antisemitism’ during the first phase of the occupation.<sup>63</sup> Exceptions were the Communists, who condemned the measures of exclusion, and those Christians who raised

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<sup>56</sup> Blom, “De vervolging van de joden in Nederland in internationaal vergelijkend perspectief”, 505.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 501.

<sup>58</sup> Olivier Wieviorka, *The French Resistance*, transl. from the French by Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge / London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016; first ed. 2013 [French]), 401; Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 104-105.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 127-134; Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, 43, 81.

<sup>60</sup> Renée Poznanski, *Propagandes et persécutions: La Résistance et le ‘problème juif’, 1940-1944* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 43.

<sup>61</sup> Wieviorka, *The French Resistance*, 210-211.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 210.



their voices to repudiate antisemitic persecution.<sup>64</sup> However, the Communists, including the FTP-MOI units, were still primarily concerned with a national, anti-fascist resurrection rather than the provision of aid to Jews.<sup>65</sup>

As more anti-Jewish legislation was enacted in 1942 – most importantly, the introduction of the yellow star in May in the occupied zone and the mass roundups that began during the summer – the responses of the French population to the persecution of the Jews changed. The distressing scenes that unfolded in the occupied zone and later in the southern zone moved the population and either removed many prejudices or ‘relegated them to the shadows’.<sup>66</sup> When the categories of the persecution multiplied, including not only Jews but also communists and freemasons as well as French workers who were forced to work in Germany after February 1943 (with the introduction of the STO), more Frenchmen actively supported, or were engaged with, resistance activities.<sup>67</sup> This included acts of sabotage, attacks, and the provision of false identity papers and hiding places as well as gathering intelligence and distributing it to the Allied powers.<sup>68</sup> However, there was still very little help for persecuted Jews. The infringement of the sovereignty and honour of France remained the central focus of non-Jewish underground groups and newspapers. As Wieviorka concluded: ‘the fight against antisemitic persecution had mobilised Jewish and Christian organisations, but the internal resistance movements and the Free France organisations [led by Charles de Gaulle] remained largely apart from that process’.<sup>69</sup> Antisemitism had by no means completely disappeared and, with the exception of a few isolated examples, French resistance groups remained silent.<sup>70</sup>

Lazare saw this history differently, claiming that ‘the Resistance, many members of the clergy, part of the administration, and elements of the population all took risks in actively and effectively participating in the rescue of Jews’, particularly after the STO and the deportation of

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 211-213.

<sup>65</sup> Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, 18; Bracher, “Jewish Resistance in France”, 84. The organisational structure of the FTP-MOI units, their relation to the Communist party and to the FTP are highlighted in Courtois, Peschanski et al., *Le sang de l'étranger*, 143-155.

<sup>66</sup> Poznanski, *Propagandes et Persécutions*, 286.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>68</sup> Cohen, *Persécutions et sauvetages*, 359-362; Wieviorka, “France”, 134-136.

<sup>69</sup> Wieviorka, *The French Resistance*, 219.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 220.

Jews from the summer of 1942 onwards.<sup>71</sup> In his view, the public disapproval by some bishops of the persecution was decisive in bringing many French people to assist in rescuing Jews.<sup>72</sup> Recently, Sémelin has claimed in a similar vein that individual acts of resistance were more prominent than has previously been thought. Sémelin argued that while only a portion of the Jews escaped France or were saved by organised rescue networks, the vast majority of Jews were aided by small gestures from the French population, including the provision of food and help in finding hiding places and ways to escape.<sup>73</sup> Sémelin has been criticised for his views by leading historians in the field, including Robert Paxton, for failing, among other things, to recognise the power of the antisemitism that was inherent in French society.<sup>74</sup> Sémelin has nonetheless convincingly shown that Jews could survive in France in many ways, often with the aid of French people.

From the summer of 1942, Jewish resisters of different nationalities began to work together with non-Jews of foreign nationalities under the umbrella of the MOI, which relied on the leadership of Jewish immigrants and other foreigners who had gained military experience.<sup>75</sup> Gildea finds that there were important connections between the French communist resistance and immigrant Jews in France.<sup>76</sup> His work underlines that Jews, especially foreign Jews, cooperated with a wide spectrum of other foreigners and that their role in the resistance, contrary to what other research has suggested, was substantial.<sup>77</sup> Jews were both recipients of Gentile help and contributors to the wider strategy of resistance.<sup>78</sup> We have seen that there were a number of Jewish organisations that (illegally) aided Jews and *specifically* aimed to shield them from persecution. The help of these organisations, including the Amelot Committee and the OSE, materialised predominantly on the initiative of Jews who had immigrated to France before the war. Their ideological and cultural differences meant that these organisations were initially suspicious of each other, but we will see that the interrelations that existed in France between Jewish and non-Jewish

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<sup>71</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as resistance*, 30.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Sémelin, *The Survival of the Jews in France*, passim.

<sup>74</sup> Paxton, "Jews: How Vichy Made it Worse" in: *New York Review of Books*, No. 6 (2014). Gildea has furthermore argued that Sémelin has reinforced the redeeming myth of the 'good French', 'not in the sense of a fiction but as a story that gives meaning and identity to a society', see: Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, 474.

<sup>75</sup> Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, 222-224.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 46, 222-223.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 204 - 205.

<sup>78</sup> Poznanski "A methodological approach to the Study of Jewish Resistance in France", 3. Also see Gildea, *Fighters in de Shadows*, 205.

groups as well as between French and immigrant Jews began after a time to foster mutual clandestine operations under the cloaks of the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud.

In the Netherlands, ‘the inexperience in matters of war, occupation and illegal activity soon became apparent’ when the German troops crossed the border on 10 May 1940.<sup>79</sup> Initially, acts of resistance were individual in nature. A sequence of anti-Jewish legislation, including raids in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam, when over 400 Jewish men were arrested, resulted in the famous February strike on 25 and 26 February 1941. Encouraged by the illegal Dutch Communist Party (CPN), this was a coordinated strike during which, among other things, tram drivers and dock workers refused to work and factories, officers, stores and restaurants in Amsterdam were closed; at its peak, around 300,000 people took part. The next day, surrounding towns such as Zaandam, Utrecht, Hilversum and Haarlem followed Amsterdam’s example.<sup>80</sup> The strike was an isolated incident: accommodation with the occupier remained the primary response in the following period. As in France, ‘the greatest impetus to civil disobedience and to wider resistance was the introduction of compulsory labour service’ more than one year later in September 1942.<sup>81</sup> As Moore has argued, the nature of resistance in the Netherlands was changed by the institution of the Landelijke Organisatie voor Hulp aan Onderduikers (LO), whose leaders and early members were all from Christian backgrounds, and which helped workers go underground.<sup>82</sup> However, with some exceptions, the provision of aid to Jews was only a minor part of the LO’s work, and was sometimes entirely absent.<sup>83</sup> Overall, because organised resistance took longer to develop than in Belgium and France, it came too late to help the majority of Jews in the Netherlands.<sup>84</sup>

There are various aspects that explain these differences between the Netherlands on the one hand and Belgium and France on the other hand. The absence of large numbers of Jewish (political) immigrants in the Netherlands was a crucial factor. We have seen that the large number of immigrant Jews in Belgium and France had experienced persecution in eastern Europe and were well aware of the dangers of Nazi occupation. As soon as the Nazis occupied western Europe, these

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<sup>79</sup> Van Galen Last, “The Netherlands”, 191.

<sup>80</sup> For an overview of the history and nature of this strike, see: Sijes, *De Februari-staking: 25-26 Februari 1941*, passim.

<sup>81</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 234.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 234-235. Also see: Johan Snoek, *De Nederlandse kerken en de joden, 1940-1945: de protesten bij Seyss-Inquart, hulp aan joodse onderduikers, de motieven voor hulpverlening* (Kampen: Kok, 1990).

<sup>83</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 237.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

Jews were the first to begin organising clandestine activities, operating as organised groups in parallel with the legal organisations via groups such as the Amelot Committee and the FI. The nature of migration, as well as the sheer number of immigrants, had been different in the Netherlands. As Moore has shown, the Netherlands, despite its proximity to Germany, was never considered a place of refuge for political refugees from the Third Reich in the 1930s, even for the many Jews who had fled from Poland to Germany earlier on.<sup>85</sup> Its ‘government by denominational political parties with a relatively right-wing outlook contrasted markedly with the political chaos of the last years of the German Weimar Republic’.<sup>86</sup> While the country did provide refuge to members of German left-wing parties, the Netherlands was relatively unattractive for this group of immigrants.<sup>87</sup> This was especially the case for those who wished to continue their political activities because the Netherlands did not allow political activity by aliens who were considered subversive and undesirable elements.<sup>88</sup> In contrast, France absorbed most of the organised left-wing immigrants during and after 1933 and, as we have already seen, these individuals became important in establishing clandestine networks.<sup>89</sup>

Their relative integration into non-Jewish society allowed Dutch Jews to develop a false sense of security. Like the majority of the Dutch population, they complied with the German occupation, responding with a traditional deference to authority and the Dutch sense of ‘civic duty’.<sup>90</sup> In contrast to the situation in Belgium and France, therefore, no Jewish armed resistance groups were formed. Jews in the Netherlands had not experienced anti-Jewish violence on a large scale and therefore, they ‘were unused to forming defence groups and few had professional military experience’.<sup>91</sup> The works of Braber have shown that there was Jewish participation in early non-Jewish resistance groups, but in small numbers.<sup>92</sup> There were Jews who set up specific Jewish

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<sup>85</sup> Moore, *Refugees from Nazi Germany*, 12.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-112, 158. Moore outlined various reasons why political refugees still decided to come to the Netherlands, of which the geographical location, being the nearest foreign border to the heavily populated industrial areas of Germany, is considered most important.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*; Braber, *Passage naar vrijheid*, 12-13.

<sup>89</sup> Moore, *Refugees from Nazi Germany*, 110.

<sup>90</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 208; Griffioen and Zeller, “Jodenvervolging in Nederland en België tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog”, 41; Blom, “The Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands”, 344; Ben Braber, *This Cannot Happen Here: Integration and Jewish Resistance in the Netherlands, 1940-1945* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 158.

<sup>91</sup> Braber, *This Cannot Happen Here*, 161.

<sup>92</sup> Braber, *This Cannot Happen Here*, 92-98; *Ibid.*, *Zelfs als wij zullen verliezen: Joden in verzet en illegaliteit, 1940-1945* (Amsterdam: Balans, 1990), 49-56.

welfare and resistance groups, most notably the Nanno and Oosteinde groep and the Palestine Pioneers whose activities we have already examined, but again, their impact and representation was limited. The delay in the development of resistance activities in the Netherlands, together with the fact that the JR was disbanded relatively early (in September 1943), by comparison with its western European counterparts (which were disbanded close to the liberation in the summer of 1944), partly explains why few resistance groups operated alongside the JR, and why they failed to use the organisation as a cloak for their clandestine operations.

### **3.3 Cloaking: interconnections between illegal groups and the Jewish organisations**

During the course of the war, the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud attracted, or had connections with, clandestine operators because their leaders and members had information and resources valuable to the resistance. In France, the interim president of the Central Consistory, Léon Meiss, who was a known critic of the UGIF, opposed the immediate dissolution of the UGIF in the summer of 1944 precisely for this reason.<sup>93</sup> The term ‘cloaking’ has been used to describe this phenomenon of covert actions taking place under the legal cover of the Jewish bodies. It is a term best understood as the concealment or camouflage of illegal activities using the legality of the Jewish organisations, either with or without knowledge of its members. As we shall see, cloaking was a complex phenomenon that was often more central to the organisations than has previously been argued.

The level of cloaking activities undertaken under cover of the Jewish organisations differed. The same is true for the central board members’ awareness of, and participation in, these activities. Although it is impossible to generalise given the complicated nature of the occupation and changes in the compositions of the boards throughout the war, it is possible to identify three different levels of cloaking. In Belgium, there were some individuals who took on a crucial dual position within the AJB and the CDJ. The top level of leadership seemed to have had knowledge of this, but intentionally turned a blind eye so as not to hamper these actions. In the northern zone of France, the situation was similar, although here the leadership’s involvement in cloaking activities was more active. In the French southern zone, the federative structure of the UGIF-Sud, in which Jewish social welfare organisations were operating independently, made it relatively easy to engage in

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<sup>93</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 324.

clandestine activities that obstructed Nazi policies, using the legality of the organisation as a protective shield. On various levels, and in relatively large numbers, members of the UGIF-Sud central board played an active role in accommodating clandestine activities. In the case of the JR in the Netherlands, there were some initiatives to use the Council in this way but, compared with the other two countries, these were few and far between. There was relatively little knowledge among the Jewish leadership of illegal activities that were taking place in parallel with the activities of the Council.

*Belgium: the Comité de Défense des Juifs and the AJB*

The perspectives of members of the CDJ on the relation between this illegal organisation and the AJB vary. It is generally understood that the CDJ's propaganda activities were mainly directed against the AJB, 'advising Jews to ignore its directives and to resist German measures'.<sup>94</sup> This notion is confirmed in various postwar statements. For example, according to Alfred Rosenzweig, there was a hostile and disapproving outlook towards the AJB's decisions and its activities.<sup>95</sup> Some postwar interviews, including those recorded with Hertz Jospa in the late 1940s, indicate that the organisation's central aim was to combat and sabotage the actions of the AJB.<sup>96</sup> According to people who worked at the top of the FI (of which the CDJ, as we have seen, was part), such as Rudolf Roels and Roger Katz, president of the Anciens Combattants et Résistants Armés Juifs (Former Combatants and Armed Jewish Resistants), they never authorised contact with the AJB.<sup>97</sup> The CDJ also actively discouraged people from approaching the AJB for help.<sup>98</sup> Yet there were important connections between the two organisations. This is illustrated by a letter that prominent FI member Jean Terfve sent after the liberation on 17 October 1944, in which he claimed that the presence of the AJB was instrumental to the FI's activities in defence of the Jews.<sup>99</sup> This notion is reinforced by a letter sent in 1964 to the president of the Central des Oeuvres Juives in which former AJB head

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<sup>94</sup> See, for example, Bob Moore "Integrating Self-Help into the History of Jewish Survival in Western Europe" in: Norman J.W. Goda (ed.), *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust: New Transnational Approaches* (New York/ Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), 196.

<sup>95</sup> Interview Alfred Rosenzweig, 3 February 1972, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>96</sup> Report on the history of the CDJ, "Historique du Comité de Défense des Juifs", AB2167, CEGESOMA. Also see: 'Historique et les activités de le CDJ', CDLXI-19, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>97</sup> Letter of Rudolf Roels to Roger Katz, 18 May 1966, AA753, CEGESOMA; Letter of Katz to an unknown person, 19 May 1967, AA753, CEGESOMA.

<sup>98</sup> Steinberg, *Le comité de défense des Juifs en Belgique*, 86.

<sup>99</sup> De Lathouwer, *Comité de défense des juifs*, appendix letter of the 'Direction Nationale du Front de l'Indépendance'.

Marcel Blum underlined that the AJB had worked in close collaboration with the services of the CDJ.<sup>100</sup>

Maurice Heiber personified the fluidity between the official AJB and the CDJ. In his capacity as head of the children's service section of the Brussels branch of the AJB, Heiber established an orphanage in Wezembeek-Ophem for children whose parents had been deported. After the first major roundups in Paris in the summer of 1942, Emile Hambresin, a left-wing Catholic working for the FI, approached Heiber and asked him to join the FI, and, specifically, the CDJ.<sup>101</sup> After the war, Heiber claimed to have realised at this point that the AJB was in reality 'an organism that collaborated with the occupier and ultimately facilitated its control over the Jewish population'.<sup>102</sup> When he was introduced to Hertz Jospa, Abusz Werber and Chaïm Perelman, Heiber agreed to work for the CDJ. Shadowing his legal role within the AJB, he became primarily responsible for the children's section of this illegal organisation.<sup>103</sup> Heiber worked together with Yvonne Jospa, the wife of Hertz Jospa, and Yvonne Nèvejean, head of the Oeuvre Nationale de l'Enfance (ONE), an official governmental agency that was created to promote children's health and remained associated with the FI. A letter written on 7 November 1968 by Jean Terfve indicates that Heiber wanted to leave the AJB on several occasions. However, time and again, the FI leadership collectively decided it was in the interest of the resistance that he should continue to work for the AJB.<sup>104</sup>

The use of the AJB's legal cover by the CDJ was complex. As soon as a parent applied to the legal AJB, or any other social service, the child would be sent from one office to another. All details about the child's family background would then be deleted before the child was sent to the CDJ. The clandestine workers therefore made it impossible for the authorities or the parents to know who had directed the children to them. After that, the 'childhood' sections of the CDJ would be alerted and would facilitate contact with the parents. Parents had to be persuaded to give up their

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<sup>100</sup> Letter of Marcel Blum to the president of the Central des Oeuvres Juives, 18 May 1964, CDLXI-20, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>101</sup> Eyewitness account of Maurice Heiber, "The Jewish Children in Belgium" (1956), 1656/3/9/274, p.4, Wiener Library.

<sup>102</sup> Maurice Heiber's story, 'recit de Maurice Heiber', undated, AA1915/22, CEGESOMA.

<sup>103</sup> Maxime Steinberg, *Un pays occupé et ses juifs: Belgique entre France et Pays-Bas* (Gerpennes, Belgium: Editions Quorum, 1998), 98.

<sup>104</sup> De Lathouwer, *Comité de défense des Juifs*, appendix, letter of Jean Terfve to M. Heiber, 7 November 1968.

children to the organisation and the child would then receive a false, non-Jewish identity.<sup>105</sup> Nèvejean, who joined the CDJ as member of the children's section and sat on its finance committee, quickly organised an elaborate illegal network and was able to place between 3,000 and 4,000 Jewish children, including those from the Wezembeek orphanage, at various locations.<sup>106</sup> The CDJ benefited from the existence of the AJB children's homes because of the resources available there and because many children were transferred through the organisation's homes.<sup>107</sup> Rather than openly disassociating himself from the AJB, Heiber continued to work for the organisation, which was considered by the CDJ leadership a useful camouflage for his illegal activities.<sup>108</sup>

There was a wider awareness among AJB officials of the dual position that Heiber held. David Ferdman, for example, who had fled from Poland to Belgium at the end of the 1930s and who himself worked for both the AJB and the CDJ, knew of Heiber's illegal activities and covered for him whenever necessary. In March 1942, Ferdman had been appointed as inspector-general of charitable institutions at the AJB Brussels branch. He occupied a position in the AJB's central board and he later became an active member of the CDJ with a direct connection to Chaim Perelman, the CDJ's co-founder.<sup>109</sup> Hoping to benefit from the AJB's existence, Heiber and Chaïm Perelman aimed to get access to the deportation lists and other official documents and to exert influence on the AJB's decisions and policies.<sup>110</sup> In January 1942, Ullman had already asked Perelman to join the AJB Brussels branch but the latter was cautious and, as a technical advisor, he wanted to deal solely with matters related to teaching. He only became a fully committed member in November 1942, encouraged by the resistance, which saw his infiltration into the AJB as another opportunity to use its existence for their own benefit.<sup>111</sup> Perelman gained a central position in the organisation, especially after the AJB was centralised in response to the Iltis operation in September 1943, an extensive operation launched against all Jews of Belgian nationality, and this enabled him to take

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<sup>105</sup> De Lathouwer, *Comité de défense des juifs*, 11; Eyewitness account of Maurice Heiber, "The Jewish Children in Belgium" (1956), 1656/3/9/274, p. 5-7, Wiener Library.

<sup>106</sup> Maxime Steinberg, *Un pays occupé et des juifs*, 132-136; Sylvain Brachfeld, *Ils ont survécu. Le sauvetage des juifs en Belgique occupée* (Brussels: Éditions Racine, 2001), 93.

<sup>107</sup> Steinberg, *Le comité de défense des juifs*, 95.

<sup>108</sup> Maurice Heiber's story, 'recit de Maurice Heiber', undated, AA1915/22, CEGESOMA.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.; Meeting report of the local Brussels department, 11 March 1942, A006946, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin; Meeting report of the central board, 12 March 1942, A006708, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>110</sup> De Lathouwer, *Comité de défense des Juifs (CDJ). Témoignages et documents recueillis entre 1947 et 1985*, p. 19, AB2167, CEGESOMA.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.; Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 272.



full advantage of his dual role in the legal AJB and illegal CDJ.<sup>112</sup> Importantly, the necessary funds for the operations of the FI and CDJ were obtained in part through *soustrait* *frauduleusement*, or fraudulent subtractions, from the AJB via David Ferdman and Perelman.<sup>113</sup> In this way, the AJB also served to finance clandestine activities. According to Marcel Blum, member of the central board and head of the AJB, many millions of Belgian francs, received from the Ministry of Finance, were clandestinely distributed through the AJB via the ONE and the Secours d'Hiver, with the AJB serving as a *rideau officiel pour la clandestinité*— an official cloak for clandestine activity.<sup>114</sup>

In addition to Maurice Heiber, David Ferdman and Chaïm Perelman, there were others, including Eugène Hellendall, Max Katz and Irène Zmigrod, who were involved in both the CDJ and the AJB.<sup>115</sup> In the introduction to this chapter, we saw that Zmigrod testified about the interconnections between the organisations and how they operated alongside one another to safeguard Jewish children. Throughout the occupation, the social services of the AJB increasingly became an intermediate station where the boundaries between legality and illegality were unclear and permeable.<sup>116</sup> At times, the AJB offices served as a meeting place for Jews who wanted to go into hiding and for the 'distributors' of the CDJ.<sup>117</sup> At the same time, CDJ members aimed to influence the AJB's workers by encouraging them not to follow the German directions.<sup>118</sup> Thus, the AJB served both as a useful cloak and an organisation with whose policies the CDJ continued to disagree.

The first chairman of the AJB, Salomon Ullman, passively supported these illegal activities. Yitzak Kubowitzki, one of the leaders of the Brussels Zionist movement who disagreed with the actions of the AJB and engaged in clandestine activities instead, testified to this. He claimed there were clear signs that Ullman was aware of the undercover activities undertaken by individuals who worked for the AJB. During a conversation between the two men, Ullman warned Kubowitzki to prepare Jewish refugees for imminent arrests and encouraged him to approach Perelman in the

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<sup>112</sup> Van den Daelen and Wouters, "The Absence of a Jewish Honor Court in Postwar Belgium", 202-203.

<sup>113</sup> Report on the history of the CDJ, "Historique du Comité de Défense des Juifs", AB2167, CEGESOMA; Also see: De Lathouwer, *Comité de défense des Juifs*, 19.

<sup>114</sup> Statement of Marcel Blum, AA753, CEGESOMA.

<sup>115</sup> Steinberg, *Le Comité de Défense des Juifs*, 62.

<sup>116</sup> Massenge, "De sociale politiek", 229.

<sup>117</sup> Eyewitness account by Irène Zmigrod entitled "A Social Worker's Report on her Experiences in Belgium during the Time of the Nazi-Occupation", 1956, p.8, 1656/3/9/262, Testimony Collection, Wiener Library.

<sup>118</sup> Archives of Esta and Maurice Heiber, AA1915/13, CEGESOMA.

event that anything went wrong.<sup>119</sup> Clearly, Ullman was aware of the function that the AJB fulfilled for the CDJ. At the same time, Roger van Praag, who had worked for the CDJ and filed a complaint against the AJB leaders immediately after the war, indicated that his contact with Ullman was less constructive. According to Van Praag, Ullman had not wanted to help him with his clandestine aid for Jews and even indicated that he, Van Praag, was putting all Jews in danger by encouraging them to go in hiding.<sup>120</sup> Ullman probably considered it too risky to actively cooperate himself with the organisation. After the war, Ullman was asked whether the CDJ was founded with the support of the AJB. Ullman answered that the AJB officially had nothing to do with the CDJ because the Germans had appointed the AJB as the exclusive Jewish authority.<sup>121</sup> At the same time, he claimed that they did meet on a personal level on a daily basis.<sup>122</sup> As Ullman resigned in October 1942 and the CDJ was officially established in September 1942, it was only in the preparatory phase that Ullman, as head of the AJB, and the CDJ were in touch. However, we have seen that that links between the illegal CDJ and the AJB were established and maintained during the war. From the evidence presented here, we can say that the clandestine actions of clandestine organisations within the AJB, most importantly the CDJ, at times with the passive consent of the leadership, were of great importance, allowing these organisations to thwart Nazi goals and actions.<sup>123</sup> Although the AJB cannot be considered a resistance organisation, its existence and the (silent) approval of its leadership or membership were important. There was a large grey area inside the AJB in which connections between legality and illegality were established.

#### *France: resistance and the UGIF*

The last president of the UGIF, Georges Edinger, claimed in a postwar report on the organisation's activities that the UGIF was the most important 'semi-clandestine, semi-official' organisation. In an attempt to overcome the criticism that, as we have seen, prevailed after the liberation regarding the UGIF and, especially, Edinger, he asserted that its legal work primarily served to camouflage

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Yitzak Kubowitzki, 12 November 1964, AA1196, CEGESOMA.

<sup>120</sup> Report by Roger van Praag entitled 'Organisation and Administration of the Belgian Resistance', 1956, p.16, 1656/3/7/1112, Testimony Collection, Wiener Library.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Salomon Ullman, 1970, AA 1196, CEGESOMA.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> De Lathouwer, *Comité de Défense des Juifs*, 11.

clandestine activities.<sup>124</sup> While the reality was far more complex than Edinger suggested, we shall see that the interconnections between the resistance and the UGIF were substantial. Furthermore, and contrary to what existing literature has suggested, there is evidence that there were manifold interrelations between French Jews organised in the UGIF and immigrant Jews organised in illegal groups throughout the course of the war.<sup>125</sup> The different organisational structures of the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud played a major role in their varying connections to clandestine activities. In the unoccupied zone, the UGIF-Sud had little impact on the still independently functioning Jewish (welfare) organisations, like the OSE and the EIF, that were incorporated under its umbrella. The UGIF-Sud was in fact the sum of these autonomously functioning relief organisations. Some of these organisations decided to establish illegal departments or engage in undercover activities by other means.<sup>126</sup> Since they were already operative under the official UGIF umbrella, the ‘cloaking’ of illegal activities by these organisations should not be understood to have operated in the same way as it did in Belgium and the northern zone of France where (some of) the illegal groups that used the Jewish organisations as a cloak were not officially incorporated into them.

#### *The UGIF-Nord, the Amelot Committee and other illegal groups*

During the war, with increasing demands from Vichy and the Germans, many organisations in France moved from legal to clandestine activity. We have seen that the Amelot Committee was initially mainly preoccupied with rebuilding Jewish welfare, aiming to unite several preexisting legal immigrant Jewish organisations.<sup>127</sup> Unlike the French Jews, the immigrants had been actively engaged in relief work immediately after May 1940 and Amelot encouraged French Jews to do likewise. In September 1940 it organised a special meeting to this effect, at which the ACIP was also represented.<sup>128</sup> The Amelot Committee’s central focus shifted after the mass arrest on 14 May 1941, when 6,500 Polish, Czech and Austrian Jews who were encouraged to report themselves to the prefectures, ostensibly in order to discuss their status, were placed in the camps at Pithiviers and Beaune-la-Rolande. On 20 August, Jews of other nationalities were arrested as well, including some

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<sup>124</sup> Georges Edinger, Report on the activities of the UGIF: concerning its ‘official work’ and ‘clandestine work’ from 1941 to 1944, p. 1, CCCLXXIX-33, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>125</sup> See, for example, Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 205-207; Rajsfus, *Des Juifs dans la collaboration*, 10.

<sup>126</sup> Cohen, “Introduction” in: *Diary of a witness*, lii.

<sup>127</sup> These organisations included the OSE, ORT and the Hachomer Hatzair. Hillel J. Kieval, “Legality and Resistance in Jewish France: The Rescue of Jewish Children” in: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 124, No. 5 (1980), 342-343; Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 39; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 62, 166-167.

<sup>128</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 62.

French Jews, and taken to Drancy camp.<sup>129</sup> By then, the Amelot Committee had been forced to withdraw from the Comité de Coordination and had become a semi-clandestine organisation growing closer to the communist MOI and its Solidarité organisation, although their alliance backfired after the German attack on the Soviet Union, ‘when the communists attempted to dominate the other groups whose objectives were more narrowly based than the outright ideological and armed struggle against fascism’.<sup>130</sup> As Moore had indicated, the path of the Amelot Committee towards illegality ‘was a gradual one, and its relationship with the Jewish communist movement MOI and its Solidarité remained fraught, but all were directly involved in ameliorative relief for a Jewish population that was economically and socially marginalized from mainstream society’.<sup>131</sup>

After the establishment of the UGIF-Nord, the legal activities of the Amelot Committee were formally dissolved and transferred into its administration. However, the Committee continued to operate separately from the UGIF-Nord leadership, and the latter was aware that it needed the support and trust of immigrant Jews to establish a solid basis of support among the Jews in France. In order to neutralise immigrant opposition and to gain a position of authority within the Jewish communities, the UGIF-Nord organised a meeting with the Amelot Committee on 28 January 1942.<sup>132</sup> This meeting shows that there were crucial interrelations between central individuals of the UGIF-Nord central board – Baur, Musnik, Stern, Stora, and Weil-Hallé – and the Amelot Committee.<sup>133</sup> Knowing that the UGIF-Nord leaders could have forced Amelot to be integrated into the organisation, and refusing to dissolve itself, the Amelot Committee was prepared to set aside its moral objections to the UGIF as an organisation that cooperated with the Nazi occupier, and it promised to refrain from attacking the organisation and focus instead on its relief activities. At the same time, the Amelot Committee continued to disavow all responsibility for the UGIF-Nord’s activities.<sup>134</sup> The UGIF-Nord, in turn, promised not to impose control on the Amelot Committee or interfere with its activities.<sup>135</sup> Amelot was able to use the financial resources of the UGIF-Nord, while it in turn provided the UGIF-Nord with access to its social infrastructure and to the immigrant

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<sup>129</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 106.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>132</sup> Meeting UGIF and Amelot Committee, 28 January 1942, Archive of Marc Jarblum P.7-8, Identifier 4019673, Yad Vashem.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Author unknown (probably David Rapoport), “Our relations with the UGIF”, January 1942, CCXIII-48, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>135</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 118.

population. The interrelation between the two organisations was thus based on pragmatism: they exchanged information, ‘referred clients to each other’s programs, collaborated in the sending of packages to Drancy, and so on’.<sup>136</sup> With financial assistance from the UGIF-Nord, the Amelot Committee was able to provide by running soup kitchens, two dispensaries and a cloakroom for Jews who were in need of clothing and shoes. Until June 1943, the canteens functioned autonomously under the surveillance of the UGIF-Nord and were at the centre of the provisions of food for Jews. They also served as gathering places where Jews discussed the latest anti-Jewish regulations and possible ways to escape or impede them.<sup>137</sup>

While availing themselves of the legal structures of the UGIF-Nord when necessary and maintaining their organisational autonomy, the Amelot Committee also engaged in various kinds of extralegal activity. Amelot helped Jews who wanted to go into hiding, and ‘systematically scattered out as many children as they could’.<sup>138</sup> They also secured hiding places for those Jews who had escaped the raids and found ways to bring them to the southern zone.<sup>139</sup> In addition, they helped those who came to their offices to obtain false papers.<sup>140</sup> The Amelot Committee remained separate from the UGIF-Nord leadership as an organisation engaged in illegal activities, while it used the organisation’s funds to provide legal social aid. Although André Baur and Marcel Stora had initially unsuccessfully tried to engage members of the Amelot Committee inside the legal sphere of the UGIF-Nord, the Jewish leadership nonetheless accepted its role as a façade for Amelot’s independent activities.<sup>141</sup>

In the second half of 1942, Amelot definitively shifted its main emphasis from relief work to ‘humanitarian resistance’.<sup>142</sup> Some members of the UGIF-Nord actively aided the Amelot Committee to carry out its activities, for example, by warning them about upcoming raids. In 1942, the Amelot Committee was informed that Jews would be taken from their homes during the night of

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<sup>136</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 232.

<sup>137</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 217.

<sup>138</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 343.

<sup>139</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 39; Brauman et al., *Organisation juive de combat*, 231-233.

<sup>140</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 343.

<sup>141</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 203-204.

<sup>142</sup> Nancy Lefenfeld, “Unarmed Combat: Jewish Humanitarian resistance in France” in: Patrick Henry (ed.), *Jewish Resistance against the Nazis*, 106. For an overview of the organisation and resistance activities of the “La Mère et l’Enfant” centre on rue Amelot, see: Jacqueline Baldran and Claude Bochorberg, *David Rapoport, La mère et l’enfant, 36 rue Amelot* (Paris: CDJC, 1994).

16-17 July as part of the so-called Vél d'Hiv' roundup, during which over 13,000 Jews in Paris were arrested and two-thirds were temporarily confined in the Vélodrome d'Hiver. It spread the news among its people.<sup>143</sup> While the group had considered permanently shutting their legal canteens, the leadership eventually came to believe that deprivation posed a greater threat than police raids and decided not to dissolve its activities.<sup>144</sup> The ways in which the UGIF-Nord functioned as a façade for the Amelot Committee and its closely associated illegal groups, varied. One of the most obvious and basic forms of cloaking was the use of the UGIF's identity cards, which allowed illegal workers to operate more freely while carrying out its clandestine activities.<sup>145</sup> The Amelot leaders had previously objected to the use of UGIF identity cards on moral grounds, but reconsidered their decision in the summer of 1942 and this ensured that they were better able to continue their wide range of activities.<sup>146</sup> The importance of access to these cards should not be underestimated. It provided a major benefit to the quasi-legal Amelot Committee compared to other illegal groups which had been forced to go underground.

Cloaking activities occurred at other levels as well. A wartime report of the Amelot Committee gives us an insight into the tactics that were used. In October 1942, a member of the Committee wrote: 'We provide the first assistance because the machinery of the UGIF is slower [...] If the UGIF rejects a request, we keep the case in our charge [...]. Relations, both within this committee and in general between the UGIF and ourselves are cordial'.<sup>147</sup> The Amelot Committee took up tasks the UGIF-Nord either did not want to, or could not, carry out. For example, around 900 families in Paris were in such a precarious situation that they did not dare contact the UGIF-Nord. Instead, they were aided by the Amelot Committee.<sup>148</sup> A report of 18 May 1943 shows that the CGQJ was aware that the dispensary "La Mère et l'Enfant" on the rue Amelot, where the Amelot Committee resided, had a 'secret bureau' on the second floor and that it clandestinely dispersed children among non-Jewish families.<sup>149</sup> The UGIF-Nord continued to serve as a cloak for the Amelot Committee until the arrest of its leader David Rapoport on 1 June 1943, less than one

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<sup>143</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 147.

<sup>144</sup> Lefenfeld, "Humanitarian resistance in France", 106.

<sup>145</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 150-151.

<sup>146</sup> Brauman et al., *Organisation juive de combat*, 233.

<sup>147</sup> Wartime report of the Amelot Committee, coll. 343, file 4 and 116, YIVO, as cited in Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 151.

<sup>148</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during WWII*, 336-337.

<sup>149</sup> Report of the CGQJ to SS-Obersturmführer Röhke on the clandestine activities of the UGIF, 18 May 1943, XXVIII-159, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

month after the CGQJ report. After that, all of the projects of the Amelot Committee were incorporated into sections of the UGIF-Nord.<sup>150</sup>

There were also other groups that used the legality of the UGIF-Nord to engage in undercover activities. In a postwar interview, Denise Schorr Khaitman noted that while she worked in the children's homes of the organisation, there was a whole network of clandestine organisations that attempted to move these children from the occupied to the unoccupied zone, or even to Switzerland and Israel.<sup>151</sup> Khaitman stated that this happened under the legal cover of the UGIF-Nord and in cooperation with its members, including Fernand Musnik and Juliette Stern, head of the social services division of the UGIF-Nord from January 1942, whose main responsibility was the social governance of Jewish children.<sup>152</sup> Organisations such as the EIF did indeed use the legal cloak of the UGIF-Nord to undertake these activities. We have seen that before the war, the EIF had already established a unique organisational foundation throughout the entire country that included both immigrant and French Jews.<sup>153</sup> The organisation was integrated into the fourth direction of the UGIF-Nord as the Service Social des Jeunes (SSJ), where it became the sixth section. The clandestine division of this sixth section – the *sixième* – was from July 1942 active on three levels: in the occupied zone, the unoccupied zone and in the armed resistance 'the maquis'.<sup>154</sup> In May 1943, the illegal *sixième* was established in Paris. Its administration was in the hands of Musnik, who officially worked for the Jeunesse et Reclassement Professionel of the UGIF-Nord's fourth group, and Emmanuel Lefschetz, director of the UGIF-Nord home in rue Claude Bernard.<sup>155</sup> Before the war, Musnik had been actively involved in Parisian youth movements, including as a member of the directory board of the Fédération de la Jeunesse Sioniste et Pro-Palestienne de France. From 1939, he also played an active role in the EIF. Between 1940 and 1944, he was in charge of the EIF and, among other things, participated in the creation of false papers in the northern zone.<sup>156</sup> After the Vél d'Hiv roundup in the summer of 1942, Lefschetz established a Jewish youth network which

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<sup>150</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 82.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Denise Schorr Khaitman, 5 December 1996, Interview No. 23092, USC Shoah Foundation. Accessed at the American University of Paris, Paris.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children*, 36-40, 76; Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 55.

<sup>154</sup> Brauman et al., *Organisation Juive de combat*, 245.

<sup>155</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 86, 151. Emmanuel Lefschetz was a French citizen of Russian origin who had arrived in France at the very beginning of the twentieth century and had fought for the French army during the First World War. His memoirs can be found in the Weill family archive and are cited in Camille Ménager, *Le Sauvetage des Juifs à Paris: Histoire et Mémoire* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2005), 156-157, 159, 202.

<sup>156</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 203.

served under the auspices of the EIF.<sup>157</sup> This group, in which his daughter Denise was involved, traced Jewish children in the Paris area whose parents had been deported and provided false identity papers and hiding places for them.<sup>158</sup> The notion that clandestine groups were created in parallel to existing welfare institutions in direct response to the Vél d'Hiv roundup is reinforced by a postwar testimony from Denise Gamzon, whose husband Robert Gamzon was the founder of the EIF.<sup>159</sup>

Another organisation that used the legal cloak of the UGIF-Nord was the Mouvement de Jeunesse Sioniste (MJS). We have seen that during the 1920s and 1930s, Zionist activity increased in France and numerous Zionist youth organisations were established, with each reflecting a particular political ideological orientation.<sup>160</sup> At the initiative of Simon Lévitte, a national leader of the Jewish scouts, representatives of various Zionist youth organisations came together in Montpellier in May 1942 for a Zionist Unification Congress. An ardent Zionist, Lévitte was born in Ukraine and had published a book on modern Zionism in 1936 after which he and his wife emigrated to Palestine where he worked in a kibbutz.<sup>161</sup> On the eve of the war, they returned to France.<sup>162</sup> During the Unification Congress, Lévitte convinced the individual organisations' leaders to disband their organisations and to form a unified Zionist youth organisation to provide young Jews with a 'Zionist education, physical training and vocational skills they would need to create successful communities in Palestine'.<sup>163</sup> The MJS was established with Lévitte as general secretary and Jules 'Dika' Jefroykin, founder of the Résistance Juive and later the Armée Juive, as president.<sup>164</sup> Soon after the organisation's establishment, foreign Jews were arrested and deported and the organisation's activities shifted to relief work and humanitarian resistance.<sup>165</sup> Refusing to be integrated in the legal UGIF, the MJS became a clandestine Zionist youth organisation, whose

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<sup>157</sup> See the testimony of Emmanuel Lefschetz, undated, CMXXI-53, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>158</sup> In 2009, Jacques Sémelin conducted an interview with Denise Weill (born Lefschetz), the daughter of Emmanuel Lefschetz. This interview has been incorporated in *Persécutions et entraides dans la France occupée* (2013) of which a revised and updated English version was published in 2018, titled *The Survival of the Jews in France, 1940-1944*.

<sup>159</sup> Oral history interview with Denise Gamzon, 2006, Accession number: 2012.296.1, RG number: RG-50.710.0001, USHMM.

<sup>160</sup> Lefenfeld, "Humanitarian resistance in France", 115.

<sup>161</sup> See: Simon Lévitte, *Le Sionisme: quelques pages de son histoire* (Paris: Éditions des Cahiers Juifs, 1936).

<sup>162</sup> Lefenfeld, "Humanitarian resistance in France", 115.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. Also see: Nicault, "L'Utopie sioniste du 'nouveau Juif' et la jeunesse juive dans la France de l'après guerre: Contribution à l'histoire de l'Alyah française" in: *Les Cahiers de la Shoah*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2001), 123.

<sup>164</sup> Tsilla Hersco, "Le Mouvement de la jeunesse sioniste (MJS)" in: Catherine Richet (ed.), *Organisations juive de combat. Résistance / sauvetage, France 1940-1945* (Paris: 2006), 127.

<sup>165</sup> Lefenfeld, "Humanitarian resistance in France", 115.



members consisted primarily of foreign-born Jews.<sup>166</sup> As well as rescuing Jews and promoting Zionist education, the organisation's leaders wanted to participate in the armed resistance for the liberation of France and they sent volunteers to the Allied armies.<sup>167</sup>

While not all members were involved in, or knew about, the resistance work in which the MJS was engaged, most of its members participated in the rescue of Jewish children and in arranging the illegal passage of Jews to Switzerland, in close cooperation with the OSE, the EIF and the AJ.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, the majority of MJS members were directly connected to the armed AJ.<sup>169</sup> While the existing literature has primarily underlined the MJS's operations in the southern zone, the organisation was also active in the Paris area.<sup>170</sup> In a postwar interview, Albert Akerberg, who was responsible for the coordination of the MJS and the *sixième* in Paris from 1943, emphasised the permeable nature of the boundaries between illegality and legality in the UGIF-Nord. He explained that he had weekly meetings with Juliette Stern and Benjamin Weill-Hallé to discuss the illegal activities that took place under its cloak.<sup>171</sup> While Akerberg served at the head of the *sixième*, which aimed to assist all Jews who lived illegally and could not rely on the legal aid of the UGIF-Nord, he cooperated with Jacques Pulver, Fredy Menachem and Toni Stern, who worked for the UGIF.<sup>172</sup> Most of the members of the *sixième* belonged to the EIF, whose organisation in the southern zone had been dissolved by Vichy in January 1943. While its functions were transferred to the second and third direction of the UGIF-Sud, some of its members were sent to Paris to encourage and

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<sup>166</sup> Hersco, "Le Mouvement de la jeunesse sioniste (MJS)", 127; Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 67-70. There exists no comprehensive account of the history and activities of the MJS. Its activities are considered in various articles, including that of Tsilla Hersco, and in numerous published and unpublished accounts of individuals who worked with the MJS. For further reading see: Hélène Gorgiel-Sercarz, *Memoirs of a Jewish Daughter* (Tel Aviv: H. Gorgiel-Sercarz, 1990); René S. Kapel, *Un rabbin dans la tourmente, 1940-1944* (Paris: CDJC, 1986); Anny Latour, *La résistance juive en France* (Paris: Stock, 1970); Georges Schnek, "Être jeune en France, 1939-1945", address presented at the Colloque International de Grenoble, January 1996 and reproduced in Jean-William Dereymez, *Être jeune en Isère, 1939-1945* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2001), 59-64; David Knout, *Contribution à l'histoire de la résistance juive en France, 1940-1944* (Paris: Éditions du Centre, 1947), 126-131 and unpublished testimonies of Tony Gryn, DLXI-35, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah and Toto Giniewski (Guinat), DLXI-31, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. As cited in Lefenfeld, "Humanitarian resistance in France", 115n50.

<sup>167</sup> Hersco, "Le Mouvement de la jeunesse sioniste", 128.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-130; Lefenfeld, "Humanitarian resistance in France", 116.

<sup>169</sup> Hersco, "Le Mouvement de la jeunesse sioniste", 129-130.

<sup>170</sup> For example, Hersco mentioned the activities of the different MJS groups (*g'doudim*) in places like Grenoble, Annency, Cambéry, Nice, Toulouse, Montpellier, Montauban and Périgueux. Lefenfeld also focuses on the organisation's function in cities in the southern zone.

<sup>171</sup> Interview with Albert Akerberg, conducted by Anny Latour after the war (exact date unknown), p. 5, DLXI-3, Mémorial de la Shoah. Also see: Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 156.

<sup>172</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 156.

participate in illegal activities there.<sup>173</sup> These examples highlight not only the strong analogies between the clandestine groups, but also show that the boundaries between legality and illegality were porous.

The connections between the legal UGIF-Nord and illegal organisations went beyond the passing of information or the use of the organisation as a (passive) cloak to cover clandestine activities. In fact, members of the UGIF-Nord actively used illegal organisations for their own benefit. This can be seen in the cases of Lucienne Scheid-Haas and H el ene Berr, who combined their legal work for the UGIF-Nord with secret operations.<sup>174</sup> For example, while voluntarily employed as social worker for the UGIF, Berr was also Denise Milhaud’s secretary at the Entraide Temporaire (Mutual Assistance), a clandestine organisation that was instituted in 1941 under the cloak of the Service Social d’Aide aux  migrants (Social Service of Assistance to Emigrants, SSAE).<sup>175</sup> Even though Berr did not reflect upon this dual role in her diary, she underlined the ambiguous feeling she had towards working for the UGIF:

[A]ll we were doing was trying to relieve other people’s misfortunes. We knew what was happening; every extra regulation, every deportation squeezed greater pain out of us. People called us collaborators, because those who came to see us had just had a relative arrested, and it was natural that they should react that way when they saw us sitting behind desks. Department for the exploitation of other people’s misfortunes. Yes, I can see why other people thought that’s what we were [...]. Why did I accept the job? To be able to do something, to come as close as I could to misfortune. We did all we could to assist the internees. People who knew us well understood and judged us fairly.<sup>176</sup>

The cases of Eug ne Minkowski and Juliette Stern, who were both closely associated with illegality, also exemplify this. Minkowski headed the illegal OSE while also working for the ‘socio-medical’ department of the UGIF-Nord. While the four OSE children’s homes (two in Montmorency, and the others in Soisy and Eaubonne) were closed in 1940 and the Paris office only retained eight employees for its four offices, Minkowski intensified the OSE’s work to hide Jews in the summer of 1942. As a result, the organisation managed to save 600 Jewish children in the Paris region from

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.; Michel, *Les  clairieurs*, 123-128.

<sup>174</sup> Laffitte, “Was the UGIF an obstacle to the rescue of Jews?”, 401-403; Ibid., “L’UGIF, collaboration ou r sistance?”, 62.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> H el ene Berr, *Journal: the diary of a young Jewish woman in occupied Paris*, transl. from the French by David Bellos (London: Maclehorse Press, 2008), 13 November 1943, 210-211.

deportation by cooperating with the EIF.<sup>177</sup>

As head of the social services of the UGIF-Nord, Juliette Stern was mainly responsible for children, including those whose parents had been arrested and interned in Drancy, and who were in need of care after they had been (temporarily) released from the camp. These children were 'blocked' and were not allowed to be transferred to another location because they would eventually be interned in Drancy again. While some of them went to UGIF homes, others were placed in foster homes through the so-called 'Service 42'.<sup>178</sup> After the raids of Vél d'Hiv, Stern decided, against German orders, to transfer the children to non-Jewish families and institutions. Many of the children she took care of were maintained in the UGIF-Nord centres that were supervised by the police, but children were also smuggled out of these places with Stern's knowledge.<sup>179</sup> She created a secret parallel institution to the legal social 'Service 42', called Service 42B, through which she was able to disperse around a thousand children. A network of organisations involved in the illegal dispersion of Jewish children among non-Jewish families, including the Amelot Committee and Minowski's OSE allowed her to do this.<sup>180</sup>

A report of the CGQJ's head Antignac to SS-Obersturmführer Röthke on 22 April 1943 concerning the 'clandestine activities of the UGIF' shows that Vichy and German officials were aware of the existence of the illegal Service 42B and the placement of Jewish children in Aryan families.<sup>181</sup> While Antignac encouraged Röthke to start an investigation into these activities, the Gestapo instead arrested the members of the *groupe 5*, responsible for the children's homes; all were deported and murdered.<sup>182</sup> At the time of the arrest, Stern was not present in the UGIF facilities and she managed to escape arrest. Thereafter, she cooperated with the illegal groups to make sure the children were removed from the homes as soon as possible. The communist underground organisation Mouvement National Contre le Racisme (national movement against racism, MNCR), for example, 'kidnapped' the children from the UGIF-Nord homes with the

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<sup>177</sup> Brauman et al., *Organisation juive de combat*, 208-209; Laffitte, "L'OSE de 1942 à 1944", 66. It should be noted that Lazare has erroneously claimed that the OSE, as well as the EIF, were not active in the occupied zone. See: Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 137.

<sup>178</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 124-126; Lefenfeld, "Humanitarian resistance in France", 106-107.

<sup>179</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 177-178; Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience*, 102.

<sup>180</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 343-344.

<sup>181</sup> Report of the CGQJ to SS-Obersturmführer Röthke on the clandestine activities of the UGIF, 22 April 1943, XXVIII-159, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>182</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 205-206.

complicity of Stern and members of the organisation's local branches.<sup>183</sup> Stern not only tried to protect these children from deportation. She also wanted their Jewish identity to be preserved, which is of crucial importance taking into consideration that the Nazis aimed to deport and murder the entirety of the Jewish population in Europe. In the light of the Nazis' aim to deport and murder the entirety of Europe's Jewish population, this was an extraordinary act of identity politics.

These examples show that while the Amelot Committee worked in tandem with the UGIF-Nord to hide its clandestine activities, without disclosing information about the identity of its clients, Juliette Stern used undercover organisations to transfer some of the children she was responsible for to safer locations. There was an interplay between legality and illegality here, which worked for both 'sides'. As Poznanski has indicated: 'UGIF dispensaries were often a virtually mandatory first stop for children going from a legal to a clandestine existence'.<sup>184</sup> The interactions between the legality of the UGIF-Nord and an illegal group such as the Amelot Committee were at times extremely complex and were considered to be mutually beneficial. Cohen has argued that people like Juliette Stern and Fernand Musnik should have opposed the UGIF-Nord leadership because it strongly encouraged Jews to abide by antisemitic regulations.<sup>185</sup> However, the examples here demonstrate that involvement in illegal or quasi-legal activities were mutually beneficial and were taking place at more than the purely individual level. We have seen that at an early stage of the occupation, the UGIF-Nord leadership had already agreed to function as a cloak for the quasi-legal activities of Amelot. The leadership allowed the Amelot Committee to operate independently, and did not exercise any control over its activities or accounts.<sup>186</sup> There was therefore a degree of trust between the two organisations. It should be noted that access to financial resources was indispensable for any underground activity. In addition to the financial support of the UGIF-Nord, Amelot also relied on the Federation of Jewish Societies in France (FSJF) for the financing of its illegal activities and, in turn, supported the illegal Solidarité with its finances when this organisation ran short of funds.<sup>187</sup> The FSJF, which operated in the southern zone, received funds from the Joint Distribution Committee and from July 1943 until the liberation in August 1944, the organisation

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<sup>183</sup> Jean Laloum, "L'UGIF et ses maisons d'enfants: l'enlèvement d'une enfant" in: *Monde Juif*, No. 124 (1990), 172-176.

<sup>184</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during WWII*, 334.

<sup>185</sup> Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience*, 106.

<sup>186</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 492-493.

<sup>187</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 208.

sent 600,000 francs per month to the Amelot Committee.<sup>188</sup> Rapoport, the head of the Amelot Committee, also collected funds by borrowing from Jews who wished to shelter their savings. On the basis of an agreement with the Joint it was agreed that those who had provided loans would be reimbursed no later than three months after the official end of the war.<sup>189</sup>

Georges Edinger, who succeeded Raoul Lambert as the president of the UGIF and headed the UGIF-Nord after Baur was interned, claimed that the UGIF-Nord continued to be used to camouflage resistance from the summer of 1943 onwards.<sup>190</sup> However, cloaking clandestine activities became increasingly difficult during this period.<sup>191</sup> After the war, a former UGIF employee who had worked for the social welfare department, Berthe Libers, attacked ‘certain dubious elements’ for having tried to save their own skins and having collaborated with people like Xavier Vallat.<sup>192</sup> As the last serving president of the UGIF, Edinger responded in an unpublished work titled *La vérité sur l’UGIF. Enfin!* in which he emphasised the multiple links between the UGIF and resistance networks.<sup>193</sup> French historian Michel Laffitte refers to Edinger’s defence as ‘densely written and sometimes contradictory in details’ and underlined that Edinger failed to mention ‘the immense element of uncertainty, the moments of distress, terror and improvisation, and the leaders’ lack of action plan with regard to an extermination policy which they had the greatest difficulty understanding and anticipating [sic]’.<sup>194</sup> Since Edinger refused to hand over his personal records to the CDJC, part of his records remain inaccessible to researchers, Laffitte seems to doubt the truthfulness of Edinger’s statements.<sup>195</sup> The preceding sections have shown that while it is sometimes not clear whether UGIF officials were aware of, or actively facilitating, cloaking of clandestine activities, there were definitely multiple links between the UGIF-Nord and resistance networks in France.

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>189</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during WWII*, 344.

<sup>190</sup> Georges Edinger, Report on the activities of the UGIF: concerning its ‘official work’ and ‘clandestine work’ from 1941 to 1944, p. 16, CCCLXXIX-33, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>191</sup> Laffitte, “Les rafles de Janvier 1944 à Bordeaux”, 325.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., “Between Memory and Lapse of Memory”, 677.

<sup>193</sup> Fonds Georges Edinger, unlisted documents, Archives du Consistoire Central, Paris as cited in: Laffitte, “Between Memory and Lapse of Memory”, 677.

<sup>194</sup> Laffitte, “Between Memory and Lapse of Memory”, 678.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

When we compare the UGIF-Sud to the JR, the AJB and the UFIF-Nord, we find that the boundaries between legality and illegality were highly permeable in the unoccupied zone (renamed the southern zone after the Germans invaded this part of France in November 1942). The welfare organisations that operated under the UGIF-Sud's umbrella were autonomous, and not bound by UGIF policy. As a result, it was easy for the leadership of some welfare organisations to provide social assistance, both legally and illegally, under the guise of the UGIF-Sud and without fear of its intervention.<sup>196</sup> From the summer of 1942, as we have seen, some of the organisations that had been transformed into sections of the UGIF-Sud set up illegal parallel bodies, including the third (health) section (the OSE), the fourth (youth) section (the EIF) and the fifth (assistance to refugees and those interned) section (the CAR and the FSJ). Crucially, the very top of the UGIF-Sud leadership was aware of, and even encouraged, illegal activities. Existing prewar relations played a major role in fostering illegal activities in the Jewish organisation. For example, the OSE's leader Joseph Millner was close to Lambert because they had worked together for the *Univers Israélite* during the 1930s, and Millner benefitted from Lambert's leading role in the UGIF-Sud while establishing clandestine activities.<sup>197</sup> The Jewish leadership could also capitalise on its connections with non-Jews that had been established in the decades before the war.<sup>198</sup>

We have seen that during the first stages of the war, French Jews were similar to their non-Jewish compatriots in holding the belief that the French State would protect French Jews against persecution. From the end of 1942, prominent members of the UGIF-Sud – Lambert, Schah, Spanien, and Gamzon – came to 'a more realistic appraisal of Vichy' and realised they would not be protected.<sup>199</sup> After the German invasion of the south of France, which put an end to legal emigration possibilities for Jews, these four men began to support or condone clandestine activities, including the illegal migration or hiding of Jewish children.<sup>200</sup> The connections between the UGIF-Sud and underground workers were many and complex. Although there had traditionally existed a division between French and immigrant Jews, these differences were partly overcome in the context of the

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<sup>196</sup> Cohen, "Introduction" in: *Diary of a witness*, lii.

<sup>197</sup> Laffitte, "L'OSE de 1942 à 1944", 67.

<sup>198</sup> Laffitte, "Was the UGIF an Obstacle to the Rescue of Jews?", 408.

<sup>199</sup> Cohen, "Introduction" in: *Diary of a witness*, liii.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid*; Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 123.

UGIF-Sud. The organisation has often been considered elitist, but Lambert's background in Jewish relief work and his willingness to serve the interests of the immigrant Jewish community, combined with the connections between the UGIF-Sud and clandestine groups which mainly consisted of immigrant Jews, shows that the reality was more complex.

We have seen that the EIF in the southern zone had to be dissolved and incorporated into the fourth direction of the UGIF-Sud in spring 1942.<sup>201</sup> In January 1943, Vichy officials dissolved the entire fourth direction. A letter from Darquier de Pellepoix to the UGIF-Sud, sent on 5 January 1943, shows that he was dissatisfied with the way the EIF had been reorganised as the SSJ under the umbrella of the UGIF. Darquier accused the Jewish leaders of having appeared to integrate the EIF into its own services while in fact allowing the organisation to remain intact. He indicated that the dissolution of the EIF's services was supposed to have been total, and should have included the full transfer of its resources to the UGIF.<sup>202</sup> In his diary, Lambert reflected upon the discussions he had had with Antignac about the order to disband the Jewish Scouts, held during his trip to Vichy on 12 and 13 January. He noted that, in the end, he had managed to save two of the four EIF sections.<sup>203</sup> While some of the organisation's functions were moved to the second direction, the SSJ was moved to the third direction (health), which incorporated the OSE. Ironically, the Vichy measure to dissolve the EIF facilitated cooperation between OSE and the SSJ's *sixième*, both of which were becoming increasingly clandestine by this point.<sup>204</sup> The illegal activities of the *sixième*, such as the manufacture and use of false identity papers and ration tickets and the clandestine placement of children, were always conducted under the official cover of the SSJ.<sup>205</sup>

Robert Gamzon, founder of the EIF and also member of the UGIF-Sud's central board, explained in his memoirs that in each city's UGIF office, the *sixième* was represented. When someone turned to the youth service of the UGIF and it was clear that he needed more than 'official aid', they arranged a meeting outside the organisation's office and offered clandestine help.<sup>206</sup> This was done particularly in the cases of foreign Jewish children and adolescents, or those French Jews

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<sup>201</sup> See the report on the activities of the EIF from 1939 until shortly after the liberation, CCXVII-8, CDJC.

<sup>202</sup> Letter of Darquier de Pellepoix to the UGIF, 5 January 1943, XXVIII-116a, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>203</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 13 February 1943, 173.

<sup>204</sup> Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French and the Jews*, 348 n35; Michel, *Les Éclaireurs*, 123-128.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>206</sup> Gamzon, *Les eaux claires*, 78-79.

whose parents had been arrested or sought by the Gestapo or the French police.<sup>207</sup> Gamzon's memoirs also show that clandestine organisations like the EIF, the OSE and the MJS cooperated closely with members of the UGIF's Marseille branch.<sup>208</sup> While using his legal position in the UGIF-Sud to prevent Jews from being arrested and deported, Gamzon also actively looked for people who could help with clandestine operations. In a postwar interview, Liliane Klein-Lieber described how Gamzon recruited her for clandestine work in Moissac in the Tarn-et-Garonne department. She had been a youth member of the EIF in Grenoble and helped with hiding children and the production of false identity papers. She claimed this was relatively easy because the local police was complicit in these activities. As a result, hardly any of her illegal group members were caught. This was very different from the situation in Nice, where almost all Jews responsible for the *sixième* were arrested.<sup>209</sup>

Through the official channels provided by the UGIF-Sud, organisations such as the EIF and the OSE gained access to internment camps and developed important relations with non-Jewish relief societies.<sup>210</sup> As a result, these organisations could engage in the rescue of Jewish children from round-ups and deportation. As we have seen, this was initially achieved legally, but from the summer of 1942, after the massive roundups of foreign Jews throughout the southern zone, these practices became increasingly illegal.<sup>211</sup> While he combined his role as member of the legal UGIF-Sud central board with actively participating in the clandestine rescue of Jews, Gamzon also used his position to inform illegal workers about forthcoming German actions and regulations.<sup>212</sup> Despite his successful dual role, by the end of 1943, Gamzon felt that it was morally impossible to continue working for the UGIF. During a meeting between the UGIF and the Consistory on 6 October 1943, he recommended the dissolution of the UGIF.<sup>213</sup> After this failed to happen, Gamzon left the organisation. After that, he continued his resistance activities and, among other things, created a

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<sup>207</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 197.

<sup>208</sup> Gamzon, *Les eaux claires*, 86-87.

<sup>209</sup> Interview with Liliane Klein-Lieber, 21 June 1996, Interview No. 16095, USC Shoah Foundation. Accessed at the American University of Paris, Paris. Klein-Lieber was also interviewed for a project of the Association pour l'Histoire du Scoutisme Laïque, see: Alain Vincenot, *La France résistante. Histoire de héros ordinaires* (Paris: Les Syrtes, 2004).

<sup>210</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 120.

<sup>211</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 172-215; Lefenfeld, "Humanitarian resistance in France", 111.

<sup>212</sup> Member of the clandestine *sixième* Roger Fichtenberg, for example, claimed that Gamzon warned him when the Germans planned to raid Jewish houses, see: Testimony of Roger Fichtenberg, undated, CMXX-33, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>213</sup> Rayski, *The Choice of Jews under Vichy*, 259.



Jewish partisan unit within the Maquis de Vabres in 1943.<sup>214</sup>

The chairman of the UGIF-Sud, Raymond-Raoul Lambert, was actively engaged in facilitating the actions of illegal workers. In the wake of the mass arrests of French and foreign Jews in Marseille in January 1943, Lambert had appointed Dika Jefroykin and his cousin Maurice Brener as ‘social inspectors’ of the UGIF-Sud. By then, these men were important members of the Jewish resistance movement Armée Juive (AJ) and acted as financial intermediaries between resistance groups and the Joint.<sup>215</sup> In this capacity, they were able to finance illegal operations. Gamzon’s diary shows that his clandestine activities were financially supported by the Joint with the help of Brener and Jefroykin.<sup>216</sup> A postwar statement by Albert Akerberg testified to the financial support Brener provided to clandestine operations in order to save Jewish children in the northern zone.<sup>217</sup> The protection of UGIF identification cards allowed the two men to move freely in the southern zone and gave them ‘protected access’ to the north.<sup>218</sup> Their ten-day ‘special mission’ to the north in May 1943, ostensibly to discuss the reorganisation of the UGIF, enabled them to establish further contact with resistance groups that were active in both zones.<sup>219</sup> There is little doubt that Lambert deliberately appointed the men without a well-defined task so that they could continue their clandestine activities. Jefroykin, one of the founders of the Jewish resistance movement in November 1941, testified to the close contact the UGIF-Sud maintained with the Jewish armed resistance group AJ specifically and resistance groups more broadly. In fact, meetings between representatives of the UGIF-Sud, the Consistory and resistance organisations seem to have taken place fairly regularly.<sup>220</sup> The relation between the UGIF-Sud and the AJ was not one of distrust or disapproval. Jefroykin specifically noted that he did not consider the UGIF leaders traitors: ‘we simply thought they had made a dangerous error’.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> For reflections of Robert's wife Denise on this episode, see: Oral history interview with Denise Gamzon, 2006 Accession number: 2012.296.1, RG number: RG-50.710.0001, USHMM; Denise Gamzon, *Mémoires*, 90ff.

<sup>215</sup> Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, 241-242.

<sup>216</sup> Gamzon, *Les eaux claires*, 88.

<sup>217</sup> Interview with Albert Akerberg, conducted by Anny Latour after the war (exact date unknown), p. 7, DLXI-3, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>218</sup> Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 220.

<sup>219</sup> Cohen, “Introduction” in: *Diary of a witness*, lvii-lviii; *Ibid.*, *The Burden of Conscience*, 160; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 142.

<sup>220</sup> Interview with Dika Jefroykin, undated, CMXX-43, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. For more information on the role of Dika Jefroykin as director of the AJ, see: Brauman et al., *Organisation Juive de combat*, 73-74.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

Throughout 1943, Lambert was in contact with Angelo Donati, an Italian Jew who planned a mass evacuation of Jews from the Italian-occupied French zone.<sup>222</sup> In November 1942, more than 15,000 Italian soldiers had invaded France following the Allied invasion of North Africa, occupying nine departments in southeastern France, a zone that was delimited by the Rhône on its western border and the Savoy to the north.<sup>223</sup> The Italians refused to give in to Nazi pressure and opposed anti-Jewish legislation, allowing Jews to flee from persecution to the Italian zone.<sup>224</sup> Even though Jews benefitted from this situation, the myth of the *brava gente* (good fellow), fostered by this relatively low-key Italian occupation of the French regions, in contrast to comparatively brutal Italian occupation of the Balkans, has recently been reconsidered by some scholars.<sup>225</sup> To the UGIF-Sud, the Italian invasion provided opportunities to foster clandestine operations in this region. Even though he does not reflect upon this directly in his diary, it is clear that Lambert met Donati on at least one occasion during his visits to Nice in the spring of 1943.<sup>226</sup> Donati had strong connections with France as he had been a liaison officer during the First World War and was a respected banker in Paris in the interwar period. Furthermore, he had helped Jewish refugees who fled to Paris in order to escape persecution in Germany in the 1930s and he continued his work in the unoccupied zone after 1940. During the war, Donati was associated with Father Pierre-Marie Benoît, who acted as an intermediary between the inmates of Les Milles internment camp and the authorities and had access to a large network of Catholics and Protestants in and around Marseille. Father Benoît used his position to obtain false identity papers and hiding places and he helped individuals to escape the

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<sup>222</sup> Léon Poliakov, *La condition des Juifs en France sous l'occupation italienne* (Paris: CDJC, 1946), 39; Marrus, "Jewish Leadership and the Holocaust", 327. For the full story of Donati, who managed to prevent thousands of Jews from falling into the hands of the Nazis during the ten months of the Italian occupation of southern France, see: Luca Fenoglio, *Angelo Donati e la "questione ebraica" nella Francia occupata dall'esercito italiano* (Torino: Silvio Zamorani, 2013). Also see two recent articles by Fenoglio which reflect on Donati's role: Luca Fenoglio, "On the use of the Nazi sources for the study of Fascist Jewish policy in the Italian-occupied territories: The case of south-eastern France, November 1942 - July 1943" in: *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2019), 63-78; Ibid., "Between Protection and Complicity: Guido Lospinoso, Fascist Italy, and the Holocaust in Occupied Southeastern France" in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2019), 90-111.

<sup>223</sup> Emanuele Sica, *Mussolini's Army in the French Riviera: Italy's Occupation of France* (Urbana / Chicago / Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 77.

<sup>224</sup> See, for example: Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order*, 182-183.

<sup>225</sup> These scholars have highlighted the complex triangular relationship between the French, the Italians and the Germans. See, for example: Davide Rodogno, "La politique des occupants italiens à l'égard des Juifs en France métropolitaine, Humanisme ou pragmatisme?" in: *Vingtième Siècle, Revue d'histoire*, Vol. 93, No. 1 (2007), 63-77; Fenoglio, "Between Protection and Complicity", passim; Ibid., "On the use of Nazi sources for the study of Fascist Jewish policy in the Italian-occupied territories", passim. Sica has provided a thorough and multi-dimensional perspective on the question of why the Italians displayed such a surprising and lenient attitude southeastern France in *Mussolini's Army in the French Riviera*, passim.

<sup>226</sup> See: Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 22 June 1943, 189 n1; Léon Poliakov, *La condition des Juifs en France sous l'occupation italienne* (Paris: Éditions du Centre, 1946), 121.

camps.<sup>227</sup> He also became involved with armed resistance groups who organised escape routes via Spain to North Africa.<sup>228</sup> The connections between Donati and Father Benoît and, in turn, between Donati and Lambert suggest that clandestine operations in this region may have been carried out with the knowledge of the UGIF-Sud's leadership.

After his arrest, Lambert showed other clear signs of his (intimate) connections with illegality. From Drancy, he sent several coded messages to Maurice Brener that referred to illegal activities carried out under the guise of the UGIF-Sud. For example, when the children of the La Verdière home had been seized and arrived in Drancy, Lambert indicated that this could have been avoided if they had been sent to Lorraine and then over the border to Switzerland.<sup>229</sup> We have seen that Brener, in addition to his role as 'social inspector' of the UGIF-Sud, was active in the AJ and was charged with establishing connections with non-Jewish resistance movements who specialised in creating false papers.<sup>230</sup> In the postwar trial against former head of the CGQJ Joseph Antignac, Brener claimed that he busied himself mostly with illegal activities, with the support of Lambert and 'other leaders of the UGIF'; Lambert was an important (silent) source and supporter of their illegal actions.<sup>231</sup>

The previous paragraphs have shown that the negative and morally weighted image of the UGIF provided by those such as Maurice Rajsfus (whose work is revealingly titled 'Jews in collaboration') should be refuted. At the same time, it would be wrong to argue that the UGIF-Sud was in fact an extension of illegal groups, or indeed the other way around. The UGIF was never actually led into outright resistance and its structures remained legal. However, Cohen's assertion that Lambert 'wavered and opted for a middle road' between legality and illegality does not fully recognise his significant role in supporting clandestine activities.<sup>232</sup> We have seen that Lambert deliberately chose to facilitate activities that obstructed Nazi policies and that he allowed the UGIF-Sud to be used as a cloak for clandestine activities on various levels. There was an intrinsic relationship between the two spheres. In contrast to the Belgium and the Netherlands, the leadership

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<sup>227</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 153-154; Yisrael Gutman and Sara Bender (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescues of Jews during the Holocaust: France* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003), 69-70.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> Letter from Lambert to Brener, 26 October 1943 in: Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 205-207.

<sup>230</sup> Brauman et al., *Organisation juive de combat*, 52.

<sup>231</sup> Testimony of Maurice Brener during the trial of Antignac, XCVI-20, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>232</sup> Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, 129.

was strongly involved in this process. Taking into consideration the fact that the UGIF's policies were largely defined by Lambert, this is important. As the course of the war changed and both the UGIF-Sud members and the illegal workers who had been engaged in these activities were arrested, the nature of these relations changed as well. Nevertheless, as Cohen has made clear, since none of them advocated the organisation's dissolution, the 'twilight activity' of legality and illegality continued to exist.<sup>233</sup>

After the summer of 1943, when Lambert had been deported, the UGIF rapidly began to lose credibility and hostility towards the organisation grew. Whereas communists and immigrant Jews, united in the Fédération, had been fighting against the UGIF from very early on, others too now realised that its position was no longer politically viable. Beginning in the spring of 1943, the French resistance had set out to unite all its movements, pressuring the UGIF to abolish itself. In the meantime, Raymond Geissmann, the last president of the UGIF, continued to underline that all of its work had been designed to respond to the needs of the Jewish community.<sup>234</sup> On 13 August 1944, Léon Meiss, president of the Consistory, supported the position taken by Geissmann.<sup>235</sup> Meiss argued that the UGIF provided social support and security to many of the Jews living in France and that it succeeded in preserving the independence of traditionally important Jewish services. He furthermore underlined that some of the UGIF members had paid for these activities with their lives.<sup>236</sup> As president of the CRIF, which officially represented both immigrant and French Jews, Meiss proposed in the end to liquidate the UGIF.<sup>237</sup> On 23 August 1944, during the battle for the liberation of Paris, Geissmann ordered the dissolution of the UGIF.<sup>238</sup> Two days later, the French capital city was liberated.

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<sup>233</sup> Cohen, "Introduction" in: *Diary of a witness*, liii.

<sup>234</sup> Polemic of the role of the UGIF during the occupation, Documents of the CRIF, 13 August 1944, CMXX-17, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>235</sup> For Léon Meiss, see: André Blumel, *Un grand Juif: Léon Meiss* (Paris: Éditions Guy-Victor, 1967), passim.

<sup>236</sup> Polemic of the role of the UGIF during the occupation, Documents of the CRIF, 13 August 1944, CMXX-17, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.; Minutes of the Meiss-Grinberg, Adamiz, Geissmann- commission, from July 1944 to 13 August 1944, CDXXX-38, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah. The name of the CRIF was subsequently altered to Conseil Représentatif des Juifs de France because the term *Israélites*, commonly used to refer to French Jews specifically, was considered too narrow. See: Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 157, 219.

<sup>238</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, 459-461.

*The JR: cloaking and illegal activity on an individual level*

In the Netherlands, illegal activities under the cloak of the JR were limited compared to the two other countries. We have seen that there was comparatively little engagement in (organised) clandestine activity during the first phase of the German occupation in this country.<sup>239</sup> Whereas the presence of large numbers of immigrants was a major catalyst for the emergence of clandestine activities alongside the AJB, UGIF-Nord and UGIF-Sud, the nature and scope of immigration prevented this from happening in the Netherlands. We will see that this was furthermore hampered by the attitude of the JR leadership, who strongly believed in the legal course of the Council and did little to encourage illegal activities. Despite these limitations, there was still a tendency for some JR members, who were not part of the central board, to use the Council as a cloak for clandestine activities. This idea is reinforced by several witness statements that were taken preparation for the trial against Asscher and Cohen.<sup>240</sup>

The case of JR member Walter Süskind, born in Germany in 1906, is illustrative of illegal activities that were carried out under the Council's cloak. After the JR's leadership appointed Süskind head of the Hollandsche Schouwburg, where Jews were assembled before being transported to Westerbork transit camp, he used his position, his knowledge of German, and close relationship with some German officials to smuggle Jews out of the Schouwburg.<sup>241</sup> Süskind's work was initially dedicated to liberating Jewish adults from captivity, but he also organised the escape of children from January 1943 onwards.<sup>242</sup> While parents were forced to stay in the Schouwburg during the day, their babies and small children were taken across the road to a crèche, the 'Kweekschool', headed by Henriëtte Pimentel. Süskind and the Jewish women who worked in the crèche managed to save many Jewish children from deportation by smuggling them out of the day care facility because the crèche was not as closely guarded as the Schouwburg.<sup>243</sup> The children's registration documents were removed from the Schouwburg files and the children were then handed over to resistance groups, for example during the daily walks the nurses organised for the children

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<sup>239</sup> De Graaff, "Collaboratie en Verzet", 96; Van Galen Last, "The Netherlands", 190.

<sup>240</sup> See, for example, the statements of Levi Gobits and Kalmer Julius Roos, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 I (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>241</sup> Mark Schellekens, *Walter Süskind: Hoe een zakenman honderden Joodse kinderen uit handen van de nazi's redde* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum, 2011), 70-196; Braber, *This Cannot Happen Here*, 124.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, Moore, *Survivors*, 305.

<sup>243</sup> Bert Jan Flim, *Omdat hun hart sprak: Geschiedenis van de georganiseerde hulp aan Joodse kinderen in Nederland, 1942-1945* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 1996), 123.

in the Schouwburg area. Although the German guards on the opposite side of the road carefully scrutinised activities in the surroundings of the Schouwburg, the crèche's employees were able to use the trams that passed outside as a cover to hand the children over to the rescuers who would in turn use the trams as a way to get quickly away from the scene.<sup>244</sup>

Initially, only those children whose parents had given approval were smuggled out of the crèche. Children who were caught in hiding and subsequently placed in the crèche were an exception because it was generally not known where the parents were. As a result of the hazardous position in which these children found themselves – being caught in hiding meant you would be put on transport as a ‘punishment case’ – these children received priority.<sup>245</sup> Süskind and the crèche employees cooperated with at least four organised non-Jewish resistance groups in order to provide a safer place for the children: Het Utrechts Kindercomité (the UKC), De Amsterdamse Studentengroep (the ASG), De Naamloze Vennootschap (the NV) and De Trouwgroep.<sup>246</sup> The children were distributed to non-Jewish families and hiding places throughout the country. The daughter of JR chairman David Cohen, Virrie Cohen, became the crèche’s leader after Pimentel was arrested and she was also involved in these clandestine activities. One of the NV’s members reflected upon this after the war and noted that, with the aid of people like Süskind and Virrie Cohen, children were removed from the crèche and temporarily housed in places of shelter in Amsterdam. There, the children received false identification papers and, usually after one or two days, were moved to a location elsewhere outside Amsterdam.<sup>247</sup> Estimates of the number of children who were smuggled out of the crèche and saved from persecution vary but amount to at least a several hundred.<sup>248</sup>

Although some JR members who worked in the Schouwburg distanced themselves from the

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 136-137.

<sup>246</sup> Schellekens, *Walter Süskind*, 139. Other organisations involved in this process were members of the Boogaard family from Nieuw-Vennep, members of the Westerweel groep and numerous other individuals. Flim, *Omdat hun hart sprak*, 121-123, 464 n4.

<sup>247</sup> Report on the work of the NV “Groep Theo de Bruin”, undated and unnamed, Inv. No. a1, p.1, 249-1395, NIOD.

<sup>248</sup> Presser has indicated that, according to an eyewitness testimony, around a thousand Jewish children were smuggled out of the crèche. Somers provided an estimate between 600 and 1,100 although it is unclear on what sources he based his information. Flim has argued that this estimate is too high, claiming that the number must have been somewhere in between 500-700. Presser, *Ondergang*, Vol. 2, 11; Somers, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 149 n239; Flim, *Omdat hun hart sprak*, 122.

wide range of Süskind's illegal activities, there was a core group that actively participated.<sup>249</sup> Some, including Edwin Sluzker, Jacques van de Kar, and Sam de Hond, belonged to the Expositur, the JR department that served as the liaison between the Council and the Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auswanderung. Van de Kar helped Jews who managed to escape deportation to go into hiding. He initially operated in the southern part of Amsterdam (Adama van Scheltemaplein), where the Germans first used a former school building as collection centre for Jews. As a JR employee, Van de Kar had free access to the building and smuggled Jews out simply by telling the guard that they had been exempted from deportation. Since he had access to a large network of non-Jews, he was sometimes able to provide these individuals with hiding places.<sup>250</sup> With the aid of Süskind, Van de Kar received a position in the Schouwburg, which became the central assembly place for Jews from August 1942 onwards, and where he continued to help people escape by using a set of duplicated keys. In this way, Van de Kar and his group managed to free hundreds of Jews from the Schouwburg. Many of them were initially taken to Van de Kar's house nearby, where they were then helped to find hiding places.<sup>251</sup> Although it is clear that Van de Kar and his group helped many Jews to escape the Schouwburg, there are differing accounts of the precise ways that he managed to do so, some saying that he acted with the help of the Germans who guarded the location, some that he acted without. Van de Kar is himself in part responsible for these discrepancies because he highlighted different methods that he used across a number of interviews between 1961 and 1991.<sup>252</sup>

It is clear that some members of the JR carried out activities that were not in line with the policy of legality that its leadership officially propagated, even if these activities were on a more limited scale than those of the JR's Belgian and French counterparts. The same is true in the case of German Jews who were involved in the JR department which operated in transit camp Westerbork and that had been established after the first deportation began in July 1942. As with most of the camp's bureaucracy, this department was headed by German Jews. The arrangement dated back to before the war when Westerbork camp had been built as a central refugee camp to house German Jews who had fled to the Netherlands from Germany, especially after the *Reichskristallnacht* on 9 November 1938. In the period when Westerbork still served as a refugee camp, these German

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<sup>249</sup> Schellekens, *Walter Süskind*, 101-102.

<sup>250</sup> Jacques van de Kar, *Joods Verzet: terugblik op de periode rond de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Stadsdrukkerij van Amsterdam, 1984; first ed. 1981), 50-53.

<sup>251</sup> Van de Kar, *Joods Verzet*, 67-71; Ralph Polak in: Lindwer (ed.), *Het fatale dilemma*, 96.

<sup>252</sup> For an overview of these statements, see: Report on Alfons Zündler, pp. 56-60, Doc. I 248-2390, Inv. No. 2, NIOD.

Jewish immigrants instituted an organisational structure for the camp. They continued to be largely responsible for it when the Germans took over and, from 1 July 1942 onwards, changed the function of the camp to that of a *Polizeiliches Judendurchgangslager*, a transit camp where the Jews stayed temporarily before being deported to concentration camps and death camps further east. There was a lot of animosity between the German Jewish members of the camp organisation and the Dutch Jews who were later interned in the camp, not least because the Dutch Jews blamed the German Jews for acting primarily to protect their own interests. Philip Mechanicus, for example, described in his diary how the German Jews were constantly giving orders to Dutch Jews and how they misused their power.<sup>253</sup> The Westerbork branch of the JR was headed by Walther Heynemann, Frits Grünberg, Hans Eckmann, and Hans Heinz Hanauer. It would later become the so-called Contact Afdeling (CA), also referred to as the 'Contact Commissie'. The members of this branch were viewed with disapproval, because they often lived in better conditions than inmates of camp Westerbork. In the beginning, the Afdeling was responsible for the registration of Jewish capital, but during the course of the war the Westerbork branch increasingly became an aid organisation, which at times also engaged in clandestine activities.<sup>254</sup>

The fact that the Contact Afdeling consisted of *German* Jews who did not have the same deference to authority and were not integrated into non-Jewish society in the way that the Dutch Jews were might have made them more inclined not to follow German orders. The fact that they spoke the same language as their German overseers undoubtedly helped them in their efforts. For example, they often tried to bribe the Germans to arrange deportation exemptions for Jews and they continuously negotiated about the number of Jews sent on transport.<sup>255</sup> In the same way that Süskind tampered with German filing systems, Heynemann attempted to remove the letter 's', standing for *strafgeval* (punishment case) from individual files, so that these Jews could be removed from the *strafbarak* (punishment barrack). These punishment cases had to carry out the dirtiest jobs inside the camp and were generally the first to be put on a transport to the East.<sup>256</sup> Official documents such as 'Palestine certificates', passports, and *afstammingspapieren* (birth certificates)

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<sup>253</sup> Philip Mechanicus, *In dépôt* (Amsterdam: Van Genneep 1989; first ed. 1964), 29.

<sup>254</sup> Presser, *Ondergang*, Vol. 2, 311.

<sup>255</sup> Activities of the Contactafdeling, 250i Westerbork, Inv. No. 716-719, 1015-1016, NIOD; Interview Liesel Reichstaler-Heynemann (daughter of Walter Heynemann), 2012, Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork; Schellekens, *Walter Süskind*, 225.

<sup>256</sup> Statement of Walter Heynemann, dossier of Willy Lages, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 140-VI (BrC 394/49).



were forged and the Contact Afdeling sought connection with illegal workers in Amsterdam. Personal documentation including photographs and films was also smuggled out of Westerbork.<sup>257</sup> Heynemann claimed that the CA administered a *zwarte kas* (hidden budget) by which money was provided by the JR to finance their clandestine activities. After the JR was dismantled and its leadership interned in Westerbork, individual donations continued to finance the activities of the CA.<sup>258</sup> Although the members of the Contact Afdeling were criticised during the war because of the better conditions they lived in, and were accused of corruption after the war, their involvement in these illegal activities and the fact that they had put their own lives at risk ensured that they were eventually exonerated.<sup>259</sup>

These activities show that the existence of the JR, like that of its Belgian and French counterparts, allowed a range of activities that would have been impossible without the protection it provided to the members involved. However, the boundaries between legality and illegality were not as permeable as they were in Belgium and France. It is likely that the strong focus of the JR's leaders on legal activities discouraged clandestine groups from operating alongside the Council and from infiltrating the organisation which, as we have seen, *did* occur in Belgium and France. It was only through people like Van de Kar, Süskind, and the CA members, all of whom operated more on the periphery of the Council, that illegal activities were initiated or, as in the case of Pimentel, Virrie Cohen and the other crèche employees, that the organisation was used to cloak the hiding of children. There are indications that the local JR branch leaders were more directly involved in clandestine activities. For example, Hans van Dam, who worked for the Rotterdam branch of the JR, indicated in a letter to Jacques Presser in 1965 that this JR branch had cooperated substantially with illegal workers, including those who provided hiding places and false identity cards.<sup>260</sup> Considering the concentration of Jews in Amsterdam, and the centralisation of the JR's policies in the capital city, the scale of these activities was smaller than in Belgium and France.

We have seen that in 1946, an honour trial was instituted by leading members of the Jewish

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<sup>257</sup> Report on the work of the Contact-afdeling in Westerbork, dossier of Abraham Asscher and David Cohen, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>258</sup> Statement of Walter Heynemann, dossier Willy Lages, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 140-VI (BrC 394/49).

<sup>259</sup> For accusations, see, for example, the statement of Siegfried van den Berg, 19 March 1948, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 (PF Amsterdam T70982); Presser, *Ondergang*, Vol. 2, 311-312.

<sup>260</sup> Letter of Hans J. van Dam to Jacques Presser, 15 October 1965, p.1, fiches of L. de Jong in preparation for *Het Koninkrijk*, Vol. 7, chapter 2, NIOD.

community in order to evaluate ‘every Jew whose attitude or behaviour during the occupation [...] had been incompatible with the most basic form of Jewish solidarity’, most notably JR chairmen Asscher and Cohen.<sup>261</sup> During this trial, Cohen indicated that on a number of occasions he knew about cloaking activities and, particularly, the clandestine removal of Jews from the Schouwburg and the crèche (through his daughter Virrie).<sup>262</sup> He also gave a very detailed overview of the illegal actions that took place in and around the Schouwburg, claiming that JR cars were used to smuggle Jews out.<sup>263</sup> Asscher further stated that he and Cohen held secret meetings with Süskind and that they permitted the illegal activities that were undertaken under the official guise of the JR.<sup>264</sup> Views about the role played by the JR leadership are contradictory, however. Former head of the resistance group ASG Piet Meerburg said that Cohen actually obstructed his activities and even started an investigation into the whereabouts of children who had disappeared with the help of his group, while he – Cohen – knew full well that these children had been ‘safely’ taken care of by the resistance.<sup>265</sup> In his defence, Cohen stated that the wrong child had been taken and that he had had to cope with the angry responses of parents who did not want their children to be taken into hiding.<sup>266</sup> Later in his statement, Meerburg was more neutral, claiming that he was not sure whether the JR leaders were aware of the illegal activities, but he continued to insist that they had definitely not been actively involved.<sup>267</sup>

The paucity of wartime sources and the existence of different views on the matter make it difficult to offer a clear assessment of the extent to which the JR leadership was passively aware, or more actively sympathetic to, the use of the structures of the JR as a cloak for clandestine activities. The best way to sum it up is perhaps in the terms of Cohen’s own claim, as reiterated by Meerburg, that organised resistance groups never attempted to approach him because the position he had taken

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<sup>261</sup> In ’t Veld, *De Joodse Ereraad*, 43-44.

<sup>262</sup> Statement of David Cohen, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 VII (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>263</sup> Statement of David Cohen, 17 March 1947, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 V (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>264</sup> Statement of Abraham Asscher in preparation for the trial against Willy Lages, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 140 VI (BrC 394/49).

<sup>265</sup> Statement of Piet Meerburg, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 III, IV (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>266</sup> Documents sent by David Cohen to his lawyers during the State investigation of his wartime activities, 181j, Inv. No. 11, NIOD.

<sup>267</sup> Statement of Piet Meerburg, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 III, IV (PF Amsterdam T70982).

vis-à-vis the German occupation was simply different.<sup>268</sup> The JR's leadership may indeed have been aware of the activities surrounding the Schouwburg, but it seems unlikely that the role of its leadership in facilitating clandestine operations went beyond (intentionally) turning a blind eye in order not to hamper these actions. As Rafaël (Felix) Halverstadt, who aided Süskind in forging lists, stated: 'Asscher and Cohen neither positively nor negatively influenced the course of events in this respect'.<sup>269</sup>

We have assessed differences between the four Jewish organisations in terms of their connections with illegal activities while analysing the different contextual elements that contributed to these differences. Overall, the existence and legality of the Jewish organisations enabled clandestine activities that would otherwise have been impossible. This is even true in the case of the Netherlands, where organised clandestine activities were undertaken relatively late and where Jewish leaders insisted on maintaining the legal principles on which the JR had been established. In the case of Belgium and France, we can say that cloaking was more institutional rather than individual in nature. On various levels, people within the central boards were aware of these activities and, when necessary, communicated this to others. The knowledge that was shared by central board leaders and the ways they at times either passively or actively facilitated clandestine activities were diverse. The relations between illegal resistance and the legal Jewish organisations were more complex than has been accepted hitherto.

### **3.4 Illegal transactions: the Jewish organisations and the embezzlement of money**

We have seen that cloaking activities were undertaken at various levels. In some cases, the members of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were actively involved, while in others, the mere fact that the leadership decided to turn a blind eye to these activities was sufficient. Whether they were passively or actively involved, the Jewish leaders as well as lower ranking members were engaged in a wide range of activities that were generally initiated or fostered by clandestine groups. In addition to these findings, we will shortly see that the organisations sometimes played an instrumental role in facilitating clandestine activities by secretly embezzling money. Several (central board) members of the Belgian and French Associations played a role in distributing the

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<sup>268</sup> Statement of Piet Meerburg, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 V (PF Amsterdam T70982).

<sup>269</sup> Statement of Felix Halverstadt, NA, CABR, nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 107491 I (PF Amsterdam T70982).

money flows that went through the legal organisations to clandestine workers and groups. Some of the existing literature has reflected upon the financing of welfare activities by the Jewish institutions and the difficulties their leaders faced in this regard, but little has been written on how money flows went from one Jewish organisation to the other.<sup>270</sup> By making this a central theme, a more general overview will be provided of the manifold connections between the Jewish organisations and various (illegal) networks, underlining that the organisations by no means functioned in a social vacuum but were instead connected to a larger network of (illegal) organisations. This is important because it shows once again that the legal Jewish institutions, rather than operating as antitheses to clandestine structures, were interconnected with clandestine organisations.

We will first provide an overview of the financial resources to which the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud had access in order to support their social welfare activities. As we shall see, attempts to find alternative sources of funding often facilitated and enhanced communication between a variety of alternative (Jewish) organisations that were willing to cooperate. In some cases, this provided the basis for the illicit allocation of money via these bodies to other organisations. Looking at illegal transactions shows us that the basic reference point from which the Jewish leaders operated, namely apparently collaborating while trying to win time, in this case turned out to be effective. The AJB and the UGIF in some way profited from the credit that was provided by the Allied powers and governments in exile to clandestine organisations towards the end of the German occupation. Unfortunately, as we have seen by then, the Dutch JR had already ceased to exist.

#### *Financial resources: a burden on the Jewish communities*

In all three countries, the Jewish communities themselves were responsible for financing the welfare activities assigned to the Jewish organisations. The *cotisations* in Belgium and France and the *verplichte bijdragen* in the Netherlands were all forced contributions that Jews had to pay in order to facilitate the organisations' activities. Before January 1943, if Jews in the Netherlands did not have access to sufficient funds to pay their contributions, they had to request money from the

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<sup>270</sup> See, for example Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 146-148; Laffitte, "Les rafles de Janvier 1944 à Bordeaux", 323; Ibid., *Juif dans la France allemande*, 117-125; Massenge, "De sociale politiek", 226-227.

Lippman, Rosenthal & Co (Liro).<sup>271</sup> This was a Jewish bank whose established reputation was exploited by the Germans who created a second office with the same name, and then used it to obtain access to Jewish assets. On 8 August 1941, all Jewish-owned assets were blocked by the first ‘Liro’ decree. According to this law, “‘Jews liable to surrender their assets’” were forced to transfer all their ready money to an account at the Liro Sarphatistraat that has been specifically opened for the purpose’.<sup>272</sup> Whereas some Jews refused to pay the *verplichte bijdrage*, others voluntarily proposed to make an additional donation to the JR. However, reports of meetings with Liro show that the Nazis were not prepared to release any of the money stored at the bank in those cases where Jews wanted to make a voluntary contribution to the JR in addition to the *verplichte bijdrage*.<sup>273</sup> Whereas objections were raised in France about the use of specific Jewish funds, the JR used the Jewish assets that were stored and frozen at Liro.<sup>274</sup> The ongoing lack of financial resources with which the AJB and the UGIF were confronted did not seem to be as stringent in the case of the Netherlands. This probably meant that the JR’s leaders were less motivated to look for alternative sources of funding (outside the legal sphere).

In France, a German law had dictated that the UGIF would be funded through gifts and legacies, membership dues, assets from the incorporated organisations, and funds from a Solidarity Fund under control of the CGQJ.<sup>275</sup> The Solidarity Fund consisted of money raised through the sale of plundered Jewish property.<sup>276</sup> In the period when Lambert and Vallat were negotiating the establishment of the UGIF at the end of 1941, Lambert indicated that he would not accept the use of money originating from the Solidarity Fund. He demanded instead that voluntary Jewish donations should suffice to support the activities of the UGIF. Adler concluded from this that Lambert was intent on finding a formula that would overcome the fears and objections of the other men who were appointed as central board members and suggests that ‘such a line of argument on Lambert’s part demonstrated that he personally had decided to participate, irrespective of Vallat’s willingness to accede to any assurances’.<sup>277</sup> If we accept that Lambert was truly concerned about the moral

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<sup>271</sup> Report of the meetings with Lippmann, Rosenthal & Co in Amsterdam, 12 February 1942, 182.1.188, NIOD. Gerard Aalders, *Nazi looting: the plunder of Dutch Jewry during the Second World War*, transl. by Arnold Pomerans and Erica Pomerans (Oxford/ New York: Berg, 2004; first ed. 1999 [Dutch]), 142-143.

<sup>272</sup> Aalders, *Nazi looting*, 147.

<sup>273</sup> Report of the meetings with Lippmann, Rosenthal & Co in Amsterdam, 12 February 1942, 182.1.188, NIOD.

<sup>274</sup> Aalders, *Nazi looting*, 142-143.

<sup>275</sup> Publication of the law on the financing of the UGIF, *Journal officiel*, 2 December 1941.

<sup>276</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during WWII*, 133.

<sup>277</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 97-98.

implications of using money from the Solidarity Fund, this claim should be seriously reconsidered. Lambert continued to refuse to do so throughout the occupation, making it a matter of principle not to use this particular source of money.<sup>278</sup>

In contrast to the UGIF-Sud, the UGIF-Nord *did* use money that originated from the Solidarity Fund because they did not have access to alternative funds that were available to the UGIF-Sud.<sup>279</sup> Shortly after its establishment, the UGIF-Nord was immediately held responsible for the payment of a one billion franc fine which the Military Administration had forced upon the Jewish leaders on 14 December 1941 in response to recent attacks by the resistance.<sup>280</sup> The first instalment of 250 million francs had to be paid on 15 January 1942. In the period that followed, the UGIF-Nord's leaders feverishly tried to pay the fine, having neither the legal powers to coerce Jews to make a forced contribution, nor access to frozen Jewish bank accounts and other properties.<sup>281</sup> As Adler has argued, the issue of the fine and the realisation that the Jewish organisation was at the mercy of both the Germans and Vichy officials made a long-term financial strategy impossible.<sup>282</sup>

As the war progressed it became clear the financial situation for the UGIF-Sud was less stringent than that of its northern counterpart. The organisation had managed to avoid using the Solidarity Fund thanks to the financial support of the Joint that would be repaid after the war.<sup>283</sup> On 11 May 1943, a levy was imposed on all Jews in order to force mandatory contributions to the UGIF and to facilitate the collection of the billion franc fine that the UGIF-Nord was liable to pay.<sup>284</sup> Lambert vigorously protested against the levy and the UGIF did not make any effort to encourage more people to pay the tax.<sup>285</sup> Despite the threat of internment for those who would not pay, almost half of the Jews in Paris did not do so. In the southern zone, the percentage of Jews who complied with this measure was less than 10 percent.<sup>286</sup> Rather than using Solidarity Fund money,

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<sup>278</sup> Poznanski, *Jews in France during WWII*, 133.

<sup>279</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 117-119.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-104.

<sup>281</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 103-112; Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 103-106.

<sup>282</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 113. For a short overview of the dire financial situation of the UGIF-Nord towards the end of 1942 onwards, see: Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 121- 125.

<sup>283</sup> Poznanski, *The Jews in France during World War II*, 428.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> See the letter of Lambert to the CGQJ, 31 July 1943, XXVIII-190, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>286</sup> Poznanski, *The Jews of France during World War II*, 429-430.

the UGIF-Sud central board made a call for voluntary contributions.<sup>287</sup> The notion, therefore, that the organisation was built on mandatory contributions from its unwilling members and by the ‘proceeds gathered from the systematic despoliation of the Jewish businesses under the “Aryanisation” program’ as has been indicated by Nathan Bracher should be refined.<sup>288</sup> Indeed, both the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, similar to their counterparts in Belgium and the Netherlands, were forced to use money originating from Jewish businesses and individuals, but the UGIF-Sud leadership had clearly defined limits about how it was prepared to do so.

In the case of Belgium, little research has been done on the way the AJB financed its activities. The Belgian Jewish leadership depended upon gifts and was soon deprived of financial means. In May 1941, all Jews in Belgium were forced to register their property and the sale of property became subject to German approval. Furthermore, money earned through these sales had to be deposited in special bank accounts.<sup>289</sup> According to Pierre Broder, affluent Jews were generally unwilling (or unable) to pay the forced contributions to the AJB (*cotisations*) a tendency that can be identified to varying degrees in all three countries.<sup>290</sup> The AJB’s leadership referred to the financial situation of the organisation as ‘very worrying’ as early as October 1942. The situation was partly caused by the fact that there were organisational difficulties obstructing the central board from properly overseeing the (financial) activities of local branches.<sup>291</sup> The dire financial situation of the Belgian Association from the end of 1942 and in early 1943 forced the AJB local branches in Brussels and Antwerp to withdraw funds from existing Jewish welfare organisations and this could only be done with the approval of the SiPo-SD.<sup>292</sup>

Some of the social welfare organisations the AJB turned to were affiliated with the Centraal Beheer voor Joodse Weldadigheid en Maatschappelijk Hulpbetoon / Centrale de Bienfaisance et d’Assistance sociale Juives (Jewish Charities and Social Welfare Centre) whose assets were frozen

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<sup>287</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 119.

<sup>288</sup> Bracher, “Jewish Resistance in France”, 87-88.

<sup>289</sup> Steinberg, *L’Étoile et le fusil: La question juive, 1940-1942*, 16.

<sup>290</sup> Report of Pierre Broder to Maurice Heiber, 22 June 1966, dossier 13, AA1915 (CDJ), CEGESOMA. For the unwillingness of Jews in France to pay the *cotisations* see, for example: Letters sent to the UGIF requesting exemption from the individual payment of the *cotisations* between, AJ 38 1141, No. 6, Archives Nationales de France; Letters sent to the UGIF requesting exemption from the individual payment of the *cotisations* between June 1943 and December 1943, LVIII-5, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>291</sup> Massenge, “De sociale politiek”, 216-17, 226.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 226-227.

by order of the Germans.<sup>293</sup> By then, the AJB had taken up the tasks formerly carried out by this social welfare organisation. The same was true of the Fondation Eduard Kischen and Hachosath Orchin.<sup>294</sup> In January 1943, the local board of the AJB Brussels branch attempted to gain access to the frozen assets of two other organisations: the Maatschappij voor Doeltreffende Bijstand (the Society for Effective Assistance) and the Israëlitische Moeders en Weesmeisjes (Israelite Mothers and Orphans). These organisations had large sums of money in their bank accounts, to which they no longer had access. The AJB chairmen came to an agreement with the spokeswomen of these organisations about the nature of the activities that the AJB would support with their funds.<sup>295</sup> By then, the Jewish Association was the only organisation allowed by the Germans to use frozen assets.<sup>296</sup> The same procedure for accessing frozen assets was adopted by the Antwerp AJB branch. By using the money of organisations like the Joods Ziekenhuis (Jewish Hospital), Ezra and the Israëlitische Maatschappij voor Liefdadigheid aan Weduwen en Wezen (Israelite Society for Charity to Widows and Orphans), the AJB attempted to continue its social welfare activities.<sup>297</sup> By the end of the summer of 1943, many frozen assets were indeed made available. However, because of the enormous financial burden on the organisation, the money was often spent within a few weeks or months.<sup>298</sup>

The assets of Jews in Belgium were stored (and frozen) in different banks rather than, as in the Netherlands, in one financial institution. Throughout 1943, with the approval of the Military Befehlshaber in Belgien und Nordfrankreich, the AJB took over the funds of other Jewish organisations stored at the Banque Diamantaire Anversoise.<sup>299</sup> The AJB also used assets stored at the Amsterdamsche Bank voor België.<sup>300</sup> In the establishment order of the Association, published in

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<sup>293</sup> Decision to lend money in order to continue the social welfare activities of the AJB Antwerp branch, A002612.01-02, JMDV, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>294</sup> Letter of the Antwerp AJB branch to Mr. De Tiege of the *Amsterdamsche Bank voor België*, 15 March 1943, A002599, JMDV, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>295</sup> Meeting report of the *Commissie voor Maatschappelijke Hulp* (Commission for Social Assistance), 6 January 1943, JMDV-CNHEJ, 21A, R497/Tr206.891, DOS as cited in: Massenge, “De sociale politiek”, 227.

<sup>296</sup> Massenge, “De sociale politiek”, 226-227.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> Letter of the *Banque Diamantaire Anversoise* (Antwerp Diamond Bank) to the local AJB Antwerp branch concerning the transfer of the accounts of Jewish institutions, 7 July 1943, A002625, JMDV, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*; Letter of Oscar Teitelbaum (member of the AJB Antwerp branch) to the central board of the AJB, 22 April 1942, A002696, JMDV, Kazerne Dossin. Established in 1937 and the only foreign department of the Dutch *Amsterdamsche Bank* that had been established in 1871, the Amsterdamsche Bank (AB) voor België stored both Jewish and non-Jewish assets.



December 1941, it was stated that in the event that the AJB proved unable to secure its own funding, the organisation would rely on the support of the Belgian bureaucracy.<sup>301</sup> The diary of the Brussels AJB leader, Salomon van den Berg, shows that this option was indeed used. On 29 January 1944 Van den Berg, Marcel Blum, and Leo Feiertag went to Oscar Plisnier, chairman of the Belgian committee of Secretaries-General, to ask for financial resources for the AJB. To his great surprise, as Van den Berg wrote, they received an amount of 500,000 Belgian francs per month in addition to 1,100,000 francs as a starting amount in order to take care of the children's homes.<sup>302</sup> This made the Belgian bureaucracy an important financial supporter of the AJB which by this point found itself in dire financial circumstances. At this very late stage of the war, the granting of credit through the Belgian government (in exile) was not unique. We will see that by 1944, the principal resistance groups in Belgium also received money provided by Belgian banks against credit notes from Belgian and Allied authorities in London.<sup>303</sup> However, this was only during the final year of the occupation. Up until then, the AJB continuously faced a dire financial situation.

#### *Alternative financial resources and the secret embezzlement of money*

Throughout the occupation, the financial burdens on the Jewish communities intensified. In light of the increasing social welfare activities for which the Jewish organisations were held responsible, there was a need to find alternative sources of funding.<sup>304</sup> In both Belgium and France, we shall see that there were attempts to find (illegal) alternative sources of funding, including through the Joint Distribution Committee and the native governments (in exile). Despite their difficult financial situation, the money secured through these sources was not used only for their own legal social welfare activities. Rather, members of the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud also used the money to finance clandestine operations. In turn, the Jewish organisations also seem to have profited from the money that was transferred to clandestine organisations during the course of the occupation. We will shortly investigate the ways in which these financial resources were distributed illegally through the Belgian and French Associations, thereby highlighting the many

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<sup>301</sup> *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, nr. 63, 2 December 1941, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>302</sup> Salomon van den Berg, *Journal de guerre*, p. 137, Buber Collection, A006685, Kazerne Dossin.

<sup>303</sup> Martin Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium: Liberation and Political Reconstruction, 1944-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 21.

<sup>304</sup> See, for example, the letter of the AJB central board to the local Antwerp branch concerning the accounting of the AJB, 10 December 1942, A002579, JMDV, Kazerne Dossin.

interconnections between these legal Jewish organisations and the illegal sphere. In light of one of the central arguments of this chapter, namely that these organisations were at times willingly and knowingly involved in stimulating clandestine activities, this is an important aspect to examine. In the Netherlands, similar activities do not seem to have taken place.

In an interview conducted in 1970, the first chairman of the AJB, Salomon Ullman, claimed that even though the AJB was officially not allowed to cooperate with other Jewish organisations – the Germans did not acknowledge the existence of other bodies except for the AJB and religious institutions – there still existed a large number of organisations and individuals that operated secretly.<sup>305</sup> These private social welfare organisations operated alongside the AJB, and included an unnamed organisation in which Ullman's wife participated. Albert-Edouard Janssen, former Minister of Finance (1938-1939) for the Catholic party and president of the Société Belge des Banques, anonymously provided Ullman and his wife with monthly financial contributions. In turn, Ullman claimed, they distributed these funds among the poorest families.<sup>306</sup> Against the wishes of the Germans, Ullman engaged in a private communication with Janssen in order to access additional funding, using his prominent position as its leader in order to achieve this. Other members inside the AJB's central board were engaged in illegal financial activities of a different nature. Among them was Maurice Benedictus, first secretary and later the head of the AJB administration, whose activities were highlighted during the postwar court case against the organisation. Marcel Louette, national commander of the so-called Witte Brigade, one of the major Belgian resistance groups with a strong presence in Antwerp, claimed in a 1946 letter in support of Maurice Benedictus that the latter had been an active member of this particular resistance group. He said that Benedictus had played a remarkable role in a variety of activities and had provided the group with information 'of Military nature regarding the internal organisation of the SD service of the Militärverwaltung as well as the security measures taken by the enemy after the landing at Dieppe', the failed Allied assault on the seaport of Dieppe in northern France on 19 August 1942.<sup>307</sup> Moreover, he had also supplied 'major financial services' to the group. It was through these forms of financial transactions that some Jewish leaders extended their support from the legal to the illegal

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<sup>305</sup> Interview with Salomon Ullman, 1970, AA 1196, CEGESOMA.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Letter of Marcel Louette in the name of the Witte Brigade, 13 November 1946, No. 8036 N1944, Krijgsauditoraat, Algemeen Rijksarchief Brussel.

sphere.

On an institutional level, we have seen that during the final stages of the occupation the AJB used money secured from the Belgian government-in-exile through credit notes. Some of this money seems to have been used to support activities that were not part of the official legal policy of the AJB. For example, Irène Zmigrod, who held a legal position in the Brussels branch of the AJB while simultaneously working for the illegal CDJ, indicated that the AJB received ample funds from the Belgian government (in exile) which were in the first instance intended to cover the expenses of the homes for children and the elderly. In practice, some of these funds were sent to the CDJ. She further claimed that the CDJ was supported through the JDC via Switzerland.<sup>308</sup> Roger van Praag, who worked for the CDJ, declared that Benjamin Nykerk had approached the Joint in Switzerland and had received a guarantee that the Joint would repay the loans of Swiss bankers after liberation.<sup>309</sup> The offices of the AJB, Zmigrod claimed, were used to deliver cash to the CDJ and employees of the both organisations never understood why the AJB offices were not subject to more careful control by the Gestapo. According to her recollections, an inspection of the AJB's office only happened once: 'when there was only one poor old social worker and no distributor present'.<sup>310</sup> Similarly, Alfred Blum, the son of Marcel Blum and treasurer of the local Brussels AJB branch, claimed in 1956 that both Marcel Blum, Salomon Ullman's successor at the helm of the AJB, and a certain 'Van den Dijk' were responsible for embezzling considerable sums of money secured through the Ministry of Finance in Belgium. After doing so, they passed the money on to the resistance because *ils étaient en parfait termes avec les gens de la résistance* (they were on good terms with the resistance).<sup>311</sup>

The situation in France exhibits striking similarities. There were interrelations between the UGIF-Nord, the UGIF-Sud and illegal groups in terms of the distribution of financial resources. The

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<sup>308</sup> Eyewitness account by Irène Zmigrod entitled "A Social Worker's Report on her Experiences in Belgium during the Time of the Nazi-Occupation", 1956, p.14, 1656/3/9/262. Testimony Collection, Wiener Library.

<sup>309</sup> Report by Roger van Praag entitled 'Organisation and Administration of the Belgian Resistance', 1956, 1656/3/7/1112, Testimony Collection, Wiener Library.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>311</sup> Interview with Alfred Blum, 5 December 1972, p. 95, A012052, CNHEJ, Buber Collection, Kazerne Dossin.

JDC financed the UGIF's legal activities, but also those of clandestine (Jewish) resistance groups.<sup>312</sup> After the German invasion of the north of France in May 1940 the Joint was forced to close its Paris office and eventually moved to Marseille.<sup>313</sup> Whereas Dika Jefroykin initially still served as the Joint's deputy director, Joseph Schwarz, European Director of the JDC, appointed him as the French representative of the organisation in 1942.<sup>314</sup> In this position, he was asked to collect and distribute Joint funds to Jewish self-help organisations.<sup>315</sup> In his role as head of the Armée Juive (AJ), Jefroykin had by then already created a network across Switzerland and Spain to finance social welfare provision for the Jews. As a result of Jefroykin's involvement in radical Jewish forces through the AJ, the financial support of the JDC increasingly moved into a grey zone, covering everything from work in the camps to assisting the Jewish underground. Increasingly, there was a preference for supporting illegal and quasi-legal operations. Without explicitly authorising its use for clandestine purposes, the JDC appears to have given Jefroykin *carte blanche* to spend money in the hope of saving as many people as possible in the summer of 1942.<sup>316</sup>

After the Nazis and Italians invaded the southeastern part of France in November 1942, this form of aid entered its illegal phase. Almost all Joint contributions were channelled through the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers) and at least part of this money went through Switzerland.<sup>317</sup> According to Jefroykin the Joint did not know that he had decided to allocate the organisation's money for the benefit of the resistance, but there is no question that the Joint financed a wide range of (armed) resistance activities at this point.<sup>318</sup> The communication network Jefroykin had organised across Switzerland and Spain facilitated the illegal distribution of money from these countries to France. Official copies which noted these transactions were carried out by groups who left for Spain. In France, a second proof of the transactions was hidden in a villa near

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<sup>312</sup> Szajkowski, "The General Union of the Jews in France" in: *Imposed Jewish Governing Bodies Under Nazi Rule* (New York: Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 1972), 85-86; Laura Hobson Faure, *Un 'plan Marshall juif': La présence juive américaine en France après la Shoah, 1944-1954* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2013), 52-53. For the role of the Joint in France during the Second World War, see: Hobson Faure, *Un 'plan Marshall juif'*, 49-61; Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, 240-265.

<sup>313</sup> Hobson Faure, *Un 'plan Marshall juif'*, 50.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-53.

<sup>315</sup> Brauman et al., *Organisation Juive de combat*, 73; Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, 173.

<sup>316</sup> Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, 177. For more information on the Armée Juive, see: Brauman et al., *Organisation juive de combat*, *passim*.

<sup>317</sup> Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 144; Hobson Faure, *Un 'plan Marshall Juif'*, 53-58.

<sup>318</sup> Hobson Faure, *Un 'plan Marshall juif'*, 56-57.

Nîmes.<sup>319</sup> As the war progressed, financial aid to the UGIF-Sud via the Joint became increasingly insecure. Nevertheless, Lambert's deliberate appointment of Jefroykin and Brener as 'social inspectors' in January 1943 highlights the ongoing mutual interconnections at this point between the UGIF-Sud, the Joint, and clandestine networks. Lambert's own role in the Joint has been considered differently in the existing literature. At the end of November 1942, Lambert wrote in his diary that the Joint had asked him to become the organisation's director for France:

The Joint, that brings together all Jewish aid organisations in the United States, has asked me to be their director for France. I accepted in principle, but I refused to resign as general director of the UGIF at this time of greatest danger.<sup>320</sup>

According to Hobson Faure, there is no indication that Lambert was indeed asked by the Joint to become the organisation's representative for France.<sup>321</sup> At the same time, Bauer has claimed that the Joint told Lambert in June 1943 that he could not act as the Joint's representative as long as he held his position in the UGIF, which indicates that this subject was discussed (again) at this late stage of the war.<sup>322</sup> Since we know that Jefroykin acted as the Joint's director during the war, we can establish that Lambert was not appointed, most likely because he was not ready to step down from his position at the UGIF. Above all, we should note that throughout 1943 the Joint no longer believed that the UGIF was effective in providing aid and, in response to Lambert's arrest and the narrow escape of his successor Gaston Kahn, the financial support of the JDC to the UGIF dwindled.<sup>323</sup>

In the occupied zone, the JDC limited itself to supporting the OSE and the FSJ. However, when the United States entered the war in December 1941, the entire occupied zone was cut off from this financial aid.<sup>324</sup> Around the spring of 1943, the Joint tried to solve this problem by promising to reimburse loans to local lenders in France after the end of the war. In this way, the

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<sup>319</sup> Frida Wattenberg, *Justes et Persécutés durant la période Nazie dans les communes de France: Jules Jefroykin*, Anonymes, *Justes et Persécutés durant la période Nazie dans les communes de France*: <http://www.ajpn.org/personne-Jules-Jefroykin-2167.html>. Accessed November, 29 2017. The manifold ways in which Joint money was smuggled throughout France and among clandestine Jewish organisations such as the AJ and the MJS are outlined in the work of Brauman et al., *Organisation juive de combat*, passim.

<sup>320</sup> Lambert, *Diary of a witness*, 29 November 1942, 153.

<sup>321</sup> Hobson Faure, *Un "plan Marshall juif"*, 56 n27.

<sup>322</sup> Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, 241-242.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Billig, *Le Commissariat général aux questions juives*, Vol. 1, 198.

UGIF and the Amelot Committee were able to secure funds outside the German purview.<sup>325</sup> UGIF officials also managed to transfer funds from the southern to the northern zone, despite German and Vichy's knowledge of this illicit action.<sup>326</sup> This money fostered clandestine operations and rescue activities. In a report on the establishment of the Service Familiale Clandestine de Placement des Enfants (Clandestine Child Placement Service, 'Service 42B'), Stern described how secretive stocks were used to finance its activities. She said that when there were insufficient funds for 'Service 42B', which she headed, the UGIF complemented the funds through their *caisse noir* – a financial resource hidden from the Nazis and from Vichy officials.<sup>327</sup> The UGIF-Nord thus functioned as a financial back-up for its illegal actions, which is remarkable considering the financial difficulties the UGIF-Nord faced. Despite financial contributions as a result of external actors, the financial situation of the UGIF-Nord remained dire and its resources proved insufficient.<sup>328</sup>

As the war progressed and the liberation of France became increasingly likely, resistance groups in France received substantial funds and material from the Allied powers.<sup>329</sup> Up until 1942, the Gaullists in London and the various secret services in the United Kingdom allocated only a limited amount of money to domestic French resistance organisations. However, as 1943 progressed, some French resistance organisations received considerable sums of money (including the Libération-sud, Franc Tireur and Combat which received 1,500,000, 600,000 and 2,500,000 francs respectively).<sup>330</sup> Although it remains unclear how resistance groups operating in parallel with the UGIF, such as the Amelot Committee, benefited from this funding the increase of aid from abroad most likely contributed to an overall expansion of opportunities for the wide range of resistance groups that were operative in France as many of these organisations were interconnected. For example, the Armée Juive, renamed Organisation Juive de Combat (Jewish Combat Organisation, OJC) included about nine autonomous Jewish resistance groups on the eve of the liberation, including the EIF, OSE AJ and MJS. Furthermore, the OJC cooperated with non-Jewish

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<sup>325</sup> David Rapoport to M. Mark, 7 May 1943, Folder 2, 43, Rue Amelot Records 1939-1945, New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research as cited in Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 144.

<sup>326</sup> See for example a letter of the CGQJ to Röhke, 11 May 1943, XXVIIIb-72, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Report of the CGQJ to SS-Obersturmführer Röhke on the clandestine activities of the UGIF, 22 April 1943, XXVIII-159, CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah; Adler, *The Jews of Paris*, 156.

<sup>327</sup> Clandestine family placement service for children (or service 42B), MDC/56, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>328</sup> Szajkowski, *Analytical Franco-Jewish Gazetteer*, 81.

<sup>329</sup> Wiewiorka, *The French Resistance*, 356-357.

<sup>330</sup> Wiewiorka, "France", 130.

resistance groups in the attempt to liberate France following the Allied invasion in June 1944.<sup>331</sup> Since the legal cover of the UGIF still existed, the many interconnections that Jewish organisations had with the resistance undoubtedly ensured an enlargement of activity here as well.

The cases of Jefroykin and Stern in France, and Salomon Ullman and Maurice Benedictus in Belgium, have shown that there were attempts by the Jewish leaders to use the organisations' money to finance illegal activities directly or to illegally disperse money among organisations that clandestinely aided Jews. Since the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud still existed when financial transactions were secured by the Allied powers and the governments-in-exile towards the end of the war, the attempt to buy time by (apparently) cooperating with the Germans while persisting in their approach was a politics of survival, and in the case of Belgium and France this approach worked. The AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud could all profit from the increase in money flows to illegal organisations. Even though the circumstances became less favourable and faith in the organisations was decreasing, their existence, even at this late stage of the war, was still beneficial to the Jewish communities both through their legal welfare activities and through the illegal activities that they in part facilitated. We have seen that the illegal operations helped those Jews who had gone into hiding and depended upon clandestine contact for their daily needs. This frustrated the aims of the Germans. Although the Dutch Council leadership acted with the same motivation, they did not manage to buy as much time as their Belgian and French counterparts could. In the Netherlands, a similar arrangement was made by the Dutch government to support clandestine activities in 1944. Through the Nationaal Steunfonds (national support fund, NSF), an organisation that was primarily focussed on arranging financial resources for the resistance in the Netherlands, the government-in-exile guaranteed that they would reimburse the loans that were arranged with private individuals through the NSF.<sup>332</sup> However, by then, the JR had ceased to exist; 104,000 Jews were deported from the country and Jewish social welfare activities were entirely dismantled.

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<sup>331</sup> For an overview of the history of the OJC and those who worked for the organisation, see: *Organisation juive de combat: Résistance / sauvetage, France 1940-1945*, passim.

<sup>332</sup> Pieter Sanders, *Het Nationaal Steun Fonds: bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de financiering van het verzet, 1941-1945* ('s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), 121-133.

## Conclusion

The JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were all linked in various ways to clandestine activities. These connections are often poorly documented precisely because of their illegal nature. Nevertheless, we have seen that interconnections between clandestine groups and the Jewish organisations were manifold, particularly in Belgium and France. Even in the Netherlands, where the circumstances in which the Council was forced to operate were especially difficult, clandestine activities were still developed with aid of JR members. The nature of these activities was complex, and the role of the Jewish leaders herein varied from passive acceptance to active support of the illegal activities of these groups. In Belgium and France, some of the Associations' leaders and members were actively involved in illegal undertakings themselves. The extent to which this was the case varied and fluctuated. Above all, the attempt to provide social welfare to the Jewish communities, in a period of time during which conditions worsened, could itself be seen as a series of courageous acts intended to maintain these communities as they came under increasing threat.

The interrelations we have seen between legality and illegality force us to nuance our understanding of the behaviour of the Jewish organisations' leaders and memberships. Their responses were those of ordinary people under the threat of an occupying power. Terms such as 'collaboration', 'cooperation' or 'resistance' are all too narrow to describe the choices of the Jewish leaders during the Holocaust. Overall, none of these terms suffices to describe their conduct. On an individual level, we have seen varying choices at different points in time. Lambert, for example, maintained his policy of legality on the one hand while also allowing clandestine activities to take place under the cloak of the UGIF-Sud, and even participated in some of these activities himself. In circumstances that continuously changed, the central board members often took on shifting roles, oscillating between cooperation and resistance and the many shades of behaviour that exist in between. Therefore, even though scholars often continue to use categories that are by definition static to describe the behaviour of the Jewish leaderships, there is a need to recognise the dynamic and hybrid nature of their conduct.



## Conclusion: Looking back on the ‘Jewish Councils’

‘I got the impression that [...] not a day and not even an hour passed by in which he (David Cohen) did not think about the persecution of the Jews and his own role in it. He (Cohen) said things like: “[...] every day I wonder how I could have done the things I did”.’<sup>1</sup>

David Cohen reflected upon his role in the Joodsche Raad on 25 September 1964 during a conversation with historian Loe de Jong, who had encouraged Cohen several times to tell his wartime story. Even though Cohen often seemed very confident about his decisions as the JR’s leader and claimed he could not have done otherwise, he was also tormented by a sense of guilt. After he returned from Theresienstadt, where he was deported on 4 September 1944, Cohen retained his job as professor at the University of Amsterdam. Asscher was deported to Bergen-Belsen on 13 September 1944, where he lived in dire circumstances from which he barely recovered after the war. After their return to the Netherlands, Asscher and Cohen no longer played a prominent role in the Jewish community because they were denounced for their wartime activities. In 1946, both chairmen were brought before a so-called court of honour (*ereraad*), which was instituted by the Jewish community to ‘purge the ranks of the Jewish survivors in order to start with a clean slate for the reconstruction of the Jewish community’.<sup>2</sup> While the court dealt with 26 cases, those of Asscher, Cohen and five other members of the Jewish Council were considered the most important and attracted the most attention.<sup>3</sup>

At the time the honour court was operative, the two men were arrested on 6 November 1947 on order of the Bijzonder Gerechtshof (Special court of Justice), instigated by the Dutch State in September 1945. This court tried those accused of high treason, treason and war crimes, including Ferdinand aus der Fünten and Willy Lages.<sup>4</sup> Even the strongest opponents of the JR were outraged by the arrest of the chairmen, which was motivated by the fear that they might flee abroad, and Asscher and Cohen were released again on 5 December after questions were raised in the Dutch

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<sup>1</sup> Reflections of Loe de Jong after his meeting with David Cohen on 25 September 1964, fiches of L. de Jong in preparation for *Het Koninkrijk*, vol. 7, chapter 2, NIOD.

<sup>2</sup> De Haan, “An unresolved controversy”, 118. For an overview of the problematic nature of the *Ereraad* and its function, see: in ’t Veld, *De Joodse Ereraad*, passim; De Haan, “An unresolved controversy”, 107-136.

<sup>3</sup> De Haan, “An unresolved controversy”, 121.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Romijn, *Snel, streng en rechtvaardig: politiek beleid inzake de bestraffing en reclassering van ‘foute’ Nederlanders, 1945-1955*, PhD thesis (Houten: De Haan, 1989).

parliament.<sup>5</sup> Shortly thereafter, on 26 December 1947, the verdict of the honour court was publicised in the Jewish weekly *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* (the NIW), even though Cohen had not had a chance to make his final plea: Asscher and Cohen were no longer allowed to fulfil any honourable or representative function in the Jewish community.<sup>6</sup> The honour court ruled that the former JR chairmen's decision to comply with the German demand to establish the Council was reprehensible; their agreement to draw up lists of names of Jews (7,000 in total) who would no longer benefit from the temporary protection of the JR and, consequently, were put on transport in May 1943 was considered 'very reprehensible'.<sup>7</sup> Cohen objected to this judgement and in the first week of 1950, during a period when the court of honour lost its credibility, the court ruled that those who had formally appealed its decision, including Cohen, would be reinstated as respectable members of the community.<sup>8</sup> In the meantime, the Dutch State trial had failed to make any real progress in their investigation of the JR. In May 1950, the trial was dismissed and one year later, Cohen was informed that prosecution was suspended on 'public interest' grounds.<sup>9</sup>

The initial delays and the sudden final verdict of the honour court, combined with the dismissal of charges by the Dutch State, suggest that the *Joodsche Raad* had, after all stopped being a central issue. There was now a strong focus on rebuilding the country and the Jewish community, which had suffered severe losses: out of around 140,000 Jews who had resided in the Netherlands in May 1940, only 30,000 now remained.<sup>10</sup> Many no longer wanted to be part of the Jewish community and emigrated abroad; the rise of antisemitism and the lack of recognition of the Jews' experiences in eastern Europe contributed to a sense of trauma experienced by many Jews at this time.<sup>11</sup> The nature of the Jewish community had drastically changed as well. Those who had

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<sup>5</sup> Somers, "David Cohen, een biografische schets" in: *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 21-22.

<sup>6</sup> In 't Veld, *De Joodse Eereraad*, 66; For the full text of the judgement that was published in the NIW on 19 May 1948, see: Knoop, *De Joodsche Raad*, 192-193.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. For Cohen's view on the course of events and a description of the situation and atmosphere in the JR office when its members had to produce the list of JR members, see: Cohen, *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad*, 166-171; Interview of Mirjam Bolle-Levie by Johannes Houwink ten Cate, 12 August 1999, Doc. 1 248-1366, M. Bolle-Levie, Inv. No. 1, NIOD; Interview of Mirjam Bolle-Levie by Johannes Houwink ten Cate, 17 September 2003, Doc I 248-2366, M. Bolle-Levie Inv. No. 2, NIOD.

<sup>8</sup> De Haan, "An unresolved controversy", 125-130.

<sup>9</sup> Houwink ten Cate, "Justitie en de Joodsche Raad", 162.

<sup>10</sup> Joop Sanders, "Opbouw en continuïteit na 1945" in: Michman, Beem et al (eds.), *Pinkas*, 216.

<sup>11</sup> Sanders, "Opbouw en continuïteit", 217; Brasz, "After the Second World War: From 'Jewish Church' to Cultural Minority", 342-346. Dienke Hondius, *Return: Holocaust Survivors and Dutch Anti-Semitism*, transl. David Colmer (Westport/Conneticut/London, 2003 [first Dutch ed. 1990]), 75-136; Isaac Lipschits, *De kleine sjoa: Joden in naoorlogs Nederland* (Amsterdam: Mets & Schilt, 2001), passim.

survived predominantly belonged to the middle and upper classes, because they had possessed the connections and financial resources for going into hiding; the Jewish proletariat had been seriously affected. While prewar institutions such as the Coördinatie Commissie and the Dutch Israelite religious community re-emerged after the war, Cohen and Asscher (the latter died on 2 May 1950), no longer received the respect of the Jewish community and were often ignored in public.<sup>12</sup>

In Belgium, where around 66,000 Jews had resided on the eve of the occupation, 18,000 Jews were left in October 1944.<sup>13</sup> The population increased quickly to 30,000 at the end of 1945, in part because Jews returned from exile and transient refugees settled in the country. Fewer than 2,000 Jews returned from the places to which they had been deported.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the Netherlands, there was a generally sympathetic attitude towards the Jews after the war. The physical and mental condition of most of the Jewish population was perilous, which meant that aid organisations had to be quickly reconstituted. In part, the structures of resistance groups such as the CDJ were used as a way to do this.<sup>15</sup> Some of those who had fulfilled a dual role in the resistance and the AJB, including Yvonne Nèvejean and David Ferdman, were involved in the reorganisation of social welfare in Belgium. They were responsible for the institution of the Aides aux Israélites Victimes de la Guerre (Aid to Jewish War Victims, AIVG) which played a major role in the postwar reconstruction process of the Jewish communities.<sup>16</sup>

The Belgian courts were overwhelmed with trial cases in the immediate postwar period. Afraid that the AJB's legal strategy of cooperation would be linked to the wartime attitude of Belgian government officials, the military courts were reluctant to carry out an investigation into the Jewish organisation.<sup>17</sup> It was forced to deal with the AJB case in October 1944 after an elaborate complaint by Lazare Liebman who blamed the organisation for active collaboration with the Nazis.<sup>18</sup> However, the trial of the seven members of the organisation's initial central board

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<sup>12</sup> Houwink ten Cate, "De justitie en de Joodsche Raad", 149.

<sup>13</sup> Steinberg, *L'Étoile et le Fusil: La question juive, 1940-1942*, 85.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Dratwa, "Genocide and its Memories: A Preliminary Study on How Belgian Jewry Coped with the Results of the Holocaust" in: Dan Michman (ed.), *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans*, 524; Van den Daelen, *Laten we hun lied verder zingen*, 29-36.

<sup>15</sup> Van dan Daelen, *Laten we hun lied verder zingen*, 44-45; Dratwa, "Genocide and its Memories", 524-530.

<sup>16</sup> Dratwa, "Genocide and its Memories", 524, 525.

<sup>17</sup> Van den Daelen and Wouters, "'The Lesser Evil' of Jewish Collaboration?", 212-213.

<sup>18</sup> André Donnet, "Het onderzoek door het militaire gerecht: het geheugen buitenspel gezet" in: Van Doorslaer and Schreiber (eds.), *De curatoren van het getto*, 294-295.

(Salomon Ullman, Maurice Benedictus, Alfred Blum, Salomon van den Berg, David Lazare, Nico Workum and Juda Mehlwurm) was not considered a priority. While the Dutch trials were predominantly centred around the two chairmen, the Belgian court focused more broadly on the entire organisation's board. This reinforces the notion that Asscher and Cohen had been autocratic rulers, and were considered as such, while the authority of the AJB was spread among a wider circle of Jewish leaders. In the meantime, several other investigations were opened, including in local military courts, that enquired into leading members of the AJB's local branches.<sup>19</sup> The courts' continued reluctance, paired with successful attempts by the defence to gather supporting statements, arguing that the AJB's policy had been similar to that of the Belgian policy of 'the lesser evil', led the military prosecutor to drop all charges. In January 1947, the cases against the central AJB leaders were closed.<sup>20</sup>

The absence of moves by the Jewish community to bring the AJB's leaders to court, as had happened in the Netherlands in the form of an honour court, is remarkable here. Van den Daelen and Wouters have explained this by pointing to the fragmented nature of the Jewish communities in Belgium; the vast majority of Jews without Belgian citizenship did not want to draw attention to themselves, fearing they would face expulsion.<sup>21</sup> Internal division among former Jewish resistance networks, most notably the communists and the various Zionist factions, might also have played a role.<sup>22</sup> Since their actions were never genuinely investigated by a court (of honour), and because the Belgian Jewish communities were relatively decentralised, it was easier for the AJB leaders to continue the lives they had lived before the war. The fact that the first AJB chairman Salomon Ullman was reinstated as chief Rabbi of Belgium after the liberation of the country and served in this position until he emigrated to Israel in 1957 most significantly highlights the different position of the AJB leaders in the postwar communities compared to the Netherlands.<sup>23</sup>

In France, the Jewish community had lost nearly one-third of its prewar population with around 200,000 Jews residing in the country immediately after the liberation.<sup>24</sup> We have seen that

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 206-208.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 209-211.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 212. Donnet, "Het onderzoek door het militair gerecht", 318-319.

<sup>22</sup> Donnet, "Het onderzoek door het militair gerecht", 316.

<sup>23</sup> Schreiber, *Dictionnaire Biographique*, 343-344.

<sup>24</sup> Séan Hand, "Introduction" in: Ibid. and Steven T. Katz (eds.), *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945-1955* (New York/London: New York University Press, 2015), 3; Annette Wieviorka, "Les Juifs en France au lendemain de la guerre: état des lieux" in: *Archives Juives. Revue d'histoire des Juifs de France*, No. 28, Vol. 1 (1995), 5-6.

the first UGIF leaders, most importantly André Baur and Raymond-Raoul Lambert, were arrested, interned and deported. In contrast to the leaders of the JR and AJB, they did not survive the war; both were killed in the gas chambers at Auschwitz. There were other important Jewish leaders in France who also did not survive the war, including 23 (out of the 60) Rabbis who had served as members of the Consistory, Jacques Helbronner, and Léonce Bernheim, a socialist activist and Zionist spokesman.<sup>25</sup> Overall, the religious and associative life of the Jews had severely changed postwar society, not least because many synagogues had been either damaged or destroyed.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, while some community leaders fled from Nazism and never returned to France, others – including many who had held leading roles in Jewish resistance groups – believed there was little future for Jews in France and emigrated elsewhere, including to Palestine.<sup>27</sup>

There was a strong focus on the renewal of the French Jewish community. The disappointment that many Jews experienced, in relation to the active compliance of the Vichy regime, necessitated the reconstruction of Jewish community in such a way that it no longer depended on the State.<sup>28</sup> With a sense of excitement and enthusiasm Jewish organisations, primarily those that sprang from resistance groups such as the CRIF, perceived this moment as an opportunity to create a new future for the Jews in France. They aimed to gain the upper hand in the reshaping of institutions and policies ‘in order to create a self-sustaining and independent community’.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, as Daniella Doron has recently argued, this was only an outward appearance.<sup>30</sup> In the case of child welfare, in particular, communal leaders were worried about the consequences of the war on Jewish society and there existed an underlying mood of ‘crisis, anxiety and pessimism’.<sup>31</sup>

Because there existed a sense of distrust relating to those Jewish organisations and individuals whose wartime conduct were a matter of fierce controversy, a number of Jewish groups, often under communist influence, called for an internal purge of the Jewish community after the

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<sup>25</sup> David Weinberg, “The Revival of French Jewry in Post-Holocaust France: Challenges and Opportunities” in: Séan Hand and Steven T. Katz (eds.), *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews*, 26-27.

<sup>26</sup> Jacob Kaplan, “French Jewry under the Occupation” in: *American Jewish Yearbook*, No. 47 (1945), 109-110.

<sup>27</sup> Weinberg, “The Revival of French Jewry”, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid; Also see: Pierre Birnbaum, *Jewish Destinies: Citizenship, State and Community in Modern France* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 217.

<sup>29</sup> Weinberg, “The Revival of French Jewry”, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Daniella Doron, *Jewish Youth and Identity in Postwar France: Rebuilding Family and Nation* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015), 20.

<sup>31</sup> Perego, ““Jurys d’honneur”, 140.

liberation.<sup>32</sup> This is indeed what happened, first through the short-lived CUDJF whose representatives, as we have seen, arrested the UGIF's president Georges Edinger and, second, through the CRIF, which instituted an honour court. Both institutions investigated the wartime conduct of the UGIF's employees and the CRIF specifically focused on the culpability of its members in the Neuilly case.<sup>33</sup> While the legitimacy of the CUDJF was violently challenged, the CRIF was criticised both by members of the Consistory and by organisations such as the Association of Former Jewish Deportees for failing to make a general evaluation of the UGIF's policies.<sup>34</sup> In the end, the UGIF leadership was held accountable for its failure to remove children from the homes that were overseen by the Germans, but any further investigations were halted, which angered the Jewish press.<sup>35</sup> The antagonism between the immigrants and French Jews that had dominated prewar society was again reinforced and highlighted in this period.<sup>36</sup> Above all, we can conclude that few prewar institutional structures or leaders remained that could facilitate the rebuilding of the Jewish communities in France. The impact of the traditional Jewish leadership, including those who had played leading roles in the UGIF, had largely dwindled and played a limited role in the process of reconstruction.

As Annie Kriegel has pointed out, the long list of employees and directors of the UGIF as well as of the Rabbis and Consistorial leaders, who were deported with their families, prevents us from discussing the case of the Jewish leaders in terms of resistance or collaboration.<sup>37</sup> Around six million Jews lost their lives during the Nazi Holocaust. They died in gas chambers in Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor and Chelmno. Others were brutally shot, including during operations in German annexed western Poland (Wartheland), the Soviet Union and other sites in eastern Europe. Still others died as a result of the hardships from which they suffered as a result of Nazi policies; malnourishment and exhaustion were among the chief causes. In the Netherlands, around 102,000 Jews perished (ca. 73% of the entire Jewish population). In Belgium and France, the number of

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 139-140.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 143; Michel Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande* (Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2006), 323-27; Anne Grynberg, "Juger l'UGIF (1944-1950)?" in: Hélène Harter, Antoine Marès et al. (eds), *Terres promises: Mélanges offerts à André Kaspi* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008), 507-526. For the conclusions of the CRIF investigator on the specific case of the deportation of children, see: Comité d'Épuration, *Déportation des enfants: conclusions de l'enquêteur*, CRIF, MDI 311, Mémorial de la Shoah.

<sup>34</sup> Perego, "Jurys d'honneur", 150-154.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.; Fredj, "Le Consistoire Central et la création du CRIF", 177.

<sup>36</sup> Perego, "Jurys d'honneur", 155; Marc Olivier Baruch (ed.), *Une poignée de misérables: L'épuration au sein de la société française après la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 537.

<sup>37</sup> Annie Kriegel, "De la résistance juive" in: *Pardès*, No. 2 (1985), 197.

victims amounted to around 25,000 (ca. 35%) and 73,000 (ca. 25%) respectively. Even though working for the Jewish organisations provided a temporary exemption from deportation – *sperre* – it did not necessarily secure a higher chance of survival. Most of the Jews who worked for either of the organisations were deported to concentration and extermination camps in the end. In the case of France, the relative number of murdered Jews was in fact (significantly) higher among those who worked for the UGIF central board.<sup>38</sup> The notion that these Jewish leaders only tried to save their own skins is unfounded.

This thesis has attempted to step away from the moralistic viewpoint from which the actions of the Jewish leaders have too often been judged. Rather than assessing the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud in the context of the mortality rates of Jews in individual countries, this comparative analysis offers new perspectives on the form and function of the Jewish organisations in their respective societies. Aspects that have often been overlooked have now been highlighted as determinants for the ways in which these organisations functioned. In the first chapter, the differences in the socio-historical structures of the Dutch, Belgian and French societies have been highlighted. This chapter has demonstrated that these differences explain the divergent position of the Jewish leaders during the war. The unique socio-historical foundations of each of the Jewish organisations has hitherto not been recognised in historiography because their impact cannot be understood when research is exclusively conducted within the borders of the nation-state. Yet, it is essential to recognise that the socio-historical foundation of the AJB was markedly different from that of the JR, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud, and vice-versa. Only then is it possible to understand the position of these leaders in their respective societies, and to contextualise their choices. It explains, for example, why the Dutch leadership decided to remain in place until the JR was dissolved in September 1943 while their counterparts either stepped down, or were removed from their position by the Germans.

The second chapter highlighted the similarities in the way the Germans planned, or rather failed to plan, the institution of these Jewish organisations throughout western Europe. It is important to recognise these similarities because they demonstrate that Nazi policies throughout Europe were unplanned and irrational. In the context of eastern Europe, the ad-hoc nature of the German decision-making process has been emphasised by, among others, Mark Mazower and Dan

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<sup>38</sup> Laffitte, *Juif dans la France allemande*, 368.

Michman.<sup>39</sup> German policies in western Europe, at least with regard to the Jewish organisations, were also defined by local initiatives, ad-hoc decisions and institutional rivalry. This chapter has also demonstrated that German views on the organisations' effectiveness varied from optimism to outright frustration. Demonstrating these differences matters because it necessitates an understanding of the factors that caused these different views: the nature of the leadership, the nature of society and the nature of the occupation. In the last chapter, the use of the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud as cloaks for clandestine activities, either wittingly or unwittingly, is contrasted with the relative absence of such activities under the JR's cloak. Furthermore, the Dutch leadership, in contrast to the French leaders, never actively supported, or engaged in, illegal activities. These differences highlight the various structures these Jewish organisations evolved into. It also shows that the nature and activities of these organisations were inherently depended upon the society in which they functioned, and demonstrate that they should not be considered as isolated entities.

The different social contexts in which the organisations were established proved to have been decisive for the appointment and position of the Jewish leaders in their respective societies. The various ways in which the Jewish communities were structured, meant that the basic reference point from which each of the organisations emerged was crucially different. Many factors that played a role in determining the social landscape of these communities, including the presence or absence of a central religious body (the Consistory), the impact of refugee streams at the turn of the century and in the 1930s, the division of power within the communities and the role of Jewish social welfare organisations. These aspects not only affected the position of the organisations' leaders, but also had an impact on their self-perception and, consequently, on the choices they made during the war.

We have seen that the number of immigrants in Belgium and France before the war was significantly higher than in the Netherlands. Coming from various social, economic and cultural backgrounds and different countries throughout central and eastern Europe, the majority of these immigrants struggled to integrate into the Belgian and French Jewish communities. As a result, the social, religious and economic landscape in these two countries was highly diverse. The communities were decentralised and by no means formed a coherent whole. In the Netherlands,

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<sup>39</sup> Michman, *The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos During the Holocaust*, passim; Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How The Nazis Ruled Europe*, passim.



there was also segregation within the Dutch Jewish community in terms of social and economic welfare. The nature of this division was mostly based on levels of prosperity and separated the very poor Jews from the rich, upper layer of the community that was well-integrated into non-Jewish society. However, in contrast to Belgium and France, Jewish immigrants did not radically alter the nature of the prewar community in the Netherlands. Even though many were more liberal than the Dutch Jews, their number was relatively small and, compared with the neighbouring countries, the close geographical connection between the Dutch and German Jews led to better integration for these Jews. The more uniform Dutch Jewish community made it easier to establish a body that represented the Jews in the Netherlands at least to some extent. Even though the leadership of the Joodsche Raad did not represent the large number of poor Jews that resided in the country, we can say that its leadership was emblematic of the development of increasing secularisation and integration into non-Jewish society that broadly characterised Jewish society at large.

In Belgium and France, it was impossible to fulfil any representative function vis-à-vis the strongly divided Jewish communities that resided in the country. In the changing prewar communities, the traditional power of the Consistories in both countries faded, in Belgium even more strikingly than in France, because the vast number of immigrants meant that an effective central leadership was entirely absent. After the German occupation of western Europe, the Jewish communities in Belgium faced a leadership vacuum. In contrast to the Netherlands, where the prewar Jewish leadership remained in place, those Jews who had fulfilled representative functions in Belgium fled the country after the threat of a Nazi invasion became imminent. To some extent, although not with the same level of intensity, Jews who resided in the occupied zone of France faced a similar problem. Those who had the social connections and financial means to do so fled southwards. Among them were central figures who had fulfilled representative functions in the prewar society. In the French unoccupied zone, the situation was different yet again. Lambert was part of the prewar Consistorial leadership, but his appointment at the helm of the UGIF-Sud and his later function as the organisation's president can be considered a break with the policies and outlook of the traditional leadership; his outlook on the Jewish 'refugee problem' in France was markedly different from that of the Consistory. Whereas he helped immigrant Jews through the CAR, the Consistory generally tried to remain aloof. After the UGIF was established, the Consistorial leadership firmly objected to its existence. Because of these differences in prewar social structures and in the position of the future Jewish organisations' leaders, the nature of the leadership was different in the Netherlands, Belgium and France. Whereas the leading position of Asscher and

Cohen in the Netherlands was a continuation of prewar social structures, Salomon Ullman's appointment at the helm of the AJB resulted simply from the lack of better alternatives. In a somewhat similar vein, the UGIF-Nord's leadership did not have the same level of prewar leadership experience as Lambert in France or Asscher and Cohen in the Netherlands.

The different social foundations on which the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were built affected both how far they were accepted by their communities and the way the Jewish leaders perceived their own role. To varying degrees, the positions of the French and Belgian leaders was not as solid as that of their Dutch counterparts. This, along with the highly diverse nature of the communities they were forced to represent, meant that these leaders could never become as determined and self-assured as Asscher and Cohen. Differences in self-perception among the central board members can be identified between Belgium and France and within France, between the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud. Raymond-Raoul Lambert was much more confident about his leadership than Salomon Ullman in Belgium. There also existed different perceptions about personal status and responsibilities among members of the same board. Whereas Maurice Benedictus (in the AJB) showed uncertainty about his position and eventually resigned, his colleague Salomon van den Berg was convinced that he could successfully govern the Jewish communities. He strongly believed in his own capacities and felt he deserved the leading position he was assigned in the Belgian Jewish community. It was a role he had been wanting for years to take on.

Differences in self-perception and the (lack of) acceptance by the Jewish communities affected the way the chairmen governed the Jewish organisations. The choices they made in terms of resisting Nazi orders or withdrawing from the boards were also partly informed by these factors. In Belgium and both French zones, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud leaders at some point either voluntarily decided to withdraw from their position, or were forced to do so because they refused to follow Nazi regulations. Their withdrawal resulted in a leadership vacuum which was not immediately filled. We have seen that the fluctuation of central board members in Belgium and France also resulted from contextual factors such as the presence of institutional criticisms about the organisations' policies and the existence of alternative representative bodies such as the Consistory or secular aid groups. This fluctuation in membership turned out to work in the favour of the Jewish communities in these two countries since it not only stalled German tactics, but also resulted more broadly in the Germans losing their grip on these Jewish communities. In the

Netherlands, this did not happen, because of the strong and stable position of Asscher and Cohen and the fact that the JR soon became the only major representative organisation the Jews could turn to. Also, these two chairmen continued to believe very strongly that cooperation with the Germans, and receiving minor concessions in return, served the Jewish community best.

German views about how the four Jewish organisations functioned should be understood in light of the differing contexts we have discussed. The leaders' perception of their representativeness and their acceptance by the Jewish communities were decisive in determining how they responded to German demands. Aspects including deference to authority, the overall (lack of) experience in clandestine activities and the nature of the German occupation, with important distinctions to be made between the Military Administration in Belgium and France and the Civil Administration in the Netherlands, all played a role here as well. We have seen that as a result of a combination of these aspects, Asscher and Cohen were more prone to follow Nazi directions and to remain in place until the JR was dissolved. Both the forced and voluntary resignations of the initial Jewish organisations' leaders in Belgium and France are emblematic of the different stances these leaders took in relation to the German occupier. In Belgium, Salomon Ullman and Maurice Benedictus voluntarily withdrew from the AJB, in part because they believed they could no longer be of use to their communities, a feeling they had nurtured from the outset. In France, André Baur and Raymond-Raoul Lambert were arrested because they failed to meet increasing German demands. The various ways in which the central board members responded to German demands affected the latter's perceptions about how the Jewish organisations were functioning. Not surprisingly, there was a greater level of dissatisfaction with the way the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud served, or failed to serve, the German interests.

Even though the literature has paid a good deal of attention to the decisions of the Jewish leaders and their role in the deportation of the Jews from their respective countries, we have seen that how the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud functioned was in large part decided by their Nazi overseers and was informed by the choices of the Jewish leadership only to a lesser extent. In the absence of a central order outlining the structure, role and tasks of the western European representative Jewish bodies, their organisation largely depended upon improvisation by individual German departments. The nature of the German occupation in each individual country, as well as the institutional rivalry which was so central to Nazi rule in Europe more broadly, were important factors in this process of improvisation. The lack of premeditation shows once again that

the rationale behind the institution of the representative Jewish organisations was not to make these bodies instrumental in the solution of the so-called 'Jewish question'. Instead, they were used by the SS or rivalling institutions when they were considered useful, and avoided when they were not. Improvisation took a different course in each of the three countries. In the Netherlands, the JR was established nine months earlier than its counterparts, in direct response to the disruptions in Amsterdam's Jewish neighbourhood in February 1941. Both the SiPo-SD and the Civil Administration attempted to gain the upper hand in overseeing the JR, which only received nationwide authority in September 1941. The establishment order of the AJB, which was a direct copy of that for the German Reichsvereinigung, was carried out by the Military Administration and was the result of numerous negotiations between representatives of the rivalling SiPo-SD and Militärverwaltung. In France, Vichy officials played a central role in the UGIF's foundation surpassing SS-Hauptsturmführer Dannecker by forcing a Jewish representative organisation upon the communities of both the occupied and the unoccupied zone.

These differences affected how much room for manoeuvre the Jewish leaders had. The rivalry between the Military Administration and the SiPo-SD in Belgium and France continued to surface throughout the occupation. In Belgium, the conflicting views of the SiPo-SD and the Military Administration not only delayed the decision-making process from the German side, but also meant that the AJB leaders were unsure to which department they ought to address themselves. Since one of the key actions of the Jewish leaders was to buy time in order to prevent worse, they were able to use this ambiguity to their own benefit. In France, the strong presence of SiPo-SD, the Military Administration and the Vichy regime created a situation that was more complex than that in the Netherlands and Belgium. Particularly in the first phase of the occupation, the Vichy-led CGQJ, which directly supervised the UGIF, was a source of frustration for Theodor Dannecker. The anti-German outlook of Xavier Vallat problematised the relationship with the Nazis which decreased the effectiveness of German rule in France in the earliest part of the occupation. This, in turn, was one of the factors that resulted in more room for manoeuvre for the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud. In the Netherlands, the strong presence of the SiPo-SD contrasts with the situation in the two other countries. The successful attempts of the SiPo-SD to implement anti-Jewish regulations and deport Jews from the country as quickly as possible and the relative lack of powerful rival institutions made the context in which the JR was forced to act much more stringent.

The modus operandi of the organisations was largely decided by the way in which the rival

German institutions dealt with the absence of a centrally decided plan, and by the nature of the communities from which they emerged. These factors were inherently intertwined and cannot be regarded as separate constituents. The comparative method used here has highlighted the importance of these factors. This, in turn, forces us to rethink the predominant attention that has been paid to the decisions of individual Jewish leaders and their impact on the fate of the Jewish communities at large. Rather than assessing their behaviour from a moral viewpoint, we should understand their choices in the context of both long-term socio-cultural factors and the particular nature of Nazi rule at the time each decision was made. The Jewish leaders were forced to respond to German anti-Jewish regulations and orders on the spot and were given little time to reconsider their ad hoc decisions. An emphasis on the individual has obscured the larger structures. Only when the importance of these structures is recognised, is it possible to come closer to a full understanding of the complex situation these Jewish leaders faced.

The various ways in which the leaders of the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud and lower-ranking members perceived their role shows that they cannot be regarded as uniform bodies. The heterogeneous responses of the organisations' members to increasing anti-Jewish regulations were not always consistent with the official policies they carried out. Whereas chairmen Asscher and Cohen, for example, continued to believe in the legal path they had chosen, other central board members questioned their decisions. Yet others outside the central board, such as Walter Süskind, interpreted their role differently by engaging in clandestine activities, which stood in contrast to the central orders of the JR's leadership. Similar tendencies can be identified in the other two countries, where the autonomy of individuals working for the Jewish organisations was larger than in the Netherlands. In Belgium, a clear difference in viewpoint can be identified between Salomon van den Berg and Maurice Benedictus. Van den Berg considered the AJB to be an extension of the Consistory and strongly believed in the added value of the AJB in terms of providing social welfare to Belgian Jews. He was a strong proponent of law-abiding action and he resented clandestine activities. After the deportation of Jews in the summer of 1942, Van den Berg continued to serve as central board member and local Brussels chair. Benedictus, by contrast, believed that there was nothing more that he could do to serve the interests of the Jews, and resigned from his post and fled abroad in December 1942.

Moreover, we should note that the actions of individual members were not consistent throughout the occupation. We have seen that the existence of these Jewish organisations created a

wide range of activities that were not necessarily consistent with their official policies, but were nevertheless impossible without their existence. Even the Jewish leaders at times acted against the policies they officially propagated and, to varying degrees, were either actively or passively involved in clandestine operations on different levels. The involvement of the central board members of the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud in clandestine activities shows that there was at times a difference between the outward appearance of so-called 'cooperation' with the Germans and the actual activities of the organisations. In an inherently complex situation, their members could simultaneously cooperate and resist. These aspects prevent us from discussing these Jewish organisations as a coherent whole. Their leaders aimed to make sure that Jewish communities would suffer as little as possible from the German occupation, despite severe pressure on those communities. In doing so, they wavered between various modes of behaviour. More attention should be paid in the literature to this liminality of human behaviour since it is inherent to the conduct of individuals and, more specifically, to the conduct of individuals who are forced to function under severe pressure. As in the case of other individuals and (clandestine) organisations operative during the Nazi era, discontinuity, chaos and inconsistency defined the nature of these Jewish organisations and the choices of their leaders. In a broader context, this means that research on the Jewish organisations ought to focus more on the many nuances and oppositions that can be identified within them.

The complex interrelations that existed between clandestine activity and the JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud underline their dynamic nature. They functioned in a context that was highly variable. Neither the German anti-Jewish regulations nor the general conditions of war, were factors that could be pre-determined. The Jewish organisations functioned in at times chaotic situations in which the Germans were trying to create some order. In doing so, these bodies were subject to change and underwent a number of severe transformations, including the modification of the central boards. Initially, the organisations were established to fulfil a representative role. The Jewish leaders aimed to aid the communities as far as possible while protecting them from the direct threat of the Nazis. Their intentions were increasingly deformed throughout the war as they were forced to deal with and abide by increasing anti-Jewish legislation. As a result, while they had started off by attempting to provide social welfare to the Jewish community at large, the organisations ended up trying to save as many Jews as possible from deportation. This was a gradually evolving process and the responses of the central board members to it wavered. The JR, the AJB, the UGIF-Nord and the UGIF-Sud were thus changing entities rather than static models

and should be approached as such.

These conclusions affect our perception of Jewish representation during Nazi rule, both in western and in eastern Europe. Broader analyses of the nature and impact of the Nazi regime are often focussed on either the West, or the East. In light of the different contexts (of occupation) in these two parts of Europe, this is understandable. However, broader themes about the nature of Nazi rule can be applied to the whole of Europe. The same goes for notions of Jewish representation and Jewish responses. Even though this research has discussed the eastern European *Judenräte* only on the sidelines, the conclusions of this thesis can also be used as a new analytical framework for understanding the notion of Jewish representation during the Second World War more broadly. There is a need to examine the representative organisations that were forced upon the Jewish communities in the broader context of Nazi rule and ideology. The functioning of these bodies was inherently dependent upon the nature of the German rule, which was epitomised by contradictions. With the absence of a clearly defined plan for how the Greater German Reich would be governed, there were competing interests, and different initiatives on a local level. As a result, the Jewish representative bodies were used by rival Nazi institutions, often to effect their own intentions. We have also seen that there is a need to critically review the terminology used to describe the behaviour of the Jewish leadership. Responses to Nazi demands were intrinsically inconsistent and dynamic. In changing circumstances, the Jewish leaders oscillated between cooperation and resistance and the many nuances of behaviour that exist in between.

This research has demonstrated that in order to understand and explain the nature of the Holocaust, and more specifically the way anti-Jewish legislations were implemented and dealt with by the Jewish communities, it is essential to compare and contrast across the boundaries of the nation-state. The predominant focus on these Jewish organisations within the context of the nation-state has obscured aspects that, as this research has shown, proved important in understanding and explaining why these bodies functioned the way they did. Only by comparing case studies is it possible to determine what factors were distinctive in each locality, and how these factors affected the course of events. As a result, comparative studies stimulate multi-perspective approaches towards the subject. Even though there is an increase in the number of comparative and transnational studies on the Holocaust, language barriers and other practical factors, such as an extensive knowledge of the historiographies of each of the case studies involved, still seem to discourage scholars from engaging in (macro-level) comparative research. This obstructs a solid

contribution to the body of comparative literature on the Holocaust. Only by comparing case studies we can have a full understanding of the wide range of (overlooked) factors that were decisive in shaping the histories of the Holocaust across Europe.



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